

Even Real Trumpists are Now Pro-Ukraine and Anti-Russian, Moscow Commentator Says

Opinion

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“Breitbart today is a clear denial of the thesis about American conservatism and Trumpism being potentially friendly to Russia. Yes, there are some individual positively inclined toward Moscow like [Patrick] Buchanan, but there are [today] no conservative groups” that follow his approach.

By Paul Goble for “Window on Eurasia”: October 1 – Following the election of Donald Trump, many in Moscow expected a new and improved era in Russian-American relations given the Republican’s statements about the desirability of such an evolution and even more his lack of any criticism of the Russian government. When that shift did not happen, many Moscow analysts blamed liberals and the American establishment for constraining the American president who, they still believed, wanted better relations with the Kremlin but could not pursue them because of opposition in Congress and elsewhere. But now at least one Russian analyst, Aleksey Popov, has gone further and suggested that even the real “Trumpists,” those grouped around Steve Bannon and his Breitbart portal have become pro-Ukrainian and thus anti-Russian, extinguishing what little hope Moscow still had for positive changes in Washington (apn.ru/index.php?newsid=36706). Bannon’s reputation as “almost a pro-Russian figure” in the Trump entourage has been based on his statement at the Vatican in 2014 when he said that he “does not justify Vladimir Putin and the kleptocracy he represents (this phrase is often left out in Russian sources, AP points out).” “But,” the Breitbart founder, continued, “we, the Judeo-Christian West must recognize that he speaks for traditionalism. Putin has come out in defense of traditional institutions and he is doing this with the aid of nationalism. People want to see their country sovereign: they want to see patriotism in their country.” However, Popov says, “all this was said in 2014,” that is, more than three years ago. And in the middle of last month, he continues, Breitbart after Bannon’s return “published an interview with Joel Rosenberg, an expert on Islamism, under the eloquent title, ‘Putin is more dangerous than radical Islam.’” The Bannon outlet featured relatively few stories about Russia and Ukraine in 2016, but most of them were increasingly critical of Moscow. And “after Trump’s inauguration, the position of Breitbart gradually took on greater definition” and was consistently hostile to Russia in ways it had not been before, the Moscow commentator says. In February 2017, for example, the portal carried an article that dismissed Moscow’s argument about volunteers going to Ukraine by suggesting that “80 percent of the Russian army consists of volunteers. The American one consists entirely of volunteers.” Thus, to use Moscow’s logic, one could call “American forces in Iraq and Afghanistan” volunteers. At the end of March, it featured a statement by former NATO secretary general Andres Fog Rasmussen who said that “Trump should meet with [Ukrainian president] Poroshenko before he does with Putin.” But the clearest indication yet that the original Trumpists have now moved away from being pro-Russian came in August. On August 23, Breitbart carried an article that said among other things that that day is “the European day of memory of the victims of Nazism and Stalinism. Russia in recent years has

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