



Russian Media, Putin, Make “Climate Change” a Low Priority

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Unlike the United States, where scarcely a day goes by without the media running a report about “global warming” or “climate change,” and the White House website has an entire section called, “CLIMATE CHANGE AND PRESIDENT OBAMA'S ACTION PLAN,” “climate change” is not a major talking point in the Russian media. Furthermore, notes a Reuters report published by the New York Times on October 29, Russian news professionals are taking their cue on this issue from none other than President Vladimir Putin (shown).

The apparent indifference of both the Russian press and president is also indicative of the Russian public’s general lack of concern about climate change. The report notes:

The indifference reflects widespread public doubt that human activities play a significant role in global warming, a tone set by President Vladimir Putin, who has offered only vague and modest pledges of emissions cuts ahead of December's U.N. climate summit in Paris.

The Reuters report quoted a statement from Stanislav Belkovsky, a political analyst and critic of Putin who was apparently dismayed by the fact that Putin believes that “there is no global warming, that this is a fraud to restrain the industrial development of several countries including Russia.” Belkovsky concludes, “That is why this subject is not topical for the majority of the Russian mass media and society in general.”

After lamenting that “the absence of a robust media conversation on climate change means [Putin’s] scepticism goes largely unchallenged,” the Reuters writer also quoted Galina Timchenko, former editor-in-chief of the Russian news site Lenta.ru. Noting that Timchenko now runs Meduza, a popular Russian news site that devotes little space to climate issues, Reuters offered a statement from Timchenko as explanation:

It is difficult to spend editorial resources on things that are now a low priority in the midst of the economic crisis. Unfortunately climate change is not very interesting to the public.

A more significant statement quoted in the report was from Andrey Illarionov, Putin’s former senior economic advisor who is now a senior fellow at the Cato Institute in Washington.

Illarionov said that back in the early 2000s, he was part of Putin's staff that "did very, very extensive work trying to understand all sides of the climate debate." Their findings:

We found that, while climate change does exist, it is cyclical, and the anthropogenic [man-made] role is very limited. It became clear that the climate is a complicated system and that, so far, the evidence presented for the need to "fight" global warming was rather unfounded.

While such an assessment may be considered to be mainstream in Russia, those who hold similar views in the United States are routinely branded as global warming "skeptics" in the Western media. Even highly distinguished scientific experts in the field of meteorology are often ridiculed and marginalized because of their anti-establishment views on the subject of climate change. A recent article in *The New American* told the story of Philippe Verdier, the chief meteorologist with state-funded broadcasting giant France Télévisions, who blew the whistle on the hysteria surrounding alleged man-made global-warming theories. TNA recounted what happened when Verdier dared to question the powers that be about the causes of climate change, both in person and in his new book, dubbed *Climat Investigation*, or *Climate Investigation* in English. In his book, Verdier lambasted the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), saying its climatologists and political backers have "taken the world hostage" with misleading or downright inaccurate data.

In response, his employer — essentially, the French government — promptly took Verdier off the air and put him on "forced holidays."

In a promotional video for the book, Verdier compared the consortium of climate change propagandists to a "war machine" that needs to keep the populace in constant terror to advance its objectives. He said in his video:

Every night I address five million French people to talk to you about the wind, the clouds and the sun. And yet there is something important, very important that I haven't been able to tell you, because it's neither the time nor the place to do so. We are hostage to a planetary scandal over climate change — a war machine whose aim is to keep us in fear.

Verdier also noted that climate scientists, who depend almost entirely on taxpayer funds distributed by governments with an interest in promoting global-warming hysteria, have been "manipulated and politicized."

The battle over climate change — whether it is real or not, and if real, whether it is a result of naturally occurring cycles or man-made — has taken on a curious aspect. In the West, in supposedly free countries, those who question anthropogenic climate change are persecuted by means of ridicule or are terminated from their livelihood. Yet in Russia, which is only marginally a free country and is presently headed by a former officer of the once-dreaded Soviet KGB, the government and the media largely ignore the topic. Russian citizens are free to embrace or reject whatever global warming theories they choose to pursue without fear of reprisals.

To paraphrase what the titular character in Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* once exclaimed, the debate surrounding global warming has become "Curiouser and curiouser!"