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Who is Dimitri Simes And Why Is He Trying To Sink Mayflower?

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Who is Dimitri Simes And Why Is He Trying To Sink Mayflower? Investigation by Yuri Felshtinsky
Center for the National Interest and it's journal created in the USA by Soviet-born Dmitri Simes instead of serving American interests serve only those of the Kremlin and Simes himself, declares Yuri Felshtinsky, Russian-American historian. In an exclusive material for GORDON Felshtinsky wrote about Simes' specific activities, his influence on American politics and his connections with top-level officials in Russia and in the USA.

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Felshtinsky: Simes, judging by the available information and by his actions is an agent of the Kremlin embedded into American political elite

Photo: EPA

Yuri FELSHTINSKY

In 1620, the famous ship Mayflower carrying its hundred or so passengers arrived from Britain to the United States, the dangerous journey having taken several months. In 1925, a hotel in Washington, D.C. was named "Mayflower" in its honor. This is the hotel where, on April 27, 2016, The Center for the National Interest (CNI), a Washington, D.C.-based organization headed by Dimitri Simes, organized a meeting between Donald Trump, then a Presidential Candidate from the Republican Party, and his supporters, which included a Russian Ambassador Sergei Kislyak. It was at that meeting that Trump introduced his foreign policy program. Two months prior, Simes [met](#) in Moscow with President Putin and a number of other Russian Government officials.

In addition, it turned out that Dimitri Simes, through CNI, also organized the meetings between Maria Butina, who was arrested on Russian espionage charges in Washington, D.C. on July 15, 2018, and Stanley Fischer, then-US Federal Reserve Vice Chairman, and Nathan Sheets, then-Treasury Department Undersecretary for International Affairs, on April 7, 2015. At that time, Butina [was accompanying](#) Alexander Torshin, who was then the Deputy Governor of Russia's Central Bank and "who investigators believe was Butina's Russian handler as an agent."

A high-level government official [Torshin](#) with an illustrious biography was Butina's handler from Russia. But who was her handler in the United States? An answer to this question was supplied by Butina herself when she began cooperating with the investigation and named two people. The first one was Anton Fedyashin, Professor of History at the American University, who could not resist the temptation to be photographed with his mentee and to mention her in his publication of April 6, 2017:

"The picturesque town of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, has a distinguished place in the American tradition of overcoming profound divisions. On the weekend of February 11-12, 2017, it witnessed a remarkable dialog between two distant worlds – the American and the post-Soviet. [...] The meeting of young minds aimed at breaking through the seemingly impenetrable wall of stereotypes that has sprung up between Russia and America over the past few years. SIS [The School of International Service] MA student Maria Butina put it this way: 'Our trip was like a time machine that took us through the present, the future and the past of U.S./Russia/Ukraine/Belarus/Azerbaijan relations. We had a great time learning about each other – students from all of these countries (and two American universities!) that represented different generations and cultures. It helped us to focus on similarities that unite us more than on the differences that divide us'."

Notably, Fedyashin erased the portion of his publication referencing Butina after her arrest and removed his picture with her which was previously available at this site American University. Now any traces of the history being rewritten by the "historian" Fedyashin exit in someone's Twitter feed. Here is the photo that disappeared: Butina is marked with an arrow, and Fedyashin is depicted on the left. And here is the site, on which one can see, for the moment at least, some of the pictures of Fedyashin and Butina together.



Felshinsky: Here is the photo with Fedyashin and Butina that disappeared. Screenshot by Yuri Felshinsky

The second handler named by Butina was Dimitri Simes.

No one may have paid attention to Simes's involvement in organizing Trump's public appearance at the Mayflower Hotel on April 27, 2016, if not for Trump winning the Presidential Election later that year and for the ensuing scandal in the United States regarding the alleged Russian meddling in the Election. This is what Andrey Piontkovsky, a political observer, had to say about the matter:

"A routine investigation revealed that Jeff Sessions, US Attorney General, forgot to mention in his application for security clearance one of the meetings with the Russian Embassador Sergei Kislyak. But it was not an ordinary meeting. [...] It so happens that in the same four-dimensional point of place and time, the world trajectories of several other noteworthy individuals had crossed – namely, of Paul Manafort, Carter Paige, Michael Flynn, Jared Kushner, Donald Trump, and – finally – the main person who became a friend and a leader of this jolly group from then on – Dimitri Konstantinovich Simis, a former Deputy Secretary of the Komsomol Organization [All-Union Leninist Young Communist League] at the Institute of World Economy and International Relations and an international lecturer at the Moscow City Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, who, while still in that role, suddenly applied for US asylum in 1972. During his many wandering years away from the Motherland, Dimitri Konstantinovich had morphed into Dimitri Simes, a President and CEO of The Center for the National Interest.

On April 27, the conference center at The Mayflower Hotel was leased by CNI for an important event – one of the Presidential candidates, namely, the Republican Party's nominee Donald Trump, was going to reveal his foreign policy platform. Before the speech, the gracious host introduced two of his

guests – Trump and Kislyak. [...] Thus, the real chief of the ‘Trump Is Ours’ operation was Simes, and not Kislyak.”

Simes said the Nixon Center, a conservative think tank, had paid for Pavlovsky and several other Russian political analysts to visit Washington in November for a research project on American influence in former Soviet republics

Mass media in the US began paying more and more attention to this event. "Sessions says that he met with Kislyak last summer in his capacity as a member of the Senate Armed Forces Committee, but the record casts doubt on that claim. [...] According to The Atlantic, Sessions also met frequently with Dimitri Simes, an expert on Russia, and at least one lobbyist with Russian clients, Richard Burt", – noted one of the publications. "Trump took a hands-off position on the Republican National Committee's platform fights last summer – except when it came to how to deal with Russian aggression in Ukraine. In that case, Trump campaign leaders ‘orchestrated a set of events’ to nix a platform proposal calling for the U.S. to provide ‘lethal defensive weapons’ to combat Russia-backed rebels, and wrote the softer replacement language ultimately sent to the convention floor, despite it being “at odds with almost all the party's national security leaders."

Simes's questionable connections were also noted. In his article titled "Donald Trump's Russia connections: Realists with Moscow Ties Are Lining Up Behind Republican Frontrunner" published on April 27, 2016, James Kirchick observed that "The Center for the National Interest, former Nixon Center, a hosting institution for Trump's first foreign policy speech and the adviser who helped writing the speech have multiple long-term ties to the Kremlin."

"In 2005 two English-language Russian sources, a Russian-American newspaper Kommersant and Moscow Times reported that “Simes had met with the Kremlin adviser Gleb Pavlovsky and Russian oligarch Oleg Deripaska – Putin's close ally, a man on FBI organized crime list and Paul Manafort's former business partner” – to discuss forming a Russian-funded think tank.

It is noteworthy that Kommersant and Moscow Times described the 2005 event differently. In an article "Moscow's Symmetrical Response" published on December 5, 2005, the following was noted by Kommersant:

"Oleg Deripaska, RUSAL and Bazovy Element owner, arrived in the United States yesterday. Informed sources maintain that Mr. Deripaska is willing to bankroll a new think tank in Washington to focus on Russian issues. [...] The new institute is largely believed to be a brainchild of Gleb Pavlovsky and Dimitri Simes [...]. A new institute for the research into Russian issues has been long debated in the United States, and scholars of Russian have been trying to gain the financial backing. A new surge of interest appeared, among other things, due to recent problems at the Nixon Center. Moris Grinberg, the chair of the center's board and former CEO of U.S. largest AIG insurance company, is now charged with fraud and other financial offences. Thus, the organization may soon lose the man responsible for a lion's part of sponsor money. What is more, a number of well-known scholars, including Zbigniew Brzezinski and Francis Fukuyama, have already left the editorial staff of The National Interest, a journal issued by the Nixon Center."

Moscow Times of December 6, 2005, noted as follows:

"Plans are in the works to set up a Washington-based think tank that would be funded with Russian money and combat the U.S. perception of Russia ‘as a bad pupil,’ Kremlin-connected consultant Gleb Pavlovsky said Monday. Among possible participants in the project are metals mogul Oleg Deripaska

and Dimitri Simes, president of the Washington-based Nixon Center, Pavlovsky said. [...] Pavlovsky said one possible sponsor for the project was Deripaska, who was in Washington on Tuesday to speak at the Carnegie Center for International Peace on restructuring Soviet enterprises. [...] Georgy Oganov, a spokesman for Deripaska's Basic Element holding company, said 'this issue was discussed ... on many occasions among Mr. Deripaska and people living in the States, including people at the Nixon Center.'"

Simes said the Nixon Center, a conservative think tank, had paid for Pavlovsky and several other Russian political analysts to visit Washington in November for a research project on American influence in former Soviet republics. But he said he had not discussed plans for a Russian-funded think tank with them or with Deripaska.

"There's clearly a background for this think tank idea," Simes said, citing plans for Russia Today. "A 24-hour, English-language news channel funded by the Kremlin" [and launched in 2005].

Pavlovsky could not confirm when the think tank might be set up, saying discussions were ongoing.

"The think tank that resulted was most likely the Institute for Democracy and Cooperation (IDC)," – was noted later by another US publication. A Kremlin-backed think tank, the Institute for Democracy and Cooperation (IDC), was formed in New York in 2008 under Putin adviser Andranik Migranyan. Migranyan was selected to run the IDC by Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, according to a confidential State Department cable released by WikiLeaks.

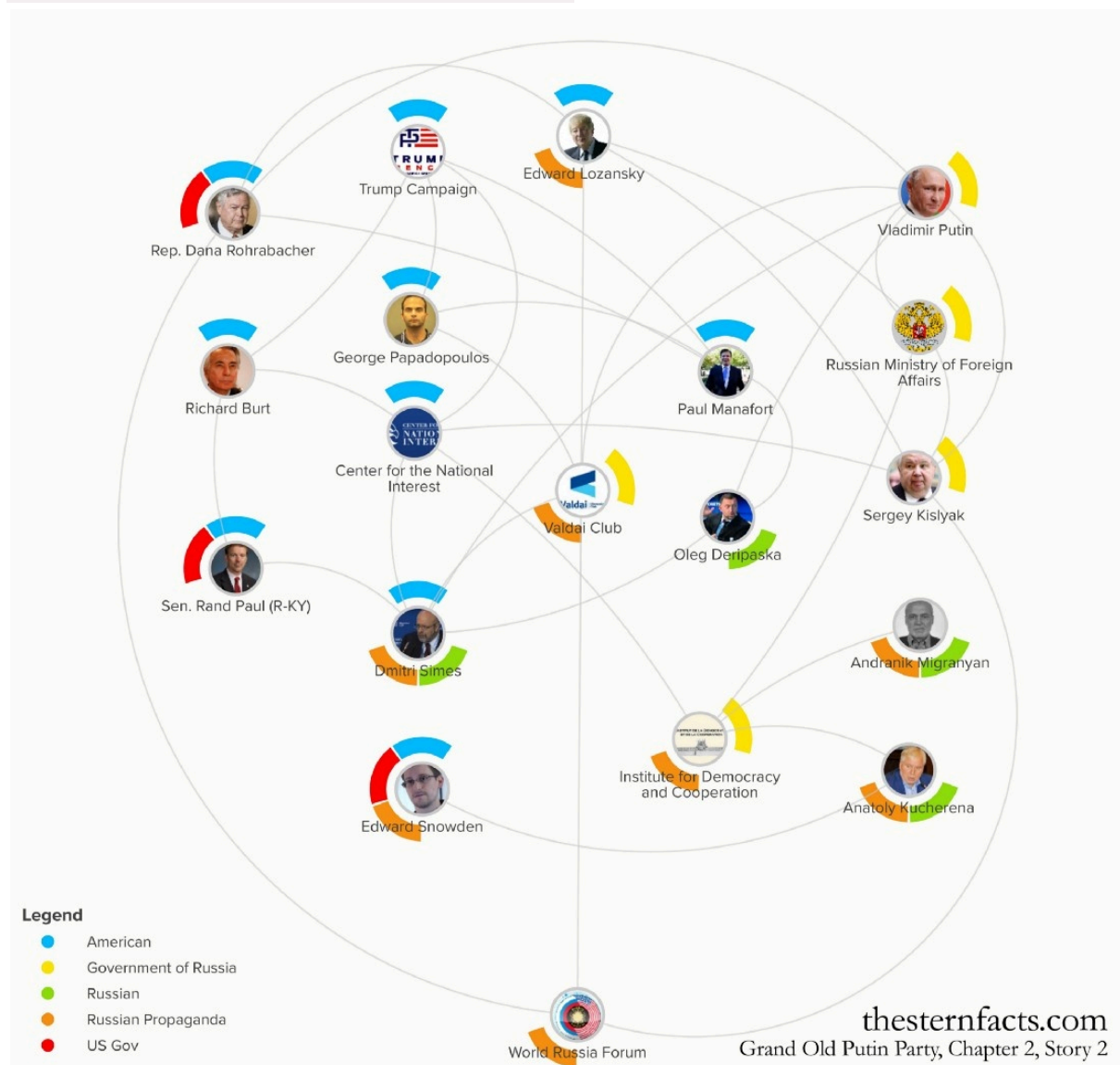


Putin meeting participants of international Valdai Discussion Club in September 2013. On the picture from left to right: Germany's former defense minister Volker Rühle, ex-prime-minister of France François Fillon, President of Russia Vladimir Putin, ex-prime-minister of Italy Romano Prodi and Center for the National Interest president Dimitri Simes. Photo by EPA

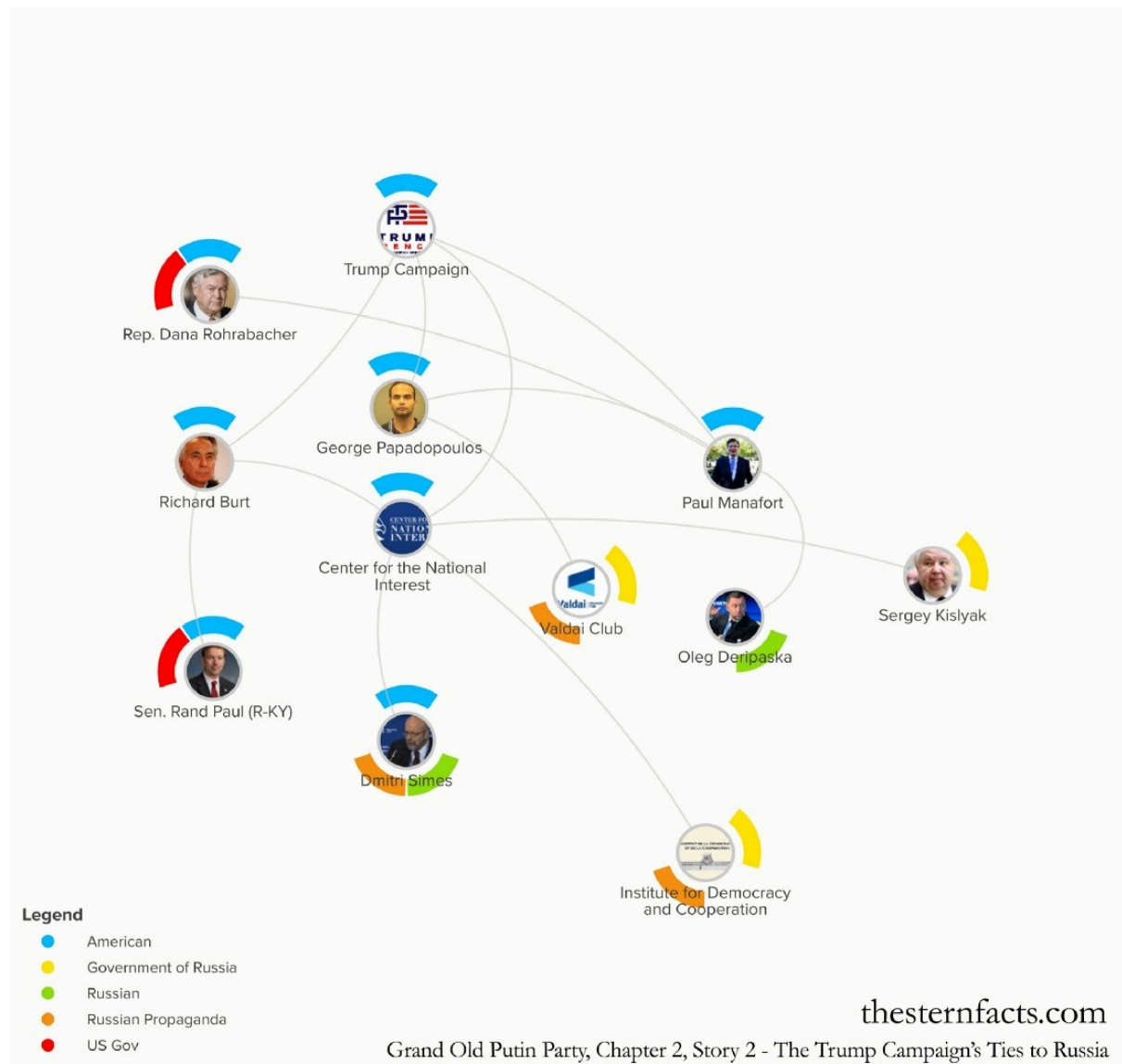
"In 2013, – according to Zabrisky – Simes attended Valdai International Discussion Club alongside Putin, where both took part in a two-hour panel discussion. Other participants were Germany's former defense minister and prime ministers of France and Italy – so Simes's presence raised some eyebrows. Putin meets Valdai Club's participants every year since 2004. Among many other Kremlin officials attending Valdai meetings are Dmitry Medvedev, Prime Minister; Sergei Ivanov, Chief of Staff of the Presidential Executive Office; Sergei Lavrov, Minister of Foreign Affairs; Sergei Shoigu, Defense Minister and more. However, the meetings are also attended by the Russian oligarchs and figures strategically important to the Kremlin."

Politico noted: "A conference formerly attended by respected Western Russia watchers but which has, since the Crimean annexation, fallen into disrepute and is now frequented almost exclusively by Putin apologists. At Valdai, Putin referred to Simes as his 'American friend and colleague' and Simes stated 'I fully support President Putin's tough stance' [on Syria]."

One of the publications even described the two structures, putting Valdai Club at the center of one, and the Simes's structure – at the center of another.



Picture by theesternfacts.com



Picture by theesternfacts.com

Finally, the US Congress became interested in Simes's activities. On March 13, 2018, the Democrat Minority on the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, which was investigating Russia's interference in the 2016 US Presidential Election, made the following request regarding Simes:

"Mr. Simes serves as President and CEO of the Center for the National Interest, which hosted President Trump's April 27, 2016 foreign policy speech at the Mayflower Hotel. The Committee is investigating matters related to the speech and communications that may have occurred at the event, and the Committee has reason to believe that Mr. Simes played a central role in drafting portions of the speech related to Russia. The Committee should also obtain relevant personal correspondence between Mr. Simes and Trump campaign officials and any individuals with direct or assumed links to the Russian government."

That request had no impact.

The attitude of the mass media towards Simes and the CNI became cautious and suspicious both because of Simes's pro-Putin stance and also because of his active participation in the Trump's campaign

A year earlier, on March 2, 2017, CNI formally responded to the mass media's query that "Mr. Simes introduced Mr. Kislyak to Mr. Trump in a receiving line last April at a foreign policy speech hosted by his Center at the Mayflower Hotel in Washington. Mr. Kislyak was one of four ambassadors who sat in the front row for Mr. Trump's speech at the invitation of the Center. Mr. Simes noted that Mr. Sessions, then a senator from Alabama, was there, but he did not notice whether he and the ambassador spoke at that time."

Nevertheless, Kushner took it upon himself to address the matter on July 26, 2017, and to protect Simes (one could speculate that he would not have done so without receiving Trump's blessing). In his testimony to the Congressional Committee, Kushner confused the investigation by stating that the meeting at The Mayflower Hotel and Trump's speech were exclusively his (and not Simes's) idea:

"The first that I can recall was at the Mayflower Hotel in Washington, D.C. in April 2016. This was when then candidate Trump was delivering a major foreign policy speech. Doing the event and speech had been my idea, and I oversaw its execution. I arrived at the hotel early to make sure all logistics were in order. After that, I stopped into the reception to thank the host of the event, Dimitri Simes, the publisher of the bi-monthly foreign policy magazine, The National Interest, who had done a great job putting everything together."

"Kushner does not note that Simes was born and educated in Russia and has been publicly called a 'friend' by Vladimir Putin", – note the authors of publication detailing Kushner's testimony and emphasizing that it was "Simes and his group [that] had created the guest list and extended the invitations for the event."

Kushner's further testimony attempts to prove that he was not involved in organizing and planning of the meeting: "I had no ongoing relationship with the Ambassador before the election, and had limited knowledge about him then. In fact, on November 9, the day after the election, I could not even remember the name of the Russian Ambassador. When the campaign received an email purporting to be an official note of congratulations from President Putin, I was asked how we could verify it was real. To do so I thought the best way would be to ask the only contact I recalled meeting from the Russian government, which was the Ambassador I had met months earlier, so I sent an email asking Mr. Simes, 'What is the name of the Russian ambassador?'"

It must have been too onerous to use Google search to find answers to his questions. It must have been much easier to ask his old acquaintance Simes. One is left to wonder what other questions could have been posed by Kushner in that email to Simes since it appears improbable that he would send an email with a single question – about the name of the Russian Ambassador – thereby demonstrating his complete ignorance.

Jared Kushner – businessman, senior advisor and son-in-law of the President of the USA Donald Trump. Photo by EPA

Kushner's testimony at the time did not tell the whole story. He met Simes on March 14, 2016, at a lunch meeting organized by the CNI. The meeting (and the lunch) took place at Manhattan's Time Warner Center. "The main attraction of the March 14th event was Henry Kissinger, the Center's [CNI] honorary chairman, who gave a talk that included analyzing U.S.-Russia relations for a small group of

attendees", – writes Bloomberg. "Kushner meeting Simes at the lunch turned out to be a solid match. In the weeks following they discussed the possibility of an event hosted by the center to give Trump a chance to lay out a cohesive foreign policy speech. Simes's organization, more pro-Russian than most in Washington, had invited other presidential candidates but none accepted."

At the same time, the attitude of the mass media towards Simes and the CNI became cautious and suspicious both because of Simes's pro-Putin stance and also because of his active participation in the Trump's campaign. "Why is a think tank with ties to Russia treated as a pro-US non-partisan entity?" – inquired one of the publications in a lengthy article about Simes, continuing as follows:

"The Center for the National Interest is a think tank headquartered in D.C. with revenue of well over \$1 million and over 20 full time staffers. [...] But is the Center for the National Interest really looking out for America's interests, or is it a backdoor for the Russian government into the heart of the U.S. security establishment? The head of the Center for the National Interest is Dimitri K. Simes, a graduate of Moscow State University (1967) and former deputy secretary of the Young Leninist League who defected to the U.S. in 1973 and became close with former president Richard Nixon. At the end of his life, Nixon wanted to establish a realistic think tank, called the 'Nixon Center for Peace and Freedom,' and in 1994 he turned to Simes to run it. But by 2011, the Nixon family had to cut relations with the Center for the National Interest. Simes had grown too close with Russian president Vladimir Putin."

Another publication, Politico, discussed this topic as follows: "To the Republican stalwarts, family members, and former political aides who sit on the Foundation board, however, the Center and – particularly – its longtime president, Dimitri Simes, had become nothing less than an embarrassment to the Nixon family name. Simes, an imposing eminence of Russia policy, was – in their view – offering apologies for Russian autocrat Vladimir Putin and even attacking their party's presidential candidate, John McCain, for his denunciations of Russia's invasion of Georgia."

In his New Yorker article titled "How Jared Kushner Helped the Russians Get Inside Access to the Trump Campaign," Ryan Lizza observed: "If you read Jared Kushner's statement to congressional committees looking for evidence of a crime, there isn't much there. But if you read it from the perspective of the Russians trying to gain a toehold – or more – inside the Trump campaign, you realize how easy he made it for them. As the evidence mounted last year that the Russian government launched an unprecedented hacking and influence campaign to affect the 2016 election in Donald Trump's favor, the Trump team, including Kushner, became increasingly more solicitous to high-level Russians offering information and requesting meetings. For Kislyak, it was clearly an important moment. The Russian Ambassador represents a country whose intelligence services had hacked their way into the Democratic National Committee's networks ten months earlier and hacked the e-mail account of John Podesta, Hillary Clinton's campaign chairman, the previous month. At Trump's speech, Kislyak was honored with an invitation to the reception and a front-row seat. Trump's speech itself extended an olive branch to Vladimir Putin, calling for 'improved relations with Russia' and an effort to 'make a deal that's great' for 'America, but also good for Russia'."

It still remains important for Trump to establish a direct and informal communication channel with Putin, thus circumventing traditional American diplomacy structures responsible for US National Security and Foreign Policy

Mr. Simes, who was born in Moscow in 1947 and who is a President of the former Nixon Center for Peace and Freedom that was renamed since March 9, 2011, as The Center for the National Interest, has long been regarded one of the leading US experts on the questions of Russian-American relations. He became an active participant in the 2016 Presidential Election campaign by serving as an advisor on Russia for Senator Rand Paul, one of the Republican Party contenders.

Alana Goodman was one of the first who observed this suspicious connection – Paul-Simes – in her article titled "Rand Paul's Russia Connection" in The Washington Free Beacon (August 20, 2014):

"Sen. Rand Paul (R., Ky.) has named as one of his key foreign policy advisers a controversial Russia policy expert with deep ties to the Kremlin. Dimitri Simes, the president of the Center for the National Interest, and Ambassador Richard Burt, a member of the Center's board of directors, are recent additions to Paul's foreign policy advisory team, the senator told National Journal earlier this year. For years, Simes and the center have provided a sympathetic platform for the Russian government in the heart of the D.C. policy establishment. Its ties to Moscow extend throughout the organization.

The advisory council of The National Interest, the center's chief publication, includes Alexey Pushkov, a Russian Duma official recently targeted for sanctions by the U.S. government in response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Pushkov has come under fire for claiming that the Bush administration orchestrated the September 11 attacks and for blaming the 2013 Navy Yard shooting on 'American exceptionalism' [...].

When contacted by The Washington Free Beacon, the Center for the National Interest denied that Simes was advising Senator Paul. Simes declined comment.

Simes has been dogged throughout his career by allegations that his work and his organizations have a pro-Kremlin slant. [...] Vladimir Kozlovsky, a Russian-born journalist who met Simes in the 1970s, said Simes often tried to play up his relationships inside the Russian government. 'I don't think he had any knowledge of inside workings in the Kremlin [in the 1970s], but he convinced people that he did,' said Kozlovsky. 'People were divided. Some of them thought he was just a fake, or a Soviet agent. The rest were enamored of Dimitri.'

Following the Putin government's crackdown on independent Russian news outlet MediaMost in 2000, Simes mounted a vigorous defense of the Kremlin. [...] His comments prompted an angry letter from the late U.S. Ambassador to Russia Robert Strauss. 'Dear Dimitri: You ought to be ashamed of yourself,' wrote Strauss in a letter on Apr. 20, 2001 [...]. 'Irresponsible statements attributed to you ... do a disservice to the new administration, the directors of The Nixon Center and many distinguished members of the American press. As for me personally, if you understood this country and its people a bit better, you would know the kind of personal references you make can only diminish The Nixon Center,' Strauss added."

Felshtinsky: Senator Paul has been (and remains) a backup candidate of the Kremlin in the event that the Trump plan failed. However, Trump did not fail during the 2016 Election but instead it was Paul who failed. Photo by EPA

Indeed, another member of the "Paul-Simes" group emerged. It was Richard Burt, Chairman of The National Interest's advisory council, and a former ambassador to Germany and State Department official during the Reagan administration. "According to a knowledgeable source, – stated Politico, – Burt, who had previously worked as an unpaid advisor to former Republican presidential candidate Rand Paul, has been enlisted by Manafort to join Trump's campaign and helped draft his speech (neither Burt nor Manafort responded to inquiries). Burt sits on the senior advisory board of the Russian Alfa Bank. [...] Burt also expressed skepticism about the relevance of NATO, another Trump talking point."

It is not surprising then that at the beginning of August 2018, it was Senator Paul who took Trump's letter to Putin (most likely as part of the project agreed upon between Trump, Simes and the Kremlin). It still remains important for Trump to establish a direct and informal communication channel with Putin, thus circumventing traditional American diplomacy structures responsible for US National Security and Foreign Policy. The establishment of that very communications channel was discussed at the meeting in the Trump Tower on December 1, 2016, by Kushner and General Michael Flynn with the Russian Ambassador Kislyak. As confirmed by Kushner, the topic of discussion was using communications equipment at the Russian Embassy.

Due to the ensuing scandal and investigation, Kislyak was called back to Russia, no connection was established through the Russian Embassy, and thus Senator Paul was made a courier between Trump and Putin. There could have been no other reason to carry to another continent that letter from Trump to Putin, judging by its contents. In that letter, Trump wrote as follows:

"I would like to introduce Senator Rand Paul of Kentucky, a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and a voice for expanding dialogue with the Russian Federation. He will be in Moscow from August 5 to August 8. Senator Paul would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you to discuss several topics. He is interested in legislative exchanges, parliamentary dialogue and cultural and educational exchange programs, increased counter-terrorism co-operation, building on recent successes like the disruption of the St. Petersburg plot and resolution of the military conflicts in Syria and Ukraine. Thank you for considering meeting with Senator Paul during his visit to Russia."

Senator Paul has been (and remains) a backup candidate of the Kremlin in the event that the Trump plan failed. However, Trump did not fail during the 2016 Election but instead it was Paul who failed. On February 3, 2016, he removed his own candidature as the Presidential contender. Simes had to quickly switch his attention to Trump and in April 2016, he organized at The Mayflower Hotel that famous meeting.

For Simes, this event at The Mayflower Hotel was a peak of his career as a Washington politician, as well as an agent of the Kremlin. His road there was a long one.

Dima came to his parents, who defended Soviet dissidents, and said: "So. I have two choices. I can join the Communist Party as a member of the district Komsomol bureau and keep getting advanced in the Party. Or I can immigrate and succeed in the West

In 1967 in Moscow, while a part-time student at the History Department of the Moscow State University, Dimitri Simes started working at the Institute of World Economy and International Relations. It was there that he became active in political and public life as a deputy secretary of the Institute's Komsomol Committee. He earned his diploma in 1969. In 1971, he successfully completed the prerequisites for the position of a junior research fellow concentrating on "socio-political issues in the United States." In the spring of 1972, his Ph.D. thesis was already written and approved for presentation and he was given the following professional character reference:

"During his four years at the Institute, Comrade Simes D.K. established himself as an employee who expresses initiative, follows directions and thinks creatively, and who is deeply interested in the problems of political struggle of the working class in the developed capitalist countries. He carried out all of the curriculum, as well as specific assignments, in a timely manner, at a high scientifically-theoretical level. In recognition of his flawless performance, Comrade Simes D.K. received a bonus on three occasions. His article titled 'Working Class in the Political Life of United States' received second prize at the competition of works authored by non-degreed junior research fellows.

In addition, Comrade Simis D.K. published eight scientific articles addressing anti-monopolistic struggles in the United States, totaling about 80 pages.

Comrade Simis's articles, which discuss socio-political problems in the United States, are published regularly in such periodicals as Komsomolskaya Pravda, Literaturnaya Gazeta, and others.

Comrade Simis D.K. combines his workplace productivity with extensive public service in that he serves as a deputy secretary of the Komsomol Organization of the Institute, a chairman of the bureau of international department of Moscow City Committee of the Komsomol. He lectures frequently at the request of the Moscow City Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union."

This spotless background notwithstanding, Simis submitted his resignation from the Institute on July 3, 1972, due to his intent to immigrate to Israel. Yevgeny Primakov, a deputy dean of the Institute, signed the resignation, and Simis left. Applying for immigration had to entail a complicated and usually unpleasant procedure of being expelled from Komsomol. In the case of Simis, whose status within the organization was fairly senior, this procedure had to have occurred at a high level – Moscow City Committee or even at the Central Committee of the All-Union Leninist Young Communist League. By Soviet standards, this had to be a political affair. However, there are no records of Simis having been expelled and the details are unclear.

This decisive step was preceded by the conversation between Dima Simis and his parents, both of whom were well-known attorneys in Moscow – Dina Kaminskaya and Konstantin Simis. Mrs. Kaminskaya was famous for defending (understandably, without much success) all of the known Soviet dissidents and human rights activists. Konstantin Simis initially taught at the Moscow Institute of Foreign Relations, and after leaving there, he became a senior research fellow at the Institute of Soviet Jurisprudence. To his parents, Dima was an accomplished Komsomol activist. He was a member of the district Komsomol bureau and participated in the crackdown of the unofficial art exhibits in Moscow. And Dima came to his parents, who defended Soviet dissidents, and said the following (according to one of his acquaintances): "So. I want to succeed. I have two choices. I can join the Communist Party as a member of the district Komsomol bureau and keep getting advanced in the Party. Or I can immigrate and succeed in the West." His parents advised him to succeed in the West.

Notably, an event occurred on September 5, 1972, that influenced the life and destiny of Dimitri Simis: the Israeli Olympic team members were taken hostage at the Olympic Games in Munich by the terrorists. Since it was known (at least in the USSR) that the terrorists arrived from Lebanon, the Soviet Jewish activists in the USSR, who were seeking to immigrate to Israel, decided to organize a protest in front of the Lebanese Embassy in Moscow. On September 6, 1972, at approximately 6pm, about 25-30 people gathered in front of the Lebanese Embassy in Moscow. They were surrounded by approximately 100 members of police. There were several empty buses parked nearby. The demonstrators were told that the demonstration was not sanctioned and that they need to disperse. They refused to do so and unfolded a couple of banners. All of the demonstrators were immediately apprehended, put into the buses and taken to the River Station subway stop. Men were put into one bus, women – into another. The Alcohol Detox Center was located near the River Station subway stop, and people who were drunk were usually taken there. But on that day, the arrested demonstrators were taken to that Center. Men were put into one room, and women – into another. Each room had beds. Simes was among the arrested. It was approximately 7pm.

At around 7:30pm, Andrei Sakharov was brought into the same room as the arrested male demonstrators. As it turned out, he showed up to the demonstration late as he was told to show up by 6pm and he arrived around 6:30pm, by which time the demonstrators were already arrested. Sakharov asked one of the policemen: "Can you please tell me where the demonstration in front of the Lebanese Embassy is taking place? I came to participate." The policeman was quite surprised and told his colleagues: "There is another one here." Sakharov was put into a separate bus and was also taken to the Alcohol Detox Center near the River Station.

The questioning of the detainees began at approximately midnight. They were taken to the room with five or so desks. At each desk, there was an investigator. Everyone was questioned very politely. At some point, colonel Verein, who was a Chief of the Visa and Registration Office, a very high-level Soviet official at the time, entered the room. He stated that demonstrations were only allowed after a permit has been issued, and that no permit has been issued in this case. "We are issuing you a warning and hope that you would not misbehave in the future," concluded Verein. Everyone was let go eventually. It was about 1am and the subway was already closed. Everyone had to take a taxi home.

Felshtinsky: "Simes-the-Expert" was that atypical Soviet immigrant who was not insisting on fighting the "Evil Empire" but instead was preaching the usefulness of a dialogue, notably on Kremlin's terms. Photo by EPA

At the end of October, a new demonstration was organized to demand permission to immigrate to Israel to those who so desired. The protest was organized at the waiting room of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the USSR, on Negin Square, in Moscow. There were approximately 10 protesters. They sat in the waiting room for the whole day. Around 5pm or 6pm, they were asked to leave since the workday was over. The protesters refused to leave. Then they were greeted by someone who introduced himself as Ivanov and stated that he was the Committee member responsible for the Israel immigration matters. He continued: "No one can receive you here, so you should please leave. However, the first deputy of the Minister of the Interior Affairs, Comrade [Boris] Shumilin will see you tonight at 8pm at the Ministry of the Interior Affairs at 6 Ogarev Street. He will be happy to meet with you and answer your questions."

By 8pm, a crowd of approximately 40-60 people gathered at 6 Ogarev Street. They were ushered into a large empty room with only a table and an arm chair. Nothing else was in the room. Soon, the door opened and three people entered the room. One of them, Shumilin, sat in the armchair. The second one was Verein. The third was someone in a General's uniform. Shumilin inquired how he could be of help. Everyone started yelling that they wanted to relocate to Israel. He replied calmly: "Let us try to figure it out. You, for example – he said, addressing Esther Markish, a widow of Peretz Markish, a poet who was shot – already received permission to leave a few days ago. What are you doing here?" Then he addressed Victor Perelman, the head of one of the departments at Literaturnaya Gazeta newspaper and a future editor of the emigrant journal Vremya I My (Time and We): "I have been reading your articles in Literaturnaya Gazeta for many years. They were very well-written and they described the terrible State of Israel. Now you want to move there. When were you honest – then or now?" After that, he spoke with Alexander Voronel, a scientist who was previously denied the permission to leave. He promised to look into his case.

During this rather constructive conversation, a shrill voice emerged from the crowd. It was Simis, who said: "Fellow Jews, we are being mocked here. We are obviously getting nowhere; let us get out of here." Being tall, Simis towered over the rest of those gathered. Pushing his way through, he started moving towards the exit. People set out to follow him. Shumilin turned to Verein and asked: "Who is

this troublemaker?" "I do not know," replied Verein. "Please go and find out; I do not want to see this person ever again."

This looked like a poorly executed farce.

In November 1972, Simis was arrested and detained for two weeks for participating in a protest in front of the Central Telegraph building in Moscow. However, by the end of the year, he received a permission to relocate to Israel. In January 1973, with an aureole of a martyr, dissident and a political prisoner, Simis arrived in Rome by way of Vienna, bypassing Israel (as did all other Soviet immigrants who decided not to go to Israel, after all). He waited in Rome for three months before receiving a visa to enter the United States. In close Soviet immigrant circles (literally so, since the living conditions were quite trying), people spoke of Simis with puzzlement and irritation. One of the refugees recalled as follows: "There was a crook named Dima Simis. He arrived here in Rome and was telling us what a big shot he was in the Soviet Union. For example, he said that he was at some reception, went to the bathroom and noticed Brezhnev in the urinal next to him. Brezhnev asks – 'Dima, did you arrive by car?' 'No'. 'I will give you a lift' said Brezhnev and dropped him off at home."

Years later, that story sounded differently as narrated by Simis himself:

"Many years ago, I was speaking with Don Kendall [a head of "PepsiCo"]. He used to invite me to his luxurious headquarters outside of New York. Don was in a good mood and kept refilling my glass with Stoli. And so he tells me – 'Saw you on TV the other day. You were talking about the Soviet policies. But when did you last speak with Brezhnev?' I replied: 'You see, Don, I never spoke with him at all.' It was not entirely true – I met him once at one of the events in Moscow before immigrating but did not manage to speak with him."

What was it that Simis told (or did not tell) to the US officials in the US Embassy in Rome in 1973 when applying for the US visa, is not known. It seems unlikely that he was telling him about his Komsomol leadership activities and that his departure was sanctioned by Evgeny Primakov, a long-time KGB official and a future Head of the Foreign Intelligence Service.

The fact that during those years Simis was supervised by Primakov is known from the interview given some later by Simis himself: "I spent the first few years of my professional career at the Institute of World Economy and International Relations, working for Evgeny Maksimovich Primakov."

With the support of his influential friends, Simis became a senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, becoming "Simes" in the process

In any event, Simis arrived in the United States around March or April of 1973 and settled in its capital, Washington D.C. In 1977, on the street, he ran into Victor Rashkovsky, an old acquaintance of his from the Moscow times who also left the Soviet Union in 1973, but a bit later than Simis. This is how Rashkovsky recalled their meeting: "I come to Washington, while studying for a Ph.D. at the University of Cincinnati. I am walking around and run, face-to-face, into Dimitri Simis. To be exact, my face-to-his-stomach since he was much taller than I. As strange as it sounds, we recognized each other and even remembered each other's names. So, we go to some bar. I think he invited me. And so we sit there and chat for a while. I remembered it also because upon learning what I was doing in the States, Dima told me patronizingly that it was complete nonsense. 'Well, fine, you get your Ph.D., you get a teaching job at some university, but it's not real money. You need to go into politics. This is the only way to really make it.' I remembered that."

Dima, indeed, went into politics. He got in touch with Richard Perle, a conservative Republican who served at the time as a staffer for Senator Henry M. Jackson (the co-sponsor of the famous Jackson-Vanik amendment); with Brent Scowcroft, the future National Security advisor for Presidents Gerald Ford and George Bush, Sr.; and with James Schlesinger, who served as both the Director of Central Intelligence and as a US Secretary of Defense. With the support of his influential friends, Simes became a senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, becoming "Simes" (rather than "Simis") in the process.

Nevertheless, not everything went according to plan. When he was applying for US citizenship, Simes was approached by the FBI. The FBI official with whom he met pulled out a folder full of paper and said "This folder contains written statements of people alleging that you are a KGB agent. Here they are. But these are all just statements with no proof. Therefore, we do feel that we cannot oppose your citizenship application on the basis of these statements. However, I am telling you this so that you understand that these statements exist and that we will be watching you closely."

Simes did become a US citizen. In the second half of 1977, his parents emigrated from the Soviet Union. A few years later, when they were visiting him at his home, a phone rang. Konstantin Simis picked up the phone. "OK, just a moment." He turned to his son and said "It's President Nixon calling you."

By that time, Nixon was not the US President anymore. Simes met him in the mid-1980s and became one of his close associates and an informal advisor on the matters concerning the USSR. In particular, Simes accompanied Nixon during his trips to Russia, including his last trip to Moscow in 1994. On January 20, 1994, not long before Nixon died (which happened on April 18 of that year), the Nixon Center for Peace and Freedom was established under the auspices of the Nixon Fund, with Simes as its president as "a leading US expert on the issues of political challenges in modern Russia."

"Simes-the-Expert" was that atypical Soviet immigrant who was not insisting on fighting the "Evil Empire" but instead was preaching the usefulness of a dialogue, notably on Kremlin's terms. The National Interest, a magazine he has been publishing since 1985, became the platform for promoting these views and the CNI headed by him became the center of pro-Kremlin propaganda at the heart of the United States – in Washington, D.C.

All of Simes's articles are just the variations on the same theme: for US to survive, it is imperative to achieve an agreement with Putin at any price

Clearly, Russia was changing. And the Russia of 1991-1992 was drastically different both from the USSR of 1984-1985 (when the magazine was first published) and from the Russia of 1995-1996, and then of 1999-2000. And so on. The only constant there was Simes. "We are frequently accused here in Washington of taking a pro-Russia stance. [...] As they say – life is hard but we are prepared to live with it," – he said in an interview.

His magazine pages do not contain any criticism of the Russian foreign policy, of Kremlin or of Putin. At the same time, his tactic should be characterized as rather simplistic. The entire body of publications, interviews and commentary emanating from Simes or his colleagues at the magazine are aimed at the same thing: there has to be an agreement with Russia because otherwise, US will suffer. The political stories are interspersed with publications featuring the latest developments of Russian military equipment, which is always superior to its US equivalents. And the phrase regarding Russia being in the position to destroy US in 30 minutes is stated so frequently that one can tell who wrote an article without even seeing Simes's signature. Here is one example:

"Russia is self-evidently the only country that could destroy America as we know it in 30 minutes with strategic nuclear weapons. Russia also has ten-to-one superiority in tactical nuclear weapons in Europe." Here is another one: "First and foremost, Russia remains the only nation that can erase the United States from the map in thirty minutes."

There is no need to read any further since all of Simes's articles are just the variations on the same theme: for US to survive, it is imperative to achieve an agreement with Putin at any price since otherwise Russia that is cornered and thus should not be expected to behave completely rationally, will destroy US just for lack of better solution. His last book that was published in Russia is titled: *Putin and the West: Do Not Tell Russia How to Live Her Life!* (2015). Annotation to the book states: "In his new book, Dimitri Simes analyzes the policy of Vladimir Putin in recent years. With some qualifications, he considers it reasonable, whereas he considers some of the actions of the Obama Administration too rash and illogical." Simes decided against publishing this book in the United States.

Simes publishes most frequently in his own magazine, *The National Interest*, allowing there only those from his circle – i.e., people holding the same views as he and his agents. Here is an excerpt from the publication in *The National Interest* from June 12, 2015:

"It may take the election of a Republican to the White House in 2016 to improve relations between the Russian Federation and the United States. As improbable as it may sound, the Russian bear shares more interests with the Republican elephant than the Democratic donkey. [...] Perhaps a Republican president would look for ways to move past the increasing confrontation that has characterized the U.S.-Russia relationship in the past few years. [...] Perhaps only a Republican can repair relations between the U.S. and Russia today. How could a Republican president help in building that relationship? First, shared economic interests can lead to political resolutions. [...]"

A second point of shared interest revolves around the global oil market. As long as America maintains its ban on selling its oil reserves to foreign markets, American oil companies seeking international markets will need international sources of oil. Russia has them. Huge proven reserves in the Arctic and huge proven reserves of oil shale within the Russian mainland. But Russian oil companies lack the technology to exploit these reserves. And the current economic sanctions have frozen cooperative agreements like that between Russian Rosneft and American ExxonMobil like an Arctic drilling rig. [...] Finally, many Russians have taken note of recent Pew Research Center data that shows that the American Republican Party derives much of its support from social conservatives, businessmen and those that support an aggressive approach to the war against Islamic terrorism. [...] At the very least, it would appear that modern Russia has more to talk about with American Republicans than American Democrats. [...] My plea is simply to not surrender to what many view as inevitable conflict between these two great nations, no matter the consequences. [...] Global maps may be redrawn, global economies will ebb and flow, but chaos need not reign. A time may be coming when Russia and America can move from turmoil to calm."

The author of this primitive manifesto that appeared in Simes's magazine was Maria Butina, who signed the article as "The Founding Chairman, The Right To Bear Arms, a Russian version of the NRA."

As an expert in Russia-related matters, Simes had to know that such organization does not exist in Russia. Nevertheless, he went ahead with publishing this propaganda by Butina with her confusing title. After her arrest, he tried to dissociate from her activity in the United States but succeeded only in confirming that he was in contact with her up until her arrest. As stated by one of the newspapers, Simes "learned about Butina's outreach, according to two sources, who said he communicated to her that she needed to drop it."

We know for a fact that this is not true. Butina's article was not removed from The National Interest website, just as there were no corrections or editorial comments made with respect to the titles of its author.

And the appearance of a primitive "manifesto" of the Russian agent Butina in Simes's magazine was not a random publication by an innocent Russian student attending an American university. It was a political appeal agreed upon by Simes and Moscow, "my plea" according to Butina, for the Republican Party to start a dialogue with Kremlin.

Simes, too, had undoubtedly participated in the active operations of the Russian Secret Service. In March of 2015, Simes visited Moscow again, and met with Putin, among others. The timing of publication of Butina's article on June 12, 2015, was not accidental – 4 days before Trump's formal announcement of his Presidential candidacy. The image of a "Russian Bear" (Putin), in front of whom the American "Republican Elephant" (Trump) was supposed to back down in order to save himself, as coined by the Russian agent Butina and pro-Russian political observer Simes, were all over The National Interest magazine. On December 24, 2016, Robert Merry, who served as both the editor and an author at The National Interest at different times, published an article titled "Stop Poking the Bear." On August 19, 2017, the same author published in the same periodical the article on the same topic, having changed only one word in the title: "Stop Poking the Russian Bear."

"The first version of the article was an 'instruction' of sorts to the new US President Trump, and the current version – the second one – concludes that he was not able to follow that 'instruction'" – this is how these publications were described by Georgi Kunadze, a former Deputy Minister of Foreign Relations of Russia and a research fellow at the Institute of World Economy and International Relations (where Simes worked during the Soviet times). His article was titled "On Usefulness of Useful Idiots."

It is noteworthy that the former director of the NSA and CIA Michael Hayden referred to Trump by the same phrase: "Trump is Russia's useful fool". "We have really never seen anything like this. Former acting CIA director Michael Morell says that Putin has cleverly recruited Trump as an unwitting agent of the Russian Federation. I'd prefer another term drawn from the arcana of the Soviet era: polezni durak. That's the useful fool, some naif, manipulated by Moscow, secretly held in contempt."

Let us consider that, for purposes of our publication, the terms "useful idiot" and "agent" carry a legal, rather than substantive, difference. The first one insures the author of a statement from a lawsuit. The second one requires proof (we shall return to it). Kunadze, an expert in Russian Foreign Policy who can be hardly suspected of lack of objectivity, writes as follows:

"In my opinion, all these simplistic conclusions of Robert Merry are highly biased and cannot withstand any serious criticism. Popular Russian TV rhetoric of impending war looks like a bluff by the slightly insane. It is unclear why Robert Merry would want to repeat this rhetoric. In any event, the respective gigantic nuclear arsenal of both Russia and US makes any serious warfare between them practically impossible. Even a localized military conflict that has a potential to expand is not quite realistic. Russia cannot handle both balancing on the edge of the war and an accompanying arms race. This is what strained USSR, which far exceeded Russia in terms of its military and economic potential, while boasting a defective but holistic ideology, a multitude of obedient satellites at its disposal, and, importantly, which depended on the rest of the world to a much lesser degree.

Georgia really did not initiate a war with Russia. It just somewhat recklessly tried to carry out a limited military operation aimed at restoring the constitutional order on its own territory. Due to a mysterious chain of events, Russia turned out to be quite ready for the Georgian operation and responded with an extensive intervention. As for an idiotic thesis regarding the revolution in Ukraine that was 'organized' by the West – it does not even merit any commentary since all of the relevant events are very recent and seem to make sense to everyone except Robert Merry.

As for estimating the distance between Russia and the closest NATO countries, it does not prove anything except for author's paranoia of an unknown origin.

In the first version of the article, its author counted Moldavia as part of Russia's sphere of influence, whereas in the second version, he substituted it for Serbia. He must have conflated the two. In general, the 'sphere of influence' concept itself is an archaic one and cannot be taken seriously.

In addition, it is unclear why liberating the former countries with 'people's democracy' regimes from the Soviet rule is necessary and useful, while liberating of post-Soviet countries from the Russian rule is not. [...]

The fact of near-total antipathy towards Putin in the West is real. But how else can it be if all of Russia's policy is officially associated with his name. This policy is completely unacceptable for the West, hence the negative attitude towards the person who initiates it.

As for author's ruminations about Russians as the nation that is besieged by the Americans and their allies, it brings to memory Henry Kissinger's expression: 'There is nothing more offensive than Russia on the defensive.'

President Trump, due to his certain, to put it mildly, character traits, manages to discredit everything that he touches. That includes his 'Russian initiatives' that are described by Robert Merry with such admiration.

As a whole, his article is noteworthy if only for the surprising unity in the views of the independent American author and of the numerous advocates of the official Russian propaganda. One cannot help but recall the term 'useful idiot' – but who knows, maybe Robert Merry is sincere in his thinking. [...] I used the term 'useful idiot' only because I do not have any evidence of Robert Merry being paid by the Russians to act in their interest. Nevertheless, I am inclined to consider him a pure mercenary and an ordinary participant in the so-called 'active operations'."

The former deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia must have omitted the words "of the Russian Secret Service" when referring to the "active operations" due to the diplomatic concerns.

Simes, too, had undoubtedly participated in the active operations of the Russian Secret Service. Hundreds of pages of pro-Kremlin political narratives written by him cannot be attributed to such "active operations." This resembles more the actions of an "agent of influence." But a statement, such as "The agitators receive \$300 for each Clinton vote" made on the Election Day, on November 8, 2016 – qualifies as not just a simple propaganda. Instead, it qualifies as an active operation of the Russian Secret Service aimed at securing victory for Donald Trump in the US Presidential Election. The following is the transcript of the appearance by Simes on that day on Russian TV:

"Dimitri Simes, the political observer and the President of The Center for the National Interest, is with us live, narrating how the Presidential Election voting is taking place in different States in the US. [...] 'I

personally heard how the Clinton Campaign representative was describing the strategy of working with agitators' – Simes observes. 'Each agitator receives \$300 per vote that is cast for the right candidate – in this case, Hillary Clinton.' In addition, Democratic Party organized transportation for the voters from the predominantly African-American and Latino neighborhoods. It is expected that they would be loyal to Hillary Clinton."

"Personally heard"? "\$300 per vote"? Many agitators must have made a fortune that day in the US. Still, Simes did not cast his vote for the Democratic Party candidate, and no one made \$300 on his vote. How much did he personally make on that day for his own campaigning efforts is a personal question for him. He gave another interview on that day – to the Russian newspaper Izvestiya, in which he told one "little-known" story about the President, hinting that his trip to Moscow was paid for by the unknown interests. Simes emphasized that he did not have any evidence to support that claim (according to him, no proof was uncovered). Let us be precise: the story did not concern Trump's trip to Moscow in 2013, for which, as is well known, he received \$12.2 million from the Russian billionaire Aras Agalarov for the holding of "Miss Universe" pageant; instead, Simes was talking about a trip to Moscow 50 years ago, in 1968, by Bill Clinton (the husband of Hillary Clinton, the Presidential Candidate from the Democratic Party and Trump's political opponent in this Election, whom Simes was trying to "hurt" one more time on that fateful day):

"Clinton and her entourage had a multitude of contacts in Russia at different levels. There is one little-known story. In December 1968, a few months after the Soviets invaded Czechoslovakia, a young anti-war activist Bill Clinton arrived in Moscow. He came to take part in the international forum of pacifists. While the majority of the guests of the forum stayed at hotels like 'Tourist,' Clinton stayed at 'National' for some reason. It was unusual back then. Only people for whom meetings at a certain level were planned could stay at such hotels, and not young students, especially since someone supposedly paid for his accommodation. [...] This topic was raised by Bush Sr.'s team during the Presidential Campaign of 1992, but there was no corroborating evidence."

After the poisoning of the Skripals, Simes started along the path of political damage control that is required of the Kremlin's agent

Frequent trips to Moscow to listen to briefings by the Minister of the Foreign Affairs Sergei Lavrov should also be attributed not so much to the political activity as to participation in Kremlin's "active operations." "We understand very well the anomaly that has arisen in the United States' political climate as a result of the election, which the Democratic Party cannot learn to accept. We obviously refuse to accept as legitimate any attempts to blame Russia for all of the political negativism in the US," Lavrov stated during the meeting with the group of US experts led by Dimitri Simes. We have not heard Simes objecting to this statement.

After the scandalous meeting in Helsinki between Trump and Putin on July 16, 2018, when the American people were left in the dark regarding the two-hour conversation of the two presidents, we were told a bit later, by the Kremlin, that as part of this conversation, Putin sought Trump's support for holding a referendum in the two Russian-controlled territories in Lugansky and Donetsk Regions, similar to the referendum that was held in the Crimea, as Putin noted inadvertently. No further details regarding this provocative idea were provided by the Kremlin, and, soon enough, the White House indicated that they would not support the Donbass referendum suggested by Putin.

It is astonishing that on July 20, while participating in one of the news programs on the US television, Simes began to explain to the American viewers that what was meant was not the referendum regarding the territorial secession of the Eastern Ukrainian Regions but instead a referendum regarding their autonomy within the Ukrainian State territory. This is despite the fact that no such explanation was provided by Putin, Lavrov, the White House, or US State Department. We heard that

explanation only from Simes who must have obtained these additional details through some other channels not open to anyone else.

Lavrov (right) and Simes (leftmost) at the meeting in Moscow in September 2017. Photo by EPA

As for the Malaysian airplane that was shot down over Easter Ukraine in 2014, Simes had mentioned it once: "Moscow could remind the world of other such tragedies, including cases when the United States, Israel and even Ukraine mistakenly attacked civilian airliners. Russian officials could also argue that the fault lies with the Ukrainian side, because Kiev used its air force to attack its own citizens and the insurgents fired on the assumption that the airliner was a combat aircraft." (<http://nationalinterest.org/print/feature/russia-america-destined-conflict-16726>) I would classify this reference not as a journalistic or politological exercise, but rather as participation in active operations of the Kremlin that was trying to steer the worldwide public opinion in the wrong direction regarding the determination of who was responsible for committing an international crime.

Also, let us specifically recall an article by Simes, titled "The Litvinenko Matter: Kremlin Conspiracy or Blofeld Set-Up?" which was published on December 7, 2006, soon after the brutal murder of Alexander Litvinenko in London. This article had little to do with politology but had a lot to do with Kremlin's campaign to minimize the political damage inflicted by the Russian Secret Service operation in London, with the cover-up operation called damage control. Kremlin involved Simes in this operation immediately, and just two weeks after the Litvinenko's death, Simes advanced several murder theories:

"The first one – the murder was carried out by Kremlin. So, it would follow [...] that a leader of the largest nuclear power completely lost his wits, common sense and survival instinct. But that does not comport with what we know about Putin. [...] There is another theory: Kremlin perceived Litvinenko as a really serious threat – for example because of his Chechen connections. It is known that Litvinenko was close, if not to all, but to some of the Chechen rebels [...] and so, it would be important to establish what was plotting the new Muslim convert Litvinenko and to also find out whether he had any contacts with the Islamic extremist organizations, which had interest in gaining access to Polonium-210, which could be used to make 'dirty bombs' and use otherwise.

That second theory of Litvinenko's murder seems to have been borrowed from the plot of the movie *You Only Live Twice*, in which the head of the SPECTOR organization, Ernst Blofeld, provokes a confrontation between USSR and US by creating an impression on each side that the other is about to seize their space aircrafts. In this case, it would follow that Berezovsky, acting behind the scenes, is trying to collide the West and Great Britain on one side and Putin on the other. He has both the motive and the means to set up the Russian leader by using Litvinenko's assassination. And anyone familiar with the history of Berezovsky's activity in Russia would know that he would have sufficient imagination, resources and ruthlessness to sacrifice his former protégé for the sake of advancing his anti-Putin designs. [...]

In the third, and last, murder theory, the main role is devoted not to the fight between Litvinenko and Putin and not to any connection to Berezovsky, but to specific individual ambitions. One Russian scientist in the UK recently stated that Litvinenko decided to make money by blackmailing Russian businessmen. If that is true, several persons or groups would have a simultaneous motive to eliminate him. [...] However, it is unlikely that the West has any interest in allowing Putin's political rivals, internal or external, to provoke him to the point of confrontation with the West based on the inexact intelligence – or on the known falsehood."

Simes is trying to explain to us that Putin cannot be implicated in this assassination since he is not mad (really, how could a madman be in charge of a nuclear power!); that Litvinenko had connections with the Islamic extremists, who likely procured Polonium-210 to make "dirty bombs" and to "use it otherwise"; that Berezovsky is the one who is most interested in an open confrontation between Putin and the West, and thus he should be the main suspect here; and since Litvinenko seems to have been planning to blackmail businessmen from Russia (which fact Simes learned from one of the scientists), the list of suspects should include "several persons or groups". And it is clearly not in the best interest of the West (note the logic here!) to provoke Putin to a confrontation. In other words, it is not Putin who is provoking the West by assassinating Litvinenko but it is the West who provokes Putin by supposing that he is behind the assassination.

We must add that this is the only report in Simes's lengthy list of publications where he mentions Litvinenko. Simes has not written a single text about Litvinenko since then, even though a lot of additional information has emerged. And if Simes has written nothing else in his life, just this article would have been enough to draw an unequivocal conclusion about its author: he is the Kremlin's agent who seeks to advance Kremlin's agenda, as well as interests of the people behind Litvinenko's assassination, by confusing and misinforming the Western audiences.

There is another curious detail regarding this article: it disappeared from The National Interest website. To be exact, there is a link to the title and the beginning of the article. After that, you are told that "To read the rest of this blog post, click here, or visit Subjective Evaluation, the blog of Dimitri K. Simes," and when you click on the link provided, you are told that "This site can't be reached."

Since this is the only article by Simes with such an unfortunate fate, we could ask why. The answer is obvious: Simes did not do well by the Kremlin by sloppily revealing in his article too many unnecessary details, including those concerning Putin. (So, the only site where the text is still accessible is in Russian).

After the poisoning of the Skripals, Simes started along the path of political damage control that is required of the Kremlin's agent. Notably, it seems that nowadays, Simes works more and more in that capacity on the two fronts – US and Russian. In Russia, he explains that the Russian Secret Service has nothing to do with the assassination attempt and that the US Administration should demand the following explanation from the Brits:

"The US political observer Dimitri Simes characterized the behavior of the British Prime Minister Theresa May as incorrect in that she blamed Russia baselessly for the poisoning of the former GRU colonel Sergei Skripal and issued Moscow an ultimatum. He called Prime Minister May's actions emotional and compared them to the actions of the Austrian Government in 1914 when, in similar circumstances and not having any evidence, Austria issued an ultimatum to Serbia after the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo. These events caused First World War. 'But Russia is not Serbia, and the retired Russian colonel – is not Austrian Crown Prince. That is why I am trying to understand why Mrs. May did what she did, without waiting for someone to be arrested and deposed, or for some suspect to surface, and without getting a thorough intelligence briefing regarding the activities of that colonel in Great Britain and whether he did anything that could cause outrage in Russia. Instead, she just proceeded to a quick ultimatum.'

Speaking of the US reaction to the actions of Great Britain, the political observer observed that the White House and Congress agree only on the solidarity with London and share its 'concerns'. And while Congress sees in the Skripal affair another reason to exert pressure on Russia, President

Trump's administration would like to familiarize themselves with the situation first, including requesting appropriate information from British intelligence. [...] 'That is why it seems to me that we are, luckily, far from any confrontation between the two great countries,' – Simes said. 'If Russia has any information regarding this matter and any vindicating facts, I think that this information could be promptly made available to our American colleagues. I see no reason why it could not be done and why the US would not accept that kind of information,' he concluded."

Conversely, in The National Interest publication, Simes explained that the reaction of the West to the Skripals' poisoning increases the chances of the military confrontation with Russia:

"In recent days, the United States has expelled dozens of Russian diplomats—who are alleged to be undercover intelligence officers—in retaliation for Moscow's alleged attack on GRU defector Sergei Skripal and his daughter, Yulia, in the United Kingdom. The Kremlin has promised retribution as relations between Russia and the United States sink to their lowest point since the Cold War. 'I don't think many of us would question that we do face a new Cold War,' Dimitri Simes said during a lunchtime panel on March 26. [...] Simes, who recently returned from a trip to Russia, said that while the Kremlin is held in low regard by Washington, those feeling are mirrored in Moscow. Indeed, tensions between the two nuclear-armed great powers are so high that analysts are openly wondering if there could be some sort of military confrontation between Washington and Moscow." Asked by Simes to grade the likelihood of any sort of potential military clash (though not necessarily nuclear) in Syria or elsewhere on a scale of one to ten—where ten would mean that a conflict was all but certain—a panel of experts on Russia concluded that there is a serious possibility of a military confrontation between Washington and Moscow."

Let us leave to Simes's professional consciousness, if any, his deliberate comment that Skripal (similar to Litvinenko) was a defector, while in reality, Skripal was officially exchanged by the Russian Government for Anna Chapman & Co. on July 8, 2010.

Is it fair to consider Robert Merry, using Kunadze's classification, a "useful idiot" of Putin? Probably, yes. Is it fair to consider his colleague Simes a "useful idiot"? Definitely no since Simes, judging by the available information and by his actions is an agent of the Kremlin embedded into American political elite. This is consistent with, for example, what has been repeatedly written and told by Piontkovsky. Here is a quote from one of his publications dated January 16, 2017, about Trump, who was acting, according to Piontkovsky, based on the "instruction from Moscow":

"I even know who manages him – an old Kremlin agent Simes. By the way, Trump made his first public speech regarding foreign policy in April 2016 as part of an event put together by the organization headed by Simes. [...] Since then, everything that he says about foreign policy is a reiteration of the Kremlin agenda."

All of the Kremlin guys were sent to Simes. He was not only spying but brainwashing the Washington elite

I asked Andrey Piontkovsky to explain to me several questions that I had about Simes. Here are the excerpts from our conversation in Washington of June 25-26, 2017:

Piontkovsky: – Note that not only Trump but some much more educated, well-read and intelligent individuals were made to believe in this classical meme after repeating it a thousand times: the main foe of the United States is the Islamic terrorism. Putin is fighting Islamic terrorism, we need Russians, and thus we should given up Ukraine, forget many other silly differences and unite with Putin to fight Islamic terrorism. This was told for many years by the three "titans" of the Kremlin propaganda, whom

I have been watching for a while. Two of them, by the way, were my personal friends for a decade, and the third one I have been observing from the outside, just like you. The third one is Dimitri Simes – a little spy [zaslanny kazachok]. I was not friends with him. I was friends with Thomas Graham and Dmitri Trenin.

Simes is probably the most significant figure.

Thomas Graham is a former diplomat. I know the day when he was bought by the Kremlin. He did not last through the end of President Bush's term. He was what is called a 'Russian Tzar' and he left in the middle of the second term when he received an offer from Kissinger. On the day when he left, I ran into him on the Metro. He is usually quite a reserved person. He did not look like himself on that day, he was in a total euphoria and, unexpectedly, mentioned to me several times that he switched jobs and that he is making at his new job several times more than he did when he worked for President Bush. [...]

Kremlin created a 'Council of the Wise' of sorts, headed by Kissinger and Primakov, the financing for which was supplied by the Russian oligarchs. It was a purportedly interdependent Russian-American body. And they were like scientists. And Alexei Mordashov or someone like that pays them \$5 million. They receive Russian, not American, funding. Everything is open and legal. [...]

And the third one is Trenin, of course. For the last 10 years, he was perceived as an organic part of the US Foreign Policy establishment, the first non-American who was appointed by Carnegie. And we were friends with Trenin throughout the 1990s. It seemed to me that we were thinking alike. Trenin is a retired GRU [Main Intelligence Directorate of the Russian Military] colonel. But, I guess, there are no truly 'former' GRU colonels. Nevertheless, he was actively making a career in the 1990s, formally and informally, within the US establishment. He found an interesting niche for himself. His favorite word was 'Russians.' It is as if he is an outside observer, like a Martian, but someone who is very well familiar with the Russians. And he is this Good Samaritan, who is explaining to the silly Americans who the Russians are and what they do. He never spoke in the first person regarding his position, such as 'I think.' He was explaining as if he were talking about the life of the insects – 'the Russians do this, the Russians will do that.'

I spoke with him about this several times. Our last conversation was circa 2006. We were sitting not far from here, at the DuPont Circle. And at that time, he had already chosen his 'tune': one needs to understand the Russians, understand their insecurities, their grievances, God forbid offending them.

And I tell him:

– Dima, what is this nonsense you are saying? I know that you do not believe in it.

And I proposed a hypothesis that seemed right to me:

– You are a Russian officer, and you feel ashamed for these Kremlin morons, and you are trying to portray them in a more decent manner for your own sake.

He replied to me in a very interesting way. He broke out into laughter and then said:

– I was a Russian officer a million years ago, and now I serve this guy, – and he pointed to the Carnegie building.

That kind of a viewpoint was really in demand at the time by the Carnegie leadership. And his curators, his Generals, of course, returned – people like Trenin are never let go. In the 1990s, the controls have loosened a bit, probably, but in the 2000s, they remembered about him. And he started singing as appropriate for the GRU colonel. He is probably already a General. And tell me, which Russian spy has made it as high as the Director of the Carnegie Center, while explaining to the Americans how they ought to behave towards Russia? No famous spy in the Second World War could have come close.

All three are very talented individuals – i.e., Graham, Trenin, Simes. A head above this other pathetic scum. These are used sporadically, taken once a year to a Yaroslavl or Valdai Forums. Of course, with business class accommodations, hotels in Moscow and Sochi. And meeting with the president. Since this is capitalization. (Simes was last invited to the Valdai Forum in Sochi, with Putin in attendance, in October 2017. – Felshtinsky). After they have been with Putin everywhere, some organization would inevitably offer them a consulting position.

The Kremlin mouthpieces who came here from Moscow – the first thing they do in Washington is go and receive instructions from Simes who would get them acclimated and familiar with relevant matters. For example, Sergei Markov. He tells me 'You know, I met with Simes yesterday. I was told to see him first.'

This is what he was advised by the people who sent him to Washington. And, by the way, he was a member of the Russian Duma."

Felshtinsky: – Who were the people who were advising Markov?

Piontkovsky: – Are you asking me who is Simes's handler?

Felshtinsky: – Yes.

Piontkovsky: – Formally, it is Lavrov. Check this out, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs website states as follows: "Mr. Dimitri Simes, the director and president of the largest US Think Tank, The Nixon Center, was at the Ministry yesterday. Mr. Lavrov, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, had a long conversation with Mr. Simes, discussing key relevant current issues in Russia....."

Felshtinsky: – That is what the website for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs says?

Piontkovsky: – Correct. (I checked – indeed, there are three of such meetings described – in 2006, 2008 and 2011. – Felshtinsky).

Felshtinsky: – So, we think that Simes's handler is the Minister of Foreign Affairs?

Piontkovsky: – Well, one of his handlers. I think Lavrov was personally tasked with handling him. Of course, the main handler is in KGB (FSB). Lavrov must have been asked to include this information on his website to boost Simes's authority in Washington. [...] Simes is a very talented person and a dangerous adversary. These three talented individuals mutilated and subdued the entire Washington crowd to please the Kremlin. All of the Kremlin guys were sent to Simes. He was not only spying but brainwashing the Washington elite. [...] Undoubtedly, Simes leads the Kremlin's Washington-based propaganda network. And Trump is his triumph. And, simultaneously, a failure.

Simes was fairly well familiar with all former Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Russia. Yevgeny Primakov (1996-1998) was his boss at the Institute of World Economy and International Relations; Igor Ivanov (1998-2004) was his colleague at this Institute as they worked together. In 2004, Igor Ivanov was succeeded by Lavrov, with whom Simes started to meet regularly.

Quite a few suspicious circumstances point to the fact that Simes may be an agent of the Kremlin:

Testimony of Maria Butina, who was arrested in the US and is accused of spying for Russia.
Information regarding his Komsomol youth in the Soviet Union prior to the rapid immigration to the United States.

Stories told by his Moscow acquaintance regarding his short-lived but active "dissident" activity that allowed him to present himself at the US Embassy in Rome and in the United States as a politically persecuted person.

Conversation between an FBI operative and Simes regarding the latter being potentially a KGB agent around the time of him applying for the United States citizenship.

Account of Andrey Piontkovsky regarding the Kremlin officials arriving to the United States with instructions to meet with Simes and receive further instruction from him.

Hundreds of pages of publications in The National Interest, hours of video interviews of Simes on the US and Russian television, his numerous published articles and interviews pointing to the fact that while formally a US citizen and a US expert, Simes takes an openly pro-Kremlin stance on all the issues concerning internal and external affairs.

I could start cataloguing endless quotes from numerous articles authored by Simes. I will refrain from doing so since they all have the same theme: we must engage in a dialogue with Kremlin (from the position of strength) but must reach an agreement on the conditions that are favorable to Putin since he would not agree to anything less and would destroy us at the first opportunity. The rest – Georgia, Syria, Ukraine, NATO, the Baltic States – are just the bargaining chips for us in leveraging our negotiations with Putin (from the position of strength), so as to be able to agree to preserve peace between the United States and Russia, a great nuclear power capable of destroying the United States in 30 minutes.

Felshtinsky: It seems that The Mayflower Hotel may likewise go down in history not as a five-star hotel that was named after the ship that delivered to the shores of America the freedom-seeking immigrants, but as a place where the future President of the United States for the first time made public the plans for the US democracy to capitulate to other interests. Photo by wikipedia.org

The Watergate Hotel is more known nowadays as not a hotel per se but as a symbol of the victory of the American democracy over the president who dared to break the law. It is not accidental that it was that very president with whom Simes managed to establish a close connection in the 1980s and whose remaining political capital he was able to use for his own benefit. To the extent that both the Center and the magazine founded by Simes served someone's interests, these were for sure not US interests, but more likely, the interests of Simes and the Kremlin.

It seems that The Mayflower Hotel may likewise go down in history not as a five-star hotel that was named after the ship that delivered to the shores of America the freedom-seeking immigrants, but as a place where the future President of the United States for the first time made public the plans for the US democracy to capitulate to other interests. Only time will tell whether or not Simes succeeded in sinking the passengers on the Mayflower while himself remaining onshore. It may turn out, however, that this is a different shore – and not the one to which the Mayflower ship arrived in 1620.

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