

Russian Cultural Values and Their Effect on Domestic and Foreign Policy

VLADIMIR N. PODOPRIGORA
TATIANA I. KRASNOPEVTSEVA

The Russian question”—this expression is becoming increasingly commonplace and widespread. As a rule, articles on this subject are distinguished by excessive emotion, such as the feeling of offended pride, and the desire to find the guilty party. While sharing these emotions to some degree, we nevertheless believe that they hinder the appraisal of the problem from all possible angles and are not conducive to the finding of its sources and its positive solution.

Let us try to formulate, as free from bias as possible, the essence of the “Russian question.”

Its major components are the material misfortunes experienced by a considerable portion of the Russian population (inhabitants of conflict zones, refugees, etc.), and the moral damage suffered by virtually all the people due to a change in position within the world community—a change that has prompted re-evaluation of the national conscience. Basically, these effects are caused by the objective termination of a whole historic epoch and by the drastic social shifts presently taking place. One can view them as the crash of Communist ideology, or as the disintegration of an empire occurring belatedly with respect to the rest of the world (which is very typical of Russia). In the latter case, the roots of the matter lie much deeper than 1917. However, it seems that we have undergone a big peaceful and natural revolution, in which both these processes became organically intertwined.

Although we have cited material reasons for the rise of the Russian problem before the moral ones, they are of secondary importance. Therefore, we shall start our exposition with morals and the national conscience.

Russian Character and the National Idea

The historic idea of how the Russians regard themselves is contained, first of all, in the characters of their national epic literature. From folk tales, legends, and ballads it follows that a Russian man is kind, gentle, simple, and unhurried. He is not prone to a quick, energetic reaction, and starts to act only in a critical situation, then showing wonders of strength and courage.

Russian characters are represented in the national classical literature with a superficial simplicity, a habitual modest way of life, disregard for “bourgeois” worldly goods (among Russians it was not uncommon that a rich man felt uncomfortable in front of a poor man), deep spirituality, and a penchant for a philosophical and religious interpretation of

Vladimir N. Podoprigora is the chairman of the Committee on International Affairs of the Federation Council of Russia. Tatiana I. Krasnopevtseva is a member of the Committee on International Affairs of the Federation Council of Russia.

existence. Twice in history this spirituality found its realization in immensely ambitious ideas.

Probably, every large nation in the course of its development holds and tries to implement a grand idea. For the British, it is the idea of personal freedom going back to the Magna Carta; for the French, the idea of social equality, which became the slogan of the French Revolution; the national idea of the Americans came to be democracy, the power of the people. The first Russian ideas were connected with Christianity, which is not surprising, since the very formation of the nation on the Slavic-Varangian (Scandinavian) basis coincided with the propagation of the new religion.

Ancient Russia, having adopted Christianity earlier than its neighbors, went into it with the ardor of neophytes. In subsequent ages, religion became an unalienable part of the national conscience. Philosopher N.O. Lossky even believed intrinsic religious feeling to be the main trait of the Russian national character, and thought it lay at the base of the search for the absolute good, accessible in different forms to all strata of society. With the lower classes, this very often took the form of “an especially keen sense of the difference between good and evil.”

For a long time the church in Russia was an obedient pupil of the Byzantine Church. However, from the fifteenth century, the time of the decline and fall of the Byzantine Empire, the situation began to change. In Russian religious circles and in upper layers of society the idea took root that Moscow inherited the theological mission of Byzantium, which had always competed with Rome as a religious center and had become, after the fall of the Roman empire, a sort of “second Rome.” Byzantium was the bulwark of the Orthodox branch of Christianity, having outlived Rome by a thousand years. The Moscow kingdom, according to the designs of its creators, should become, as the well-known formula put it, “the third and the last Rome—the fourth will never be!”

The spreading of the religious Orthodox “third Rome” idea brought about the situation in which Russia and the Russians felt responsible for other orthodox peoples. Amid great patriotic and religious élan in 1870s, Russia went to war with Turkey to liberate Bulgaria from its many centuries of hard Turkish rule. Even now, a lukewarm feeling of religious persecution has caused Russians to regard the [Muslim] Serbs with particular concern, affecting Russian foreign policy toward the Yugoslav conflict.

The second idea, introduced by the Bolsheviks, was no less ambitious: it envisaged the transformation of Russia into the center of world revolution. Based on the absolutization of the role of classes and of antagonisms between them in society, the Bolshevik idea was implemented through the demolition of the natural historical structure of the Russian society, and the consecutive annihilation of its best strata: the most active part of peasantry, the nobility, business people, traders, clergy, and *intelligentsia*. After a fierce, merciless fight, this idea flourished in the popular conscience, leading to its essential modification.

The new type of Russian, created under the Soviet regime, has a high education level, but low everyday culture. He has a quick wit, a penchant for collectivism, a lack of firm morals and legal conscience, an easiness and aptitude in evading regulations and prohibitions coming from the state (with a simultaneous disposition toward being economically dependent on the state), a certain amount of double-thinking (in the Orwellian sense), and an inferiority complex with respect to the West. He has unstable social behavior, and exhibits some other signs of marginalism.

At present Russian society has lost its basic ideals and is standing at a crossroads. The bad state of things in general leads to constant internal discord and adversely affects Russia's relations with the outer world. The nascent idea of national resurrection is, unfortunately, being strongly compromised by ultra-right political parties and groups, including fascists.

Relations with Other Peoples

Prior to 1917, the outside world did not have a negative view of the Russian Empire and the Russians as a people. There were several empires in existence, and world public opinion viewed the act of colonization of some peoples and states by others as an essentially beneficial phenomenon, enabling the light of civilization to be carried to distant and backward regions of the world. Historically Russian colonialism was somewhat lighter than other European (especially British and derivative) brands, which led to the virtual extermination of the aboriginal populations of North America and Australia. A special characteristic of the Russian Empire is recognized by conscientious Western historians: in contrast to the European empires that came into being only after the central states were formed, Russia grew and widened simultaneously with the state. Historically, the two processes were practically inseparable. It appears that among other countries only the United States followed a similar pattern of development: it also accrued by expansion through more or less sparsely populated lands until it reached natural borders on the Pacific.

In a well-considered manner, the Russian rulers did not try to get possession of overseas or remotely located territories. During all the centuries of colonization Russians did not engage in slave trade (after the thirteenth century), and did not try to destroy the traditional cultures of subjugated peoples. On the contrary, local elites were endowed by tsars with various privileges, and if they adopted Orthodox Christianity, they were included in the Russian nobility. Extreme forms of nationalism were alien to the spirit of pre-revolutionary Russia as a great political power: on the whole it was ready to make use of every talent, notwithstanding its origin. The relations of the Russians and the state with the abundant Jewish population of the country were of a special sort; the complexity of this theme makes a separate analysis expedient.

Living together with other peoples, Russians got on easily with their neighbors as a rule and became intermingled with them in many ethnic areas; when people from other nations came to live within the great mass of the Russian people, they were quickly Russified. In the twentieth century, when a large-scale emigration from Russia took place, the Russians proved their own ability for rapid assimilation.

Not all expansion by far was due to conquests: many territories, such as Georgia and Armenia, voluntarily put themselves under Russian protection when seeking refuge from threatening enemies. Of course, the general picture was not without blemish. There was an ugly case of national oppression in Poland, a country with a rich historic and cultural heritage. (But to be just, this deplorable period followed a time when the Polish kingdom was stronger than Russia and repeatedly made war on it, finally occupying Moscow and installing a tsar of its choice at the beginning of the seventeenth century.) If we compare Russia of that time with other known colonial powers on the basis of contemporary moral and ethical norms, it cannot be reproached for an excess of cruelty, a stronger tyranny, or an attitude of arrogant national or racial superiority.

Until the end of the nineteenth century there was no evidence of widespread national conflicts. If we exclude the Poles and some peoples of the Caucasus, the non-Russian population did not make much trouble with the central authorities, lived in peace with the Russians, and accepted them as the leading nation. For the sake of governing, the country was divided into provinces, and only in particular cases were some really autonomous national formations maintained, such as Finland and the Bukhara emirate.

The revolutionary events of 1905 and the establishment of the constitutional regime gave an impetus to the national emancipation of the non-Russian population of the empire. At that time, various organizations intended to express the national aspirations of certain ethnic groups in the Duma parliament. The ethnic problem as applied to non-Russian peoples assumed rather acute form during the days of the February 1917 revolution, when the disintegration of the monarchy presented many ethnic groups with the opportunity not only to voice their demands, but to insist on those demands being met.

Dramatic events in the ethnic decomposition of Russia took place after 1917. The Bolsheviks' stated aim of "world revolution" attracted to their side some of the "nationals," who then entered the party leadership and added an international character to it. The Declaration of Rights of Peoples, signed by Lenin in 1918 and having much to do with this process, was destined to secure the support of Bolshevik followers at the margins of the former Russian empire, which were populated by numerous non-Russian peoples. It declared, without any conditions or reservations, the right of each national group to self-determination, including secession from Russia. In this respect it was a document both unique and paradoxical. Even Lenin's adherents expressed their disagreement with such an idea, which, as they believed, would balkanize Russia.

The extraordinary character of Lenin's decision was based on his erroneous confidence that the strength of Marxist ideology (which states that self-determination should have been interpreted as a thesis subordinated to the higher principle of "proletarian internationalism") and the economic integration of different regions of the country would counteract decentralizing political trends (such as nationalism). The reality turned out to be completely different. The ensuing course of the civil war in many regions took the character of national liberation movements striving for secession from the metropolis of "world revolution." The empire was rapidly crumbling, shortening the opportunities for staging the grandiose ideological experiment. Lenin, who never balked before a change in tactics in order to reach the final goal, replaced the principle of national self-determination with that of federalism. However, the federalism was of a special brand that would not endow the subjects with power or equal rights.

The creation of the "federation," which opened a wide field for reshaping the borders and making new state-like formations (including those that never existed before), was accompanied by severe clashes with national armies in Ukraine and Central Asia, and by direct military invasion of independent Georgia to oust its government. All this resulted in increased solidarity among non-Russian peoples and in their rising hostility toward Russians.

In the late 1930s, a concentrated program of Russification in the USSR was methodically pursued. Since that time, access to prestigious and responsible professions and positions has become hampered for many ethnic groups. A major factor of Russification was World War II itself with its general mobilization and the basically Russian-dominated army. The final peak of the Russification campaigns was under Brezhnev, when education in local languages in the outlying national republics was sharply

curtailed, and education in Russian, as well as the study of the Russian language itself, was greatly increased.

The status of Russia as the highest and foremost ethnic nation in the USSR was constantly emphasized by the entire party propaganda apparatus. The expressions “the great Russian people” and “the great Soviet people” became glibly interchangeable and nearly synonymous. It grew habitual for the Russian to think of Russia’s uniqueness and superiority. However, the more the Russians grew assured of those ideas, the less they were shared by other peoples of the USSR, or by the rest of the world. National relations did not

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become any better in view of repressions and genocide carried out by the Stalinist party leadership against various ethnic groups, in whose eyes the inhuman character of the regime was associated with the Russians. Ethnic Russians also suffered from its beastly crimes, but they were at the same time marked with signs of certain privileges.

As a result, some peoples were subjected to forced Russification, while the others

(Russians) were deprived of the right of national self-expression, which was substituted by Communist ideology. The social structure of all constituent peoples of the USSR was broken. The elite layers were exterminated, the ethnic communities marginalized. The violation by Bolsheviks of the religious rights and practices did much to corrupt the national spirit of Russians and of other peoples. The ideological internationalization, nevertheless, did not abate the tension among the Russians and other nations.

World War II did nothing to ameliorate the attitude of neighboring countries toward Russians. With us it was called the “Great Patriotic War,” but for the wider world it had been a long struggle between two anti-human regimes: those of Hitler and Stalin, who divided Europe in secret by the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and then came to grips with each other.

When soldiers came back after the end of the war, they were praised and glorified beyond imagination. The state propaganda apparatus continued this campaign in public speeches, the cinema, and literature for several decades, but only from a certain point of view: the prevailing interpretation was heroically romantic, with such topics as unnecessary Russian military losses and the insensitivity of commanders toward them, and the merciless practice of employing the so-called “barraging detachments” stationed behind the fighting lines and machine-gunning our own soldiers if they tried to retreat, being completely forbidden. Also lacking for half a century was the representation of the opponents as human beings, an absence that could be explained partially by the special cruelty of the war on the Russian theater. The mythological, almost religious treatment of the last big war continues even at the present time. This could not fail to produce a certain kind of mentality in Russia and to add to the discord between the Russians and other East European nations.

Until now our veterans have had the persistent feeling of bitterness and bewilderment because their personal bravery and sacrifices did not produce reciprocation from the populations of the countries they had liberated. Undoubtedly, the reason lies not in the personal qualities of the Russians, but in the attitude to the type of state that the USSR was and that was associated with the Russians. Yes, the Russians made a terrific stand and fought desperately to liberate their country from invaders, but they just could not liberate

anybody else. The state that was not free could not bring freedom to others, and that was what distinguished us from our allies in the anti-Hitler coalition.

The unofficial relations and popular feeling between Russians and the East European peoples reached a very low level after decades of oppressive Moscow-dependent rule in their countries, and the crushing of several revolts and civil protest movements.

A number of other factors had an adverse effect on the attitude toward Russians. One was the state of our economy, which contrasted very unfavorably with that of developed Western countries, the low living standard of the people, and its poor everyday external culture. By the end of Brezhnev's rule, the so-called "period of stagnation," signs of moral degradation were omnipresent in all social circles. The bearers of one of the highest cultures, who gave to the world the names of Tolstoy, Chekhov, Dostoyevsky, Bunin, Tchaikovsky, Rakhmaninov, Mendeleev, and Pavlov, displayed behavior in relations with the world that was widely different from that existing at the time of the Russian empire, when the Russians—not only in word but in effect—were associated by the surrounding peoples with a culture higher than their own. The universal distribution of low, evil living principles and habits due to the penetration of prison and concentration camp morals into Russian society (many millions of Russians passed through the gulag inferno), social cataclysms, and the strongly anti-cultural stance of Communist rulers led to a situation in which the Russians, who had experienced so many misfortunes and carried so many burdens on their shoulders, came to be considered by some of their neighbors as second-rate people.

This further complicated Russia's relations with the peoples of the so-called "socialist system," as well as with ethnicities inside the Soviet Union, who suffered less from the Soviet system.

By that time, a drastic turn took place in the development of world public opinion. An anti-colonial mood predominated; colonialism was now considered a reactionary and anti-humanitarian phenomenon. While the largest world empires were crumbling, the USSR started strengthening its positions, building up a new system of ideologically dependent overseas territories. The expansion and the toughening of the Russian Communist empire were perceived by the world community as a rough violation of the general course of history.

An important process was the continued Russification of the hinterlands in the Communist empire. With all their undemanding attitude and inferior everyday culture, the Russians still remained the most educated, technically trained, and active part of the Soviet population. Understandably, in the course of the post-war industrialization of the USSR, the migrational flows of Russians were directed to the sites of large industrial projects constructed in various parts of the country, quite often in the outlying regions. Incidentally, this enabled the party leadership to strengthen the non-Russian borderlands with a more reliable and easily controllable Russian population. The Russians, having been subjected to prolonged ideological treatment, moved with clear conscience to other national republics, without a shred of suspicion that the situation would eventually change. During the post-war decades, the percentage of Russians inhabiting Latvia, Estonia, Kazakhstan, and Moldavia sharply increased. Thus, during the period from the early 1960s to late 1980s, Russians went from being 30 to 48 percent of the population of Latvia, which caused ethnic Latvians considerable discontent. A similar situation occurred in Estonia. The native Baltic peoples were seriously troubled by the evolving prospect of being totally dissolved in the Russian medium.

After the fall of communism and the disintegration of the USSR, all fears concerning the imperial aspirations of the USSR were automatically transferred to the Russians and to the new reviving Russia that was making its first steps in establishing a new state system. This is not just, but, unhappily, such is the reality. Meanwhile, this lack of confidence in the Russians and Russia on the part of world public opinion narrows the possibilities of the full-fledged future development of the country, hampers its entry into the world community, and complicates a variety of current problems. These problems include the status of Russians in the newly independent countries that had been parts of the former USSR.

Russians in the New Independent States

After the disintegration of the USSR, nearly one-sixth of ethnic Russians, about twenty-five million people, turned out to be living abroad, that is, outside the Russian Federation. This dismembering, and its administrative severing—especially in the conditions of an unfavorable demographic trend with the birthrate being smaller than the death rate—deprives the Russian ethnicity of much of its blood and vitality; this is the more so in view of the fact that those who are left beyond the border are the most dynamic and active portion of the Russian population. The most attractive variant solution would be one that creates all fifteen prerequisites for the repatriation of Russians and representatives of other native nations of the Russian Federation.

The Russian administration seems to be already realizing the imperativeness and expediency of such a solution, and some plans appear to be forming. Now the question is what practical measures will follow this realization. Against a background of animated discussion of the problem of “negative increment” of the principal, the Russian population is decreasing in numerous villages—and whole districts—in Central Russia. The federal organs are positively obliged to develop programs for accommodating those who wish to come back. Social organizations and the public in general should be encouraged to participate in the process in the widest possible way. In order to upgrade the quality of the programs, the government and local administrations might open competitions for the best plans in areas receiving the immigrants. It might be feasible to think out a system of tax privileges for commercial enterprises and utilities helping the new settlers in moving to new places and establishing themselves there.

The repatriation of such a large mass of people cannot be a one-time action in view of the material, financial, and organizational efforts required, but this problem should be proclaimed a prime national priority on a level with several others.

Russia is not the first country in the world to face the task of receiving a large number of compatriots or other immigrants. Some decades back, when the French President Charles De Gaulle decided to end the war with Algeria—considered an overseas department of France and an inalienable part of the country—the French residents were called to return home. Most of the Algerian French were repatriated. From the viewpoint of the technology of immigration programs (definitions, the choice of criteria, the sequence of actions, terms, and procedure), the experiences amassed by Israel, Germany, and the United States are of great value.

The second part of the problem of Russians abroad is connected with people who would not be able or would not wish to come back to Russia, and who stay where they are. Their situation cannot be considered acceptable, though it is varied in different republics.

A special state of affairs exists in Ukraine, Belarus, and Kazakhstan. Historically, the Russians, Ukrainians, and Belarusians are three branches of the same people. Inside of Russia they do not make any distinction between the Russians and the numerous Ukrainians and Belarusians residing there. Even in Ukraine it is a hard task to distinguish between a Ukrainized Russian and a Russified Ukrainian: both of these types are very common. The ethno-political situation in the Ukraine and Belarus is relatively favorable for the Russians, although those wishing to come to live in Russia should not be hindered in fulfilling their wish. The same applies to Kazakhstan, but for a different reason. The northern part of Kazakhstan has a long-time Russian population; the Russians have been living side by side with the Kazakhs for centuries, and the current task is to find a mutually acceptable solution for further communal life so that the Kazakh people would not feel undue pressure and the Kazakhstan Russians would not be cut off from the Russian culture or from processes in the motherland.

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Regarding Russians continuing to live in other neighboring states, Russia's role should better be that of a defender on the international arena and a provider of moral support. In this sphere there exists a forbidden range of action: it is highly undesirable to try to solve the problem with the use of threats, by intimidating the newly independent states, or by forcibly pushing forward arrangements convenient for Russia. The memories of the way Hitler's Germany covered up its aggression by caring for the status of Sudeten Germans in Czechoslovakia and of Germans in the Danzig enclave in Poland are still alive in Europe. Our task is to avoid the possibility of European and other public opinion making any analogies of this sort with present-day Russia.

However, there are other analogies in world history that should be taken into consideration; they have to do with the disintegrated Western empires of not so long ago. In our view, the government bodies responsible for external policy have been undervaluing the need for seriously studying the experience of diplomatic relations between former metropolises and new independent states, for a long time. The experience obtained during the dismantling of Western empires can be very useful. Not always, but frequently enough, former metropolises managed to secure favorable or even privileged conditions for their citizens who continued living in the territory of former colonies. In some cases, new administrations of colonies grown independent have paid and are still paying comfortable pensions, exceeding average local payments of this sort, to ex-servicemen of colonial armies. Nobody tried to encroach on their freedom to use the language of the metropolis in the territory of ex-colonies. Some of them—and Britain was the most successful in this respect—managed to secure the right of using important strategic objects, ports included, in the newly independent colonies for decades to come. As a rule, this was achieved due to the finesse and maneuverability of diplomatic action.

Our diplomacy in this respect was not up to the mark for a long period of time. From the aggressive imperial stance of the Soviet period, the external policy leaned sharply to the

side of naively altruistic gestures, which were considered by outsiders to be manifestations of weakness and not of conscientious progress toward a more humanitarian position.

The West, which is by no means devoid of national egoism, viewed the neglect by the Russians of their national economic interests in the question of troop withdrawal as a sign of weakness. As in the case of Lenin's thesis concerning the unconditional secession, no conditions were agreed on at the initial stage that could make the financially and organizationally burdensome processes easier for Russia. Truly, "if hacking he does—then straight from the shoulder," as the poet Alexei K. Tolstoy put it more than a century ago, speaking about the Russian character and the way of doing things. It is much more difficult to try to achieve acceptable conditions after the fact, but it is worthwhile to remind Europe more frequently of the circumstances accompanying the decay of its other empires from the 1950s to the 1970s. This could facilitate, in some degree, understanding of the difficulties currently faced by Russia, and will be helpful in establishing a more humane attitude toward Russians in the newly independent countries. Russian authorities' passivity in protecting the interests of the Russian population in these countries resulted in the radical political groups seizing the initiative and making adroit use of the current difficulties to boost their support.

One of the most pressing tasks of the Russian state is to take initiative in this area, which, fortunately, it is now beginning to do. It appears to us that now, after the time wasted and the errors made, it is necessary to formulate the principles of Russia's attitude to compatriots left abroad. These principles should be "soft and hard." On the one hand, they should not frighten the world community and arouse any odious historical associations, and on the other hand, they should be effective enough in putting constant pressure on the appropriate countries and providing moral support to the Russian population if it suffers undue oppression. By way of an example, one could cite the widely known linkage of foreign trade status, given to different countries by the United States, with the observation of human rights. Perhaps we could use for this end, among others, tariffs for energy carriers. The policy of linkages in the matter of alleviating the problem of Russian population abroad should be substantiated with arguments; the principles should be discussed and approved by the Parliament, and should be made public and widely known in Russia and in the outer world.

Russians and the Federal System

Since the disintegration of the Soviet Union, we have failed to realize that a drastic transformation has occurred and that we are now living in a practically mono-ethnic country with the Russians comprising 81.5 percent of the population (as opposed to 50 percent in the USSR), while the percentages of other ethnic groups is incommensurably smaller. The second-largest ethnic group, the Tatars, makes up only 3.5 percent of the population of Russia. This fact is extremely important in itself, and it affects the development of federal relations in the country to a greater degree than is habitually assumed.

The federation that Russia inherited from the Soviet power is not what it purports to be by definition. According to the classical definition offered in the Brockhaus encyclopedical dictionary, federation is a state system in which the constituent parts (subjects) have equal rights and are formed after a uniform criterion. The strict observation of a uniform criterion guarantees the stability of the federal edifice. Nothing like this is now available in the Russian Federation; likewise absent is the general public belief in the

expediency of this particular form of state organization. Until recently, both in pre- and post-revolutionary periods, the state *de facto* functioned as a unitary one. Meanwhile, the federal system in itself does not prevent the establishment of a despotic totalitarian regime from trampling the rights of ethnic minorities and the individual citizen; at the same time there are many manifestly democratic countries with a unitary state system. However, Russia, as the RSFSR preceding it in the Soviet time, is *de jure* a federation; this is a reality one has to take into account, but that does not preclude attempts at improvement.

The existence of political subunits formed on the basis of different criteria (territorial and ethno-territorial), causes justifiable criticism. It brings in elements of unhealthy competition between subjects. For some obscure reasons, citizens of the ethno-territorial units happen to have, in effect, more rights than the territorial ones in the Russian Federation. Meanwhile, the titular ethnic group in only four of these units comprises more than 50 percent of the population (the Chuvashs, 69 percent; the Tuvinians, 64 percent; the Chechens, 58 percent; the Ossetians, 53 percent).

In all other cases the ethno-territorial units are not, in principle, what they try to appear, as the titular ethnicities in them (after whom the units are called) constitute a marked minority, while the majority are Russians, whose national rights are twice infringed upon: first, within the territorial subjects, which, being basically Russian, are officially devoid of any national color; and second, within the falsely ethno-territorial subjects, where the Russians are allotted the statutory second place. They are not even considered the native population, though they have lived in most of those areas since the time of Ivan the Terrible, earlier, for example, than the Europeans on the present territory of the United States. Generally speaking, the Russians now, after the passage of a history, are the native population on all the territory of the Russian Federation and have no lesser rights for land and area management than any other people. In concrete historical terms, the claims for the title of an absolutely native population have no sense at all, since macro-migrations are intrinsically characteristic of humanity. Strictly speaking, the present ethno-territorial subjects with a small title population should be considered areas where the minority ethnicities, threatened with the prospect of dying out, are under the protection of law. It should be hoped that the expected adoption of the law on the legal status of "little peoples" of Russia will help partially to solve this problem.

If the ethno-territorial principle of creating the federation is consistently maintained, the names of the territorial subjects should be supplemented by the adjective "Russian" (e.g., the Russian Tambov province, the Russian Krasnoyarsk region). By all means, the subjects should be endowed with equal rights. Nevertheless, this approach is most unlikely to produce good results. Even a perfect ethno-territorial division will invariably lead to newly arising conflicts, as in Russia each subject of federation, delineated according to the ethno-territorial criterion, will always comprise at least several ethnicities other than the title one having all the privileges. These ethnicities will start a fight for their rights, the country will be stuck in the mire of ethnic conflicts, and there will come to exist a favorable climate for the growth of chauvinistic, fascist trends, of Russian nazism. As a rule, states constructed on the principles of an ethnic federation turn out to be highly unstable. Seemingly, the only exception to this rule is Switzerland, but in all probability, Russia runs more of a chance to resemble the unfortunate Yugoslavia than the well-to-do Switzerland. The complexity of the national problem and its current link with the administrative and political system in Russia necessitates an individual approach in the relations between the federal powers and the constituent subjects, provided the equality of the latter's rights is

duly secured. The basic inequality of subjects destabilizes the country and creates an artificial potential difference, where tension is certain to develop. The Russian Federation of today is not a federation yet. The achievement of a mature federative structure is a goal that is attractive and remote in the same degree as the creation of civil society. The move toward this long-term goal may well become the essence of the transition period from a totalitarian state to the democratic one.

And one thing more. A big population and a large area always did produce the feeling of might and the lack of bounds, and created illusions of inexhaustible spiritual and physical powers and of national grandeur. To maintain this feeling of greatness neither the Russian nor the Soviet rulers had mercy on the people, and, to tell the truth, the people quite readily victimized themselves, sparing no effort to keep up the image. However, the idea did not prove itself useful in the long run, having exhausted the power of the people and having failed to provide the spiritual satisfaction. The attempts to secure the acknowledgment of national preeminence by trying to win for ourselves a greater role in resolving world conflicts than we can now afford, considering our current potential, are not only fraught with new difficulties for the Russian people, but put us at times in a false position. Would it not be better to balance one's abilities and means and, for a rare time in history, to concentrate calmly on tackling normal practical problems? It may be that this position lacks splendor, but it holds national dignity and economic promise, which are now the most important things!