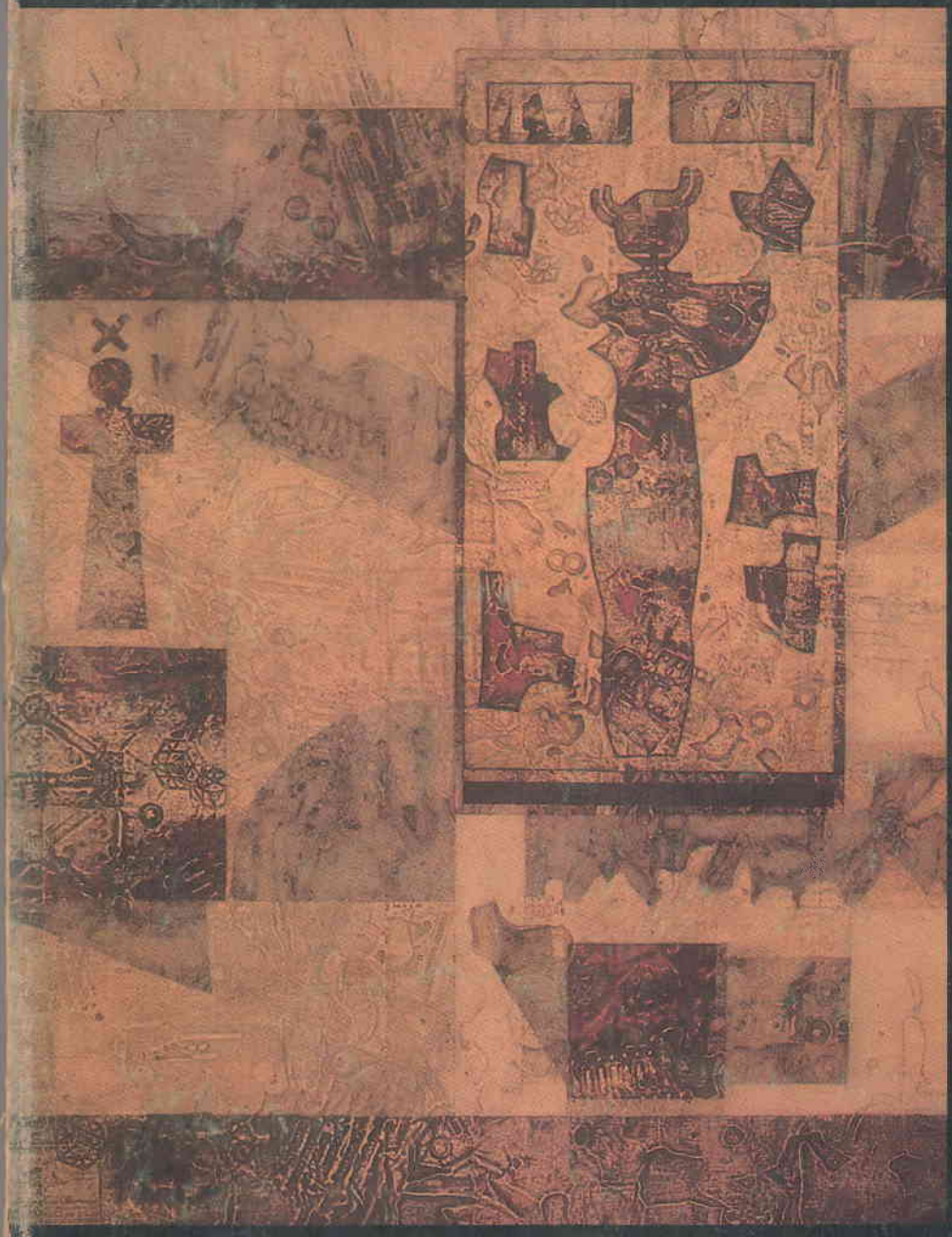
The Russian Enigma



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by Andrei Rublyov

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The Russian Enigma

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India International Centre
40, Max Mueller Marg, New Delhi 110 003

Cover: Composition in tempera and oil, 1978 by V.Z. Sazonov
From the collection of Madhavan K. Palat

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FOREWORD

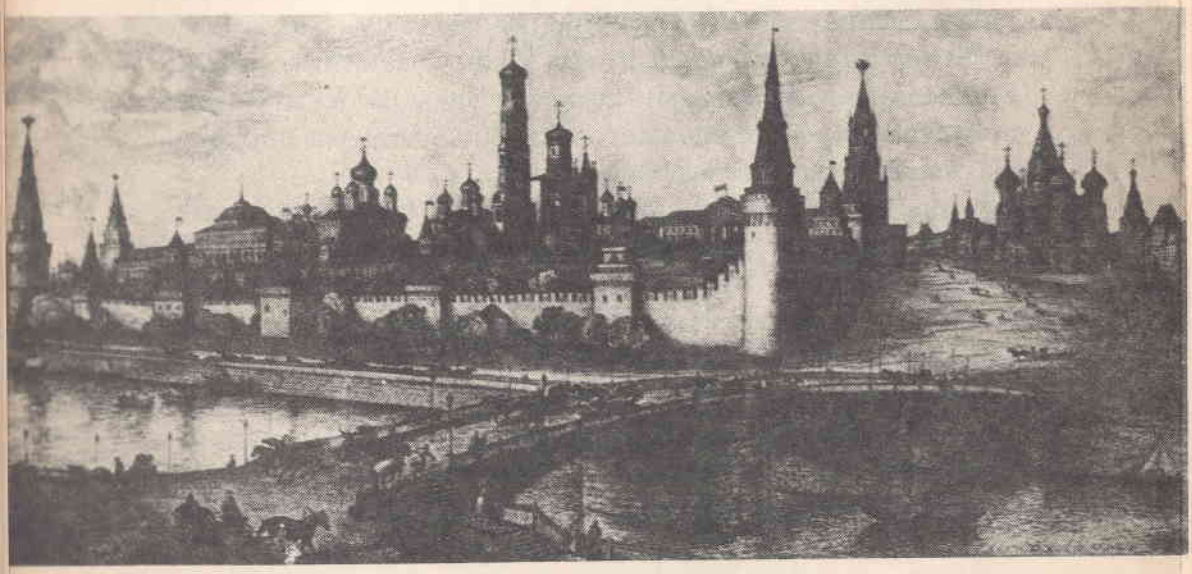
This is the first time that the IIC *Quarterly* is devoting a full issue to a single country other than India. But then, as the Guest Editor has observed, India has known Russia and the Soviet Union as a close friend. The spectacular mutation of the Soviet Union is a fit occasion to reflect upon the history and culture of both the union and its predecessor, the Russian Empire. The *Quarterly* has, for the present, confined itself to the predominant constituent of this multi-national entity—Russia. In fact, as the fascinating dialogue between Nikhil Chakravartty and A.K. Damodaran reveals yet again, the Soviet Union did mean Russia to most of us, despite our intimate contact with Central Asia throughout the centuries before colonial times.

Mikhail Gorbachov emerged as one of the most important political figures of this century, responsible for a massive democratisation of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe with profound consequences for the future of humanity. The interview with this remarkable man, perhaps the first to an Indian journal, is in some ways the centrepiece of this issue.

Recent developments in politics have been dealt with in a number of articles, especially from Russians. Other issues of significant interest have been addressed such as the cinema of Andrei Tarkovsky, the art of the celebrated icon painter, Rublyov, and the continuing transformation in the role of Russian women. Most of our readers would be fascinated by the two articles on the Russian reception of the Hare Krishna cult and of Indian cinema; a significant fact of Russian identity has been explored in an eighteenth century Russian courtly self-image as oriental; and no study on Russia would be complete without a piece on Dostoevsky, probing the instability induced by modernity.

This special issue is a statement on India's abiding interest in and sympathy for Russia, which needs to be sustained and developed. Let us hope that this Indian initiative, and the Indo-Russian collaboration that this issue embodies, will be replicated manifold.

— Karan Singh, President, IIC



Moscow Kremlin
Etching by Alsher Petkov

MADHAVAN K. PALAT

Russia as the Alternative Universal

The general significance of the imperial Russian and Soviet experience to modern times would appear to lie in Russia representing the alternative to the western route to modernity. The alternative lay in the method of attaining and sustaining such a system, not in the madness of wanting it. Russia was unique in offering the option, but primarily to late developers who were entangled in the constricting coils of development with apparently little hope of escape, unlike the most successful late starter, Japan. The material resources of India and China, and the Asian tigers and other good performers in the race, are too limited, and their intellectual range has been too parochial for them to propose the alternative. The capacities and scope of the Russian and the western on the other hand are ecumenical, but in permanent competition, it would appear.

India has known Russia only as the Soviet Union and as a friend. To China, the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union have been a dangerous neighbour since the Treaty of Nerchinsk in the seventeenth century. To the world of Islam, they have been variously friend and foe, ruler and former subject, and source of ideology and modernity at different times since Russia passed into the Chingisid empire in the thirteenth century. To others in the developing world, the Soviet Union has been mostly a partial and distant friend. To Europe, they have been a perennial challenge: through Orthodoxy, Great Power chess games in Europe, the Great Game in Asia, and the Cold War division of the world, lasting altogether as long as Rus herself, a millennium. But these judgements derive from specific relationships with Russia; their universal significance would be different.

The Russian achievement lay in her participation in the leadership of the world with an exceptional structure of modernity. It dates from about the late eighteenth century when the world was

united through processes of industrialisation. Only then onward would universal models become meaningful; only then could a prescription of presumed universal validity arise in the West, and with it, an alternative, in Russia.

Russia was a world power like the British and French empires, later to be joined by the United States, Germany and Japan, while the Spanish, Portuguese and Ottoman empires dropped out, the Italian, Dutch, and Belgian limited themselves, the Austro-Hungarian confined itself to Europe, and the rest of the world sank into colonial or semi-colonial status. With the exception of Russia, differences of structure among these leaders were deemed national; but together, along with Japan, they constituted a differentiated or composite unity known as the West. Russian uniqueness on the other hand was regarded as transcending her national traditions.

Her modernity was combined with deliberate or ineradicable archaisms. These have been the subject of generations of research and have been passed under the general rubric of backwardness. Yet her sustained capacity to exercise leadership in the world, in the company of the same handful of powers, suggests that her peculiar transition to modernity were not so much an incomplete modernity as a version independent of the western.

It is often argued that her defeats in the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-5 and in the First World War exposed her as primitive and unfinished. But then, the contest was among the Great Powers, and the defeat only exposed inequalities within that group. Further, that most developed capitalist power, Germany, was twice resoundingly defeated in this century without attracting such charges. Similarly, France was trounced during the Second World War, and Japan at the end of it. Again, France was expelled from Vietnam in 1954 after a colonial liberation war, and, more tellingly, so was the United States in 1974. Let us therefore examine those attributes of imperial Russia which are described as modern and archaic and how the combination was theorised into a universal paradigm.

The first visibly modernising aspect was the economy itself. From the 1820s, the industrialisation of Russia proceeded on an increasingly capitalist basis. The mechanisation of the cotton industry began in the central industrial region near Moscow and Vladimir from the early nineteenth century; it spread to the

woollen industry in the 1840s; and both edged out linen, the traditional Russian textile. From as early as 1825, Russian industry began to undergo the cyclical crises of capitalism.[1] Ferrous metallurgy in the Urals began its technological transformation in the 1840s to catch up with England. During that half century, a transport revolution connected the major rivers through an interlocking series of canal and river systems called the Vyshnevolotsk, the Mariinskii, the Tikhvinskii, the Berezina, the Oginskii, the Augustus, and the Wurttemberg.[2] This was followed by the railway epic, with one big boom in the 1860s and another in the 1890s. By 1860, Russia could build and maintain her own railways, including engines, without dependence on foreign engineers.

In the latter half of the century, Russia kept abreast of all European technological developments, and in certain areas, Russian science and technology made independent contributions with legendary names like Pirogov in medicine, Pavlov in agronomy and botany, and Lobachevskii in mathematics. Toward the end of the century, the mining and metallurgical wealth of the south, of the Ukraine, was opened up, and Russia quickly took to the new technologies in the electrical, chemical and oil industries. Russia's proper entry into the superior capitalist world occurred with her colonial conquests beginning with the steppe, mostly Kazakhstan, from the 1820s to the 1850s, and sedentary and oasis Central Asia from the 1860s to the 1880s.[3] Russia enjoyed a dynamic capitalist economy, driven by the state but constrained by the backward agriculture of the semi-servile peasantry.

The bureaucracy was the next most visible modernising agent. Imaginative and memoir literature have presented to us few greater or more enjoyable caricatures than the face of tsarist officialdom. Its reforming energy and enlightenment therefore comes as an unexpected surprise. From the reign of Nicholas I, its upper echelons were committed, with the emperor's usually generous support, to greater rationality, efficiency, and professionalism tempered only by Autocracy and, decreasingly, noble privilege. They had to contend with low educational standards and appalling legal and practical training, especially in the provinces where the nobility dominated. Indeed, 13 per cent of Russian officials were illiterate in 1846;[4] and Herzen's lively account of the provincial bureaucracy, and the biting satire of Saltykov-Shchedrin were not entirely the handiwork of raconteur and novelist.[5]

Yet the foundations for a new generation of enlightened officials were laid during the first half of the nineteenth century. Count P.D. Kiselev trained a full cadre and made the abolition of serfdom in 1861 possible with his reforms at the Ministry of State Domains (1837-41). Similarly, L.A. Perovskii, deputy minister of the interior (1840-52) and minister (1852-56) was one of the ablest and most efficient. His reforms on the crown estates between 1820 and 1845 inspired Kiselev at State Domains. The third of the group was Count Viktor Panin, the jurist and minister of justice. So august a personage was he that he could finally talk to his parents only because "they did not violate the rules of seniority". Yet he had a passion for the bureaucratic virtues of clarity and efficiency; and he brought up a new generation of outstanding jurists like K.P. Pobedonostsev and D.A. Roginskii.[6]

These three together trained the civil servants who saw Russia into the post-reform era. These are the famous names of Nikolai Miliutin, Andrei Zablotskii-Desiatovskii, Sergei Zarudnyi, Aleksandr' Girs, and a host of others who congregated at the Imperial Russian Geographical Society and planned reform under the slogan of *glasnost'* and *preobrazovanie*, meaning transparency and transformation. Both the Nicolaevan and Brezhnevian "eras of stagnation" bred such a reforming bureaucracy inspired by nominally identical mottoes and committed to what appeared to contemporaries as suicidal reforms.[7] The reforms of the 1860s, especially of provincial administration through the *zemstvo*, the local administration units, advanced this immensely further. It unleashed an army of trained specialists in statistics, agronomy, animal husbandry, engineering, public health and other developmental spheres, into the countryside, to sink the state deeper and ensure rational administration in lieu of the arbitrary rule of local notables and communes. Its purpose was to create, not self-government but local government, and to put an end to "apoplexy at the centre and atrophy at the periphery".[8] All these reforms were inspired by efficiency, not the limiting of Autocracy; and, by division of powers they understood the functional and the rational, not the separation of powers of liberal jurisprudence. It was a modernising Autocracy that was not becoming democratic.

The army was the other modern showpiece. Until the Crimean War of 1854-56 it tended to rest on its Napoleonic laurels, like the other European armies. After the defeat, and especially with the

Miliutin reforms of 1874, the Russian army modernised in keeping with its European competitors. General Miliutin sought to create a professional and common education and formal training for officers instead of a privileged and stratified one through cadet and junker schools. He was only partially successful. But he established the Military Academy (later the Nicholas Academy of the General Staff) which became a proper institution for training higher officers. Military equipment and preparedness dramatically improved after the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-78 especially with General M.I. Dragomirov's achievements in frontier fortifications and communications of the Kiev military district between 1881 and 1889.

The general conscription introduced in 1874 prepared for mobilising the nation to arms. However, being a peasant country, generous exemptions had to be made, and with them came numerous anomalies of old men pressed into service and young men exempted for family reasons. Thus Russia had most of a modern army, as the century wore on, with universal conscriptions, reserves, General Staff Academy, and increasingly professional leadership. Its weakness lay in the state's inability to maintain the civilian population at the same level of mobilisation and motivation as German and French nationalism could.[9]

Education was something of a success story in Russian modernisation. From the days of Peter, it was presumed necessary to rationality and efficiency in administration and productivity in the economy. During the eighteenth century it was pursued in fits and starts; from 1804, under the combined influences of the rationality of the enlightenment, Napoleon's administrative absolutism, and German academic refinement, Alexander's Secret Committee established a national network of primary and secondary schools. Thereafter new universities were founded in Kharkov and Kazan, where boys grew "thin and pale" in their enthusiasm for enlightenment, as Sergei Aksakov's vivid memoirs record. Throughout the century thereafter, the principles of liberal opportunity and estate privilege conflicted in the organisation and access to education; both then had to contend with official anxieties about the relation between curricula and revolution, and, for long, the nobility's aversion to state education. The state, however, was aware of its importance to social engineering; and the intelligentsia was committed to enlightenment.

Peter the Great
19th century engraving

It went through numerous vicissitudes, until the 1880s when Dmitrii Tolstoy took over the secondary school system from the hands of the nobility. Denounced as black reaction for its innumerable limitations, it nonetheless professionalised the structure. After the revolution of 1905, it was opened up, and the state, the local public, and professionals at long last collaborated in a genuine public education system which the Soviet Union took over intact.[10] The peasantry shifted for themselves, with the assistance of the parish priest until the 1880s; the *zemstvos* entered the field thereafter, despite the reactionary temper of that decade; and from 1908 the state consolidated these earlier initiatives with its immensely greater resources. By 1914 the country was more than half way to universal primary education, an imperial legacy that the Soviet state was pleased to accept without acknowledgement.[11]

More could be said, in a similar vein, on the Autocracy's energy and accomplishments with respect to a free judiciary and lively press, or primary health and welfare. There was no stagnation, there was much dynamism, but every issue was disputed between a state looking to domestic political stability and international security and visionaries yearning for utopia. Because of the immensity of the revolutions of 1905-07 and of 1917-21, the Revolution's negative assessments tend to prevail; and we see the same happening today in judgements on the Soviet record. But while a defunct tsarism could enlist the partisan support of foreigners, the Soviet system cannot, and probably never will in future, any more than the Roman empire can look to Christians for polemical sustenance. To return to the empire, let us now see what archaisms co-existed with modernity.

The archaic attributes began with the state itself, traditionally called the Autocracy. It was a centralised dictatorship, hereditary in the Romanov dynasty. Unlike the European states in the course of modernisation, the Autocracy spurned a liberal constitution, even in its compromised version of the Bismarckian *Rechtstaat*. It entered the twentieth century and went to its doom in 1917 as a deliberately *ancien regime*. Yet it did so as a world power—not as an European puppet, as the regimes of the Ottoman, Iranian and Chinese empires so obviously were.

Admittedly, it went through important transitions. The absolute autocracy of Nicholas I (1825-55) functioned through a personal bureaucracy, standing army, the Orthodox Church, a privileged and incorporated nobility, and an enserfed peasantry. His successor Alexander II (1855-81) shifted to one more dependent on the modern institutions of a liberated peasantry, a limited public opinion, a free judiciary, extended local government, and the reformed army. His heirs, Alexander III (1881-94) and Nicholas II (1894-1917) turned more to a conservative public opinion and Russian nationalism, while Nicholas, after 1905, was compelled to acknowledge that dependence constitutionally through the electoral processes of a Duma, 1906-17. But these shifts of base were partial and uneasy: the Autocracy throughout relied more on its traditional institutions of bureaucracy, nobility, and church, than on conservative and nationalist mass mobilisations through parties and the press.

The Autocracy was an *ancien regime*, not for failing to become democratic which is the common prejudice, but for its independence of parties and popular support. Parties mobilised mass support by articulating interests; and they legitimised the state by being the instruments of popular sovereignty. The Autocracy partially converted to such a regime after 1905 through the electoral and party politics of the Duma. But it emasculated the process through constitutional violations and restrictions of suffrage; and it administered the country largely through emergency regulations, including martial law. As such the Autocracy was beginning to resemble the conservative modernising dictatorships that swept across Europe in the fascist inter-war years, where military rule combined with a civilian party to mobilise support. But the Autocracy disdained fascism and was not seduced by racism and anti-semitism despite its modernising urges and many pressures from court circles and the rabble. It remained an Autocracy resting shakily on its historic institutions.[12]

This peculiar structure was throughout claimed as its contribution to modern politics. Conservative ideologues like Mikhail Pogodin in the forties, mystagogues like Mikhail Katkov in the seventies and eighties, and propagandists like Suvorin and Meshcherskii thereafter, throughout claimed that Russia had wrested the benefits of modernity without succumbing to the evils of social conflict and instability. They ascribed this success to an eudemonic

Autocracy that rose above class and nationality, mediated them, retained the powers to do so effortlessly, and represented the general interest of the empire. The modernising Autocracy was thus presented as one answer to the liberal and constitutional challenge of the West. As it happened however, it prefigured the fascist deluge. In ways that Russians might not care to be reminded, the Autocracy acted both as an alternative to European constitutionalism and as an inspiration to European fascism.

The state was followed by society. It was ordered as an hierarchy of estates with positive rights, obligations, and exceptional legislation. It was not founded on the equality of citizens under the law.

The hierarchy of estates consisted of a nobility, the clergy, townspeople, the peasantry, and a fifth group known broadly as *inorodtsy* which included the tribal and nomadic population. The first three were incorporated in the late eighteenth century; the peasantry remained under exclusive regulations; and the hierarchy was sanctified in the Speranskii codification of 1832. It remained the official structure until 1917. Arguments late in the nineteenth century to convert the nobility into a class defined by land ownership and privilege rather than state service were defeated.[13] The clergy was also incorporated in 1785 as another estate; and they never converted into a profession as in modern class society. The townspeople were ordered among themselves into a hierarchy according to their capital assets, and, at the lower end of the scale, according to their trade. They did not dissolve into classes and professions. The *inorodtsy*, because they were neither sedentary nor agricultural, were governed by altogether special regulations.[14]

Of this social structure one class or estate, the peasantry, merits special mention. Not only did it live throughout under exclusive legislation which impeded its transition to citizenship, it was also organised in communal institutions. The question of their retention was much discussed in the course of the reforms of the state peasantry during the reign of Nicholas I,[15] during the abolition of serfdom in 1861, and again towards the new wave of controls in 1889. In each case it was decided that this communal organisation, whether with hereditary household tenure or in repartitional communes, must be retained in order to ensure social stability in the face of possible proletarianisation.[16]

Following the logic of anti-liberal critique the world over in modern times, the conservative believed that community structures must be conserved to prevent anomie while radicals on the left argued that they should be created anew to transcend atomised and anarchic individualism. The conservative argument was one of the most firmly held convictions of the tsarist establishment, of Slavophile and cognate traditions of the intelligentsia, and an influential stream of European conservatives, those like Freiherr von Haxthausen. The radical intelligentsia, represented by the omnibus term Narodnik, strained to build the new community of the socialist vision; but, in a significant irony typical to Russia, they expected to do so on a foundation of tradition: the peasant commune. Karl Marx famously sympathised with this view instead of denouncing them like a good Marxist. Thus the conservatives hoped to attain modernity without the harshness of capitalism; and the Narodniks along with Karl Marx hoped to see the socialist revolution before capitalism could be permitted to sink its claws. The single most important basis of their hope was the peasant commune, at once the embodiment of hoary tradition to one and the rational instrument of utopia to the other.

Until 1905, the Russian state believed that the Autocracy and communal peasantry were evidence of its success in a non-liberal and obviously non-socialist modernisation. The major peasant revolution of 1905-07 undeceived it; the Stolypin agrarian reform of 1906-11 assaulted the communal institutions in a desperate late measure to create an independent peasantry that would ward off the coming revolution. It did not succeed and 95 per cent of peasantland was recommunised after the bourgeois and socialist revolutions of 1917-21.[17] But for a century Russians and foreigners of diverse political persuasion believed in the validity of these uniquely Russian social prescriptions; and until the Stalinist collectivisation from 1929, the peasantry retained and renewed their communal structures.

This legal hierarchy was the basis of the claim through the century that Russia did not suffer the evils of class division and conflict. The claim was spurious, but it was routinely made. Officials and propagandists dealt with the reality of class by intercalating it into the structure of estates. Thus workers would appear in their legal incarnation of peasant or the lower orders of townsmen known as *meshchane* or *remeslenniki*, never as working class. Yet, as

befitted a modern industrialising society, appropriate legislation like the Industrial Statute, the *Ustav o Promyshlennosti*, provided for the relation of capital to labour. In bourgeois class society, worker and capitalist exercised their natural rights as citizens to enter into contract, and the law stipulated the conditions of validity. In Russia they did so by the exercise of their positive rights as members of an estate. Hence the astonishing claim made from departments like the finance ministry, not by mere propagandists, that a working class did not exist in Russia, although it was that class, or parties deriving their legitimacy from that class, that nearly overthrew this regime in 1905, and eventually did so in 1917.

On reflection, however, such assertions need not be deemed any more absurd than that peculiar English expression "middle class" to mean bourgeoisie, as if an aristocracy and a "lower class" exist, or the manifest contradiction of terms in the expression "bourgeois monarchy". Yet these terms, virtually nonsensical in formal theory, express a reality of social relations and the structuring of power in utterly modern societies. The deliberate archaism of Russian social estates, with its concomitant claims about the absence of class conflict, should be appraised like similar claims elsewhere, where social reality only approximates but never coincides with the "ideal types" of the social theorist.[18]

The other properly exceptional feature of the Russian empire was its multi-national composition. The nation-state is presumed to be as necessary to modernity as equality under the law, party politics, bureaucracy, and industry. The Great Powers, including Germany and Japan, cemented this union between the nation and the state during the nineteenth century despite their internal heterogeneity. The Russian empire alone presented a distinct alternative; and the Soviet Union built on that exception.

In pre-modern times, the principle of unity of empire was loyalty to the dynasty, not to a culture; and the Romanov dynasty commanded the obedience and mediated the interests of the various aristocracies and commercial bourgeoisies, and their respective artisanates and peasantries. There was no premise, and rarely the fact, of a vertical cultural integration between these

classes. In much of the world these were culturally distinct, and much of the Russian empire was of that type.

But capitalism, industrialism, and modernity in the nineteenth century witnessed the deliberate formation of a series of cultural identities. These were elaborated through the creation of a national memory and the demarcation of a national territory through historical research, a national language and literature to carry a high culture, and its appropriate folklore. This was premised on or intended to culminate in a vertical cultural integration, unheard-of until then. The next phase was the attempted congruence between a political and cultural territory followed by the final one of its sovereign status at international law. The successful result is known as the nation-state; the failed or incomplete product is known as the nation; and the beginner is called the nationality, nowadays apparently the ethnos.

The different units of the Russian empire became nationalities in the course of the nineteenth century, but the empire denied them nationhood. From the 1840s a series of distinct national identities took shape: the Estonian and Latvian in the 1850s and 1860s, the Lithuanian and Belarusian in the 1860s and 1870s, the Ukrainian in the 1840s and 1850s, the Tartar in the 1850s, the Georgian, Armenian, and Azerbaijani between the 1860s and 1880s, the Turkestani from the 1880s to the Revolution, and the Russian itself in the 1840s during the famous debate between the Slavophiles and the Westernisers. But they were overlaid with Russian national domination, which led to the national tensions of the final forty years of empire. The empire earned for that reason the Leninist sobriquet "the prison house of nationalities" and inspired the strategy of colonial and national liberation being harnessed to the forthcoming socialist revolution.

Again, as with political pluralism, class structure, and social mobilisation, the Autocracy did not commit itself to Russian nationalism for fear of its divisive consequences. For the better part of a century, the Russian empire was the exception to all modern states in this respect: it was an assembly of nations or putative nations, not a nation-state; and the Soviet Union built vigorously on this foundation with remarkable success for another three quarters of a century, but with an entirely different, indeed antithetical ideology of union.[19] The Hapsburg empire in Europe was the apparent other exception; but it was obviously an assembly of

dynastic territories without a centre, or a *Staatsvolk*, like the Russian to the Russian empire. Hence the very different trajectories of development of the successor states to the two empires.

In sum, therefore, it might be said that the instruments of modernity were comparable to the western while the structures into which they fitted were distinct. The Russian army, bureaucracy, educational system, and capitalist enterprise would resemble the western. But the Autocracy, the hierarchy of social estates and its peculiar internal stratification, and the multi-national union, were unique to Russia.

The Autocracy and its custodians presented the functioning face of Russia as the alternative; their bitter opponents over the course of the century, the intelligentsia, presented the vision instead. But the vision or the dream was based on scholarly insight or researched knowledge of Russian capacity. Such capacity was defined in terms that made the empire the equal of Europe and one of the leaders of the world. The first generation, that of the 1840s, analysed the state of Russian consciousness and discovered it to have attained the level of a nation conscious of itself.

In a brash and passionate orientalist hurrah to Europe, Belinskii argued that Russia before Peter lived in a state of "natural immediacy". This meant that she was internally homogenous and concerned only with the concrete, the particular, and herself, without a larger universal vision. This is akin to our notions of tribal society, internally undifferentiated and externally isolated. As he put it, Ivan the Terrible was merely fascinating, but Louis XI of France was historically significant. Peter violently tore Russia from these provincial moorings to raise her to the level of European universalism in science and philosophy. Belinskii endorsed such universalism, but noted its acquisition of a national content in the nineteenth century, with the campaign of 1812 and Pushkin's creative brilliance. In other words, Russian high culture itself became one of universal import, something which could apply to France but not to India. Russia had thus become self-conscious as a nation, like the Europeans, but not as Europeans. For the pre-petrine seventeenth century he reserved the famous Russian word *narod* or people; for the conscious epoch he preferred the alien word *natsiia* or nation, so redolent of the French Revolution and bour-

geois democracy. That bleak and "pewtery-eyed" bureaucrat and gendarme, Nicholas I, postured; Pushkin's unforgettable verse celebrated the exploits of those three hundred generals framed in the hall of fame in the Hermitage; and Belinskii proclaimed, in fervid prose of Hegelian structure, the self-consciousness of the Russian nation.[20]

Belinskii was ably seconded by Konstantin Aksakov, later to be his distinguished opponent in the debate between the westernisers and the Slavophiles. In a formidable philological exercise of nearly 400 pages on the history of the Russian language, he claimed that the Russian vernacular reflected "extreme nationality" or parochial particularism, that the Church Slavonic was the vehicle of the universal and the abstract, and that they effected a junction in the style of Mikhail Lomonosov in the eighteenth century, who did for the language what Peter did for Russia. This argument implied that the Russian mind could now reflect upon the universal on the premise of its own national experience. The dates, personages, and subject matter were different from Belinskii's, but the product was the same: Russian high culture declared the nation conscious of itself, that their cogitations on behalf of the nation would be universal in range.

This was followed by Konstantin Kavelin's thesis of 1847, another survey of Russian history. It presented ancient Russia as undifferentiated socially and isolated culturally, in a state of "exclusive nationality", just as in Belinskii's and Aksakov's speculations and philological surveys respectively. Russian society then shifted to "an intellectual and moral plane" or universality with the emancipation of the individual from the coils of "exclusively-national determinations". The process began with Ivan Kalita's centralisation of the Muscovite state; it was then driven forward by Ivan the Terrible; and it culminated in Peter the Great's westernisation. As he put it, "peoples called to world-historical action in the new world cannot exist without the principle of individuality"; its absence led to infantilism. Once again, a major scholarly essay had declared that the particular concerns of Russia were now of universal significance. If he dated it to Peter and the eighteenth century, he did so in the 1840s, along with the others.[21]

Alexander Herzen provided a general and systematic foundation for these ideas in a speculative statement on the history of mankind in the manner of Hegel's *Phenomenology*. He divided

human history into the three stages of "natural immediacy", "abstract thought", and "action". His subject was human individuals, not nations, but the implications for national argument would be evident. In the first phase, the individual was confined to his particular interests and subject to natural forces. In the second, he attained the universal through rational consciousness; but he was then at the mercy of abstract reason; and science was a "dreadful vampire". Consequently he was capable only of reflection on the rationality of being without being able to act; and the "Buddhists of science, having attained the sphere of the universal somehow, cannot get out of it." He negated this passive condition in the third phase by deliberate action that synthesised the previous stages. He now acted as an individual in universal causes.[22] It would be inappropriate to suggest that Herzen's individual was Russia; but there is a symmetry between these phases of all these thinkers. The most obvious is the first; but Herzen's passive individual in the second is akin to Belinskii's universally European Russia before Pushkin, and the nationally uncreative universality of Church Slavonic in Aksakov. But the identity between all their third stages is again apparent: Herzen's individual, like their Russia, may now act as a particular entity with a universal purpose.

In these different ways then, the leading thinkers of the Nicolaevan era, speaking authoritatively on behalf of Russian high culture and abstracting from the record of the Russian state, announced that Russia had transcended all that was specific to her culture without abandoning it, that she was not to be the follower, imitator, or passive recipient of European culture any longer, that she could act with the Europeans in determining the fate of mankind. What Nicholas did in foreign and colonial policy, and in domestic social engineering, they achieved in the realm of the abstract and in theory.

Subsequent statements of Russian capacity to reorder the history of man, and to take her part alongside Europe to leap into the future, came in another mode. They usually dealt with the question of the development of capitalism in Russia, an important enough issue given its development in Europe and the sweeping changes in Russia. From the 1850s until 1917, all socialists argued that Russia was ready for the socialist revolution or must

prepare for it. This was to be the future of Europe also and an example to it. The Narodniks, or all who go by that classification today, from Chernyshevsky to Vorontsov, argued its possibility on the ground that capitalism was yet to take root in Russia, that capitalism would be the obstacle to socialism. They differed among themselves on the nature of the preparation for the event: Lavrov demanded an appropriate level of consciousness to be achieved by propaganda while Tkachev and later the Narodnaya Volya and others demanded immediate action, whether through a jacobinist seizure of power or through terrorism.

The Marxists, on the other hand, claimed that Russia was on the threshold of revolution because capitalism had already established itself in Russia; the contradictions of capitalism would now eventuate in the socialist revolution. This was Plekhanov's discovery in 1883, and it was presented with crushing economic and statistical argument by Lenin in 1899, in his *Development of Capitalism in Russia.* Whatever the disputes between them or the validity of those famous arguments, they were all acting on certain premises: that Russia and Europe had a common socialist future, that Russia like Europe was ready for the transition to that future, and even that Russia was likely to arrive there before Europe. This last was a specific contribution of the terrorist and jacobinist wings of the Narodniks and of the Bolsheviks among the Marxists. Thus Russia was poised, like Europe, for one of those fateful transitions in human history. The final premise, unstated of course, was that the colonial and semi-colonial world, and the more backward parts of Europe like Spain and Portugal, were fated to follow these leaders.

The modernity and leadership status of Russia were thus affirmed; the question now was how was she to realise her future. An apparent ambiguity now faces us. Without exception, these thinkers accepted that Russia was backward compared with Europe, even as they claimed equal status with Europe. The conjunction of these two postulates lends a unique authority to the Russian discourse on backwardness. The task for the future then was to overcome this backwardness by closing the gap with the West, and then to transcend it. There were always two distinct stages. The future of Russia was not to be the present of Europe, but a common future for both in which Russia could play at least an equal and sometimes leading role. The procedure for closing the

gap and overtaking the West was to take advantage of Russian backwardness, to exploit that very tradition accused of engendering backwardness; and, if intellectual ingenuity failed on how it was to be done, to will it.

The most eloquent and enigmatic pronouncements were made on the subject by Peter Chaadayev, that thinker who provoked and still provokes Russians with his unsettling questions on the role or absence of a role for Russia in human history. One of the enigmas is that he did all this by merely writing a few letters in French, only one of which was published in his lifetime, and was out of date by the time it was published in 1836. He regretted that Russia did not belong to any of the great civilisations of mankind, eastern or western, but that her very primitiveness, her unformed state, gave her the freedom to shape her destinies as she chose. In his *First Letter* of 1829, published in 1836, for which the emperor consigned him to the lunatic asylum, he observed, "There persists the chaotic fermentation of things in the moral sphere similar to the eruptions of the globe which preceded the present state of the planet."[23] He recanted in his *Apology of a Madman* by suggesting that for that very reason, for lack of a weighty past, Russia was capable of infinite creativity. His thought was profoundly conservative, related to Roman Catholicism and western conservatism after the French Revolution; but his dictum on Russia was filiated to the revolutionary strategy of inscribing a new society on the *tabula rasa* according to principles willed by man, not those pressed by tradition. His pessimistic utterances were profoundly optimistic, and the negative diagnosis combined with a positive prognosis. It was to inspire many.

Herzen at once entered the door that had been opened. He was sorely disappointed by the failure of the revolution in Europe in 1848. He now looked to Russia for salvation. He then argued that her backwardness permitted her to learn from the horrors of European history, especially its recent capitalism, which he saw first hand, like Dickens, in England. Russia could skip that misery. It could do so by employing an institution which derived from her ancient past and had already been held up for acclaim and emulation by the Slavophiles and certain foreigners, the peasant commune and its cognate workers' cooperatives known as the *artel*. This was the community which existed in Russia, had been pulverised in the English Industrial Revolution, but could now be used

to build the society of the future and would turn its exemplary face to a degraded Europe. This was the origin of Russian socialism and the strategy of skipping stages.

Chernyshevsky picked up the baton from Herzen even if they disliked each other intensely. He derided the absurdity of repeating all the processes of invention and discovery undergone by the rest of mankind when it was manifestly more rational and efficient to benefit from the experience of others and to absorb the latest. "Should a society go through all the logical steps of each society," he asked, "or can it, in favourable circumstances, move from the first or second level of development straight to the fifth or the sixth, skipping the intervening ones?"... His answer was an emphatic yes. He then cast the insight into a set of theses, that such lags in development can be overcome by benefitting from example, acceleration, absorbing the latest, and theoretical rather than practical experience of the intermediate stages. He followed it up with his deathless aphorism: "History is like a grandmother: it adores its younger grandchildren. To the latecomers it gives, not the bones, but the marrow." The basis for skipping stages then was to be the peasant land commune and the workers' *artel*, whose utility he investigated without romanticising them as did the Slavophiles before him or many of the Narodniks after him.[24]

During the sixties and seventies Lavrov and Mikhailovsky pursued this idea, albeit indirectly. They inveighed against the determinism of theories of progress, of Comte and Spencer, and opted for choice in strategies of development. They rejected western liberalism, as already done by Herzen, and called for building on the commune. Hence the vital role they ascribed to "critically thinking people", or the intelligentsia as we would call them, for the choice to be exercised in the full consciousness of historical options and moral imperatives. Once again, the backwardness of Russia, as represented in community structures, would be her salvation.[25]

The most technical account of the advantage of backwardness would be given by Vorontsov in the 1880s. He pointed out how (1) Russia could absorb the latest technologies, (2) she could create a combination of small scale industry and household farming without the over-emphasis on capital intensive heavy industry, (3) heavy industry was a pampered, artificial, loss-making sector heavily dependent on the state, and (4) she could not afford such

capitalism because it destroyed the domestic market through impoverishment of the peasantry and she was denied a foreign market which was already carved out between the colonial powers.[26] For the first time, there was more pessimism than optimism, and Lenin triumphantly pounced on that frailty.

The Marxists then would complete the argument and demonstrate its validity in a revolution. Trotsky's doctrine of the Permanent Revolution foretold in 1905 that the pre-bourgeois or semi-servile Russia would carry out the bourgeois and socialist revolutions as a single uninterrupted process. The whole of the bourgeois phase of history would be elided; it would be a merely logical moment, not a historical epoch, in the transition from feudalism to socialism. It would be possible because Russia was backward, without a bourgeoisie or cities; but Russia was possessed of a proletariat that dominated strategic sectors of production, that is heavy industry in sensitive spots like St. Petersburg, the modern extractive industry in the south, and the railways. Plekhanov had, two decades earlier, included the revolutionary intelligentsia also as bearers of consciousness in the manner that his forbears had done. Lenin cast this intelligentsia into an organisation, the vanguard party, which was to lead the revolutionary proletariat to victory. Lenin's April Thesis of 1917 endorsed the Trotskyite compression of stages. But he added his own original contribution to this ancient Chaadayevian vision. Russian backwardness made her the "weakest link" in the chain of imperialism. The revolution would therefore commence at that point, and revolutionary Russia would lead revolutionary Europe in the universal liberation of mankind.[27]

Over the course of the century, the most erudite thinkers of Russia had asserted that Russia was a power and culture of global reach, and equal to Europe, that she was nevertheless backward relative to Europe, but that she would draw level with and overtake Europe by the privilege of such retardation. It was an unambiguous series of statements that Russia would gain the modern society of the future without replicating the history of Europe. Significantly, this was proposed, not merely by the Slavophiles and Narodniks who are always credited with or accused of yearning for the unique way, but also by utter westernisers

like Herzen, and later the Marxists, be it the Menshevik Trotsky or the Bolshevik Lenin. These were claims of global import; they were symmetrical with the poorly articulated claims of Autocracy to exceptional modernisation; and both traditions became the patrimony of the exceptional industrial society, the Soviet Union.

The potency of the idea of latecomers substituting for backwardness may be judged by the popularity of the Gerschenkron thesis in our own post-war world. He suggested that late starters like Russia could compensate for the delay and their retardation by a specific set of substitutions of a classical model, that of the pioneer English Industrial Revolution. Thus the Russian private sector was incapable of mobilising the resources for industrialisation; accordingly, the public sector would do so. By painful fiscal measures, the state extracted surpluses from the peasants to raise capital; through tariffs and related measures it attracted foreign capital; it substituted for entrepreneurial timidity, managerial deficiency, and the poverty of the market through its own bureaucracy and the budget; large plants would substitute for small ones to concentrate scarce skills; the lack of a skilled labour force led to capital-intensive industry substituting for labour, and so on. This theory of substitutions to compensate for relative backwardness, applied mainly to Russia but also to continental Europe, has for forty years stimulated research and dominated non-Soviet academic discussion on late imperial economic development. All the theses have been revised with more advanced research; and it has been shown more than once how Gerschenkron, the emigre installed in Harvard, has been indebted to his forbears, especially the Narodnik economists.[28]

Another tradition however was not so confident about the unity of mankind and was more inspired by a manichaean vision of its division by two contending principles. The Slavophiles of the forties, the pan-Slavists of the seventies, and the Eurasianists of the 1920s would belong to it. As might be expected, Russia exemplified one of these two principles, while the West was cast as Ahriman.

The Slavophiles are usually represented by their holy trinity, Ivan Kireevskii, Alexei Khomiakov, and Konstantin Aksakov, whose major contributions appeared by the fifties. Of these Kireevskii and Khomiakov reflected on the state of the world, while Aksakov endorsed Kireevskii and confined himself more to Russia.[29] Both in his philosophy and his speculative history of Russia

Kireevskii contrasted the principles that governed Russia and Europe. The philosophical foundation of Europe was reason and logic; in Russia it was faith. Abstract reason over-developed one faculty of the human being at the expense of the others; it fractured his wholeness of being. Social relations and the law in the West were therefore determined by logic and rationality, not by custom and conviction as in Russia. The individual was an atomised being in Europe but an integrated personality in Russia.

While these and many similar observations may be recognised as common European conservatism of the time, if cast in the categories of the Eastern Church Fathers, he clearly divided humanity into two and found Russia superior for being endowed with and choosing to retain more of one set of attributes. It was a call for choice, not a specific claim to Russian national exclusiveness. But then he permitted himself the motivating question, why, if Russia were so superior, had she fallen back after setting out with Europe at the same point a millennium before, and why was Russia not the intellectual leader of the world. The answer was an exhortation to return to those ideal principles from which Russia had fallen since the sixteenth century, that of Ivan the Terrible. It repeated Kavelin's account, but came to the opposite conclusion.[30]

Alexei Khomiakov came to similar conclusions by a different route. He surveyed the whole of human history in a work he called his "Semiramid" and classified all societies according to principles he called Iranian and Kushite. These corresponded, as was customary in nineteenth century Europe, to the principles of freedom and necessity; they contrasted creative action to submission to the law, logic, and nature. These principles were not geographically specific; but again, as with Kireevskii, more of the creative Iranian principle sedimented in Russia while Europe submitted more to the Kushite principle of logical and legal necessity. It was not a statement of Russian Slavic nationalism; it was a classification of human societies with creativity concentrated more in those like the Russian.[31]

But Danilevskii's pan-Slavic thesis of 1871 is more paradoxical and problematic. This was a categorisation of human societies not into two, as done by the Slavophiles, but into a dozen "historical-cultural types". The same idea recurs in inter-war Europe in the work of Oswald Spengler and Arnold Toynbee attempting to identify a specific number of discrete civilisations, and in post-war

Soviet Union in Lev Gumilev classifying ethnoses rather than civilisations. Danilevskii argued that each of these developed according to its own particular laws of organic being, valid unto itself. Having said so he focused all his attention in his voluminous opus on the contest between Russia (leading the Slavs) and Europe.[32] Danilevskii had pessimistically abandoned the hope of universals for humanity by positing discrete cultural types, yet he argued on the unstated and nominally repudiated premise of contending European and Russian universals. In the 1920s, the Eurasianists led by Prince Nikolai Trubetskoi reflected a comparable ambiguity. Indeed, Trubetskoi took the further step of proposing Russia-Eurasia as the leader of the colonial and future less developed world against the metropolitan West; and he did so from an avowedly anti-Marxist position.[33]

Both the Russian empire and its intelligentsia offered an alternative to the European route to modernity. On the premise of a single humanity, they claimed leadership when the process should have been completed; on the premise of a world divided into two, they asserted leadership in one camp. In the world-wide balance of power, the Russian empire stood forth as one of the leaders of the world and as the exception to the European structuring of a modern state and society. The Soviet Union was to assume the triple mantle.

The first of these was the drive to world-wide leadership. The Bolshevik revolution was predicated on a world revolution without which it had no meaning to its authors. The Bolshevik state was to induce the revolution in Germany; but the series of failures, first by the German proletariat voting for Parliament instead of Soviets in 1918, followed by the decimation of the Spartakus Bund in 1919, and the comic collapse of the attempted coup in 1921, dispersed such hopes. Similarly, the Revolution was cheated of victory in 1920 by the "miracle of the Vistula" when Polish forces threw back the Red Army outside Warsaw. Comintern and Narkomindel, the instruments of world revolution and Bolshevik foreign policy respectively, gradually began to function as one. However, until the end of the decade, the world revolution remained on the agenda so that the Soviet state could lead mankind to liberation. Only during this post-revolutionary decade did the

messianic dreams of some of the thinkers of the nineteenth century enter policy, admittedly in terms that they might not have recognised.

The Soviet Union however inherited the central tradition of aspiring to lead one camp in a divided world. This role was legitimised by the non-western modernisation or a socialist industrialisation of Russia and the rest of the Soviet Union. This Stalinist undertaking combined driving peasants into collective farms and to famine, the herding of another 30 million into towns between 1926 and 1939, forced labour camps, and the series of paroxysms called the purges; it was in no way western of inspiration or style; and the most xenophobic or Slavophile anti-Stalinist would not make such a charge. It was entirely *sui generis*. It was carried out under the legitimising slogan of "Socialism in One Country", which provided the formal foundation for the titanic struggle with Trotsky, the advocate of world revolution. The early emigres like the Eurasianists and the National Bolsheviks of the *Smena Vekhov* group endorsed the leadership of the Soviet Union in a divided world, not on ground of ideology, but as fulfilling the destiny of Russia to resist European domination.[34]

The state and society that eventually emerged was as modern as the western, but different; and this symbiosis recalls the cohabitation of the modern and the archaic in the Russian empire– although nothing in the Soviet Union could be considered archaic. She was one of the great powers until the close of the Second World War, which itself was a continuation of the First World War after a truce of twenty years; in this she inherited the role of the Russian empire. She then became a super-power in a Cold War partition of the world for the next half century, which far exceeded the imperial achievement or even ambition. Its armed forces, nuclear and space technology, fundamental research, educational standards, and her bureaucracy and other instruments of rule, were of high quality at the top if uneven further down, and it was capable of leading the United States in certain areas at certain times. But she was different in just those respects that have been described as archaic in the case of the Russian empire.

The Soviet state was unequivocally a dictatorship. It was not pluralist in structure, which is the usual meaning of democracy. In this respect it continued the autocratic tradition. The instrument of rule was the Communist Party. It was capable of articulating

interests, legitimising the power structure, mobilising the population, and being open-ended for entry. It was a modern instrument of politics, like political parties the world over, but here in a monopoly position. The Party, or rather the *nomenklatura*, may be compared to the old nobility, the privileged stratum which ruled but which was open for entry through the Table of Ranks.

The economy was a centrally planned command economy. This meant that allocation of resources would take place by administrative decision rather than market forces bounded by the state. The Soviet state was exceptional in the world for being entrepreneur, proprietor, and chief consumer. It was the vastest expansion of a public sector in history. But it was in no way archaic: by 1938 already 33 per cent of the population was urban, and the transition to fully industrial status took place after the war. However, it recalls the imperial Russian economy in one most important respect: the role of the state. The state substituting for the inability of the private sector to mobilise resources on the scale required for Russia to remain a great power was carried to an extreme under an altogether antagonistic ideology.

The industrial Soviet society was divided into strata that had differential access to command structures; but it was not marked, as are western industrial societies, by the private accumulation of capital, classes with rights over the disposal of property, over income from property and the capital market, or to make profit in a regulated market. There was no bourgeoisie, capitalist, or farmer. Workers did not relate to management or the state as an antagonistic class. Most of all, there was a degree of levelling which went beyond that of mass industrial societies. However, it shared with capitalist industrial society the inequalities arising from division of labour and the family's socialisation of children.[35] Again, this "classlessness" is reminiscent of the non-class estate ordering of tsarist society. Classes in both societies were officially discounted, and though they enjoyed a sub-theoretical existence in the tsarist, the refusal to acknowledge them had important consequences for stratification and identities. The rejection of class division in Soviet society was more thorough and successful than in the tsarist, where it was increasingly spurious.

Finally, like the tsarist, this was a multi-national union. But now it was assembled on a modern foundation, through conscious mobilising, rather than retained on the partially archaic principles

of imperial Russia. The empire spurned nationalisms, promoted the Russian, and promiscuously flirted with subordinate nationalisms to balance them. The Soviet Union encouraged them in the 1920s, and transformed them into a series that were homogenously communist but with a variety of national cultures. Unlike the empire, the Soviet union endowed the fifteen Republics with a political territory through ethnic identification, a leadership through nativisation policies, mass literacy, post-secondary education, and media in the local languages, collectively amounting to modern nations, each with its own high culture. For many of these nations, this is the first time in history that they came into possession of their own "national" territories and high cultures. These were all integrated into the Soviet super-nation. For polemical purposes this has been described as the last surviving colonial empire: the statement is false in every sense of the term.

For nearly two centuries now Russia, understood as including the non-Russian parts of the empire and of the Soviet Union, has aspired to or acted as the alternative pole in the world. In imperial times that was more a project, and the record of the regime was diffused; in Soviet times it has formally done so under the umbrella of the Cold War. It was one of the passionate commitments of both the intelligentsia and of the imperial regime that Russia must modernise, that she must do so differently from Europe, that she had the capacity to do so as the equal of Europe, and that thereby she would be an example to the world or at least a part of it. The Stalinist Soviet system did precisely that.

It is not a little instructive and ironic that such bitter ideological and political antagonists as the imperial establishment, the pre-revolutionary intelligentsia, and the Soviet partocracy, could have so much in common over the better part of two centuries. With the end of the Soviet system now, with a state of such flux that future trajectories cannot be discerned, we must ask whether such a common strain would persist, or whether it was merely a feature of a society in transition to the industrial. We would have to wait for Russians to give us the answer.

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Notes

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4. Hans-Joachin Torke, "Das russische Beamtentum in der ersten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts," *Forschungen zur osteuropäischen Geschichte*, Vol. 13, Berlin 1967, pp. 7-345, see pp. 137-173, esp. 159, 167.

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7. Lincoln, ch. 2, pp. 99-109 and ff. .

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12. Hans Rogger, *Jewish Policies and Right-Wing Politics in Imperial Russia*, Univ. of California Press, Berkeley, 1990, esp. ch. 2, 4, 8.

13. Seymour Becker, *Nobility and Privilege in Late Imperial Russia*, Northern Illinois Univ Press, De Kalb, Illinois 1985, pp. 99-103; Roberta Thompson Manning, *The Crisis of the Old Order in Russia. Gentry and Government*, Princeton Univ. Press 1982, ch.1.

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16. The latest research has been conveniently summed up in a conference proceedings volume, containing important Soviet contributions also, see Roger Bartlett ed, *Land Commune and Peasant Community in Russia. Communal Forms in Imperial and Early Soviet Society*, Macmillans, London, 1990, see esp. contributions by Moshe Lewin, Dorothy Atkinson, and David Macey.

17. Moshe Lewin, *The Making of the Soviet System. Essays in the Social History of Interwar Russia*, Methuen, London, 1985, p. 18, 85, and generally ch. 1,3.

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From M. K. Palat and Geeta Seu, ed. Rethinking Russia (New Delhi: IIC, 1994)

HARI VASUDEVAN

Party Formation and the Russian Political System

In the aftermath of the disintegration of the Soviet state, the behaviour of parties in the Russian Congress of Deputies, and the course of conflict between President and Parliament has been responsible for the increasing importance of the executive branch of government in the Russian political system. Parties in the Federation have made Parliament the major source of their authority, but they have used their position to little effect. It is questionable whether deputies have established the public value of the formations they represent; and it is equally questionable whether they are in any position to do so. Ultimately, in the confused conditions of Federation politics, this has not undermined habits of democratic practice: instead it has added an unusual dimension to the Russian variant.

Much of what has occurred has been the product of the substantial role of the executive branch of Russia's government in the country's economic life—its control of social property and its close links with a number of corporations which, until recently, have been heavily dependent on the state for their wherewithal. The vast technical expertise required to take serious interest in the details of the remnants of the planned economy has eluded active parliamentarians, while deputies who possess the expertise are rarely able to take substantial interest in the Soviet in view of the heavy call of their professional obligations.

This aspect of the country's governance, however, only partly explains the position of parties in the Russian political system. As this paper explains, in its treatment of the evolution of political parties in Russia since 1987, uncertainty concerning the implications of perestroika in politics made it impossible for parties to create stable organisations and to develop an ordered relationship with organs of state, let alone to evolve the apparatus of control over Russia's executive and crucial aspects of social and economic

life. The CPSU itself, by virtue of its extensive authority in government and in all spheres of social and economic life, was an exception; and this was somewhat true also of the *Demokraticheskaia Rossiia* movement (the main forum of "democratic" parties in 1990-1991). But confusion in the Politburo concerning the long term aims of institutional policy led to corrosion of the CPSU organisation and the disintegration of its pre-eminence in Soviet government. In the case of *Demokraticheskaia Rossiia*, reluctance to set serious social and institutional programmes, in conditions where the CPSU had a monopoly of power, led to its own haphazard state at the time of the disintegration of the Soviet Union.

The period after the Yanaev putsch of August 1991 led to a deepening crisis among political organisations. The official ban on the CPSU and the Russian Communist Party at a time when the whole Soviet executive was discredited, led to the fragmentation and collapse of the Communist Party. The political groups and registered parties which emerged from the wreckage of the CPSU and RCP had support within local soviets, "executive committees" at *raion* and *oblast'* levels, and in the trade union and *kolkhoz* structures. Moreover, although a good portion of the Party funds were seized and frozen, since few knew of the exact extent and disposition of the reserve, Communists and their sympathisers continued to enjoy a major advantage in post-August politics. But the ban, in the circumstances of August, inflicted a major blow to the authority of the Party in the political system of the Union, and it never recovered.

On the other hand, groups associated with *Demokraticheskaia Rossiia* were deeply concerned with the remains of Communist authority, and they rallied around Boris Yeltsin's presidency as a means of dealing with it. They thereby strengthened the executive at a time when party organisation and the authority of Parliament was extremely weak. Such a policy continued after the formation of the Russian Federation as an independent state, during Christmas 1991, despite the major questions concerning economic policy that were raised in the early months of 1992, and the structure of the privatisation after April 1992. Even after conclusive evidence of the President's unreliability in July-November 1992, this policy prevailed, as is evident in the referendum campaign of April 1993.

Meanwhile, a string of interest groups and political organisations attempted to acquire a degree of public support: but since they were singularly badly endowed with funds and had few major sponsors, their activities merely added to the cacophony of political parties and discredited the institution of the party in the public eye. Rampant intrigue and manipulation of parties in the Supreme Soviet during 1992-93 merely reinforced the poor image of most political organisations. This hardly diverted the public from the standard process of election and referendum, since these were occasions where discontent could be easily indicated. But the unusual pattern of voting in the elections of December 1993 and the local elections of March 1994 indicate that parties have limited authority in the expression of the public will and that they are extensively discredited. Politics involves a melee where established parties and social organisations not merely vie for public trust but their functions are substantially confused.

This article traces how this situation has come about. The first part shows the contours of the political pluralism of the 1987-91 period in the USSR, and the problems of party formation. The second section follows the parliamentary chaos of 1992 and the commitment of democratic groups to a strong executive. The last section is an end note written in the light of the 1993 election results.

The account avoids representation of what has occurred in the light of theories of transition from authoritarianism to democracy.[1] For, although much that has been said of transitions appears appropriate for the politics of later perestroika, it is questionable whether, after 1991 August, the terms of the paradigm suit the circumstances of the Russian Federation. In circumstances where it is far from certain what kind of politics is at work in the Federation, it appears adequate to follow a course which avoids a comparative perspective and presents an account of party politics, highlighting the rhetoric that was in use. This makes some sense of the Russian political system, and allows the advantage of viewing it on its own terms.

Many of the problems of contemporary Russian politics can be traced to the early nature of multi-party contest in the USSR during 1987-91, and the stunted development of party formation in this period. This was the consequence of

public confusion concerning the implications of the CPSU's abandonment of its traditional determination to choose candidates for public assemblies from collectives under the Party's guidance and to prevent the formation of independent parties. Widespread doubt prevailed in the CPSU and elsewhere regarding the kind of political system that was to emerge after the experiment of spring 1987, the All-Union elections of 1989, for the Congress of People's Deputies, and the elections of 1990 for Republican bodies. As a result, although, as Table 1 indicates, an unprecedented growth of parties took place at this time, those concerned were not certain when the rule of public life would change. Their organisations, consequently, were mainly ad hoc affairs, directed to a specific electoral campaign.[2]

The rhetoric of reform itself encouraged such haphazard party growth. For, despite the statement by M.S. Gorbachov (especially in December 1998) regarding the necessity to change the electoral mechanism of the political system, the General Secretary also made clear his commitment to the October Revolution, to the shibboleths of the Soviet system and to the foundations of the CPSU. For instance, at a special session of the Supreme Soviet, when electoral reform was under discussion, he emphasised that he was concerned to "revive the values of the October Revolution". And, in speaking of the new electoral laws of 1988, while Gorbachov argued that "it is not that we will simply return to the experience of the Congresses of Soviets, the All-Russian Central Executive Committee and the Central Executive Committee"—stressing the break with the October heritage—he was capable of saying in the same breath that "we will revive what was characteristic of the system of Soviets, as Lenin understood it and proved to be correct immediately after the revolution...".[3]

A Central Committee document of August 1990 showed the conspiratorial determination with which the CPSU expected to emerge pre-eminent from the electoral reform. Noting the necessity to avoid the serious consequences which transition to a market economy had had for Communist parties in Eastern Europe, the document ran on that the final aim of its current schemes was "via the commercialisation of the existing party property, to systematically found structures of an invisible party economy". Here, for the working of the mechanism, "only a narrow circle" were to be admitted by the General Secretary of the Party and his Deputy.[4]

Table 1: Party formation in Russia 1988-92

1988

All Union anti-fascist centre, Christian Regeneration Union.

1989

Anarcho-Syndicalist Conference, Anarcho-Communist Revolutionary Union, "United Council of Russia" Association, Democratic Party of the USSR, All Union Communist Party of Labour, Conservative Party, National Democratic Party, Free Russia, Fatherland Spiritual Regeneration, Transnational Radical Party, Christian Democratic Union of Russia.

1990

Anarcho-Democratic Union, Association of Anarchist Movements, Humanitarian Party, Democratic Party, Democratic Party of Russia, Democratic Workers' Party, Democratic Movement of Communists, Unified Women's Party, "Women of Sovereign Russia", Russian Communists' Initiative Movement, Islamic Revival Party, Committee for Workers' Democracy and International Socialism, Peasant Party, Liberal Democracy Party, Marxist Workers' Party, People's Constitutional Party, Party of Peace, Party of Free Labour, Party of Socialist Choice and Communist Perspective, Party of Man, Rightist Conservative Movement, Orthodox Church Monarchist Accord, Progressive Party of Russia, Republican Party of Russia, Russian Party of National Revival, Russian Liberal Democratic Party, Russian National Party, Russian Christian Democratic Party, Russian Christian Democratic Movement, Russia, Russian National Unity, Free Democratic Party of Russia, Slavonic Assembly, Socialist Party, Social Democratic Party of Russia, Soluz, Union of Russia's Revival, Association of Socialists-Narodniks.

1991

"Revival", Moderate National Party, Constitutional Democratic Party, League of Green Parties, People's Party of Russia, People's Patriotic Party of Russia, Pamyat, Party of Justice, Republican Humanitarian Party, Russian Communist Workers Party, Russian Party of Communists, Russian National-Monarchist Party, Russian Party of Leftist Socialist-Oriented Organisations, Socialist Party of the Working People.

1992

Russian Party of Democratic Transformations, Russian People's Assembly, Social Democratic Workers' Party of Russia.

Source: "Political Movements in Russia", Tass Script (1992).

In the arena of practical politics, traditional members of the CPSU, while participating in the electoral committees and the reform process, fought a vicious game in campaigns, using a range of dirty tricks. Anatolii Sobchak, for instance, describes a well organised campaign against him by a determined group of such conservatives in the winter of 1989: the lies that were circulated to undo him, including calumnies that he insisted his students sleep with him or he would not pass them, that he was involved in speculation in the new cooperatives, and that he was heartlessly cruel, campaigning while his wife was dying in hospital (this last, unwittingly, in the presence of the wife). The lies were circulated by the same people, at public meetings and in leaflets[5]. Elsewhere, in the electoral assemblies, non-Party candidates got no public space to hold their meetings while the elections were all strategically planned for winter.[6]

The new political formations that took shape in such conditions were unsteady, based on friendship, and lacking in organisation. As in the case of Sobchak, they might emerge with one individual alone, without money. They would accumulate a team who hardly knew each other and who would work without remuneration[7]. The process was full of enthusiasm; but it ultimately lacked solidity and effective contours. Supporters, like the reform-inclined Shevardnadze, who had developed a democratic commitment by December 1990, were ready to believe that the power in the shadows was awaiting its opportunity; that it would, as it did in 1990, demand of Gorbachev a return to the old instruments of politics, however terrible; that circumstances had not changed sufficiently to make these demands of little significance[8].

Consequently, in elections themselves, and in their aftermath, (in 1987, 1989 and 1990), in a number of constituencies, (Belgorod, Bryansk, Kirov, Kursk, Orel, Rostov, Saratov, Smolensk, Tambov, Vologda, etc.) there was no serious revision of electoral procedure, and the traditional leadership of the Party maintained their local pre-eminence[9]. Elsewhere, although anti-establishment forces gained ground and newspapers outside the mainstream (*Moscow News, Orientir, Simbirskaia Gazeta*) attracted widespread public attention, a degree of confusion prevailed concerning the goals of reform and the organisation of

strength was haphazard. In local elections in Iaroslav in 1987, in a clear example of confusion regarding the new pluralism among reformers and anti-reformers, local candidates publicly expressed their disagreement with the notion that the presence of several candidates in an electoral contest improved possibilities of public participation and representation. In the rhetoric of the occasion, it was clear that protagonists of reform were clearly concerned with the mechanical issue of ensuring a multiplicity of contestants, preferably of varying opinions, rather than the more crucial issue of bringing out problems which were of public relevance, and the creation of organisations with this end.[10]

In two major anti-establishment areas, Volgograd and Kemerovo, the anti-establishment programme was clear, and new men moved quickly to centre their political campaigns around associations that had just emerged. But the political value attached to these associations was unclear—especially in regard to crucial issues such as capacity to assist in policy formulation and implementation, and even mobilisation strategy.

Hence, in Volgograd a number of groups, who were responsible for the dismissal of the previous Soviet in February, mobilised in March to elect a new chairman of the Provincial Soviet. Responding to these forces, Valerii Makharadze, who was elected, made himself available to the public at all times of the day and, in May, rejected his election by the local Party as the *obkom* secretary. He also came into conflict with local Communist officials and *kolkhoz* chairmen, and pushed through land redistribution under the Russian law of December 1990. In all this he received the support of the various new parties formed in provincial politics over the previous months, and in April, he set up a consultative organ, made up of leaders of these parties, to involve their opinions in the discussions of the Soviet. But the parties themselves appear to have been shadowy phenomena which only received stable form in the face of the electoral contest and the impulse of Makharadze.

The position of Aman Tuleev—*obispolkom* chairman of Kemeravo, in Western Siberia, and those who supported him in the 1990 election—was somewhat different from that of Makharadze. Here, the new man depended on the local influence of the workers' committees constituted during the coal miners' strike of 1989, and there was no question of this organisation lapsing into obscurity after the election. On the other hand, an unclear relationship ex-

isted between political authority and the new source of political influence in the region, i.e. the independent labour unions, and this resulted in confusion in local politics. Hence, in 1990 and 1991, Tuleev clashed with the emerging labour leader, Vyacheslav Golikov, chairman of the Kemerovo provincial council of workers' committees and co-chairman of the Kuzbass Labour Confederation, who was bitterly critical of Tuleev in local strikes before August 1991.[11]

In general, such cases confirm the haphazard nature of association formation in Russia's electoral process,which is otherwise well illustrated by Anatolii Sobchak's description of his electoral campaign in 1989, and, more important, his account of his relationship with his major electoral supporters after his success. The support came to him; it neither represented any one group or institution; and after the election, it appears to have dispersed—the flotsam and jetsam of the democratic wave.

Only two major organisations avoided insignificance in these circumstances: a much-mauled CPSU and *Demokraticheskaia Rossiia*, which was a movement in the perception of its leaders, but which had more concrete attributes (the product of the various groups and circles which backed it, and which were, themselves, more ephemeral).

Of these, the CPSU was a ragged organisation which was still influential because of the inertia of members who had grown up with it—a power by virtue of old networks and the authority of its General Secretary, who was President in a system which was fast becoming chaotic. The Party was badly damaged by the divisions between the Democratic Platform (which believed in a more unstructured organisation) and the Marxist Platform (which was concerned with traditional discipline and minority-to-majority subordination)—divisions which especially flared up during the 28th Party Congress of July 1990. The formation of the Russian Communist Party intensified such in-fighting and undermined the already limited force of the Party's authority in provincial areas, where the General Secretary's men now faced open hostility from conservatives in local government [12]. This weakened the CPSU's normal source of strength—the control of social property and government via the *nomenklatura*. In the increasing chaos of the

country's economic life, affiliation to the CPSU became of less and less value. In 1988, 130,000 members quit the Party; in 1990, in the first six months, while 72,600 joined, 353,300 members quit.[13]

In the case of *Demokraticheskaia Rossiia*, the nature of the phenomenon, its strengths and weaknesses were less straightforward.[14] Initially, the formation was an electoral alliance, established in January 1990 and based on the Moscow Voters Association and sympathetic groups such as the Memorial societies. Its goal was to ensure representation of democrats to the Russian Congress of Deputies. After the elections, the organisation took on the shape of a parliamentary bloc, and, after discussions regarding the pros and cons of creating a party, a conference of sympathisers decided in October 1990 to create a movement along the same lines as the solidarity in Poland. Thereafter, the movement claimed the loyalty of members of the Christian Democratic Party, the Democratic Party of Russia, the Republican Party of Russia, the Social Democratic Party, the *Zhivoe Kol'tso* group, etc.

Clearly, such a ramshackle entity lacked cohesion. Members, such as Nikolai Travkin, wished to discipline it into a party, in fact to mould it into the Democratic Party of Russia, which had its first Congress on May 26-27, 1990. But this was vigorously resisted by prominent democrats such as Lev Ponomarev, Mariia Sal'e, etc. The constituent organisations were also unstable. The Moscow *Memorial* was riven with divisions, and the other *Memorial* societies elsewhere were spontaneous organisations which did not keep in touch with Moscow[15]. Since all other sources of *Demokraticheskaia Rossiia's* support, moreover (voters' clubs, popular fronts, etc.), had their own independent reasons for formation and their own compulsions, *Demokraticheskaia Rossiia*; was hardly based on the firmest of foundations.

The first Congress of *Demokraticheskaia Rossiia* as a social movement, however, where 1273 delegates from 10 political parties and 31 democratic organisations were present, indicated the cardinal strength of the formation, i.e. its presence in 70 odd regions and its broad ranging affiliations in the Union Congress of Deputies (in the inter-regional group) and in the Russian Federations' Congress.[16] The concern of members to avoid crucial issues, as a means of assuring unity, however, was equally self-evident. No real programme was adopted. In the by-laws that were passed, the goals of *Demokraticheskaia Rossiia* were stated as the

"co-ordination of democratic forces opposing the state-political monopoly of the CPSU, the carrying out of joint electoral campaigns, the coordination of parliamentary activity and other concrete actions promoting the creation of civil society", that is, primarily activity concerned with electoral contests and the subversion of the authority of the CPSU, with no specific policy or organisational orientation; *Demokraticheskaia Rossiia* also expressed a commitment to the market economy and to the principle of "the realisations of the right of nations to self-determination with guarantee of rights to ethnic and religious minorities", but these issues were not elaborated.[17] In the months that followed, during the campaign over the union referendum of March 1991 and the election of the Russian President in April a further commitment of the movement became self-evident. This was *Demokraticheskaia Rossiia's* preoccupation with the projection of Boris Yeltsin. Although Yeltsin had disagreed repeatedly with the decisions of *Demokraticheskaia Rossiia's* leaders, it is clear that such a commitment was in force in March 1991 (when a referendum of the necessity for a Russian presidency was run) and during Yeltsin's presidential campaign of May-June 1991, which was managed by *Demokraticheskaia Rossiia's* special National Initiative group and its volunteers. After Yeltsin's election, this commitment posed no major problem, however, since the Russian presidency, despite its extensive powers on paper, was an institution of limited authority, despite Yeltsin's various manoeuvres of July-August 1991.[18]

It was in the aftermath of the Yanaev putsch of August 1991 and the disintegration of the Soviet state that the full implications of the poor organisation of political parties became apparent. These were to show themselves in the affairs of the Russian Congress of Deputies, and the parties represented there (where there was a more powerful democratic, anti-CPSU component than in the Union Parliament). Initially, the Union Congress of Deputies and the Union Supreme Soviet became steadily more ineffective between September and December 1991, when the institutions of transition (including the State Council) came to run Union affairs. The complete discrediting of union ministers for their participation in the putsch, led to the collapse of union executive authority and devolution of power over social property and state economic ac-

tivity to republican Congresses and Soviets de facto. After Christmas Day 1991, all governmental authority in the Russian Federation devolved on the Russian President, the Russian Deputies and the parties to which they belonged.

Thereafter, there ensued the well-known tussle between the Russian president and sections of parliament—a tussle set in motion by Yegor Gaidar's price reforms of January 1991, and his privatisation schemes, which were begun in spring and autumn 1992. After initial confrontation in the 6th Congress of Deputies (April 1992), Yeltsin attempted to accommodate his opponents through the cabinet changes of June 1992 and out-and-out agreement with the so-called "Civic Union in November 1992 (on the eve of the 7th Congress of Deputies). His failure led to the confrontation between his own democratic supporters in the Supreme Soviet, the Civic Union and the Salvation Front, climaxing in the crisis of 1993, the referendum of April 1993 and the October crisis of 1993. A range of issues were involved, including the ethos of the new state, the nature of presidential powers and the course of economic policy.

In these months, the democratic groups, under the umbrella of *Demokraticheskaia Rossiia* and the *Dvizhenie Demokraticheskikh Reform*, an amorphous group of communist reformers organised under the leadership of Shevardnadze, Alexander Yakovlev, Anatolii Sobchak and Gavrill Popov, showed their clear lack of concern with social activity and their obsession with drawing the teeth of Russian communists. They were clearly wedded to the idea of using the authority of the Russian presidency and the popularity of Boris Yeltsin (at home and abroad) to achieve their ends.[19] Hence, they gathered to vote special powers to President Yeltsin (to appoint ministers and local government officials) during the November 1991 Congress of Russian Deputies. Although some opposition was expressed in the Chechno-Ingushetia crisis, and in the scope of the price reform of January 1992, democrats adhered to such a position, even though they were unhappy about President Yeltsin's failure to consult their leaders in policy formulation[20].

Ilya Roitman of the Democratic Party of Russia expressed an opinion held by Elena Bonner and others when he pointed out that the President and the deputies had had a common objective in the past, i.e. the "struggle against the totalitarian regime". He argued that Mr Yeltsin enjoyed immense credibility, and political parties

found themselves "in the role of hostages to this credibility credit". Criticism of the President, therefore, was seen as "betraying their own interests". Stefan Sulashkin and others, meanwhile, of the Republican Party of Russia, took a more extreme position and joined the President's administration as Presidential representatives in order to assist him. They took a harsh view of the strength of CPSU sympathisers in the region, stressing that this required harsh treatment and temporary abandonment of democratic practice.

In such circumstances, most of *Demokraticheskaia Rossiia's* focus was in bloc politics in the Supreme Soviet and the Congress of Deputies, where they sought alliances with the Democratic Party of Russia, the Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs and other influential groups in order to ensure that the legislature was not an embarrassment to the President. This was a complex task, since, as data on the behaviour of deputies in the Congress of April 1992 indicates (Table 2), stable coalitions were difficult among deputies who had been elected in the party chaos of 1990, and who voted without party considerations more than half the time.

Demokraticheskaia Rossiia consequently had limited success. The Democratic Party and the Social Democratic Party of Russia refused to co-operate, although they were willing to work with the President during difficult Congress sessions.[21] It was only in late

Table 2: Incidence of voting according to party in the April 1992 Congress. (Figures are an average of indicators of group voting on all motions, where 100 = when all members vote together).

Communists of Russia	69.5
Demokraticheskaia Rossiia	65.9
Otchizna	63.7
Left Centre	61.9
Radical Democrats	59
Agrarian Union	57
Workers' Union of Russia	55.9
Free Russia	53.4
Deputies without party	52.1
Rossiia	51.8
Sovereignty and Equality	41
Industrial Union	33.6
Smena	30.4

Source: Nezavisimaia Gazeta, 24 April, 1992, survey of "Monitoring" report.

spring that the Democratic Choice bloc was formed[22] and this, together with *Demokraticheskaia Rossiia's* past influence with other parties constituted its parliamentary presence until the formation of Russia's Choice group in autumn 1993.

Outside Parliament, *Demokraticheskaia Rossiia* organised public meetings and demonstrations in support of Boris Yeltsin, especially after the stormy April Congress, in 1992, to counteract the meetings of the Russian Communist Workers' Party, which was active on Moscow streets during January-March 1992. The movement also set up the Public Committees of Russian Reforms at a special conference of 21-22 December, 1991 in Moscow. These were to unify "the efforts of citizens for wide support of fundamental democratic reforms in the Russian Federation". But, typically, these committees were directed as much to assist Boris Yeltsin's government (through surveillance over the realisation of reforms and providing information to the Government regarding the limitations of officials) as to explain the reforms to the public and to involve it in the process of change.[23]

A major critique of such political behaviour in *Demokraticheskaia Rossiia* came from Yuri Afanasev and Marina Sal'e (the radicals of the movement) in January 1992.[24] Afanasev complained of the ossification of *Demokraticheskaia Rossiia* and contended that it was dominated by the Moscow Coordinating Council (where Lev Ponomarev, Gleb Yakunin and their supporters predominated) and erstwhile members of the Moscow Voters' Association. Consequently, he argued, the movement had lost the right to set norms for constituent organisations, which was a disastrous development at a time when, according to Afanasev, the self-aggrandisement of old *apparatchik's* threatened to undermine the transfer of social property (which had been the monopoly of the CPSU *nomenklatura* in the past) to the broad majority of the public. Afanasev made his analysis of the existing situation clear in a major article in *Moscow News*, where he stated that "democracy is used as a front by brass hats and civilian bosses of the Military Industrial Complex, who rally to (Vice President) Rutskoi. Another *nomenklatura* group backs the ambitions of the parliamentary Speaker, Ruslan Khasbulatov, whilst a third such group caters to the wide-ranging hopes of First Deputy Prime Minister Gennadii Burbulis. But all of them want only one thing—to stay in power, or, best of all, to snuff out the last flickers of Democracy[25].

Afanasev questioned the legitimacy of existing institutions (though he down-played his references to Yeltsin), and demanded the revival of *Demokraticheskaia Rossiia* for the furtherance of democracy. He wanted the movement to perform the role of "a powerful vehicle of public interests". He argued that,

> first *Demokraticheskaia Rossiia* should play a decisive role in radical economic reform, and ensure social protection. Second, efforts should be stepped up against the authoritarian tendencies of current Russian leaders. Third, the movement should continue as an independent public alliance of democratic forces and cut short attempts to turn it into an appendage of power.

He and Marine Sal'e repeatedly worked for special congresses of the *Demokraticheskaia Rossiia* which would give such propositions greater attention.

The radicals, however, had inadequate strength ultimately within *Demokraticheskaia Rossiia* (as their poorly attended July 1992 Moscow Congress indicated, as did the exclusion of Afanasev and Sal'e from the Coordinating Council in December 1992) to achieve their ends. To reverse the trend of local organisations was more than radical professors such as Afanasev and Leonid Batkin (another prominent radical) could do. [26] Ponomarev and Yakunin were able to sway many devoted organisation workers. And, in answer to Afanasev, Dmitrii Kataev of the Presidium of the Mossovet and Deputy President of the Moscow organisation of *Demokraticheskaia Rossiia* adamantly argued that the *Demokraticheskaia Rossiia* was well aware of the problems of possible "*nomenklatura* privatisation" and that the Public Committees on Social Reform were working to prevent this.

Kataev further claimed that the *Demokraticheskaia Rossiia* was not oriented to office and showed that members held few important administrative positions. He failed to consider that Boris Yeltsin was not concerned to give the movement power, since he saw it as a rallying organisation for his own public ascendancy and creamed off individuals for his own administration if and when he needed them. Kataev also appeared blissfully unaware that even as he spoke, members of the Public Committee in Moscow were now so burdened with work for a referendum to extend Yeltsin's authority that the bulk of their efforts concerning privatisation

remained in the office. Examples of the social work done by the Public Committee at 22 Petrovka, moreover, indicated great dedication from volunteers but limited popular response, although the privatisation of trading establishments was well under way at this time. [27]

Parliamentary parties outside *Demokraticheskaia Rossiia*, however did even less outside the Supreme Soviet. They made and remade pressure blocs in Parliament and the Congress of Deputies – groups which were intended to extract concessions from the President rather than act as major links between public demands and official policy. Members of the Russian Unity bloc squabbled with each other unless a vote of confidence in Yeltsin was in question.[28] The New Russia bloc, formed by the Democratic Party of Russia, the People's Party and the Socialist Democratic Party in early winter 1991-92 was a formation whose novelty lay in its inactivity. More influential was the Civic Union, made up of the Democratic Party of Russia, the People's Party and the *Obnovlenie* (Renewal) group. Under the patronage of the *Dvizhenie Demokraticheskikh Reform* (Movement for Democratic Reforms) leader Arkadii Volskii and the democrat Travkin, this exerted a major influence on parliamentary politics during the post-April 1992 period, eventually extorting a special status from President Yeltsin for its (shortlived) parliamentary support [29] . Its significance outside Parliament, however, was vague, as with most organisations outside *Demokraticheskaia Rossiia*. As the tussle over Parliamentary powers (during 1993) clearly demonstrated, parties were primarily concerned with the arithmetic of the Supreme Soviet or the Congress of Deputies. They hardly attempted to bring a wider provincial public into their conflict with the President.

In significance for the political system, such insubstantial "democrat" presence outside Moscow was only matched by the chaos among Communist groups after the imposition of Yeltsin's ban in 1991 and the disastrous consequences for party organisation of infighting. Other than the People's Party of Free Russia and the small Socialist Labour Party, the old Communists were also represented by the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks, the Union of Communists (founded in April 1992), the Russian Communist Workers' Party and the Komsomol. All their various conferences had a large sprinkling of regional representatives and the RCWP's organisations, the *Trudovaia Moskva* and the *Trudovaia Rossiia*, were

able to bring large numbers of demonstrators to the streets. But, as newspaper reports pointed out, the warnings issued by the President's research-cum-analysis unit, RF-Politika, concerning Communist strength,[30] were exaggerated, and internal dissension paralysed any serious social work or action among Communists[31]. Viktor Anpilov and Alexei Sergeev, the main RCWP leaders, undertook Union activity in the Urals, but both here and in the Kuzbass, Independent Trade Unions, which had replaced the Communist Trade Union after 1990, left the new organisation weak.[32]

Dissension among Communists showed itself in Party organs[33] and at public meetings, such as the assembly held in May 1992, which was to be preparatory to a Conference of the CPSU. The RCWP delegation walked out first, arguing that their Party was the successor to the CPSU. Later, the Bolsheviks and the Komsmol also walked out[34]. Finally, when, in October, the 29th Conference actually did convene, delegates indicated that they were not quaint hangovers of a bygone age, accepting the disintegration of the USSR, however grudgingly, and also subscribing to an extensive criticism of social and economic policy in the seventies.[35] This did not fully settle their divisions, however, and only some sections (notably the Socialist Party of Labour and the RCWP) worked on mass organisations, differing substantially (in the case of the SPL) with the Communists of Russia group in the Congress of Deputies, who had thrown their lot in with "patriotic organisations" of the Right to form Parliament's Russian Unity bloc.

Seen against such a background, the statistics of the elections of 1993 and the response to the local elections under the 1993 Constitution are a clear indication of the political consequences of such party behaviour. They demonstrate a clear lack of public commitment to any major party, despite sustained interest in electoral politics. Results for the national contest, based on proportional representation, clearly differ from results of individual constituency contests (Table 3). Voter response to individuals in a locality was clearly an important aspect of political life. Voter turnout is of a reasonable order (over 50 per cent), indicating that national representative institutions continue to attract public attention. This is contrary to the situation of local government elections,

Table 3: 1993 Election Results

Party	*Proportional Representation*	*Constituency Contest*
Agrarian Party of Russia	21	14
Yavlinsky-Boldyrev-Lukin	20	2
Russia's Choice	40	16
Democratic Party of Russia	14	
Communists of Russia	32	14
Liberal Democratic Party	59	4
PRES	18	1
Women of Russia	21	-
Non-party	-	126

Source: Rossiiskie Vesti, 28 December, 1993.

where, despite the general interest shown by parties in politics, their organisational and mobilisation structure is weak. The powers of local officials have declined substantially since the collapse of the Planned Economy, leaving local issues of interest only to local officials. Hence, in many local government contests, the necessary quorum has not been forthcoming. [36]

Seen in the light of what has been said of party behaviour, the introversion of political groups, their poor sense of social involvement and their focus on institutions in Moscow, such results come as no surprise. It is safe to conclude that, although party voting may be seen among the public as an expression of discontent, party means little more—nor does the electoral process. Citizens are drawn to a host of social organisations (trade unions especially) if they wish to resolve their grievances.

The consequence is that in contemporary perceptions of democratic practice in the Russian Federation, political parties represent no fixed function. They are the means of settling disputes in Moscow rather than instruments of public expression of any significance. It is possible to see in them vestiges of old habits (as the political scientist Alexander Tsipko has done, when he speaks of the bolshevik quality of liberal groups and Russian democracy): or to dismiss them as institutions unworthy of immediate serious regard—a decorative necessity of a period of transition (as Andranik Migranyan has been inclined to do).[37] Ultimately, their public presence has been remote, even if tangible or even forceful on occasion. Unlike the Presidency, they have failed to shape the

Federation's political system in any major sense since the disintegration of the USSR, and they exercise a superficial social function at best.

Notes

1. Discussion of such a transition in G.O. Donnell, Philippe Schmitter, Laurence Whitehead, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore 1986, has been taken up in the context of political change in Russia, in essays in Alexander Dallin (ed.), *Political Parties in Russia*, University of California 1993, and (albeit critically) in Michael McFaul, *Post-Communist Politics*, Centre for Strategic and International Studies, Washington 1993. Andranik Migranyan has applied the model extensively to Russia in several newspaper articles.

2. A good discussion of the movements and parties which emerged at this time is to be found in Moscow News, February 1990, "Public Movements in the USSR"; see also, Michael McFaul and Sergei Markov, *The Troubled Birth of Russian Democracy*, Colorado 1991 and Vladimir Brovkin, "Revolution from Below: Informal Political Associations in Russia, 1988-89", *Soviet Studies* 1990. Units fell to pieces even as they were formed, as was the case of the group which brought E.I. Gorbatov to the position of Head of the town administration of Megion, in the Khanti-Mansiiskii okrug of Tiumen'. I received this information from G.A. Somov, of Tiumen', who was attempting to form a *Krest'ianskaia Demokraticheskaia Partiia Rossii* in May 1992. He had contact with a number of disaffected individuals in southern Russia and the Far East. Divisions were accentuated after 1991, when power devolved to local "democrat" groups and squabbling intensified. This occurred in the case of the Tomsk *namestnik*, Stefan Sulashkin, who was anathematised by local democrats after he became Presidential Representative in the region.

3. 12th Special Session of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR of the 11th Convocation. *Documents and Materials*. Moscow 1988, p 14.

4. *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, October 31, 1991, quoted in the Poul Funder Larsen, "Whatever happened to the Soviet Communist Party?", *International Viewpoint*. No. 217, November 25, 1991.

5. Anatolii Sobchak, *Khozhdenie vo vlast'*, Novosti, Moscow 1991, p.20.

6. *Moscow News*, January 29, 1991, p.9; *Moscow News*, March 18, p.19.

7. Sobchak, *op.cit.* p 13-28.

8. Eduard Shevarnadze, *Moi Vybor*, Novosti, Moscow 1991, p.20.

9. Joel Moses, *Soviet Provincial Politics in an Era of Transition and Revolution, 1989-91*, *Soviet Studies*, 1992, p.483-484.

10. Russian television paid due attention to a number of these contests, and provided special long discussions of the Yaroslav election.

11. Moses, *op.cit.*, p.481-482.

12. John Morrison, *Boris Yeltsin*, London 1991, provides a good resume of the events of this time and conflicts within the Communist Party.

13. *USSR Yearbook 1991*, Novosti, Moscow 1991, "Public Organisations", p.101-104.

14. The history of this organisation is best documented in Yitzhak M. Brudny, "The Dynamics of 'Democratic Russia'", 1990-1993, in *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 1993, 9, 2, and Michael McFaul, *Post-Communist Politics*, chapter 5. These studies are based on wide-ranging interviews and (in the case of Brudny) a study of the organisation's archive. Also of value are Michael Urban, "Boris Yeltsin, Democratic Russia and the Campaign for the Russian Presidency", Soviet Studies, Vol 44, no. 2, 1992, and *Argumenty i Fakty*, 1990, Nos. 8, 14, 16, 20 and 38, and *Ogonek*, 1990, No. 45, *Izvestiia*, 1990, October 20 and October 22. See also *Literaturnaia Gazeta*, 10 June, 1991.

15. Sergei Kovalev provides a good short account of the Moscow Memorial and the All-Russian Memorial in "Eshche o 'Moskovskom Memoriale'", *NG*, 7 March, 1993. This also provides some idea of the divisions in the societies.

16. In Moscow, DR candidates had 57 of 65 seats in the Russian Congress, in Leningrad, 25 of 33 seats, in Sverdlovsk, 7 of 9 seats. See Brudny, *op.cit*, p.145.

17. Quotations as in Brudny *op.cit.* p.150.

18. For the Presidential campaign, see Urban, *op.cit.* For Yeltsin's actions as President, *Vedomosti S"ezda Narodnykh Deputatov i Verkhovnogo Sovieta RSFSR*, issues for July and August.

19. *Izvestiia*, 13 December, 1991, for the pre-occupations of the Dvizhenie at this time. Stanislav Shatalin expressed his fears of Communism and fascism shortly after this, in an interview in *Izvestiia* 5 February, 1992. Democrats were willing to resort to "dirty tricks" themselves, to consolidate their position, as shown by Viktor Malukhin in his articles on "liberal bolshevism" in NG 15 April, 1993 and Literaturnaia Gazeta, 16 December, 1992. Alexander Tsipko took up this aspect of *Demokraticheskaia Rossiia* in his articles on the movement in NG, 19 April, 1993 and NG, 13 April, 1993

20. *Moscow News*, No. 4, January 26-February 2, 1992, p.8.

21. *Izvestiia*, 25 March, 1992.

22. Brudny, *op.cit.* Democratic Choice took a strong stand on *nomenklatura* privatisation thereafter, *Izvestiia*, 11 September 1992, sought to find a way out of the President/Parliament conflict, *NG*, 13 January, 1993, but always remained loyal to Yeltsin, *NG* 15 May, 1993 NG 7 August, 1993.

23. "Ukhodit li Demokraticheskaia Rossiia", *Moskovskie Novosti*, 23 August, 1992, questioned the public position of the movement in such circumstances.

24. *BBC Short Wave Broadcasts* series (*SWB*), 1 February, 1992.

25. *Moscow News*, March 15-22, 1992, "Government and Society Must Unite".

26. "Ukhodit li...", *Moskovskie Novosti*, 28 August 1992. The radicals controlled 10 of the 74 regional organisations.

27. I base this on observations over three visits to 22 Petrovka (of 3 hours duration each), in May 1992, when I observed DR workers preparing for the referendum and also had a long discussion with S.G. Vlasova, who was giving consultations for the day, and who was a remarkably articulate, approachable and dedicated DR worker.

28. Akstuchits (of the *Rossiiskoe Narodnoe Sobranie*), for instance, had clear differences of opinion with the *Pamyat'* organisation and Anpilov's Communist groups, NG 5 July, 1992.

29. *Moscow News*, January 26/February 2, 1992, *Moskovskie Novosti*, 23 August, 1992 and Izvestiia, 11 September,1992.

30. An RF Politika report is surveyed in *NG*, 9/7/92.

31. "Kto dolgryvaet Partiiu", *Izvestiia*, 16/5/92.

32. The All-Russian Labour Conference was the Union arm of the RCWP. See *Moskovskie Novosti*, 6 September, 1992.

33. In *Andropovskaia Pravda*, Nina Andreeva criticised plans by other Communists for the reconstitution of the CPSU, *NG*, 4 July, 1992.

34. *NG*, 28 April, 1992.

35. *Pravda*, 22 October, 1992.

36. *NG*, 22 March, 1994, Izvestiia, 23 March, 1994.

37. A. Tulpko, *op.cit.*; A. Migranyan, *NG*, 16 February, 1993.