

Catastrophism on the Eve of 2000

Apocalyptic Ideology Between Russia's Past and Future

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The role of the past and the future in the human mind varies from society to society, from one time period to another. Popular perceptions of the past and the future—good or bad in comparison with the present—also diverge greatly. At the same time, the signs that people ascribe to the past and the future—positive or negative—depend largely on the type of society in which they presently live. In a totalitarian society a monopolistic ideology is able to control the perceptions of the past and future. In contrast, in a democratic society everyday experiences of individuals more strongly form images about the past and future, even though ideology does have an overwhelming effect on some groups in such societies.

The main channel for shaping the images of the past and future through ideology are the perceptions of life in the present. A strong ideology in a totalitarian (or even democratic) society is able to isolate everyday experience from generalizations about life. In this way it opens the door for the formation of images and the scenarios of the future necessary for the given ideology.

For just this reason, an ideology and its corresponding propaganda are concentrated to suggest to the people that life is currently very bad or very good, regardless of the “objective” facts. The ideology then imposes on the people (through reference to the present) its images of the past and future. We see such developments in such disparate societies as Stalinist and post-Communist Russia, as well as in any Western democracy.

Catastrophism

In a totalitarian society the dominant image is a type of mindset that surmises that the present is better than the past and the future will be even better. Most Soviet people, particularly the young and educated and ambitious, were “complete optimists.” This was especially true in Stalin’s times and to a great degree even in the last decades of the Soviet regime. This parallel is also true of Hitler’s Germany before the war. However, in contemporary Russia another type (“complete pes-

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simists”), comprising people who see their present life as worse than in the past and suppose that it will be even worse in the future, is most prevalent. The other three types (“complete optimists,” for whom life is becoming better and better, “moderate pessimists” who enjoy the present but are afraid of the future, and “steady optimists” who, despite the deterioration of the present, still believe in a better future) also exist in Russia, but they are in a minority.

The state of mind in Russia with respect to the past and future has had a rather negative impact on the stability of the society and its economic progress. The clash of two different views on the past makes the formation of a consensus on the major values among active political forces in the country impossible. However, even more detrimental to Russian life is the pessimistic outlook on the near, and even remote, future. This outlook contains several catastrophic elements.

All political actors, but primarily the opposition, exploit catastrophism for their political goals. They tend to foment various dangers in the public mind. At the same time, this catastrophic mentality increases the danger to democratic institutions in society, encourages violence, and increases the probability that high-level individuals in the army, security forces, and government will commit dangerous and irresponsible acts. Catastrophism also increases the level of mysticism in society and the numbers of apocalyptic sects and their members. It debilitates social ties (society, community, family) and strengthens the growth of jungle individualism. It increases the level of ethnic hatred, xenophobia, and the danger of ethnic conflicts. Catastrophism also augments, in a society with a market economy, the danger that there will be a decline in the demand for investment goods, and increases the probability of economic depression. In addition, it diminishes the level of foreign investment, foreign business activity, and tourism, and stimulates the return to a “self-sufficient” economy. Catastrophism strongly affects the decisions of individuals about emigration from the country and causes unnecessary migration from one part of the country to another. It prompts people to invest their money abroad and send their children to live in foreign countries. This contributes to the feelings of national instability and makes politicians and businessmen with prepared havens abroad less absorbed with continuing the search for the best solutions to national problems.

Individuals and nations are forced to think about their past and future and compare them with the present. However, they do so with varying degrees of intensity. Happy people are so absorbed with the present that they tend not to think greatly about their past and future. The same also holds true for nations. All other things being equal, the more societies make progress in the well-being of their members and the more freedoms they have, the less inclined they are to spend energy and time dwelling on their past and making projections about the future. The higher the satisfaction with present life, the more the past appears bad and the future promising.

Russia and the United States: Different Interests in the Past

American and Soviet societies were radically different in this respect between 1917, when the Bolsheviks took power, and 1987, when the system began to open

under perestroika. By Soviet standards, Americans are less absorbed with their past than Russians. Of all events in the past, contemporary America returns regularly only to the Vietnam War. In contrast, the Russian mind is filled with associations with developments dating as far back as the ninth century. Nobody in Russia was amazed when in 1995 President Boris Yeltsin dwelt at great length on the role of eleventh-century Kiev Prince Yaroslav the Wise. This ancient ruler was held up by Yeltsin as an example of a statesman able to unite the warring Russian princes.

American pollsters rarely, if at all, include in their questionnaires questions about the attitudes of respondents to the American Revolution or the Civil War, let alone questions about what they currently think about Washington or Lincoln. In contrast, Russian sociologists regularly ask their respondents about dozens of historical events, as well as former political figures such as Alexander Nevsky from the thirteenth century, Ivan the Terrible from the sixteenth century, and Peter the Great from the eighteenth century. Though quite remote from the present, they are alive in the Russian mind. One can hardly find an issue of a Russian newspaper or magazine that does not include several references to the past, along with hot debates about how events and figures should be assessed now.

The differences between American and Soviet attention toward the future were not as drastic as toward the past. However, in Soviet life contemplation of the future was much greater than in the United States. Of course, in the 1960s and 1970s Russians were not as absorbed with the future as they had been in the first three decades after the 1917 revolution. In the 1960s, and particularly in the following decade, communism as a future lost its spell on everybody, including party hacks. This was one of the relatively rare cases where Soviet propaganda failed almost completely.¹ However, with all this, the Soviet leadership generated various programs that anticipated progress in many areas of life. Even if numerous Soviet people were skeptical about many of these programs, the media, the propaganda apparatus, and the educational system forced people to think about and discuss future developments.

The United States in the 1960s and 1970s also liked “programs” of various sorts (and continues to do so). Let us remember, for instance, Lyndon Johnson’s “Great Society.” However, Moscow exceeded Washington in the number of various projects and the ability to mobilize propaganda efforts for praising them and foisting them onto its citizens.

Ideology and Reality: The Impact on Images

Most reflections on the past and future in the public mind are based on their comparisons with the present, i.e., which is worse (or better). Of course, these comparisons are by definition “subjective” and are in the realm of the human mind. The images of past and future have a complex nature. They are determined by the “factual” experience, be it individual, group, or national (a hard factor), but also by the ideological pressure of society, regardless of the character of the dominant ideology (a soft factor). Both factors are effective in both types of society (democratic or totalitarian), but in a totalitarian society the role of ideology in shaping

the images of the past and future is much greater than in a democratic society. In a democracy, where various ideologies continually clash, individual experience is able to challenge any ideology most energetically.

The degree of internalization of dominant values, irrespective of their character, occurred under the fear of a repressive apparatus or under the pressure of public opinion in the social environment. This is also of great importance because the internalized values of older generations can outlive, at least among some peoples, the regime and its ideology. The loyalty of millions of Russians to “socialist ideals” in post-Communist Russia demonstrates this eloquently.

Perceptions of the Present as the Key Channel. The main channel for shaping the images of the past and future through ideology is the perception of life in the present society, made on the basis, using Alfred Schutz’s term, “of direct experience.”² A strong ideology isolates everyday experience from the generalizations about societal life; its corresponding propaganda efforts are concentrated to suggest to the people that life is currently very bad or very good, thus imposing its images of past and future on the people. In other words, we can say, “Tell me what you think about the present, and I will be able to predict with high probability what you think about the past and the future.”

The relative influence of the “hard” and “soft” factors on attitudes toward past and future, as with any other attitudes toward abstract issues, varies in space and time and depends on a multitude of variables.

A Typology of Societies. In general, we can identify four different combinations of “reality” and “ideology,” which as factors shape popular perceptions of the past and future: (1) monopolistic optimistic ideology and “good reality,” (2) monopolistic optimistic ideology and “bad reality,” (3) pluralistic ideologies and “good reality,” and (4) pluralistic ideologies and “bad reality.”

Both of the first cases pertain to totalitarian society: the first is Nazi Germany before World War II, when the standard of living improved in comparison with the 1920s; the second is the Soviet Union throughout most of its existence, but particularly in the 1930s. The two other cases apply to democratic or semidemocratic societies, with the United States as an example of the third type and post-Communist Russia as the fourth.

A Typology of Mindsets. In each type of society just described we can discern four states of mind with respect to the past and future: (1) “complete optimists”—while the present is better than the past, the future will be better than the present—positive and positive; (2) “steady optimists”—belief in a radiant future despite bad times now: the present is worse than the past but the future will be better—negative and positive; (3) “moderate pessimists”—the present is better than the past but the future will be worse—positive and negative; and (4) “complete pessimists”—the present is worse than the past and the future will be even worse—negative and negative.

In a totalitarian society with “bad reality,” such as Russia from the 1930s to

the 1950s, it is the first type that (publicly) is absolutely dominant.³ In a pluralistic society, where each ideology cannot be so pervasive and powerful as a totalitarian ideology (with the exception of “totalitarian” sects), all four types of mindset are spread among people in public as well as in private life.

The Optimism of the Soviet People in the 1930s. The Soviet system was able not only to compel the masses to think and speak a lot about the past and future, but also to force them to perceive it much as the political elite wanted them to. In fact, official ideology was able to implant its optimistic images into a majority of Russians. Almost until 1987, most Russians believed that their life was much better than before the revolution, before the war, and in the aftermath of the war.

This was true even in the 1930s, when the country suffered from hunger and mass terror. In this decade, millions of Russians, particularly the youth, were enthusiastic about its future. Even more importantly, they believed Stalin’s words that “life has become

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better, more merry.” Since there were no sociological studies in Stalin’s times, one can refer only to indirect data that substantiate the conclusion of strong support of the regime by the urban population, who “sincerely” believed that their life was better now and would be immensely better in the future.⁴ Various memoirs by committed enemies of Stalin’s regime attested, with evident reluctance, to the veracity of Vladimir Vernadsky’s 1940 diary entry that “the crowd supports Stalin.”⁵

The same views were conveyed by the dissidents who published their books in the West before glasnost⁶ as well as in numerous publications in Russia after 1985.⁷ Even during glasnost, with the acrimonious campaign against Stalin, those liberals who wrote about Stalin’s times also backed the same thesis.

The extremely positive reaction of the population to strongly ideologized movies such as *Chapayev*, *Pass to Life*, *Lenin In October*, and *The Youth of Maxim*,⁸ as well as to patriotic songs and novels like Nikolai Ostrovsky’s “How Steel Was Tempered” (1932–1934) or Boris Polevoi’s “Story of a True Man” (1946) is another well-certified argument for the above thesis.

The Soviet masses greeted each ostensible success of the socialist motherland with great fervor and evident sincerity. The salvation of 104 passengers of the icebreaker *Cheliuskin* in 1934 was immortalized by Boris Pasternak’s poem celebrating the heroism of the Soviet people; the feat of Ivan Papanin’s team, which spent several months on a drifting Arctic ice floe in 1937–1938, was honored; the first nonstop flights—Valery Chkalov’s and Mikhail Gromov’s—from Moscow to America in 1937 were cheered. Millions of people in all cities greeted the

heroes, and even if all of these manifestations of people's elation were well organized by local party committees, most of the participants were sincere and proud of their country and their system.

The enthusiastic support of the official Soviet position for the Spanish civil war of 1936–1939, which occurred during the most sinister years of mass terror, is another indication of the popular support of the regime. Millions of people ardently followed the course of the war, and wished with all their hearts for the victory of the republicans and their Communist allies.⁹ Various indirect data also suggest that millions of Russians, particularly young people, passionately believed in the Communist future, and avidly looked for any signs confirming that it was drawing near.

What is more, even sophisticated intellectuals such as two future Nobel Prize winners, the poet Boris Pasternak and the physicist Lev Landau,¹⁰ not to mention typical members of the intelligentsia, especially those recruited from the previous lower classes or who had been discriminated against in tsarist times because of their ethnicity, supported the Communist vision. They strongly believed in the Communist future and the official interpretation of the past as being outsmarted by Marxist philosophy, which claimed to have discovered “the inescapable laws of history” that could be challenged only by the ignorant, not by the educated. It took them many decades before they found the intellectual courage to defy “the historical necessity” of a new society and declare themselves foes of communism.

The well-documented reaction of the Soviet people to the death of Stalin also demonstrated the adoption of the Soviet ideology by the Soviet masses, whose standard of living by 1953 was indeed miserable. The absolute majority of the people in cities mourned in a most sincere fashion the passing of “the great leader.”¹¹ Of course, there were groups of the population whose real sufferings were so great that public ideology cemented by fears could hold them only in partial sway. Some people wholly dismissed the official ideology. Horror of the present and fear of the future were enormous among peasants during collectivization. The peasants' plight was well documented by Andrei Platonov in his famous novels (written in the late 1920s and the 1930s) *Chevengur* and *Pit*. In them, he described the peasants as unable to comprehend the rationality behind the behavior of the authorities who destroyed agriculture. However, even among peasants there were many people, especially younger ones, who accepted the official ideology with all of its elements.¹²

Fear and apprehension of the future were also quite strong among party apparatchiks and intellectuals (particularly among those who were party members), because the probability of being jailed in the 1930s was quite high for them. However, most of them, even on the eve of their arrests, did not cast doubt—publicly or in private communications with their spouses—on the radiant future and the official description of the past. Moreover, many prisoners of the Gulag, the so-called old Bolsheviks, remained faithful Communists with respectful attitudes toward the past and future.¹³ Nikolai Bukharin's letter to future generations of Bolsheviks, which his wife learned by heart on the eve of his arrest, demonstrates

his conviction in remaining totally loyal to Communist ideology and its interpretations of the past and the future.¹⁴

Moderate Optimism When Life Improved. While life was “objectively” much better in the post-Stalin period, the level of satisfaction decreased. This can be attributed to the fact that the pressure of ideology and the fear of repression were significantly weaker, even if they were quite strong in comparison with what would happen after 1987. Still, Soviet ideology maintained its optimistic tenor and worked quite effectively, enforced by a gigantic propaganda apparatus that employed many millions of people.¹⁵ Most Russians were indeed satisfied with their lives, as various surveys conducted in the post-Stalin era showed. In fact, Russians were almost as satisfied as Americans in the 1960s and 1970s.¹⁶ The majority of Russians were satisfied with their professions, jobs, and salaries (50 to 80 percent in various groups),¹⁷ with their clothes (70 to 80 percent), with their leisure time (about 80 percent), as well as with their vacations (up to 80 percent) and other elements of the quality of life. The majority of Russians (50 to 60 percent) were moderately satisfied even with their terrible housing conditions. However, here the level of dissatisfaction began to rise in the late 1950s when the construction of apartments started to grow—a paradox explained by the emerging anticipation that housing conditions indeed could be improved.¹⁸

The national survey of the Soviet population conducted in 1976 (in which I was head of the methodology section) found that on a five-point scale Russians evaluated their life with a grade of four. They felt certain that American life did not deserve more than a two or three, with the best life being in Czechoslovakia, which scored almost five.¹⁹

Of course, many Russians were grouching about the flaws in their lives, in particular about the shortages of almost all goods, and about their “superiors.”²⁰ However, most never “jumped” from concrete negative facts to the negative generalization of “the system.” This two-level mentality—one dealing with everyday life, another with general, ideological issues—permitted the Soviet people (as well as people in any other society) to combine seemingly opposite views of reality.²¹ For just this reason, as several studies found, the Soviet people were much more critical of the local authorities than of those in Moscow.²²

With all their grumbling about their everyday problems, most Russians accepted in the 1960s through to the 1980s most of the major postulates of the official ideology. These included such items as Soviet patriotism; Soviet foreign policy (including the invasions of Hungary in 1956, Czechoslovakia in 1968, and Afghanistan in 1979); the superiority of public property over private; the central planning system’s superiority over the market economy; and the superiority of Soviet/Russian culture and morals to those of the West. Various studies carried out in these years document the devotion of most Soviet people to the dominant values.²³ What is more, the strength of Russians’ fealty toward several elements of Soviet ideology was so strong that they held out somewhat after the collapse of the Communist regime, as will be shown below.²⁴

It is not surprising that the majority of Russians continue to uphold the images

of the past that Soviet ideology imposed on them. The life of prerevolutionary Russia remains “naughty,” while present life is much better than in the period of Lenin’s New Economic Policy (NEP), when capitalism was partly tolerated by the Kremlin.

With fear gradually declining in the country, and with some erosion of official ideology, the future was not described in such glowing colors after Stalin’s death. Gradually, by the end of the Soviet system, the notion of a Communist paradise had almost disappeared from the Soviet media. It was replaced by so called “mature” or “developed” socialism (which had already provided Soviet people with a lifestyle superior to that of the West and which would be improving systematically in the future).²⁵ However, the Soviet leadership was still very much concerned that the Soviet people’s views of the future remain optimistic—or at least calm. Official Soviet ideology successfully banned any attempt to introduce even a slightly pessimistic element in its official vision of the future. Even purely theoretical debates about the eventual end of the earth or the universe were practically impossible, even in scientific publications.²⁶

Russian intellectuals, including dissidents, were in a bad but not apocalyptic mood in the 1970s and 1980s. They believed that the existing state of life, regardless of how bad it was in their opinion, would survive for decades without any cataclysm.²⁷

Contemporary Russia: The Dominance of Pessimism

Now let us move to post-Communist Russia. For this article it is important to point to four factors: (1) the drastic decline of living standards for the majority of Russians in comparison with the Communist past; (2) the political and economic instability of Russian society; (3) society’s semidemocratic character that at least permits freedom of speech; and (4) actual ideological pluralism.

Quality of Life. The most important factor that influences modern Russian perceptions of the past and future is, of course, the deep dissatisfaction of most Russians with their quality of life. According to the polls conducted by the prestigious All-Russian Center for Public Opinion Studies (VTsIOM), no more than 10 percent of Russians professed contentment with their lives in 1993–95, while about one-half considered their lives to be hardly bearable. The same polls found that almost 70 percent regarded themselves as “rather poor” or “poor.” Only 16 percent of Russians are now satisfied with their salary, whereas in the Communist past no less than one-half had the same attitude toward their income.²⁸ Most Russians found that the quality of their lives had deteriorated in many respects, even if they did not deny some significant progress (i.e., the availability of goods and political freedoms).²⁹

As was mentioned before, in such a society as post-Communist Russia the role of individual experience as the basis for the views of the past and perceptions of the future is much greater than in a stable democratic society like the United States, where the impact of the dominant ideology as well as various alternative ideologies on the human mind is much more significant. In such a society, extrap-

olation from present conditions is the major tool used by the human mind to shape the images of the past and the future.

How Russians Now Look Backward and Forward. The psychological atmosphere in present Russia has very little in common with the years before 1985. The optimistic ideology enforced by the gigantic propaganda apparatus and by the fear of repression is gone. Instead, the Russian mind has been exposed to the impact of reality on people's generalizations to a much greater extent than in the past. At the same time, this "objective reality," if we mean mainly the material standard of living, has indeed been harsher for most Russians than it was in the Soviet past. In other words, Russians have been exposed to the worst combination of the "soft" and "harsh" factors enhancing pessimism: "weak ideology" and "bad reality."

Living in a deeply unstable semidemocratic society with a weak state, the Russians are divided in their perceptions of the past and the future. However, considering the wide variance of views, it is evident that the fourth type ("complete pessimists")—negative and negative—is dominant: the present is worse than the past and better than the future. By all accounts, 50 to 60 percent of the population belong to this group, and at least three-quarters of people above age forty subscribe to the notion.

Three other types are also visible. People belonging to the first group, the "complete optimists"—positive and positive—can be found among so called "new Russians," people who prosper in post-Communist Russia. Some are successful businessmen and some are members of the new administration. It appears that no more than 10 percent of Russians can be considered members of this type.

The second type, the "steady optimists"—negative and positive—comprises those Russians who recognize that life has deteriorated greatly. They consider this period as transitional and are confident that sacrifices are worthwhile for future progress. This point of view is shared by people who hate the Communist past and who, without denying the misery of the life for the majority of Russians, believe in a happy future. The number of these people was quite high in 1992 when the reforms started—probably about one-third of the population—and declined significantly in 1993–95. They now make up probably 10 percent of the population.

The third group, "moderate pessimists"—positive and negative—accounts for about 10 to 20 percent of Russians; they enjoy their lives now, are inclined to think that others do the same, and consider it much better than in the past. However, they are afraid of the future. Most of these people are "new Russians" but, unlike other members of the new prospering class, are afraid of future developments. Many actions of these people are determined by their apocalyptic vision of the future, a subject discussed below. If these estimates are valid, it means that 30 percent of Russians find their life now somewhat better than in the past, and 70 percent find it worse. At the same time, only 20 percent of all Russians are more or less optimists about the future, while 80 percent are quite pessimistic.

Attitudes Toward the Past

Ideologies and the public mind operate in each time period with different emphases. Soviet times are often compared to others, especially the period before World War I (“the time of peace,” as my grandmother used to say). Another time for comparison, mostly in an unofficial context, was the period of NEP. After World War II, the times before “the war” were again used as a yardstick for comparison, especially in the 1970s. In the statistical yearbook for 1983, the last pre-war year, 1940, was quite prominent in this regard.³⁰

In post-Communist Russia, new periods for historical comparisons entered circulation—prerevolutionary Russia, Brezhnev’s period, and Gorbachev’s perestroika. The 1970s and 1980s, the period preceding perestroika, were particularly popular in the Russian mind of the 1990s. Prerevolutionary Russia also emerged as a basis for comparison, and not so much with the present as with another past—the Communist period.

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At the same time, Russian history, as is now openly discussed in the media, is presented

for millions of people as being full of tragedies and catastrophes. Soviet history appears, even for Russians still devoted to the old ideals of communism, as tragic. With the civil war, the collectivization of agriculture and mass starvation, mass repressions, and the war with Germany, the early Soviet period is now viewed in a different light. The memories of these events, which were always dormant in Soviet times, have been resurrected in the minds of the intelligentsia and, to a lesser degree, in the minds of the masses as well. Of special interest to them are the events of World War II. The memories of these tragic events, now being evoked after several decades of suppression by the authorities, have also made a contribution to the pessimistic mood in the country. Lamenting modern life in the country, a Moscow author titled his article, “Everything in Russia is Sad.”³¹ Popular attitudes toward the past manifest themselves in two forms—general and specific.

Polarization of Views on the Brezhnev Period

Unlike the Soviet past, with its almost total consensus on history, contemporary Russians are polarized on the Brezhnev era, probably even more so than on several other social and political issues that currently divide them. Various surveys in 1993–95 converge to 1:1 and 2:1 in favor of the past, depending on the questions asked.³² Brezhnev’s period compared favorably not only with the times after 1985, but with all other periods of Soviet history. The VTsIOM survey of three thousand Russians in 1994 found that the characterization of Brezhnev’s period as a time when “there was more good than bad” was shared by 36 percent of the

respondents. The same attribute was ascribed to perestroika by only 16 percent; Stalin's times garnered an 18 percent favorable response; and the Khrushchev era received only 16 percent.³³

The Search for Strong Leaders and Order

If the yearning for the Brezhnev past was dictated mostly by the relatively high standard of living and the welfare state, the interest in Stalin's times and prerevolutionary Russia was determined mostly by the quest for statesmen able to keep the country in order and defend the imperial interests of Russia in its confrontations with foreigners. Among these leaders were Peter the Great, Lenin, Stalin, and Pyotr Stolypin, a prime minister in prerevolutionary Russia. Even Napoleon and Alexander the Great figure prominently in the Russian psyche.³⁴

Official Ideology and Opposing Views of the Past

While a majority of Russians look with nostalgia at the past, the official ideology, which uses television and most national newspapers, presents the Communist past, including Brezhnev's period, only in a negative fashion. This view is shared consistently by one-third of the population, especially young people. The clash between the two images of the same period makes its own significant contribution to the political instability of Russian society. It makes it impossible to create a consensus on essential values, a condition that is necessary for a stable political life in the country.

A Gloomy Vision of the Future

Along with general feelings about the future, people hold positive and negative views about the likelihood of specific events. Among these events, catastrophes play a special role, since in many cases the belief in them exerts a profound influence on human thinking and behavior.

General Feelings. Russians' general feelings about the future in 1991–95 were pessimistic. Indeed, in 1989 the mood in the country changed significantly, and apocalyptic feelings, along with beliefs in mysticism and various conspiracy theories, began to rise. The August revolution in 1991 failed to halt this persistent trend. The collapse of the Soviet Union, the ethnic conflicts, and then the drastic deterioration of economic life account for the pessimism shared by a majority of the population in modern Russia. No less than two-thirds of all Russians described the situation in their country as gloomy in 1992–94, with no brighter outlook possible for the future.³⁵

The ratio of optimists and pessimists in regard to the future was in these years between 1:5 and 1:3. When asked at the end of 1994, "Are hard times behind us or in the future?" 9 percent in the VTsIOM survey of three thousand respondents said "in the past," and 52 percent said "in the future."³⁶ No less than 50 to 60 percent of Russians characterized their mood as tense, and 11 percent "felt fear of the future." Forty to 50 percent also regarded the present situation as fraught with "crisis and explosion."

It is interesting to note how Muscovites answered the question, "Is your life becoming better or not?" In 1987, 47 percent said yes, and only 21 percent, no. In 1992, the respective figures were 8 percent and 47 percent.³⁷

The Future "For Me" and the Future "For Others." Each individual makes a distinction between the future for himself or herself and the future of his group and society. As various data show, people can combine high optimism about the future of the nation with pessimistic feelings about their personal future. This combination of feelings was quite widespread in Stalin's Russia, where a significant number of the members of the so-called old classes believed in the inexorable victory of Soviet society. But they were justifiably certain that there was no place for them in the new society.

In post-Communist Russia, another combination is typical: moderate optimism about one's own fate, with a quite pessimistic outlook on the future of the nation. Such a combination of the attitudes toward "my present life and my future" and "the present life and the future of others" is a direct result of the mechanism of adaptation that worked mostly at the individual level (but to some degree at the social level). This explains why people after 1991 tended to accommodate their new life not only in the material but also in the psychological sphere.

As the VTsIOM data demonstrate, whereas 46 percent of Russians assess their life now as "average" or better, only 29 percent apply the same estimate to life in their city or village. Moreover, only 12 percent think in the same terms about life in the country.³⁸

Specific Images. Stalin's regime was able to combine perfectly the general optimistic tenor of the official ideology with the elements of catastrophism. The basis for catastrophism under Stalin was the thesis of "the sharpening of the class struggle" and "capitalist encirclement," which justified the preparations and measures taken against internal and external enemies as well as the threat of war.

In the post-Stalin Soviet era, the roster of possible catastrophes contained practically only one item: war. Only in the late 1960s did another item appear on the list: ecological disasters. However, these disasters were extreme, such as the death of Lake Baikal, and the day-to-day disasters affecting the average citizen's life were not addressed.³⁹

If in Soviet times it was the political elites who mostly offered the population its menu of eventual catastrophes, since the late 1960s, and especially after 1989, intellectuals have formulated the types of potential catastrophes that Russia may face. Some of them saw the degradation of Russia as part of the general slide of the whole world toward an abyss.⁴⁰

Analysis of the Russian media over the last three years produces a roster of eventual catastrophes, including dozens of items that never even occurred to Russians before 1989:

Political: disintegration of Russia into several independent states; installation of dictatorship and fascism; seizure of control over Russia by Western capital and

special Western interests (Masons and Zionists among them); wars with foreign countries; seizure of the Far East and Siberia by China; transformation of Russia into a third-rate country or even a colony of the West; seizure of power in the country by mafias; civil and interethnic war; and criminalization and corruption leading to the disintegration of the fabric of society.

Economic: collapse of the Russian economy; total starvation of the population; a series of technological and ecological disasters on the scale of Chernobyl; depopulation of the country; growth of mass unemployment; gradual decline in the standard of living; and growing financial crisis.

Social and Cultural: loss of Russian cultural identity; collapse of science and culture; lumpenization of the population; and breakdown of the family.

Empirical Data. Let us see how many Russians are obsessed with or at least mindful of the fear of catastrophes. Russian intellectuals, of course, are ahead of the masses in prophesying imminent catastrophe.⁴¹

Russian pollsters have included in their questionnaires only a few of the possible catastrophes. According to them, the belief in the eventuality of almost every type of catastrophe is supported by no less than 10 to 20 percent of those surveyed.⁴² Amazingly, even the possibility of a major war was regarded as serious in the summer of 1995 by almost one-half of the population, a fact that would appear to reflect growing mistrust of the West and its intentions toward Russia.⁴³

The Influence of Catastrophism on Present Russian Life

Whatever the basis of catastrophism, it exerts a major impact on Russia's social and political life.

Catastrophism in the Political Struggle. Politicians use real and false fears to achieve their purposes. It is not rare for politicians to use a strategy of catastrophism to reflect national interests, mobilize people to avert various threats to the country, and otherwise achieve goals useful to the nation. Sometimes, however, politicians exploit fear to achieve egotistical goals that are incompatible with genuine national interests.

As can be seen in Russia today and in other countries, catastrophism is primarily a weapon of the opposition, which not only uses but tries to foment the fear of the future among the masses. The success of Vladimir Zhirinovskiy's party in the Russian elections of December 1993 is only one example. Communists and nationalists will continue to increase the fear of the disintegration of Russia, of the criminalization of society, and of economic catastrophes. The specific feature of the ideology of the Russian Communist Party, headed by Gennady Zyuganov, is its focus on a future global ecological catastrophe and a lethal conflict between "the north" and "the south" for resources. These views are supported by many liberal-leaning Russian intellectuals.⁴⁴ But the government also uses these fears to scare the population with the consequences of an opposition victory. There is

little doubt that in the upcoming decades the fears of catastrophes, justified or not, will play an extremely important role in Russia.⁴⁵

Views on Politics and the Future. Popular views on the past and the future have a pivotal importance for political, economic, and social life in democratic society. The reason is that these views greatly predetermine the political preferences of the people and help shape their support of political parties, whose ideologies differ significantly from each other in their presentation of the past and the future. Also, by looking to the future from the present, parties offer different ideas about what should be done to enhance current trends if they support them, or reverse them if they are in opposition. For this reason, even people who hold similar views on the past and the future differ from each other in their beliefs about what can be done to improve prospects. The main divisive point is the degree of changes that politicians suggest in order to stop the negative tendencies, and those ready to support radical measures.

While few people would claim that the past can be changed (putting aside its revision by historians), many people maintain that there is hope and that existing trends can be changed for the better. It is not surprising that, as surveys show, Russian pessimism is still combined with hope.⁴⁶

Of course, those who like the present situation will argue only for the status quo or the encouragement of existing trends as positive. These are the people who support the governmental parties, such as Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin's "Our Home Is Russia." However, pessimists have different views, even if they differ greatly from one another about the necessity and the character of the changes currently taking place.

People with the same pessimistic vision of the future are divided into three major groups: those who prefer no changes (comprising mostly the alienated and disappointed masses); those who want moderate measures (the moderate opposition parties, headed by Grigory Yavlinsky and Lt. Gen. Alexander Lebed); and those who are for radical measures (Communists and nationalists).

Social and Economic Consequences

Catastrophism has a significant impact on economic and social processes. The famous theory of self-fulfillment suggests that bad (as well as good) prognoses can be fulfilled simply because people with their activity help implement the very events they fear. In some cases, fear of catastrophes has positive effects on society by forcing it to mobilize its efforts to combat oncoming disaster. It is possible that famine was averted in 1992–93 because the fear of it pushed people to expand their private plots and the time devoted to them. However, in most cases catastrophism has a debilitating effect on society.

Society cannot be indifferent to the spread of apocalyptic moods among its citizens. It is true even for such a prosperous and stable country as the United States. But it is even more important for such an unstable society as post-Communist Russia. It would be very positive for Russia to introduce rules into the political game that would diminish the use of catastrophic scenarios in the political arena.

The Russian media must also be more responsible about spreading apocalyptic visions. The fight against unnecessary fears is an important function of all social institutions in any society. In a society as troubled as Russia is today, the necessity of these institutions is more urgent than ever.

NOTES

1. Another case can be found in the representation of the proletariat (or later, the working class) having the leading role in Socialist society.
2. Alfred Schutz, *Collected Papers* (The Hague: Martinus Nizhoff, 1976), 20–64.
3. Of course, other groups were also present in totalitarian society, but most of them were present only in private life. Among them were, for instance, people who recognized the regress in comparison with the past and believed that the future would reward them for their current sufferings.
4. V. Kisilev, a Russian engineer, carried out a straw poll among people who were adults in Stalin's times. He asked them, how people then would have answered the question "Do you support the leader and his policy?" All of his respondents said that 100 percent would have replied "yes." See *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 4 June 1993.
5. V. Vernadsky, "Ya ochen redko vizhu ideinykh kommunistov," *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 9 June 1992.
6. See P. Grigorenko, *Memoirs* (New York: Norton, 1982), L. Kopelev, *Khranit Vechno* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Ardis, 1975), L. Kopelev, *I Sotvori Sebe Kumira* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Ardis, 1978), R. Orlova, *Memoirs* (New York: Random House, 1983), and N. Ulanovsky and M. Ulanovsky, *Istoriya Odnoi Semi* (New York: Chalidze, 1982).
7. See, for instance, Mark Kolodnitsky, "I bore Stalin's picture," *Rossiyskaya gazeta*, 27 April 1993.
8. D. Shlapentokh and V. Shlapentokh, *Soviet Cinematography, 1918–1991* (New York: Aldine DeGruyter, 1993).
9. Alexander Solzhenitsyn recalled that this war was "a dear war of my generation." He continued, "And this amazing influence of this political ideology, of this heartless earthly religion of socialism, with what force it swept away young souls, with what spurious lucidity it shows them as if there were simple solution to any problem!" A. Solzhenitsyn, "Razmyshleniya po povodu dvukh grazhdanskikh voin," *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, 4 June 1991.
10. The case of Landau was indeed tragicomic. He was among the few people arrested in 1937 for a "real thing"—an attempt to disseminate an anti-Stalin leaflet. In it Landau defended "genuine socialism" against those who discredited it. See *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, 8 August 1993.
11. Among numerous sources we can cite Dmitry Volkonogov, *Trium i Tragediya Stalina* (Moscow: Novosti, 1989), 593–94; Yu. Borev, *Staliniyada* (Moscow: Soviety Pizatel, 1990), 364; N. Leonov, Likholetie (Moscow: *Mezhdunarodnyie otmosheniya*, 1994), 27–28; and L. Kopelev, *Ease My Sorrow* (New York: Random House, 1983), 192.
12. See P. Grigorenko, *Memoirs* (New York: Norton, 1992). Harsh reality was stronger than ideology for several ethnic groups persecuted by Stalin in different periods. This included Poles, Koreans, Greeks before the war, Germans, Crimean Tartars, Kalmyks, Chechens, and several other North Caucasian people during the war, and Jews after the war.
13. Solzhenitsyn spoke at length about this phenomenon in *The Gulag Archipelago, 1918–1956* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975). This "old Bolshevik's phenomenon" was brilliantly supported by Arthur Koestler's guesses in *Darkness at Noon* (New York: Modern Library, 1941), about the eventual motivations of some Communists after their arrests.
14. Anna Larina, *This One Cannot Forget: The Memoirs of Nikolai Bukharin's Widow* (New York: Norton, 1993).

15. According to our computations, no less than two million full-time workers were engaged in ideological work in the Soviet Union before 1985. This figure is based on the assumption that seven million professionals (teachers, professors, social scientists, cultural workers, and people in several other occupations) spent at least 30 percent of their time on propaganda. A half-million full-time party workers spent 50 percent of their time on similar activity and eight million members of the rank-and-file who, in the capacity of propagandists of various sorts, spent 5 percent of their time on ideological work. See V. Shlapentokh, *Soviet Public Opinion and Ideology: Mythology and Pragmatism In Interaction* (New York: Praeger, 1986), 6–7.

16. In the 1980s, the American and Soviet people assessed the quality of their work and its single elements almost identically. This is according to research conducted in 1986. The residents of Jackson and Pskov, two cities chosen for the comparative study of time budget, for instance, absolutely evenly appreciated their jobs on the whole, giving a score of 3.9 (on a scale where 1 was completely dissatisfied and 5 was completely satisfied). They only slightly differed in the assessment of other items in the list of their activities related to work. See John Robinson, Vladimir Andreykov, and Vasily Patrushev, *The Rhythm of Everyday Life* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1989).

17. No more than 8 percent of men and 5 percent of women were inclined to use additional free time if they had it for moonlighting in attempts to earn more money. See L. Gordon and E. Klopov, *Chelovek Posle Raboty* (Moscow: Nauka, 1972). At the same time, as various studies showed, when asked how much their salary should be augmented, Russians demanded an increase of no more than 10 percent, even if their salaries were the lowest in the country. See V. Shlapentokh, 1967.

18. See Gordon and Klopov; B. Grushin and L. Onikov, eds., *Massovaya informatsiya v Sovetskom promyshlennom gorode* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1980), 250; V. Yadov, V. Rogozhin and A. Zdravomyslov, *Chelovek i yego rabota* (Moscow: Mysl, 1967); V. Yadov, ed., *Sotsialno-Psikhologicheskyy Portret Inzhenera* (Moscow: Mysl, 1977); V. Yadov, *Samoregulatsiya i prognozirovaniye sotsialnogo povedeniya lichnosti* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1979); I. Levykhin, “K voprosu ob integralnykh pokazatelyakh sotsialisticheskogo obraza zhizni,” *Sotsiologicheskkiye issledovaniya* (1994) 90–97; V. Shlapentokh, *Chitatel i gazeta: chitateli truda* (Moscow: Institut Konkretnykh Sotsialnykh Issledovaniy, 1969); V. Shlapentokh, “Vozrast i zarabotnaya plata kak faktory tekuchesti rabochei sily,” in *Opyt issledovaniya Peremeny truda v promyshlennosti*, ed. E. Antosenkov (Novosibirsk: Nauka, 1969), V. Shlapentokh, *Chitatel i Gazeta: Chitateli Izvestii i Literaturnaya gazeta* (Moscow: Institut Konkretnykh Sotsialnykh, 1969); *Issledovaniya, sotsiologiya pechati*, Vol. 1 (Novosibirsk: Statistika, 1969); V. Shlapentokh, *Sotsiologiya dlya vsekh* (Moscow: Sovetskaya Rossiya, 1970); V. Shlapentokh, *Kak segodnya izuchayut zavtra* (Moscow: Sovetskaya Rossiya, 1975); and V. Shlapentokh, *Public and Private Life of the Soviet People* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

19. From the author's personal archive.

20. The analysis of the open questions in the questionnaires of the surveys I conducted in the 1960s and 1970s for major Soviet newspapers, including *Pravda*, showed the anger of ordinary Russians about various issues such as the shortages of food, bad housing conditions, the behavior of bureaucrats, and moral issues, mostly related to the youth. See V. Shlapentokh, *Chitatel i gazeta: chitateli truda* (Moscow: Institut konkretnykh sotsialnykh issledovaniy, 1969) and V. Shlapentokh, *Sotsiologiya dlya vsekh* (Moscow: Sovetskaya Rossiya, 1970). See also N. Davydchenkov, “Organizatsiya sotsiologicheskogo obsledovaniya i vnedrenie poluchennykh rezultatov v tsentralnoi gazete,” in v. 2 of *Sotsiologiya pechati*, ed. V. Shlapentokh (Novosibirsk: Nauka, 1970); B. Grushin and L. Onikov, eds., *Massovaya informatsiya v Sovetskom promyshlennom gorode* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1980); and A. Verkhovskaya, *Pismo v redaktsiyu i chitatel* (Moscow: Izdatelstvo moskovskogo universiteta, 1972). The analysis of the letters to the editor published in Soviet newspapers in the first half of the 1980s produces the same results. See D. Shlapentokh and V. Shlapentokh, “Letters to the Editor on Ideologies in the USSR During the

1980s,” in v. 1 of *Research on the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe*, ed. A. Jones (JAI Press, 1990), 167–95.

21. About this dual mentality see V. Shlapentokh, “Two Levels of Public Opinion: The Soviet Case,” *Public Opinion Quarterly* (Winter 1985) and V. Shlapentokh, *Soviet Public Opinion and Ideology. Mythology and Pragmatism in Interaction* (New York: Praeger, 1986).

22. Boris Grushin showed, for instance, that of all letters sent to newspapers by the resident of Taganrog, only 9 percent raised issues related to society in general. Of these, only 6 percent were concerned with the city and region. The rest were regarding the developments in residential blocks, factories and family. See B. Grushin and L. Onikov, eds., *Massovaya informatsiya v Sovetskom promyshlennym gorode* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1980), 413. See also V. Shlapentokh, *Chitatel i gazeta: chitateli truda* (Moscow: Institut konkretnykh sotsialnykh issledovaniy, 1969), 154–64.

23. The attitudes of the Russian masses toward the media can be treated as an indirect sign of popular attitudes toward the system. People identified the media with power. In general, the attitudes toward the media were positive among most Russians. No less than two thirds of the Soviet people were satisfied with newspapers and TV before 1985. See B. Grushin and L. Onikov, eds., *Massovaya informatsiya v Sovetskom promyshlennym gorode* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1980); also V. Shlapentokh, *Chitatel i gazeta: chitateli truda* (Moscow: Institut konkretnykh sotsialnykh issledovaniy, 1969); and V. Shlapentokh, *Sotsiologiya dlya vseh* (Moscow: Sovetskaya Rossiya, 1970); V. Shlapentokh, *Problemy representativnosti sotsiologicheskoi informatsii* (Moscow: Statistika, 1976); and V. Shlapentokh, *Soviet Public Opinion and Ideology. Mythology and Pragmatism in Interaction* (New York: Praeger, 1986). It is remarkable that Soviet journalists before the first surveys strongly overestimated (between 5 and 20 times) the number of critical readers. See V. Shlapentokh, *Chitatel i gazeta: chitateli truda* (Moscow: Institut konkretnykh sotsialnykh issledovaniy, 1969); N. Davydchenkov, “Organizatsiya sotsiologicheskogo obsledovaniya i vnedrenie poluchennykh rezultatov v tsentralnoi gazete,” in v. 2 of *Sotsiologiya pechati*, ed. V. Shlapentokh (Novosibirsk: Nauka, 1970); B. Firsov, *Puti razvitiya sredstv massovoi kommunikatsii* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1977); B. Grushin, *Svobodnoye vremya* (Moscow: Mysl, 1967); V. Shlapentokh, *Kak segodnya izuchayut zavtra* (Moscow: Sovyetskaya Rossiya, 1975); V. Shlapentokh, “Moscow’s War Propaganda and Soviet Public Opinion,” *Problems of Communism* (September–October 1984); V. Shlapentokh, *The Politics of Sociology in the Soviet Union* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1987); V. Shlapentokh, *Soviet Ideologies in the Period of Glasnost* (New York: Praeger, 1988); V. Shubkin, *Sotsiologicheskie opyty* (Moscow: Mysl, 1970).

24. Of course, the attitudes toward socialism in the 1990s reconstruct only partially the views of the Soviet people to “the system” in the 1970s and 1980s. This is largely because these attitudes generally reflect the reaction of the people to the reality of post-Communist Russia.

25. See, for instance, G. Glezerman, M. Rutkevich and S. Vishnevsky, eds., *Sotsialistichesky obraz zhizni* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1980); M. Kim, *Problemy teorii i istorii realnogo sotsializma* (Moscow: Nauka, 1983); and S. Vishnevsky, ed., *Sotsialistichesky obraz zhizni* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1986).

26. Some fear, which lingered in the Russian mind, was connected with the possibility of a new war. It was, however, relatively weak, since the official ideology promoted the idea of detente rather than confrontation with foreign powers. Even during the Cuban missile crisis in October 1962, when the world was indeed on the verge of a nuclear catastrophe, the Soviet people remained calm. Only in the late 1960s, when Soviet-Chinese relations became quite tense, did the fear of war begin to spread somewhat in the country. It was, however, with a low intensity, since the Kremlin was willing to hush up the catastrophic vision of the “yellow danger.” The famous book by Andrei Amalrik, *Will the Soviet Union Survive Until 1984* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), only partially reflected the mood of the country.

27. See D. Shlapentokh and V. Shlapentokh, "Letters to the Editor on Ideologies in the USSR During the 1980s," in v. 1 of *Research on the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe*, ed. A. Jones (JAI Press, 1990). Alexander Shpagin ("Rekviem v stile rok," *Literaturnaya gazeta*, 31 August 1994) compared the mentality of Russian intellectuals in the 1970s and 1980s with their ancestors in the "Silver age." He notes that, "then, in 'the period of stagnation', there was not a similar fear, the apocalyptic presentiment, apprehensiveness which tore the personality into parts and broke the world around." At worst the heroes of movies and novels of that era thought about "little apocalypses," which meant only the destruction of their own illusions about the Soviet world.

28. See VTsIOM, 3, 1995, 42–43; see also VTsIOM's data in *Pravda*, 23 May 1995.

29. The comparison of the feelings of the Muscovites between 1987 and 1992–93 are very indicative. In 1987, 73 percent of respondents were satisfied with their job; in 1992, 50 percent; with salary, 42 percent and 9 percent, respectively. In 1987, 22 percent were satisfied with medical service, while in 1992 only 9 percent were; with commerce 15 and 3 percent respectively; public transportation, 47 and 11 percent; with the conditions of life in Moscow in general, 32 and 5 percent. See Yu. Arutiunian, *Rossiane: stolichnie zhiteli* (Moscow: Institute of Ethnology, 1994), 39–42, 89–96. See also *Izvestiya*, 27 July 1995.

30. See TsSU SSSR, *Narodnoye khozyaistvo SSSR, Finansy i statistika*, v. 1983 (Moscow, 1984), 36, 48, 49.

31. See *Izvestiya* 31 October 1995.

32. The information about people's attitudes toward the Brezhnev period change drastically with the formulation of the questions. Having asked "Should Perestroika have been started" the Fund of Public opinion found in February 1995 in the survey of 1982 respondents that 45 percent condemned Perestroika and 40 percent supported it. Fifty-six percent answering the question "at what time you would prefer to live" clearly said that they would prefer to live under Brezhnev while 35 percent said no. On the other hand, 43 percent prefer socialism to capitalism, while 20 percent think vice versa. See *Segodnya*, 7 May 1995; *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 7 April 1995; *Ogonyok* 20 (1995): 23. Almost the same data were produced by the Center of Public Opinion Studies. Answering the question "Do we agree that it would be better if everything would be as it was before 1985?" 43 percent said yes and 41 percent no. See *Segodnya*, 25 June 1995. At the same time, the survey of 2,957 Russians carried out by the Center of Public Opinion Studies (November 1994–March 1995) who answered the question "What perestroika brought to the people" shows that the number of positive assessments of the past are again negative (in comparison with perestroika), with a ratio of almost 2:1. See *Segodnya*, 7 June 1995; see also *Izvestiya*, 26 June 1995.

33. See VTsIOM, 1, 1995; see also *Segodnya*, 24 January 1995.

34. See the results of the survey conducted by VTsIOM in the spring of 1995: Peter the Great garnered 53 percent of the votes among people younger than forty, and 35 percent of those older than forty. Lenin, 32 and 36 respectively; Napoleon, 20 and 0; Alexander the Great, 16 and 0; Stalin, 14 and 17. Comparing these data with a survey carried out in 1989, Alexei Levenson notes that in the last five years a shift from "the Marxist mentality" toward "state mentality" has occurred. See *Segodnya*, 11 April 1995. Also see the data of the survey conducted by an (unnamed) American firm and published by *Newsweek*. In answering the question, "Who would have been able to lift Russia from the crisis," 14 percent named Peter the Great; 9 percent Stolypin; and 6 percent Stalin. See *Moskovsky kom-somolets*, 20 July 1995.

35. In a survey conducted in August 1994, Russians described the situation in the country as "critical" (40 percent), "alarming" (27 percent), or "catastrophic" (22 percent). Only 6 percent treated it as "normal." See *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 17 August 1994. At the end of 1994, only 6 percent of Russians, according to VTsIOM, strongly believed in the improvement of life in the country. According to another survey conducted by VTsIOM, 25 percent thought that in 1995 "the country will continue to slide into an abyss," and 12 percent expect "anarchy." See *Moskovskiyе novosti*, 15 January 1995. See also VTsIOM,

Ekonomicheskie i sotsialnie peremeny: monitoring obshchestvennogo mneniya, 1994, no. 5; 1994, 6; 1995, 2:53, 57.

36. By all accounts, the apocalyptic mood is especially strong among intellectuals. The survey of 1,230 journalists in the summer of 1995, conducted by the Fund of the Defense of Freedom of Speech, found that 50 percent of the respondents believed that “the country faces big trials in the future,” while only 8 percent thought in the opposite way. Being asked the emotional characteristics of the society, 60 percent pointed to “fright”; 47 percent to “exhaustion.” See *Moskovskiy novosti*, 20 August 1995.

37. See Yu. Arutiunian, *Rossiane: stolichnie zhiteli* (Moscow: Institute of Ethnology, 1994), 87–88.

38. VTsIOM, No.3, 1995, 36–37. It is also characteristic that by looking at the past year the growing number of Russians assessed it better than one year ago. In 1990 93 percent of 1,600 respondents answered VTsIOM that 1989 was worse than 1988; in 1990, 88 percent said the same; in 1992, 82, 1993, 65, in 1994, 57. See *Moskovskiy novosti*, 15 January 1995.

39. Several non-Russian ethnic groups, mostly the intelligentsia, also envisaged as a catastrophe the assimilation of their people with Russians and the loss of their culture and national identity. Feelings of this sort of disaster were strong, even if publicly muted, in the Baltic republics and West Ukraine.

40. The famous writer Victor Astafiev wrote that he feels, “bitterness and sadness, consternation and disappointment, because the aggressive and animal elements of the human being at the end of the millennium as was predicted in Revelations push mankind in chasm and arouses in it primitive instincts.” See *Literaturnaya gazeta*, 9 May 1995.

41. One hundred forty-eight leading Russian journalists, in the survey organized by the Ebert Foundation, identified among imminent events mass riots and strikes (87 percent); catastrophes at nuclear power stations (64 percent); dictatorship in Russia (63 percent); and the return of the cold war with the West (44 percent). See *Novoye Russkoye Slovo*, 4 July 1995.

42. See Yu. Levada, *Est mnenie* (Moscow: Progress, 1991) and Yu. Levada, *Sovetsky prostoi chelovek* (Moscow: Progress, 1993). See also the data of the All-Russian Center of the Public Opinion Studies (VTsIOM) since 1989 in *Ekonomicheskie i sotsialnye peremeny: monitoring obshchestvennogo mneniya*, 1990-95.

43. See the data of the Fund of Public Opinion, *Argumenty i fakty* 32 (August 1995).

44. See the debates about the ecological issues in S. Kurginian and V. Koptiug, in *Zavtra*, 1995, no. 26:4. See also V. Loginov, “Novoye srednevekovie,” *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 22 November 1994.

45. Georgii Satarov, an adviser to the Russian president, discussed this subject in his lecture in an elite Moscow political school in June 1995. He underscored that “the fear of time” is an important element of the Russian political struggle. He devoted special attention to “the mythology of conspiracy,” which is, in his opinion, “a form of the struggle against irrational, against something what is difficult to explain.” He contended that for many people the myth of conspiracy is impossible to refute: if those who are suspected do something bad, it confirms their participation in a conspiracy; if inversely he is doing something positive, it is sign of a conspirator’s perfidy. See G. Satarov, “Predvybornaya taktika v zerkale mifologii,” *Segodnya*, 30 May 1995.

46. Among Muscovites, no less than 32 percent had “hopes” about the future (in 1993 it was 42 percent). See the survey of the Center of Sociological Studies at Moscow University, detailed in *Argumenty i fakty*, 31 (1995). In the survey of 1,230 Russian journalists mentioned above, the majority (60 percent) expressed their fear of the future, while 53 percent declared that they are hopeful that life will be ultimately better. See *Moskovskiy novosti*, 20 August 1995.