

The Russian Imperial Movement and Coronavirus

The Center on Terrorism, Extremism, and
Counterterrorism



Middlebury Institute of
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April 6, 2020

What is RIM?

RIM stands for *Russian Imperial Movement*. It is a self-proclaimed Russian Orthodox national-patriotic and monarchic organization dedicated to re-establishing the Russian autocratic monarchy. Members view the old Tsarist monarchy as a superior form of state order that is in greater accordance with Russian national history, politics, and religious traditions.

The Imperial Movement has published COVID-19 conspiracy theories in line with its far-right, ultra-nationalist ideology. Specifically, its Facebook page has been used to disseminate disinformation on COVID-19 and, simultaneously, propagate violent extremist narratives.

RIM is a dangerous extremist organization that is involved in training white supremacists to participate in violence both inside and outside of Russia. It traffics in anti-LGBTQ, anti-Semitic, and anti-Ukrainian hate speech, and operates at the fringes of Russian society. On April 6, 2020, the United States announced that it has designated the group as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist (SDGT).

Ideology

The RIM holds that the Russian Empire continues to exist in law. Members claim that this is because no laws passed after the surrender of Emperor Nikolai II in March of 1917. RIM claims that this document of surrender contradicts the laws of the Russian Empire. This would mean that, from a legal perspective, the monarchy and imperial code of laws were never discontinued.

Membership requirements

Members of the movement must:

- Be Orthodox Christians/Parishioners of the Russian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate or the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia)
- Share the basic principles of the ideology of the movement: orthodox imperial nationalism.

Coronavirus disinformation

Examples of dangerous conspiracy theories, hate speech, and disinformation about the coronavirus include this video and the post on the final page, which states:

What is the coronavirus, and to whom may it be advantageous? If it got into Russia, then why haven't the [state powers] announced a mass quarantine? Why does the leadership of the Russian Federation stay silent about the AIDS that is mowing down people left and right? Why don't

[state powers] confront the causes of this illness? [These causes are] homosexuality, narcotics, brothels.... LGBTQ is actively promoting sodomy and tolerance, especially among the youth. Narcotics and brothels is a business that the regime covers up.

Relationships and conflicts with other groups

- Clashes with the Azov Battalion, a Ukrainian ultranationalist militant group.
- International Police Organization (IPO): A photo of their emblem is on RIM's "partners" page.
- International Practical Shooting Confederation: As with the IPO, a photo of this emblem is also on the "partners" page.

Operations and Enemies

Evidence suggests that, after the Charlottesville attacks, members of the Imperial Legion, the militant element of the movement who run the "Partisan" combat training program, contacted the organizers to have them train in Russia [1]. The Partisan program has also been known to train other far right-wing extremists from Europe [2].

RIM is avowedly anti-Ukrainian, and one of RIM's leaders has stated that Ukraine is a pseudo-nation invented by the Soviet government. The group has openly indicated an intent to carry out violence against Ukrainians. Denis Gariev, the leader of the Partisan division, is quoted as saying: "We see Ukrainian-ness as rabies. A person is sick. Either quarantine, liquidation, or he'll infect everyone" [3].

Gariev has also openly criticized Putin, believing that the Russian government is corrupt and does not do enough to protect ethnic Russians. His anti-Putin sentiment caused the Legion to be the target of police raids several times. He has expressed anti-Western sentiment, as well, stating, "The goal of the West is to weaken us by making Russians kill each other. They are succeeding" [4].

On its Facebook page, RIM has directed ire and hate toward LGBTQ people and leftists. One post on Facebook declares, "These people condone the destruction of the Russians... Antifa is sodomy and tolerance."



Русское Имперское Движение - Russian Imperial Movement



11 марта в 17:24 · ⚙️

Что такое коронавирус, кому он выгоден? Если он проник в Россию, то почему власти не объявляют масштабный карантин? Почему правительство Российской Федерации молчит о спиде, который косит людей направо и налево? Почему власти не борются с причинами этой болезни? А это гомосексуализм, наркотики, бордели... ЛГБТ активно продвигает содомию и толерантность, особенно среди молодёжи. Наркотики и бордели - бизнес, который открыто покрывает режим...

СМОТРЕТЬ НАС ЗДЕСЬ - https://youtu.be/fi0Yk_tse04 или 👉

Подписывайтесь на наш канал, оставляйте комментарии, задавайте свои вопросы, присоединяйтесь!

Телера - https://t.me/Rus_imperia

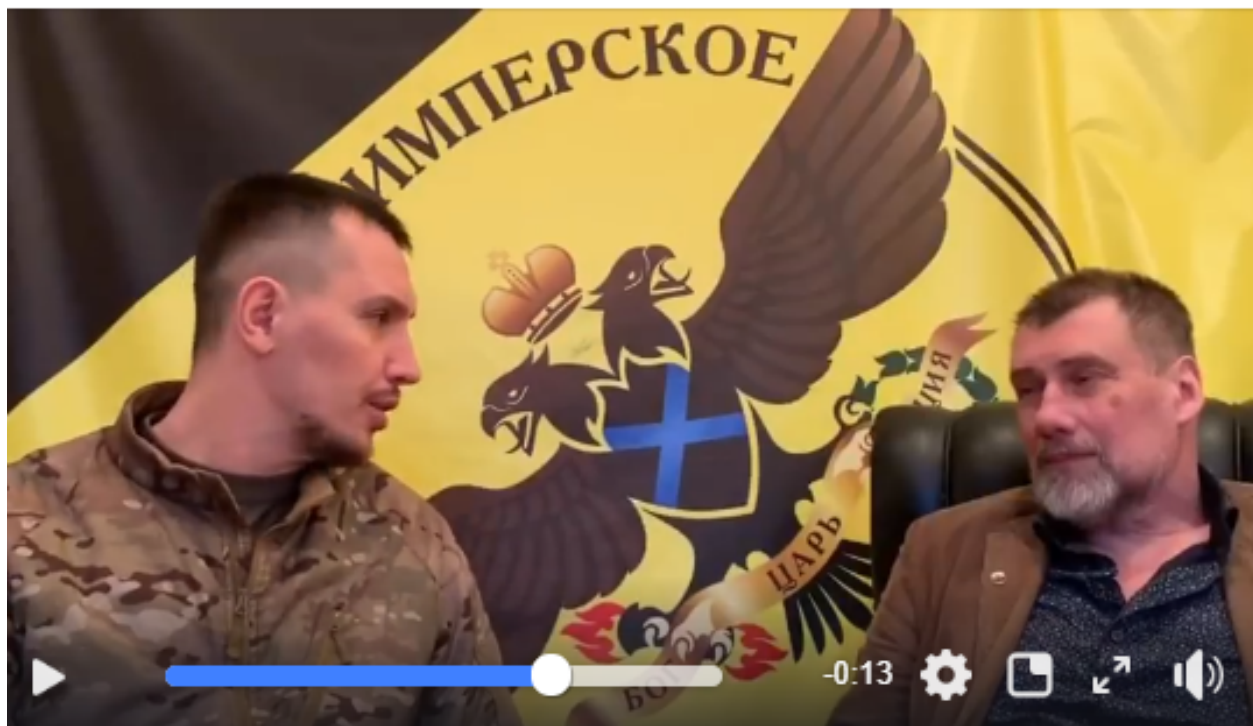


Figure 1: RIM's COVID-19 disinformation

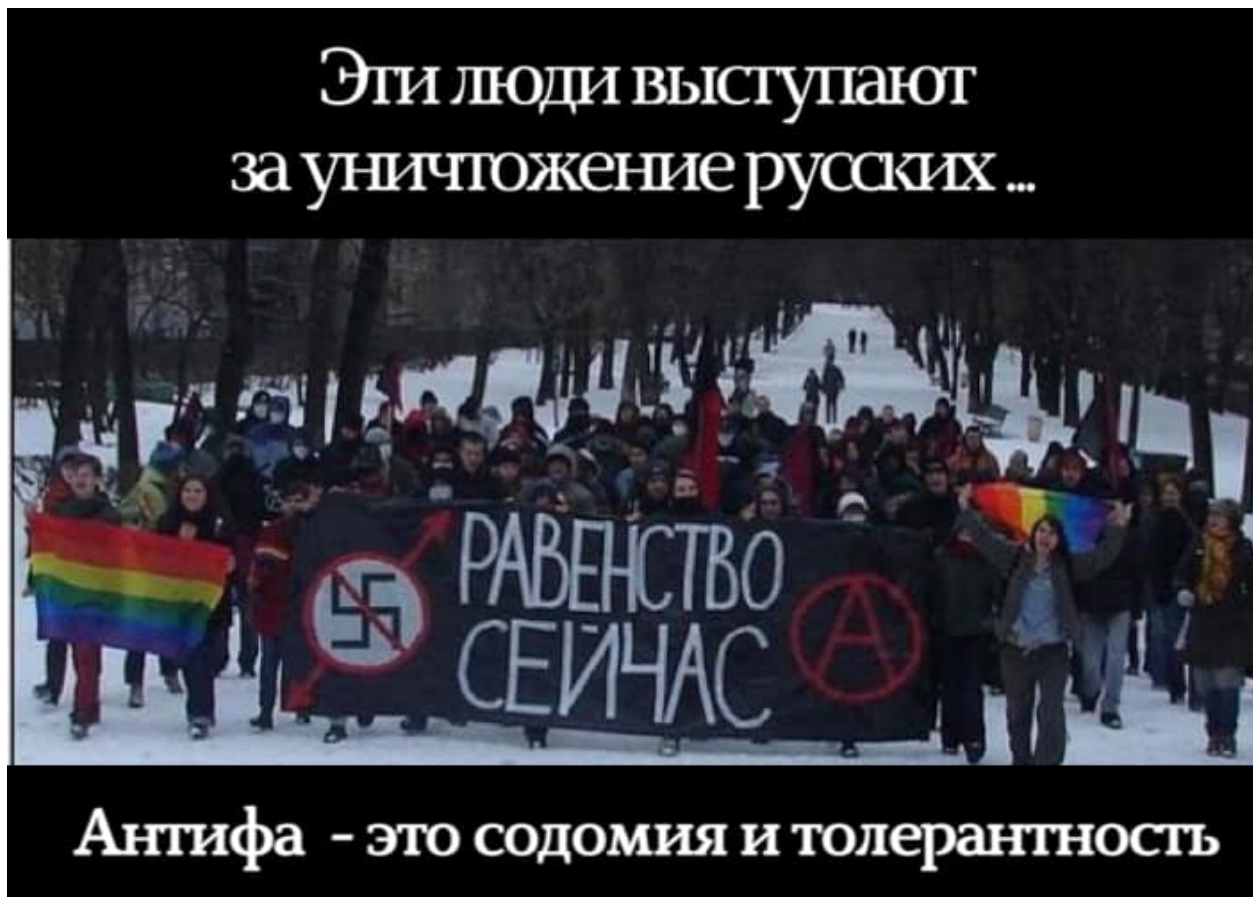


Figure 2: Anti-LGBTQ hate on RIM's Facebook page.

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