

**THE FATE OF RUSSIA: SEVERAL OBSERVATIONS ON "NEW"
RUSSIAN IDENTITY**

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Introduction

Russia is going through a complicated historical period. A search is taking place for the optimal path of development and the best form of state structure. Social-economic ties are changing in a fundamental manner. Along with the not insignificant positive results of the political and economic reforms that are being carried out, negative processes in the economy, in the social sphere and in the relations between the center and the regions are becoming clearly evident. On the international arena, Russia is confronting the desire of a number of countries to use the transitional period to promote their economic and political interests, often to the detriment of Russians' national aspirations.

Three overarching factors characterize the Russian domestic situation: the continuing systematic crisis in society, which began in the Soviet period; the country's development crisis, which appeared during the transitional period; and the difficulties of overcoming the residues of the former totalitarian regime. (These problems are in turn linked to the global crisis that has resulted from the collapse of the Cold War order.)

It is obvious that the contemporary crisis is on a larger scale than the problems associated with the February and October 1917 Revolutions, the abolition of serfdom, and even the Time of Troubles. We are discussing a crisis that is comparable only to the epic transformation of the 13th century, when the collapse of one superethnos (Kievan Russ) occurred and a new nation, country, and civilization (the Russian superethnos) began to be born.

Notwithstanding all the dimensions of the national and world crises Russia is

experiencing today, at bottom Russia is suffering from a single phenomenon: a crisis of identity and national self-consciousness. It is closely linked with our inability to return to our traditional path of nation state development, and corresponding need to define a place for ourselves within the international political and economic systems. The protracted nature of this process of self-definition risks depriving Russia of its legitimate, natural, and still widely recognized leading role in world affairs.

Recent domestic development in Russia is of fundamental character and makes strategic analysts to review some basic questions related to the role and place of Russia in the next century, which will have a dramatic impact on US-Russia relations.

What we are facing right now in Russia is the end of liberal revolution, which began not in 1991 after the collapse of the SU, but much earlier - back in 1985, when M.Gorbachev took over in the Kremlin. As for the liberal idea, it became a driving force in the former SU even earlier - in the late 50s-early 60s, when for the majority of Soviet intellectuals it became absolutely clear that fundamental values of communism could no longer remain the global historical orientation of domestic development.

Now we are facing the end of the other historical cycle of this domestic development -liberal cycle. It is evident, that liberalism, which used to be the basic idea, superidea of the Russian state since 1991, and provided the state legitimacy is over. That means that the Russian state nowadays is lacking not only its identity but legitimacy as well.

Liberalism failed to provide sacrosanct approach of the national idea (communism did provide such a sacrosanct approach, being driven by historical project. As for the US, it is the idea of global leadership and human rights which does resolve at present the

problem of the state legitimacy).

The decline of liberal idea became obvious back in 1993, after the President fired the Russian Parliament and established authoritarian presidential regime of his personal power, being enthusiastically applauded by so-called civilized world, including administration of Bill Clinton. The recent development means total collapse of the liberal idea, which is recognized by the majority of Russian society. From now on liberals became very little, marginal political group in Russia, which will have no possibilities to be a decisive part of division-making process.

Having said that, I would like to make very important reservation. I have in mind the type of liberalism which formed in Russia in the 90s. I think that this form has nothing to do with genuine liberalism. It used to be perverted, wrong form of liberalism which has discredited the genuine form.

The central idea of liberalism is human being, its demands and rights. This idea was cynically neglected by national liberals. In this sense Russian liberals appeared to be very good students and successors of Russian communists.

The domestic policy of liberals was based upon several wrong assumptions. The first wrong assumption. Russian liberals were proceeding from the premise that while introducing market economy and private property without social guarantees, without well-thought state regulation would automatically bring about prosperous society in Russia. Another wrong assumption. They believed that while introducing formal attributes and institutes of democracy, such as free elections, parliament democracy, political freedoms, including free mass media, without effort to build the real civil society, would bring about - mechanically- real democracy. That is why they in fact made

a try to form classical liberal capitalism (that is to say actually capitalism of XIX or even XVIII century), while the capitalist world have already switched to neoliberalism, introducing in its every-day life the whole spectrum of social guarantees and state-regulation economic measures.

In this sense one can speculate about the wrong interpretation of liberal values in modern Russia. Therefore one can envisage that the genuine liberalism is still a fundamental challenge for Russia.

In foreign policy these wrong assumptions has been translated into exceeded expectations of quick benefits from integration into the world economy. The Russian government really believed that after it abandoned communism, Russia would be included in the major Western political and economical institutions not only like G-7, London and Paris Clubs, but also in NATO and EU as a full-fledged member. Russian government counted on massive economical assistance and support from Western countries and first of all from the United States.

Moreover in this context Russia was ready to give up geopolitical approach in general. Russia selected the US as a major partner, neglecting its near-abroad neighbours. That explains why Russia left so rapidly its geopolitical frontiers in Europe.

In reality the US had another understanding of partnership. Russia was not treated as a full-fledged partner. Instead the US has introduced the concept of its global leadership which was equal to monopolar world. They used Russian weakness - at least as it was perceived in Russia - to advance their own narrow and short-sighted interests and began to play the "geopolitical pluralism card", encouraging new nations to distance themselves from Moscow. These activities and especially drive towards NATO

expansion, despite Russian protests, were perceived by elite as betrayal of the mere idea of partnership and provoked deep disappointment with the US actions in Russia. That, in turn, provoked the major problems in US-Russian relations, such as rejection of the State Duma to ratify START-2, Russian cooperation with "rogue states", opposition to NATO enlargement, aggressive declarations by some Russian policy-makers v-a-v CIS states and so on. In turn, such Russian actions were labeled in the US as "imperialistic ambitions". Although both countries managed not to fall into a new confrontation, the development caused mutual suspicions and misperceptions.

As a result Russian political elite has made following unpleasant conclusions.

1. Russia should rely upon its own potential and capabilities in restructuring its economy.
2. The concept of integration into the world economy should be cautious and balanced.
3. The concept of liberalism and democracy should be rethought having in mind introducing fundamental prerequisites of democracy: market economy; state ruled by law; civil society.
4. In foreign policy Russia has to identify and strictly stick to its national interests.

It is time to admit that the attempt in recent years to implant primitively understood foreign values onto Russian soil has met with a vigorous rebuff from the Russian people. Russians still do not measure personal success by wealth, and the national mentality scorns the so-called "New Russians" and their values. The ten years of trial and error in domestic and foreign policy, the excessive and naive expectations regarding the market economy, Western-style democracy, Russia's rapid integration in

the world economy, the rush from globalism to isolationism - all this confirmed that Russia's path does not have an analogue in world history. Moreover, the crisis that has seized Russian society is tightly connected with the impossibility of transferring the ideology and practices of Western liberalism to Russian soil. It has become clear that to count on the Russian nation's submissively accepting the ideals, values, and social forms of Western civilization is a dangerous illusion not only for Russia, but also for the whole world.

National security and russian idea

One of the recent concerns that stirs half-sleeping Russian mentality is the lack of the federal national security concept. The official concept, which was adopted December 17, 1997, is not the case, since it does not respond the fundamental questions, related to Russian national identity - both in the short term and in the long run. As if expecting the messiah, the nation is expecting the real document that, according to our Constitution, President must voice in his annual message to Parliament. So far, the country is torn by disagreement, while mutual misunderstanding as to the national security concept and lack of common, comprehensible, and acceptable language only add to the situation.

This appears to be quiet normal, and we do not have to overdramatize it. Self-identification of Russia is still underway. The new Russia is not the Soviet Union, moreover nor is she the old Russian Empire. Her new borders, option, culture, civilization, inner development did make Russia another state that previously had not existed on the global political or geographical map. Several years is a short period to mould national consciousness, shape political system, and perceive objectives and prospects of national development. These are just few but very important constituents

that underlie national security. So far, we have not specified the subject of national security, namely the concept of Russia as a state.

And yet there is more to it. National security concept must be reinforced by consensus, or in the absence thereof, by national agreement that goes beyond political strife and interests of certain parties and addresses a number of key matters, above all the best model for social, economic, and political development of the country. It must somehow harmonize preferences of the people and of the elite that they might have with respect to the state system, economic pattern and the nature of relationship with the outside world. It must be a sort of Common Effort Philosophy (N.Fedorov) and a technology prescribing how the compromise required for such accord can be reached. Much time would pass before participating scientists, politicians, general public, and, of course, Parliament might achieve it.

The adopted Security Law (1992) reads that security is the protected existence that allows for the advancement of an individual, society, and the state. If this is so, the maintained security is not confined to protection, it also accommodates development. It is not just a mere removal of threats (security policy in its narrow, traditional meaning). What is meant here is tangible and intangible values of the community, constitutional system, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the state, namely, the activity typically qualified as consolidated long-term government policy which, for instance, the US political science defines as "Grand Strategy" instead of "National Security Strategy".

If this is an approach to follow, Russia must primarily have a clearly-cut long-term aim incorporating national top priorities or, in other words, the national (Russian) idea. This is to a certain extent a conceptual code, the spawn that brings fish to life.

As it stands, the problem is that the key idea has not been perceived and therefore has not been formulated yet.

In few words, the national idea of the USA is "the crusade for democracy". The national idea of Ukraine, Estonia, other post-Soviet states is the national statehood built on their independence from Russia. The new Germany also has its national idea. It is the restoration of the unified German state and economic expansion in Europe. Even in the USSR there was some national idea which communists interpreted as state and territorial expansion.

What is the national idea in the new Russia?

It seems understandable that Russia's standing concerns should have much in common with universal long-term interests of any major nation. They must include at least three categories: military security, political sovereignty, sustainable economic development. Obviously, Common Effort Philosophy must focus on Russia's restoration and improvement as a power living in harmony with itself and the outside world. This is going to be the foundation for national concord and unity of the Russian society. Strategically, the country is likely to have opted for the universal milestones of her development: the formation of an open society that includes the triangle of market economy, civil society and legally organized state. However, such assertions overshadow Russia's identity and could hardly bring us closer to the comprehension of a truly national idea.

Perhaps, another approach is required, if we are not to be trapped by the current politics. We assume that Russia's national security has different aspects attributed to its history and culture. To resolve most urgent items on the national agenda, we have to

build on Russia's age-old interests and tasks.

Here is their approximate list. Will the new Russia go for anarchy instead of creating and strengthening a powerful state? Will she choose a distinctive development pattern or will she copy western civilization brought into being by liberal economy? Will the country withdraw or will she be more open to the world through integration in the world economy and extensive growth in political, economic, and cultural areas? Will Russia stake on self-sustaining or will she rely on external assistance? Will she agree to the status of a major European nation having regional interests or will she seek the status of a superpower having global interests? Was the Soviet Union to collapse? How to assess its dissolution? Is it a crime against state or is it a natural phase in its history (the so called contraction)? Next, how to treat the Stalin-style state, the Russian communism, the USSR, and the attempts of its restoration? Are par excellence traditional values of the West - classical capitalism, private property, liberal ideology, democracy - possible in Russia? And more importantly, have Russians had their say in world history or probably their time has yet to come? Have they accomplished their mission or not? Have they exhausted themselves while struggling with other ethnoses or do they save their latent potential for a better time?

Obviously, some metahistorical concept of national security that suggests the existence of an ideology viable throughout Russia may offer answers to these questions. Russia has never had such an ideology either before or after the October revolution. It may be said that advocates of Russia's religious and philosophical renaissance (the end of XIX - the beginning of XX century) started working out critical approaches. However, the challenge was not met. The principles were not even clearly defined. Let's venture a

hypothetical guess.

Russia's historic mission

As a rule, among any sufficiently large nation, during a time of crisis or ascent, a national idea has appeared that has stood above the utilitarian tasks of the self-preservation, reproduction, and development of the ethnos. At such crucial points in its history, this people are instinctively conscious of themselves as the carrier of a certain historical mission that goes beyond the boundaries of everyday life. If one assumes that every nation fulfills its historic mission and task in world history, it is impossible not to see that only certain nations have "supernational tasks". Lev Gumilev and Daniil Andreev regarded those nations as superpeople, or supernations representing a group of nations united by common culture they are jointly creating.¹

As for the Russian nation, it always was a center of ethnic and cultural attraction of not only the Slavs, but also the adjoining peoples. In fact, Russians are defined more by their geographic location than by blood. They have never constituted a nation in the Western understanding of this term. Unlike the nations of Western Europe, the Russians have never been obsessed with the idea of creating a national state, and never equated the nation and the state. Russia's national idea always has been separate from the idea of Russian nationalism. Russian philosophers and ethnographers have traditionally maintained that human culture and civilization constitute a single whole, representing, as Vladimir Soloviev put it, "some large entity" or "great cumulative substance", while nations are an interim stage in the advancement of ethnos towards supernational, global

¹ Lev N. Gumilev. *Etnogeneze and Biosphere of Earth*, Moscow, 1994.

unity.²

The second half of the 20th century gave a resounding confirmation of this thesis. Now it is becoming clearer and clearer that, notwithstanding the divisive power of passionate nationalism and political and economic separatism, the modern world is undoubtedly moving slowly but steadily toward a new single historical community. But can this movement take place automatically, without any conscious design? Probably not. How else can one explain the incessant-despite the numerous unsuccessful experiments-attempts of humanity to not only contrive such a project, but to put it into practical effect and test it on itself? If this is so, then sooner or later a bearer of the unifying mission should appear.

As is well known, at present the United States aspires to this role. But does that country have the necessary moral, spiritual, and cultural factors-elements that are needed more than purely military and economic factors-for the carrying out of the dominating and unifying functions of the new civilization? Not only politicians but also entire nations, states, and continents have serious doubts in this regard. There are good reasons for assuming that the so-called "new world order", that is being propagated by the United States in no way corresponds to the modern paradigm of the constructive and stable development of humanity. It is rather the death convulsions of "Atlanticism", resulting from the passing from the historical stage of the Anglo-Saxon era. In its place a "post-material" era is coming, along with a "post-economic" (i.e., humanitarian) culture with different intellectual and spiritual values. The basis of this worldwide movement already today (and even more so in the 21st century) is not increasing the volume of the

² Vladimir Soloviev, *Russian Idea*, Moscow, 1990.

consumption of resources, but preventing a global ecological catastrophe.

Which nation is most suited for the fulfillment of these tasks? Evidently, that one that possesses such features, for instance, as cosmopolitanism, openness toward others cultures, tolerance, and expansive spiritual values. Great Russian writers and philosophers such as Feodor Dostoevsky and Nicholas Berdayev convincingly have shown that all these qualities are most intrinsic to the Russian people. The Russian nation-merciful, tolerant, passionate, and susceptible to other cultures-can serve as a core of this movement towards a new single historical community. Indeed, the Russian spiritual imperium has existed as a combination of the spiritual hierarchies of the whole world. Yes, Russia is indeed an Orthodox country, but it is also a Muslim country, a Buddhist country, and a Catholic, Protestant, and Judaic country. The citizens of Russia can belong to different religions or be atheists, but one must never forget that the spiritual connection of Russia with the world is carried out through them, and that they are the bearers of the results of Russia's labors to all the other civilizations of the world. The historic mission of the Russian people lies primarily in the spiritual sphere: the creation of a world-class culture. To lead humanity towards unification through moral perfection is precisely how Dostoevsky defined the mission of the Russian people.

Only a nation of high spiritual values - and Russian nation is potentially such a nation - is capable of carrying out this unifying mission. If this hypothesis is true, then all of Russian history becomes understandable. Over the course of centuries, while surmounting innumerable obstacles, the Russian people prepared themselves for the fulfillment of this historic mission.

From this perspective one can presume that Russia's history is the history of

struggle for the preservation, reproduction and development of the superethnos, the custodian of unique spiritual and cultural traditions that are substantial for inter-culture. In fact, it was the struggle for the right to accomplish the national supermission that accords with the ultimate human goals and Providence. At the same time it was basically a religious struggle waged by the duty-ridden nation that genetically and instinctively accepts its liability. The Russian statesmen who were up to the historical supermission remained in the folk's memory as prominent figures and originators. Ironically as it may seem, even when the deeds claimed innumerable human lives, like it was, for instance, under Peter the Great, but the historical horizon promised the supernation increased opportunities for its creativity, be it urban construction or great culture closely related to other nations and states, then such statesman was considered to have coped with the task. The activity that contributes to the growing power and influence of the Russian state and, therefore, opens up new prospects for the development of the creator nation, was historically and morally justified. It was approved by the intellectual elite and ordinary people.

Daniil Andreev speculated on one of the exhausting puzzles in our history. How to explain the Russian expansion that went in all directions? Why did the Russians who lived on the vast, undeveloped, low dense East-European Plain occupy, not without help of a powerful state and individuals, in some 300-400 years the severe, cold, bleak, almost desert territory thrice bigger than their motherland and rich only in wild animals, birds and fish only to step over through the Bering Sea and get as far as California?³

The transformation of Russia from a borderland country into a great Eurasian

³ Daniil Andreev, *The Rose of the World*, Moscow, 1993.

power -occupying the entire space between the Roman Catholic, Muslim, Indian, Confucian, and Japanese (Shintoist) cultures (i.e. practically between all the existing cultures) - had great significance. The culture will transform into inter-culture only when it is closely associated with other cultures that are going to be assimilated, united, melted and finally translated into the planetary entity.

One may suppose that this development was related to the worldwide historical purpose of Russia, and that this territory will serve as an arena for those creative acts that the 21st and 22nd centuries will witness. If a great people are destined to become a catalyst for the transformation of both themselves and the other nations of the world into a single historic community, then it should possess a territory corresponding to the scale of its mission.

Century after century, amazingly persistent Russians went East, North, West and South bringing together other ethnoses and peoples. Mutual openness of Russians and outlanders leaning towards Russia brought about a single ethnic community - the Russian superethnos. Minorities, or subethnoses, preferred to exist under the Russian superethnos comparably tolerant towards them than to be exposed to the danger of being eliminated by other, less tolerant ethnoses. Geographically, Russia was a natural refuge for emigrants from the West and the South. In the XX century Russia absorbed all those willing to affiliate with her and since then has always been open to other minorities and majorities. What's more, in the XX century she actually became a donor for the whole subcontinents. The openness of Russians which is the key to fulfillment of the supermission encouraged the champions of various cultures and religions to come to Russia, while the incorporated cultural traditions made it possible to form inter-culture in

future.

Certainly, the creation of inter-culture is the moral obligation of Russia. Not more. However, if we are to believe Vladimir Soloviev saying that nations and also individuals are moral beings, then their historical flair defines their existence by "two opposite practices: as law of life when the obligation is fulfilled and as law of death when the obligation is defaulted".⁴ Therefore, Russia's moral imperative to accomplish her mission is at the same time the clue to the survival of ethnical cultural.

If we agree that Russia's mission is to create inter-culture, then the sources of the Russian communism are understandable. The Russian communism is the false inter-culture, the fictitious inter-religion. Russia accepted the Anti-Christ for Christ. The Russian idea assumed distorted, or rather disfigured form of proletarian internationalism. The supermission, to use poetry, "the cosmic program formulated in the Universe" and embodied in the cultural and historical tradition, made the nation susceptible to communism.

This is the reason why the Russian idea has always been a mission. Since the times of Vladimir and Ivan Kalita Russia realized herself as the leading custodian of Christian values of Orthodox statehood. The idea was articulated as a formula: "There were two Romes, the Third Rome is Moscow, and there will be no fourth Rome". The program spelt out for centuries stated its implementation tools: the Russian statehood is the instrument of self-preservation and perfection of the Russian supnation, and also the ideological foothold that forces Russians, as the blessed historical nation, as the mouthpiece of God, to "suffer for others". As a state, Russia is destined by world history

to preserve and improve the mouthpiece of God. That is why the Russian idea (as the mainspring of the Russian ideology to be formulated) included the assembly process ("sobornost"), statehood, cosmic approach ("Russian cosmism").⁵

If all this is correct, then one can explain why any revolutionary changes in Russia - be it the reforms of Peter the Great, the development of the Russian Empire, or the October Revolution - exert a fundamental influence on the whole world. Those developments that have occurred and are occurring today in Russia are of world-wide significance. These developments always were a precondition for humanity's entering into another spiritual dimension, the imparting to it of a renewed cultural impulse of development, and its return to the path of creating genuinely human values.

Russia historically has asserted itself as a great power that one way or another embodied, as a bearer of a certain model of an alternative civilisation, an alternative way of life. Extremely often it also embodied a claim to leadership in the solving of some long-felt task of mankind (for example, the achievement of social justice in the Soviet period).

At this historical stage of the development of humanity, an alternative to the society of general consumption, which is beginning to exhaust its possibilities, is needed. The model of progress that devours world resources in an unrestrained consumption race is reaching a dead end. It is being replaced by a "post-material", "post-economic" model of development, at the center of which will be "post-economic man" with a different structure of needs, a humanitarian structure, and primarily intellectual and spiritual values. The main universal task already today (and even more in the 21st century) is

⁴ Vladimir Soloviev, *Russian Idea*, Moscow, 1990.

becoming not to increase the volume of the consumption of resources, but to secure stable development.

Already now a person, a society, and a state must ever more frequently confront the question, "to have or to be"? In the same way, the role of the balance of interests as a regulator of human social relations is diminishing in favour of an increase in the significance of fundamental moral values. For Russia, this transformation of its civilization in the direction of a change in values from "to have" to "to be" will proceed the least painfully; in essence, it will be a path toward self-consciousness.

Precisely the moral element should lie at the basis of the coming into being of Russia. Moreover, the assertion of a place for Russia in the world and its future high status must lay in the construction of a new paradigm and model of development, which by its character is historical and universal.

Indeed, the time for common human civilization has yet to come. Its dynamism will be maintained in the XXI century by several geopolitical and ethno-confessional centers that are tangible right now. Each of the centers is seeking the best model of its development and is trying to define its role in the future civilization. For Russia, it means national survival: will the nation drag behind or spearhead the world development.

The weight of russian history

One cannot understand what is taking place in Russia today outside the context of Russian history. It shows that Russia has always remained a part of a single, common cultural civilisation, and never "fell out" of it. And therefore talk about Russia's "returning" to the "community of civilized countries" not only is historically incorrect,

⁵ Vladimir Gorbunov, Moscow, 1994. Russian Cosmism, Moscow, 1992.

but also contradicts common sense.

For two thousand years the Russian people were repeatedly threatened with the danger, if not of extermination, then in any case with absorption and dissolution into other ethnoses. The Mongol Tatars, the Turks, and others threatened the Russian and Slavic nation with, if not physical destruction, then its existence as a freely developing and independent nation.

Russia held out, though, the survival cost flesh and blood of the supernation. The country tried different, including capitalist, development patterns and state structures. The mighty superpower was established. The huge territory having unique natural resources, the sea-gates to so many seas and oceans, and numerous neighbors was inhabited and developed. Together with other peoples Russians managed to create the unique culture, the harbinger of global culture.

In the course of a millennium in which they defended the people of Western Europe (some of whose members, the Crusaders, themselves attacked Russia) from the onslaught of the Great Steppe, the Russian people created an enormous and great country that was bound together by a feeling of unity. The only way the Russian nation could survive this unprecedented protracted two-front assault was to occupy as much territory as possible and to create on it a powerful military apparatus and a super-centralized state that controlled its subjects' entire political, religious, and economic lives. The effectiveness of this strategy was confirmed on many occasions, and it has continued to influence Russian attitudes towards foreign and defense policy right down to the present day.

Russia has historically arisen as a political, economic, and administrative union of

lands, ethnoses, and cultures that are consolidated in a common state with common values and interests. No special "Slavic" or even more "Russian" privileges existed. Not one of the component state nationalities was dominated or subordinated.

The openness of the Russians to these minority ethnic groups resulted in Russians perceiving other minorities as part of their own ethnic group, and led to the creation of a single ethnic community, the Russian superethnos. The development of Slavic unity was especially significant in this regard. The expansion of the Ottoman Empire served as a powerful catalyst for the unification of the Slavs, with Russia as their geographic centre. It resulted from the free choice of the southern Slavs, especially the Serbs and the Bulgars, who found precisely in Russia a defender against the Turks.

As a result of these circumstances, by the first half of the 19th century Russia had become the largest and most powerful country in the world. In 1814 its troops were deployed from Paris in the west to Alaska in the east, and its soldiers were operating in the Caucasus and in Central Asia. However, Russia's defeat in the Crimean War in 1854 showed that its traditional policies were failing. The country for the first time tried out the Western model of economic development. However, the results of this approach during the 1861 - 1914 period were meager. Despite the existence of private property, a market economy, a State Duma, and even a pro-Western government, the country was unable to survive the experiences of the 1904-1905 Russian-Japanese War and the First World War, during which it lost to its eastern (Japan) and western (Germany) rivals.

In October 1917, the Russia chose a new strategy of development - the Bolshevik path of forced mobilization - whose high costs were paid by the Russian people themselves. The pursuit of communism led to a confrontational and isolationist ("iron

curtain") approach towards the outside world that was uncharacteristic of Russian culture, which had always been eager to incorporate other cultures and to welcome all peoples and civilizations. It conflicted with Russia's tradition of adding to its own culture by enriching the culture of others and promoting conditions that heightened intercultural understanding.

By definition and history, Russian culture cannot remain isolated from other countries for a long time. By adopting a policy of closure, the communist government entered into an irreconcilable conflict with Russia's national cultural tradition, which absorbs within itself other cultures, enriching itself and others and thereby creating the reconditions for the creation of a genuine world culture. Russian culture by definition and by its historic destiny could not long live behind an "iron curtain", isolated from other cultures. After World War II it seemed that no one could threaten the Russians, who had gathered around them hundreds of other nations and had again expanded their influence to the north, west, east, and south. But now another form of historical confrontation arose: the Cold War. The protracted confrontation exhausted the competing economies in a costly arms race that in the final analysis favoured the West more than Russia. By the late 1980s, it had become clear that it was no longer possible for the country to exist in the former system of state and moral values. The M.Gorbachev policy of "perestroika" was a reflection of this new situation.

But right after M.Gorbachev's policies led to the collapse of the "iron curtain", the great communist state, having lost its moral and ideological pivot, quickly disintegrated. Acquisition of nuclear weapons after the Second World War, and the emergence of nuclear parity between the Soviet Union and the United States led to a fundamental

change in Russia's international and consequently domestic situation. They allowed Russia for the first time in its centuries-long history to become invulnerable to military invasion. The absence of an external military danger in turn led to a weakening of centralized state power, a softening of the state ideology, and an atrophying of the ties between the peoples of the former USSR.

One must look for the reason in the spiritual realm. As it was said earlier, communism was a false and distorted form of the Russian idea. Under the rubric of proletarian internationalism, the Russian idea was deformed. After 1917, the country proceeded along a false path. False communist values were accepted at the expense of genuine human ones. When it became clear that the spreading of communism ("world revolution") would not happen instantaneously, an "iron curtain" was lowered (precisely by us, not the West) and an extraordinary experiment took place - an attempt to create a world culture on the scale of a single (admittedly large) country.

The liberation from the remnants of Stalinism, from the Stalinist machine of political terror, and from communism itself was one of the most important spiritual achievements of the Russian people, who were tired of living in a system of lies. Yet, the collapse of communism engendered a moral vacuum among the Russian people after the Soviet state, which had defined its mission as the building and spreading of communism, collapsed and thereby deprived the Russian people of their moral references. Instinctive, or rather intuitive doubts first haunted the nation, then intellectuals (phenomenon of dissidents, Sakharov, Solzhenitsyn, others), and finally brought it home to the country's political elite that the Russian communism is not inter-culture at all. Since then nothing could stop the nation's drifting away from the totalitarianism hedged against the outside

world. The "iron curtain" fell at one fell. Moral code and ideology frustrated, the great state collapsed at one stroke. As the supernation assumed that its mission was over, an ideological and moral vacuum gave way to moral decay and humiliation and hasty moves to find another foothold.

The revelation that the road chosen seventy-five years ago leads to nowhere brought about widespread discontent. The epiphany shocked the Russian soul. The Russian people fell under the sway of rather primitive consumer society values that do not reflect universal human values. A weakening of ethnic feelings among the Russians themselves was a parallel process to the loss of those factors that had held the USSR together.

This is convincingly shown by the behaviour of Russians in the "New Abroad" (the newly independent non-Russian republics of the former USSR), especially their passivity toward the discriminatory measures that have been taken against them. It is also shown by the tolerance with which Russians within Russia treat separatism within their country, whether it be by geographically concentrated national minorities or by Russians themselves living within a particular geographic area (the Urals, the Far East, etc.). This latter development threatens to divide the Russian ethnic community into various subethnic groups and calls into question its very survival. The ideological and moral vacuum of the end of the Soviet period led to spiritual decay, degradation, and spasmodic attempts to find other bases of support. This temporary historical defeat threw the Russian nation into the orbit of influence of material values.

But the aftertaste of the anti-Communist revolution of 1991, and the anti-Soviet revolution of 1993, has been bitter. Despite the positive features of the culture of the

liberal economies, Russia has demonstrated a lack of susceptibility to its export version. The ten years of economic and political reforms-which began with Gorbachev and intensified under Gaidar, Yeltsin, and Chubais - have shown that it is impossible to simply graft "classical" Western values onto the Russian people. The market economy of John Dickens and Jack London, the Anglo-American type of democracy, and a foreign type of state structure are elements that would make Russia an appendage to the historical development of the Western countries. Privatization has given birth not to a middle class, but a criminal nouveaux rich. What has been created in Russia is not a Western-type economy, but a phenomenon unknown in history: an economy of criminal clans. We wanted to create a national bourgeoisie, but ended up with compradors who were unwilling to invest in domestic industries and simply exported capital abroad. Today Russia is threatened neither by democracy nor autocracy, but a criminal oligarchy. Instead of a "Great Democratic Reform" we got a "Great Criminal Revolution".

Of course, this defeat is not final. It is only a result of a perturbation of the spirit, of spiritual enlightenment, of a recognition of the falsity of the path chosen three quarters of a century ago. It represents a temporary spiritual stupor, a condition of moral shock, and happily a reliable sign (and prerequisite) of a spiritual and moral ascent.

What we are witnessing now is not "the end of history", even in its western understanding, contesting cultures and ethnoses. Of course, it is not the triumph of western values, liberal ideology and economic civilization with prevailing materialism and consumerism. The true competition between ethnoses will involve and is involving not only or solely their economy but culture, civilization, intellect and spirit. Emphases here are different. History provides Russia with a critical advantage making the country

the "world's cultural laboratory" and the center attracting other ethnoses. To channel the historical competition between ethnoses in a way that most favored their country is a real challenge for the current wave of Russian politicians which they might take up.

The collapse of communism has not yet led to the spiritual and moral rebirth of the Russian people. But this will inevitably happen. The historical calling of the Russian people is to preserve Russia's distinctive civilization, which is based on spiritual principles. The October Revolution, the Civil War, Socialism, the war with Germany, and the revolutions of 1991 and 1993 were the most important boundaries of Russian national history. They were steps along the agonizing path of the development of the self-consciousness of the Russian people - a people that is still very young, and who possess a great future.

Universal values and national identity

Russia has its own national values. Their content - as the case of other nations - boils down to three core principles: the preservation and flourishing of the nation; the defense of its territory; and the conservation and development of the national way of life.

Yet, today it is important to find a harmonious combination of universal and national values. Russians must assimilate the most important achievements of humanity while preserving and developing their distinctive national characteristics. In order to serve as the basis of the political strategy of the state in the area of national security, national values must be expressed in the form of national interests.

National interests lie at the basis of the formation of the strategic tasks of

domestic and foreign policy. They represent an integrated expression of the vital interests of the individual, the society, and the state. At the present stage, the supreme national interest of Russia is the guaranteeing of both a stable growth in its population's living standards and the well-being of individual Russians on the basis of stable economic development and the observance of individual rights and freedoms.

Today Russia is engaged in an agonizing and intense search for a new mode of existence. The answer to this quest may be found in Russia's spiritual rebirth and development. The constructive development of any country rests on two pillars: freedom and technology. So far Russia has both. Technology is the brains of the nation or, more precisely, a product of the activities of these brains. Their preservation is central to a nation's survival. Russia must do everything it can for the sake of preserving its high technologies and thereby safeguarding its leading role in the 21st century. Freedom must be equally protected since we have already paid a very high price for it: the break up of the Soviet Union, deteriorating living standards, a curtailment of Russians' average life expectancies, and the unnatural dismemberment of the Russian superethnos.

In the course of history there are naturally pauses and temporary reverses. But in the end Russia is doomed to freedom and its own distinctive variant of democracy. It has tried all the other variants of development and state structures (with the exception, perhaps, of fascism) and has rejected them. There is no need to fear that the democratization of Russia, and the coming into being of a law-governed state, signifies the loss of Russia's distinctiveness. On the contrary, only a law-governed state offers a reliable means of ensuring the country's truly independent and distinctive development. A democratic orientation, trust in society, and a policy of openness—all these make it

possible for Russia to pursue its own development path.

At present, morally and intellectually, Russia is threatened with assimilation into the mass culture of the West. "Mass culture" is the other side of the coin of the mass economic civilization of the consumer society of the West. It represents its *modus vivendi*, the indispensable condition for its existence. But in Russia mass culture has only existed when the nation has been in a state of psychological shock. Now, people are sobering up. Insofar as the country experiences a spiritual rebirth, this surrogate culture undoubtedly will be displaced from public consciousness.

One ought not to forget that the struggle between Russia and the West, which Nicholas Berdyaev called the struggle of the spirit and the machine, is not a simple thing. Russia has not become a slave to the machine. But this does not mean that Russia must prefer only the force of spirit. Material development opens new horizons for the Russian spirit. Certain elements of modern society - such as the market, private property, and scientific and technological progress-are universal values that create the preconditions for the stable development of any society. Russia must not hesitate to incorporate them in its national model of development, but not blindly. The nation must do so in accordance with its own distinctive culture and history, and its centuries-old tradition. Any conception of how best to guarantee the country's national security must reflect, if not an absolute consensus, than at least a sufficiently wide range of agreement among political leaders with respect to a number of fundamental questions relating to the country's optimal model of social-economic and social-political development. It must synthesize the political preferences of the people and the elite with respect to the type of state structure and economic system appropriate for Russia, and the nature of our relationship

with the outside world. Its formation will be a lengthy process in which scholars, political figures, a wide circle of society, and of course Parliament must participate.

At present, a shaky consensus has matured in favour of the necessity of preserving Russia's distinctiveness. Of course, national peculiarities can have both "pluses" and "minuses". Spirituality is undoubtedly a positive feature of a nation's uniqueness. In the final analysis precisely it is the guarantee of Russia's independence and security against the impossibility of instilling alien values into Russia. In this regard, a powerful state is clearly an instrument for preserving Russia's distinctiveness. It is precisely for this reason that the idea of a strong state always has been an integrating idea for Russian society. And now in this society the political divide lies not between leftists and rightists, but between those who advocate a strong state as an instrument of escape from the present crisis, and those who are against it. The formulation and implementation of national development policies on the scale of a country such as Russia requires a strong state, but strong not in the "physical" but in the "intellectual" sense. The fundament of such a state is above all the intellectual and spiritual resources of society. In the use of these resources one sees the essence of modern democracy, which makes it possible to ensure both the power of the majority and the rights of minorities.

In the aftermath of the anti-communist revolution in 1991 and the anti-Soviet revolution in 1993, on the eve of the coming election a new ideology is taking shape. The enlightened democratic patriotism is going to be the ideology of the Russian renaissance. It is already clear that the ideology will incorporate the ideas of an open society, individual freedom, strong and responsible state power. The emerging Russian-style democracy is a constitutional blend of the advanced social technologies of the West and

the Russian tradition of one thousand year history, the Russian-style market economy that is socially oriented. Formal pseudodemocracy or totalitarian dictatorship is unacceptable to Russia. Democratic and at the same time national model of statehood that stands closer to corporate democracy and corporate statehood, as Ivan Ilin defined the process, is Russia's road.⁶ Russia will have a modern political system with a strong state that acts strictly within the framework of the law (i.e., a legal state) and which has found the optimal balance between the concepts of freedom and justice. If the country does not deviate from this path, then for the first time in history Russia will attain a compromise between freedom - which leads in its absolute manifestation to anarchy, the breakdown of the state, rebellions, and internecine strife - and justice, which engenders in its extreme form despotism and totalitarianism. The search for that balance is dominating the current political scene in Russia.

Overcoming the myths of a shocked nation

Several myths have taken root in our country that hamper Russia's spiritual rebirth and development. It is the duty of all responsible Russian politicians-if they want to see their country independent, influential, and prosperous-to dispel these myths.

The first myth is that Russia "lost" the Cold War. This myth is of foreign (especially American) origin. However much it serves the interests of the American government to promote this myth, it demoralizes Russians and creates among them a feeling of wounded pride and aggravates the national inferiority complex. In fact, neither Russia nor the Russians lost the Cold War. It is difficult to appraise the ending of the

⁶ Ivan Iliin, *The Essence of Legal Consciousness*, Moscow, 1994.

Cold War using the categories "loser" and "winner" insofar as it was a form of trench warfare that did not lead to territorial acquisitions. It was a competition of two ways of life, of two value systems, which on the surface looked like a competition of economies or like an arms race. But neither the Western way of life-although one must not underestimate its influence-nor the NATO military machine won this war. The Soviet communist system, having accumulated a horde of internal contradictions, disintegrated from within. The collapse of the Soviet system (but not of the USSR) was both a natural process and inevitable in so far as this system turned out to be grounded on an unstable foundation. And if someone gained a victory over it, then it was the Russians themselves, who found within themselves the strength to reject the Communists' myths.

The second myth is that the new Russia is still an "evil empire", that has cunningly changed its outward appearance but not its essence. This myth is also quite clearly of foreign origin. It is advantageous to everyone: to the United States, which is mobilizing Americans for a "crusade for democracy" to NATO, which now has a new enemy for the sake of its own self-preservation; to the countries of Central Europe and the Baltics, which are looking for a pretext to rapidly enter this military bloc; and to certain countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), which are forging their nationhood on the basis of independence from "aggressive Russia with its great power ambitions". It is profitable to everyone but Russia itself, where because of this myth anti-Western and even isolationist sentiments are growing.

Hatred towards communism and the Soviet system is turning into hatred towards Russia itself. The ideology of "Sovietophobia" is changing into an ideology of "Russophobia". Among Russian politicians a disturbing suspicion is emerging: did not

the West from the beginning conceal a struggle with Russia under the fig leaf of its "noble" struggle with Soviet Communism? It is difficult to give a definite negative answer to this question. The latest publications and declarations of such anti-Communists and Sovietologists as Zbigniew Brzezinski and Henry Kissinger give one good reasons to conclude that the basic motives of certain Western circles during the Cold War was elementary Russophobia.

Unfortunately, the same conclusion could be made with respect to many Soviet human rights activists and scholars, who have made no small contribution to the formation of the negative image of Russia and the Russians, and who are trying to inculcate a guilt complex for Russia's alleged exploitation and repression of its national minorities. This myth serves as an instrument in the hands of those who seek the further disintegration of the state.

The third myth is that Russia is conducting an "imperial policy" in the "Near Abroad" (the territory of the former Soviet Union, excluding Russia), and that the country constitutes the same kind of empire as the former USSR or pre-Revolutionary Russia. This myth is related to the first two, but differs from them in that it is inspired not only by foreign but also by homegrown ideologies. Is (and was) Russia an empire?

To begin with, it would not be bad to "rehabilitate" the concept itself. An empire is not an absolute evil. Many extremely significant breakthroughs in the history of humanity (including in its cultural history) were connected with the formation, ascent, flourishing, and activities of various empires, which unlike small states possess the means to concentrate immense material resources and human energy (including spiritual and intellectual energy) in certain sectors. It would be an extremely great mistake to assume

that an empire is a concept that has irrevocably been left in the past. This is true only for empires of the colonial type- such as that of Great Britain. Other empires have changed only the forms of their activities.

For example, few would deny the fact that the United States is a great and mighty economic and financial empire with global interests. In the economic realm, Japan and Germany belong to the same category. The latter, incidentally, is not at all concealing its expansionist plans and ambitions: one only has to analyze its policy with respect to the countries of Central and Southeastern Europe, as well as the Baltics. Such countries as Turkey, Iran, China, India, and South Africa are carrying out an "imperial" policy on a regional scale. As for the Russian empire, it was never an empire of the classical colonial type.

Russians see an "empire", as an "imperium", which is a kind of grouping of the communities (including spiritual ones) inhabiting Russian territory that are united, in the expression of N. Federov, by a Philosophy of the Common Good. In Russian the word "empire" means a (Euroasian) civilization, which embodies within itself a "way of life" and therefore in many respects constitutes a self-sufficient and integrated whole. Russia has contrasted the Western type of imperial nation, with its policies of colonialism and imperialism, with the Russian metanation and the Russian imperium.

The imperial idea today is the idea of a political union of the multinational population of Russia, but in new historical forms. The Russian state was and remains multinational. The history of the Russian state is precisely the history of a political union of a multinational population. Such an alliance cannot be exclusively reduced to a legal institution or to mechanisms of state power. The Russian state system invariably

consolidated more a civilizational identity for the country than a national one, with the maintenance of the historically integrating role of the Russian nation, which always was a centre of ethnic and cultural attraction not only of the Slavs, but also contiguous nations. In the geopolitical, ethnic, and cultural-civilizational sense, the Russian nation was more than an ethnic group.

The Russians are a metanation - that is, something more important, precise, and substantial for the world than a nation. The formation of a Russian nation as a community of all those ethnoses who live on the territory of Russia is possible now, meaning by this not the forming of a new international community of the type of the "Soviet people", but a national self-consciousness in which a feeling of belonging to a single state plays a most important role in its maintenance and development.

The path to a really equal union of all the nations in Russia lies not through allotting them all their own separate statehood, but through a recognition in the basic law of the Russian Federation of the fact of the multinationality of all its subjects, and through the ensuring of real equal rights to all the various national groups in all areas of life, at all levels, and in all places. The assertion of the principle of equal rights of national groups in fact renders senseless debates about which territories belong to which nationalities.

In addition, one ought to remember that the Russians are the basic state-forming ethnos of Russia, and on their shoulders lies the historic mission of ensuring the maintenance of Russian civilization. The preservation of the Russian nation, and its spiritual and moral principles and genetic foundation, is the basis and guarantee of the existence of Russia. If it disappears, Russia will be dismembered into a large number of

national-state formations of various sizes scattered throughout the enormous space of Eurasia. It could lead not only to serious inter-ethnic regional conflicts in a struggle for resources and land, but also to a bloody revision of general borders and the beginning of a new re-division of the world. In this sense Russia, as a bearer of Eurasian civilization and a multinational community, simply is doomed to be an empire. Otherwise, it would disappear from the face of the earth and disintegrate into a great multitude of dwarfish border states, with all the ensuing monstrous consequences for the world.

Kazakhstan, Belarus, Ukraine, the Russian Federation, and the other newly independent states constitute unbalanced systems, which they themselves subconsciously sense, in which a number of ethnoses feel alien. They gravitate either towards reunification with their cut-off parts, or towards independent development.

A balance can be attained only through unification in historically unprecedented forms and on the basis of new principles (including in new state systems) under the aegis of a new pan-national (Russian) idea. In this regard, the modern Russian idea no longer can be Slavic or even pan-Slavic (the union of the three Slavic states no longer provides anything). It must be Eurasian or even broader.

Does an alternative to empire exist for Russia? Yes, it is the classical nation state. But such states, as Otto von Bismark said, are created by "blood and iron". In Russia it would lead to an outburst of hitherto dormant Russian nationalism with its unpredictable consequences. A nation state would be created under the slogan, "Russia for the Russians". Is our society, and the world as a whole, ready for such a turn of events? I think not.

This theme has another aspect. In affirming that Russia does not have the right to

a so-called "imperial policy", one is saying something else: Russia does not have the right to a policy based on its national interests. Instead of such a policy, certain foreign and domestic politicians toss to us a collection of democratic slogans. At least the former group understand perfectly well that such a substitution will lead nowhere.

The West's reaction to the October 1993 events in Moscow and the crisis in Chechnya demonstrate that the West, acting not in the name of "democracy", but exclusively according to its national interests (i.e., proceeding from the principles of Realpolitik), preferred a stable Russia to a democratic one. But then, excuse me, the West (and certain of our democrats) has lost any moral right to lecture Russia about democracy and preach to it about how to behave at home and abroad.

The fourth myth is that the seventy-five years of Communist development in Russia were a disgraceful and unequivocally negative period in Russian history. This myth is also of mixed (foreign and domestic) origin. It played a fateful role in the destruction of the Soviet state, which was the legal successor of the thousand year old Russian state, and the collapse of the USSR. Enthusiasts of expunging the Soviet period from Russian history ought to remember that, without this period, the history of Russia does not exist at all.

This is not even to mention the gigantic role the October Revolution and Russian socialism played in world history. Having tested on itself the model of socialist development, Russia not only played the role of "deterrent", but also contributed to the incorporation within the Western model of the principles of social justice, macroeconomic planning, and the extensive development of government social programs in the areas of public health care, education, science, culture, and other fields.

All this is said, of course, not in order to justify the crimes of the Bolsheviks (or, even earlier, Czarism), but to restore elementary historical justice to several generations of our ancestors and their unprecedented victims, as well as a "sense of history", without which, I am convinced, the country cannot move forward.

The fifth myth is that socialism was a historical mistake for Russia, and that what the country needs now is "wild capitalism" in its pure form. This myth is of purely domestic origin, for nobody in the West even in their nightmares thinks about themselves returning, or dragging some other countries, to a path which humanity long ago left behind. Russia is now returning to its pre-October paradigm of development and is building Western-style capitalism. But it is clear even to non-economists that, first, no kind of classical capitalism is possible anywhere in the modern world, with its high-level of economic interdependence and the tumultuous development of transnational corporations. Second, now it seems also to have become clear that Russia could hardly accept a development model that already has been tried several times by our country (under Peter I Alexander II, and the Provisional Government) and found extremely wanting. Third, a "reverse transition from socialism to capitalism" is not even theoretically possible.

The events of the last few years demonstrate that in Russia (and, incidentally, in the whole world) processes are occurring that are much more profound and significant than "the replacement of socialism by capitalism". In the depths of the modern mass consumption-based industrial society, a new paradigm of development is maturing: an information society (or, according to the definition of Alvin Toffler, "The Third Wave"). It is a great mistake to assume that the "consumer" civilization of the West will dominate

world history also in the 21st century. And the salvation of Russia (and of the whole world) possibly lies precisely in the fact that our country is not susceptible to its charms. The myth about the erroneousness of Russia's experience in the 20th century, being in essence anti-historical, has a clearly anti-Russian purpose. It essentially relegates the country's rich history and its substantial contributions to world civilization to the periphery of world development.

The question naturally arises: who profits from such an assertion? The answer is obvious: those who do not want a rebirth of Russia and who are therefore striving for its full historical discreditation. Only after a reasonable rehabilitation of its socialist past can Russia count on the fact that it has a future, and that it has its own history, which has a continuation.

For this one ought to recognize that, no matter how much it cost Russia, the socialist experiment was one of the most significant and important periods in the history of both Russia itself and of the world as a whole. Today in Russia, after the collapse of the communist idea and the defeat of a number of the values of the August anti-Communist revolution, many have the feeling that the country has "strayed from the path". They are gradually losing the sense of themselves as subjects not only of world politics, but of world history. This presents a real threat of destruction to the conceptual basis of Russian civilization. We must return to our historical roots. Not a single part of Russian existence must be lost, though everything must be reconsidered. Not a single second of our history can be declared empty or black, but all of it must be studied anew. Only in this way can we "return" to world history as a subject with equal rights, and not as a mere object.

What kind of Russia is best for the world?

The question of what kind of Russia does the world need is hardly the most important question of contemporary world politics. Meanwhile, the answer as usual remains open. Sometimes one even gets the impression that the interest of the developed part of the international community-that which is customary called the West-towards the new Russia is largely negative. It more or less knows what Russia should not be, but it does not have any constructive ideas or opinions regarding what it can and should be.

Most likely, the main reason for this - if we discard the Russophobia of some well-known Western political figures such as Zbigniew Brzezinski, Henry Kissinger, and Alexandre Haig - is that any attempt of the new Russia to form its national interests is interpreted as reflecting "imperial ambitions". This is the reason for the ambiguous attitude of the West toward Russia. On the one hand, it is frightened by instability in the territory of the former Soviet Union, the inability of the newly independent states themselves to cope with the problems confronting them - be they ethnic or religious conflicts, the development of a market economy, or the construction of law-governed state.

At the same time, they regard very coldly the growing integration processes that are taking place within the Commonwealth of Independent States under Russia's leading role (even our modest rapprochement with Belarus), seeing in it a "revival of Russia's imperial potential". This approach is especially noticeable in the policies being conducted by the United States. American leaders as before regard Russia as an important strategic partner with which it is possible and necessary to maintain a constructive dialog and solve emerging problems, not allowing matters to reach a boiling point or, even more, the

level of a new confrontation.

At the same time, not an insignificant number of voices, especially in the Republican camp, call on the Clinton administration to "take a pause" and freeze practical cooperation with Moscow "pending a clarification of the situation". There are also advocates of a radical reconsideration of the current relationship with Russia. In its most concentrated form their views were recently expressed by Washington political scientist Charles Krauthammer. Posing the question, does the United States need a strong Russia, his answer was categorically negative, asserting that economic stability will serve as a springboard for a revival of Russia's imperial ambitions and a restoration of its military potential. Krauthammer drew a parallel between the Russian Federation and Communist China and in fact called for the economic and political isolation of Russia.

Finally, there are those who have lately come to agree with the proposition that Russia is generally a "superfluous country". For such figures, the optimal situation would be a controlled disintegration of Russia in which the collapse would not proceed beyond the level of sufficiently large regions with local systems of power, which neutralizes the potential explosive consequences of the disintegration to the lowest "stages". This approach is already being carried out by Western countries, who have reoriented their economic cooperation with Russia toward direct dialog with the regions, bypassing Moscow.

The West should understand that Russia is a place from which is visible both the West's prospects and its diseases. It is not the West's rubbish pit, but its drain. In blocking up this drain, the West is killing itself. In hating Russia, it is also killing itself. In converting Russia into an image of itself, it is killing both itself and the entire future of

the humanity. Earlier the West understood this, but it has forgotten about it. And now it is in a state of euphoria associated with the "victory", as it sees it, of its liberal values, and cannot remember that there is a common human history and culture. And this is terrible.

It is even more terrible when, being incapable of remembering about these things, the West - or, more precisely, its not very far-seeing part, - clings to its technology and dehumanized science as to the Universal. And it is completely dreadful when, suffering from amnesia, the West practices Russophobia. Russia is the West's memory of the Universal, the memory of the West about itself, and the West precisely wants to kill this memory. That is why a genuine Russian patriot is simultaneously a patriot of the West. Russia is an element of the Universal, its spiritual hypostasis, and the embodiment of its free will. Of course, without Russia, there is no Great Problem for the West, but this means that there would be neither a Great Culture, nor a Great Theory, nor a Great Policy, nor a Great History. Without Russia, there is no Universal.

It would hardly be productive, however, to blame the West for everything. No one from the outside, of course, can explain to us our place and role in world politics. It is obvious that Russia must itself define them, which would permit it to precisely formulate its national interests and, consequently, the limits of its concessions to the West. This is in everyone's interest insofar as the policy of Russia will become more predictable, which, in turn, would permit the construction of a viable partnership with the West that would manifest itself in fruitful cooperation based on equal rights with respect to a wide range of fundamental issues of world politics. The further dragging out of the process of national self-definition is fraught with the loss by Russia of its legitimate, natural, and hitherto recognized by other states place and role in world politics, and, on a wider plane,

in the global historical process as a whole. The result would be Russia's relegation to the periphery of world development, which would have extremely negative consequences not only for it, but also for the whole world.

What is Russia today? History itself always forces Russia to think not only about itself, but also about the world as a whole. The time has come when it must again think about its position in the world, its historical purpose, and its civilizing role.

Let's begin with things that are obvious to all. Being the descendent of Ancient Russia, the Moscow Czars, the Russian Empire, and the USSR, Russia occupies a unique situation in Eurasia, which from time immemorial has permitted it to play an important stabilizing role in the global balance of power and interests. Russia is the guardian of an ancient spiritual tradition that is recognized to embody the highest ideals of justice, morality, and brotherhood. It also represents a most complex ethnic community, which is united by the historical destiny of the Russian nation, and which interacts on a voluntary and equal basis with other peoples that have expressed a desire to live in the same state with it. Russia's abundance of natural resources, and its economic and intellectual potential, could secure for it a maximum of economic autonomy with the emergence of threats to its national security and its development as a sovereign state.

It is necessary to recognize also the following objective condition. Despite the collapse of the USSR, Russia remains one of the great powers thanks to its political significance and influence on the course of world affairs, including by means of its responsibilities as a permanent member of the UN Security Council. Apart from its geopolitical situation and its nuclear weapons, which by general recognition allow one under contemporary conditions to consider Russia a great power, its opportunities and

prospects in the areas of demography and natural resources, and its high scientific and technological potential, place it in this category. These very factors (i.e., the scale of the country, its economic, demographic, and intellectual potential, the presence of practically all kinds of raw materials and natural resources) objectively make Russia one of the world's most important centers.

At the same time, nothing guarantees the continuation of these advantages. They could be lost by the country in the next few years if it does not escape from its economic, scientific, and spiritual crisis. On the other hand, Russia's opportunities to secure a high quality of life for its citizens and exert influence on the course of world events will be enlarged provided the country successfully escapes its crisis and completes its social and economic reforms. It ought to be recognized that all the preconditions for this exist. The population of Russia on the whole is characterized by a sufficiently high level of education and culture. A high proportion of its workers consists of highly qualified specialists.

It is important that the correlation of the relative GDP indicators of Russia and other countries during the 1980s and 1990s has not qualitatively changed. In other words, Russia remains a developed country according to its industrial and partly its scientific and technological potential, which does not differ in principle from those in the West. Unfortunately, for a long time other production relations and a different social organization held sway in Russia, which prevented it from attaining the levels of productivity prevailing in the West.

Of course, many years will be needed in order to catch up with the United States, Germany, France, Italy, and the other most economically developed Western countries in

23 terms of per capita GDP. But as far as such countries as Spain, Ireland, Greece, Portugal, and Chile are concerned, these countries are in principle at the same stage of economic development as Russia, whose per capita GDP indicators (and correspondingly its standards of living and quality of life) could attain such a level in the near future should its reforms succeed. And this is a sensible, realistic prospect for Russia.

All that has been said permits one to characterize Russia today as a great power that is temporarily experiencing large-scale economic difficulties caused by the changes in its economic and geopolitical situation. The preservation and mobilization of its available internal resources provides the potential means for a speedy recovery of its economy and its transition to the model of democratic and vigorous development. Largely positive changes in the world provide favorable opportunities for the solution of this task.

If and when new public attitudes and labor morale take shape in Russia, and the destructive consequences of the transition period are overcome, Russia according to the absolute scale of its production will be fully able to attain again the very highest levels of world standards, or even exceed them. If the CIS itself becomes a real economic organism, the possibility of regaining economic dimensions on the scale of that possessed by the USSR arises. In any case, even taking into account the fact that this will not occur immediately, the situation is not worthy of excessive dramatization. Historical experience shows that the loss of superpower status by no means deprives a country of the possibility of social progress and prosperity.

However, it is extremely important to assimilate that fundamental fact that, having lost its superpower status, Russia in any case can successfully develop provided

its policies have changed commensurably in accordance with this fundamental fact. It would be most ruinous to make consciously or unconsciously any attempt to occupy the same geoeconomic or geopolitical position in the world as that of the Soviet Union.

Today Russia has all the means to ensure its national security and development. It no longer is engaged in the struggle for global domination that took place between the USSR and the USA, and which required incredible expenditures. It only has to ensure its own national security, which requires from Russia significantly lower expenditures and forces, but on which depends its very physical existence.

Thus, in answer to the question, is it worth it to Russia to aspire to great power status, one ought to answer: yes, it is worth it. But it should aspire not to the role of a great power that competes as an equal with the United States, but rather to that of an equal among the ranks of the world's five leading great powers. And not because some want this, and others not. It is an objective process, something that is natural for Russia.

The definitive loss of great power status is fraught both for Russia and for the world as a whole, as will be shown below, with catastrophic consequences. The European Geopolitical Balance Russia occupies a key position in Central Eurasia, a region that is a kind of axis of world politics. It is precisely this position that creates the prerequisites for Russia to carry out its geopolitical mission as a holder of the balance between the Eastern and Western civilizations. In this geopolitical mission Russia is underpinned by its rich cultural tradition, which combines three world faiths-Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism. The preservation of the long-standing geopolitical role of Russia as a world civilization and power "balancer" is one of the main means of preventing the fall of Europe, and indeed the world as a whole, into geopolitical chaos. In today's chaotic world, engendered

by the end of the military confrontation between the two superpowers and the disintegration of one of them, diverse political forces are striving to realize their interests.

In the aggregate this is capable of causing a real avalanche of geopolitical changes, which might become uncontrollable. In this regard, the matter will not end with a change of the borders of Russia or the other adjoining newly independent states. A chain reaction of territorial and other geopolitical significant changes is threatening to spread to the whole globe. It has already become clear that the United States, as the single remaining superpower, cannot cope by itself with this global challenge. However, for Russia to be able to fulfill its role of power balancer and extinguisher of cataclysms-and its has repeatedly played this role in world history-one must not allow the splintering of Russia itself. If Russia were to find itself in a state of disequilibrium and chaos, these latter conditions would spread out in all directions.

The weakening of Russia inevitably would lead to an acute aggravation of the military-political situation in the countries of the CIS, the Baltic region. Eastern Europe, Central Asia, the Middle East, and, as a result, in Western Europe and the whole world. Then there would be a real threat of total geopolitical instability in Eurasia. A weak Russia would be an object of expansion of Islamic fundamentalism, a rapidly developing China, and myopic representatives of certain Western countries. Those groups that are now striving to destroy the Eurasian geostrategic balance and reduce Russia to the position of that of a third-rate power in Europe and Asia are conducting a dangerous game. The formation of new centers of power in the world arena, the contours of which are already visible (the United States, Germany, Japan, and China), places Russia, which occupies an important geostrategic position, under the active influence of these centers,

which will strive to draw the newly independent states into their orbit. In this case, one can expect a new re-division of the world, and a re-division of spheres of influence, in the 21st century.

In order not to become an apple of discord and an object of division, Russia must be economically and militarily powerful, internally stable, and the nucleus of the Eurasian center of forces at least on the territory of the former USSR. Without a powerful and friendly Russia, the West can hardly succeed in creating a stable and predictable world order in the next century. If Russia is mindlessly relegated to the camp of the marginals (and NATO expansion, for example, could lead to this), the entire international system will be hanging in the air, deprived of a solid base. Washington's declared readiness today to rely on military force will not work. In a world in which Islamic extremism is acquiring new, more aggressive forms, Russia is objectively turning into a barrier to the threat from the South, which is emanating from aggressive Middle Eastern regimes. And if the Euroatlantic community needs to contain an unpredictable and conflict-ridden South, then the national interests of Western Europe and the United States would best be met by the preservation of a similar mission for Russia. And therefore the West is objectively interested in maintaining and strengthening the territorial integrity and unity of Russia, and in promoting its revival as a powerful country that is able in cooperation with it to carry out an influential policy both in Europe and in Asia.

Does such a role correspond to the interests of Russia itself? The thing is that it simply does not have a choice: by virtue of its geographic situation, it cannot "shelter" itself from the potential threat from the South.

On the other hand, to be a pier of stability in Central Eurasia is not only its

inevitable fate, but also opens up the prospect of a revival of Russia's authority. It is an historical opportunity that allows it to occupy a worthy and, in essence, real place in the hierarchy of the world's great powers. One ought not to be surprised by the fact that today, in Russian political and government circles regardless of political orientation, a preoccupation with one issue is growing: restoring the possibility of Russia's fulfilling its appointed role in the world. And this is not the notorious "imperial ambitions" of old, but a concern for Russia's and the world's secure development. This is understood in the more farsighted policies of the United States, Germany, China, Japan, and the other countries that need a strong, vibrant, and cooperative Russia. We are not talking about the "Small Russia", that in 1991 emerged out of the "Big Russia", but precisely about the kind of Eurasian geopolitical monolith that Imperial Russia and the USSR were like, and which modern Russia and many other CIS states were until quite recently in the process of forming.

The supporters of the final break-up of this monolith, and the inevitable ensuing fragmentation of Russia itself, ought to be reminded that the current international status of the former Soviet republics has been harmed since they have been deprived of their legitimacy as the USSR's constitutional successors. The Soviet Union (like the Russian Empire earlier) was declared dissolved by unconstitutional means without giving the ethnically mixed inhabitants of its territories an opportunity to decide for themselves their fate. The conflicts in Abkhazia, Tadjikistan, Ossetia, and elsewhere (like in the former Yugoslavia) were a direct consequence of the country's illegitimate division. Matters stand otherwise with respect to the Russian Federation, for it was the only republic not to declare its exit from the USSR, and thus now is its legal and international successor.

All this explains the extreme shortsightedness of the stake certain groups in the United States and Western Europe have placed on "geopolitical pluralism". Even more dangerous are the attempts at stirring up conflicts between Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and the other former Soviet republics according to the "balance of power" principle. "NeoWilsonism" is a provocation not only with respect to Russia, but also with regard to the world, in which today extremely heterogeneous and unpredictable forces interact. It is precisely multipolar balancing, with absolute certainty, that earlier led to world wars. In an age of nuclear missiles, this policy is suicidal. Both the West and the whole world should be interested in preserving a global balance of power.

Attempts to play diplomatic games at the expense of a "weak" Russia could end in a catastrophe. The Clash of Civilizations Russia's role and place in the world cannot be reduced to only its geopolitical dimension. It is impossible to abolish the principle of polycentrism, just as it is impossible to annul the law of gravity. Communism could not do it in 1917, fascism could not do it in 1941, and no one can do it today, including the United States, notwithstanding its new variant of "common human values". A single world empire, or the dominance of one center of the world at the expense of the others, would be a catastrophe for its peoples insofar as it would encroach upon the versatility of the world (i.e., upon the laws of the universe).

Russia is a special civilization, a special world with its own values and interests. Each civilization has something special to contribute to the Universe, and by this means world civilization as a whole is created and maintained. Having a common source, civilizations are alien but not hostile to one another. World stability is ensured by this fact.

Western civilization is characterized by its entrepreneurial spirit, which has resulted in its citizens' enjoying an extremely high standard of living. Russian civilization has not perfected its production of material goods and services to such a degree, but it is creating for the entire world unique conditions for the production of uniquely eternal values, new human qualities, and a new man. The new moral values and human qualities are being born in the eternal embodiment of the dreams of Russia: the creation of God's Kingdom on earth-that is, of a civilization that consciously embodies in its social structure the higher laws of the universe. That is precisely why the Russian state is always an empire, but without imperialism.

The system of civilizations constitutes a mosaic of values and landscapes of all the centers of the world. Russia is fulfilling a special existential and civilizational role in this system. Any impediments to this role are a threat to safe development of the world. One such obstacle is American messianism.

During the past few years some American geopoliticians have called on the West to exploit its "victory" in the Cold War (against whom?!) and the disintegration of the Soviet Union to further advance U.S. interests in Europe and in the other regions of the world. Moreover, the impression has arisen that certain figures in the West seriously perceived the end of the Cold War as a major "defeat for Slavic civilization" and as an opportunity to direct the development of the whole world in a direction that corresponds to their own traditional values and their own distinct visions of the future. Precisely this explains their widespread use in international relations of the principle of "the double standard", which presupposes obviously different rules of the game on the world arena for states representing different cultural and religious regions. Precisely this also dictates

their insurmountable striving to expand NATO until its borders reach the "natural" boundaries of Western civilization, and to turn the alliance into this civilization's political-military foundation. From this arises also the conceit and doctrinarianism of American officials' self-identification as "agents for the spreading of democracy". Knowing neither our country nor our traditions, they take it upon themselves to expostulate about Russia's fate and instruct Russians how to carry out elections and reforms. The Cold War began at the end of the 1940s not in the least because of Stalin's desire to spread the Soviet communist system to the entire world. And today we are witnesses to how the desire to "accelerate the victory of democracy throughout the whole world" is beginning to provoke new conflicts, and a new estrangement between nations. However, it is known from the experience of the Cold War that sooner or later ideological confrontation escalates into political confrontation, which frequently leads to war.

Discussions about Russia's entering into the "civilized" Euroatlantic community are an effort to join the country to an alien superethnic system. The success of it would mean Russia's downfall, and after this the collapse of the entire world. Twice before in this century Russian civilization was under threat, and the consequences of this were the wreck of an enormous empire, and the whole world began to stagger on the verge of a catastrophe.

Conclusion

Russia must have a national idea. It is very difficult for any people to survive without such an idea. And it is impossible for them to preserve their culture without a

vision of their future. In XXI century Russia will not come back to communism and command economy. Russia should enter the next century as:

1. The single integrated state. Russian sovereignty should still expand to Siberia, Kaliningrad, Far East, North Caucauses and so on.
2. The democratic state. Russia should introduced neoliberalizm (or even post-liberalism) and open society standards (at present Russia is not so far "open" but rather "transparent" society).
3. The state, integrated into the world economy as a full-fledged member (actually Russia has already integrated itself in it, though Russian leaders do not understand it completely).
4. The nuclear power, though one should realize that this situation will not last forever, since in the next century the world will get rid of nuclear weapons.

The information society.

The technological republic.

Russia of the kind will not represent a threat to other nations, but rather will be their partner on the way to build a new, more human world. Russia will contribute to it with its own national values.

The Russian state was and for now remains in principle supranational. Recent experience affirms that its transformation into a national state would expose it to serious dangers. The identification of Russia with its national-ethnic dimension would inevitably raise "the Russian question" and the insoluble problem of the country's borders with the other former Soviet republics (many of which contain large Russian minorities).

A new Russia - that is, a new supernational state - must and should become an alternative to a fascist or communist mutation or a liberal "multiple sclerosis". Russia can achieve more than merely modernization, a national state, and a materialistic civilization: it can be a country that combines the latest Western ideas (meritocracy, post-industrialism, etc.) with the traditions of Russian development, including Soviet traditions, and the achievements of Russian philosophical thought. All this is something absolutely new, something that has been sought for and not found either in the West or in the East. In the new Russia should be combined the coming dynamism of the 21st century and the great spirituality of our country, our democratic values and national interests, and the mechanisms of market economics and the national idea. From the ontological point of view, and this is confirmed by the entire course of world history, Russia is a bridge between three continents. It is a bridge between civilizations that also ensures the global balance of stability. It is not only us Russians who are building this bridge that need it: everyone needs it: Europe, the rapidly developing Pacific Ocean region, and America. The great national idea of Russia lies in the transformation of this bridge between continents and diverse civilizations into a reliable foundations of the world order of the 21st century. The world needs precisely such a Russia.