

Moscow Agents versus Ukrainian Patriots: The Polarisation of Ukrainian Political Discourse

DOI: 10.26379/IL2020002_006

Ludmilla A'Beckett

University of the Free State

berchonok@gmail.com

Abstract

This paper analyzes the exposure of alleged 'Moscow agents' by selfproclaimed 'patriots' in Ukrainian public discourse. It provides an overview of the socio-cultural context of accusations of high treason and of collaboration with an aggressor-state. The analysis draws on insights from discourse historical analysis (Wodak 2001) and from investigations of antagonistic discourses (Carpentier 2017; Viola 2019; Baisha 2020). It focuses on discourse processes and scenarios invoked by this public confrontation and demonstrates that the overuse of stigmatising labels ultimately leads to changing attitudes towards these labels since the 'hunt for Kremlin agents' prompts contentious or humorous responses rather than national solidarity. The paper concludes with an overview of structural similarities and differences between discourses based on 'us' and 'them' division.