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The Campaign against Pussy Riot: Anti-Westernism in the Paradigm of the Beilis Case

Abstract. *The performance staged by Pussy Riot (a Russian punk-feminist group) in Moscow's Cathedral of Christ the Savior should be rightfully viewed as one of the major events in the wave of international protest movements in 2012. Serving as a litmus test for liberalism, the Pussy Riot case divided the Russian society, drawing fierce criticism from the radical, pro-Putin majority. As shown in this article, one of the leading themes of this campaign was anti-Westernism. This article identifies and analyzes the major ideological components of the campaign's anti-Western rhetoric. Furthermore, it juxtaposes the Pussy Riot case against the 100-year-old Beilis case, showing their striking similarities both in terms of the polarized impact on the Russian society and in terms of their assessment of liberal values. While the acquittal in the Beilis case signified democratic trends in pre-WWI Russia, the author concludes that the conviction in the Pussy Riot case became a triumph of anti-democratic, anti-Western values, marking the completion of a transition to authoritarianism in present-day Russia.*

Key words: *anti-Westernism, ideology, liberalism, russocentrism, opposition, anti-Semitism, de-sacralization, Pussy Riot, Beilis Case*

The entire article is available in Russian.