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# Guerilla Warfare Against Cops

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A video titled "Primorye Partisan" has been making the rounds on the Internet. It was made by a gang of self-proclaimed guerrillas in the Primorye region that led an armed attack against policemen. They are suspected of killing two policemen and wounding six others between February and June.

One of their slogans is "Grab a weapon and save your soul" — something that is close to what guerrilla fighters in the Caucasus have said and done. Imagine that these guerrillas surfaced in the United States and started shooting at cops. I think the public would call them the new Manson family.

The reaction in Russia has been mixed. According to a public survey conducted a couple of years ago, only 1 percent of the population trusts the police. In a recent Moscow poll, the figure was even less than 1 percent.

Most of the remaining 99 percent consider the police and other siloviki as an occupation force of sorts — absolute scum who abuse citizens with impunity.

Any encounter with a cop in uniform is like running into a hardened criminal on the street. This is particularly true for the traffic police, who have a license to extort money from drivers. But it also applies to the drunken street cops who openly collect protection money from street vendors.

Each time a traffic officer extorts a bribe, even the most nonviolent citizens drive away muttering, "Those bastards should be taken out and shot."

They don't do it, of course. Extorting money from drivers is reprehensible, but does it justify killing traffic policemen? Hardly. Even if we believe that the police as a whole are nothing more than a nationwide crime syndicate, this is no justification for citizens taking matters into their own hands by opening fire at policemen. Regardless of how abusive cops are, due process of the law must be observed. Society cannot be ruled by vigilantism.

Violence against policemen, of course, is not limited to Primorye. Cops are shot in Dagestan and other parts of the North Caucasus on a regular basis. Will this trend lead to a larger guerrilla war against cops in other parts of the country? No, and one reason is that there is a lack of young people in the European parts of Russia and in the regions east of the Urals. The only exception is the North Caucasus, where the birth rates — and unemployment — are high. These regions have a particularly high proportion of youth aged 16 to 20, many of whom will never be able to find work. Religious fundamentalism is the spark that can start the fire. The combustibles are already in place.

If 40 percent of the Russian population were also under 25, then the policies of the current regime would trigger serious social unrest. I don't know which specific ideology would guide the angry youth — perhaps neo-Nazism, some fringe version of Orthodox Old Believers or an exotic blend of paganism.

In any case, after watching the video of the Primorye guerrillas, three things are clear. First, if Russia had an excess of young males, they would wage a guerrilla war against the cops.

Second, that war would enjoy the support of most people — even educated Russians who don't share the guerrillas' radical views.

Last, it would not be a war for democracy.

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*The views expressed in opinion pieces do not necessarily reflect the position of The Moscow Times.*

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