



Yuri Luzhkov

The MYSTERY of GOSTINY DVOR

About my city, about the world, about myself



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Foreword to the English edition

It gives me great pleasure that this book is available to British readers at a time when London and Moscow are engaged in substantive dialogue on a number of problems which face not only our own two cities and countries, but also those of Europe and indeed across the entire globe.

In this foreword, however, rather than focus on matters of global cooperation or of economics and investments, I would like to make a more human attempt to measure the relationship between our two countries, linked by so much of the historical past, as well as the pressing events of the present.

I would like to make special mention of the traditional interest held by the Russian people, and certainly Muscovites, in what they fondly call "Foggy Albion", as a country which has made an enormous contribution to world civilization and "classical" democracy (if we can apply such an adjective to the dynamically-developing notion of democracy).

At the end of 2006 and early in 2007, great celebrations were held in Moscow to mark the 65th anniversary of the victorious offensive of the Soviet Army in the Battle of Moscow. We all remember that our two countries were allies within the single anti-fascist bloc during the Second World War, and this tradition of cooperation in the face of global challenges and dangers is not forgotten today, when international terrorism has become such a threat. Despite some well-known differences between our approaches to the war in Iraq and the permanent crisis in the Middle-East, we clearly understand and feel the deep unity of European civilization, the immense worldwide importance of such values as security for people, cities and countries, socially-focused economy, cooperation and coordination at all levels. These are areas where we have always found common ground.

As Mayor of the Russian capital, I am pleased with the fruitful cooperation which exists within the M4, the organization of Mayors of the four European cities of London, Paris, Berlin and Moscow. I believe that we are all part of a single Europe, and there is much that we can discuss and share with each other by way of the experience we have gained in developing our capitals. To this purpose we hold regular "no strings" meetings which provide excellent conditions for making serious decisions about cooperation between our great cities.

The *Mystery of Gostiny Dvor* is not my first book, and it will not be my last. There are some things – intellectual, philosophical, human – which can only be expressed in a book. The sum of my life experience, my immersion in the numerous problems facing our city, our country and the world, the countless fascinating meetings and the thoughts they have provoked – all these I have tried to share with you in this book. Its subtitle is *About my city, about the world, about myself*, and I make no apology for the priority I give to the city. I know, and deeply appreciate, that the British people show great interest in Moscow, and for this reason I hope you will read this book, and understand and share my views. I also consider it my duty, as a man and as Mayor, to invite as many of you as possible to come and see Moscow and Russia with your own eyes; I would like you to get to know our great city for yourselves, and not through a journalist's description!

Let me stress that a visit to the Russian capital, for whatever purpose, holds no dangers. St. George, Moscow's patron saint, protects the city, its citizens and its visitors day and night. On a lighter note, yes, we have bears, but contrary to what you may have heard, they do not roam the streets: you will only find them in zoos or circuses!

As for the other "tourist attractions" – caviar, vodka, pancakes, nesting Matryoshka dolls, the Bolshoi Theatre – all these are here, accessible and affordable, along with numerous museums, galleries, exhibitions, places of interest and unique architectural styles. The brilliant creative might of Sir Norman Foster's architectural projects can be seen on the banks of the Moscow River.

I would also like, perhaps even more than anything else, to call on British companies and businessmen to invest in our city. Opportunities for profitable investment in Moscow run very high.

I am deeply grateful to my publishers, and for the attention of you, the reader.

As for the mystery of Gostiny Dvor, I am sure that Sherlock Holmes, using his famous skills of deduction, would have solved it easily. But since we were not able to ask him, we had to unravel it ourselves. You will find out all about it in the book.



Yuri Luzhkov

Face to Face with Everyone

I cannot say when Moscow's Mayor Yuri Luzhkov last filled in the "occupation" column of his application form, but I think he could have safely added such words as "journalist" and "political scientist" to his well-known functions of the nation's top manager, statesman and innovative engineer. I believe that the readers of this book will soon come to realize that he is indeed a man of many talents.

I think you will agree with me if I say that reading a single article (one has to catch sight of it in the first place; few people today begin their morning with looking through a pile of periodicals, they would rather page through one or two papers) is one thing, but it is quite another to understand the scope of interests and the logic of reasoning of a well-known man. The articles and essays by Yuri Luzhkov that have been published in the past few years by the Central and Moscow Press and brought together in this book do offer such an opportunity.

I anticipate a question that many will surely ask: what makes the Moscow city administrator who, as he admits, reads his official mail only at nights, spend his time and energy on writing articles not to mention books? (Incidentally, the latter is another subject of discussion.) Is it a wish to overcome a complex of insufficient achievement? – Definitely not. No one can say that about Luzhkov. It is also impossible to imagine that a person who has been a daily newsmaker is seeking popularity or the laurels of a political writer. But surely there must be a motive that makes him write, or perhaps the Mayor himself will give us an answer to that question.

Indeed, I found Luzhkov's several relevant phrases in my own book *Luzhkov's Laws* published four years ago while I was looking for that answer.

"You see, I happened to know some senior officials who used to call their subordinates on the carpet and give them hard whipping when something went wrong and finally say snobbishly: "Go now and think about it". I really hated such seniors and vowed never to be anything like them. I suppose the verb "think" is something I value more than any other word but far and by I regard it as some kind of requirement towards my own self".

"One of our well-known political scientists said that 'it was not fitting for a mayor to concern himself with geopolitical matters. A mayor should have his city streets cleaned, houses heated and social matters attended...' My answer to this is that neither mayor nor anybody else should be deprived of the right to think, analyse and

make conclusions. And I conclude simply that everything in this world is interrelated. Let me remind you of Ray Bradbury's story which relates that a time machine carried some people several centuries back and there, while in the past, one of them happened to kill a butterfly. And then these people came back to the present only to find that a dictator had come to power".

And finally, here is one more quote, perhaps, the most important one with reference to this matter: "I feel it is crucial for me to be clear on everything I think about".

Let me explain what kind of clarity is meant here. Anatoly Agranovsky, an old Izvestia staffer and a living classic of political writing is known to have coined the phrase "he who thinks clearly speaks clearly". The phrase can be easily reversed to "he who thinks vaguely has a mess in his head". No better way to sharpen one's thought other than putting it to paper has ever been found. Even if you write for yourself exclusively rather than for the public, just to shelve your work, you will involuntarily come to talk to yourself and that self of yours just needs to be convinced of this or that. It is in this sense that you can check your own reasoning on yourself. Therefore the writing as an activity whether we want it or not is always addressed to someone else who hypothetically may become your reader.

I have no doubt about that it is really important for Yuri Luzhkov to be clear on everything he thinks about. More importantly though is that even guided by personal motives a man of deep social response – and Luzhkov beyond doubt comes within this category – appeals *urbi et orbi* as ancient Romans used to say.

Even after a quick look through the book the reader will certainly think of the author as an extremely versatile person. He writes about the Ukrainian "orange" revolution and industrial building issues, diverting rivers and video piracy, the architectural style and the Russian-Japanese relations, the agrarian policy and the legal aspects of the Internet... One can hardly be more versatile.

But once you have read the book attentively, you will have another judgment – the author after all is righteous rich. No matter what phenomenon he writes about, or what strategic forecast he brings to broad public, he never considers the problem at hand without its context, outside his inherent systemic approach, without regard for facts or trends relevant to the body of his article. This is why the subdivision of the book into chapters, i.e. about Moscow, on the role of Russia in the world,

on intrastate matters, on personal anxiety and flashbacks of his life, is to a major extent contingent. For example, even while deeply submersed in the calm of his private reminiscence, he will not fail to resurface amidst the turbulent stream of public concern and agitation.

Well, why does Yuri Luzhkov write articles, essays and short stories for newspapers and magazines? It should be mentioned here that he does it while off-duty and without witnesses fulfilling thus an ironic commandment once coined by Hemingway who said that journalist's ethics required that no one ever saw you at work.

So... what could possible answers to that question be? Perhaps he writes because he finds interest in writing, which means that he is curious to observe life as it goes and "dig" deep into it. Or, perhaps, he writes for self-development. Why not? Anybody who tried to write will surely agree that while you are working on a book, the book is working on you.

Furthermore, it is also quite possible that the Moscow mayor sees his literary activity as a component of his day-to-day work which strongly requires the reciprocal understanding between the mayor and the Muscovites and thus their support for his undertakings. It is essential to note here that the special status of Moscow as Russia's capital as well as its historical nucleus, and one of the largest business, financial, scientific and cultural centers of the world sets problems for Yuri Luzhkov that require of him global thinking, understanding and explanation to himself as well as to everybody else.

The air of this Moscow-imposed responsibility is something that distinguishes the style of the articles and essays you can find in this book. They include all: mettle, boldness in raising delicate issues and persistency in finding answers, independent judgment and thus original characteristics. But the main point is that in them the reader will find much what Luzhkov passed through his soul, thinking and suffering desperately trying to find a correct solution in situations where he had to stand face to face with problems crucial for the fate of very many people.

And we cannot discard yet another incentive as a reason for Luzhkov's writing formulated in the ancient world: if an event is yet to be described, it means that it has not yet occurred ...

Mikhail Scherbachenko

Planet "Moscow"





"Our task is not just to preserve certain houses, buildings and facilities of city culture and architecture for history and posterity but also leave intact our cultural code and our civilization model that have been crucial for Moscow's development for many centuries.

A city is like the face of a man. All changes should be reflected on it otherwise it will turn into a death-mask. You cannot balm man alive. It's tantamount to killing him. While he grows, his looks will acquire something new. It's impossible to freeze Moscow, our capital, the face of our country by screaming, "Stand still!" or "Freeze!"

Izvestia, May 2004.

The Mystery of Gostiny Dvor*

(A Plotline for a Slap-stick Detective Show)

Russia is a land of riddles – this is how bewildered foreigners described it. Surprisingly, the Russians have always been of the same opinion.

“We are born with a riddle in our hearts and carry it with us all life long without letting go”, said the Russian governor M.E. Saltykov-Schedrin. “No matter where you turn, you’ll see the same longing to get over the fence of the enigmatic zone but at the same time you’ll see a fatalistic look on the same faces: no, never we’ll be able to get there”.

The passion to understand the enigmatic organization of life is not new as it comes from the depth of eons, of which antiquities clearly speak. For example, many a Russian fairy tale says that if a young man fails to solve three riddles, he will never be given consent to marry his chosen one not to mention the more “marketable” dower. In other countries the intended were also put to testing though they were asked to do something more pragmatic, say, to grind four quarters of grain overnight. But this is well understood: the test should prove the groom is capable of showing qualities fitting for a future husband. With us it was different: we believed that a man should have other qualities to succeed.

Life itself in the vastness of Russia has always seemed to be so illogical, so full of all sorts of odd things that it was taken for

* Gostiny Dvor (Russian: Гостинный двор) is a historic Russian term for an indoor market, or shopping centre. It is translated from Russian either as “Guest Court” or “Merchant Yard”, although both translations are admittedly inadequate (Hereinafter translator’s note).

granted that one can never do without the ability to take the right course in an absurd situation. Let alone some eternal questions of social life “who’s to blame?” or “where’s the money, Zina?”* (However, it’s these questions rather than practical issues of life organization that the debates of today’s politicians focus on). The same can be said about things more mundane that happen in “confined” areas of the Russian vastness, very close to us – in our courtyard or even in a house lift. There too we have to rack our brain in an attempt to solve a mystery who and how could have possibly succeeded in bending a three-inch pipe post of the swings near the sandbox just in front of your windows notwithstanding the fact the swings were emplaced only yesterday.

It is for this reason that all sorts of detective stories are so popular in this country. And the specificity of our literary taste has nothing to do with this as some critics think. It is the people’s need that accounts for this. What is entertainment in Europe is the daily routine for us. What’s entertainment reading for them is the applied science for us and one of extreme importance as sometimes you would just open your mouth, not figuratively, by the way, but completely at a loss. Neither sharp thinking, nor Sherlock Holmes’s deduction will help you overcome your bewilderment.

And thus we stood once, silent and at a loss; we were looking up unable to move.

– Who did it?

– We don’t know, Yuri Mikhailovich.

– How on earth did they manage to climb there?

– It’s puzzling! No one can possibly climb there!

Several squares of the glass roof of Gostiny Dvor that had just been restored were pierced through in the most caddish way.

You will find it difficult to imagine this open-mouth silent scene which vividly brought to mind the final piece of Gogol’s *Inspector-General*. Twenty solid men, experienced administra-

* A catch phrase from the lyrics of a song by Vladimir Vysotsky.

tors who have seen plenty in their lives... – and that plenty was really something! – stood motionless as the stone horse group of Tsereteli's fountain, their heads up and each one of them was racking his brains trying to understand how it was possible to break the glass roof at such a height.

As the genre requires we should make a stop here because as a spectator of this detective show I am obliged to theorize on what happened and bring the situation home to my readers. Do you know what Gostiny Dvor is? You don't? OK, then I advise you take a walk and have a look for yourself. This is something we are proud of.

It is a square rather than a court, or, to be more exact, a vast area whose square perimeter is a whole block of buildings confined by Varvarka and Il'inka Streets on one side and Khrustalny and Rybny by-streets on the other. This used to be a large market place from times immemorial. It was a market in the most common sense of the word having nothing to do with anything liberal-metaphorical. In actual fact, the market area stretched from the Kremlin to Lubyanka. It began with its upper lanes (now it's GUM) to be followed with the middle lanes and with the low lanes a bit to right. The perimeter was fenced by outlets, trade stalls, stores and hotels that all enclosed a court where goods were brought on carriages; horses were kept in stables and noisy trade flourished. There is a lot of evidence that the trade used to be really brisk but one fact speaks for itself: under the ancient basement of one of the stores that dates back to the times of Ivan the Terrible, archaeologists found a hoard of 95,000 gold and silver coins both Russian and from other countries.

Because Russian traders were never known for their love for order and cleanliness, the Moscow authorities always viewed all this market space as their headache. Each new governor began his office with a promise to put this architectural chaos to order. Gostiny Dvor had more luck than the other areas: none other

than the great Quarenghi made the project in the times of Catherine the Great, and the famous Bove directed its restoration after the fire of 1812. Moscow was proud of its Gostiny Dvor but this pride did not last forever. When Moscow was again made the capital – this time of the communist empire – the Bolsheviks could not live with the idea that something shameful, i.e. a market, was literally next to their sacred place, alias the Kremlin. It was ideologically impermissible. The upper lanes thus were turned into a restricted area (nobody was admitted there) and the low lanes became derelict and turned into chaos.

Since it was not allowed to build houses in this area, this place became a magnet for Soviet bureaus, desks and offices that like the fragments of some cosmic litter started to fly in and settle down there. These were accounting offices, directorates, warehouses, etc. They opened there with whimsicality typical of only planned economy's backside. You can add all sorts of extensions and enlargements, temporary structures, wall-mounted external stairs and piles of litter and you will understand how desperately powerless Soviet leaders felt visiting the area with a good intention to put it to order. Anyway neither E. Ligachev, nor the then first secretary of the City Executive Council B. Yeltsin failed to leave us with any solution.

As a certain character of a story of which the name I can't recall said, "it was no whorehouse but a fire in the whorehouse" (excuse me for the language but I'm quoting from memory). We started with a decision to resettle this "crow's nest". It was a challenging task to fulfil as we had to find new dwelling, persuade people to resettle and to lure them into it with generous offers. And, finally, when everything was cleared up and the restoration project was practically finished, it was at that moment when we had an idea to cover this entire gigantic courtyard with a glass roof. We asked the authority for monument protection for permission and they somehow did not object to it. Then we asked our engineers and they said it was difficult but possible.

I will not bore you with the story how we raised the money, how we built and how we argued in the process. With all this behind, I am coming now to the day before opening.

My story begins exactly with this day.

But why? For starters, let me ask you a question. Why are vandals so excited with new, fresh, virgin things? This happens almost every day: somewhere somebody has just finished the facade of a building – immediately someone throws an open tin of paint tin carelessly left nearby against the wall. Once a new monument is unveiled, in a matter of hours a competition starts “who can chip off a larger piece of granite”. A new metro station is opened – the next day all its glass doors are broken.

We usually call all this vandalism thinking that by using this term we make the problem clearer, but, in actual fact, the so called vandalism in our setting is a complex psychological phenomenon and we cannot fight it using only anti-vandalism measures. What we need is a help of science: psychologists, specialized scientific departments, scientific research.

The main postulate that should be a cornerstone of that science must be, as I think, that it is not everything that can make a vandal excited. My observations tell me that such a person rarely wants to break completely what is already broken, spoil completely what is already spoiled but partially. A sculpture with a torn arm leaves him impartial. What he can't observe calmly is exactly something that is new, flawless and completed. This gives us grounds to assume that he sees his actions so much as creativity rather than destruction. And he, so to say, conditions the reality that surrounds him to his liking. The bulb in the lift should not be absent because this would be irregular. But it should not give light.

The second feature of vandalism is, without doubt, its anonymity. Everything that happens happens just here, very close to us, but we just cannot catch the culprit red-handed. But who is

that culprit? Lazy in mind, we blame our teenagers all the time. Yes, they do spoil many things. However, experienced and observing psychologists argue that it is very often that the doers of vandalism are exactly grown-ups who do it "for their mood's sake", "to put away the strain", or "by rote as if hypnotized". However true it may be, this hypothesis can hardly explain everything. Many a vandalistic deed requires such power, dexterity or a special skill that you involuntarily start thinking about aliens, UFOs and all that. There is nothing surprising in it: as far as I know the researchers of joke origins came to the same result too. Being unable to find their authors, they secretly (they are too shy to write about it openly) came to agree with the hypothesis that all jokes come from the aliens of another world.

The third crucial quality of regular vandalism is its lack of profit. If somewhere border stones have been removed to be re-installed near one's country house, here we have a theft rather than the act of vandalism. If somebody takes away handles from entrance doors or substitutes blown bulbs for new bulbs in lifts, it is pragmatism rather than vandalism because a true vandal is unscrupulous. He spends his energy, time and sometimes risks his life just to achieve his end, i.e. to spoil something whose freshness or polish irritates his eye. It is sooner a call to achieve a certain psychological balance. For he has to bring the environment in line with his troubled mind, or, as professor Preobrazhensky used to say, "with the ruins in his head".

I could brood over the specificity of Russian vandalism for a longer time but that would be an unnecessary deviation from the plotline of our literary game which we have agreed to call a detective show. Well, dear readers, can you now say who broke the glass roof of Gostiny Dvor? OK, then those of you who think they can will now have a chance to check if their guess is right.

As soon as the repair teams replaced the broken glass with the new glass panels, a huge flock of crows gathered on the roof.

I don't like to fantasize whether or not they were irritated at the sight of the fresh roof, but once the crows found that the roof was new again, they started to fly over the glass cover performing all sorts of aerobatics, croaking, quacking and making other noises. Then after a while they calmed down.

Look what they did then.

The flock settled in circle, as if at a stadium, to form an empty space in the centre with young crows in the first row. This is what the eyewitnesses of the security staff told me as they observed everything directly from the roof. So, I'm just retelling you what they told me.

Then one old she-crow.. Well, here we are falling into a trap of the Russian language as the word "crow" is feminine and in Russian it sounds like the whole crow family is feminine which looks like a linguistic concession to feminists or lib women. In actual fact, according to ornithologists, crows are normal creatures as far as their sexual orientation is concerned, all of them are straight.

Back then to our story.. then, say an "old cock of a crow" takes a fairly big stone in its beak (or in its talons as was also the case), flies high up over the roof, then takes a combat turn and drops its stone as if it were a bomb over the newly repaired roof, aiming at the centre of the glass square which is roughly one metre by one metre.

Bang! The bomb hits the metal crossbar.

There's no reaction on the part of the crows. They keep silent as if by doing so they want to hide their disappointment.

Then comes the second attack. The stone-thrower takes another "bomb", takes off high and throws again – this time it's bull's-eye! The stone hits the centre of the glass square cracking it and splitting it into tiny fragments. The entire stadium bursts up with joy! The crow public flapping their wings cries out, "Goal!!!"

The bombing was repeated several times.

This indeed was a real sporting event. The security staff testified that the crows got excited each time they saw the glass being broken. Their concern was the result of the action rather than the action itself. And they showed their passion for sports very much like our fans: braying, croaking, flapping the wings and jumping in place as most crows do when in a hurry or excited.

It is well understood that the security staff could not keep their ornithologic surveillance for an indefinite time. The crows were scared away, but each time they found the huge pieces of glass intact they gathered together again in a huge flock with a clear intention to repeat the sporting event. There was no way that we could live with letting them do it.

Before I tell you how we managed to chase away the feathered vandals once and for all, I would like to make another digression. Tell me, dear readers, if this happened in an ordinary Moscow court, one of the many thousands in the city, rather than in a prestigious residential area, would anyone care to make repairs? I don't think anyone would. More than that, nobody would notice or pay attention to some cracked glass. It is so because apart from vandalism, we have another problem and that is our tolerance towards vandalism which is in no way less important.

With such indifference to what is happening outside our flats we just developed a habit of not noticing such things. We just don't notice damaged walls, dented corners, chiseled ceramic tiles, banged up or loose stair railings, forced mail-boxes, inoperable intercommunication panels, scratched doors, omnipresent scribbling, cigarette butts, bottle glass scattered everywhere, crumpled plastic bags... Do I really need to go on?

We do not notice the corruption of our living environment as if this corruption were part of the architectural design introduced to "decorate" our dull apartment blocks. However, we speak about our alienation from everything which is beyond

our entrance door rather than preserving beauty. Here we have an attitude where everything outside my flat is alien, theirs, not mine. Today we blame our public utilities for everything. And we are quite right in doing so. It is high time to reform them. But exercising municipal authority only will not suffice to do it. What we need is reciprocity on the part of the consumer who could act as both master and client. Aye, there's the rub.

We have been talking a lot about the housing and public utilities reform. The Moscow government has defined its position saying that the reform should not be just a resolution to pay 100 per cent for public utility services. Not only because our people, frankly speaking, will not be able to pay that physically but because such a "reform", if I may use that word, will not resolve anything at all. This would mean that innocent people will have to pay for the defects and bad work of public utilities organizations.

However, if the city intends to continue to fund its public utilities, what is then the substance of the reform? The answer is simple: we are going to create competing services and to subsidize our consumers. In this case the money will not flow direct to public utilities but to apartment dwellers, i.e. their dedicated accounts. This will be made for you to pay those whose quality and work organization are better and more reliable.

However, to make this whole scheme work, we need to fulfill one condition which is to change the attitudes of our man towards the city, to overcome his indifference to what surrounds him. So this is your attitude towards your city that matters, my dear fellow-citizens. These are the chain links to be connected, this is the rub, this is the snag, according to Anton Chekhov.

Would you say it's utopia? No, I wouldn't. Really, even in hopeless houses one can find people with initiative. And we offer them a deal: let's work together, let's make your staircase and surroundings clean and safe. Let's repair what needs to be

repaired, organize for security, build a place for a concierge and fit it with a telephone, install flat-entrance communications and remote control for opening the entrance door – all this with the help of the city, i.e., we'll help you to pay for all this.

Wherever this has been achieved, the picture has radically changed. Surprisingly, it appears that the dwellers are willing to take part in maintaining order. They make their neighbouring ties stronger, they find and set up new forms of self-organization. The people are ready to take up control over water and power consumption. And this means that we can give them municipal money (which we anyway are to spend on their house), we can entrust them with disposing of our subsidies. Let them make contracts themselves to maintain competition among public utilities.

This is how step by step we are going to make use of the people's potential. As for our people, they are fantastic. What we need is just to push ahead, help them with their initiative and make them say "good-bye to the "Soviet-time" belief that they will be given everything ready for use. Then a man who finally perceives himself as a proprietor, his fate linked with that of his neighbours, will actively improve his own living environment and strengthen his territorial ties. This will be the beginning of a chain reaction. Those who happen to see just once other people's entrances brought to perfect order will not want to tolerate desolation at their own porch.

The development of the city cannot be effective only through a top-down effort. It takes two to tango, i.e. we need such Muscovites who would see the city through their household prism rather than globally, who would not be indifferent to what is happening in their courtyard or near their entrance door. We must have a situation where the notion "my home" would not end once you step over the threshold of your flat on your way out, where the entrance hall, staircase, courtyard and street would be

your “own”, where you would have a wish to improve the surrounding area as you think fit and that means that you should be able to intervene if need be, keep everything under control and provide help.

This is not just a municipal problem let me assure you. This is the beginning of a civil society if you wish. Democracy and elections are something we need; there is no question about that, but they alone will not ensure a real breakaway from totalitarianism. This is where the main battle for the new society is going to take place.

“And what about the crows?” an impatient reader would ask.

“Crows? Oh, yes... Well, it’s simple. They installed some radiating units on the roof top to scare away the birds. So they flew away never to return...”.

Moskovsky Komsomolets, January 2004.

Awaiting the Predicted Catastrophe

The term “problem of the year” came into our life not so long ago. It happened at the turn of the 21st century. All of a sudden the whole world became agitated with finding an answer to the question how computer systems controlling social and economic processes in this era of information dominance and key life-support and security systems would survive the advent of the year 2000.

People are still arguing about the “problem of the year 2000”. Some say the problem was not there at all, or at least the scope of possible harmful consequences was greatly exaggerated. Some say that the time and the money spent by mankind in the late 90s on countering the change of the dates in calendars played a major role in preventing the full swing of the “problem of the year 2000”. Well, the world economy did not stop, the strategic arms did not go out of control, the aircraft did not crash and the information society did not perish.

Anyway, nobody has abolished the popular phrase “forewarned is forearmed”. We still use it, but I remembered the “problem of the year 2000” only to talk about other problems of a similar kind that are closer to us.

It will not be an exaggeration to say that over the past few years we have been living in anticipation of a “predicted catastrophe”. With each new year the problem of the year takes another shape but the only real change is the date rather than the substance.

The problem is the increasing and progressive wear-out of the entire national infrastructure – in the field of economy, transport, housing, public utilities and energy.

Several years ago the warnings about the “problem of the year 2003” were rather vocal. That year was believed to become the year of massive and avalanche-like retiring of key assets and infrastructural facilities. The forecast did not live up to the expectations because the margin of strength of the Soviet infrastructure turned out to be a bit farther off.

The key word in this phrase is “a bit”. As years go by, the strength reserve is being inexorably reduced. However no systemic and total collapse of the infrastructure has occurred, we have been receiving our dosage of catastrophes and emergencies of a similar kind every year though. Suffice it to mention only the most important technological disasters of the last year – the explosion at the Chagino power substation in Moscow or the collapse of the roof at the swimming pool in the city of Chusovoi of Perm Krai.

By the way, the most serious disaster in the past few years, the Transvaal-park tragedy, has generally the same roots. The difference lies in that the main reason for that collapse is not the wear of transformers or metal corrosion but something both analogous and at the same time deeper and fundamental, i.e. the “wear” of building standards, the “obsolescence” and failure of state mechanisms intended to control and supervise construction to meet today’s requirements.

This latter problem today is indeed a key problem simultaneously for a number of reasons. To begin with, the issue of “service life expiry” of the national infrastructure is becoming to be not only perceived but also and eventually attended at the national level. It is on that issue that the entire system of national projects is being focused. The ideology of priority programmes of national development, investments for the

future and the improvement of the demographic situation is centered on that issue.

If we were to look carefully at all present-day long-term national programmes and projects, we would notice that they have a clearly visible “construction” component.

First of all, the national project called *Affordable Dwelling* provides for a twofold annual increase in house construction bringing it to 80 million sq m per year by the year 2010. As its principal component, *Affordable Dwelling* includes large-scale renovation of public utilities and construction of engineering structures and communications. The renovation of the power infrastructure is also becoming more and more urgent.

Our Moscow experience also speaks for that: following *Affordable Dwelling* massive social construction to include modern kindergartens, schools, medical centres, offices, trade centres, advanced garage complexes and other facilities of a regular infrastructure – in a word – everything what together with house construction is required to form our diverse living environment and a fully featured living space for our citizens, will very soon be placed on the all-Russia agenda.

Some of these issues have already been included in the long-term national programmes announced by the president. For example, we will implement the programme to build large medical centers throughout Russia within the framework of the Public Health project.

On the other hand, mass industrial construction is already underway in very different fields of national economy. In 2006, a project to set up economic zones of a new type – assembly manufacturing and innovation – got off the mark.

Large cities start reviewing the principles of location of industrial enterprises, planning their transfer from city centres and set up new large industrial areas. In Moscow this strategy is being realized within the framework of the Prom-City project.

The non-government sector of economy is also engaged or plans to be engaged in industrial construction, in fact, very different in scale and worth billions of dollars and embracing many million square metres of the total area to be developed. In many cases here we will have the construction of facilities with unique characteristics in what concerns their functions, location, design solutions, technology and materials rather than the construction under the so called type projects that the epoch of Soviet construction was so generous to leave us with.

The national tasks to develop various regions of the country (for example, East Siberia), build new transport routes and form innovation zones may require in the near future to build not only single facilities but also new cities, which has not occurred in Russia for a long time. This construction is not going to be type construction at all as it will be advanced and no easy for it will take place in pretty adverse natural environment.

We can go on naming the programmes but we must understand the main point which is that today, literally speaking, a new Russia is being made.

The situation seems to be pretty clear at first glance. The goals set to maintain the well-worn infrastructure of the Soviet time, modernize it and start new industrial and social construction require that the state should considerably reinforce its system of state control and supervision in the field of construction.

However, everything is going on vice versa in practice. And this vice versa implementation practice is so grave that I am very serious to declare the existence of the "problem of the year 2007". It is less than a year from now that we may face a chaotic and unpredictable disintegration of the entire system of organization of construction. And the sands are running out for us to be able to check this process.

The situation that we have at hand is kind of unique. Now that we are convinced of the harmfulness of the liberal market ele-

ment for the national economy in terms of what happened in the 90s, today the state has played back in an attempt to increase its presence in industrial sectors. However, the pseudo-liberal ideas and principles continue to prey on the minds of our reformers. Regretfully, in the field of construction industry regulation, the most odious ideas demanding the withdrawal of the state from the industry advocated by our liberals are being implemented. The state which alone can be the only counterbalance against all sorts of ill-intended commercial interests in the market conditions is now running away like a bat out of hell from the task of control and supervision over the quality and safety of construction.

Such thoughts come to mind when you think about all the "reforms" in the field of construction in the past few years. In 2003, the State Duma calmly passed the government's amendments initiated by the Ministry of Economic Development that overrode licensing the construction and designing of public buildings and structures and engineering research for construction purposes. However, in 2005, the next portion of amendments to the licensing act extended the life of construction licenses for another year, i.e. until the year 2007, the Russian government is still intent to cancel all licenses for construction.

Preserving licensing gains support of not only experts and experienced officials of industrial departments but also big construction business itself which, as it may seem, should raise both hands for the removal the so called administrative barriers. But nothing is changing. Professionals understand too well that on 1 January 2007, we will run the risk of facing a situation where hundreds of newly born construction companies without any history and license to construct will start building dwelling and commercial facilities.

A number of other circumstances will further exacerbate the advent of the "license-free wild market" in construction. The point is that the government is going not only to cancel construc-

tion licenses but also actually abolish the system of state standards in this sphere. Numerous assurances that the state standards (GOST) will be replaced with advanced technical regulations can pacify only laymen. Today, with less than a year left for the state to finally abolish all construction licenses, not a single technical regulation has so far been developed – the construction community, regional and local authorities who have to do with construction do not possess clear information regarding where we are in this technical regulation development process.

One thing is clear: no fewer than 16 technical construction regulations should be developed, and none has actually been developed as of today. Not only the technological modernization of the industry is being hampered but also additional conditions are being created to bring down the quality of construction, let loose foul competition, deskill professionals and press them out by nonprofessional moonlighters.

On the same day, i.e. 1 January 2007, the new Urban Development Code will prohibit any examination of construction projects except for the examination of project documentation and the results of engineering research introduced by the same code. However for these two types of examination the state again lacks just a “bit” of something, i.e. the mentioned technical regulations developed, discussed and approved by the Russian government and the appropriate by-laws passed by the federal government. So, here again we have a vicious circle.

In such a situation we may well face an upsurge of tragedies in the construction and the follow-up operation of improperly built facilities in contrast to which, as sad as it may sound, the tragedies of Transvaal-park and the Chusovoi swimming pool will pale into insignificance.

It is the investigation of what caused the collapse of the Transvaal-park roof that could have been a good opportunity to reveal all the existing defects in the system of control and su-

pervision over the quality of construction and those that would threaten us after the “reforms” of 2007. The inquest on that case is completed and, regrettably, with no adequate result.

The Moscow Prosecutor’s Office chose to find a “scape-goat” in this case by charging Anatoly Voronin, the head of Mosgosexpertiza, with neglect of duty, who was responsible for coordinating the project of Transvaal-park construction. Incidentally, all these charges were refuted by independent experts, but what is more important here is that the Prosecutor’s Office failed to see or even did not try to see “the forest behind the trees”.

Mosgosexpertiza, in fact, did everything with regard to the construction of Transvaal-park exclusively within the authority it had been given as of that time by the state legislation, and exclusively in compliance with the existing as of that time construction standards and norms.

Thus, the real and most serious issue that we have here is that to prevent the Transvaal-park tragedy, the state supervising organs did not have enough functions and powers and also that some functions and powers concerning certain questions were absent at all. Considering the deviations from the project allowed by the designers and builders in the course of construction and the nature of the obsolete construction standards, this disaster became inevitable though it really sounds appalling.

This means that in the field of control and supervision over construction we do not face some ephemeral task to do away with administrative barriers, liberalization and other heretic gobbledegook of the “reformers”, which is being brought to our life so clumsily. On the contrary, the real task we are facing is one to improve and reasonably strengthen the system of state control and supervision over the construction industry. To do it, we must rectify the defects of the existing system and, among other things, learn some exemplum lessons from the tragedies like Transvaal-park rather than confine ourselves to taking punitive measures.

The state should clearly understand the suicidal nature of the impact of legal uncertainty on the construction sector, on the regulation, control and supervision along all the lines and stages of the construction industry processes. Attempts to “throw the baby with the bath water”, i.e. to weaken or eliminate state control and supervision in construction on the grounds of imperfectness are extremely dangerous. They are nothing but a mine with a delay fuse in what concerns reliability and safety in construction. Therefore, they also threaten the strategic goal of our state, which is the modernization of this country, the making of a new Russia.

Rossiyskaya Gazeta, January 2006.

Freedom to Print and Right to Know

Those who are not very young must remember a newspaper column "A letter called to hit the road". The connection is that many letters from newspaper and magazine publishers, distributors of printed matter as well as the well known tensions that regularly occur between publishers over the place under the sun in the system of print media wholesale and retail trading turned me on to understand the technologies used for delivering information to its consumer. This multi-faceted problem is extremely important for the effective management of our capital.

According to experts, on average a rank-and-file Russian has a stash of about 9–10 rubles a day to buy his favourite paper or magazine. But the retail mass is steadily growing. In the last year alone it grew by 22 per cent, and in value terms it came in excess of one billion dollars. But here we have not only price indexes (why should we hide the obvious? – inflation regularly causes prices for newspapers as well as any other consumer goods to head north) but also the physical growth of sales.

Such progress on the specific newspaper market is possible to a large measure owing to the improved trading techniques and more flexible advertising methods and even the geographical specificity of newspaper trading rather than regular explosions of information bombs.

For us, municipal authorities, the periodic press is like a street with two-way information traffic. "A good newspaper is the conversation of a nation with itself". This is a phrase I happen to like very much. The need for such a dialogue has been shown by the events around the recent benefit monetization. It was the time when our nation desperately required a nationwide discussion on the pages of popular and authoritative papers but it just wasn't there. Television alone cannot tackle such a task.

A newspaper is a tool for interactive communication with the people. We just cannot allow it that this communication is broken for purely technical reasons so that the reader and the newspaper could not find each other so that our people in public transport irrevocably ceased to be, figuratively speaking, "the people who read more than anyone else in the world". This is why the problem of distribution and affordability of periodic press is becoming a political problem within the purview of municipal government rather than just infrastructural and trading.

Today the emerging new papers and magazines are pressing on the Moscow reader in an attempt to win him. Eyes begin to ache when you cast them on a multitude of front covers. It is at this time when a vendor appears demonstrating a classical Soviet-time approach: you are many and I am alone. I am not saying, of course, that vendors and distributors are few. I just want to say that no stall or outlet can digest more than 30–40 titles of our abounding printed matter. It is at that moment that the shadow competition factors come into play. The owners of distribution networks just name the sum to be paid by the owner of this or that edition for a privileged place on the counter or for placing an advertising slogan in the shop window. Often you have to pay just to make a distributor or a vendor agree to sell your printed matter.

In a word, the competition of content is superseded by the competition of purses of wealthy publishing holdings. I think it is normal if a well-selling popular periodic edition is placed where it does not strike an eye; those who regularly read it will ask for it all the same. And do you think it's normal if a new interesting journal is displayed where very few can see it and its publishers just don't happen to have some ten thousand dollars to buy a lucrative place for their offspring in the shop window? Do you think it's normal if the distributor himself has already received a solid sum just for the fact of his existence which provides him with a decent profit and reduces his wish to go in for free enlightenment to zero? He just does not care whether or not he will sell inexpensive though important newspapers for they are a source of current events, because he knows he will not come off as a loser anyway. This is where we see the most important problem.

The legendary New York Times publisher A. Sulzberger used to repeat, "The point is not in the freedom to print but in the right of citizens to know". A well-thought and consistent policy is necessary at all levels to make our periodical printed matter market actually blossom into "one hundred flowers".

We often hear that poor publishers cannot be free. The freedom of speech is based, no matter what, on the economic independence of newspapers and magazines. For this, they should use as a minimum several sources of finance, which will automatically exclude the direct dictate of a certain general sponsor. But, as before, the main source of finance for periodicals is advertising, preferably official and open rather than covert and PR-oriented.

The country's general trend towards stabilization of finance has a favourable impact on the scope of advertising placed on the printed media pages. Last year the overall amount of advertising payments to the press came to a total of 1.29 billion dol-

lars. Consequently, the income from advertising is distributed unevenly because advertisers are more concerned with the size of circulation and the target audience on which this or that edition is focused.

Therefore, an edition, even an important one, needs such a size of circulation that would be of interest to large advertisers but which, to a large measure, depends upon the liking of that edition on the part of its distributors so that its publishers could break current news to the public and maintain interactive communication between citizens and authorities. This is a vicious circle again.

Naturally, the government cannot directly exert influence upon the "distribution policy" of the printed matter vendors. A market is a mark, and the distribution of periodic press is a business like any other. However, the equal access of Muscovites to information can be stimulated by creating a specific work regimen for the distributors with due respect for the specificity of their goods.

In the final analysis, the geography of newspaper sales, i.e. outlets from stalls and portable trays to big supermarkets, depends on the authorities regardless of their level. At first glance the figures for Moscow – 2,500 newspaper stalls, 750 outlets and over a thousand so called portable trays – are impressive. But it is important not only how many they are, but also where they are. It is still early to say that newspaper stalls are within hand's reach. Needless to say, the vendors of printed word have long been under pressure of those who wanted to push them out from choice locations of mass migration of Muscovites in favour of outlets for selling other goods, tax- or otherwise profitable.

Yet, it is the geography that largely predetermines the distribution policy. The assortment of printed matter sold at stalls and from portable counters undoubtedly depends on

the nature of the location. It is only natural that expensive glossy magazines and journals will be catching one's eye in supermarkets, whereas it will be suicidal to try to sell them in a dormitory suburb – there you will find municipal press, federal and sports newspapers and magazines, in a word, such periodic editions that are called socially oriented, i.e. it is the customer with his preferences and possibilities that will dictate the conditions for sale.

The adequate location of trading outlets and the early analysis of their location layout in new developing districts is a real task for the city authorities to fulfil. In other words, one can influence the size of circulation, prices and, eventually, the affordability and accessibility of periodic press for the broad public by using reasonably different forms of trade organization.

On the whole, I think that the described misalignments are a consequence of mistakes made in the analysis of the single national information space. Some hotheads just jumped to discard the printed media believing that they will be superseded by television and the Internet, just like, the Canadian scientist M. MacLuen, one of the most renowned theoreticians in the field of information technologies, at a certain time in his career went as far as to proclaim the “end of the Guttenberg era”, being naïve in thinking that television was bound to kill the book.

Several decades passed but the book as the paramount achievement of human intelligence is not just living on but also is feeding Internet sites and the omnipresent television itself. One may argue that texts can be and are already distributed on CDs and through e-mail, not only on paper. It is true. The traditional and new forms of information delivery and storage organically add to rather than eliminate one another.

True that there are some leisured fantasts who say there's no future for paper books as information carriers. They think that in the relatively near future a certain TV-Internet hybrid will become the main tool for bringing information to all homes, they say there will be a certain interactive information field where each and everyone will not only use information but also create information.

Perhaps they are right, it will be so, but still... every morning Muscovites hurry to buy their favourite newspaper on their way to work. The dialogue between the government and the people in the periodic press is going on and I somehow can't see its end.

Komsomolskaya Pravda, August 2005.

What is the Metropolitan Architectural Style?

“Moscow’s disintegrating!” – this is one of the most vocal catchphrases of the day. But it is a bit sly, isn’t it? To say so about Moscow, one must have a rather distorted or specific view on the city’s past as well as its future. The architectural history of Moscow is rife with steep turns, unrealized plans and, contra wise, coincidences that predetermined the lines of development for our capital for many years. However, it is in this that we find Moscow’s inimitable looks and its “genetics”. Before we come to argue whether or not Moscow is disintegrating, or how it will be developing in the future, we must make a stop and try to make out and understand the paradoxical nature of Moscow’s history “carved in stone”. It is so because our task is not just to preserve certain houses, buildings and facilities of city culture and architecture for history and posterity but also leave intact our cultural code and our civilization model that have been crucial for Moscow’s development for many centuries.

Who knows why Providence let Manege catch fire?

It may sound strange but Moscow is a very young city in the architectural sense. The five-hundred-year-old Kremlin is, perhaps, the oldest architectural ensemble. The old historical Moscow is just a small part of today’s enormous megapolis. Over the centuries almost every new house was built in place of

something that had existed before. It should be noted that the destroyed structures were often rather interesting. Today the world admires the silhouettes of the Moscow Kremlin built by Aristotle Fioravanti. But he had to remove the white stone walls that had been founded at the time of Dmitry Donskoi. And it is these walls that gave Moscow its name “a white-stone city” which is still in use. Later old structures also had to be destroyed: do you remember that the original construction of the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour required pulling down the ancient nunnery whose walls absorbed prayers of many centuries? The architectural history of Moscow has always been characterized by a continuous war between “plan” and life, between human will and the course of history. The first general plan of Moscow’s development dates back to the end of the 15th century when the construction of the Kremlin, as we see it today, and Kitay-gorod began. According to archeologists, many processes in construction and in people’s awareness characteristic of that time are very similar to those that we observe today. “The construction boom”, inviting best architects from abroad, removing industries from the city centre, people’s protests (then it was the clergy that protested) – it’s not about today’s Moscow, it’s about the 15th century Moscow.

At the same time the history of Moscow is a story of rejected or failed projects. What would have happened if at the end of the 18th century Bazhenov had succeeded in implementing his project that provided for almost a complete rebuilding of the Kremlin? We can never know. But what we can say is that Moscow would have been totally different. And Russia would have been totally different. It would not be an exaggeration to say that the implementation of his plan could have had a tremendous impact on the entire history of our state.

What would have been if the most grandiose of all Stalin’s skyscrapers – the People’s Commissariat for Heavy Industry

had been erected in the old Moscow Zaryad'e where now one can see a concrete square-shaped pancake of Hotel "Rossija". Should that have happened, today's hard talk about Moscow's architecture would have seemed kid's stuff to us.

On the other hand, we have Kalinin Avenue which Muscovites "christened" New Arbat only because of their hidden guilt for something they failed to preserve, for Sobachia flat ground and Molchanovka, for Okujava's side-streets. They should have asked themselves a question why the Providence ruled so rather than otherwise. Who knows why the Providence let Manege catch fire? Perhaps, the Betancour restored steelwork will no longer have to rest on ugly metal columns and be bashfully covered by the dusty cloth of a false ceiling. May this be the debt we must pay our descendants?

The dialectic of the clear and the latent, of the architectural plan and the spirit of the city is what we call Moscow's genuine style.

Sometimes a copy cannot be of lesser value than the original

Architectural questions are always extremely politicized in Moscow and are subject to the subjective tastes of both architects and journalists. Some call for mothballing the city for all times; some say it should be radically rebuilt to have more glass and concrete... So here we have an issue of professional and aesthetic selfishness which has overshadowed almost everything, whereas the purpose of the debates is self-expression rather than the search for the truth.

I suggest that we should talk in substance. For example, we could give serious consideration to the phenomenon that in Moscow's culture the notion of a copy sometimes has no lesser meaning than the original. It is so because the logical, historical

and cultural load carried by such a copy can often be richer and deeper than the original architectural solution and it is for this reason that the disparagement towards the so called remakes is extremely superficial.

If somebody thinks that the debates over the reconstruction of monuments and so on is something solely immanent in today's Moscow, I can certainly say that it is not so. The question has a thousand-year history. In Japan, for example, every 200 years old temples are disassembled and their replicas are built in their place to stand for another two centuries. It is just a tradition to maintain their historical architecture.

By the way, a serious talk about monuments had not been possible before the 20th century when the city started to grow rapidly on all sides because of the development of radically new system of public transport and there was a chance to build new buildings en masse in new areas. It was then that the idea, earlier impossible, to protect all architectural monuments was born.

What are we to regard as a monument? "Russia"? "Moscow"?

The majority of great buildings of classical tradition now admired by millions were at that time extremely revolutionary. If the height of new buildings had always been the same as the surrounding historical city, the great Gothic cathedrals would have never been built. Someone in history had to be the first to think up and create their forms that had not existed before for them to become eventually a component of the people's culture. And someone had to be the first to reject them.

In this sense Moscow is in no way worse and in many ways better than the other cities of the world! Take a look, for example, at Shukhov's Tower on Shabolovka Street and the adjacent

monument of Moscow's baroc – the Church of the Deposition of the Robe on Donskaya Street – just look how different they are. Almost all noticeable architectural projects of the 20th century went against the established tradition, they defiantly paid no heed to aesthetic canon and focused on functionality. The Russian avant-garde of the 20s had no roots in the previous history. The constructivist Melnikov sought for a form in each of his projects, as a priority to be ideally suited to the purpose of the building. His works became a teaching aid for many generations of architects to come.

On the other hand, Zholtovsky, being a classicist, showed that a new content could be easily incrustrated in even very old forms. This skill is extremely important in today's rapidly changing conditions when the purpose of the same building can well be changed once a year.

So, what buildings shall we consider to be monuments? Khrushchevki and Stalinki cannot be considered as such. We can leave them as museum exhibits, but there's the risk that all Muscovites will protest loudly. As far as infrastructural buildings are concerned (there are very many buildings used for that role – hotels, shops, etc., that are being ardently defended today by our "culturally-oriented public"), they too embody a certain social and historical edge and each of them played its definitive functional role. But now these buildings are forced to adapt to their new extrinsic roles.

Take for example "Rossija". This hotel has never been held in regard with the architectural community. I think it deserved it to a measure. Its architect Dmitry Chechulin was known for his aversion to architectural ensemble as a notion. As a result, "Rossija" literally sticks out from what surrounds it as all that emerged largely as far back as the Middle Ages. Anything built in its place will not make it worse. And what if the disturbed harmony comes back again?

As for Hotel "Moskva", things are noticeably more complex than they are presented in indignant articles about its removal. The matter is that Tschusev's interior and décor styled on classicism hardly come in harmony with the constructivist basis of Saveliev's and Stapran's. The 1976–78 addition (by A. Boretsky, D. Solopov and I. Rozhin) is only in general terms coherent with the original main building.

Incidentally, all these architectural details pale into insignificance when contrasted against the historical details. "Moskva" is in the place of the demolished lanes of Okhotny Ryad whose stone shopping stalls were Moscow's main food market for over a century – a long time, enough to win respect. Moscow's architectural eclectic is a result of perpetual additions and adjustments throughout its history. It's an amalgamation of the old and the new. It's a dialogue of the epochs and a test for their compatibility.

**We must preserve where we can preserve.
We must build where we can't but build.**

This problem has an economic aspect too. Raising a building from ruin, as is often the case with us, costs very much, which is regretful. The state does not have such money. It means that we have to look for a reasonable way and a reasonable compromise. We should not be lured by slogans as we have to understand the substance of the matter.

To begin with, we should have a clear picture of what we want to have as a result of the reconstruction of a disintegrating monument. If we want only a museum piece, it will be a blind-alley investment for the next few decades. We must set clearly defined goals and then we can look for investors and rigorously control them.

By the way, a good half of the buildings about whose condition we should be concerned today are under federal protection. Take for example, the Pashkov Mansion: it is Bazhenov's only creation that exists and it has been dilapidating for a good twenty years – neither Soviet, nor today's federal Ministry of Culture could find funds to take care of it.

We have been concerned about monuments for all these years including those under federal protection. Incidentally, "federal" does not mean that they belong to the Ministry of Culture, it simply means that they are part of the national heritage. And if we have a monument which is part of all-Russia's heritage, this means that we should take special care about it. If it is in Moscow, we just cannot stay aside. The government of Moscow is trying to fund the preservation and restoration of even those structures of which only the external contour is left. The municipal policy is that we should preserve where it can be preserved, we must reconstruct where we can't but reconstruct, we should build where we can't but build. But in certain situations it is better not to build at all than to spoil the looks of the city.

The city authorities have always paid much attention to the opinion expressed by anyone representing the public or different branches of power (this is exactly what they did when we were trying to regulate both the rights of ownership of Manege and the proposals concerning its reconstruction). The city couldn't but consider a multitude of opinions therefore the coordination process took a rather long time. To my great regret, this delay was fatal for that great historical building which was in a very bad shape, technically speaking. And this same thing can happen to many architectural works of art in Moscow! While hot debates are going on with the public, representatives of commercial and non-profit-making organizations, all buildings are subject not only to ageing but also to production-induced factors that are far more destructive.

You can't balm man alive. It's tantamount to killing him

Many a venerable architect thinks that Moscow will not tolerate any architectural novelties; that Moscow is a special world with a special architectural medium which is not to be touched. Certain proponents of this view come to sheer absurd in their logic and are ready to insist that everything should be left as it is even if architectural monuments begin to crumble. But to live means to change in the flow of time. You cannot mothball and thus leave the space you live in without change. You cannot make Moscow a city of a single epoch or of a single generation.

For instance, it is much more important and practical to try to resolve issues of technical reconstruction than to deal with finding solutions to architectural problems. Of special importance is the provision of a guaranteed capability of the principal elements of a building to carry its weight. There is nothing new in that the foundation, floors and roof timbers or the framework of many monuments are in a very bad shape, and everyone knows that it is impossible to preserve such a monument without resolving this problem normally requiring considerable interference in the architecture of the building itself.

It is natural that the chase for functionality and feasibility leads to many conflicting situations. Yes, they are many, known to everyone and very obvious: insufficient number of car parks; sharp reduction of traffic capacity in rush hours; infringement on the rights of pedestrians who are forced to give way and space to motor transport; unorganized pastime for young people, etc.

It is easy for those having one's own apartments and one's own studios to criticize the municipal city development policy aimed primarily at resolving problems of social and economic development (in conditions of catastrophic lack of dwelling and office area). This does not mean, of course, that the Mayor's

office is in opposition to Muscovite old-timers who have been living in this city from generation to generation, but we must not forget that Moscow has always been a colossal "melting pot" for all nationalities of Russia and the former Soviet Union. The country can have only one capital and there cannot be many megacities that large in the country. This is why the number of those who want to live in Moscow will be noticeably more for many years still than the number it can physically accommodate. This is confirmed, though indirectly, by the growing volume of real estate in Moscow. If modern architecture knows any other methods of improving sanitary and dwelling conditions without introducing new dwelling areas that are not yet known to professionals, let it name them.

And let's not be deceived by such tourist lures as calm narrow streets in medieval cities in Germany or France. Numerous autobahns or auto routes connect and unite these small cities into single organisms of economic enterprise and vigour. In Rhur, for example, one cannot understand where one officially independent city ends and another city begins. And it's been so for a couple of centuries.

* * *

A city is like the face of a man. All changes should be reflected on it otherwise it will turn into a death-mask. You cannot balm man alive. It's tantamount to killing him. While he grows, his looks will acquire something new. It's impossible to freeze Moscow, our capital, the face of our country by screaming, "Stand still!" or "Freeze!"

Izvestia, May 2004.

Russia in the World Ocean





The cold war may have come to an end, the heads of many western politicians and experts are still preoccupied with the idea that the boxing match is going on. They believe that it is only the first round that has ended and a long exchange of blows is yet to come.

In actual fact the boxing match is over and now we are playing a different game. If it is chess, then let me remind our opponents that decent players do not resort to turning the chessboard round when they feel they are losing, not to mention stealing chess pieces from it. Or perhaps it is the modern history's call that we should play together in one soccer team? If that is the case, we will need teamwork, the feeling of a partner, the skill to understand one another at a wink.

Mi & Zapad, 2006

We and the West

We know that the nations of the West do not understand and do not like Russian singularity. They test the unified Russian state for strength, as if it were a dam; they also test it for a possibility of their trade, as well as linguistic and military expansion. They desire to break down the well-tied Russian "broom" into "twigs", break up these "twigs" one by one and use them to kindle the fading fire of their own civilization. They want to fractionalize Russia to disengage it from itself, equalize it with the West, and thus destroy it.

Ivan Ilyin

Today the relations between Russia and the West can most accurately be characterized with one word, that of perplexity. This perplexity is reciprocal, but its origin is deep-rooted though it can be found in that noisy confusion and fussy uneasiness that has so clearly been seen recently in the reaction of Western countries to the events that take place in Russia.

But behind this nervous reaction is the age-long history. However obviously Russia belongs to European nations, however obviously it develops not only in the context of but also with the continuous participation in European culture and history, Europe (the mother of the modern Western civilization) has traditionally felt a mix of attraction and fear towards our country.

These two European feelings take root not only in the sensation of "geographical" adjacency to the vast, immense and severe

Russian territory which is equally spellbinding if one looks at the map or travels across this country. This spatial sensations lead sometimes to a vague or, at times, clear understanding that “we are close, we are together, but we are not the same”.

Nikolai Danilevsky, a famous philosopher and historian, described this problem very accurately about one and a half century ago. Looking at Russia, Europe “... instinctively feels that under its surface there is a solid, hard core which cannot be ground, crushed or dissolved, and which, therefore, cannot be assimilated or turned into someone else’s flesh and blood, and which has a power and ambition to live its independent, unique life”.

It is exactly these “power and ambition” of Russia to be independent and unique and the impossibility “to grind or dissolve” the Russian sovereignty that the West cannot bear with. This is why, according to Danilevsky, Russia cannot help being subject to the same accusations that it is allegedly an imperial, “conquering state” which is nothing but a “dark force opposed to progress and freedom”.

Well, what can I say... nothing has changed since. Today as before “we hear the same groans from everywhere”. They are deep-thought lamentations about the crisis in the relations with Russia, tactful “concerns” about Russian plans to develop and strengthen its economy, calls for protecting the world against the powerful expansion of Russians who are literally falling on their “orange” neighbours, heartsick wailings about the authoritarian Russian bear who does not understand and thus treads on democracy, extremely emotional shrieks about Russian imperial ambitions, and, finally, calls for creating a sanitation fence around Russia or some kind of a new curtain.

Against this background, philippics calling on Russia to get back on the track of “progress and democracy” and to prove such a return by gay-parades in the centre of Moscow and near the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier – places sacred for each and

everyone in this country – look like something akin to hysterics desperate and insane if not delirious.

It is understood that such passion and the stream of consciousness of the West cannot but cause bewilderment this time with us, Russians. Say the least, Russia would like to discuss our issues of mutual interest and concern without reticence and well-rounded formulations on the one hand, and without conjectures and double standards on the other, and also without mothballed stereotypes of dinosaur-politicians of the Fulton era and the Vilnius period. Otherwise, both sides can lose the main thing, i.e. the possibility sides honest, partner-like dialogue between us.

Russia is Re-gaining Strength

Early in May the director of the Russian-Eurasian programme of the Carnegie Centre Andrew Cachins in his article published by *The Wall Street Journal* eventually gave the West a possibility to admit what the matter really was. According to his fair conclusion, the gist of the situation with which the U.S. and, perhaps, many other powers in this world find it difficult to reconcile is that Russia has come back to the political arena. It has re-gained power after two decades of recession and has come back to play after a painful geopolitical time-out and severe traumas caused by the breakup of the Soviet Union.

This is actually what happened nothing more, nothing less. There isn't any "empire of evil" of a new type. There isn't any "authoritarian monster". What the world has is Russia which has regained awareness of its national interests and which is ready to defend them; just as everybody else – in no way better and in no way worse than the U.S. itself, the European powers or the rest of the world.

However hard it is to understand this for someone, that someone should do it just to be able to pursue a realistic policy, adequately assess the situation and build normal relations of partnership with our country. In fact, it is better than to try to wave orange flags and devise mantras to throw Russia back again or to curse the Kremlin to conceal one's own unwillingness to accept the reality.

Regretfully, the reality is that the West itself is getting rid of its own complexes towards Russia unwillingly and painfully and, more importantly, it is still far from getting rid of them completely.

The attitudes to our country continue to swing whimsically from fear to admiration. Thus, the fear of Bolsheviks, the permanent revolution and the USSR was superseded by the admiration with perestroika, with the destruction processes of the late 80s followed by the anarchy of the time of troubles, as well as with the lack of state control and Russia's readiness to mortgage itself just for a word of praise from the world community in the 90s. This admiration grew even stronger fueled by the practically free access of the West to our national resources in the conditions of sheer chaos in Russia.

There is nothing surprising in that this kind of euphoria was shattered by painful "chuck horrors" as soon as Russia stated to regain consciousness. Presto!, and once again we see the same sovietologists who, after a leave, have taken a new lease of life by trying their level best to revive the old fears in western middlebrows of wild and dark Russia, and by doing so they seek to get many a grant for their "scientific" speculations about the "revival of the Soviet Frankenstein" and the end of the world which, as they say, will imminently come as soon as the Russian state gains a bit more strength.

Well, there is no lack of dreadful prophesies in the West now. The Western emotional swings just can't stop somewhere in the middle where there is firm ground and an opportunity to look at Russia calmly and realistically.

The History Must Go on

There is one more fundamental reason for this situation. The breakup of the Soviet Union, the upset balance between the two world systems that determined the world development for almost the entire 20th century have caused in the West a dangerous feeling of the end of the evolution of the world civilization, alias the end to the achieved historical and geopolitical super puissance.

The proclaimed doctrine of "the end of history" holds that the Western world together with its values, economic structures and its political system built on them is the paramount achievement of civilization. The rest of the countries and systems, this way or another, involved in the process of globalization will have to accept the offered logic of the "catching-up-with-the-West" type of development and will have to follow this line inevitably.

The future of mankind, as they think, should turn into a mechanical process of crunching all countries, peoples and cultures up a point from where they all will finally comply with the breathtaking "heights" of the modern Western world civilization. Such "unbearable easiness of being" has enabled the West to disregard the rest of the world, simultaneously fuel the "global egoism" of the Western civilization and thus give itself the right to interfere in any situation anywhere in the world guided by "humanitarian" goals and values for the benefit of global progress.

As a result, over the last fifteen years we have become witnesses to the impressive and at the same time appalling attempts

of the Western countries, primarily the U.S., at democratization of certain countries and even some regions of the planet by force on the strength of the self-imposed mission to "promote democracy in the world". In fact, the Soviet Union did the same when it tried to tug certain countries from feudalism and even from a primitive tribal stage to communism.

However, the burden of external management over states and peoples, when the notion of national sovereignty is erased, may prove to be too heavy. One should not forget that there are political forces in today's world that can make the process of global democratization work quite differently, in the opposite direction. Proclaiming the "will of the strong" to decide who's right and who's wrong, the West itself falls into a trap because nothing will keep the bosses of the terrorist underground from following suit and deciding that they stand higher and are better than us and thus have the right to dispose of our life and our fate.

It is already obvious today that the attempt to "close down the history" has turned out to be nothing more than an illusion. After the 9/11 tragedy in New-York the author of the "end-of-history" concept Francis Fukuyama wrote that the United States would become a different country. It would be more unified, less egocentric and far more in need of friends' help. But the main thing, according to Fukuyama, is that America will have to become to a greater degree an ordinary country – a country with clearer interests and weak points rather than a power convinced that it can alone determine the fate of the world in which it exists".

Today this conclusion is believed to be as relevant as never before not only for the U.S. but also for the entire Western world. Once, the former U.S. president Ronald Reagan called on the USSR to become a "normal state". Today's Russia is surely a normal state. I guess that the analogous procedure for "coming back to earth" is what the West now needs most.

The West should perceive Russia's comeback to world politics, its strengthening and economic growth not as a threat but as an important factor of security and stability and also as a testimony of its return to normal life in that complex, interdependent and fluid world we live in.

Changes in the Notions

To my regret, suspicions that the processes in our country pose a threat continue to prevail in the West. The Russian policy is still being analyzed in light of the age-old stereotypes and perceptions that the authoritarian rule, imperial ambitions and expansionist aspirations are allegedly characteristic of Russia.

The situation, in fact, was accurately diagnosed a long time ago by Confucius, who said, "If the notions are incorrect, the words used to define them have nothing to rest upon. If the words have nothing to rest upon, no action can be taken..." Now there is a definite need to make such "changes in the notions" in the relations between Russia and the West, i.e. the need to abandon the incorrect understanding of words and the meaning of events.

Now let's talk about democracy. At just hearing this word, the whole host of sovietologists like an old artillery horse at hearing the call of a regimental bugle wakes up and starts to hoof, snort and neigh about the "funeral of democracy in Russia". However, the real situation is absolutely different.

The democratization processes in Russia have specificity. This specificity is that these processes, having been with us for the last fifteen years, have no analogy in the Russian history. Everything which is new is difficult to implement. It is fraught with inevitable mistakes that need to be corrected. Russia is making these corrections now because a ten-year journey

“with no rudder or sail” in the 90s has made the Russian nation understand that it is imperative for us to be more cautious as we move into the future and that there should be more reasonable conservatism and circumspection in our further transformations. Russia needed a policy to link its traditional values without which no society can survive with democracy without which no society can evolve. It is this policy that Russia is pursuing today.

Let me answer another question. And this question is this: Is there a state where such a policy is not pursued? No one will seriously argue that there is a certain machine-press for stamping a single standard template for democracy and a single conveyor belt to put it together (however someone may like it to be so). Any country seeks an optimum combination of its historical and cultural values with the institutional mechanisms of democracy. Similarly there is more than one model of motor vehicles in the world to be used at all times and people choose to drive what they need or what they think is more convenient for them, be it a mini-car or an offroad. And the models differ considerably from one another, as a Japanese Toyota, from a German Mercedes or an American Ford.

I think it is worth mentioning that the processes of political development in Russia were accompanied until recently by the weakening and the “half-decay” of the state to the extent that at a certain time it became a tool for stealing, shady manipulations and cynical intrigues in the hands of certain groups and even individuals. Such oligarchic “democracy” can and must be referred to as weak. If at all the word “democracy” can be applied to such outrageous things as semibankirschinas*, media-terrorism, and hypothecary and mortgage frauds.

* Yu. Luzhkov uses a pun by drawing an analogy between “semibankirschina” (literally the rule of seven bankers) and so-called Semiboyarschina, a Russian government of seven boyars, who on September 21, 1610, committed the act of national treason by covertly letting the Polish troops into Moscow.

What we have now in Russia is a process intended to rectify this defective democracy which can hardly be distinguished from oligarchic anarchy. This is why it is nothing else than a process designed to strengthen democracy, develop and consolidate democratic institutions and traditions. It is not easy, sometimes it takes long, sometimes it is painful, sometimes we learn from mistakes. But one thing is certain: this is undoubtedly a process aimed to build a strong democratic state which can and must become a worthy and equal member of the world community of sovereign democracies.

Other rules of another game

The existing fears about Russia's imperial ambitions show even more clearly than before the weakness of sovietologists who were so numerous in the past. At times there is an impression that the West continues to base its thinking on the categories that were used at the time of the Soviet - U.S. confrontation. The cold war may have come to an end, the heads of many western politicians and experts are still preoccupied with the idea that the boxing match is going on. They believe that it is only the first round that has ended and a long exchange of blows is yet to come.

In actual fact the boxing match is over and now we are playing a different game. If it is chess, then let me remind our opponents that decent players do not resort to turning the chessboard round when they feel they are losing, not to mention stealing chess pieces from it. Or perhaps it is the modern history's call that we should play together in one soccer team? If that is the case, we will need teamwork, the feeling of a partner, the skill to understand one another at a wink.

However because of the "boxing" stereotypes of the past we still hear such words as "imperial ambitions" and "confronta-

tion" instead of "national interests" and "cooperation". And once again at someone's will the bell tolls a "cold war" type warning this time about the increasing defence capability of the Russian armed forces. However obvious it may be, Russia must and has every right to oppose an alien policy if it poses a threat to its interests, its people, its national sovereignty, its territorial integrity and its stability as a state. It is for the same reason that Russia, understanding better than many other countries the threats and challenges of extremism, terrorism and separatism in the modern world, takes an active part in the international anti-terrorist coalition.

Strengthening our defence capability is an absolutely normal warning to all hostile forces in the world (including criminal and terrorist) that Russia is not a courtyard through which those with instincts typically wolfish rather than vegetarian could easily pass. It is also a sign that Russia is ready to cooperate with other countries in promoting a world order based on stability. It is exactly the same what the rest of the countries of the world not inclined to commit suicide are doing.

We are bewildered even more when Russia is reproached for its alleged expansionism, be it in connection with its cooperation with our neighbours or on the issue of energy. I used to write that the 21st century is a period when large "geopolitical continents", new supranational political-economic systems, global common markets, cultural and information regions of influence will be formed. In such a world a state or a group of states will be capable of not falling out of the general development process provided only it has a global integration programme of its own intended to develop and strengthen its positions to be able to counter such new global challenges as international terrorism or the emergence of a large infrastructure of institutions and mechanisms designed to exercise external control over the development of these or those countries.

Russia may belong to the European civilization, but in this context the idea of its joining the European integration project, alias the European Union, is objectively impossible. Such an experiment, should it take place, would end in a failure for both sides for it would be impossible to “digest” the enormity of political, economic and socio-cultural as well as geopolitical problems proper that would inevitably emerge.

This is why Russia should objectively integrate, in present-day conditions, a certain part of the world, i.e. the former Soviet republics and the Russian community abroad, with itself and its own project of the future. Alone no one can survive today.

As for economy, Russia has been taught to live according to market laws for 15 years. Now the West is vexed that Russia turned out to be a good student. The reason for annoyance is that Russia really lays claims to a fairer participation in globalization and in world economy.

Russia’s energy resources objectively constitute its competitive advantage. But Russia is not saying that it will simply use these resources. No, on the contrary, Russia says it is ready to cooperate and invest these resources in ensuring security of energy supply and, more broadly, in providing economic security of the entire world. It is only natural that our country in this context expects to be provided with equal and fair possibility to participate and cooperate in other global economic processes.

In other words, Russia does not want to become the West’s appendix rich in raw materials and primary products. It wants to make advantage of its resources and its capabilities to participate in writing the fairer game rules for the world and in providing its development and stability. However doubts may be about these initiatives of Russia’s, the real state of affairs will be as it is. But

if the West is afraid of such cooperation or rejects it, this will make Russia turn East where it will be given a warm welcome for there its aspirations perhaps are better understood and to a large extent shared.

With sober views and in good memory

In conclusion, I need to say that the issue of understanding the processes presently underway in Russia is also and *inter alia* a question of good will required from the West. It is also a question whether or not Western political scientists and politicians are capable of taking a look at what is going on from a new angle.

The assessment of the development processes in Russia allows us to say that the glass is half full rather than half empty. False suspicions about Russia's development, its goals and interests can only spill the water rather than fill the glass.

Over the last 15 years Russia has seen revolutionary changes that brought to life an absolutely new reality. As of today the revolutionary period is over and the new Russia is getting on its feet. There are no doubts whatsoever about its democratic way of development. The speculations that a stronger state control in Russia poses a threat are groundless. The approach which allows viewing Russia as nothing else but an enemy is not consistent with today's reality and only keeps us both from moving ahead into the future.

Any reasonable person cannot but admit that Russia is a leading power in the Euro-Asian space with a considerable capability of worldwide influence, primarily, because of its nuclear and institutional factors. Russia's potential also allows it to become one of the poles of the world economy.

Russia's unique status is accounted for by its enormous potential of natural resources including its energy potential (which is mainly characteristic for the countries in the global South),

plus its humanitarian, industrial, military-strategic potential, and, more importantly, its culture and historical experience which is part of the Western civilization. In this context, Russia objectively becomes a bridge to connect the different world civilizations. And its participation in the world political process can be a safeguard for global stability.

Naturally, a lot should be changed in the relations between Russia and the West. We should move fast away from the shabby patterns of the "cold war" and stop viewing our relations exclusively through the prism of deterrence potentials and groundless suspicions. Such viewing is totally incorrect. We should also substantially expand our knowledge of each other and learn more about the areas where we can successfully cooperate; we should also re-focus our attention onto the sphere of economy and the dialogue between our public institutions.

The main conclusion is that it is of vital importance for Russia and the West to make their relations more complex in the sense that they should become more diversified and of full value. I think that both Russia and the West deserve exactly such relations.

Rossiyskaya Gazeta, June 2006.

Orange-grey Platitude or Peroxide Revolution

On 24 August, Ukraine marked its principal national holiday – the Independence Day – for the first time after the “po-maranchevaya” (which is Ukrainian for “orange”) revolution. How did Ukraine mark it? What does Ukraine live by and what is the “new Ukraine”? I think it’s time to talk about it all.

Ukraine has become different. Today, I believe, everybody can see it. Yes, everybody regardless of whether he supported the “orange revolution” or was skeptical about it. Every time you look at today’s Ukraine, you have a strange feeling akin to what you feel meeting a neighbour or a relative whom you have met by mere chance after not having seen him for a long time, and have been struck by a change in him, a change that is hardly noticeable and strange at first glance, but radically shocking though.

For example, there were protests against the shutdown of Russian schools in the Crimea. In the thick of ukrainization nobody pays attention to the fact the Russian language and the Russian culture in the Crimea and in Ukraine’s other regions are native to the citizens of Ukraine. The pre-election promises of today’s leaders of the country about making the Russian language the second official state language of Ukraine have been forgotten.

At the same time the arch-see of the Uniat Greek-Catholic Church is transferred from Lvov to Kiev. That the Vatican makes use of the position of the “orange” government ingratiating themselves with the West is well understood. But why does the

new Ukrainian government have to flagrantly defy the interests and feelings of the orthodox and disregard the traditions and culture of their own country? It has already been announced as a political goal that Ukraine will have the “unified local orthodox church” independent of the Russian Orthodox Church, which will become “one the major factors of national self-determination”. Can’t the wish to drive a wedge between Ukrainians and the Moscow Patriarchate be so strong that the “uniat club” will be used against the entire Orthodoxy to achieve this end?

Meanwhile we regularly hear Ukrainian ministers threatening us to withdraw from the project to create the Common Economic Space, and also to enter, if it works out, the WTO ahead of Russia and to offer us unacceptable trading conditions. A little earlier the Ukrainian authorities blackmailed Russia by raising lease payments for the Black Sea Fleet facilities thinking that this would help them dislodge the Russian fleet from Sevastopol and with ever more vigour fly into the arms of NATO. Today the adherence of Ukraine to European values is vocally manifested by stenciling North Atlantic insignia on its tanks and ships. They call it “the most harmonic system for organizing a national defence”. The innuendoes and calls to take Ukrainian factories and plants from Russian companies can be heard regularly. They threaten Muscovites to take away their health resorts in the Crimea. And jiggery-pokery around Russian gas is a non-stop perpetual affair.

Perhaps everything what is happening in Ukraine is happening for a reason and according to a pattern. However illogical, that pattern must pursue a certain goal. As we say: one time is a happenstance, two times is a tendency, three times is a pattern. This is why we are very keen on understanding what kind of locomotive force behind Ukrainian government leaders makes them erect “revolutionary barricades” in the relations with Russia?

First of all it needs to be reminded that the “new Ukraine” emerged from the “orange mist” under the colors of “European integration”. Yet it became clear very soon that the cavalry charge on the European Union would not succeed. Ukraine is taking the risk of turning into the same “eternal applicant” for EU membership as Turkey. Incidentally, the Turkish example clearly shows the implications of the situation: the incessantly growing “euro skepticism” inside the country, the increasing public awareness of the country’s state of uncertainty and the reciprocal growth of isolationist sentiments in Europe itself. However the euphoria over the prospect of joining the EU, as before, is not allowing Kiev to see things as they are.

One side of the problem is that the ardent desire to make the West love it forces Ukraine to completely open its economy once it enters the WTO and turn into a dull European suburb and NATO’s “unit-train” regiment at the expense of ditching its national economy, its military-industrial complex, agriculture and eventually its people. The other side of it is that the Ukrainian authorities for no apparent reason decided that the best way to Europe is their anti-Russian policy. This strange conviction fuels their desire to hoof Russia whenever they have such an opportunity. And it would be absolutely great if it were possible to take something from Russia and divide it among themselves every time the appropriate situation arose.

In his time Lenin, when he was defending the need for “red terror”, said that a revolution is worth something only when it knows how to defend itself. Today’s Ukrainian rulers seem to have so much absorbed the legacy of this leader of communism that they have linked direct the ideas about defending their revolution with the Bolsheviks’ ideal of expropriation. As a result, they produced terror, not “red” though, but “orange”.

The attempt to “regain the title of Ukraine” to Crimean health resort facilities owned by Moscow is a vivid illustration

of a businesslike plunder on the grounds of revolutionary needs. Moscow has owned and invested in the Crimean health and recreation stations since the 1930s, i.e. when nobody even thought about placing the Crimea under Ukrainian jurisdiction. In the last few years, Moscow has invested several billion rubles in the Crimean health resorts, has created and kept thousands of jobs in the Crimea, has built houses for the Crimean who work at sanatoriums. Needless to say, the Crimean budget is being well fed by Moscow's health stations. This is what perhaps inspires "commissars of expropriation" to take away what is working well, what is looking nice and what is developing rather than apply their talents to putting other numerous failing and deteriorating Crimean health resorts. They, by the by, do belong to Ukraine.

The Crimean example shows too well one more specific feature of any revolution. This is a maniac desire to rewrite history and to erase the truth from the people's memory. No special reasoning is required to prove that our peoples are brothers in terms of their history and in terms of their single culture. It is only too obvious that they are bonded together with numerous Russian-Ukrainian families, kinship, brother- and sisterhood and intertwined economically. Over the last 400 years Ukrainian lands have been part of the Khanate of Crimea, Rzecz Pospolita, Austro-Hungary and the Russian Empire. But none of them but Russia alone took the labour to collect Ukrainian lands and create Ukrainian statehood. Needless to mention that today's Ukrainian integrity was achieved only when it was part of the USSR. It may seem that the new Ukrainian rulers should appreciate the "Crimean gift" to Ukraine from Russia made by "our dear" Nikita Khrushchev ("dear" in this context also means that Russia had to pay dear for Nikita's doings). All the more so, the Crimea had never been part of Ukraine and there had been no historical reasons for giving it to Ukraine. It is extremely unfair that new post-revolution history textbooks

written for Ukrainian schoolchildren disparage Russia's gift of goodwill by saying that "the inclusion of the Crimean peninsula in Ukraine was a Russian attempt to transfer to Ukraine Russia's moral responsibility for resettling the Tartar population". And one more thing! According to these textbooks, by giving the Crimea to Ukraine, Russia allegedly wanted "to force Ukraine to take responsibility for the restoration of economic and cultural life in the peninsula". In this connection, I can say only this: if everything is that bad and horrible, if Ukraine was forced and arm-twisted", then, perhaps, justice should be restored and Ukraine should give the Crimea back to Russia, what do you think about that, brothers?

The relations between the new Ukrainian rulers and Russia are only a special part of a deeper problem. The problem has been known for long and it runs as follows: "the revolution has a beginning but no end". The spangle of revolutionary innovations and transformations has become a means of existence because of the reluctance to pursue a realistic policy and exercise day-to-day government. He who "doesn't want and cannot do anything" will have, as his last resort, to simulate a vigorous activity. To simulate is easy when you, for instance, abolish the most hated GAI, which stands for the "state's traffic police", to loudly announce the re-privatization and "fair" re-distribution of property, or in a state of administrative excitement to try to bring down petrol prices by strong pressure of numerous prohibitions just to gain popularity. One can also eradicate the "enemies of the people", which is actually taking place now in Ukraine. The Ukrainian leaders almost with pride in their voices say that the revolution has fired almost 20 thousand officials. Many of them have not just been removed from their offices but are being subject to criminal persecution.

This expulsion of skilled force is going on mainly for political reasons irrespective of work results. Any official from the Ukrain-

ian East or South can all of a sudden be accused of corruption or separatism. The destructive social, economic and political consequences of such actions are of interest to no one, the main thing here is that the number of those "lustrated" looked impressive and reflected the decisive nature of the arbiters.

A word about lustration if you permit, not for the sake of eloquence. In spring 2005, a bill was submitted to Verkhovna Rada. It contained a provision about verification of the involvement or implication of candidates seeking high-ranking posts in the government, armed forces, mass media and education in "stealing the 2004 presidential elections", as well as in the collaboration with the former Soviet KGB and foreign intelligence after the year 1991. The bill has not yet become a law but the policy in line with it is already underway.

The "orange democrats" are, of course, gentle and distinguished doves of peace. Only you should not forget that doves belong to the pigeon family and a pigeon is the only bird that pecks its own kind to death.

But PR in the raw and purges assisted by commissars' six-shooters cannot deceive the economy and make Ukraine a prosperous country. According to official statistics, last year's growth of Ukrainian GDP accounted for 12.1%. This year the government expects it to come at 5-6% at best. In actual fact, according to many experts, this figure will be lower than that. Inflation at the end of the year will go beyond 10%. Prices for many consumer goods rose during the first half-year only from 15 to 30%. However obviously pro-Western the verbal "investment friendliness" of the Ukrainian government may be, no significant investments have been made so far. What investments can we talk about if the government is not even going to stop its policy for the redistribution of its own and someone else's property. Even IMF makes innuendoes to the Ukrainian rulers that "the clarification of re-privatization plans would assist in the cause

of improvement of investment climate". But even this doesn't help because someone's hopes to wash some grains of gold in the pan of the Ukrainian economy pierced by the revolution still run very high.

More often than ever one can hear predictions on the threshold of the elections to Verkhovna Rada that Ukraine is bound for an inevitable economic crisis. Of course, the "revolutionary economic crisis" can be described as "correct and beneficial" especially if it were to be compared to the "incorrect and harmful" economic growth during the "anti-social rule of Kuchma's". One can even, as is now proposed by the Ukrainian press, review the official statistics of the country's last year's economic development, i.e. "true it up" to make the present economic failures less noticeable.

The inability to put an end to the revolution, start normal living, do daily chores and perform one's duties is the principal problem of the current leaders of Ukraine. Now we bear witness to a sad picture showing people suffering from a besieged citadel syndrome of those who for no reason think that the shortest way for the Ukrainian people to prosperity and to the European Union is a continuous excogitation of and struggle with enemies. No, there are no enemies. No one is going to attack the revolutionaries.

The convivial orange fireworks in the main square are dying away leaving only a grey cloud of carbon monoxide in the sky. But I think it will soon clear away. Sooner or later "samostiynost"[†] and "nezalezhnost"^{**} should be replaced by common sense. Otherwise the new generation of Ukrainian politicians will have to "leave Maidan".

Izvestia, August 2005.

[†] Ukrainian for self-sufficiency.

^{**} Ukrainian for independence.

A Test for “Nezalezhnost”

14 years after the Ukrainian referendum on “nezalezhnost” and the breakup of the Soviet Union that followed it almost immediately Ukraine has not resolved this issue of paramount importance – the issue of its independence.

As for “samostiynost”, it is present in abundance in the recent Ukrainian history and its present life. As for political self-sufficiency and rationality, and creative action to build and develop the country, they are definitely in great deficit.

A major part of the Ukrainian people continues to regard the endless fight against phantoms of the Soviet past and the place of Ukraine on the political map as *raison d’être* for their existence. But the respect of the world and genuine sovereignty come only from the “daily” work to develop one’s country and its economy rather than from the struggle against Russia or from efforts to join the EU and NATO.

The dead grabs the living

The Ukrainian rulers have been living by the past fighting its “imperial legacy” for the last fourteen years after the break-up of the Soviet Union; in fact, they continue to do so now. They keep looking and even sometimes going back to the dramatic event of the early 1990s. “Samostiynost” and “nezalezhnost” in a strange way combine with the attempts to link over and over again their

resolute rejection of the Soviet legacy with posing special conditions and demands to Russia as the successor of the USSR.

For example, the Ukrainian-Russian relations in the gas sphere are "talk of the town". Gasprom's standing proposals to pass on to transparent payment relations is a logical result of the previous "angelic" patience of Russia based on hopes for Ukraine's self-recovery from such childish diseases of sovereignty as the inability to regularly pay its accounts, the disappearance of gas from pipelines and gas storage facilities and Ukraine's hesitant attitude towards the creation of a joint gas-transportation consortium.

However, the "gas question" in our complex relations with Ukraine is far from being the only one, nor is it the oldest. The history of the post-Soviet "divorce" shows that Ukraine is the only nation wishing this process to be perpetual.

In line with the best traditions of soap operas Ukrainian politicians have been dividing the former Soviet property along with hysterics, tears, blackmail and threats by "hook or by crook", not forgetting though to regularly receive from Russia an allowance for everyday life and even to demand new concessions.

The matter is that Ukraine unlike the other CIS countries has been kind enough to agree to give Russia the burden of paying all the debts of the former Soviet Union. This being the case, it has not ceased until now to make claims for a part of the former Soviet property abroad and take legal action against Russia at foreign courts from time to time.

The unbearably easy way of living

Ukraine has rejected the so called "zero-option" agreements it signed that specifically recognized Russia as a sole legal successor of the Soviet Union on the issue of paying external debts and assets that include the Soviet Union's property abroad. Russia, on its part, promised that following the settlement of the issue

it will lease to Kiev, practically free, a part of the facilities that constitute the former Soviet real property abroad.

However, the agreement signed in the distant year of 1994 between Russia and Ukraine on the relevant issues of succession of the external debt and assets of the FSU has not been ratified so far by the Ukrainian side.

The 1997 resolution of Verkhovna Rada said that Ukraine would ratify the agreement only after Russia, apart from furnishing information about the size of the gold reserve, the diamond fund of the USSR and the assets of Soviet banks, had given Ukraine a free-trade status to cover the entire Russian territory.

But this means one thing only – it means that Ukraine recognizes all groundlessness and inappropriateness of delaying the ratification of the 1994 agreements because it places, as a condition for this, additional free-trade-zone demands in no way related to the subject matter of the issue.

This year Ukraine once again dodged the issue on the Soviet debts and assets when Russia made one more unprecedented concession to Kiev by changing the procedure for paying VAT subject to country of destination having given Ukraine an additional income of about 1 billion dollars a year.

But even this gesture of goodwill did not impress the Ukrainian leaders at all. On the contrary, Kiev started to talk that it was necessary to demand that Russia, apart from the portion the FSU property, should give to Ukraine a compensation for the amounts of Ukrainian depositors that had blown up in the Soviet Sberbank saving accounts.

Selective sclerosis

The Ukrainian favourite tactics of “escalation of claims” in what concerns Russia goes hand in hand with the astonishing loss of memory. The Ukrainian rulers have completely forgotten the

situation in which the succession agreements were signed in the early 1990s and the essence of their fundamental principle.

Unlike them, I remember that time very well. The breakup of the Soviet Union coincided with the time of political and economic chaos. The country was almost hopelessly neck deep in debts. As of the day of its breakup, the USSR had over 100 billion dollars to be paid back.

In autumn-winter 1991-1992, as a deputy chairman of the Committee for operational management of national economy of the disintegrating Soviet Union, I was charged with a task to resolve issues of providing the country with food products. The situation was critical; in fact, a real threat of hunger was in the air. At this time the newly "baked" leaders of independent republics were concerned with one thing only – "sovereignization".

The Ukrainian rulers, for example, were playing hide-and-seek with Gorbachev who was trying to seek consent from the "brother-republics" for a new Union Agreement. It was for this purpose, i.e. to avoid it, the Ukrainian referendum of 1 December 1991 was hastily prepared and held where, according to someone's *mot juste*, 90 per cent of the election commissions voted for Ukrainian independence.

Just before the 1992 winter when, exactly one week after the Ukrainian referendum, the former Union was being beaten to death in a businesslike and cynical manner at Belovezhskaya Puscha, very few advocates of sovereignty and self-reliance were thinking about daily bread, if at all. Now few remember that we could have found ourselves in a situation akin to that of the terrible hunger of 1930s but for the extraordinary efforts of Russia's to buy food abroad on credit terms. The burden of these debts as well as all the liabilities caused by Soviet borrowing were later fully taken on by Russia.

And they speculate now in Ukraine that they should be entitled to 16.37 % of the former Soviet assets. While saying

this, they prefer to forget that it was Russia that had been paying throughout the 1990s and is paying now all Soviet debts in full. They also forget that our debt balance also includes almost 20 billion dollars of the Soviet debts which Ukraine had passed on to Russia.

More importantly, they forget that by removing the burden and responsibility from other post-Soviet countries, Russia, in fact, had provided them as well as Ukraine with a "credit of survival". But for this decision, but for Russia's goodwill, it is impossible to say what would become of Ukraine today.

Ukraine will have to understand sooner or later that it parted with the "Soviet legacy" long ago, that it lost its title to it exactly when it refused to undertake to pay a portion of the Soviet debts. And the fact of that refusal is impossible to contest.

The moment of truth for Ukraine

Today Ukraine is falling over itself in an attempt to make the West look at it as a "country with market economy" and a full-fledged subject of a "civilized society". It is doing so to gain admittance to NATO, to painlessly join WTO and to have good looks to enter the EU.

For all that, the Ukrainian leadership in its practical doing is very far from the image it so ardently pursues. Our neighbour perhaps ranks first today in terms of political and economic risks. The risks primarily have to do with the threat of nationalization and the re-privatization, the inability to build normal relations with neighbours and partners and the unwillingness to comply with generally recognized rules.

By raising the case of the Soviet property, Ukraine is inflicting harm not just to our country but also endangers the interests of many other states. If the status of the Russian real property abroad is questioned, similar problems in connection with the

status of foreign embassies in Moscow as the capital of both the FSU and Russia will arise.

In no way all this makes Ukrainian market economy look more market-like or adds more democracy to the methods of the Ukrainian ruling elite. Nor does it give any more weight for the Ukrainian leaders in the eyes of the West. Who needs a financial, economic and political ally who is ever ready to defy his historical heritage and his historical partners and disavow his promises in favour of his current mercantile interests?

Having been decisive, consistent and clear on the need of civilized and transparent relations between our two countries, say, in the already mentioned gas-related sphere, Russia, has made no less for the normal development of Ukraine and for its future than several generations of Ukrainian politicians together.

This is so even because the new working conditions of the Ukrainian economy present a test for Ukraine. It is a test for its capability to "eurointegrate". It's a test for joining WTO where Ukraine has been so violently and light-headedly rushing in the last year trying to leave Russia behind in order to be able to make its own trading conditions for us. It is a good real test for Ukraine's ability to live a self-sustained life and pursue a responsible and realistic policy.

Tit for tat

Finally, one more thing. I can easily assume that many will criticize me for what I am going to say. But I need to say it.

Ukraine undermines the fundamental principles of our intergovernmental relations, i.e. the 1997 Treaty of friendship, cooperation and partnership by its permanent revolutionary practicability and attacks on Russia.

Here we have something else apart from the obvious unfriendliness of Ukraine's many steps and initiatives. Its state-

ments about its intentions to join NATO as soon as possible can be regarded only that Ukraine has chosen a line to actually and directly violate the articles of the 1997 Treaty, in particular, its provisions that each party shall refrain from the participation in or the support of any actions against the other party and undertake not to make any treaties with third countries against the other party and not allow the use of its territory to the detriment to security of the other party.

When today in response to the Russian proposals to pass on to market relations in the gas sphere Ukraine comes forward with asymmetrical claims against the Black Sea Fleet, by so doing it once again denounces de facto an international treaty, the one that was signed as a package with the Agreement between Russia and Ukraine on the status and conditions of basing of the Russian Black Sea Fleet on the territory of Ukraine. And it was ratified in 1999 by the Russian parliament exactly with this in mind.

Ukraine should clearly understand that it is bringing up the issue on the status of the Crimea by destroying international agreements with its own hands. The title of Ukraine to the Crimea is factually legitimized in the same 1997 Treaty only and accounted for by the then laxity of president Yeltsin. There will be nothing of the kind today. If the Ukrainian side wants to continue to pursue its unfriendly policy, Russia will have to show common sense and scrupulously review the Treaty to establish whether or not it is still consistent with today's realities.

In the early 1990s the common fate of our peoples was severed without anesthesia and our living together was torn apart. This fact is one of the greatest tragedies and catastrophes in our history. This breakup is not yet understood, is not yet perceived completely by the peoples of our countries.

But today clearly understanding the tragedy and feeling the pain of this breakup, the politicians of Russia and Ukraine

ought to find resources in themselves to pass on to rational, fair and responsible relations between our two countries. Russia has already understood this. Ukraine, as it seems, is yet to understand it. The sooner the Ukrainian rulers understand that it is necessary to stop recalling the Soviet past and fondly hide their “skeletons in the cupboard”, the better. The sooner we will be able to say that Ukraine has turned finally into a self-sustained, responsible and independent state free of its own fears.

Rossiyskaya Gazeta, December 2005.

Neutrality

On 8 August 1945 – this day three months after the surrender of fascist Germany – the Soviet Union conceding in good faith to the request of the United States and the United Kingdom entered the war against Japan. The joint effort of the Allies put an end to the plans of the Japanese militarists to conquer vast territories of East Asia, including the Far East and Siberia. But the USSR declared war on Japan at the time when the five-year Neutrality Pact of April 1941 was in force. What do Russian and Japanese think about that? I believe here we have much to think about.

For us, the victory of the USSR over the fascist Germany inevitably meant that we must fulfil our duty to our Allies, i.e. to liberate Asia from the Japanese invaders. For the majority of the Japanese, we are the violators of the Neutrality Pact which allowed the USSR to focus its war effort on the war against Hitler but which we violated in 1945 at the time which was real hard for Japan.

Is that really so? Why do the Japanese do not want to admit that they were waging aggressive wars over decades and why can't they reconcile themselves with the defeat?

The point is that the ideology of "resentment", or of being offended by Russia, has its history and its background and its

ideologists. It is this ideology that prompts the dislike of Russia and, in actual fact, it is the source of territorial claims against Russia that have taken shape of a policy. What are the roots of this resentment then?

For us, i.e. for Russians, this fact of our history looks like that. In 1904–1905, Japan waged a war against Russia and, as a result of that war, it took the southern part of the Sakhalin Island. In 1917–1925, the Japanese invaded the Russian Far East and Siberia with the intent to make these territories part of the Great Japanese Empire. In 1938, Japan crossed our border near Lake Hasan and, in 1939, unleashed full-scale military operations on the Soviet troops stationed on the territory of the Mongol People's Republic in the area near the Khalkin-Ghol River. In 1941, Japan started an aggressive war against the East-Asian countries, the United States and the United Kingdom, i.e. against our Allies in the war against Hitler.

After Germany attacked our country, not only the question of the future of Europe was at stake but also that of the physical survival of the entire Russian nation which eventually succeeded in defeating fascism and liberating its own country and all other European countries from the “brown plague” only through the total mobilization of all its resources and with the help of its Allies.

To understand better the psychology of Japanese ideologists, I'd like to quote some lines from the book “Milestones of the Peace Treaty between Russia and Japan” by I.Suetsugu, a prominent Japanese historian. The book was recently published in Russia.

This is what he writes about the 1904–1905 war: “Japan caught the contagious predatory spirit of the conduct of some European and American countries. In view of the growing appetite of Russia with respect to Korea, the confrontation between Japan and Russia grew evident. Japan went as far as to make

compromise proposals but Russia ignored them, and... Japan, by dealing a strike against Port-Arthur, kindled the fire of the Japanese-Russian war.”.

On the causes of the 1918–1925 Japanese intervention which involved the invasion and occupation of Primorie, Amur, Trans-Baikal Regions and Northern Sakhalin, I. Suetsugu writes, “As a result of the revolution, Russia couldn’t help dreaming about carrying out a revolution in the entire world, and at the insistence of the Entente Cordiale, Japan and the United States made a decision to launch a military expedition to Siberia”.

I am really shocked by the terms used: “military expedition” rather than “intervention”, “caught the contagious predatory spirit of the conduct of other countries” rather than “sought to include the territories of Siberia and the Far East in the Empire”. Not a word of repentance, not a reference that the goal of these so called expeditions was the annexation of Russian lands.

The military operations against the Soviet troops in 1938 and 1939 that took a toll of tens of thousands of lives are called “local clashes”.

The Soviet-Japanese Neutrality Pact, according to Suetsugu, “turned out to be highly effective”. “Having relocated his troops from the Far East and Siberia to the west, I. Stalin managed to use all his might against the German forces with full effectiveness, and Japan was able to send its choice troops of the Quantung Army to the South”. Looks idyllic, doesn’t it?

But this is not quite so, or even this is not so at all. Let’s look at the facts.

Well, in 1925, Japan withdrew its troops from Northern Sakhalin and established diplomatic relations with the USSR. However, the document known as the Tanaka Memorandum clearly shows that Japan already had plans to prepare for a new war against Russia in summer 1927.

A special plan of war against the USSR under the code name "Otsu" was developed in 1930. The operational plans of the Quantung Army stationed in China provided for the attack to be launched against the Soviet region of Primorie with the objective to capture Vladivostok, Khabarovsk and Blagovetschensk. The plans also aimed at the isolation of the Special Far-East Army from the Soviet troops in the Trans-Baikal military district and launching an offensive along the Amur and Trans-Baikal axes of attack.

Moscow tried to avoid confrontation with Japan by all means. Even when Japan started to press Russia out of North-East China in the most arrogant manner, by attacking Soviet institutions and paralyzing the East-China railroad, Russia had nothing to do but to sell this profitable business for a song.

Japan was preparing for a war against Russia and, naturally, wanted to have support of its allies. Thus, the German-Japanese Agreement Against Communist Internationale and the additional secret protocol to it were signed in Berlin on 25 November 1936.

Having signed the Anti-Comintern Pact, Japan tried to win Germany as its military ally to wage together with it a war against the USSR both in Europe and in the Far East. However, at that time the war against Russia was not yet part of Hitler's plans.

On 27 September 1940, Japan, Germany and Italy signed the Tri-Powers Pact in which they proclaimed "as their main principle the goal to set up and maintain the new order in the areas of the Great East Asia and Europe" and expressed their "determination to take coordinated action in those areas". We know now what terrible tragedies and merciless exploitation "the new order" had in store for the peoples of Europe and Asia.

The first test of battle readiness of the Soviet troops was the attack on the Russian border forces in Primorie near Lake Hasan.

The Japanese General Staff ordered the deployment of 38,000 troops near the USSR border. On 29 July 1938, the Japanese forces deployed thousands of kilometres away from the Japanese islands launched an offensive. By 31 July they seized bald hills Zaozernaya and Bezymyannaya and moved 4 kilometres deep into Soviet Primorie. Following fierce fighting, the Japanese troops were thrown back from their positions by 9 August.

After a crushing defeat near Lake Hasan Tokyo decided to take revenge. Two new plans of war against the USSR were developed during the autumn months of 1938; they came out under a joint name "Operation Number 8". The Quantung Army command began to prepare thoroughly for the attack early in 1939. They planned, if they were to succeed in Mongolia, to bypass and strike at the Soviet Far-East Army from the rear near Chita and Lake Baikal, and thus capture and cut the Trans-Siberian railway which linked the Soviet European part with the Soviet Far East.

The combat operations begun on 12 May and ended on 9 September 1939. The forward edge of the battle area was 40-50 kilometres long. About 100 thousand troops took part in them.

Can possibly these combat operations, in which about 18 thousand Japanese officers and men lost their lives, be a "border incident"? In actual fact, this was nothing else but the failure to begin a real war against the USSR which was localized within the Mongolian borders.

It is very obvious that Stalin had no longer grounds to fear Japan as he knew its plans and especially after he had built up substantially his contingents in the Far East and had had his troops combat-tested near Hasan and Khalkin-Ghol.

A big war against the USSR would have been suicidal for Japan. Japanese strategists were careful and meticulous to develop their war plans against the USSR but they understood that

such a war could only succeed if the Hitler troops won their part of the war.

Then, treading in German steps, on 30 October 1940, Japan offered the USSR to sign a Non-Aggression Pact.

However close the confrontation with Germany may have been, V. Molotov showed down his cards and told Japan everything what the USSR wanted. The Commissar for Foreign Affairs openly demanded that the Russian title to South Sakhalin and the Kuril Islands be restored as a precondition for signing the Pact. There was an alternative though – to sign a Neutrality Pact. The negotiations over that Pact sometimes had their “black swans”. On 12 April 1941, the Japanese foreign minister I. Matsuoka, while discussing the terms of the Neutrality Pact with Stalin, asked if the USSR might be willing to sell North Sakhalin to Japan. Stalin walked to the map on the wall and said, “Japan controls all the straits we can use to get into the Ocean ... Now you want to take North Sakhalin and seal us off? Are you going to strangle us? What kind of friendship is that?” Matsuoka answered that Japan needed Sakhalin to establish the “new order” in Asia and tried to persuade Stalin into channeling aggression into Asia “by reaching the warm sea through India”. Whatever nuances their relations may have had, the Neutrality Pact between the USSR and Japan was signed on 13 April 1941.

Many things in history are inexplicable. For example, the same Matsuoka, who had been passionately trying to convince Stalin of Japanese friendly attitudes towards Russia and owing to whose efforts the Neutrality Pact had been signed, became, in the summer 1941, a raging champion of the soonest entry of Japan into the war against the USSR on the German side despite the Neutrality Pact which he himself had signed.

Even at the opening meeting of the coordinating committee and the imperial headquarters on 25 June or three days after the German invasion into the USSR, he urged all those present to

follow German footsteps and attack our country. "The signature of the Neutrality Pact will not have any impact or influence on the Three-Power Pact, he said. "I signed the Neutrality Pact because I believed that Germany and Soviet Russia would not fight a war. If I had known that they would start the war, I would have preferred to take a friendlier position to Germany and would not have signed it." At the June 27 regular meeting he said, "We ought to move north and reach Irkutsk."

Only ten days after Hitler started the war against the USSR, Japan decided to begin to prepare secretly for its new war against the Soviet Union. The Japanese rulers believed that "if the German-Soviet war developed favourably for the empire, Japan would resolve the problem of Northern Territories by the use of force".

On July 7, Emperor Hirohito issued a secret directive to mobilize 500,000 Japanese and ship them to Manchuria in areas close to the Soviet border. The Japanese General Staff and the War Ministry developed a plan for the preparation and conduct of offensive operations against the USSR code named "Kantokuen". As a result of the implementation of this plan, the numerical strength of the Quantung Army was initially brought up to 700,000, which was a twofold increase, but the total strength of the force intended to attack the Soviet Union was 1 million.

The Kantokuen Plan provided for the destruction of the Soviet forces in Primorie, the occupation of Vladivostok and Khabarovsk and the advance to the west as far as Omsk.

The Japanese leadership was not unanimous as to the time for starting the war. Some, as the war minister H. Toze, argued that the right time to start it was when the USSR "as a ripe persimmon would be ready to fall down for Japan just to take it". Some, like the minister for foreign affairs Matsuoka, demanded that the war should be started immediately.

Japan was obviously not ready for war against Russia. Well aware of the fighting efficiency of the Soviet troops from its Hasan and Khalkin-Ghol experience, the Japanese General Staff resolved to take action rather than risks only "when the Germans seized Moscow and advanced at least as far as the Volga". But in a month's time it was clear that the Hitler plan of a blitzkrieg collapsed.

So Japan faced an option: whether it should proceed with its already launched offensive in South-East Asia or use an opportunity and strike against the USSR.

It was oil that accounted for its choice of the direction of the attack. In 1941, 88 per cent of the Japanese total oil demand was being met by Canadian, Dutch and U.S. companies. After 25 July 1941, when Japan invaded Indochina, the U.S. government placed an embargo on oil shipments to Japan. England and Holland followed suit soon after. Different estimates agreed that Japan's oil reserves would not last longer than three or four months. Under such circumstances, a war against the USSR was already impossible. The advance deep into the Far East and Siberia would not have given the Japanese armed forces easy access to oil.

Starting a war against the USSR would have been suicidal for Japan. Long distances, adverse Siberian weather and other conditions, the absence of necessary resources for sustained combat operations would have inevitably led Japan to a defeat. Besides, if Japan had undertaken such a venture, the Soviet Army would have had to fight Japan not only in China but also fight it direct on the Japanese soil. This would have been even a greater tragedy.

Because of the lack of resources and the slackening pace of the German advance on the Western front and the coming of the autumn-winter period, the Japanese politicians and the military resolved on August 9 to put off the attack on the Soviet Union and to focus on the preparation for war in the South.

But the Japanese generals were closely watching the developments on the Soviet-German front and their long-term plans stayed unchanged. In December 1941, i.e. at the time when fighting was raging in the vicinity of Moscow, a "Plan for administrative governance over the areas of Great East Asia" was completed. The Plan provided that the region of Primorie would be part of the Japanese Empire while the areas contiguous to Manchuria would stay under its governance.

It is totally clear that the existence of the Neutrality Pact was in no way keeping the government of Japan from attacking the USSR. The Pact was void for Japan from the very beginning. Japan did not attack the USSR after all but it was engaged in the most real, large-scale preparation for such a war which it did not start exclusively because Hitler's plans failed and also because of the concurrence of a number of external circumstances. It is for this reason that the Neutrality Pact, which was virtually a non-aggression agreement between the USSR and Japan was, on the one hand, formally effective, but, on the other hand, it was fictitious in its essence.

But still, to what measure is the USSR's entry into the war against Japan in violation of the Neutrality Pact that was formally effective though, justified from moral perspective if we know that Japan only had plans to attack the Soviet Far East but did not resolve to do it?

I would rather ask a different question – could the Soviet Union have done otherwise? The Second World War was on; one group of countries was trying to bring the entire world to submission by exterminating and enslaving the other nations. Fascist Germany occupied almost entire Europe and was trying to destroy our nation. Washington and London sided with us to become our allies in order, through joint effort, to save the world from the "new world order" of concentration camps, gas chambers and the Satanist Nazi ideology. One cannot possibly

undervalue the help we received from our Allies. Here we have monthly shipments of 400 warplanes, 500 tanks, 152 ack-ack guns, 756 artillery pieces and other combat materiel, thousands of tons of reinforced armoured steel, non-ferrous metals, clothing and medicines. This help allowed us to reorganize our industries, evacuate plants and factories from Europe to the East.

What would have been the cost of our victory if we had had to fight our enemy alone? Nobody can possibly give an answer to this question. There would and could have been no excuse whatsoever if we had refused to participate in the joint effort to suppress the Japanese aggressors. The need of the Allies in each other's help was running very high. Too much had they to overcome. Too high was the price for victory. Too terrible were the plans of Germany and Japan to establish the "new world order".

The U.S. first requested the USSR to assist it in its war against Japan as early as 1941. As soon as Japan attacked Pearl Harbour on 7 December 1941, President Roosevelt asked Stalin through the Soviet ambassador to the U.S. Litvinov to declare war on Japan.

The allies raised this question before Stalin many times; incidentally, the opening of the second front in Europe so badly required by the Soviet nation was invariably linked with the Soviet entry into the war against Japan. Stalin made that decision in principle shortly after the victorious Stalingrad battle in February 1943. But obviously the USSR had no sufficient resources for that at that time. On 28 November 1943, at the Tehran Conference of the Allied Powers Stalin said, "Regretfully, we cannot yet add our efforts to the efforts of our Anglo-American friends because we are engaged in the West and we do not have enough capability to launch any combat operations against Japan. Our forces in the Far East are more or less sufficient for defensive action rather than offensive operations for which they would re-

quire a threefold buildup, say the least. It could only take place after we made Germany surrender. Then we could join the Allied forces fighting Japan." It was during this conference that our Allies promised to open the second front against Germany in Normandy, France.

On 11 February 1945, Stalin, Roosevelt and Churchill signed the Yalta Accord which recorded the Allies' agreement that in two or three months after the German surrender and the end of the war in Europe the Soviet Union would enter the war against Japan on the side of the Allies provided... that the south portion of the Sakhalin Island was to be returned to the Soviet Union and the Kuril Islands were to be handed over to it as well.

Based on analysis, I believe that Stalin did not want to step on it to enter the war against Japan and, in fact, was giving Japan the maximum time provided by the Yalta Accord to make a decision to surrender. He was definitely taking the risk of entering the war on the very last day stipulated in the Yalta Accord. The point is that Tokyo could have declared its surrender right after the signature of the Potsdam Declaration on 26 July 1945, which demanded that Japan should surrender. Incidentally, the United States initially did hope exactly for that. But, as some historians think, because of lack of professionalism on the part of the then Secretary of State J. Burns the wording suggesting the possibility to preserve the emperorship-type system in Japan that would have made easier for Japan to take that step was excluded.

Stalin knew from intelligence sources that the U.S. tested its atomic bomb on 16 June and also of the American intention to use this weapon against Japan.

Washington, in its turn, knew the time when the Soviet offensive would be launched. As far back as 28 May 1945, Stalin informed the U.S. President's special envoy H. Hopkins that he would be ready for war against Japan on 8 May. It is, perhaps, for this reason that Harry Truman, who succeeded the defunct

Franklin Roosevelt as president of the United States, tried to use nuclear weapons before that date, succeeding thus in bringing in the elements of the cold war in the relations between our states. Well, Japan had two days. Truman hoped that Japan would surrender before the Soviet Union entered the war. And Stalin was taking his time.

My point is that if Japan had accepted the conditions of the Potsdam Declaration, the entry of the Soviet Union into the war would have been no longer possible. I am quite certain that if the Kuril Islands had been Stalin's sole objective, he would have left Japan with no possibility of an early surrender whatsoever and would have declared war on Japan earlier.

Nor do I believe that Stalin lacked determination in giving the order for an earlier attack because of the need to prepare for it well. He had been always guided by the principle that the end justified the means. And such an order, should it have been given, would have been fulfilled no matter the cost the Soviet Army would have had to pay for that.

Incidentally, Stalin whom we can hardly suspect of lack of skill in making Jesuit-like schemes, was quite frank in telling the Allies that Japan had proposed that the Soviet Union should play the role of a mediator between Washington and Tokyo and that he had, in fact, refused to play "games" with Japan that would have created illusions in Tokyo about a possibility of any conditions other than those of the unconditional surrender.

How would the events have developed if the USSR had refused to side on this issue with its Allies? The nuclear bombing of Japan could have continued. A number of other cities could have gone to ruin. Many more thousands of innocent people could have perished in the flame of such bombings. What loss and destruction would Japan have suffered in that case? What would have been the fate of the Japanese soldiers of the Quantung Army? Would they have been able to return home?

Today we admit that by denouncing the Neutrality Pact of 5 April 1945, the USSR could not have terminated it formally until April 1946. But let us recall something else. The Pact provided that "should one of the parties to it become subject to an aggression by one or several states, the other party to the Pact should keep neutrality throughout the entire conflict". The Neutrality Pact had been signed before Hitler attacked the Soviet Union and before Japan unleashed the war against the USA.

Were there other options for the USSR?

There were not and there could not have been any justification for avoiding the allied duty or for entering in backstage negotiations with one of the aggressors at the time when all the strength and all the resources of states and nations were centered on the task of liberating the mankind from fascism and punishing the aggressors. Japan in that war was the aggressor and the U.S. actions against it were but a response of necessity. The neutrality of the Soviet Union would have been regarded as nothing else as the cooperation with Hitler's ally. And this was just inconceivable.

There is no doubt that either the United States, or the Soviet Union was altruistic as they focused on their military and strategic interests. By attacking the then Russian Port-Arthur and by making Russia yield the southern part of Sakhalin, Japan violated the 1855 Simod Treaty and the 1875 St. Petersburg Treaty which both proclaimed that Russia and Japan would live in "everlasting peace and sincere friendship". By seizing Russia's vast territories in 1918–1925, Japan violated the Portsmouth Peace Treaty of 1905. It is for this reason that punishing Japan through the alienation of the territories "it had seized by the use of force and as a result of greed" was totally in line with the agreements of the Allies stipulated in the Cairo Declaration of 27 November 1943.

While I was reading the Suetsugu book, I was struck by one remarkable thing which explained quite a lot to me. Mr. Suet-

sugu believes that all the aggressive wars waged by Japan should be sooner considered as those of compulsion and provoked by other states, by Russia in particular. Japan had not allegedly set any expansionist goals. And if sometimes it had set those, it had occurred through the influence of bad examples shown by other states.

According to Mr. Suetsugu, those wars waged by Japan through which it expanded the territory of its empire are consistent with one kind of logic. However, when Japan was defeated in the Second World War, another kind of logic began to work and this logic leaves no room for any territorial losses for Japan.

But to one's regret, or, perhaps, to one's joy, neither the nature itself, nor the human society can limit the responsibility for an aggression or an attempt to seize someone else's property only by the losing of what was seized. It is always and everywhere the case that an aggressor or someone who encroaches upon something that does not belong to him will lose more, i.e. his property, his territory, his wealth and his freedom, at length. This is exactly the only deterrent which is universally accepted as a principle of justice. I would say it is history's "rule of thumb".

Summing up, I'd like to say that I see today's Japan as a peace-loving state which is friendly to Russia. Everything I have said or quoted, to be exact, belongs to history. And in the history of many a state there are some pages of which you would rather not talk. But one thing I can say for this: we should know them and we should not forget them.

Rossiyskaya Gazeta, August 2005.

The Chronicle of the Deceased

The body of Slobodan Miloshevič found its eternal peace in the land of his native town of Pozharovets 80 kilometres from Belgrade. His soul will assent high to attend the Last Judgment which no prosecutor of The Hague's tribunal can attend.

A lot has been written about death. "Blessed is the one who fell in combat like Achilles – youthful, handsome, strong and gallant", said a poet almost 200 years ago. The former president of Yugoslavia was neither youthful, nor handsome. But he fell in action, fighting alone for the honour of the Serbian people and for that of his own – I am sure this is what people in Serbia and in Russia will say, the people who do not take on trust what the West says. Some of them have already placed Slobodan's image on their icons.

I am not ready to share the extreme views on the life and work of Slobodan Miloshevič. We, politicians and administrators, boiling in the pot of day-to-day problems, are hardly the best social group for high appreciation. But politicians like everybody else live their lives through and come to the end of the road. It is only recently that the two of our former presidents held their jubilee parties. Fighting each other, they both broke up our country and inflicted such damage which none of the most devastating invasions had ever done to it. This fact, however, does not take away their appetite and self-respect. We can see how dignified and comfortable they are in their old age surrounded by their relatives, sponsors and fans. Well, in sooth, may they live well and long!

Slobodan Miloshevich, who fought for his Yugoslavia in his own way, did make mistakes and stumbled, but eventually he did not bow his head either to prejudiced Europe or to 66 charges brought by his prosecutors against him, and for that he will undoubtedly take the best place in the memory of his own people and it will definitely be a much better place than the one the country's narrow-souled rulers preoccupied with the desire to get even with Miloshevich's family and the people's memory of him, found for his coffin to rest. And we think we must give credit to those whom Slobodan Miloshevich owes his wreath of a martyr. We congratulate NATO leaders with their successful bombing raids in Yugoslavia, the Western press and television, and, naturally, Ms. Carla del Ponte, The Hague's doctors and judges who have glorified the very special justice of "The Hague's" for all times.

A popular saying goes: forearmed is forewarned. When the West bought Miloshevich just as an item of merchandise from the Serbian rulers set to govern Serbia through Western assistance, I wrote an article for *Izvestia* "Don't ask for whom the bell tolls". Let me quote it, "Perhaps contrary to their original plans all the king's men of NATO's member-states will have a showdown with him, I mean Miloshevich, as with a "dethroned" man who has chosen to defend himself and is alone in the hall of justice of The Hague Tribunal. People have always taken close to heart such unfair confrontations with such odds against a party since times immemorial. Besides, the West will have to work real hard to present to the Tribunal its own role in the methodical ten-year breakup of Yugoslavia as successful and constructive work to settle the conflict and as an attempt, out of altruism, to help the people living in that country overcome their internal problems. It appears that by their hardly intelligent attempt to put Miloshevich into the hands of law, give short shrift to him and thus close the subject those who participated in the bomb-

ing raids over Yugoslavia have not noticed that they have put themselves in the same dock with the person who passed away unconvicted.

Several years ago we could not have known all for certain, for example, that Zoran Jinjich who had turned Milosheвич up to The Hague would die by the hand of a Serb earlier than Milosheвич; that the West would be so commendably economical by turning a blind eye to the previous promises of loans and help to the Serbian government disgraced by betrayal; that the departure of Milosheвич would not make life easier for Serbs in Kosovo; and that the region itself, contrary to all the agreements whatsoever, would be five minutes short of independence. But we could guess that Slobodan Milosheвич would not leave his prison in The Hague alive. The point is that the attempt by the rule of law to make Serbs and their leader scapegoats for everything that had happened in the Balkans failed largely owing to Milosheвич. He put his captors in a hopeless situation where they could not convict him, nor could they set him free. Thus the years spent by the deposed president of Yugoslavia in prison were nothing but a chronicle of his pre-planned death. Whether he was poisoned or just denied help is important for his death investigation rather than the substance of what happened. Slobodan Milosheвич was led to his death and finally killed. Before the verdict.

This sacrificial offering has and will have influence not only on the future of the Serbian people and their state but also it will put an end to the labours of the strong to judge the weak and to make everybody admire this offering as justice. These international courts, designed to try rulers deprived of power through foreign intervention, rejected nations and misunderstood cultures, will continue to work as we know, but the seeds of doubt have been planted even among the advocates of supranational justice.

Now back to the main point, i.e. to what I am concerned with today no less than five years back. "I am deeply concerned with what is going on in Yugoslavia and pray it would stay put and go through this new ordeal. But I am no less concerned with the deepening crack in Russia's relations with the West over the events taking place in the Balkans – I can sense very well in our people the feeling of strong rejection of double standards, double morals and hypocrisy towards Yugoslavia. The difference of opinion over this issue with the West, the well-grounded doubts in the fairness of the new world order, the disappointment in the values we share with the West now – this is the logical chain I would not like to follow as a mayor of one of the European capitals. For we too belong to Europe, i.e. to the West, at least for those who are east of us. And the fallacy of the West, its moral aberration which we in Russia feel so well is a cause for our most serious concern rather than malevolence.

Don't ask for whom the bell tolls. It calls for the lost justice."

Izvestia, March 2006.

A Matter of National Importance





Well, we used to walk there a lot, so once, while we were walking, I went on just a bit ahead of my family. My younger daughter was walking beside her mother when she asked her:

"Mommy, why does Daddy never take this path and never come close to this little house?"

"This is a bad little house", my wife answered. "Your Daddy just doesn't like it."

But Olga, not satisfied with the answer, was clingy. Later Elena told me that my little Olya had kept on asking her, "Why is it bad? Why is it so that Daddy doesn't like it?"

My wife stopped to explain:

"You know, Olya, we had a large country. Many different things were in it as it was very big and very different. Many people lived in it. Many republics it had. Many languages they spoke too. So large it was that there could be winter at one place and there could be summer at some other place – all at the same time. It would be night somewhere and it would be day somewhere else. But the country was a home for all the people who understood one another very well because they had been living in it for a very long time. And they had come to live together to help one another for the good of all."

"Russia Has Chosen Europe", 2005

Liberal and Social

Two wings of one strategy

The action plan proposed by the Russian President in his annual address to the Federal Assembly in May 2003 turned out to be far more impressive than expected, even by experts. Its scope and scale are accounted for by an obvious and sad fact: the key problems, facing the country for a number of years, are, softly speaking, very far from being resolved.

Basic element

Various reasons account for the unhurried course of reforms in our economy. They say, for example, the country's vastness stands in the way of vigorous action. However, the independent economic activity of each element of the economy is not only permitted but also even welcomed in actual fact. Therefore, the country's inertia is hardly capable of affecting each and every element of the economy. This means that this reason does not hold water. They even blame the country's climatic specificity resulting in higher production costs. But Russia in toto spends for heating about the same amount of energy as California alone does only on air conditioning.

Apart from these and other similar excuses there are two more typical pieces of reasoning that explain our slowness from the "right" and from the "left" angle. The "right" persist in saying that all our difficulties can be explained by the fact that all our reforms are not yet completed. They argue that the reason

for “unfinished building and abandoned construction sites” is in the resistance of “left” politicians and “red” managers who control these politicians as well as officials who objectively are joint and several with both of the mentioned types. The “left” claim that the main culprit is the reforms themselves which destroyed the uniform system of planned economy.

But one can find a far more obvious explanation for the abovementioned sluggishness in the history of mankind. It has been known since time immemorial that the main reason for indifference to labour and its results lies in the practical impossibility to change one’s life and welfare by one’s own active action. Without feeling the tangible results of his work and not seeing any real benefits from it, man fails to find sense in working. In such a situation he believes the principle of economy of force to be best suited: in other words, his choice is to drift or just stay idle if you want. As the rate of development of the entire society depends on individual activity, the result of the country’s development is equally predetermined.

As soon as the results of work cease to depend on its quality and amount, man loses interest in them. None will look after a tree if it does not produce fruit no matter how much it is watered. This is how stagnation had emerged out of socialism. But there is an important fact not to be overlooked: a modest income providing a certain, though not high, level of welfare was something that socialism did guarantee. Higher incomes were not welcomed and it was very difficult to turn them into tangible material wealth. These rigid breaks are just enough to stop any economic vehicle however strong it may be.

In today’s post-reform Russia, the situation has practically not changed if we are to speak exactly about what is being done rather than about hopes or promises. Those working in the budget sphere at different levels including officials who make decisions of which the cost may run very high continue

to receive a fixed salary irrespective of the results of their work. In business, incomes, on average by half, depend upon factors beyond its control, namely: tariffs imposed by natural monopolies, departmental regulations, taxes, and duties. The effect once again is detached from its cause.

In this way the concept, providing the ways and possibilities of building a free market, brushes off its basic element, i.e. the principle that the welfare of each and everyone should directly and tangibly depend on what one actually does or produces. The absence of this relationship makes the search for new opportunities and best solutions senseless. The market should encourage the initiative: the efficient and sensible actions of each and everyone should lead to reaching higher living standards. Every man should have an incentive to make a step forward in his own work. Then the entire country will also move forward.

Following in Erhard's footsteps

The market does necessarily require global approaches. It is possible just to call on every customer to compare prices for similar goods at different shops before making a buy and thus make a choice to his benefit. This is exactly what Ludwig Erhard, the father of the German economic miracle, did. As a result, the country saw a noticeable rise in labour productivity. The cause for it is clear: owing to such a massive checkout, the turnover of industrialists and traders, capable of bringing the best price-quality ratio, rapidly advanced. The rest, under the circumstances, had to roll up their sleeves and work more efficiently not to be pressed out from the market.

Naturally, the global effect of market optimization shows if its local pre-requisite is in place: each fair player should not be restricted in any way to work freely on the market. Any restrictions on market initiative are impermissible. Moreover, the mo-

nopolization of any types of activity by a variety of means – from punitive agreements to examinations to gain the right to engage in retail trading – is also impermissible. This was the line that Erhard pursued.

The fact that a market is based on freedom is a fact confirmed by the entire economic history. Erhard enriched the ideas of market freedom with the notion of a social market economy. This “hawk of socialism” believed that it was exactly and only a free market that could pave the way to finding solutions to any social problems. A developing active market, according to Erhard, is the most effective source of funds for social needs.

Such ideology is usually assumed to come from the “right”, and Erhard is none other than its classical steward. However, there is another point of view pursued by German social-democrats who said that social problems should be attended irrespective of the situation in the market. They held that only those assets that are left after social issues were resolved should be used for market development.

Practice, as is known, is the criterion of truth. The Soviet experience showed that this hierarchy of priorities in an economy proposed by Erhard’s opponents is not very effective. Social problems were actually resolved by the distribution of certain wealth, but that wealth should have been produced first. It follows then that the production should be attended first. And the efficient production directly depends on market efficiency, and vice versa.

Life, as it is, shows that the unregulated, uncontrolled market concentrates almost entire wealth in the hands of the few. The concentration of capital and goods in the hands of the chosen ones occurs through the will of the market, whereas the distribution requires a more object-oriented effort. Unless this effort is made, the fruits of prosperity become inaccessible for a large part – and sometimes for the majority of society. Is it not what is going on in today’s Russia?

How was this problem resolved by Erhard and the like-minded politicians? They held that preeminently those who are not able to earn on their own should be the top-priority recipients of social funds. Market efficiency in this situation is achieved through lower taxes. In this way individual activity is encouraged and this allows making wealth of such quality and in such amounts that it will make possible to satisfy the needs of the entire society. Each is working for everyone, but no one is forgotten or forsaken by everyone.

However, Erhard's policies did not aim exclusively at attending the needs of the poor. It was much more important for him to create conditions allowing everyone to participate in the market. Thus the society is obliged to provide every individual with an opportunity to take part in the market economy process which means that he should be free in making his own choices and decisions. Then the general economic tactics and strategy will be formulated in the optimal, i.e. the best way. Using modern words, Erhard, so to say, increased the number of independent processors used to resolve the task of optimization along parallel lines. From the computer perspective, this technology is incomparably more effective than the centralized planning of the entire economic life.

Socialism should be liberal

In pursuit for freedom for each and every one, Erhard, shifting to the right, came very close to the advocates of the leftist ideology. Carlo Rosselli, a famous Italian socialist, insisted as far back as the late 1920s that it was socialists who should be the most consistent liberals. Since freedom is impossible without a material basis, only he who does not need anyone's support is truly free. The liberal idea of universal and equal freedom is attainable, according to socialist canon, provided only that everyone is secured with a minimum of material comforts.

"Attempts to establish an absolutely direct link between philosophy and practice are fruitless. But if we were to consider in this context the theory of historical materialism and its revisionist interpretations, we would come to the most obvious liberalism rather than socialism. Yes, we would come to realistic and explicit liberalism based on the main principles of the labour movement and the dialectics capable of accurate and realistic defining the main actors of progress."

Alas, practically no one knows about Rosselli in Russia. It is because of the Soviet ideology and the political technology associated with it that the idea of unity and interdependency between freedom and welfare was unacceptable in principle. Rosselli's most important work *The Liberal Socialism* written in 1929 appeared in Russian only in 1989. Incidentally, the marxist Rosselli had no anxiety about correcting his teacher:

"Capitalism... managed to come out of a deadlock to which it had been sentenced. The labour movement, social legislature and various forms of intervention by society put an end to the most serious excesses of capitalism in the developed countries. In the course of improving production and capitalist thinking, it became obvious that profit growth requires workers of higher skills and higher wages because they were not only to produce but also consume the growing mass of products flowing into the market; the emerging joint stock companies democratized capital to a certain extend and the capitalist associations began to realize the drawbacks of the system of production which was subject to the whims of profit and personal criteria. Gradually, there came a transition from when the state tended to stay away from economic problems to when the state began to increasingly intervene in them to meet public interests in the form of state control over railways, postal services, banks, insurance and so on, not forgetting control over prices (electricity, food, water, housing, etc.) and over the market, professional asso-

* C. Rosselli, *The Liberal Socialism*. M.: Mondo Operaio, 1989, p. 81.

ciations, foreign trade, bonuses and subsidies and nationalization. Social work, mandatory control over wages and labour conditions... brought about the blossoming initiative of social security organizations of which Marx could not have been aware..."

Thus the revised and improved Marxism based on dialectics, as before, makes the following conclusion: freedom and social security make up the unity of the opposites. This conclusion is not surprising as the ideal of equality is now being realized exactly in the form of social security.

Today the presence of dialectic interrelation between freedom and equality can be reaffirmed too. Using the old pictorial phrase of Hegel's, modern scholars point out that "the categories of "freedom" and "equality" like two mirrors reflect themselves in each other many times. Naturally, "absolute freedom" includes, too, the principle of equality, and this means it also includes "equal opportunities". With this principle as basic, we can deduce from it the idea of freedom to be understood as the "freedom from exploitation"."

The extent of how effective the interaction between freedom and equality is depends on the effective interaction of the other pairs of the opposites: production and consumption – in economy, conservatism and progress – in politics, and, of course, their implementation in social classes – it was not without reason that the same Rosselli emphasized that the thesis and antithesis are equal in value and are inconceivable without each other.

NEP is something serious

Let us take a look at our country's experience. The rates of economic growth during the time of the new economic policy (NEP) were, probably, highest throughout the course of Rus-

¹ C. Rosselli, *The Liberal Socialism*. M.: Mondo Operario, 1989, p. 91.

² S. Platonov, *In the Wake of Communism*. M.: Molodaya Gvardia, 1991, p. 136.

sian history. It was at that time that the intervention of state in the country's economic life was lowest. The vantage heights of the economy as railways and heavy industry stayed under state control whereas in all the other areas the state confined itself to imposing rather modest taxes.

The state even resolved to abstain from the pre-revolution, bureaucratic and penny wise regulatory action: why interfere when the market will do fast and effective what is required?

Nikolai Shmelev, a well known economist, writes, "A fact is a fact: never, neither before, nor after NEP did Russia show such a high GDP growth rate which, according to different modern scholars, ran as high as 13–14% on yearly average. In 4–5 years the country succeeded in creating a highly dynamic, effective and competitive economy with the acceptable degree of social differentiation of the people".*

It is true though that the reporting data on many items were inflated during the NEP period too: it should not be taken as a surprise as these are the long-standing traditions of our statistics! The assessment of the benefits of this policy requires a serious adjustment for the conditions of the restoration period. Production industries are known to recover faster after a crisis let alone post-war devastation than during a period of stable lasting development. Even if we take into account these factors, the NEP results look impressive.

"The main thing", continues Shmelev, "is a skillful and pragmatic combination of market institutions with the state interference with the economy. Let us recall the time when prices in the state industries sector were let go loose to skyrocket just as today's prices of "natural monopolists", as if they were choked by the freedom, and then soar to create a distribution crisis. As for the Bolsheviks, they did not hesitate to send their Che-ka chief Dzerjinsky to deal with the situation. And he actually broke that system of monopoly prices inflated to an unimaginable degree...

* N. Shmelev, *Everything Old is New Again*. *Voprosy Ekonomiki*, 1994, № 4, p. 5.

By unloosening market initiative, free enterprise and private property the authorities succeeded in making people work and move and in bringing goods to the market. This was going on together with the revitalization of trade and crafts sector, the replacement of the surplus appropriation system with the agricultural tax in kind and the development of cooperative movement... Finally, a remarkable, viable monetary system was established based on gold ruble.

If NEP had not been dismantled by the year 1928, how could things have developed and what could we have now? We could have a normal well-organized country perhaps with a bit high degree of state control but definitely with very high development rates. It could be so because we have never been able to bring the development rate as high as in the times of NEP.”

A gift to see that far was something that the economists (let alone politicians) of those times when NEP was gaining momentum certainly lacked.

The extremely unstable situation of the political rulers of the country was not contributing at that time to positive emotions. And if we were to consider the fact that during the period of restoration the fundamentals of country's economy, its development rates are bound to recede, the politicians would have interpreted immediately such a recession as a sign of NEP's failure...

There were more than enough contradictions during that period. But we will single out the main one: the idea of isolating the larger part of economy from any political influence. There is no doubt whatsoever that the full political dominance over the economy does not hold anything good for the country. But the opposite extremity is no better. The NEP-time producers were not denied a possibility to inform the rulers of their needs. The obstacles obstructing production were inevitable and logically growing.

* D. Dokuchaev, *Grass Breaking Through Asphalt*. NEP can still be useful for Russia even after 80 years. *Obschaya Gazeta*, 5 April 2001.

One of most serious obstacles was the subsistence character of the economy of the larger part of the country's population, i.e. the peasantry. However, the demand for goods, as is known, depends on the population solvency. Naturally, the country's industries soon stopped in front of a lifting gate with a bold-letter sign on it: "We have no money to buy things!"

By that time various techniques had been studied and developed... in many countries other than Russia. Moreover, the Bolsheviks considered advertising as something ideologically unacceptable though such ardent, talented and communist-thinking "advertising agents" as Mayakovsky and Rodchenko worked in this sphere. The issue of bringing prices down was a full-time responsibility of the chairman of the Supreme Soviet of People's Economy and, double as the chief of OGPU – Felix Dzerzhinsky. However, the existing industries, technically obsolete and worn out, were narrowing the opportunities to bring them down.

Perhaps, the country's leaders should have just waited until the peasantry grew up to be able to keep up the demand for industry products, shouldn't they? But, as we know, for the structures ruling in the name of proletariat, such waiting was unacceptable primarily for ideological reasons. Moreover so, no one could have possibly predict how much time it would have taken to wait until such "ripening". Thus, the collectivization and the rejection of NEP is not just an excess of the orthodox Bolsheviks. The comeback to the technologies of military communism for controlling the economy and the society had also quite objective economic reasons.

The swings of acceleration

As we know, no acceleration was achieved contrary to the expectations of the developers of the first Five-year Plan. Competent economists had already made their estimates by that time

what economic growth rates were to be expected provided NEP was preserved but politicians, as is often the case, thought the estimated growth to be unacceptably low.

The first Five-year Plan was announced as completed in four years "in terms of basic figures" in order not to have to compare the planned figures with those actually achieved. The economic efficiency turned out to be far worse than the most modest NEP estimates. Even the absolute growth did not appear to be noticeable in all the target sectors. And the specific figures hardly went higher at all. Sergei Prokopovich, a prominent authority in matters concerning the study of Russian and world economics, showed that the average production cost in industry dropped by 4.8% rather than 35%; and labour productivity in industry edged up only by 5.3% rather than 110% as was planned. Add to this a drop in quality, and you will have a 7.4 drop!

But the people's general welfare did worsen not only in the devastated villages but also in the city for which somehow everything had been contrived. The level of living plummeted so low that later on every however small advance was perceived as a great victory.

Of course, the aggregate improvement eventually became quite tangible. The normal systems of a functioning society were built: all-round education, a vast network of cultural institutions (from libraries and clubs to the world's largest system of theatres run by permanent cast and staff), all-embracing health system... But Erhard's warning which goes as that you can distribute only what you have already earned was not heard by anyone. And a new contradiction emerged between the almost unlimited scope of social security policy and the limited economic capability.

Thus, the soaring dreams came in conflict with the severe reality. The country had to go back to economic freedoms, but

* S. Prokopovich, *The Idea of Planning and the Results of the 5-year Plan*. Paris, 1934, pp. 77–79, pp. 81–82.

this time it happened in the 1960s and took the shape of the Kosygin reforms.

To my regret, these reforms turned out to be short-lived. The obstruction appeared almost immediately because of the forgotten NEP lesson that it was hard to implement economic freedoms if they did not go together with political freedoms. A freedom-based politics combines with a party monopoly just as bad as a freedom-based economy – with an economic monopoly. Even Czechoslovakian modest calls for “socialism with a human face” were taken as a threat. And the Warsaw Treaty tanks on Prague’s streets became a clear-cut warning to all freedom champions. Whenever ideology dictates, there is no room for the word “freedom”. Hence, nor is there any for effective economy.

A radical economic surgery was needed to be performed on the ailing economy. Although it was required, the idea of a surgical operation was discarded because it was ideologically unacceptable. The reforms resisted just as a healthy child wants to play outdoors rather than sit locked in a dark room and read the works of the revolution leaders. But at that time the chief ideologist Suslov team suddenly found a bean in the cake in the form of the oil embargo imposed because of another Arab-Israeli war which made prices for oil and gas skyrocket. In such a situation it became possible not just to stop the reforms but replace them with rapid and effective measures to restore the pre-reform state of affairs. We were happy.. “to come back to the old well-known though insoluble problems!” – Kosygin was pressed out to backstage. Any step away from the official ideology again came to be considered as an attempt to escape. Even the smallest forms of economic independence as repair shops or a dentist home practice were thought to constitute an ideological threat.

As a result, the country actually ceased to earn on its own. The oil-dollar anesthetics paralyzed any kind of activity as it was

not going along with economic surgery. The only industry that went ahead steady and strong is that of defence because we had a stronger catalytic agent for an incentive, i.e. the USA.

It is only natural that the first serious slump in the primary market was a trigger for our economy to start to disintegrate. The survival surgery, required long before, thus had to be done without anesthetics.

The Laboratory of absurd

The operation was designed to restore economic freedom. But it was forgotten in the heat of the fight that, as dialectics rules, freedom is still the awareness of nothing other than a need. That is why the market went outside reasonable bounds and came to anarchic absurd. The ferocity of the market element gave our citizens quite a scare and kept them from plunging into its whirlpool. It not just scared them but pushed them away from the tangible benefits of the market. However numerous those who are successful and prosperous in this new business life may be, the hungry and the poor who surround them do not allow them to enjoy their new opportunities. And this, as it fully comes in line with the warnings of Erhard's, makes the efficiency of the entire economy head south.

This great German reformer once canceled all restrictions in order to let the market live and grow. It is noteworthy that the restrictions had been introduced even before the Second World War – and the Nazi rulers interfered with the free flow of their economy adjusting it to their military needs. Then the occupation administration also regulated many aspects of German economy in order to effectively use the remaining resources of that country. But it turned out that it was sufficient to remove that regulation (and freeze – rather than devalue! – the inflation burden of the old Reich marks) to make the home market come back to life!

The mechanism of that miracle is already known to us – it is economic freedom for everyone. More important though is that the developing home market becomes an extremely powerful engine for the entire economy of the country.

As far as Russia is concerned, we practically have no home market. Our business is still convinced that our demand inside this country is limited and it is for this reason that it takes every opportunity however tiny it may be to focus on “outside operations”. Yet, an inner “engine” linked with the other system elements by numerous industrial and trade ties is required for the stable self-development and self-propelled motion of this country’s economy. The interaction of numerous market partners and smooth and coordinated cooperation of all economic links – is it not the engine that our economy needs?

But, perhaps, to make it, it is necessary just to care enough about the needs of our businessmen as well as those of the country’s, is it not? It is exactly such conviction that comes from the now popular conception of liberalism as the absolute non-interference of politics in economic affairs. Many popular politicians believe even Milton Fridman’s monetarism to be a very severe restraint. But it is only a way of regulating the economy through large-scope indirect measures, like using a central bank’s rate!

This new type of “lab” dogmatism turned out to be in no way better than the old one, the one of Suslov’s.

The next swing of the Russian political pendulum is as destructive as all its previous swings. But the main thing is that its motion does not allow us to use the favourable external situation in the primary market making thus really deep, coordinated and fundamental transformations practically impossible in this extremely advantageous situation.

Communist textualists had been destroying the prestige of their own theory for several decades. Liberal textualists appeared to be noticeably more efficient: it took them only a few years to

do the same. The word “monetarist” has already been put on the list of swear words, the word “liberal” will soon follow suit.

Forget ptolemy

In his times Ptolemy proposed a rather complex system of interrelated circular movements – epicycles. They were intended to explain the visible movement of the Solar system planets. When a certain deviation from the Ptolemy’s system was discovered, he just introduced an additional epicycle to bring theory and practice back together again.

The economic system of today’s Russia just as in the Soviet times looks very much as Ptolemy’s epicycles, though not just hooking on but cramping one another. This crooked and over-complicated mechanism stirs somehow what vaguely resembles the real movement, be it of stars or economy. The resemblance is also in that to coordinate the actual movement of economy with theoretical inventions and to keep the country from the next fall into the abyss as we come to balance on its edge every now and then is something that we can do by inventing ever new “epicycles”. But one thing is needed, as Lenin did in 1921, i.e. to pass on to the Copernican system. The needs of life itself unbreakably intertwined and providing for one another should be placed in the centre of our economic policy. The freedoms of enterprise and social guarantees create a balance necessary for the society to move ahead helping it just like the pole helps a rope-walker.

Meanwhile we are hovering in a special dead-end street we chose for ourselves, the actual reforms are by-passing us. For example, China has been consistently and irrevocably moving ahead implementing the modern version of the Kosygin reforms. In what direction? Well, the same we have known long before through the NEP experience.

It is true that the number of degrees of freedom in the PRC is not that large yet as it is with us. Moreover, social benefits and security there are rather limited. But the country is moving forward without zigzags let alone steps backwards. That is why the Chinese society is developing considerably faster than ours. The recent congress of the Chinese Communist Party recognized businessmen as equal-right members of not only the society as a whole but also as part of the party itself! This is an absolutely shocking departure from the dogma! However this departure is necessary: the party control at the grass-roots level rather than at the official one should be continuous and daily. Only such control can provide the optimal flow of material wealth from business to the other layers of society.

A bird needs two wings to take off. Obviously, the same goes for the Russian party in rule which ought to find a harmonious combination of two key aspects of the economic mechanism. The state needs the unity of two phases of economic activity. One can only distribute in a socialist manner only what has been earned in a capitalist manner. On the other hand, it appears that one can work in a capitalism manner only when a lot is distributed in a socialist manner.

It is important that such harmony should be achieved as soon as possible.

There are no reasons yet for us to speak about an economic catastrophe. But no situation favorable for transformations lasts long. More importantly, public trust has almost run out. The people are disoriented: who is right, who is wrong, what are we to do? Meanwhile the scale of moral values is being deformed or completely erased. A desire to live and work in Russia for its future is fading.

The situation at hand is that a human being is retiring into his shell, fencing himself from social life, becoming solely focused on his own affairs in the daily "horror of existence". Such atomization

of the social medium is becoming increasingly grass-rooted. The loss of ties among people, the disintegration of society into “atoms” is a very dangerous trend. It is not easier to bring back such a man from this inner-self emigration than to make an emigrant come back home from abroad. How, if I may ask you, would you recover numerous and various human contacts, recreate their extremely complex “neuron-like network” and make this social thinking and feeling organism function smoothly as a whole again?

The last PR is coming up...*

Our society needs clear and distinct goals and guidance. The people want to understand clearly what is going on now and what will be done in the future. Every citizen should understand his own role and maneuvers.

What political technologies offer us for this orientation will obviously not suffice. Their service life has already expired although five years ago it seemed that everything could fast-talk the society into accepting anything or anybody. A propos, PR specialists themselves strongly believe that they work for the benefit of their clients, or even the whole nation. However, massive brain washing both in the Soviet time and in today’s political games has brought up generations of people unsusceptible to PR techniques. They can only be convinced of something through actual deeds that can be seen and felt and should be continuous. They no longer need soap operas and love stories. They are more interested in books or videos like “Do it yourself” or “How it’s made”. Only genuine freedom of action and genuine social security can once wake up the people to action for their common cause.

* The author makes a pun by substituting the word “PR” for the original word “parade” in this line from a very popular Russian patriotic song called “Varyag” written in memory of the crew of the Russian cruiser Varyag and that of the gunboat Koreyets, who, in 1904, after spending all ammunition in the fight against the numerically stronger enemy – the Japanese squadron of armour-clad cruisers and destroyers – refused to surrender, sank Varyag and blew up Koreyets.

The unity and struggle of "United Russia"

Today's United Russia Party comprises the representatives of production and consumption. The party also includes some influential champions of free enterprise and talented supporters of social security. What else does this party need for exercising power and for harmony?

Wait a sec! The same dialectics warns us that the opposites can find their unity only in struggle. And since key tendencies have not been identified or formulated, the balance of the opposites can be gained only by chance. That means the unity will not last or will not be consistent.

It was said long ago that before you unite you have to move apart. Statements like "on the one hand, it's OK, but, on the other hand, it's rather..." should be replaced by unambiguous and clear-cut separation or fractioning into champions of freedom and distribution organizers. As soon as it is clear "who is where", it will become possible to set clear rules for coordinating social interests with these factions. Then only there will be a hope for reaching a balance comparable to that of West Europe. To that end, European traditions including primarily the social-democratic tradition of bringing to balance freedom and security are to be adopted in full measure and also creatively.

Why cannot different parties present these two aspects of social life? All the more so that it is often the case in the world. However, the parties' struggle to win voters interferes with the coordination of party interests. We have not yet developed the culture of such struggle in Russia therefore it would be advisable if we depart from pre-election motives altogether. Then both freedom and social security will become the slogans of two factions within a single united party. And the long-forgotten art of party building and consolidation should be revived and used in the most efficient manner.

The confrontation of liberal and social-democratic parties in many usually developed countries works as an ideal balancing lever. However, the swings of the bipartisan "pendulum" are stable only where the main battles were fought long ago and are well behind. With weaker radical flanks, the main struggle shifts to the centre and is waged primarily around nuances that are almost invisible to the Russian unworldly eye.

Only under such undisturbed circumstances Anthony Giddens, director of the London School of Economics, could write, "The traditional debates between the supporters of free market capitalism and socialism have become suddenly obsolete. Now new issues that go far beyond the framework of traditional positions of political theory are coming to the front stage." It is only against such a background of "problem-free stability" that ideas like the one set forth in the statement by Schroeder and Blair about the "third way for development" can be understood.

Let us be more specific: the possible "third ways" are countless. The same Mr Giddens is right to note, "The theories of social evolution in 19th century often tended to pursue the unilinear nature of evolution to proclaim the existence of one single line of development of human society from simple to more complex forms. All societies were believed to evolve through the same development phases. Over the last few decades sociology has borne witness to a peculiar revival of evolutionist theories with the accent, however, placed on multilinear rather than unilinear evolution. Multilinear theories hold that the existence of different ways of development from one type of society to another is possible. According to this perspective, different types of societies can be classified by their complexity and differentiation, however, there is no one single way to be passed by all societies."⁴⁴

⁴⁴ A. Giddens, *Sociology*, M.: Editorial URSS, 1999, p. 609.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 593.

The Russian history proves clearly that it is impossible to replicate the trajectory used by other countries. It is indeed so because the picture of the political life of today's West clearly shows a "castle stone" of its system, i.e. the marginalization of flanks and the contraction of society towards the centre. In fact, this balance rests on this product of centuries-long evolution! Give us at least a couple of centuries for undisturbed development, and Russia will also reach such welfare and prosperity. But do we really have so long a time?

We should go straight ahead cutting the angles of evolution. This means that sometimes we will have to go perpendicular to the well-trodden paths.

Liberalism and socialism are not perpendicular, of course, as each of these trends affects the other. But they are not opposed either and their effective interaction is possible without big conflicts. These two dialectically interrelated concepts form a specific plane or a volume in the multi-dimensional space of historical paths of society. It is in this space that the numerous lines of development mentioned by Giddens can stay without interfering with each other. The harmonization of the liberal and the social is a key trend of modern economics. We ought not just to accept it, but use it as a vector for our own development.

Two spectres – of liberalism and socialism – are hanging out around in Russia. Neither of them has so far succeeded in acquiring the real historical substance or the body of a subject rather than an object! – of the processes of social evolution. If only they do not part away once again, the political life of the nation can become eventually meaningful, consistent and effective.

Our flanks have traditionally been very strong bringing each of the key concepts of modern politics to sheer absurd.

A strong centrifugal field of radical ideas and action opposes the meaningful, conflict-free and fruitful cooperation of these concepts. Those who wish "to take away all and divide again" are as many as before. Under such circumstances, it will hardly be possible to organize independent political movements capable of effectively balancing the key political ideas. The stability and purposeful action of liberals and socialists can only be achieved provided they are united within one party.

Liberals and socialists, unite in the United Russia Party!

Strategiya Rossii, January 2004.

Dark Side of the Internet

Recently we saw the first Millennium Prize in the field of technology, named the European NOBEL, being awarded to Sir Timothy Bernes-Lee, an English scientist who really managed to turn the world over by creating the basic principles for the modern Internet. Working off hours at the European Nuclear Research Centre, he was the one to develop a method called hypertext which became the basis for transmitting information through a computer network. Incidentally, this technology genius who is also credited with the first systems for data processing and transmission – Internet-server and Internet-browser – decided against patenting his world-shattering discoveries out of principle. This decision of his reflects the philosophy of the World Wide Web: it is to serve the all-round progress of mankind, break down all possible “iron curtains”, help intensify the scientific and cultural exchange rather than serve someone’s mercenary interests or ill ambitions.

But as is often the case, all sorts of marauders began to friskily prowl about the new space. Today the Internet reminds one of the World Ocean of 16th–18th centuries as a domain of all kinds of pirates and fortune hunters. This tendency is on the perpetual increase as the number of Internet users goes up. Up goes its role in the world’s politics, economy and social life. The propaganda of violence and drugs, human trafficking and child prostitution make the reality of today’s Internet.

I have already written about the immorality in cinema halls and on TV screens. Now films of doubtful moral character are at least shown after midnight and age restrictions are in effect at cinemas, but hard-core pornography sites can be visited even by a child any time at all.

Now and then you can find yourself at a special site where you can learn instructions how to make an explosive device from expedient materials or familiarize yourself with the rules of a mine war. The Internet is gradually being mastered by genuine terrorists who convert it into their e-mail box and a real military infrastructure of the "worldwide underground". Through the Internet explosions in peaceful cities are planned, meetings of international terrorist leaders are held, the elimination of the enemies of numerous "only true teachings" is promulgated, the scenes of execution of "infidels" are publicized. It is only recently that Moscow saw a process in connection of the murder of a certain Sukhomlin, a developer of several Internet sites. According to a version, the murdered person had failed to complete the order for an advertising campaign to be launched in the Internet so he was dealt with or "taken care of" if you wish. Another version suggests that the elimination of Sukhomlin was carried out in connection with the recruiting of volunteers to be sent to hotbeds of war, organized through the Internet or with the exposure of arms traffickers at his sites.

At the same time those who work in the creative sphere over the world are forced to take legal action against providers and site framers in a desperate attempt to protect their intellectual property. The owners of electronic media libraries, whose numbers are rapidly increasing, arrogantly do what they like with texts that do not belong to them. In no way less restricted, web pirates deal with audio recordings or new films providing Internet users with a possibility to download them scot-free.

Even the elementary human rights for private life, immunity or inviolability are not protected at all.

By just pushing several buttons he who needs it, can get a database including your passport data, telephone numbers, account number or information about your relatives and next kin. The inviolability of your home is not guaranteed in any way – sometimes it is not of importance whether the criminals burst into your apartment through the door or through hacking your computer.

Every now and then Internet users come in contact with another specific feature of this type of “weapons of mass destruction”. The World Web has turned into the main kitchen for black PR, information and political provocations, mares of all sorts, and all kinds of rumours and lies however incredible they may be. Web sites are also used to “white-wash” sheer disinformation. The technology is known all too well. One can make public anything through the Internet in line with Gebbels’ principle – the more arrogant or shameless a lie is, the better and more convenient. Then such a “rotten” dish can be garnished with relatively respectable analytical speculations. And a reference to such a site will help present disinformation not as bringing up obvious damaging evidence or simple mud slinging but as an attempt by a journalist to investigate what the emergence of such information might mean. The fact that anonymous web authors or newspaper journalists drink and eat “from the same palm” and play well-rehearsed roles is no secret either.

Of course, a person insulted or slandered by worldwide web “spiders” can go to court and ask to defend his honour and dignity on the basis, say, of the Civil Code of the Russian Federation. But firstly, such practice of law does not exist. It is so because slanderers can quickly remove the text in question from the web as it is technically easy. Secondly, the much desired refutation will at best be placed on the very same site with

a limited audience, but papers and TV channels that have picked and circulated the false info all over the world cannot officially be held responsible for that.

Naturally, everything I have described is a consequence of the actual fallout of this information medium from the state's legal framework. Now, the urgent task our society is facing is to place the Internet under civilized legislation. To a degree one can understand the fears of those who say that attempts to put the Internet under control would be an attack against freedom, democracy and human rights. At the same time it is becoming increasingly obvious that any further uncontained development of the Internet is a way to nowhere, moreover so, such development may turn the Internet into a "criminal world", whereas the adherence to the ideals of freedom consists in understanding the logic of events, showing responsibility and determination to preserve it for mankind. The call is not for denying access to the sources of trustworthy information, turning the Internet into a national instead of international networks, or introducing biased censorship. This call is for writing clear and unambiguous rules concerning, *inter alia*, the contents of countless web sites. Well, while driving a car, you observe traffic rules. You do not drive recklessly without paying attention to road signs. You do so because you understand that your personal safety depends on how well the rest of the world observes them.

For starters, it is necessary to raise the responsibility level of Internet journalists and operators for the trustworthiness of information to be placed on a web site. This can be achieved by passing a package of legal and legislative instruments.

Then we must clearly define the rights and responsibilities of Internet users. Internet providers would be issued with official licenses for such business and sites themselves would be registered as full-fledged mass media.

The Mass Media Law should have a separate article or a specific paragraph devoted to the Internet so that one would not have to guess whether or not it is attributed to "the other mass media" as you do every time you read the current text of this law. A legal possibility to officially warn Internet publications should be provided so that they could be banned by the ruling of court rather than only as a consequence of exposing illegal hacker operations. Let me note here that the notorious anonymity of the real owners of web publications is only slightly compatible with the principles of an open and democratic society.

By the way, new provisions of legislature should also safeguard providers' rights, in particular by introducing strict punishment for site hacking attempts, for invasive, technically assisted falsification of site contents, for opening site clones and so on. The second phase should include the development of a special law on the Internet. The advisability to have such a law, as far as I know, is not questioned either by experts or many legislators. As Plato put it once, what departs from reason deviates from law farthest.

Izvestia, May 2004.

Holes in the “Web”

A comment on the discussion
about WorldWideWeb development

While I was writing the article “Dark Side of the Internet” for Izvestia (Izvestia, May 17, 2004) about what to do with some urgent problems of the Internet, I was perfectly aware what treacherous intentions I might be accused of. In fact, this was exactly what happened: I was criticized for and accused of the attempt to inspire the introduction of censorship, to bring about the transformation of Runet into a close system and to tailor our WorldWideWeb to fit the rigid state control standards of Zimbabwe and China...

But one thing is really interesting. A large-scale popular movement opposed to making the Internet a seedbed of pornography and a tool for instilling in young people ignoble interests has come to life in Europe in the past few months.

Being aware of the paradoxical nature of our mentality, I can very well assume that our liberal thinkers with their eyes wide open will soon demand that mechanisms to control the Internet be introduced referring this time to European traditions.

Spam syndrome

Working on this comment for discussion, I made myself familiar with the concluding documents of the conference on the spam problem or the issues associated with the unauthorized dissemination of electronic ads. Being quite certain

that the spam phenomenon is as ugly as littering information sites with totally false information, I called for adopting a well-thought legal barrier to resolve the problem. But the participants in the conference came to a conclusion that it was impossible to fight against that aggressive force-feed advertising without the cardinal restructuring of the Internet itself. They said, in particular, that it was necessary to define spam legally and provide criminal and administrative responsibility for spam dissemination.

Here I think it would be fitting for me to jeer at my crafty critics (incidentally, quite a few of them are among spam-fighters) who, once it came to their personal and commercial interests, recognized the need to extend the legal regulation to cover the whole Internet space. The trouble is that these Internet-folks, who can count their purse money well, often become unhealthily excited every time we come to discuss the degree of responsibility for the information placed on Internet sites. Claims for moral or financial harm caused by such information to individuals not members to their corporation are perceived by them as something arrogant.

Here we have a dangerous manifestation of double standards: it is possible to introduce rigid regulations to fight spam but you cannot do so to resist the dissemination of lies.

A "driving license" for Web routes

There is a clearly expressed intention to include in the text of one of the amendments to the Mass Media Law that are currently under discussion a clear and distinct provision about the Internet as a mass medium. This means, I hope, that soon lawyers and all Internet users will not have to guess whether or not the paragraph called "other mass media" of the effective law extends to cover the WorldWideWeb. We must

finally have a legal instrument to be able to officially warn net publications for site-placing slanderous information and demand on a legal basis that it should be rebutted.

I am not trying to credit myself for opening a new subject as the idea to civilize the Internet has long been hanging around. Nevertheless and for the sake of common benefit, I am drawing the fire of criticism against myself by opening a discussion which is important exactly for the cause of defending the freedom of responsible speech.

It is characteristic that the item about Internet security is found now even on the agendas of CSCE commissions, and the Council of Federation addressed the issue on the need to equalize Internet-publications with traditional mass media, which would allow net journalists, as full-fledged members of the writing community, to place official requests for information with government authorities and other agencies.

Incidentally, some West European specialists, primarily company analysts engaged in antivirus technologies, come forward openly with the need to introduce a special test for Internet users similar to that required for obtaining a driving license. The supporters of such a radical measure proceed from the understanding that Internet is fraught with risks comparable to those of incompetent driving.

Just a joke

It should be made absolutely clear that there is no intention whatsoever to close down Internet or to limit access to it. Such a measure would be tantamount to a demand for "closing America" expressed by one of Dostoevsky's heroes. It is totally the other way round as, for example, in Moscow we are doing everything to make access to the Internet affordable and easy for many Muscovites as possible.

According to the estimates of the Ministry for information technologies and communications, almost 40 per cent of Muscovites will have been able to use the services offered by Internet providers by the end of this year. It is a widely held opinion that now every third Moscow citizen is an Internet user.

I also wish to emphasize that for the Government of Moscow, the Internet is also an effective tool of city administration, information openness of governing institutions, interaction with people, and a source of reliable information about all city affairs covering such areas as health, education and social aid. This is why it is of paramount importance to keep this information source "clean", authoritative and trustworthy. Meanwhile, a number of loud scandals have shattered the Web since my article on that issue was published.

Recently the Web carried a letter allegedly signed by several U.S. congressmen accusing the former Russian premier and the current plenipotentiary representative of the Russian president in the Privolzhsky federal district of all possible deadly sins. A popular newspaper swallowed it and had to face a suit lodged by that politician who was deeply insulted by this Internet-fiction. It is interesting that the authors of this phony interposed some time later calling the publication of that information in the Internet just a joke. Unlike the newspaper, they had nothing to fear.

This scandal was followed by the exposure of a network of hacker firms that offered their clients to hack or erase the sites of their competitors for a considerable remuneration, of course. Rooking as a form of extortion through the Internet is spreading under most sophisticated guises as a forest fire. But the crying example of such misuse of the Internet is this: some crooks placed in it a number of false accounts for money transfers intended for helping the victims of Beslan.

InterNO? InterYES!

It is only too natural to ask a totally Russian question of all times, what are we to do? Yes, what are we to do with deliberate disinformation, refined slander, extremist propaganda, piracy and everything that litters Internet and shatters our confidence in it?

Not going to the length of repeating everything I have already proposed, I would like to address a number of new aspects of this problem. Internet is not only politics or its part. It is also a growing sector of the national economy. Our official statistics says that the annual growth of the Russian Internet audience is steadily exceeding 30 per cent. Electronic sales are surging, which means that the profits of Internet providers are shooting ahead.

Consequently, the economic component of a possible compromise is gaining importance for implementing reasonable regulation of the Internet. This compromise should involve providers and government agencies. I think that rank-and-file users should not be left out either. It is high time to do away with the illusions that it is good for the Internet to remain an uncontrolled information space. Spam whose bulk in the Web is approaching a critical mark is only the top of this iceberg-size problem. Today's net problems do not allow the introduction of electronic signature and the definition of such notion as an "electronic document". This clearly means that the potential of business efficiency in the country is edging down.

As for the European trend I mentioned at the beginning of this comment, the understanding of the need for inter-state cooperation to fight against manifestations of extremism in the Web is growing. It has recently come to our knowledge that a site of the extremist group of Hamas was exposed and shutdown on

the Russian territory. Well, Hamas then had been breaking its news and sharing its ideas through the Internet from here, not from Palestine. The Russian authorities have been increasingly successful in denying oxygen to "Kavkaz-tentr", a mouthpiece of Chechen warlords, which had tried to come on the Web from the Baltic states and Finland.

Someone has even devised a slogan: "It's our InterYes to their InterNo!" It is true that WWW will be a subject of many debates. The point is that the debates must be civilized, including those in the WWW itself.

Izvestia, November 2004.

The Mountain Begat a Mouse

The history of a letter

A year ago I had to address the Russian president with a letter or an extensive note to be precise. The note focused on the notorious 122d Act which came down in the people's memory mainly as the law about the clumsy monetization of benefits. However, the body of the Act seriously distorted the entire sense of the really needed and already ongoing reform concerning the division of authority between the centre and the regions.

Instead of being concerned with raising the teamwork spirit and improving the mechanisms of responsibility at each level, the developers of the Act produced a discreet crawler vehicle for pulling through into the system of national governance the false principles of unitarism that have never been favoured either by the president or the regions.

Nobody had asked the opinion of the republics and regions of the Russian Federation, so they all were given one and the same short trim, but, to be precise, they were trimmed clean. What I mean is that they centralized practically all authority in favour of the federal government including powers which in principle could not be exercised from the centre. For example, the regions were denied the right to run schools and outpatient medical centres, train specialists at institutions of higher learning, clean local rivers and ponds, plant or, if need be, cut trees,

decide how to dispose of or utilize garbage, control harmful discharges into the atmosphere, and support research work.

He who thinks that this centralization undertaking was based on a government strategy or a sincere desire of the federal government to tackle local problems is making a mistake. In fact, everything was much worse. The logic of 122d Act was based on the financial interests of the Finance Ministry only. Well, the point is that the entire system of national governance was adjusted to meet the appetites of the budgetary and tax centralization. The adjustment caused inevitable deterioration.

I set forth all this in my letter to the president. The opinion of the Government of Moscow was supported by the other regions. The head of state considered the problem and ordered the government to correct the defects in the 122d Act. Last July the issue was on the agenda of the State Council which proposed some necessary solutions aimed at the decentralization and optimization of the authority division system.

However, the developed bill was sent on a circular journey of bureaucratic coordination through a long chain of departmental corridors. Eventually, it surfaced amidst the intricate web of departmental interests and finally dived into the abyss of parliamentary debates.

Last December, as a result of those debates, the State Duma passed the new 199th Act on improving the division of authority which, to my regret, with good reason can take a "place of honour" next to its predecessor, i.e. the 122d Act.

Specificity of national law-making

One of the flaws of both the 122d and the 199th Acts lies in the fact that they show us a typical example of the law-making practice of the current State Duma. Both Acts were passed in compliance with all the rules of "combat operations" involving

obligatory camouflage and concealment and well as distraction. The amendments put forward by the regional representatives were normally rejected.

The speed and surprise factors were also complied with. For example, the draft 122d Act had been addressed by the Duma and the Council of Federation in early August during a holiday period and was passed as law on 22 August a few days short of the completion of the federal budget by the federal government. This haste, which, as is known, is positive for totally different processes other than legislation, led in fact to the expected results.

The 199th Act had even less luck than its predecessor because the procedure for passing it was the extraordinary example of a "New Year law-making practice". The draft text of this bill having immense importance for the entire logic of governance and management slipped through the second and third hearing in the Duma on 23 December last year to be then stamped by the Council of the Federation on 27 December. We should take note here that the larger part of its provisions took effect on 1 January 2006. Besides, the federal and all regional budgets for the year 2006 had been prepared long before the time this Act was passed.

Of special concern is that the Council of Federation, alias the "chamber of regions", i.e. the body which should have studied the bill of that kind very carefully and for a long time, passed it without any detailed discussion. Our senators might have been glad to read the bill thoroughly but they definitely lacked the time and opportunity for doing so.

The 122d and the 199th Acts have shown us a special type of national law-making practice called "making changes and additions to certain acts of legislature of the Russian Federation".

The close text of their articles and pages, numbering many hundreds, is teeming with additions, exemptions and changes to the wording of a score or two of the effective laws. In fact, these

documents, that were supposed to become fundamental for the system of authority division between the organs of state authority at different levels, turn out to be just a spread of “patchwork” sewn from a multitude of fragments each having a different shape, colour and texture.

Consequently, the substantive content of such laws is very often a mystery holding many “miraculous findings” both for the society and for the majority of the participants in such law-making.

Every accountant can rule the state

The outcome of the described law-making process is not surprising. The 199th Act has turned into a curtain to hide the accountant’s approach towards state governance which is still dominant among the government finance managers.

The main point that the regions had been defending in their struggle for correcting mistakes in the 122d Act throughout 2005 was simple.

It is necessary to review the naked system of centralization of state governance and return the actual authority and financial powers to the regions for the development of their territories.

All the more so that the adopted political decisions concerning the new principles of electing governors and the formation of a unified system of executive power in the country reinforce the already existing wide powers of the federal centre to exercise control over the efficiency of regional administrations.

However, such a position of the regions, unfortunately, has not found adequate understanding with the federal government and lost once again to the ambitions of the Finance Ministry which has but one phrase: “Why? You still have some money left? – You gotta give it to us!”

Under the pretext of the centralization of powers federal treasurers were consistently depriving the regions for several years in a row of the growing portion of the money they earned.

Now the federal government, having returned a number of functions to the regions, did not agree to give back their permanent sources of tax revenues for their performance.

Some of the functions returned are fairly costly, such as emergency early warning and damage control, preservation of monuments, development of regional research institutions, professional secondary education and training and control over kindergartens.

One should not be a fortune teller to be able to predict that it is already this year that the federal centre will have to face insufficient financing in many subsidized regions and, consequently, the actual impossibility to normally perform these functions.

This will happen exactly because of the unwillingness of the Finance Ministry to decentralize the inter-budgetary relations despite the enormous profit of the federal budget and the swelling stabilization fund rather than the inability or ill-intent of regional authorities.

Because of this prevalent logic of the Finance Ministry, the 199th Act was left, in fact, with very few powers that can be transferred and assigned to the regions on a permanent basis according to a normal scheme. Outside the Act are the powers that would enable the regions to develop their territories, propose their own solutions and realize their administrative potential.

If there had been more powers to be decentralized in full and on a permanent basis (as initially proposed), the Finance Ministry would have had to share its tax revenues with the regions. To block this, the government made the delegation of powers to federal subjects the basic mechanism of the decentralization of powers and set it out in the 199th Act.

Such delegation of powers means, firstly, that the regions will have to ask the Finance Ministry to provide them with subventions, kind of mandatory under current law but not yet calculated individually for each region.

Secondly, this should be done constantly rather than on a one-time basis because the delegated powers and the subventions for them are to be confirmed once a year in the budget. This means that the regions will have to assume a stance of a beggar asking and pleading on a "permanent basis".

As far as the rest of the powers not listed as ones to be delegated or assigned to the regions on a permanent basis are concerned, we can say that the 199th Act provided the regions with only a virtual and strongly bureaucratized "right of participation" in their execution and financing. The Act has a reservation which holds that the regions can spend their own money on the execution of these powers provided only there is a corresponding mention thereof in the federal law. This, however, will not change the situation that actually bans regional self-governance in making use of the resources they have at their discretion for territorial development.

After Federal Law FZ No 199 was adopted, we have to say with regret that the accountant's approach to the question of the distribution of powers which is being imposed by top financial and economic officials of the government has won. The RF regions are left with the role of passive administrators of both federal and their own scarce financial resources.

Flaws of manual control

The refusal to thoroughly consider the opinion of the regions for the benefit of law-making as well as the unwillingness of the government to give them more powers and minimal financial freedom are accounted for by the false but dominant executive principle of the state's policy towards its regions.

The federal government believes that the existing system of governance and control is far from being perfect. However true it may be, but they make a paradoxical conclusion that the problem can be solved by centralizing, alias squeezing the powers and primarily finances and material resources to a degree when they all could fit in the offices of federal ministers.

It is obvious though that the transition of the Centre-Regions relations to manual control cannot improve even slightly the quality of the system as a whole. The government continues to program regional leaders to accept the inertial development of their territories and once again instills the leading-strings mentality in local authorities. The number of highly subsidized territories is growing, the majority of the Russian regions are living "from one subsidy to another" granted by the all-mighty Finance Ministry in the absence of any sources of incentives for self-sustainability.

If I were in the place of the government financiers, I wouldn't talk proudly about the year-to-year growing federal transfers of funds and subventions to the regions; on the contrary, I would start to think hard why the "macroeconomic model" of total centralization is so ineffective. The economic growth is slowing down, the monetization schemes are idling, and the inflation is galloping and just does not want to be checked. The Finance Ministry has all the money in its bag, but nobody is happy all the same. Well, experts say that it is exactly because of the excessive centralization and the absence of "growth points" that Russia is losing about 2.5 % of its GDP potential increase a year.

On the other hand, the federal centre is just incapable of digesting the bulk of powers and responsibilities it is undertaking to assume. The 122d Act, which appears to have stalled completely, has shown it clearly. However, even today after the

illusory delegation of a number of powers to the regions the problem is still there.

The administration system continues to be strongly dependent upon the sluggish, "continually half-dead" process through which the Russian government passes its administrative ordinance. We have already lost both 2005 and 2006 for normal work due to this reason. Regional governing institutions continue to be affected by administrative arguments or disagreements inside the federal government itself because the areas of responsibility and competence in what concerns Centre-Region coordination are not clearly defined between different central ministries, services and agencies.

In this situation the government keeps hanging on its fallacies. Having saddled up the tax flows on a "take-all-while-you-can" basis, our good centralizers are looking forward to putting their hands on other regional assets such as property in government or municipal ownership.

The procedure for delineating ownership rights set forth in Act No 122 blatantly conflicting with the civil and constitutional legislature has forced Moscow to appeal to the Constitutional Court. In 2005, when the talk about the need to decentralize powers was in the air, this legal action was suspended. But today we actually have come to what we so badly wanted to avoid.

The government again insists on the totally free transfer of property between the levels of federal and regional power without any compensation of payment for its maintenance. Moreover so, from now on the regions are obliged to transfer land plots and premises currently occupied and used by federal organs under the federal jurisdiction even if the regions have the right to keep such property in their ownership.

The approach to property distribution in a situation with delegated powers is even more illustrative (let me remind you that such situations constitute a majority). In such a case the

government is vested with a right (not a duty!) to transfer certain property to other levels of power for only temporary use or control rather than transfer the title to that property.

It is almost certain that the regions will be left with the so called “delegated powers” lacking thus money, and property necessary for the performance thereof.

We need systemic measures

The “renovated” system of segregation of powers is still fraught with a great deal of fundamental problems. The story about passing Federal Law No 199 shows us a typical example of bureaucratic emasculation and distortion of a sensible idea to decentralize the system of regional governance.

The situation at hand calls for taking system-level measures. It is totally obvious that the extent of regional participation in federal law-making and in developing a federal policy for regional governance is absolutely insufficient.

It is also apparent that the budgetary planning and the inflated federal budget may be a nice thing, but it must not press out or even supersede the actual tasks of state governance.

It seems that it would be reasonable to implement the idea to call governors to discuss key issues of fundamental concern for the state’s regional policy at the Council of Federation level.

It is necessary to further enhance the role of the State Council of Russia it should play in analyzing the current situation in the sphere of centre-regions coordination. It is the State Council that played an important role in easing the tension around the adoption of Federal Law No 122. However, practice has shown that the State Council’s effort will still be short unless its competence in what concerns the discussion of the national budget policy is exercised in full.

Rossiyskaya Gazeta, February 2006.

“Pirates” Demean our State

Let me begin with the most grievous recent example. The mighty Boeing aerospace corporation had to admit the fact that many spare parts and accessories to its airplanes are counterfeit. Once you learn this, your emotions must run high, but that would be nothing compared to the emotions of passengers on board the plane which is just out of maintenance and repairs performed on such an economical basis. Well, counterfeit market wins customers because it is cheap.

Beware counterfeit!

Little by little we got used to the word “counterfeit” which means the imitation of a trade mark or a mercantile label. In plain words it means the violation of the intellectual property right, the profiteering from someone else’s well-earned reputation or name. Biologists call this mimicry, but in wild life it is just the defensive reaction of a living creature, whereas in the world of economics it is an aggressive venture designed to bamboozle a customer and undermine his credit to the genuine market values. It is a form of economic subversion based on underground production, tax evasion and the reduction of the state’s financial base.

The accumulated “shadow” millions of dollars are invested over and over again in the expansion of “parallel” production and in the fight against barriers in the way of counterfeit. The capital

formed like this begins then to exert pressure on the government, contaminate its agencies and infect law-enforcement.

Counterfeit money in circulation gives rise to people's outrage, which is quite natural because it is as plain as the nose on your face: your damage is equal to the face value of a forged note. The bogus money is just a variety of counterfeit, but here the loss is usually visible and quickly discovered. But if we buy a counterfeit watch, it will keep on ticking for some time, if it is counterfeit engine oil, your motor will not stall immediately, and if it is a counterfeit text book, you will even learn something from it.

Have you heard about "sham" schoolbooks? A few days before the start of the new school year counterfeit schoolbooks are invariably and in abundance offered by street vendors. They are made in violation of the copyright law, but they can also contain a whole "bunch" of technological defects posing a health treat such as bad paper, cheap colours and inks with high content of lead, tin and zinc. Just touch a line on a page with your finger and your finger-pad will be soiled with poisonous printer's ink...

Some experts estimate that counterfeit takes one-third of all our market sales. But this is the aggregate figure. If you take clothes or footwear, it will come to forty per cent. Almost one half of cosmetics and detergents are anything but what the trade mark says. However, the most profitable (or arrogant if you want) "field" of counterfeit is still the illegal replication and circulation of audio and video products.

A peddler tray full of someone else's secrets

It needs to be said that piracy (this is already a common word for this phenomenon) with regard to electronic media differs in substance from the fabrication of the majority of other goods. Here we have problems of a variety of spheres intertwined in a single knot. A few brief illustrations if you permit.

Economy. The overall tax shortfall of the electronic media market measures in figures with many-many zeros. The tax revenues from audio and video products are 3 million dollars. However, it could have grown to 65–120 million dollars a year according to different estimates. These are the losses the state sustains. Losses of those entitled to royalties from their intellectual property are running very high.

Law and law enforcement. A huge army of people is involved in this illegal business: from business organizers and specialists responsible for “pirate” conveyors to all sorts of peddlers and street vendors who can be seen en masse almost on every street and at every market place in the country. Our research shows that even if law enforcement or trade inspection officers find goods with counterfeit signs (you needn’t go far to find such goods, check the first peddler tray you see and you’ll never miss it), these goods will come back to a sales counter in 70 out of 100 cases. This happens not because the illegality of such goods’ origin has been disproved but for the simple reason that the system intended to oppose counterfeit is absolutely ineffective. In any case I just don’t know even a single instance where a pirate was sent to prison.

Do our **moral principles** go hand in hand with our law? Are we not fed up with porno? Now one can buy video films featuring all sorts of perversion from torture to sexual abuse, rape of minors and other outrageous things. Next to such video cassettes you can find DVDs with databases that contain personal, confidential, officially secret information or even state secrets. With a little help from hackers as well as villains on government’s service one can very easily find out almost anything about any officials or individuals: from their home address and cell phone number to individual tax payer number and the registration number of their car. Then one can use this information as one sees fit. Well, here we have a problem

of information security in all its enormity, the security which should be guaranteed to the state and to each and everyone living in that state.

Country's international image. Russia ranks second in the world in what concerns the scope of illegal audio and video business with only China ahead of us. At what length should I go to explain that such a situation is a solid block to foreign investment, to our entry into authoritative and respected international associations? Whatever convincing assurances our government may make, the impression that it is impotent is still there, I mean the impression that both counterfeit producers and its distributors are just too tough for it, mildly speaking.

But this is not so. We can resist pirates effectively. This is what I am ready to prove by giving you a five-year-old example.

By the end of the 90s almost all audio and video products in Moscow had been of pirate origin (without "almost" in Russia's regions). The production and distribution of these goods had been in the hands of shadow associations. Naturally, no taxes had been paid, in fact, we had come to a critical situation.

It was at that time that the city government took a number of measures aimed at the implementation of a simple thing: we ordered that all cassettes and discs to be sold at the Moscow market must have an identification tag – a special mark with a high degree of security. If you have such a mark – it's a go-ahead then, if you don't – you will have to answer questions to the officials of specially organized services designed to inspect or examine merchandise and to press out counterfeit by force. If those questions were left unanswered, the culprits were denied further trading and the pirate products were destroyed under the caterpillar tracks of a bulldozer...

To resolve this problem, we formed a special unit within the Moscow department of internal affairs and opened the state unitary enterprise "Informzatschita" tailored to monitor all le-

gal goods intended for the Moscow market. The country's first regulatory framework was thus created to regulate the distribution of electronic media. This was followed by the database of copyright and adjacent rights owners and the register of trading enterprises dealing with this kind of products. We were very serious about it as you can see.

Do you think we are incapable of banning counterfeit from our life?

We had what we wanted sooner than we had expected. The sales of counterfeit slumped to 41 per cent in the second year after we had launched the scheme. They were cut by half! The 2000 federal budget received 520 million rubles of tax revenues from audio and video trade, and that was good because this trade had not been giving anything two years before. Legal sales and royalties went up respectively. At this time everybody understood that it was not only necessary but it was also possible to win some room from pirates.

I wish our joy hadn't been so short-lived.

The lower went the share of counterfeit, the more aggressive was the displeasure of its producers and distributors. All sorts of mechanisms and tricks were used to discredit the new system. Just think! The ministry for anti-monopoly policy issued a directive that canceled the decision of the Government of Moscow. We protested and it was withdrawn but the litigation did not stop.

At the end of 2000, the prosecutor's office held that a number of certain items in our resolution on introducing a protective identification mark conflict with the federal legislation. So, the mandatory Moscow mark allowing easy identification of a pirate product was declared to be an illegal duty and a restriction of the rights of economic entities for selling goods as well as an obstacle obstructing the free movement of merchandise.

We had to make adjustments to our resolution and the identification marks became a matter of one's own wish at the beginning of 2001. Those, who wanted to stick such a mark to their goods, did that, whereas those, who did not think they should go to the length of spending their money on it, were allowed to sell their goods without any identification marks. The pirates cried out their triple "Cheers!" and everything rapidly reversed: the share of counterfeit sales rocketed and the revenues and royalties plummeted. In fact, we almost came back to where we had started. True, we gained some good experience and confidence that this pirate invasion can be resisted in principle.

Black mark from ambassador

The counterfeit affair took a notable turn recently. Last midyear the U.S. Ambassador to Russia Alexander Vershbow sent a letter to the Russian Government accusing a number of enterprises including some sensitive and restricted access facilities. A list of names and addresses involved was attached to the letter. Surprisingly many pirate firms were based on the premises of governmental institutions. The ambassador made it clear that such a situation was of the U.S. government concern because American authors, performers and other copyright owners were suffering losses caused by Russian pirates.

Yes, indeed they were. It soon came to our knowledge that American copyright owners were going to sue the Russian government for damages (3.7 billion dollars) caused by our "counterfeit geniuses".

This ambassadorial demarche showed everyone that the whole thing was no joke at all. Americans imposed sanctions on countries where pirates were causing great damage to American companies on two occasions. Thus, in 1997, the U.S. did it with Bulgaria which together with some South-East Asian countries

ranked first in manufacturing and selling counterfeit audio and video products. Then Bulgarian pirate firms left Bulgaria for Ukraine. But Ukraine faced the U.S. sanctions in 2001. In punishment for the country's inability to stop Ukrainian pirates who had been robbing American producers and copyright owners of 200 million dollars, Ukraine was deleted from the trade programme which allowed duty-free exports of a certain range of products to the United States.

Where do you think the pirates of Ukraine go? – Totally right! They went to us.

It is not surprising then why Verchbow's letter produced a quick reaction. The federal government placed the issue for discussion, the premier emphasized its importance, a government commission and an expert council were formed to counter violations in the sphere of intellectual property. Moreover, the Internal Affairs Ministry, the Ministry for Economic Development, the Ministry for Printed Matter, the Ministry of Culture, Rospatent, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry... confirmed their readiness all in the same breath to open an allied anti-pirate front.

Nine months passed. Yes, there were meetings, open worldwide statements, all agreed as one that it was necessary to improve our legislation and to make punishment for selling counterfeit goods more severe to effectively counter the pirates... But one can observe no visible changes. I'd like to think and strongly hope that they are just getting ripe to come soon. I talked to M.Kasiyanov and suggested that our Moscow experience should be used and now our specialists are part of the federal agencies engaged in finding solutions to counter piracy. However, the situation should be controlled as they say "here and now".

Despite the enormity of counterfeit sales, the capital already can boast of a number of new "islands of civilization", i.e. large and small specialized shops where no counterfeit goods are al-

lowed. You won't find it in commercial video libraries either. We closed down the old "Gorbushka" market which had been a real den of counterfeit and caused by doing so a serious stir in the city. Mass action against counterfeit peddlers and street vendors is to come next. Yes, they a legion but for us to stay idle is the same as to say we are impotent.

It goes without saying that there is a share of disappointment caused by the Russian government's inconsistency, the ineffectiveness of its resolutions to counter counterfeit especially now. But we are ready to restore the dismantled system of control and make new steps in eradicating this evil.

A Temptation for One's Purse

I have heard on a number of occasions that pirates allegedly are culturizing Russia bringing it to the present-day computer-based civilization. Well, they would say, where would we have been in terms of software if an average Muscovite couldn't have afforded to buy cheap a "pirate" Windows? What should a rank-and-file engineer earning 200 dollars a month do if they offer a "genuine" Microsoft product for 400 dollars? The answer is obvious: of course, I would rather buy the 400 ruble counterfeit. And so on and so forth... the pirates are serving the nation doing it a favour... is it not good or convenient to be offered the world's best music and films almost for a song?

These psychologically coined phrases are hammered in mass conscience... at the expense and owing to the same slate club based on "counterfeit market earnings". It is this club that funds counterfeit propaganda for a poor consumer.

By so doing the authors and begetters of counterfeit are trying to fake not only goods themselves but also social values. They want us to disregard such fundamental values as integrity, honesty, earnest partnership, fair play and respect for other people's

rights and accept their values such as cynicism and profiteering by fair means or foul. In addition they turn their customers into their active accomplices in sheer larceny. In fact, they make us receivers of stolen goods. I would call this mass counterfeit a temptation of the society by absolute immorality.

The answer must be adequate. The government must not forget that it should not only fight against individual fakes, illegal incomes and criminals but also defend the dignity of its state.

It is very important that the course declared at the top should be a real process for many years to come and that it should not become just another campaign to be reported on time and soon forgotten. It is so because Russia's successes should be measured in terms of the concentration of our political will aimed at defending equally the mass customer and the legal owner of an intellectual product rather than in terms of up-to-the-minute results, or reports timed for an occasional visit of an emissary from the West.

Trud, May 2003.

Russia Has Chosen Europe

A bad little house

This is how it was. Four years ago I took my family for a holiday to Belavezhskaya Pushcha in Byelorussia. We paid a visit to Viskuli where the Belavezha Accords were signed.

Well, we used to walk there a lot, so once, while we were walking, I went on just a bit ahead of my family. My younger daughter was walking beside her mother when she asked her:

“Mommy, why does Daddy never take this path and never come to this little house?”

“This is a bad little house,” my wife answered. “Your Daddy just doesn’t like it.”

But Olga not satisfied with the answer, was clingy. Later Elena told me that my little Olya had kept on asking her, “Why is it bad? Why is it so that Daddy doesn’t like it?”

My wife stopped to explain:

“You know, Olya, we had a large country. Many different things were in it as it was very big and very different. Many people lived in it. Many republics it had. Many languages they spoke too. So large it was that there could be winter at one place and there could be summer at some other place – all at the same time. It would be night somewhere and it would be day somewhere else. But the country was a home for all the people who understood one another very well because they had been living in it for a very long time. And they had come to live together to help one another for the good of all.”

Olya tilted her head in silence and listened for more.

"This is what our country was like," continued Elena. "It was big and strong and everybody held it in respect. And it was called the Soviet Union. And this country had a president, the most important man. He ruled the country and for that he had powers. He decided what and how should be done. And the people obeyed him."

"And so what happened?" asked Olya stealing another look at the "bad little house" because she couldn't understand yet that it was at this very place at which she was looking something had happened to that big country.

"Well," continued Elena, "there were three men who also wanted to have power of their own so that they could also rule and decide what to do. And so that everybody would obey them except for the president of the big country. And it is in this very "little bad house" that they signed a paper to make this big country be no more and to make several smaller countries be in its stead in which countries these men would become the most important and respected."

It was at this moment that I noticed that Olya and Elena were behind. So I stopped. I could see Elena explaining something to Olya. Then they both stopped talking. Then I saw Olya look around, frown and run. She did not run towards me but to her elder sister Alena who was walking along the path leading to the "house". I saw my Olya running past me crying out to Alena, "No! Don't go there! Three big dunderheads made our big country crumble down there...".

Fathers and daughters*

Then and many times after that I just kept asking myself why she had put it like that. We had never talked with our chil-

* This is a clear reference to *Fathers and Sons*, an 1862 novel by Ivan Turgenev, his best known work. The title of this work in Russian is *Отцы и дети* (*Ottsy i Deti*), which literally means "Fathers and Children"; the work is often translated to *Fathers and Sons* in English for reasons of euphony.

dren about that before that trip to Viskuli. Perhaps the verb "crumble" is easier to understand than the word "collapse". A sand cake in a sandbox can crumble, and a snowman can also crumble.

The enemies of the Soviet Union will exclaim joyfully, "That's it, you let it out yourself. You are just trying to explain the extremely complex process by "baby talk" about "a sand cake crumbling". OK, then, let me make this clear.

One and the same thing happens all over again in the history of mankind. New generations often (or very often) and very naturally too ask their predecessors one sacramental question, "How did you allow it? Why were you so short-sighted?"

Our children and grandchildren do have great experience and knowledge. What is painful thinking for us is a lesson for them. They immediately see the sense of events where we, as "witnesses" and "contemporaries", cannot overcome ideological and psychological barriers.

Today we often repeat, "He who was not sorry about the breakup of the USSR has no heart, and he who wanted to keep it has no reason". Many would say that the Soviet Union with its bronze-like looks couldn't have possibly survived anyway. Well, it is for this reason that it is generally believed that to keep the USSR going would have been unreasonable.

Perhaps it would, to some extent. But I am not arguing about that. I am speaking about something different; I want to say that a breakup and a reform are not the same thing. I want to say that in between the ardent desire to break up the Soviet Union and in no way less maniacal attempts to mothball it there were also some other scenarios.

I would say the scenarios by far more viable and, more importantly, useful for all the republics and the peoples of the USSR. Regretfully, we tend to the extremes, a habit which we haven't got rid of until now.

But eventually the historical and cultural unity, the economic and geopolitical space, the commonality of families and fates are something far more important and valuable than the snobbish wishes of some “men” my daughter mentioned. Given this gospel truth, the citizens of the Soviet Union had every right to expect a more careful attitude to their own interests and the interests of their big country, a home for everyone.

Well, nobody is saying that the USSR was a problem-free country or that there was nothing there to be corrected or rectified. But this absolutely does not mean that it was necessary to chose the most stupid way to overcome difficulties and contradictions, which comes down to the well-known principle “no Union – no problem”.

As a result, the Union was destroyed somehow in line with our traditions – without reason in mind and with a kind of cruelty.

Someone some time back paraphrased the last words of the famous line from the communist anthem quite well, “We shall destroy the world of violence to its foundation, but what for?”

Catastrophe and resonance

As a popular Russian proverb goes “He who had his head lost shouldn’t cry about the hair”. I’m not writing this article to weep over the breakup of the Soviet Union. I’m writing it to make us think about the future and keep ourselves from new mistakes.

Sometimes it is necessary to look around and come to understand that both our descendants and many of our contemporaries appear to be much cleverer than we are.

* This is literal English translation of the Russian text of *The Internationale* (*L’Internationale* in French), the most famous socialist (and anarchist, communist and social democratic) song and one of the most widely recognized songs in the world. The original French words were written in 1870 by Eugène Pottier (1816–1887, later a member of the Paris Commune) and were originally intended to be sung to the tune of *La Marseillaise*. Pierre Degeyter (1848–1932) set the poem to music in 1888 and his melody became widely used soon after.

Viskuli came to my mind at the end of last year when I was watching television. It was the ceremony of signing the agreement on the single "Constitution for Europe" by the leaders of European states in Rome. I remembered Viskuli because I felt I was kind of envious towards the Europeans. Yes, I thought, these people know how to value their history, their homeland and culture. They know what to do with their life and their future.

If we quite justifiably call the collapse of the Soviet Union the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of our time, we can safely call the historically very fast, almost dashing emergence of a Unified Europe, if not the greatest, but, definitely, extremely important positive geopolitical and civilized event of the modern time, a revival actually.

50–60 years ago when Europe was coming to after the war, it was hard to imagine that Europe would unite. It was all the more so if we were to remember the history of the European civilization which consisted of hundreds of wars, internal conflicts, intrigues and mistrust and, finally, the two terrible world wars of the 20th century.

However, the principles of integration and unity have turned into a value-based groundwork for the revival of Europe and its economic development, for the restoration and growth of welfare of European communities and, finally, for the new ascent of Europe's role in world's politics.

Running away from Europe

We found ourselves in an antiphase, in full sense of this word, i.e. in conflict with the key motive and logic of the development of the European civilization at the end of the 20th century and for many years to come.

With minimally careful attitude to the value which was the single statehood of the republic and the people of the USSR, we

should have the experience and the algorithm of development that Europe started showing us as early as the beginning of the 90s.

In that case instead of the breakup of the USSR, we could have had a quite modern model of the reformed Soviet Union that would have complied with our common interests. Such a model would have been characterized by a considerable degree of decentralization and that of sovereignty of the republics. But it would also have had a retained single economic and monetary space, a common market, a common foreign and defence policy, single citizenship, a single law, as well as a single information and humanitarian space.

Such a scenario in contrast to the CIS, for instance, could be considered an exemplary "civilized divorce". Besides, such a divorce or a parting wouldn't have been irrevocable. The decentralization trends would have been replaced sooner or later with a new wave of integration of the republics of the Soviet Union. If that had been the case, today, perhaps, we would be able to bear witness to the reunification instead of the actual funeral of the CIS.

However, all these possibilities were not used and all we are left now to remember is the ironic smile of our history.

On 9 December 1991, i.e. the day following the Belavezha Accords the leaders of European states, in Maastricht, the Netherlands, made a decision to institute the European Union. And just two months after the flag of the USSR had been removed, the Treaty on European Union was signed.

Is it not an edifying lesson? I think it is, and even, perhaps, too obvious.

It's not us who invented this world

In the 21st century we will witness the onset of the concluding phase of the formation of the globalized world, i.e. the world of large geopolitical continents, new supranational politi-

cal-economic systems, global common markets, cultural and information "areas of influence".

The formation of unified Europe. The American project of the "ideological empire of freedom". The growth of cultural-ideological and economic integration trends in the Islamic world. The recently vocal ideas of the "African Federation". The expansion of Chinese diasporas and the formation of a unique cultural-demographic and economic "worldwide Tianxia".

All this and many other things are the signs of a new world and the examples of a new type of existence and the development of states in it. The main thing here is an ability not to fall out from the general flow of global development. This ability is determined by the presence or absence of one's own national global integration project designed to make a state survive and strengthen its positions to be able to face such new global challenges as international terrorism or a whole number of institutions and mechanisms for "external control" over the development of these or those countries.

What does all this mean for Russia and the other post-Soviet states? Speaking in a plain language, the modern world offers our countries only three options.

The first option is to join a global project, what, for example, many countries of the former Eastern Bloc and the Baltic states did by joining the European Union.

The second option is to come sooner or later under the external control or governance and thus be included in this or that global project but this time knowingly and admittedly on the no-win and "subaltern" conditions. Regretfully, we can see today the signs of this type of development in a number of CIS states.

* Tianxia (Tiānxià) literally means "under heaven". This term is usually used in the context of civil wars or periods of division, in which whoever ends up reunifying China is said to have gotten Tianxia, or everything under heaven.

And finally, the third and the last option is to find strength and resources to implement one's own global integration project and thus preserve one's self-sufficiency and entity in the new world.

We have no other options today, to our regret or to our joy. Having been dragged in the global political stream, Russia cannot choose a policy isolating itself. "Being alone" in the forming new world leaves no room for survival.

Kidnapped by Europe

It would be easiest to say that Russia's affiliation to European civilization requires that it should join the European integration project. However, whether you like it or not, it is objectively impossible. It is impossible for either of us.

Such an experiment would most probably end in a failure for both sides because of the impossibility to "digest" the enormity of political, economic, socio-cultural and purely geopolitical problems which would consequently emerge.

A propos, the same or analogous problems of "reunification" with Europe are characteristic for some other countries of the former Soviet Union, even despite the present-day euphoria over the near-term outlook for the European future.

Moreover, Russia cannot allow itself to select the strategy of a slow 20–30 year process of moving towards Europe to join it thereafter. Besides such a drift to joining Europe would go hand in hand with the lessening of the role of Russia in the world and the diminishing of its capability to counter external threats and challenges. The truth is that Russia in that case would cease to exist as a unified state within today's boundaries in about two decades. As for the EU, such possible new entities as the Kenigsberg Republic and the Central Black Belt Federation would join it.

Such a situation is obviously inconsistent with our national interests, and the logic of world development dictates that we should start to act today, here and now. The other states of the former Soviet Union face the same problems.

The need to be consistent with the present requires that our republics and the people should collect their political will to go over to a qualitatively new level of integration.

Europe's lessons

The EU experience, which has already proved its viability, may come in handy.

The first EU lesson we should learn is that global competitiveness can be achieved in the final run only through integration processes. Russia's two per cent share in the world's economy does not allow it to use the economic factor to influence international relations. And this factor is the most substantive and effective in the modern world.

But integration offers an opportunity to create a common market and expand demand for the benefit of national economies, which, today, is a key prerequisite for the faster growth and structural transformation of the Russian economy, and the abandoning of the model of development based on raw mineral wealth.

At the same time integration mechanisms make it possible to open new competitive industries and sectors of the global economy. Such European projects as Airbus or the European space programme prove it very tangibly.

Finally, the creation of a macroeconomic pact of stability and the formation of a wide single currency circulation space for the integrating states make it possible not just to substantially raise their role in world economy but also create additional incentives to make the integration-based

unification wider and more attractive. The EU has proved that it works well for the benefit of its global stability and sovereignty.

The second key element in the Euro-integration experience is that it is necessary to borrow political and cultural integration algorithms proper for unification.

The European cooperation has always been particularly centered on a refined political manner of the correlation of national sovereignties and the integration process as well as its supranational organs and mechanisms. Europe was centered on looking for new mechanisms and forms for finding solutions and compromises between states and sometimes even for enforced cooperation.

This could have slowed down the general course of the integration process until all the participants had come to understand the need to enter a new stage and come up to a new level of unification. But at the same time Europe tried to ensure that integration processes were precise and progressive in those spheres where the solutions had already been implemented. Moreover, a possibility that integration would stall or the participants would refuse what had already been achieved was minimized.

Finally, the third and most important conclusion is that the basic reason for European success is that the cooperation and integration ideas transformed into the system of values of modern Europe and thus a version of Europe's omni-national idea was formed.

Such a common idea is what we need too. And to make it come to life, one should understand the primary goal of the European unification. It consists in making wealth and welfare of the European communities and of all the citizens of the European Union grow through the integration which is a means to achieve it.

We can speak a lot and at length about how this goal is to be achieved through the macroeconomic regulation, the single European political and judicial system, the common and free labour market, the single citizenship and many other things. One thing is beyond any doubt – the result of these efforts is the obvious and invariable wish of Europeans to unite as well as the voluntary and increasingly strong nature of that wish. And this wish to unite is exactly what the EU is generating.

The Euro-Asian Union

Well, today's all integration formats over the territory of the former Soviet Union are ineffective for integration. The unhealthy birth marks on the CIS's skin left after the "civilized divorce" poison any attempts to unite.

The GUUAM-type projects do not have any future for any kind of integration either. If we brush aside loud declarations, we will see that these countries' only sense of existence consists in proving that they are independent from Russia. They are trying to prove it to the authors of other global projects rather than to themselves.

Well then, what we have to do now is to determine the nucleus for integration using again the European experience. Such a nucleus for Europe was the Franco-German cooperation and it was found fifty years ago.

In our case such a new integration project could be the creation of a Euro-Asian Union with the Russian Federation, Byelorussia and Kazakhstan being its integration nucleus for starters.

The political elites and the people of Russia, Byelorussia and Kazakhstan have the greatest potential and readiness of all the CIS for full integration and even for creating a single union-type state.

It is these states that have come to the highest, as of today, level of integration. This level roughly complies with the level of integration of the countries of today's EU they achieved in the early 80s.

This means that making advantage of the European experience, we can implement, within the framework of the Euro-Asian Union, the integration programme up to the level comparable to that of today's European Union within 5–8 years. This would require forming a system of supranational bodies, creating a common economic infrastructure, developing a single policy and security policy, adopting one currency and developing and passing a single constitution for the Union.

The economic and geopolitical issues of the higher level of deeper integration with the other post-Soviet states can be considered as strategic long-term objectives. These objectives could be reached in the future as part of the natural expansion of the Euro-Asian Union (analogous to the processes and "waves" of expansion of the European Union). And such "expansion waves" will follow inevitably as soon as the Euro-Asian Union has shown its viability and integration attractiveness.

Simultaneously, the unification of Russia and other post-Soviet states should result in the creation of a common space" for coordination and partnership of two global integration projects – Euro-Asian and European.

To our and your Victory

Symbols play an immense role in history. They often turn into a real locomotive force of policy.

The European Union resolved to mark and treat 9 May as Europe's Day, the official holiday commemorating the formation of the Union.

This day was chosen because on 9 May 1950 the memorandum of the then French foreign minister Robert Schuman was published. The Memorandum was officially addressed to the Federal Republic of Germany and called for the integration of steel and coal industries of the two countries and, which is noteworthy, in the areas adjacent to the Rhein that had always been a seedbed of conflict between France and Germany. However the political sense in the Schuman Memorandum turned out to be much deeper. This document laid a foundation for the entire European integration project, the ideology of "unity in diversity" as a programme to modernize European civilization and to depart from the hard legacy of the past.

This is why the publication of this Memorandum exactly on 9 May, which is also the day of the end of the Second World War in Europe, was by no mere chance.

In a year's time, in April 1951, the Agreement on the Establishment of the European Association of Coal and Steel, the first integrated institution in Europe, was signed.

For our country, 9 May – the Victory Day – has always been and will be the greatest day in history for all times. 9 May 1945 is the pinnacle and triumph of the grandeur and glory of the USSR, all the republics and all the people of the Soviet Union.

Today, over two-thirds of the people of Russia are certain that there has never been anything more significant in our history than the Victory in the Great Patriotic War. The majority of the people living in the former Soviet republics can also say the same.

The traditions forged by this fraternal and multinational Victory must be maintained and developed.

The centrifugal political tendencies within the bounds of the former USSR can be overcome only if we remember our

common heroic past, only when we understand that our history and the Day of the Great Victory are the cornerstone of our national idea, the idea shared by all the republics and the peoples of the USSR.

This should lead us to understanding that we will have one common fate in the future, and to the revival of our brotherhood, unity and union of our people. I am quite certain that it will come.

Rossiyskaya Gazeta, May 2005.

Personal Score





People say that the mentality of a thirteen- or fourteen-year-old individual cannot be changed. Well, in fact, people are wrong. It takes about twenty-two or twenty-five years for a personality to take shape. Until that age it is very susceptible and easily influenced and can be corrupted from the outside. A child or an adolescent adopts the principles and rules of social surroundings, and they form the inner structures of his mentality. And the most important thing here is what norms the child adopts. In a normal society these processes are always regulated, otherwise the collapse of such a society is inevitable. If you do not want to bring up your children instilling your own values in them, they will absorb foreign values and thus become aliens.

I promised to avoid moral preaching. So I suggest that my readers think about Russia's future if its various minorities suddenly become its majority. Just take a look around and see for yourselves how many aliens are roaming our streets. They are not foreigners, but aliens in terms of their life values, who have fallen out of our society and do not accept it... We, our state and our society, should protect Russian children from these definitively maleficent factors.

Aliens?!, 2003

Shall we Turn Around our Rivers or Brains?

On global benefit one can draw
from a schoolboy's composition

I tasted a little honey with the tip of the staff that was in my hand; here I am, I will die.

1 Samuel 15-43

Whatever one may say, school should not fall behind life. Western democracies introduced freedom standards in parallel with instruments designed to contain their abuse. Liberal freedom came to us so fast that our society appeared to be unprepared for it.

This affects not only the idea of freedom itself but ethic as well. In conditions where a thief becomes a role model and he who has no fear to speak about honour and honesty looks like a naïve and nostalgic idiot, we must teach our people how to live without losing their identity, how to defend themselves, how to keep their good moral character and how to be gentlemen in the most difficult situations. We must set reason against craftiness, knowledge against dishonesty, and historical facts against ignorance. This was what I was thinking, roughly, still under the impression and splinters of an information bomb explosion in local papers. "Luzhkov wants to turn round the flow of Siberian rivers!", "Luzhkov doesn't know what to do with money!", "Luzhkov's turn-around", "The Luzhkov Canal", "Beat caps into turbans!", and so on and so forth. The tone of those articles was explicitly angry, amotivationally arrogant, and insulting as is always the case when "black PR" is unchained. I can't help

admitting that it all impressed me. I found myself at a loss however used I may have been to falsification, or even slander. This matter was different as it had nothing to do with architectural problems of building in Moscow, or city subsidies, or dispersing anti-ice chemicals on city streets. It had to do with something long passed. It was about digging a canal for taking water from Siberian rivers to Central Asian steppe – a project canceled as far back as 1986 mainly for political reasons. A confidential note which found its way to the government suggested that a feasibility study of the idea, which had been on people's minds for over one hundred years now, be made with due consideration given to new socio-economic and geopolitical realities.

But let me tell you this *seriatim*.

What flows out from what?

It was not so long ago that the press informed general public about a certain declassified report prepared by the CIA. The report disclosed some U.S. geopolitical forecasts; one of them predicted the breakup of Russia into 6-8 states before 2015.

This idea is not new (a book by Graham Fuller, a CIA analyst, predicted that several hundred new countries would appear in this century), but the forecasts and predictions are hardly important here. What really bothers is that our own political scientists and other citizens showed keen interest in that and started to discuss the probability of such a development. But the most striking thing of all is that nobody wasn't horrified at the thought of it. On the contrary, when *Echo of Moscow Radio* asked its listeners flatly, "Do you believe that threat to be real?" almost two-thirds of them (71%) calmly answered, "Yes".

There you are! You just think! Two-thirds! Two-thirds of our fellow citizens presume the impermissible! They allow themselves to question Russia's future existence!

How could it have happened? No joke, it's a serious question. Nobody could even think about anything like that yesterday. We have always looked at our country as a sacred gift of our ancestors. And we have always defended this gift without sparing ourselves or even our lives. And then, all of a sudden, we are getting used to thinking that nothing may be left of Russia but a few insignificant countries.

Russia's spacious land, national diversity, innumerable resources have always been regarded as unquestionable advantages of our state. Now it has just turned out that these advantages are fraught with danger, that all this vastness attracts some other nations too, and that our resources allow us to live a life of parasites. Not to mention the problem of nationalities and ethnicities.

"Stop it!" you would say, "These are just sentiments and they will pass." That's it. That is the question! It is in sentiments. Let me put it like this then: "How dangerous is it to have doubts about the future of the country you live in?"

I think it is very dangerous. It is even more dangerous for Russians than for any other nation. Because we are what we are. We cannot live without a feeling that there is a big and strong country behind us. It is appalling when you hear people say that we shouldn't jerk, that we should sit still, little by little eating out all that was left from the past generations, that we shouldn't build new plants, upgrade the existing ones, do scientific research, set great national goals... No, our society cannot go ahead with such thoughts in the minds of people. This way of thinking is bad for shaping up the national spirit. It breeds mistrust and irritation, that's what it does. Such thinking destroys the motivation for development. Nor does it tune us to build anything.

Let me give you an example to show the specificity of our national awareness. The Russian people use the adjective "Russian" for national identification. We do not use a noun, like a Briton, a Dane or a Scot. A Russian thus literally means some-

one from Rus or someone who belongs to Rus. In other words, unlike some nations, we identify ourselves by territorial affiliation rather than by blood. Anyone who was abroad knows that foreigners call Russian all who are or come from it regardless of their actual nationality. I don't think that this is so by mere chance. Well, let me continue.

Well then, it has become increasingly often lately that I hear a reproach during lectures, administrative meetings or just in private that we do not allegedly propose any large-scale projects. The nation is feeling bored without real creative work, people want to hear us offer them something real to do that can have a tangible and visible result. The most curious thing about it is that these reproaches are addressed not only to government officials but big business as well. This means that people are waiting for them to initiate large nation-wide projects so that they could participate in them rather than wait for one-time pittance or odd jobs. This is the genuine social responsibility of big business which came to possess its capital almost for a song. It is time we make it work to implement our nation-wide long-term far-reaching projects rather than build villas in France or buy English football clubs.

We, Russians, need big goals to return our moral values, improve the spirit of the nation and build up its optimism and confidence.

We need to sense a feeling of victory, or a drive, as my young interlocutors would say.

It would be unforgivable not to use the most needed and effective truly and very Russian lever – the spirit and will of the nation. Lev Tolstoy often mentioned that the spirit which grows inside the nation gives off the energy of tremendous power for development.

Well, if are to continue to lack initiative, we will lose the country. This is what I also heard from different people in differ-

ent settings when that old project about changing the direction of the river flow came again as a subject for discussion.

“The New World” and “The Time Machine”

“Here’s a new turn,” Andrei Makarevich is singing not suspecting, perhaps, that it was a remake. “The Turn” is the name of a famous article about the victory over the project concerning the turnaround of rivers written by S.Zalygin at the beginning of perestroika.

“What will it bring us?” the singer is asking. According to the above-mentioned writer, it would have brought us terrible things.

It appeared that land-improvers wanted to flood Russian fertile lands leaving whole villages, and national monuments under water and so on. The older generation remembers this all too well.

My God, what good time it was! How strong and dynamic the public opinion was and how important we thought it was! With what passion people argued about this project! How impatiently we waited for the next issue of “Novy Mir” to come to bookshops! How hastily we looked through the contents to find the words “turnaround” and “rivers”! Once read, the articles were Xeroxed and given to friends as we wanted them too to know the latest.

The strong-sounding word “turn” was exciting by itself as we felt it had some promise of change. A fresh reason for sharing opinion, showing interest in the common cause was like a salvo amidst the sour state of total stagnation.

Until that time no party decision had ever been discussed without appropriate instruction from the top.

* The Time Machine (Mashina Vremeni) is a well-known Russian old-timer pop group whose lead guitar is Andrei Makarevich.

CPSU resolutions had never been a subject for public discussion. Everybody used to obey without a word and rush to fulfil what was ordered by any means and at any cost. And all of a sudden the people were given a chance to show that they also had their own opinion.

Before that the history of the Soviet power had been the history of great construction projects. Yet, after all those grandiose deeds, after great canals, Komsomol initiatives, after our breath-taking successes in space exploration, in the virgin lands, in the construction of the Baikal-Amur or BAM railroad – in a word after all that served as proof of the power and glory of the regime, this was an occasion to pour out the accumulated dissatisfaction and put up a fight against the dull and mediocre rulers of the country.

The occasion was really very advantageous. It was not as dangerous to inveigh against the river turnaround project as defend dissidents. So it could be done openly and in print.

The excited publicists tried to scare us with terrible consequences of the canal construction. They did not spare colours to predict apocalyptic scenes with unusual passion and eloquence, they pictured such horrors that the Pompeii destruction, the Flood and Egyptian plagues seemed to befall the Russian people all at once just because of the intrigues and schemes of the land-improvers.

So the nature of the discussion changed rapidly and ceased to be technical to enter a totally different dimension. The much hated project was perceived to contain the Bolshevik approaches of enforcement to conquering the nature. It was opposed by fresh environment-friendly ecological ideas.

The project had accumulated all the vices of the administrative-commanding system. Its opponents felt the support of the brewing public awareness and community views that the state should stop any ministering over large projects, that the bureauc-

racy only interferes with science, that gracious times would come when all the money would be spent on pensions, culture and health instead of “unwanted” communist construction projects and arms race. All this was unfolding against the romantic predictions that we were entering a world where nobody would attack us and for that reason we should beat swords into ploughshares and produce frying pans and meat-mincing machines instead of weapons; and once we did it, we would live a happy life.

Thus a stereotype took root in mass conscience: if you support the turnaround project, you are a KGB associate, and if not, you are a democrat.

This story would have gone down in memory if under the impression of the recent meetings already described I had not taken an old folder from my bookcase with the cuttings of that long-gone discussion (in fact, I had been prompted to do it by scientists). It had been on the bookshelf for all these years.

So I opened it and saw.. By the Grace of God, what I saw! The old newspaper cuttings told me a story totally different from that which had been stored in my memory all these years. They told me of a big, well-contrived lie.

The criticism was indecent, obscene and unbridled with no regard for all traditions of business-like discussion and scientific debate. The articles portrayed some saboteurs, corrupted bureaucrats, deliberate destroyers of nature and culture, pests devoid of human feelings, ready to devastate their homeland which had given life to them in exchange for meager appropriations from the budget ...

Let me give you a quote: “The project will bring about irrevocable damage to our climate and our culture because, with hundreds of villages, 15 thousand cultural monuments would cease to exist in the Russian north”.

Another line: “Given the flat-level nature of the land in northern Russia, it would be deforested and millions of square

kilometres of meadows, agricultural land and tillage would be flooded.”

Not tired yet? Well, here is one more then: “The project developers somehow overlooked the fact that, due to a considerable rise of soil waters, when the rivers were diverted to flow through ancient Russian cities, the entire Vologda plain with its famous historical architecture and the Cathedral of St.Sophia would be inundated; the same fate would await the creation of a human genius, i.e. the Kirillo-Belozersky monastery and only the top of the wall and the towers of the Ferapontov Monastery known for the unsurpassed murals by the great Dionisy would stick out of the waters of a new sea.”

I am reading these lines and just don't believe my eyes. It can't have been printed then... why did we all keep silent? Why didn't we go to the length to check it? Why did we take it all for granted and why did we never say a word in defence of our scientists? How could we be so short-sighted to read these clearly unscientific and malicious articles with such overwhelming trust? Why did we not see the grubbiness and the black PR templates that were used in that campaign?

Improbability – this is what is striking in these hypertrophic attacks on the project. It appears that it is not necessary to tell the truth to make people believe you. It is vice versa in most situations. The area susceptible to neuroinduction (not a nice word but still we can use it here) is, probably, in that sector the human brain which is devoid of normal thinking. That is why the rule “the less credible, the better” is not, perhaps, a product of someone's irony, but rather a professional instruction.

The subject of the criticism is used like red flags during a wolf-hunt, that is why down with the details! I have been wondering for a long time why nobody was showing any interest in the Voentorg history while speaking about the sad fate of this department store. No one was listening to you no matter how

patiently you explained that the building had stayed empty for a long time because it had been impossible to find someone who would have invested in its restoration. The same lack of interest was in the air during the second discussion on the subject. The press was not interested in facts and scientific arguments because the object for criticism had been chosen as a symbol. The authors of numerous articles were not concerned with the question whether it was really necessary to do something to save monuments; their passionate debates were only a disguise for their struggle against the party omnipresence. The project itself would not have given rise to such a turbulent resonance but for the front page note "The Resolution of the Central Committee". The target was that fearful power for which we used the adjectives "organizing and directing" rather than men of science. And the scenario for the play was being born right here during the discussion as improvisation in front of our eyes.

Let's consider another example. Today the so-called "namesakes" are widely used in election campaigns. They are persons who are paid to be placed on the election list to discredit the hated candidate running for a post (by saying in a newspaper, for example, that a man of such and such a name was convicted or is out of a loony-bin, or that he was involved in something disgusting, etc.).

You see, the trick I described was used in the "turnaround" campaign too. You have probably noticed it in the citations about the Ferapontov Monastery which is known to be very-very far from the Ob River, you can even say as far as the other part of the world, why not?

Well, why hue and cry then? It's easy because this time the other project was chosen for "the guy to be shown a thing or two" which had nothing to do with the Siberian one we have been talking about, namely the plan to divert the rivers in European Russia to the Caspian Sea. This project is really very weak

and extremely precarious. There's nothing to say about it, not a word. But words do emerge, unprintable, bad words when you come to notice that fairly well-substantiated critical comments are wrongfully transferred to the other project to discredit both of them together as one thing in order to make radical organizational conclusions. And this is what the authors of the so called "diversion" or "turnaround" discussion resorted to without batting an eye lash.

I can give many examples of many other tricks that ensured the victory of writers over scientists. But I will refrain from doing it for fear to bore my readers. He who wants to know can read about it himself: today "dirty technology" manuals and textbooks are abundant. At this point I would like to draw your attention to one more specific feature of this case which you won't find in any such textbook.

PR is a Western abbreviation, already an acronym. We got used to thinking that it had come to us from over the Atlantic Ocean. And it seems so because our newly established specialists in defamation are sharpening their skills translating the experience of their American colleagues from English into Russian and adapting it for their needs. Perhaps, this is exactly what is taking place now. However our homemade masters of bringing discredit wouldn't have achieved such a tremendous success had they not been able to adapt themselves to the Russian stylistic tradition which had taken shape long before the Soviets came to power.

The Russian tradition of defamation is great and rich. In this context our PR-experts should not be proud of their knowledge of Western technologies. They should have their own pride. In the time of Stalin, for example, the black PR craftsmen were as many as almost half the country's population. Though their craft was not called so beautifully as the English abbreviation PR sounds because it had a Russian simple name of "donos" mean-

ing "information to deliver", this craft was producing results in no way less tangible. It is sure as a gun that if then in the year 1937 we had had PR agencies, the Big Terror would have been considerably easier to implement. Any nark or fink informing against his neighbour would have been relieved from the pains of creation. You pay and wait. Wait until he is taken to prison so that you can move into his flat.

All the more so striking is with what similarity to professional technologies those black PR techniques were spontaneously self-generating among the people. Just like they were during our discussion. We were so much charmed by sensing the power of the public opinion that now it is even hard to remember how we, men of science, without any sympathy were reading "pit-ous" as we had thought then explanations of our fellow-scientists who used their feet to explore the entire region, study and make record of all animals and insects of the desert, who were concerned even with such things as where predators would go and what they would feed on:

"Tens of specialized research teams worked on the project; scientists from 29 research institutes took part in the research. The research results were published and discussed with specialists. Many renowned scientists and experts who had worked on the problem put their signatures to approve the conclusions made through this extensive work. Against them there are the signatures of those who did not work, did not study, did not make calculations, did not see..."

It's incredible. It is impossible to believe with what contempt and negligence our public accusers treated all attempts of scientists to bring the problem up for an open discussion. The defamed land-improvers were not invited for discussion, and if they were though, they were denied the floor, and if they were given the floor though, they were denied the right to be published.

The fate of all those scientists was of nobody's concern; they were just sacrificed. While criticizing the land-improvers, the press was allegedly criticizing the CPSU CC. They were forging their methods to exert influence on the regime but it was scientists who found themselves lying on the anvil. The epigastric burning in people's throats was caused by the party with all its grandiose plans, but instead a very good project badly needed by the country took the blow. It was unique because it had not only comprised a well-made and verified feasibility substantiation but also an impressive file of healthy criticism. Just you think, the work of thousands of scientists and research workers who had studied in depth and prepared ten variants for using a total of only 5 per cent of the Ob's water was defamed and destroyed!

Even some documents suggesting that certain parameters of the project be specified provoked wild reaction. They were just burnt.

As a mayor, I took a lot of time to study the problem of destruction. I even went abroad for experience to find out that it was a serious science with its books, research and teaching departments and advanced technologies. But one thing is the same everywhere: they destroy only what they do not need, what is obsolete and what stands in the way. We, do exactly the opposite: we destroy what is viable, what works and can come in handy. It is some sort of a national disease. To destroy is easier than to build, so let's destroy – this is our motto. All our energy is spent on destruction and nothing is left for construction. You want us to destroy it? No problem! The labour organization for destruction work is ideal. And it is done with enthusiasm. No need to recruit; those willing to destroy come in plenty. The main thing is to destroy all so that nothing is left.

I think time has come to do away with this tendency. Even if a project turns out to be impracticable. Anyway, the sense

of elementary justice once again calls upon us to review at least the idea in which romanticism, economic profitability and solution of many problems including geopolitical came together.

The revelation of a young geographer

This idea came first to a sixteen-year old boy. It was in 1856. It did not happen in Central Asia as some would think but, in fact, very far from it – in the good old town of Kiev, the capital of Lesser Rus', i.e. Malorossiya. This teenager went to a local school and was so keen on geography that he had read all the books he could borrow from the city library and all the geographical magazines he could subscribe to.

Yakov Demchenko, as this was the name of the boy, admitted later that he had had a strong emotion while working, during his seventh year at school, on his examination paper "On climate in Russia". He said it was as if he saw the intention of Mother Nature itself. His mind visualized a low-rise going through Western Siberia forming a watershed with enormous water area in the north and an area with a gradual inclination in the south allowing a free water flow practically without any assistance. "However large Russia may be, occupying 1/6 of the world territory", held the youngster, "no regard is paid to the fact that crops yield only before snowfall in its northern part and they don't in its south." Two reasons as a minimum prove that this was a Heavens-sent vision rather than an incidental consequence of a child's passion. The first reason is that this idea did not leave him throughout his life. The second reason is that Demchenko's idea itself has survived until the present time essentially unchanged. Having gone through all research and criticism imaginable it retained basically the same form in which it had been formulated in the school composition of the Form-VII pupil.

In late 1869, this enthusiastic young man submitted his proposal on which he had worked for five years to the Russian Geographic Society. Its title was "On the use which can be given to the Aral-Caspian depression in the future". He gave his work such a title with the purpose of "disguising at least initially the basic idea of the manuscript which could make an impression to be too much of a fantasy". The project was then passed on to scientists for scrutiny and it found itself amidst a sheer sea of red-tape for there was a feeling of general mistrust among scientists and scholars towards those who did not belong to their circle. Thus Demchenko began to feel sorry for having presented his immature project for their study. But then he learned that a famous Frenchman, Ferdinand de Lesseps, who had finished building the Suez Canal by that time decided to "build another canal to bring water from the Red Sea to Sahara". This inspired Demchenko to look with optimism into the future and write a brochure which was published twice. He wrote a letter to the Khan of Khiva and the Emir of Bukhara asking them to write to the Russian Czar and support his project. He looked for supporters, trying to convince and tempt rich people into subsidizing the project.

But at this point, let me draw your attention to a phenomenon almost as inexplicable as the story itself. There was some kind of spell which, despite all Russian grandiose deeds before and after the Revolution, destroyed all the start-ups. Demchenko died in 1912 failing to see in his life span anything but sneer and mockery. ("Demchenko is ready to write us a story about the flood to inundate Europe and Asia" – this is probably the mildest reference to his life-time work.). But his idea did not die; in fact, it did win some supporters. Some expeditions were sent to the Siberian watershed to study the question on site even at the time of the Civil War. It was only in the 30s that attention was diverted to the grandiose construction of the Moscow-Volga

canal and the White-Sea-Baltic Canal. However, during the Second World War the idea of making a "Siberian Sea" became popular again: many scientists and creative thinking personalities evacuated to Central Asia had enough time to like that land heart and soul.

The actual work on the canal started in 1950 to be suspended though in 1951.

Then, in 1958, the construction was continued to last only until 1962. This was followed by one more cycle from 1971 to 1973.

Finally, it was in 1978 that the work was given another forceful start. Thousands of specialists carried out a colossal scope of work by preparing 17 variants for using surplus and stream rise waters of the Ob and the Enisey rivers to irrigate the land in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan as well as in the Tumen, Kurgan, Chelyabinsk and Orenburg regions. It seemed that real work had started. You already know what happened next.

So now we have come back to that start point, i.e. from where the Kiev boy started to work on his idea. This means that we are to address the concept as it was set forth in his school composition:

"... Not far from the Aral and Caspian Seas, in Siberia, there is the Ob River watershed which is twice as large as the Vólga area capable of feeding two Caspian Seas by its mass of water. This vastness is almost as open towards the Arctic Sea in the north as towards the Aral Sea in the south, and the rivers in it originating in the West, i.e. in the Urals, flow north rather than south because of the most insignificant inclination towards the north. A small obstruction somewhere in the north from the side of the Arctic Sea or a small depression in the south from the side of the Aral Sea would suffice to make the West Siberian rivers change their original course from north to south, i.e. it would suffice to make them feed the warm and vast areas around the Caspian and Aral Seas rather than let

them flow as they do now to the cold tundra of North Siberia and bring to no purpose their fresh waters to the Arctic Sea subject to freezing-up to a greater measure for that reason".

Today all this has been thoroughly verified and ascertained. Geologists, geographers, map-makers, soil specialists, hydrologists and ecologists have been working on it for many years. They have surveyed the vast areas in Siberia and Central Asia. They have come to a conclusion that in the north the water resources are 50 times as large as required for local consumption whereas the steppes of Kazakhstan and Altai in the Siberian south are humidified on average once in ten years only, and in the years in between the people living there keep on praying, "Water, water!"

They have also concluded that 5–7% of the average annual water discharge of the Ob into the Arctic Ocean would suffice to meet the demand for fresh water in Central Asia. They have laid on their maps several alternative routes for aqueducts with due consideration given to the relief and productivity forecasts of the contiguous areas. It has been found out that it would be most convenient to take the Ob water from the area near Khanty-Mansiysk to let it further flow to the republics of Central Asia and into the Amu-Darya River. They have also decided that the most optimal type of the aqueduct could be a canal notwithstanding inevitable filtration and evaporation (2,250 km in length, 16 m in depth and 200 m in width) with a diversion capacity of no more than 27.2 km³ of water a year.

Finally, they have gone as far as to guarantee that it would be possible to irrigate 4.5 million hectares of land using the diverted water. They have also held that the invested money would pay back not only by agricultural production but through socio-economic returns of the project as well.

The returns could be used for the development of Siberia both for environmental improvement and direct budgetary needs to ensure the survival of the Siberian population.

An easy simple idea, is it not?

I am not saying, of course, that it is just possible to take the old project and launch it. Its comeback, as it is, is hardly possible at all. It can be revitalized only on the basis of new realities – political, economic, ecological and technical. I am saying that it is hardly conceivable that such a large-scale preparation work that took 15 years to complete and was carried out by our leading specialists is totally unprofessional and should be discarded for good rather than serve a foundation for new additional research. It would just be unfair.

Let me specify and conclude: Making a final verdict is what I want least. I do not consider myself to be competent in that issue. What I want is to resolve whether or not this idea is realistic on the basis of geopolitical and economic conditions of our time, and also to do it calmly and unemotionally.

Old project in new situation

What's this idea to us, the reader would ask, if the entire situation south of the Siberian watershed has changed radically in the passed few years? It's one thing when this territory was that of our own country, that of our brother-republics and it's quite another thing when it is that of independent countries that more often than ever look at the United States. We will leave the question why it happened and who is to blame for that it happened outside our discussion.

Uzbekistan is pursuing a policy of total refusal to have any considerable cooperation with Russia. It is a host to the largest U.S. military contingent in Central Asia. Despite the fact that Russia is the biggest importer of Uzbek raw materials, Russian business is very weak in this country.

Kazakhstan continues to be Russia's principal political and economic partner in the region.

Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are Russia's partners within the framework of the Collective Security Treaty. The only force that maintains the unity of Tajikistan devastated by the civil war is Russia's 201st division and border troops. However, the political leaders of these countries have also been increasingly looking for other external political centres that could become their economic partners.

As for Turkmenistan, Ashgabat has been building its hopes for the construction of the gas pipe to connect it with India via the U.S.-controlled Afghanistan. What's up to us?

Let me answer this question. The point is that Russia can't allow itself to be impartial to what is going on in the former Soviet southern republics. Even if we omit the emotional aspect as it is sort of out of fashion today, it has to be admitted that their problems may cause pain to the former "Big Brother".

I am trying to say that no matter how economical they are with their water (through drip- or pipe-type irrigation for example) their water resources that are scarce already will continue to diminish to exhaustion due to the forecast global warming. According to some UN specialists, fresh water reserves in this region will turn down by 20% as a minimum because of a warmer climate.

Meanwhile, high population and labour growth in all Central Asian countries will call for the expansion of social production and more new areas for land development. For the normal functioning of a society they will need no less than 0.3 hectares of irrigated land per capita whereas today they have only 0.17 hectares. And we must take into account that the present-day aggregate population of the Central Asian republics except Kazakhstan is over 40 million people; it will have grown to 60 million by the year 2020 and to 100 million by the year 2050. These are the figures to make further calculations if you wish.

In a word, the Central Asian republics face a crucial disproportion between the highest population growth rate and the lowering if not continuously dropping level of production efficiency, and between the growing needs and the actual capacity to meet them. Only Kazakhstan is in a better position. But its problems, resolvable though, can be overcome only by a prosperous state. On the other hand, prosperity may never come unless these problems are resolved.

One should expect tensions, aggressiveness, terrorism, fundamentalism and the like in countries that are becoming poorer because of lacking in fresh water.

And this is just part of the problem. Even today the dust of sand and most harmful mineral salts from the 40-50 sq km dry bottom of the dying Aral is reaching Orenburg, Orsk, Volgograd, Saratov and the southern areas of the Ural region. Imagine what harmful effects await Russia as a result of fast desertification of arable lands in Central Asia caused by the death of the Aral Sea.

As a matter of fact, the region has been living in conditions of the upcoming natural and technogenic catastrophe. Over 150 thousand people have been relocated from Karakalpakia; it is just impossible to live there now. Add to this the inevitable evacuation of economic links from the southern areas caused by the slump of solvent demand, as well as the radical reduction of exports from Russia and imports from Central Asia such as cotton, rare metals, uranium, agricultural products, raw hydrocarbons, and other strategic items.

With all this in mind you just begin thinking: well, perhaps the champions of ecology shouldn't have been scared of the "river diversion project". Perhaps they should have feared the opposite, i.e. the rejection of that idea?

The 1986 project provided for delivering water from Siberia exactly to this region.

Wouldn't it have been better for Russia if southern winds had been bringing just evaporation from the Aral Sea mirror rather than dust and salt from its dry bottom to Western Siberia and the Urals?

Another problem is the enormous migration of refugees from ecologically and socially unfortunate regions. It is hard to imagine how Russia is going to cope with it. And I wouldn't even want to think if, as a result of economic failure, poverty and intra-political tension, Central Asian countries come to yield to Islamic radicalism and extremism; all this could flood out in torrents the Russian plain where millions of Moslems – Russian citizens are living.

Add to this a persistent military partnership and economic presence of the United States and other Western countries that would take one position after another in this strategic area and you will see the light of the ancient principle: "if he who is upstream doesn't give water to the one who is downstream, the latter may rise his sword to fight for his rights for that water".

To avoid all this, the entire economic policy in the east has to be radically restructured. This means the need not only to transform the economic infrastructure of our lands in the Siberian and Central Asian regions for the benefit of all, but also to set new objectives in the global-scale partnership in Central Asia. If we fail to find mutually advantageous partnership solutions, we will have to deal with a different group of problems, i.e. we will have to seek protection against external armed encroachments.

Anyway the sheer possession of 24% of world's fresh water resources will require an immense political and organizational effort to defend our right to let our excess waters flow into the Arctic Ocean.

How we can do it

Everything I have mentioned does not mean, of course, that one should demand that Russia should make charity gifts to the prejudice of the interests of its own people. My point is that we have an oppor-

tunity to sell something which we ourselves cannot use. I mean we can sell excess water flowing into the ocean to solvent customers.

If we put the issue like this, i.e. transfer it from the emotional sphere to sharp-cut economy, the project will finally have a firm commercial basis. In this case, Russia could profit a lot with the direct financial participation of our southern neighbours. The money gained could be used to develop Siberia. If the project were implemented, those living and working in Siberia would receive millions of dollars every year to maintain their region.

By the way, a cubic metre of water for irrigation in Cyprus costs one dollar. In Central Asia such water could be sold for less, say, 20–30 cents because of much lesser economic capabilities. Add to this that the delivery cost of this cubic metre of water by a canal, with due account for capital and operation and maintenance costs, will be about 10 cents. Besides here we have something other than oil or gas whose reserves are limited. Here we have a renewable, virtually inexhaustible resource.

Besides we must take into consideration that the demand for water (as well as the price for it) is growing and will continue to grow.

The hitch is that we have no experience whatsoever to trade water. Another hitch is that there is still no answer to the question how to implement such projects in conditions of market relations. For almost twenty years we have been deprived of gaining new experience of doing joint work, be it road construction or struggle with poverty. So far everything declared or proclaimed has been instantly fading and coming to an end under the pressure of bureaucracy. We no longer have the enthusiasm that mobilized our people; there is no authority of the state that allowed employing levers of noneconomic influence; nor do we have, thanks God, the party pressure, quasi-ideology and repressive mechanisms that made these levers work. The questions how, without all that, to do what our fathers and grandfathers used to do, and how to make the

country come together in a joint effort to deal with large projects and programmes and turn a private interest into a common cause are of course resolvable, but they are new nevertheless.

It has to be admitted that the engineering and technological support of the "diversion" project is not the most urgent problem we are facing. Firstly, (let me repeat) much of what has to be done has been done so far and thus requires only a linkage with the changes that have taken place. Secondly, (let me also repeat) sufficient scientific potential and experience have been accumulated for us to be able to succeed. If only all the remaining problems could be solved – political, financial, organizational and, more importantly, ideological, those of outlook and even psychological. Here is the rub.

To resolve them we need the qualities of true politicians. Yes, we need the qualities which, according to philosopher Max Weber, "are decisive for a politician. First, it is a passion in the sense of being focused on the substance of what you are doing. Second, it is responsibility. And an eye".

At the Bishkek UNESCO-sponsored conference "Eurasia in 21st century, the dialogue of cultures and conflict of civilizations" the heads of the Central Asian republics showed interest in the project. President of Kyrgyzstan Askar Akaev, for example, supported the idea of an intergovernmental consortium. This is an interesting proposal. The more interesting thing in it is that it does not call to establish another natural monopoly that would take its member-states by the throat pursuing its own interests of profit making. Profit is supposed to be gained and received by the member-states themselves whereas the consortium would be paid for work to make for its expenses. The community of the states members to a project would be based on membership: states and private companies would participate in it not just by making monetary contributions (borrowed most probably from the World Bank) but also administratively, i.e. through the posts provided by this international consortium.

Other organizational forms could be found. The main point is that the economic core of the project is not just buying and selling water but the development of production forces and maintaining a profitable economic activity through the vigorous and effective improvement of the region based on water supply.

Feel the difference, as they say. All together we would not just sell water but also develop agriculture and industry in the region, natural resources, forest protective belts, transportation of goods along the "North-South" auto route parallel to the canal, electric power industries and so on.

In essence, we would establish a corporation "by clubbing the expenses" for the systemic socio-economic development of the gigantic territory (including the south of Russia and the republics of Central Asia) by way of the reasonable use of united resources.

The implementation of such a project could be a turning point for brining together the interests of all partners in this area of Eurasia and allow building a strong economic bridge between Russia and the Central Asian republics and with the Persian Gulf countries in the future.

Well, this means that we should turn around our brains rather than our rivers, for the time being – if we at least started to discuss the problem of land irrigation in Central Asia and showed interest in it, we would get reciprocal interest in response as a minimum, or, as a maximum – we would set a precedent for "the other globalization" built on mutual assistance and improvement of the world for each and everyone.

The other globalization

Today there are, in fact, two scenarios for globalization to develop. The essence of the first one is in the domination of powerful transnational corporations based on the principles of global and social Darwinism. This scenario presupposes increas-

ing efficiency of production and higher incomes. However, it provokes protests as it secures all privileges and advantages of the developed countries in the competition for access to global resources. This is unfair. As is known, injustice gives rise to opposition and is a fertile ground for terrorism and interstate conflicts, including military. We can see that it is so every time we read a newspaper.

However, there are some rare examples of the other type of globalization based on equal relations of partnership and the concept of united actions. A classic example of such a model is the European Coal and Steel Community, established more than fifty years ago. In those days European countries considered coal and iron ore to be a common resource that should be distributed in such a way so that the whole European Community would get a maximum benefit from it. The effect of such an approach was so powerful that it played an important role in the neutralization of national separatists. However, this article is about something else. The main point here is that by assuming such a constructive stand, states will go over to a new, so far irregular model of political thinking for achieving national objectives.

Today none of serious politicians suggests freezing or reversing globalization processes. But they can be made fairer, more rational and, if you want, more controlled. Globalization is not just a world-wide McDonald's fast food chain or a global financial market. Globalization is heralding a new and unknown world order that neither West, nor East is ready for because in both hemispheres there is no universal idea how to meet it. There is only selfishness of the actors of the global market and claims to know the ultimate truth that grow proportionally to their military and financial capability.

Today the United States of America has every reason to claim to be the leader of the globalizing world. However, true leadership should be gained by recognition rather than by force.

It is not through confrontation, not through sucking life juices out of those who fall out of one's strategic interests, and pushing them out of the way that a leader is made, but through adopting the idea of universalism as well as the new morals.

Everybody remembers (many Americans used to tell me about it) what President V. Putin had said just before the war in Iraq started: "This is a mistake". The question is why it is a mistake. It is a mistake definitely not because somebody did not believe in the political or military might of such a superpower as the United States. It is certainly not the reason. It was a mistake because the United States, while trying to solve their most vital geopolitical problem, actually resigned from the role prepared for it by this stage of history – the role of a leader of the entire world community. Just like in one of the Bible's parables, America sold its birthright for pottage of lentils, its image of a just and democratic state for that of a colonial power. Moreover, this mistake was in no way accidental. It is rooted in America's older benchmark values of the 18th century such as utilitarianism, selfishness and money used to be perceived to be of superlative value. However, such a system of values is doomed as it can never hope for world-wide recognition. It is out of basic instinct that humanity will never accept a country for the role of a global leader which forces others to succumb to its terms by bribes and bombings.

Our vision of world problems has become obsolete and is lagging behind. The world is already living in the future but without the ideology that would be consistent with the present-day global economy. All our social institutions, politics, moral and ethic norms and all guidelines are essentially from the past. They have changed their shape, they have become better in some ways, they have become larger in scale, but they are still orbiting the old core which is basically trying, like Ford's conveyor, to defend the world order by advanced sophisticated weapons,

which in a moral sense and in terms of its values has become depleted and obsolete.

No matter how hard we try to resent young people who rebelliously come against the American model of globalization and want to bring about their own version based on social dialogue, mutual tolerance and neo-austerity, we cannot but accept the fact that in relation to the new epoch the socio-Darwinist system of values looks as obsolete and conservative. However, the vision of the new world order heralded by globalization still remains vague and unclear. We do not know yet what managerial technologies, ethics and values will govern in it. But if those young people are right, and values other than power, wealth, money and frantic consumption make up the cornerstone of the new world, we should play our game then on a different court.

We still do not have new ethics, i.e. some kind of absolute moral law that all would accept. However, there are some shoots of what Dostoevsky called "worldwide kind-heartedness".

An absolute moral law is when a person is able to understand the problems of others without ideological, racial and other prejudice. It is readiness to come to the rescue of any country irrespective of the degree of liberalization of its legislation or its consent to deployment of foreign military bases on its territory. It is such an attitude towards your neighbour as if that "neighbour" on today's unified planet were the entire world. Any country regardless of its orientation should inspire in us a wish to help it overcome its problems as if they were our own. I cannot imagine what kind of catastrophe the world must go through to understand that something like this absolute moral law should become an ethical postulate accepted by everyone. But if we do not find an answer to this challenge of globalization, a world-wide massacre will then be inevitable.

These theses are not new, all of them. However, those who criticize globalization usually end up with yells of protest and

demonstrations. We still cannot see any real or tangible manifestation of alternative globalization – thus we cannot say where and how it is possible. If we want to succeed, we should do something real. The alternative globalization is not for theory which often comes down to demagoguery with the aggressive help of today's mass media. It is for practice, for what is needed now is a practical and real solution of the problem.

So, returning to the project in question, we can say that its political feasibility is that it undoubtedly falls in line with the second scenario of globalization. If, as I have already said, the backbone of the project is not just selling and buying water, but also the development of economic activity in the region plus the corporate effort to create conditions for its systemic socio-economic development through the rational use of water, then, if we chose to do so, we would get a new, original globalistic approach to the solution of national problems. In essence, what is good for our neighbours is good for us.

The implementation of this project (if all the parties agreed to it) would inevitably bring about other projects in such fields as transport, fuel and power, construction, tourism and so on.

A bit of something personal

He who has never ridden a horse across a Kazakh steppe, who has never seen dawn in Kyrgyz mountains, who has never had tea with Uzbek greybeards, who has never bought Tajik national ceramics, who has never felt the ancient spirit over the excavation sites in Turkmenia, in short, who has never been to Central Asia – will never understand the inner pathos of this article. Since the collapse of the Soviet empire, the region of Central Asia has become somewhat closed for us. Seldom do we hear any news from there. The scarce information that our news agencies bring to us about the region comes down to ironical reports about

the political situation and videos featuring the dark faces of ex-workers roaming the streets in search for employment.

By declaring ourselves to be a European state, which, to my mind, is right, we very easily lose our ties with Central Asia, which is not just wrong, but inadmissible. The double-headed eagle on our coat of arms looks in both directions. But it is mostly from the republics of Central Asia that it gets a reciprocal friendly look.

I visited Central Asia many times. I worked there. I took part in the construction of a chemical plant there. And this is my impression: I have never seen such a degree of benevolence towards Russians anywhere else in the world. Russia is held in great esteem there, and none of the Central Asian nations has ever thought of us as conquerors or subjugators. Russian culture, science, education, industry and everything brought here by the Russian Empire was introduced with due respect for local customs and traditions. In modern terms, we have a positive image in this region. And this, I must say, is worth more than a fortune.

For us, to lose ties with Central Asia would be an extremely short-sighted thing to do, in fact it would simply be dangerous. The region still has to gain strength but its potential is enormous, and its conservatism is deceptive. The peoples of Central Asia easily adapt to new achievements of civilization, but at the same time they do not show haste to bow their heads to the West or argue with it. To argue with it is beyond what they need now. Their historical roots go very deep indeed, and their historical ballast is too solid and stable to pay attention to the coming and going fashions of progress. They are simply waiting for their time to come. And the manner of calmness and dignity in which they are waiting is just another proof of the short-sightedness of the champions of western values.

The people of Central Asia have absolutely everything they need – a warm climate, rich mineral resources and a labour

force. The only thing they really lack is water. And a friend will be he who brings it to them. If we could sell them enough water, it would be a really great gift. And in return we would have allies in these countries for many centuries to come. As long as deep rivers flow in Russia, we will have friendly and good-will relations with this region.

You know what? Central Asia is a special land. There you start to feel the real flow of time and forget the fuss of progress.

There, in the steppe under the blue dome of sky, you start to perceive our world as one thing, as something globally one and single, just like cosmonauts see it from outer space.

There you feel wisdom, meditative sentiment and peace of mind, and you understand how right our world was once created. You will hardly be able to feel this in Moscow's business rush and scurry. Though sometimes, but very-very seldom, such feelings do come on special occasions – on holidays in a bee garden amidst peacefully buzzing bees.

Moskovsky Komsomolets, October 2004

Aliens?!

Don't feed our children with foreign values

It is quite often that I talk to Alexander Minkin, a well-known political writer. It is year after year that he exercises his right for freedom of speech by straightforwardly, reasonably and ably criticizing the immorality of the present-day television.

But the reaction to his criticism is always the same – both the authorities and the captains of television simply exercise their right for the freedom of hearing, and thus nothing changes. Recently, Minkin shared with me his extreme indignation over the views of a certain journalist from a well-known magazine who is a consistent advocate of defilement of youth and drug propaganda. The enlightened cynicism of that journalist, his boorish manner of addressing his colleagues and his tactics of casting his opponents into psychological shock during a discussion – all this makes me really doubtful and concerned about this magazine calling itself democratic. I am definitely on Alexander Minkin's side on that, but let me now address something different. You know, when you see a guy who begins to harangue his audience in favour of drug legalization, then another one making big profits from his child porno business, and then the third one heralding the “good news” about the advent of “gay culture”, and when you see all of them succeed in achieving their mean goals, it becomes senseless to preach about morals. What is needed is a rational approach to be taken by our government authorities.

Business based on human vice is as perpetual as vices themselves. In this context, modern times differ from the past just in the scope of that business. Billions of dollars are being cashed in on such sinful services. The highly developed infrastructure of this business demands thousands and millions of new clients. The best way to cultivate that army of clients is to start cultivating it from cradle. It is only this condition that will guarantee a stable and ever increasing profit for drug lords, directors of various harbours of ill fame, producers of pornographic video and captains of gay entertainment industry. The war for the minds and souls of children has been on for a very long time. It starts in a four-ale bar or near a slot machine. But its main battlefield is in mass media.

It is through mass media, and especially through television, that the child's vision of the world as something full of entertainment and all sorts of pleasure is formed. Of course, this war is going on not only in mass media, but also in so-called night clubs, which, in my opinion, are opened for mainly one reason, i.e. to push drugs to teenagers. Regretfully, the state seems to be losing this war.

The present-day social conditions are redounding to the advantage of those who make money from vice. The people and our society as a whole seem to be rather indifferent to what goes on around them. Psychologists argue that morals of the majority of ordinary people are aligned with the externalized social norm rather than the unreserved compassion for another person. For many, the fact of TV shows featuring acts and scenes of violence, perversion and so on means the admissibility of their own suppressed desires and aspirations. Unfortunately in this country the orientation to the opinion of the majority has traditionally been replacing individual conscience and morals. Nowadays when the Soviet-time framework of almost total control over public conduct no longer exists, people in the street seem to be unknowingly

assigning the role of moral authority in proportion as they think fit to the state, the church, bandits and mass media.

As a result of fast and large rotation of the so-called governing elite in the 80–90s, the public awareness of norms, rules, normal *modus vivendi* and normal conduct seems to have lost its contours. I wouldn't like to exaggerate the efficiency of the former Soviet elite because it turned out to be incapable of preventing the country's breakup. However, the absolute majority of today's new elite doesn't even understand that by its everyday conduct it should establish benchmarks and moral norms. Likewise, the present governing elite is quite often a ganglion of abnormal ideas, notions and sheer barbarity.

In my way of thinking, the most striking manifestation of all this is a nation-wide infiltration of so-called prison-made culture into all aspects of everyday life. Concerts of thieves-slang chanson take place in the country's major ball rooms and are shown on state-owned TV channels. The so-called prison cell and gangster romanticism has overwhelmed the movie-making industry and television. Many soap-operas, where present Russian gangsters are shown as heroes, are financed by the state. I perfectly understand that the task of socialization of tens of thousands of people who turned bandits in the 90s is really hard to accomplish. However, I do not think that the authors of the notorious *Brigada* soap-opera made it for a noble cause.

While discussing the issue of the influence of mass media on children, one should always keep in mind what the present-day Russian elite is. Paraphrasing a well-known proverb – like elite, like mass media. (Some readers may try to correct me: “Mass media reflect the general situation in a society”. No. Here everything is like in the real market economy – people buy what others sell. Just make people get used to drugs, and they will demand drugs).

This is why it is not in mass media that the problem lies. The major threat comes from the historical promiscuity of our elite. When Russia said "good-bye" to its communist past, the only fitting alternative seemed to be the contemporary liberalism of the West, i.e. the liberalism on the stage of a crisis (someone might even say "on the stage of decay"). Long-long ago, in the age of Enlightenment, liberal values made a positive impact on the development of civilization. It happened so because these were the values that humanity needed as much as man needs air to breathe.

But as ages passed by, these ideas changed and eventually acquired a new meaning. There used to be times when some types of deviant behaviour and life style were considered at least excusable, and minorities representing such behaviour were treated equally with other people. However today, at the time of the crisis and degradation of liberal foundations of public life, deviations and pathologies are force-fed to our society. Here is an illustration. There were days when the suggestion that homosexuality was a psychological disease was considered to be a manifestation of true humanism of our society. But look what we have today! Everything has changed its ways and now this humanism has turned into the propaganda of homosexual life style and into a constant creative search for pros and cons to change one's sex. All this is now a norm. Our television, for example, is overburdened with all sorts of shows, especially musicals, which make the impression that it is better to be queer than straight and which deliberately depict gay guys and les gals as winners in most situations.

Something like that takes place in the so-called "market of ideas". People say that there should be free competition, that a person purportedly cannot be deprived of his right to chose! For example, you bring people the ideas of traditional Christianity; we also bring them ideas but of our own – those of Satan-

ism. People will figure out themselves what appeals them most. I think that any normal and unconcerned person understands that there is no place for competition in this case. For if you put some piranhas in a bowel with goldfish, the latter will not be able to compete anyway.

It is noteworthy that the problem of drug proliferation and that of legalizing prostitution are also presented as a matter of free choice.

But, ladies and gentlemen, free choice starts only when the inner structures of human mentality are already formed and thus capable of making a person tell right from wrong and see what belongs to him and what doesn't. Even adequate grown-up people sometimes can be expected to make the wrong choice, i.e. when they act irrationally. As far as children and adolescents are concerned, they just are unable to grasp what grown-ups offer them.

People say that the mentality of a thirteen- or fourteen-year-old individual cannot be changed. Well, in fact, people are wrong. It takes about twenty-two or twenty-five years for a personality to take shape. Until that age it is very susceptible and easily influenced and can be corrupted from the outside. Psychologists call this process the interiorization of norms received by a person from the outside. A child or an adolescent adopts the principles and rules of social surroundings, and they form the inner structures of his mentality. Thus, his socialization takes place. And the most important thing here is what norms the child adopts. If he is constantly shown that drug addicts, homosexuals and prostitutes are normal (and that they are noble, handsome, fair-looking and powerful), it is no wonder that he or she will consider it as guidance.

Societies more wordly-wise than ours took the interiorization channels under control long ago. In a normal society these processes are always regulated, otherwise the collapse of such a

society is inevitable. If you do not want to bring up your children instilling your own values in them, they will absorb foreign values and thus become aliens.

I promised to avoid moral preaching. So I suggest that my readers think about Russia's future if its various minorities suddenly become its majority. Just take a look around and see for yourselves how many aliens are roaming our streets. They are not foreigners, but aliens in terms of their life values, who have fallen out of our society and do not accept it. It means that we can lose a whole generation, which should have been socialized at the beginning of the 90s. But we still have some ten or maybe twelve years in reserve to correct our mistake. We can still return many of these aliens to normal social life. However, it will be too late to do so when they are twenty-five.

We, our state and our society, should protect Russian children from definitively maleficent factors such as drugs, sects and various extremist movements. And in this fight we should be adamant to what some concerned "advocates" may say.

Today some states adopt anti-terrorist legislation. Not only committing terrorist acts is considered to be terrorism, but instigating them as well. There is no civilized country in the world where freedom of speech can be legally used by those calling for acts of violence or war. And nobody argues about it because violence brings death. If a person calls on everyone to war against everyone, it is clear that he works for arms dealers. I am absolutely certain that the mass media regulation law should leave no room for those who explain to our youth that drugs are good and normal. The liberalization of the state's drug legislation will bring about both aggravated genetic transformations and death in great numbers. It is even more dreadful than a deliberate murder. People who promote the ideas of freedom or drug taking in public are co-partners of drug traffickers. It is high time to set a precedent for the implementation of the Criminal Code's article on induce-

ment to take drugs. There is no doubt that mass media will raise hue and cry to “defend” democratic rights and so on, but this is our country, right or wrong, and it is too dear to us to lose.

I am saying this for those pragmatically thinking politicians who may read these lines with an ironic smile, sincerely thinking that moral restrictions would be like tools of self-torture. I would like to remind them that they are not the first to cast moral values and principles overboard. I would like to remind our men at the wheel that many of their potential voters already have or intend to have children. And in general our people are not a gathering of imbeciles, and they can tell good from evil, words of truth from bla-bla-bla talk in front of TV cameras.

The Russian state should finally launch a consistent and merciless crusade against the branched and many-faced drug trafficking infrastructure. We intend to start with night clubs here in Moscow. We will simply close it down once and for all if we catch somebody with drugs in that club.

I perfectly understand that this problem cannot be solved only by the efforts of such a young institution as the Drug Control Committee because “surgery” alone will not suffice. Drugs for young people are just a means of filling the void of their existence. The dull routine of everyday life is unbearable for a young person. So we should help him find something bright, something that would make his life meaningful, something that he could be proud of. For example, today there are hundreds of fitness centers in Moscow. There is no doubt that their regulars will never use drugs or drink vodka because they want to be strong and fit. However, these fitness centers have a reputation of being for the rich only. So it is our task to find a way to make them affordable to rank-and-file young people. It is obvious that a beautiful body is a great motivation for a young man or girl.

No battle for the health of our nation and our children is possible without the support of mass media. It is totally inadmis-

sible that the friendly fire of our mass media destroyed friendly forces. I think that it would be useful to develop a national program designed to stimulate mass media to promote social health and a healthy life style. And as far as those who still want to make business based on vice are concerned, sooner or later they will have to say "good-bye" to their precious licenses.

I am sure that if the policy of our state in this field is smart enough, many problems can be solved by journalists themselves. After the Nord-Ost tragedy a large part of the journalist community took the initiative and worked out a code of conduct for journalists during the coverage of a terrorist act. I think that this experience should also be used for the drug problem. It would be good if such a renowned organization as the Academy of Television took part in that initiative.

It could try to list those TV programs and shows that are inappropriate for children. If the Academy decides that this or that program should be screen-marked as "Not recommended for children under 14 years of age", everyone will have to draw respective conclusions – this refers to parents, authors, TV bosses and authorities.

Another noble cause that could be pursued by journalist professional organizations is the creation of perception hygiene departments at all journalist education institutions. Psychologists and doctors should teach there. It is only then that our grandchildren will be protected against those awful shows that overwhelm our tubes.

Perhaps, the rules of perception hygiene will help our children to learn the culture of interaction in a society. Today there are two kinds of young people in this country – those who will be able to live by the rules and norms of the forming society, and those who do not fit in and who will eventually drown in another sub-cultural mire. Such a division is first and foremost is accounted for by the financial standing of many families.

However, it is not only this factor that determines the situation on the whole. The most difficult thing to do is to figure out the algorithms of relations that would enable every member of our society, including those who are still on the verge of a downfall, to return to normal life rather than fall overboard. The essence of these algorithms is social partnership which would enable the rich and successful members of a society to help the poor and losers step back from the dangerous cliff without abusing their will and insulting them with sympathy.

...Two centuries ago Mikhail Lomonosov, addressing count Shuvalov, one of Empress Elisabeth's favourites, declared: "The might, power and wealth of the entire state lies not in the inhabitable vastness of its territory, but in the protection of the Russian people and their ability to multiply." With due respect for all the differences of that and our times, some flaws of those days continue to persist in the present-day life: reckless drunkenness, marriages among relatives, neglect for newborns' health and sheer "murder of children". I strongly doubt that Russia would have survived if the journalists of those days' *Kuranty* newspaper had proclaimed all these ugly things to be an inalienable right of all citizens of Russia...

Rossiyskaya Gazeta, May 2003.

Agricultural Impotence

The procedure for my expulsion from Komsomol dragged on for almost a year. Eventually, everyone around was fed up with it. My friends made their bets, and my professors could not figure out how they should treat a student whose picture was on the Excellent Student Board, while the CPSU Central Committee insisted on my expulsion. It seems as if I were the only one who did not care at all about it. I did not even bother to think about what had happened. However, there was another thing in this story that made me feel uneasy. It was my first confrontation with the Soviet regime which shattered my naive understanding of life back in those days.

When you are twenty years old

However, let me tell you my story *seriatim*. There was once a movie called *I Am Twenty Years Old*, and it is really a pity that this title has already been used, for it would have fit in my story best.

Just imagine: summer, steppe, heaven-sent beauty and we are standing there so young, strong and cheerful. Such notions as “students’ brigade” and “by Komsomol order” only seem, to be boring: in reality everything was very nice indeed – quiet nights, moonlight, ground-squirrels running away from under the vehicle’s wheels. If, as mystics argue, human life is valued by the overall number of moments of

sheer joy and happiness lived through in this sinful world, I will definitely name all those hours I spent working in the virgin steppe some eighteen kilometres from the Komso-molsky state-owned farm.

You just can't imagine what the August moon is like there! It really sends a shiver down your spine! So there you go along a tractor rut, passing by the low chaliga bushes all withered and wintered by winds and frosts, when suddenly you see the steppe on fire! The flames become more and more violent and are about to engulf you. The horror of this fire which silently draws near makes you double your pace, but somewhere, deep inside, you understand that this is not a steppe fire. And suddenly the huge fiery moon which can be seen only there emerges above the horizon! "Oh, dammit!", you swear ashamed of your fear. And then you stop to admire the virgin land, so dark and unfriendly only a couple of minutes ago, bathing in mystic and coldish moonlight, and all of a sudden changing the colours of everything around you... Well, you know, a moonlit night has colours of its own...

But let us go back to the prose of life. Back in those days my official post was not a combiner but only a combiner's apprentice. It so happened that our combiner-instructor had to oversee our work from a distance. We pitied him: on the way to the site of harvest, he had become extremely bored by the rail trip and failed to resist the temptation. He started drinking in such quantities that could kill anyone but a Russian, i.e. recklessly. Thus he arrived as drunk as a fiddler. There are several different versions of what happened next, but the essence is that he stumbled, hit something made of iron and, as a result, broke his spine and could not walk any more. We helped him to visit a surgeon who suggested he should be sent to hospital. However, our distinguished combiner said as a truly Russian: "I don't care! If I am to die, let it be in the field!"

Well, my friend Borya Zakharov and I used to take him “to work” every morning. We helped him to climb up a huge haystack and mounted a flag upon it to exclude the possibility of him being grabbed by some misguided machine’s steel claws to become safely packed inside a heavy hay cube, or turned into something worse. He lay there and explained to us the design structure and operation of a tractor-drawn combine-harvester, taught us how to make locking wire pins and how to make repairs in the field. He continued to receive his pay as a member of the work-team, and, to tell you the truth, he really deserved it.

Oh, friends, do you know what happiness is? For me, happiness was the feeling of being trusted enough to be allowed to operate a huge, powerful and good machine on my own! Besides, whatever tractor drivers might say, my harvester was very smart indeed!

We worked our hands through to bone there, and it really was a pleasure to look at us! We worked with all our hearts, all our strength, we worked to win! It was the first time that I felt the ultimate delight from working with devotion, which, to my mind, is the sense of a human life.

However, not everyone shared my philosophy. Some of my mates were irritated by my labour enthusiasm. And among them Vaska Tiunov, a local idler, who had returned from jail a short while back, was the leader. Either he was a true-born bum, or just wanted to look like a thief in law (everyone knows that they never work). Nevertheless, he immediately singled me out as his total opposite. He literally got on my nerves. Everything I did irritated him. He was annoyed by my working from dawn to dusk and by my justifying the spirit of emergency-like job enthusiasm.

“Hey, chap, all your strain is for naught,” he prophesied looking at me like a hungry fish looks at a worm. – No matter how much you harvest, it will be lost.

The most horrible thing was that it turned out that he had been right.

You are the boss, then I am a fool

And now let me tell you what happened to me. Although it was really stupid, it had a certain effect on my fate. It was then that for the first time in my life I saw the foolishness, incompetence and complete indifference of our authorities. So when many years after that I made up my mind to become an administrator and a technical engineer, it was a response to the episode I am going to tell you about.

Well, one morning we were told: "Nobody is to leave the grounds today, comrade Mukhitdinov is coming to visit us.

"So what?" I said, "I've got work to do."

"Oh, Luzhok, you're a fool! Do you have even the slightest idea about who he is here? A candidate (you got it?) member (you got it?) to the Politburo! It is something like a local boss!"

The boss came in a black *Chaika* limo. This limo with its chrome parts shining in the sun amidst our wagons, mud-covered tractors and a field kitchen, which was a pile of smoked rocks with a dirty cauldron in its middle, really looked out of place.

Anyway, everyone gathered to meet the boss. By everyone I mean fifty-two students plus skimmers, plus their wives. To tell you the truth, it was quite a picturesque company gathered amidst the endless fields.

Mukhitdinov started to read his speech. He spoke about how important it was to solve the problem of food supply and underlined the fact that any gathered harvest is the feat of the whole nation. He said that everyone was to spare no effort for the harvest to be gathered in time and all that kind of bullshit.

Everyone listened in silence. It is noteworthy that on the eve of comrade Mukhidinov's arrival our tractor drivers went to the nearest local shop to buy some strong drinks as we had

nothing but *Zolotoy Kluchik* candies at our mobile shop. Although the shop they went to was generally referred to as a nearby one, in reality one had to go some forty-six kilometres across the steppe to get there. And now let's do some calculations. The speed of a tractor is seven kilometres per hour. So we divide forty-six by seven and we get roughly a seven hours' ride in one direction. Then we multiply seven by two to get the overall time of this go-and-return journey; it makes fourteen hours. Eventually, our tractor drivers returned only the next day. They failed to buy any vodka but they bought a great many "triple cologne" bottles instead. I felt sheer disgust when I watched them drink it. And the characteristic cologne aroma spread all across the steppe.

So, there was comrade Mukhidinov speaking about the importance of food supply, but due to the above-mentioned circumstances the interest of the audience started to fade. However, his speech was so boring that one couldn't help falling asleep even if he hadn't taken a gulp of that triple cologne.

But suddenly one of the local skimmers interrupted his speech. And everybody seemed to wake up at once. They were ordinary people there; many of them had spent time in jail. They had respect for authorities, but they always spoke frankly no matter who they addressed.

"Hey, boss, we know all of this," said the skimmer. "You'd better tell us if there is any way you can help us with other things...".

And he told Mukhidinov that they could not even buy a pair of knee-high rubber boots there.

But here I must stop to tell you about that. It was indeed a problem. There was nothing sold either at our place, or places some tens of kilometres away, or in our mobile shop, which came to us regularly, but for the above-mentioned *Zolotoy Kluchik*

candies that we have been really sick of. So, imagine the following situation: our pockets and wallets were stuffed with money for the pay was good. A propos, the work was hard 24/7. We did show remarkable enthusiasm and achieved outstanding results, but we could buy nothing. We could not even find a pair of some ancient patched trousers!

“It’s OK, we’ll do without rubber boots,” continued the skinner. “The hell with clothes too. But what we really need is food, any food! That’s our problem. Now we eat some... spoiled by-products. They cook soup from guts, and this shit really stinks. And instead of bread we have to gather some corn right out in the field and eat it raw! It still grates between my teeth!”

Mukhidinov somewhat irritated interrupted him. He said that our comrade did not understand all the significance of the moment, that was determined not by clothes, but by our goal – to gather in the crops at any cost.

However, the skinner did not give up:

“Hey, stop lecturing us! We’ll gather in your goddamn crops! And you solve our problems! So what’s the buzz? It’s as simple as that.”

Eventually a squabble arose. Some people just could not control themselves. Some of the students also took part in the discussion. As you may have already guessed, I was one of them.

I entered the discussion and defended the position of our skinner. I said that all of us had been brought up to have respect for elder people, but none could interrupt a person who talked turkey.

Comrade Mukhidinov, as if it were a slow playback, started to turn his frontispiece red with anger towards me. When he finally saw that it was a twenty-year-old snorter talking with him he suddenly set his anger loose. I did not even quite get it what the problem was. I did not say anything of abuse. But, prob-

ably, it seemed that for a candidate member to the Politburo to hear comments from a young man was not only the violation of subordination, but also that of all laws of life. So finally being face-to-face with me the lord of the steppe said with a voice accepting no objections:

“And you, young man, I ask you to leave these premises!”

There was a pause. The party boss was waiting.

Me too.

Properly speaking, there were no premises to leave for it was an open-air meeting – several benches, a dining table and everything was just like in a well-known Russian folk song “Steppe and steppe is around”. So I just did not know where to go. And so I told him:

“Ok, But how can I leave if I may ask you? I don’t see any door here.”

Then his face grew so red with anger that it could only be compared to a combustion chamber of a locomotive engine which I had seen in my childhood. However, combustion chambers did not splutter.

The phrase he finally uttered would surely enter the most absurd phrases’ section of the Guinness Book of Records:

“Step aside!”

I have to say that at such moments I feel as if my body turned to stone and I looked like a stone statue.

“Which side?” I asked still motionless. Everybody around burst out laughing. Mukhidinov’s anger started to burn as if in a blast furnace for pig iron melting.

And then I heard some kind of ventriloquism nearby (it was indeed ventriloquism for no one dared to speak aloud): “Yura! Get out of trouble!”. This chant came somewhere from the stomach of our Komsomol secretary Sasha Vladislavlev (yes, the same Alexander Vladislavlev, who today is a renowned political analyst who you can see on TV quite often; but those days he was

simply Sasha, an excellent student, a Komsomol organizer and a holder of Lenin's scholarship). He was the only person there who could cool down my anger.

And then something unexpected happened. I stepped aside as ordered, i.e. directly towards comrade Mukhidiniov, stopped there and in full view of everybody quite friendly tapped the candidate member to the Politburo on the shoulder saying aloud for everyone to hear:

"Oh, my dear fellow, you'll go far if nobody stops you."

Then I went away. The meeting between our workers and the high-ranking authority was bugged. The boss got into his "member-limo" and blasted off.

However, he did not depart alone but took our poor Komsomol organizer with him. And all the way he told him everything that he had failed to tell me. But, in essence, his speech was very plain and simple: "this Luzhkov should be immediately expelled from Komsomol! Immediately! Today!" But as Sasha did not support his idea, after having repeated it for one hundred times, the offended party boss put down our Komsomol leader somewhere on the road near the Kom-somolsky state farm. So Sasha had to go home some eight kilometres on foot.

Our leader came back in the dead of night and as a very disciplined man he immediately called a meeting. He woke us all, though we were tired and sleepy. He gathered us around the table and suggested we speak up for the record. And now I want you, my readers, once again to imagine: the bright moon, a warm night in August, small creatures creeping in the grass, and there we are, young men and women amidst this wonderful setting which would go well for a love-story movie. We were sitting there, listening to some foolish proposal to expel one of us from Komsomol, which, as you know, was a really bad thing back in those days.

It all ended as follows. What everybody said in essence was this: the conduct of comrade Luzhkov had been out of line, irreverent, but still justified by the situation. So we waited for our chairman to make a decision. And then our Komsomol leader showed some tip-top art of a bureaucratic speech when he finally said what he had not dared to say to the offended candidate member to the Politburo:

“Comrades, I regret to announce it but, in conformity to the Komsomol Charter, a temporary Komsomol organization does not have the authority to expel its member from the All-Union Young Communist League.”

So I got away with a public reprimand. When I came back to Moscow, I had some problems though. But I think that Sasha’s were bigger. It was for almost a year that comrade Mukhidinov annoyed the directors of my institute by calls from high-ranking officials and demanded that the rector and Komsomol leaders should expel me. But the institute directors did not give in. I was an excellent and diligent student, and, by the way, I was awarded a badge of the Central Committee of the All-Union Young Communist League for my hard work in the steppe! The pressure from the vindictive candidate member to the Politburo was hard to overcome, but eventually he lost his little private war.

Mukhidinov’s Heirs

But I could not get over it! I do not mean that story (as I have already said I soon forgot about it). I could not get over the fact that all the crops that we had gathered were lost! In fact, the harvest rotted and went bad right there where we had left it! At first they said that they had not had the required number of elevator units, and then that roads had become impassable in autumn.

Anyway, all our efforts, all our hard, enthusiastic and frantic work turned out to be in vain. And Vaska Tiunov, my ideological enemy, proved to be right. All our efforts were for naught! And all because of that Mukhidinov guy! Probably, if I had not seen his indifference in flesh, I would not have worried so much about it. But I just could not calm down: it was that bastard's fault! But if that pest had really cared about our goals, our people and our country rather than about himself, target figures and ideology, he would have saved those crops!

You may say: it is too late to lock the stable-door when the horse is stolen, those days are over now. No, folks, I must disagree, regretfully they are not over! If we analyze the results of the reforms of the last few decades, we will quickly understand that nothing has really changed. The same traditions of nomenclature management continue to be the cornerstone of all our agricultural failures. And our peasants do not give a damn that the Mukhidinovs of the past promoted communist ideas back in those days, and that their today's heirs praise liberal values. The style is the same, and the methods of work have not changed. And in both cases decisions are based not on the real situation, but on some abstract ideas. It is the same inability to predict and forecast the consequences of the decisions made. Assessments and estimates are made in the same way – "from the backseat of a private limo".

For example, let me refer to... OK, let me speak about the process of distributing shares among our peasants, may it be cursed forever! It is almost similar to the notorious distribution of vouchers started by Chubais (if the consequences of both these distributions are compared, we will see a similar negative impact which should be the shame of our authorities). To be more precise, the process of distributing shares is a procedure when a peasant gets only a tiny piece of paper instead of land,

not an agricultural property but a share – a certificate confirming his corporate-stake title to a part of the former state farm land.

Let us take a closer look – everything here is done in conformity to the Mukhidinov-like scheme. Here is the same reassurance that the only thing that needs surveillance is the purity of the introduced principles. However, nobody cares about a peasant having a right to possess land, but in fact he has no land. These are some minor things that can be neglected by our highly intellectual specialists in the field of macroeconomics. I will paraphrase a proverb for them: the devil lurks behind small things.

Of course, nowadays there are examples of successful farm enterprises and big efficient agricultural holdings. There are managers who do everything within their power to create conditions and opportunities for the modernization and further growth of agricultural production, as well as to raise the welfare of our peasants. It is noteworthy, that, as a rule one does not go without the other – efficient farming activities are maintained by intelligent and scrupulous managers.

So, God, please, make the number of such examples grow. However, it is more an exception than a rule, they are the examples of extraordinary feat and faith, rather than standard. For it is the ideology of Mukhidinov and the like that rules and devours everything around.

Well, let us assume that in the future a certain farmer shows exceptional determination and not only proves in various bureaucratic institutions his right to own land, but also gets a land plot in his possession in reality.

So the question is what to do next? To work? And how is that supposed to be, when the former agricultural infrastructure is destroyed? The issued plot is located God knows where, lost

amidst miles and miles of impassable land. The most modern tractor in your possession was issued in 1990. But even this machine is of no use. Prices for diesel oil are high. So there you are looking at your land plot and you feel utterly discouraged, for it is only a patch of wild and uncultivated land. So one has to invest money to ameliorate everything. And how is one supposed to do it if there are no affordable credits, if there is no system to sell produced goods in order to pay for the credit? And everywhere around there are hordes of profiteers, racketeers and other envious characters who do not consider idleness, drinking and theft to be something wrong.

The reaction of our peasant to this is quite easy to predict (it ranges from "Let our Lord be my guide!" to "To hell with it all!"). And there are people who do nothing but only wait for him to make such a decision. For he is opposed not only by "economic circumstances" but also by various local criminal bosses, raiders and bureaucrats. And their lidless eyes are constantly fixed on what goes on around them to exclude the mere possibility that something escapes their crooked greedy filthy little fingers.

These Colorado beetles see no difference between an individual farmer and a big agricultural holding's owner whom they consider to be a major threat to their narrow and selfish interests. This is why they do not want to provide peasants and investors with some guarantees for future long-term residence and labour in their regions. It is so because the system of the so-called "piece of paper owners" is much more profitable for them, because in this case even big agricultural enterprises are allowed to use land not as owners, but only as tenants (and the rent is usually short-term, and without guarantees that they will be able to work on this land after some five or ten years).

This is how things work here. The present system does not encourage serious producers and manufacturers, but short-timers instead who only want to squeeze out money – it is much

easier and safer for them not to possess land. You do not need to invest anything into land, you do not need to care about it or to preserve it, the only thing you need is to exploit it day and night in a predatory way, no matter what grows there. Eventually, in this case nothing will grow there very soon.

Dangerous equations

When you analyze the agricultural reforms of the 90s, you understand that neither former candidate members to the Politburo, nor their present-day successors, i.e. capitalist managers, have ever needed to understand what people really want. By tempting common folk with untested and ambiguous values, they have not learnt to attend to the needs of an ordinary man who comes to them with his hand stretched out timidly begging for help. The attitude of liberal reformers towards a country man is similar to that of their communist predecessors. You can't make an omelet without breaking eggs. Time tames the strongest grief. But we will get what we want no matter what hardships common people face. Besides, from the point of view of both former global revolution and the present frenzy of global trade, these hardships are trifles that can easily be neglected.

However, it would be fair to say that all this nonsense is not the invention of the seventy-year-long communist reign and the chaos of the 90s.

No, the similar methods of conducting agricultural reforms, when nobody cares for the desires, feelings and skills of common people, can also be traced back to Imperial Russia. Let us refer to what Saltikov-Schedrin wrote in this connection (while observing the process of the first agricultural reform in Russia):

“The problem under consideration had nothing to do with the real future of people. It was about solving an equation with one or several indeterminates. But the more people become tired

and sick of everything, being deprived of any hope, the less they care about what role they play in these equations. 'Life is hard and then you die brothers', they say, and, what is more important, they really start to die, as if they made a very wise decision...".

So why do I mention this? Because today, thanks God, we adopted a national project for the development of rural areas. It is the first time in many years that our government has finally dared to look inside the so-called black hole of agricultural industry. The peasants in Russian villages have at last been given hope that they will avoid the abyss which they have been approaching for so long.

The essence of all this lies in the people's hope. This is something that cannot be betrayed, otherwise we will lose our crops once again, and once again Vaska Tiunov will be right.

This is why it is of utmost importance to change our present managerial approach and to focus on real troubles of our rural areas rather than some abstract macroeconomic outfits... We should directly address our peasants.

Sooner or later we must understand that we cannot allow ourselves to have business with such parasites as Mukhidinov. No matter how nice their present promises and slogans are, such characters and the like should not even be allowed to come close to farms and to cheat on our peasants. Otherwise, people will simply stop to care about what role they play in these dangerous equations.

Whatever our rationally thinking government members may say, neither oil, nor gas, nor nickel, nor diamonds which cost so much today, form the backbone of our great country called Russia. These riches extracted from the depths of the earth will never give us national solidarity; and an oil pipe will never become an all-Russia national mainstream.

Land and work on it have always been the bedrock for the Russian people to exist; they forged our national character and

our culture. They are the foundations of our national identity, the keepers of our national customs and traditions, the backbone of our existence.

This is why agriculture is not just an industry of the economy. We should not only develop agriculture, ploughing techniques, our fields and forests, but we should also develop the man who lives and works on this land. This is why the national project should have been called "Resurrection of Russian Rural Areas and Rural Life", rather than "Efficient Agriculture". And it is also its contents, goals and priorities that should have been broadened and expanded. And we should use at least a part of the money from our stabilization fund which seems to be covered with cemetery dust for solving the above-mentioned macroeconomic equations.

The state's strategy for rural areas, the creation of rural infrastructure, the restoration of agricultural engineering and even the adjustment of land ownership – all this can be done one way or another but only if there is a consensus of opinions over the major problem.

And the major problem is as follows: If we are ready to watch Russia slowly decline and if we want to trade it for a new country based on some other spiritual values, so let everything go as it goes. Let us just turn a blind eye to the Russian village which is about to become extinct. But if we want to preserve our history, our customs and traditions and to guarantee a stable future for ourselves, then we must understand that we will not go anywhere without the Russian village because it is there in the vastness of our land that the mystery of the Russian heart and soul dwells.

Moskovsky Komsomolets, May 2006.

A Bullet

This bullet lay in a small tin candy-box. Our neighbour used to open it and allow us to touch the bullet. He used no other name for it but a "bastard". So I thought for a long time that the words "bastard" and "bullet" were synonyms. I was six years old then. And the war was on. The tiny German bastard, stained with the neighbour's blood, lay there and pretended to be dead. I examined it so many times that it seems that I still remember all of its dents and scratches.

The bullet had been extracted from the neighbour's chest, somewhere from below the heart. And it turned out to be a great piece of luck for us and for all of the backyard kids. Then we were able to play war, having some material evidence and first-hand information.

However, the information was poor and monotonous. It is now that boys play thinking they are movie-heroes with plastic guns in hands. But then, back in 1942, we had sharpened pieces of metal instead of toy-guns, and we did not play victory. We played resistance.

Of course, these kids' games evolved with the actual progress of the forward edge of the battle area. But at the beginning of the war our games were not diverse. We used to run from attacking and shooting planes across the open field, or to be more precise – across our backyard dump. Or we used to wade through the woods at night (in reality – through the workshops of a soap factory) to get to our forces. We even imagined we were lying motionless in the icy mud near a German lookout with a blind shell at our side.

We used to play all these acts keeping in mind the stories told by our bandaged neighbour, and thus we imitated grown-ups in our major and common cause: to resist and to survive through thick and thin. We fought to the bitter end. To surrender was out of the question. "You won't do anything to me" – this was the ethic basis of a kid's vocabulary back then.

Today we remember the Great Patriotic War from its end, from the victory. The memories of it seem to have remained in a reverse order. But everything was quite different in reality. The Germans were at Moscow's doorstep. And the World waited for the Russian troops to surrender any day soon. Everything appeared to have been lost if one were to use common sense.

Indeed, the French had suffered a similar blow and had quickly surrendered not so long before. Not a single shot was fired when the German troops occupied Belgium. The freedom-loving Europeans decided not to fight against a thousand-year old Reich. They were not ready to stay put, fearing to lose even a single soldier, let alone staying put to the last one. They considered freedom not to be the kind of value that is worth fighting and dying for. Instead they chose to save their lands from havoc and their households from ruin by yielding to the German armies. They acted according to their rationalist logic and turned to be right in their own way. Any war ends some day, and a person can put up with everything, and it is possible to go on living even under a fascist rule. These were the arguments of free Europe, and its historical experience only added strength to that logic.

But the Russian vision of the war is totally different. It demolishes the very foundations of European rationality. For some completely unknown reason it is in the situation of despair that the resistance of the citizens of Russia becomes especially fierce. This is what one war veteran, a participant of Moscow's citizens-in-arms corps, wrote in this context:

“In 1941, the Soviet army was destroyed. Its remnants retreated in chaos though individual units continued their resistance, which seemed meaningless, but owing to their efforts the German advance was delayed till harsh winter frosts came.”

Gebbels explained this resistance by the primitive character of Russians and by the inability to understand that the war had already been lost. However, Gebbels himself failed to understand all. Chaos does not undermine the morale of a Russian soldier. On the contrary, it inspires him to be even more stubborn, courageous and daring in his strive to overcome this chaos. When they seemed to be drowning neck deep in water with no way out, it was the second wind and adrenalin that came to help Russian soldiers, officers and generals.” (G. Pomerants).

Such a reaction is a paradox from the European perspective. It is resistance without hope. It is a stubborn will not to surrender rather than an urge to survive. Neither pragmatic, nor rational point of view accounts for such a behaviour. There is neither rationale nor argumentation behind it. This resistance is significant in itself and irrational. It excludes the very idea of surrender without leaving any room for the instinct to survive.

To stay put to the last soldier, to the last bullet and to the last trench, and to abandon all hope for any way out – this was the principle.

And this is the Russian national character. It is some kind of unyielding will of one “standing on the edge of the darkest abyss”. A soldier finds himself embraced with total desperation, and there seems to be no light at the end of the tunnel, but suddenly a faint glimmer appears in the darkness of the void... And his spirit revives overcoming the fear of death... It is as if he sees the situation from another perspective, and then comes the second wind, and after that – even the third and the fourth one... And the only goal is to fight and resist.

Today people often say, "Stalin did not care about human life." It is true. However it is also true that our people did not spare themselves. There were no punitive forces around Moscow in those days. It is only because our soldiers and citizens-in-arms, like our neighbour I mentioned, continued to resist and defend their land in a totally desperate situation, that the Soviet leader was able to give orders. These men and women fought courageously for every single hill, every single ravine and every single farm yard, which they turned into a stronghold of resistance. There was not even a slightest idea to raise one's hands and surrender. The Germans indeed had a nut too hard for them to crack.

Not so long ago during a celebration of the Great Victory anniversary one foreigner raised his glass and said that the love for freedom had turned out to be greater in Russians than in Europeans. These words indeed seem beautiful but they are not true. It had not been the love for freedom that had mattered here, but that purely filial attitude towards the motherland that is typical of all Russians. But there was another thing as well.

It is the traditional feature of the Russian civilization that explains the ability of the Russian citizens do adapt to extreme situations and living conditions. Chaos has no power over Russians. We do not simply give up when everything crumbles around us, when there is no master plan, when there is nowhere to run, nowhere to hide and no one to seek help from. We have no fear of something unknown or unexplored, of something which is completely alien to us what we cannot understand through our previous experience. In the chaos of war Russians develop an ability to go on with their normal lives under constant fire. This is what we are like.

These were our neighbour's words of wisdom. He joined the Moscow citizens-in-arms corps in the first days of the Great Patriotic War. He was given a captured Canadian rifle and some twenty cartridges at a recruiting station. "We have nothing more," said the station's officer. "Try to get some when you come to the front line".

And so it was with this old rifle that he went with thousands of other Muscovites to defend Moscow against German tanks. And then there was blood, mud, mountains of dead bodies and all other horrible things he told us about. And that stubborn willpower aimed at resisting at all costs, was also there.

However, the war did not end for him even when he was wounded. He lay bandaged all over and nearby on a table lay the German bullet removed from his body. He kept thinking of nothing else but coming back to fight again. But it seemed as if his life suddenly stopped for the time being and lost its meaning.

Then an idea struck him. It was a totally insane idea from a rational perspective. He decided to return that bullet to Germans. He was up and about as fast as he could and went straight to the front-line. He had been seen off to the front by the entire neighbourhood. He had taken the bullet with him of course. As for the events that followed, I know them much better because when our neighbour returned I was ten years old. He came back with his chest covered with medals and wound-stripes. He had some splinters stuck forever somewhere in his back and he was nicknamed Crooked for that.

Well, one day while at the front he found himself in a village. He used a small tool kit to detach the Russian-made bullet from its cartridge case and replaced it with the German bullet. Then he put the newly made cartridge in a separate pocket and decided that if he saw a German soldier he would simply aim and thus return the bullet.

Once at the Belorussian front at a place called like many other places in our country – Sosnovka – he decided to realize his idea. He saw an enemy soldier at the other side of the front-line, loaded his cartridge into the rifle, took aim, though he was a bit far away and made his shot. The enemy fell to the ground and thus he was avenged.

Once he did it, a peace of mind and soul came to embrace him; he never had that feeling either before or after that in his life.

This story came to my mind quite recently through an association. It was not a direct association; it was, as mathematicians would say "ex adverso". Well, this ex adverso was in fact, adverse. Imagine that I'm peacefully driving along the streets of our beautiful sunlit capital and then I turn on the radio just by rote out of habit. There a woman, specially invited to the studio, is talking about the future of our country.

"What I am about to say may sound as something revolutionary," says the woman on air, "but nonetheless, Russia will become a great country once it returns to its natural borders. The huge country we live in spreads from Kaliningrad to Kamchatka. Its size definitely by far exceeds its natural borders.

"What are these natural borders?" asks the journalist. "Something like the state of Muscovy?"

"Our natural borders end at the Urals!" specifies the woman. "To my mind, a superpower is only an idea and it is utopian. But we, my dear listeners, are living here and now. We need to buy food, clothes, pay our rent; we must be able to use metro, visit our friends and give gifts to them. We live every day, and our living conditions should be good. Do we need Russia to be a superpower to achieve this? I am not so sure about this..."

All this nonsense would not be worth a damn if this idea came only from one woman who cares only about going to parties and giving gifts. The problem is that more and more people start to think the same way, square ideals become more and more associated with democratic values, and this for some reason leads to the collapse of our country. This indeed can make us feel uneasy.

The Russian mass media recently started to discuss the CIA report on the upcoming collapse of Russia. I must say that the results turned out to be astonishing! Absolutely no one seemed to be horrified by this idea! On the contrary, when *Echo of Moscow Radio* asked its

listeners: "Do you think this threat is real?" nearly two thirds (71%) calmly answered: "YES". So that is how things are! Jesus, just think about it: two-thirds of our fellow-citizens accept such a sacrilegious and intolerable thing as doubts about the future of Russia.

How could such a thing happen? No one could even imagine in the near past anything like that to take place. We have always perceived our country as a holy gift inherited from our ancestors. We have always protected and defended it no matter what the cost. And suddenly we simply accept the idea that Russia might collapse and breakup and nothing but a bunch of insignificant states might remain afterwards. How can one think in such a way? The question is more serious than ever.

Why does the same nation, which fought to the bitter end during the Great Patriotic War, the real war, surrender and lose all the will to win in this virtual, cold and mythical war? Why are we even ready to abandon our country and to hand it over to someone as a contribution?

When the threat was so real, people gave their lives for the sake of their country and fought to the last drop of blood to protect their homeland. But why is there nothing like that nowadays? Why do we face defeat so easily and even don't feel ashamed to openly declare it to the whole world? Why do we question our history and traditions? Why are we ready to abandon our country for it to be ruined and plundered? Where did our inborn ability to resist and fight go?

There is no explanation. One can name hundreds of reasons and put the blame on thousands of people – we can always find culprits, so everything is OK. But to tell you the truth, there is something mystical here which shatters all the hypotheses of a conspiracy of foreign secret services.

Russian people seem to have some kind of thirst for the extremes. This can be traced in our national proverbs and sayings: "what will be, will be", "all or nothing", "give me liberty or give me death!"...

That desperate readiness for self-sacrifice with which we fought against the fascist hordes and the inexplicable apathy which has embraced many of our fellow-citizens nowadays – are the two sides of a medal. In both cases this combination of the nationwide mood forged by our history and traditions produced unconventional results. Now the nation that used to resist so staunchly is disappointed. This disappointment includes the same passion and the same ability to overcome hardships. There is no place for shame and disgrace in it. We can accept sacrifices and severities but not humiliation, not treading us in the mud, not slandering us and everything we lived for. However, the dosage of this poison turned out to be more than the people of Russia could bear.

As an example, allow me to quote a man whom the above-mentioned intelligent woman may have read but inattentively:

“The Russian people are not made... by mere numbers. Numbers are insignificant. They are like wheat that waits to be grinded and baked afterwards into bread. And the quality of corn in bread corresponds to the spiritual health of an individual in this totally new and non-mechanical unity that we call the people.

But sometimes such epochs come when no bread is baked, when storehouses are overfilled with that wheat but there is no milling. No longer does political independence make the people out of individuals. We need a new mill to throw our wheat under its grindstones of a totally new type of care. And it is only then that we will get pure flour – the new essence of our people”.

The author of this prophecy is not some political activist or a statesman. He is the great poet Osip Mandelshtam who was tortured to death in a concentration camp.

Right now we are just a mechanical gathering of individuals, electorate and inhabitants. But we are not one people in the poet's sense. We do not have any feeling of being part of the great nation; nor do we give a single thought about our nation's meaning, goals or aims.

Hitler couldn't have dreamt of a weaker enemy. He lost because he fought against the united people. But something went wrong, and the bonds inside the people who had overcome all the hardships of war, siege and retreat started to weaken. And now these same people are invited to become collaborators who are able right now only to survive rather than resist or fight.

Shame and humiliation undermine our people's pride, dignity and courage. A catastrophe came and everything was covered with darkness. The history was rewritten, and the life suddenly turned meaningless. It is as if some powers were surreptitiously trying to put an end to the Russian people, to deprive us of our feeling of unity and to make every single Russian an egoistic and pragmatic individual. It seems as if our people were brought down to humiliation in the face of history, as if we were deprived of our right to live. As a result, we have lost now our will to live, our ability to resist and we are ready to accept our historical and national defeat. Neither a Kremlin politician, nor a soldier in the Chechen Republic, nor an oligarch, nor the most hopeless soaker feels himself part of the single united nation. Our huge country of 140 million is hovering deprived of its goal and a place to stand. It is as if our existence grew meaningless.

Yet, no matter what you do, or think or say, somewhere deep down in our souls the feeling of unity is still smouldering. And it will erupt as an all-consuming wave of righteous fire when it comes to the tolerance limit. In spite of any lies and defeats in any war, including the Cold War, even when only two Russians are left out of all, this spiritual directive to unite will still live in the spiritual code written in the basic national instinct. Yes, it will wake up and then the entire world will once again see that we are still alive and kicking, capable of putting up a resistance. A second, third and fourth winds will come then and our energy, passion and drive will return.

Today we make forecasts and draw pessimistic conclusions. But all of them are too straightforward and inspired by the rationalist logic of Europe. But the basic principle of the Russian civilization is

totally different. We are deprived of the form but not of the content. We can be humiliated but we cannot be defeated. It is our eternal love for our land that keeps us alive, and from time to time it can be seen sporadically. However, one can hardly see it in everyday life.

Today, just like in 1941, some prophets are trying to sentence us to defeat. But they can be wrong because the time for this has not yet come. They are trying to convince us of it and we continue to retreat, giving up our positions one after another, as well as our history and territory.

But I would like to tell all those who have already accepted the idea of the upcoming end of Russia: don't you even dare to count on that! You'd better forget it! You'll never live up to it! Or to make it sound in a West-like manner: "I am very sorry, gentlemen." Our forefathers explored the harsh vastness of our country not because of their lust for oil or gas. They loved these lands and they chose to live here. We also love our country. End of story, folks!

* * *

However, this story from my childhood had an unexpected continuation in Germany not so long ago. During a business lunch I heard a German businessman telling, between this and then, a story about his father who had fought in Russia. He had been wounded but survived. All his life he had kept coming back in his mind to the situation in which he was wounded. The problem is that when the bullet was extracted, everyone was surprised – the bullet was German-made! – though the shot came from the Russian side.

– And where did it happen? I asked.

– At the Belorussian front, I guess, this is what you call it.

I had an urge to ask the name of the place but changed my mind. Maybe it had been that very bullet, well, who knows?

Moskovsky Komsomolets, September 2005.

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The Mystery of Gostiny Dvor is not my first book, and it will not be my last. There are some things – intellectual, philosophical, human – which can only be expressed in a book. The sum of my life experience, my immersion in the numerous problems facing our city, our country and the world, the countless fascinating meetings and the thoughts they have provoked – all these I have tried to share with you in this book. Its subtitle is *About my city, about the world, about myself*, and I make no apology for the priority I give to the city. I know, and deeply appreciate, that the British people show great interest in Moscow, and for this reason I hope you will read this book, and understand and share my views.

I also consider it's my duty, as a man and as Mayor, to invite as many of you as possible to come and see Moscow and Russia with your own eyes; I would like you to get to know our great city for yourselves, and not through a journalist's description!

As for the mystery of Gostiny Dvor, I am sure that Sherlock Holmes, using his famous skills of deduction, would have solved it easily. But since we were not able to ask him, we had to unravel it ourselves. You will find out all about it in the book.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Yuri Luzhkov', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the left.

Yuri Luzhkov