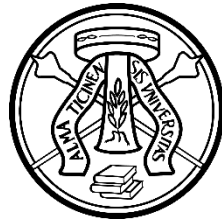


UNIVERSITY OF PAVIA

**Department of Political and Social Science
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**UNIVERSITÀ
DI PAVIA**

RUSSIAN IDEOLOGY IN LIGHT OF THE ONGOING CONFLICT WITH THE WEST

L'IDEOLOGIA RUSSA ALLA LUCE DEL CONFLITTO IN CORSO CON L'OCCIDENTE

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Abstract

The work argues that the main reason for ongoing conflict between Russia and the West is their ideological incompatibility. Thus, the work studies the question of Russian ideology examining its fundamental differences with the Western worldview. It implies that the main difference between Russia and the West is their different attitude towards God and consequently towards the existence of truth. Such an attitude historically developed into distinct ideologies which gave birth to different ways of social and political organisations. It argues that Orthodoxy is a solution that can overcome the global Western civilizational crisis and provide Russia a full-fledged ideological system.

Abstract

Il presente lavoro sostiene che la causa principale del conflitto in corso tra la Russia e l'Occidente risieda nella loro incompatibilità ideologica. A tal fine, lo studio analizza la questione dell'ideologia russa, esaminandone le differenze fondamentali rispetto alla visione del mondo occidentale. Si evidenzia come la divergenza principale tra Russia e Occidente riguardi l'atteggiamento verso Dio e, di conseguenza, verso l'esistenza della verità. Tale atteggiamento si è storicamente sviluppato in ideologie distinte dando vita a diverse forme di organizzazione politica e sociale. Questo studio sostiene inoltre che l'Ortodossia sia una soluzione in grado di superare la crisi di civiltà dell'Occidente globale e di fornire alla Russia un sistema ideologico a tutti gli effetti.

Keywords: Russia, West, Orthodoxy, Catholicism, ideology, conflict.

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Introduction

The purpose of this work is an attempt to answer the question why there is a conflict today between Russia and the West? The main argument of my work is that the reason for today's confrontation is not a misunderstanding over a particular case but the difference between their ideologies that shapes for them almost opposite views on the world. Because of it today's conflict is not a separate incident but a natural consequence for their relationships that as we will see for most of the time were defined by a state of conflict.

For that reason I will examine Russian ideology and in light of the ongoing conflict compare it in key aspects with the Western one.

In the first chapter I will discuss the ideological foundation of Russia from the creation of its state which was Orthodoxy. We will see how Orthodoxy shaped many important sides of the Russian mindset as well as examine that strict watershed that it put between Russia and the West that was fostered by Catholicism. Then we will discuss different ideological concepts such as “Moscow - 3rd Rome”, “Saint Rus” and “Orthodoxy, Self-rule, Peopleness” and also look at key historical episodes that influenced Russian ideological development. I will make a conclusion that the Western borrowing that was taking place in certain periods of its history was leading it away from its own path of development, increasing contradictions in the society that eventually resulted in revolution. After that the history of Russian development was interrupted for 70 years when there was complete rejection of the previous ideology and its replacement by a new one in the face of the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, we concluded that the ideological importance of this period was minimal and soon Russia returned to its usual historical image exercising its common historical traits but already without a clear ideological explanation because of the insolvency of the communist one that soon exhausted itself.

In the second chapter I will move on to the period after the fall of the Soviet Union until 2022. I made a conclusion that the main reason for the collapse of the Soviet Union had ideological character. Due to the fact that communist ideology ceased to play any important role in society and became only formality, Russia

approached the 90s without any ideology which is why the leaders of that time voluntarily accepted the Western values and renounced further existence of the Soviet Union. After the fall of the Soviet Union Russia firmly stepped on the path of Western development and began a convergence with Western countries. Nevertheless, we saw that Russian ideological mindset did not allow it to follow this path both on a domestic level when it was not able to accept the results of liberalisation that contradicted its previous historical development as well as on international arena when it increasingly often could not agree with the collective Western opinion and its policy that in the end led it to complete rejection of the Western ideology, which was marked by the beginning of an open confrontation in 2022.

In the third chapter we will look at the modern state of Russian ideology from 2022 onwards which I described as a state of ideological confusion. The original Russian view made it refuse the Western ideology and pushed it to take energetic actions both inside and outside the state but it still did not find the ideology that would be able to explain and justify them. We will discuss different reforms aimed at dewesternisation of the Russian state and make a conclusion that the attempts of Russia to achieve its ideological sovereignty are held back by the fact that it still did not fully abandon the prerequisites of the Western ideology which have grown into its mindset very tightly during the past thirty years and hinder Russia on the path of adopted reforms not allowing them to be fully completed. Then we will look in detail at different views of Russia based on which it tries to build its own ideology today: traditionalism, patriotism, historical memory, and multinationality. However I made a conclusion that these separate views cannot result in one full-fledged system since they lack a deep epistemological foundation that would be able to counter Western liberalism and provide Russia with needed ideology.

The fourth chapter is dedicated to modern Russian ideology on an international level. I discussed the core differences in the views of Russia and the West on international relations and made a conclusion that today Russia advocates for multipolarity in the relationships between the countries and the West, on the other hand, advocates for its own hegemony. The reason for that I assumed in their attribution to different churches, Orthodox and Catholic, which in both cases served as

a foundation of their development and, consequently, of the worldview which they have today. Then I discussed the character of relationships between Russia and the West today as well as the reasons for failures to build a dialogue between them. Also I stopped on those endeavours which Russia undertakes today on an international arena in order to build its ties outside of the Western orbit.

In the fifth chapter I returned to the question of this work and based on the above-mentioned arguments tried to answer what is the main idea of Russia highlighting its fundamental difference with the Western one. I continued the comparison of Orthodoxy and Catholicism as a foundation of both civilizations, and concluded that the core difference between Russia and the West is their different attitude towards God and therefore towards the existence of truth that historically developed in their societies. The reason for this is that the character of development of the Western church led it to rationalism that resulted in a consequent relativism of the Western society and a perception of absence of truth with secular development of the society and democracy as a political representation of this view - the system which implies that there is no truth and for this reason serves the desires of people. Russia, on the other hand, due to its belonging to Orthodoxy did not experience the same path of development which happened in the West and would lead it to rationalism and the truth still exists in its ideological mindset which in turn resulted in a different form of political organisation where the system serves not the desires of people but the truth. By this I answer the question of what Russia is? Russia is a country where truth exists. In my opinion, a perception of Russia through such a frame can best explain its behaviour on domestic as well as international level and also show the fundamental nature of today's conflict with the West. Then I briefly repeated the ideological development of Russia and made a conclusion that a way out of its modern state of ideological distress is Orthodoxy. I argue that Orthodoxy solves Western civilizational dead end and provides Russia a foundation that puts together all of its views to which it has recently returned in one complete system.

Chapter 1. Russian ideological development from the beginning to the end of 20th century

When did Russian ideology begin?

Russian ideological thought, as well as Russia itself as an idea, as a state with its own distinctive ideology appeared after accepting Christianity from Eastern Orthodox Church, in 988 by Vladimir the Great - Grand Prince of Kievan Rus'.¹ Before this time Russia was no different from any other barbarian country and represented itself different tribes spread across the Russian territory, who fought each other and lived only with their basic material interests without any ideology, idea or goal that could go beyond them. And only after it was baptised those different tribes started to gain distinctive characteristics and create one distinctive ideological realm. The ideological coercion later led to social and political one. Indeed throughout Russian history we can see that Orthodoxy was that reason why and for what Russia appeared as a country. In the 13th century when Russia was besieged from the North by German Crusaders which subjugated the captured lands to the Roman power and converted the population into Catholicism, Russian cities overcame political disagreements in the face of infidels' threat and asked the Grand Prince Alexander Nevsky for help who gathered a military squad and following the Battle on the Ice in 1242 managed to protect northern frontiers of the country.

In the period from the 13th to the 15th century when Russia was conquered by the Mongol Empire Orthodoxy served as the main reason for unification of scattered Russian city-states in one centralised state in order to fight against a foreign invader. This process of coalitions of different Russian cities and battles against the Golden Horde continued until the end of 15th century when it completely freed itself from the Mongol empire and all Russian lands became one state with a center in Moscow.²

During the Time of Troubles or “Smuta” (lit. troubles) in the 16th century when Russia was left without centralised power and the country plunged into chaos,

¹ Sergei Solovyov, History of Russia from Ancient Times: In 29 volumes, Vol. 1, Ch. 7

² Sergei Solovyov, History of Russia from Ancient Times: In 29 volumes, Vol. 5, Ch. 5

its neighbours, Poles and Lithuanians, took advantage of this situation and seized power in Moscow, settling in the Kremlin. At that time Archimandrite Dionysius was sending proclamations from Holy Trinity Lavra of St. Sergius to all Russian lands in which he described the sufferings of people from the hands of invaders and called the Russian people to unite and put aside internecine strifes in order to defend Orthodoxy. At a time when Russia lost its political sovereignty the Patriarch remained as the only voice of Russian independence. For that reason Patriarch Hermogenes was imprisoned in Kremlin by the Poles which demanded him to make a charter in which he would order Russian people to obey the new government, but which as he wrote it: "I see the destruction of holy churches, I hear Latin singing in the Kremlin and I cannot stand it" and called for the organisation of resistance and blessed "to stand to the death for the Orthodox faith" for which he ultimately paid his own life and was starved to death in the cellar of one of the Kremlin monasteries. During this period Orthodoxy once again served as the reason why the Russian people, left to themselves, decided to unite and organise militia groups from Eastern lands, starting from Nizhny Novgorod led by coalition of a simple peasant Minin and a noble aristocrat Pozharsky and move to Moscow to liberate it from foreign invaders and then by themselves from all of the freedom which they had to choose a new Russian Tsar from the aristocratic family of Romanovs which would serve as a stronghold of Orthodoxy.

Therefore, from the very beginning the main Russian ideology was only one - Orthodoxy, meaning Christianity for which it was created and then lived and developed in the next centuries.

To better understand what role Orthodoxy played in Ancient Russia we should take a closer look at the Russian society of that time.

Ancient Russia or Ancient Rus' was a very closed country isolated from foreign influence and developed only within its own cultural and ideological frame. Nevertheless, from the writings of foreign travellers and diplomats that visited Russia we can make an impression on what Russian society resembled.

In the reign of the Tsar Alexey Mikhailovich in 1654 the Antiochian archdeacon Paul of Aleppo left some of his notes after visiting Moscow during the period of the Great Lent. On the border of Moscovia he wrote that: "We entered the

gates of suffering, sweat, work and fasting since in this country from simple people to monks all eat only once a day and leave the church no earlier than 2 o'clock in the evening. In all their churches there are no seats. All the people stand like statues, silently, making continuous prostrations. We were told in advance by experienced people that if someone wants to shorten their life by 15 years they should go to the country of Muscovites". He writes that during the first week of Lent the noisy and crowded Russian capital becomes almost empty. All of the shops were closed for the first three days. Without a vital need people did not go out but stayed at their homes. All of the pubs and drinking places in accordance with the Tsar prescription were closed and sealed by the soldiers until the end of the Great Lent. People did not make any sales or purchases at that time but were strictly attending the Church services. Paul of Aleppo complains that during his period in Moscow he and his companions suffered greatly because of the strictness with which Moscovites were spending the Lent. He says that the Tsar with his wife and adult children did not eat in the first three days of the Lent. They did not accept any visits at this time but were actively following Church services and increasing their home prayer. Another feature of Moscovia was that: "Russians are distinguished by their unparalleled charity towards the poor; their ears are always attentive and their hands are always open to their requests, so that in Moscow one can see whole crowds of beggars receiving food near the homes of rich people."³

Many foreign travellers were mentioning the deep and strict morality which they encountered in Russian society. For example, in 1523 Albert Campensee wrote to Pope Clement XII about the morals of the Moscovites: "They are better than us (i.e., Catholics) in their following of the teaching of the Gospel. In the churches nothing indecent or disorderly is noticeable, on the contrary, everyone, kneeling and prostrating themselves, prays with sincere fervor... To deceive one another is considered a terrible, vile crime among them... violence is very rare, unnatural vices are completely unknown. In general, they deeply revere God and His saints."⁴ The

³ Schema-Archimandrite John (Maslov), *Ritual Features of the Penitential Discipline of Ancient Rus'* (Sergiev Posad: Holy Trinity Lavra of St. Sergius, 2006), 71 p.

⁴ *ibid*

smoking of tobacco was seen as a serious crime for which a person could be executed and a foreigner caught for this misdeed sent to prison. Paul of Aleppo, was marveled at "the order in Russian churches and the unwavering attendance at church services." "People stand from the beginning of the service to the end, motionless as stones, continually prostrating themselves, and all together, as if from one mouth, sing prayers."⁵

A special respect Russians paid to the priests. The generals and the mayors were standing before the bishops with bare heads and did not dare to sit even when invited. People also treated ordinary village priests with the same respect. Based on many historical examples we can say that the spiritual cast was always the most revered one. In the reign of Ivan the Terrible when the executions filled the country the only person who could openly reproach him was St. Basil the Blessed whose words the Tsar always listened very carefully.

In Russia strict liturgical charter was followed not only in monasteries but in all parish churches as well. The spiritual ideal of people of that time was an ascetic monk who entirely devoted his life to the serving of God. Therefore, the monastery charter and its rules defined not only monastery life but also the life of ordinary Russians. The only difference between common people and monks was that they could marry and engage in secular affairs, apart from that in everything else they had to imitate monks. Paul of Aleppo repeatedly stressed that often even in secular settings "they (Russians) felt as if they were in a monastery."⁶ Before death Russians usually took monastic vows. "Not only elderly did this but also young men and women leaving their belongings to monasteries and churches".⁷

Therefore, we can see that the ideological foundation of Russia is Orthodoxy to which all spheres of human life were subjected.

Moreover, attribution of Russia to Orthodoxy became the main reason for its future ideological divergence with the West.

⁵ *ibid*

⁶ *ibid*

⁷ *ibid*

Indeed the fact that Russia and the West were raised by different churches, Orthodox and Catholic, which in both cases were the foundation of their civilizations, is the main reason why they have different views on the world that as we can see preserved to these days. Because of it, this question should be discussed in more detail.

One of the most illustrative examples would be if we look at a dispute that took place in the Eastern church in the 13th century.

The Saint Fathers of the Orthodox Church for many centuries have had a tradition of hesychasm. It meant that monks were living in silence and complete solitude: they were closing themselves in their cells, leaving to the deserts and mountains and with help of a special attentive prayer in their dark cells began to see the light unlike any other created in the world, i.e. uncreated or divine. In 1330 one educated monk Varlaam came from Calabria to Constantinople. When he found out about this practice he criticized it based on the rationalistic Catholic study - scholastics - and said that God was incognizable, and went as far as to the Constantinople Patriarch himself. Because of that a dispute broke out about the possibility of man's knowledge of God which shook the whole Eastern Church.⁸ One of the educated monks, Gregory Palamas, a son of a wealthy Constantinople official, who left his prominent career at 20 and went to Athos to become a monk, spoke in the defence of the Saint Fathers and the tradition of hesychasm.

He was defending the position that a man can know God through certain energies which are outside of the laws of the material world and which are unavailable for the understanding of the human mind.⁹ In the end Orthodox Church accepted the position of Gregory Palamas and acknowledged the possibility for a human to know God and, therefore, that logic and reason are not the only ways of cognition, but there are also others that lay beyond them.

The Catholic Church, on the other hand, because it accepted only rationalistic and logical instruments of cognition kept the opinion that God is incognizable, that He

⁸ Alexander Dvorkin, *Essays on the History of the Ecumenical Orthodox Church: A Lecture Course*. - 4th ed., revised, Moscow: Riza; Nizhny Novgorod: Christian Library, 2008. - 935 p.

⁹ St. Gregory Palamas, *The Triads*. New York: Paulist Press, 1983

is somewhere very far away and fundamentally inaccessible for a man. For that reason for Catholicism there has left only a surrounding material world as a God's creation which we should study with logic and rationality, meaning that for Catholicism there has left only an “armchair theology” - which later transformed just into scientific work. For the same reason of the unknowability of God, that he is very far away from people, the Catholic Church became a worldly institute since the only available way of making contact with Him that remained for people was by doing good deeds, following His commandments, and helping other people. Because of it the activity of the Catholic Church mostly concentrated on particular deeds that would bring practical benefit for people, that later remained in the Western worldview and became a result of its close attention to the material world and its reformation.

In Orthodoxy, on the contrary, because there is a possibility to know God the religious life remained to be a spiritual practice, and the way of contacting Him happened through prayer, fasting and other spiritual means and not particular practical things that you can do in the world.

For that reason the Orthodox Church remained to be the unworldly institute. In Orthodoxy the good cannot be expressed by certain good deeds of a person but it is a spiritual matter that consists of transformation of the person's soul. In this sense if in Catholicism the good is to build a church, in Orthodoxy it is to build a church of your own soul.

For that reason, for example, there is such a difference between the Saints of the Western and Eastern Churches. If in Catholicism they are educated pious scholars (Dominicans), in Orthodoxy they are blissful fools, monks, spiritual elders. Or if in Catholicism the Saints are those who brought a particular benefit for other people and served them (Franciscans), in Orthodoxy they are those who, on the contrary, left the world and went to inhabited forests and deserts.

This in turn also influenced the character of relationships between a human and God.¹⁰ If in Catholicism a man has a list of his good deeds and a list of his sins and during his life he has to make the former prevail over the latter (what usually also

¹⁰ Hieromartyr Hilarion Troitsky, Repentance in the Church and repentance in Catholicism, Transfiguration of the Soul, Moscow: Institute of Russian Civilization, 2012, 196-248 p.

comes down to certain positive activity in the world). In Orthodoxy, on the other hand, a sin is not a certain action because of which a man becomes a debtor to God, but a sin is a harm that a person does to himself, it is a perversion of his nature, a wound that distances him from God and from being with Him that is the only purpose of a human and a reason why he was created. For that reason the main goal of a person's life is a deliverance from his own human nature and an increase of a divine one, meaning deification. And that unification with God happens through a personal solitary spiritual feat and also usually means a negligence of the world.

For the same reason there are completely different prerequisites of cognition. If in Catholicism the principle of cognition is: "I don't know, but I know that I can find out with help of logic and reason". And the process consisted of studying the previous information and its analysis for making a new conclusion. In Orthodoxy the principle of cognition is: "I don't know and I don't want to know but if You want, You can tell me". And the way a person got knowledge was without books or any information but through repentance and cleaning of his heart so it could enter him. Indeed the Catholic choice could seem particularly odd if to take into account the fact that the whole Christianity is built on the shaming of the wise ones of this world which precisely because of their pride and knowledge could not understand the wisdom that is not from this world.

For that reason this difference that Orthodoxy accepted that cognition is possible not only through logic and reason and Catholicism accepted only these means served as a fundamental watershed between the Orthodox and Catholic churches for all subsequent centuries of their development and, consequently, for those societies that they were raising.

Later the Western mind continued to develop but already independently and outside of religion.

Beginning from the Renaissance religious life in Europe started to be slowly substituted with a secular one and many religious notions were changed to the similar but already secular ones, with a secular essence: for example, instead of religion - humanism, instead of God's law - ethics etc. - which created an ideological foundation for the further transformation of Europe into the secular society.

Then in the 16th century during the period of the New Age the Western mind made a next step and completely got rid of religious justifications of its study of the world and began to develop outside of its frame and for its own purposes.

Because of it in the following centuries Europe dived into creating numerous different theories on numerous sorts of questions in all of the spheres of a human life. At a certain point there has come an understanding that this process is endless, that the truth is unreachable and these are all only opinions all equally distanced from it, that in the end led to inability to gain any knowledge and to a dead end: epistemological, ideological and, therefore, existential in which today's Western society and all others that are under its influence are in.

From the very beginning, the choice that the Western church made (in later chapters I will explain why it made it) placed the society on the logical and rational rails which inevitably led to relativism and coldness towards religion that is based not on logical proofs but more on the opposite, on a virtue, on a faith, trust - and that eventually resulted in the refusal of religion by the Western society.

Nevertheless, from the Orthodox point of view, such a process of development of the Western civilization characterized by its gradual renunciation of God and dominance of mind represents only a process of continuous fall through pride - the first and most fundamental sin. Pride on its fundamental level means a refusal of truth by questioning it with logic and rationality, with something that, in the very first place, cannot reach it but shows only a lack of a virtue in a person - humility and a prevalence of sin in him - pride - that he knows what truth is, can criticize it or rebel against it. Pride is opposed to humility - a main virtue. Humility means an acceptance of truth. Therefore, to the fact that goodness, kindness, love - is good and that is the truth humility would bow its head down and accept it. Pride would refuse it and with help of logic and rationality say: "what is truth?". In Christian terminology - the same as the devil has fallen through pride when he stood against the truth, the same Christ united people with God by His humility towards it.

That is why such a result, this dead end to which the Western society has come is not a discovery which they found and now share with the rest of the world showing in what a terrible position we all happened to be - but is only a consequence of those

prerequisites which the Western society chose and which means only a fact that it lacked a virtue - humility.

Therefore, from this point of view many centuries of development of European thought, philosophy, sociology, politology and creation of numerous theories on them - is only an aimless cunning and dogginess of mind. For example, European thought was meditating on the nature of power and the relations between the state and the society. For the Orthodox view a question arises: what is the difference if a society grants a sovereign legitimacy unconditionally or a society has a right to take it back? Why choose one view over another if both systems are similarly logically proved? But instead of it Orthodoxy suggests to answer with something that lies beyond this system - with virtue, with humility - in this case towards the state.

Therefore, this fact that Europe, fostered by Catholicism, as a result of its development fell away from God and Russia, fostered by Orthodoxy, did not experience the same development and preserved its connection with God and lived and existed only for Him and in the moment when Europe refused Him and in the following centuries and today even though due to modern ideological unclarity it cannot understand it is a main source of all differences between them.

After Europe fell away from God the truth in Europe had disappeared. And they substituted it with their own wishes which now became the truth themselves and manifested in the values of “freedom, equality, brotherhood”, which are the very foundation of modern Europe and can serve as its best definition. From the first glance they may sound as something good and for this reason as something unapproachable. The current situation is that when the West comes to a non-Western person, and reproaches him that in his country they do not have freedom, meaning European values, usually the person knows that what happens in Europe and knows that what happens in Europe is very bad and that the truth is on his side and not on the side of Europe but is still confused and does not know what to answer because freedom, equality, brotherhood all seem as something good by definition. But their foundation

is negative, it is godless and represents a renouncement of a person from God and an exaltation of his will above all and therefore they themselves are bad.¹¹

Christianity also has all these values but they have completely different meanings. If in Europe freedom - is a realization that the truth does not exist and consequently a demand for your own permissiveness and so that nobody could tell you what you can or cannot do. In Christianity, on the other hand, freedom is a manifestation of God's wisdom in the order of things when a person cannot be brought to good, to God by force but he is always free to choose his path and therefore bears responsibility for his choices. Nevertheless, for a person himself it is seen as something negative. Because when a person collides with the truth manifested by God's glory and His light, freedom immediately becomes to be seen as something scary.¹² He understands that a man is put in such a position, that even having already seen the good, having already contemplated heaven he is still given a freedom to choose and he can voluntarily refuse it. Therefore, freedom is something that a person should voluntarily overcome when realized that his will is bad and corrupt and instead subjugate it to God's one which is always good. Quite interestingly, the highest form of Christian life, the monkhood, literally means that a person sells himself in a voluntary slavery when taking a so-called "vow of obedience" just in an attempt to take off himself this burden of freedom and get rid of his own will. Moreover, only the one who encountered the good can fully understand the profound meaning of freedom that was given to him and, on the contrary, for the one who did not, freedom just means that no one would prohibit his own permissiveness. At the same time, freedom as a condition of a person is always seen as an internal state of a man that does not and cannot depend on external circumstances and always means freedom from a sin. In this sense the goal of the Christian life is freedom: to untie yourself more and more from unimportant things: food, entertainment, people, world as a whole and to stick more and more to the only important one, to God. Thus, if in Christianity freedom is

¹¹ Priest Yevgeny Yaganov, How should Orthodox Christians view the French Revolution?, ABC of Faith, 23.09.2025, <https://azbyka.ru/vopros/kak-pravoslavnym-hristianam-otnositsja-k-velikoj-francuzskoj-revoljucii/>

¹² Schema-Archimandrite Sophrony (Sakharov), Venerable Silouan of Athos, 3rd ed., Sergiev Posad: Holy Trinity Sergius Lavra, 2011, Ch. "Thoughts on freedom"

to take off the chains from yourself, in Europe freedom is to be free to put on yourself the chains you want. And all of the commandments - they are not something that God imposes on a man but rather something that takes off the burden from his shoulders, something that liberates him. Gluttony, for example, what a pleasure not to belong to your stomach, not thinking always about how and where to eat tastier but be free from it, knowing that there is nothing better than just a piece of bread. While a sin is a man-killer, something that imprisons and tortures him. For this reason, from the Christian point of view, the Western society is seen as a society where people are most oppressed and unfree, that is most full of suffering, where people have everything and yet nothing because they do not have the most important thing.

Therefore, a person is always free. Moreover, he is doomed to be free. He is always free to be a good person or a bad one. While that "lack of freedom" in which the West reproaches non-Western countries just means a fight with evil the existence of which the Western society rejected since the truth had disappeared in it. Since the ruler bears the sword not for nothing but to avenge the evil.¹³

Similarly, if for Europe equality means a fight of people that realized that the truth does not exist and therefore nobody should stand above them that leads to a fight for your own dominance. In Christianity, equality cannot be determined by people's worldly positions, whether a man is a slave or a master, but every person is equal by his nature in front of God for Whom his position is all the same and which is only his worldly obedience and only a test whether a person will be able to perform well the task which has fallen to his lot: a slave, must be obliging and thorough, a master must be just and merciful, a warrior must be brave and courageous. And for this reason equality does not come out of a struggle of a person for his desires but from humility of people to each other and realisation that in the end they all equal in front of God.

Also if in Christianity brotherhood means a unity of people that live together for the good and try to reach it helping each other in this common endeavour. In Europe it means that people agreed that they would not stop each other from satisfying their desires and since they might have different desires they decided to be tolerant enough to each other.

¹³ Rom 13:4

For this reason freedom, equality, and brotherhood do not represent something new but the values which people have had long before and still have today. The European version of “freedom, equality, brotherhood”, though, means only one thing - that a person renounced from God and now tries to make sure that nobody would stop him from satisfying his desires as much as possible in this short time that has left for him.

The same is with all the European values. They do not represent some kind of fundamental moral choice, some kind of new strict moral system but only enthronement of their own desires which always change and for which a well trained European mind by centuries of scholastics then finds a theoretical justification. It just so happened that today, for example, the main European idea is in “universal humanism”: in justice, fight against discriminations, peace, equal rights. A century before it was in complete opposite, when it wanted to keep only itself and subjugate or destroy all others. Because every new attempt of the West to establish its new social project it is always only pride and exaltation of itself and in the first place before God.

For this reason modern Western society from the first glance may look like a society of a complete virtue: philanthropy - the degree of care with which Europe today surrounded a person in the face of medicine, protection of his safety, his rights so that a single misconduct of the law enforcement official can lead to a national upheaval, stranger-hospitality - that it accepts huge number of people from foreign countries and maintains them at its own expense, fraternal love - the fact that there is no racism in Europe and they treat all people equally, help to the poor - support from the state and the social system where rich ones pay more so that the poor could have a roof over their head. For this reason modern Western society looks like an embodiment of all Christian ideals. But still among all this apparent virtuousness something feels wrong, something that immediately disturbs the outside viewer and why he hesitates to make his mind on it. The matter is in pride, that they substituted the foundation of their values from humility - to God and His truth, to pride, to their own self-exaltation - why every virtue became so distorted. From stranger-hospitality - there is modern Western migration policy, from humility and love towards the close ones - there is tolerance which is tolerance towards every sin and untruth, from the

fact that all people are equal and it is necessary to love everyone - modern Western racial policy, from the beauty and richness of the world - there is diversity which is apotheosis of the fact that truth does not exist and people with pleasure and intellectual arrogance want to show it any way possible. And behind all these values there is no love towards people, they do not have an aim to bring people good but there is only a desire to establish its new idea.

And the whole picture becomes even clearer when after all these from the first glance virtues: philanthropy, stranger-hospitality, equality, care for the poor follow a change of gender for children and inclusive pronouns. It seems like behind this whole situation someone's laughter is being heard, that the whole situation is a result of a someone's joke over all this grandiose people's project, over all this valorous fight for high values of freedom, equality and brotherhood, that only change it by a drop, only substitute the foundation from humility to a human pride and the whole picture would distort and there will come out something as grotesque and disturbing as we can see it today. Some people, though, recognise this laughter very well. And this tree which continues to grow under the guise of external virtuousness, wants to feed all the nations today but brings them only rotten fruits of their pride and closes the Sun of Truth for them.

Such a drastic ideological shift in the West also led to a new perception of a man on himself, on a society and his relationships with other people. The fact that a person fell away from God and, thus, from the truth, when the only thing that remained was his own desires led to individualism - a view of a man that a measure of all things is himself, his interests and his good. For Christianity such order means a world where there is no love. Because love is possible only when you lower yourself and want the good of another person over your own. Therefore, if in the frame of the Western ideology the good - is to maximally satisfy the desires of your personality. In Christianity, on the other hand, the purpose of a man's life is to overcome yourself, your own desires in order to unite with others in One. And the course of a man's life is a process of getting rid of that barrier that prevents it, from his Self which always wants a good only for itself and not for others.

And that theme of love and unity comes through the whole Christianity. Because unity is a definition of love and love can exist only when there is unity. The main dogma of Christianity is Trinity. How can three be one at the same time? Because of the absolute love that is between them and which from three makes one. The Church serves as an image of that divine unity and an institute that teaches people to be One while still on earth. The definition of the Church itself is a unity - it is a living body that consists of a unity of all local Churches around the world and all its members: the servants and the people. The main Church service - liturgy translates as "common doing" - when people come together and everyone seeks to abandon its own will and looks only for God's one and by such single personalities vanish in God and unite in One.

And the whole purpose of a man's life is in the same - to learn to live with others. Because that is the meaning of heaven - it is one place shared by many. And either he will bring his soul to a condition when it can get along with others, i.e. to be able to concede and neglect his desires for others in this life or will not learn and will be left outside of this common unity with others which is a meaning of hell.

And that is possible only when people are together because in such a way their pride diminishes, their desires always collide with the desires of others and they have to learn how to give in to each other and choose others' desires over their own which is a meaning of love - and therefore they learn how to live together.

The Western society, on the other hand, first on a theoretical level accepted a complete and constant rightness of an individual and then in the organisation of the society itself started to separate a person from others fencing his calmness as much as possible and by such his pride, his sense of self-rightness remains to be untouched, uncured and therefore his soul becomes to be unsuitable to live with others. For this reason, from the point of view of Christianity, the Western individualistic society is a society that is deprived of love.¹⁴

¹⁴ Priest Georgy Kochetkov, The Problem of Individualism and Personhood in the Orthodox Church (in the parish, the monastery, the family of the flesh and the family of the spirit—within the church community, brotherhood, and school), International Theological Conference "Personhood in Church and Society" September 17, 2001, <https://sfi.ru/science/doklady-stat-i-vystupleniia/problema-individualizma-i-lichnostnosti-v-pravoslavnoi-tserkvi-na-prikhode-v-monastyre-v-seme-po-ploti-i-seme-po-dukhu-v-tserkovnoi-obshchine-bratstve-shkole.html>

Such deep ideological difference also led to different political organisations of society.

If in Europe the fact that the truth has disappeared and spread to every person and then resulted in a concept of “freedom” which means an acceptance of a person that truth does not exist and, therefore, every person should be free in choosing it, that led in social and political sphere to democracy - a way of political organisation of society where truth does not exist and people gather and vote on what it will be for a certain period of time sharing each other’s opinions on it with such tools as freedom of speech, freedom of press, of assembly to make this process more effective, - in Russia, on the other hand, where the truth was preserved and remained it resulted in a different political organisation of society where the truth exists and the desires of people cannot and must not determine it.

Out of this comparison we can see how different Church development led to a drastic ideological difference between Russia and the West. In later chapters we will have an opportunity to prove it and see how, from the first glance, even the most separate and specific views of Russia on its domestic or international policy today have their roots in Orthodoxy.

Apart from the Church divergence, different historical development of Europe and Russia also played a certain role in their ideological differences. If in Europe historically the main purpose of the state was to protect, in Russia, on the other hand, it was to educate and teach people.

In Europe modern countries and authorities in them were created in the course of wars and because of it the relationships between the ruler and the people were based on provision of security and on economic interests, meaning that the ruler protects the people and the latter obliges to give him a part of his work thanks to which the security could be provided: the knights could fight for the peasants while they were working on them and feeding them, the way how feudal system was created.

In Russia, on the other hand, the authority appeared voluntarily. Russia from ancient times was struggling due to constant wars between the rulers of different lands and because of that they invited from foreign lands a princely family that would

govern over their vast lands and resolve their conflicts.¹⁵ Especially clear this character of relationships becomes after accepting Christianity. That is why the main feature in relationships between the people and the state was that they were family-like relations. The peasants and the landlord that was placed over them represented a family where the landlord as a father had to educate and teach them and watch that the people given to him were following the truth and lived according to it. And the same family relations were spreading further on top to the Tsar, whose main objective in Russia historically was only that he would be always for truth, supporting it in the state and making sure that it is followed and the society lives in it - and when he does it he is always excused for all of the other social, political or economical problems that the state may have.

For example, the Tsar was often called with a word “batushka” which means “father” but with a tint of a more informal and warm attitude which was especially widespread among the common people, simple peasants. Meaning that the reverence to him was not formal, as between a subject and a lord, but a family-like, as to a head of family. Because of it in Russia, contrary to Europe, from ancient times there developed an attitude towards the ruler that he was never neither supported nor not supported but loved.¹⁶

Probably due to this fact it would be also wrong to say that in Russia there was slavery. Slavery - as it is usually understood - is an economical compulsion. In Russia, on the other hand, there was an educational one that was a foundation of the state system and the justification for its existence.

Ideological theories of Russia

The period of ancient Rus' is not very rich on formalised ideological concepts because as we could see people of that time did not need it but rather lived it and exactly based on their deeds future generations would try to understand what Russia is and formalise an ideological theory of it.

¹⁵ Nikolai Yakovlevich Danilevsky, *Russia and Europe: A Look at the Cultural and Political Relations of the Slavic World to the Germanic-Roman World*, 1895. Chapter X

¹⁶ Ivan Kireevsky, *Spiritual Foundations of Russian Life: Note on the attitude of the Russian people to the tsarist power*, Moscow: Institute of Russian Civilization, 2007. - 445 p.

Moscow - the third Rome

The first attempt would be the ideology of Moscow - the third Rome. This idea was first developed in the 16th century in the letters of monk Filofei from Pskov Spaso-Eliazarov Monastery.

This ideology implies that Moscow is a new and main pillar that protects the truth in the world, Christianity, after the fall of previous centers in the face of Rome and Constantinople. The fall in this case has a double meaning and suggests more an ideological rather than physical one. For example, the first Rome has fallen not after it was conquered by the barbarians in the 6th century, but after it has fallen into heresy, declaring the supremacy of the Roman church among all other Churches, and, thus, has torn its relations with the East and divided itself from the Universal Church. Constantinople has fallen after it was taken by infidels Hagareans and it lost its independence in Church affairs as well as its former power and strength in protection of Christianity. Nevertheless, the reason for that was seen in its spiritual fall, in the fact that they betrayed Christianity after uniting with the Roman Church during the Florentine Unity in 1439 when the Byzantium Emperor and a part of the clergy accepted the supremacy of the Roman Pope in the Church affairs and the further conquest and fall of Constantinople was seen as a pay for this because the meaning of existence of Constantinople as a force that protects Christianity in the world has been ceased. When the Russian Church found out that Constantinople united with Catholics they arranged a Moscow congress of 1441, where they condemned the Florentine Unity and parted from Constantinople Patriarchate and created an independent Russian Church being the only place at that time where Orthodoxy has remained, thus, saving the world Orthodoxy.¹⁷

After that Moscow has become the third Rome and remained as the only world pillar of Christianity which now has a duty of bringing into life its ideals and protecting them in the world.

He writes:

¹⁷ Professor of the Orthodox St. Tikhon's University for the Humanities, Doctor of Church History Vladislav Petruschko, July 2019, <https://xn--h1aagokeh.xn--p1ai/journal/post/5697>

“... So, with that said, let's end our discussion about it, and better say a few words about the current Orthodox reign of His Serene Highness, our Tsar, who in all God's possessions is the only King to Christians and the ruler of all holy thrones of God and His holy universal apostolic Church that arose on the place of the Roman and Constantinopolitan and exists in the Godsaved city of Moscow in the church of saint and glorious dormition of Holy Mary which in the whole world shines brighter than the sun. So you should know, my friend, that all Christian kingdoms came to an end and united in one kingdom of our Tsar according to the prophetic books, that is the Roman Kingdom: since two Romes fell, and the third one stands, and there will be no fourth one”.¹⁸

“... And according to the Great Theologian: «A woman clothed with the sun and the moon is under her feet, and a child in her arms, and immediately came a snake out of the abyss, that had seven heads and seven crowns upon his heads and he wanted to swallow the women's child. And the woman was given the wings of the great eagle in order to escape in the desert and then the snake gushed water out of his mouth, as if it was a river, to drown her in it». The water here means disbelief: you see, my friend, how all Christian kingdoms are flooded with unfaithful ones and only the Kingdom of our Tsar stands by Christ's mercy”.¹⁹

Therefore, this concept suggests that Russia has become a main pillar of Christianity not because of the physical strength but because of ideological reasons, because of the Christianity that they inherited and then managed to conserve.

An important consequence of this is also the fact that from this moment Russia is no longer a national state that lives only with its own domestic issues and develops closely, outside of the rest of the world but obtains a global goal and a global mission including in its orbit also other nations. Over time Russia will sacrifice its own national well-being and will dissolve in this mission, it will represent more of an idea, a special view on the world that can support and share also other countries around the world. Consequently, the word “Russian” will lose its distinctive national and ethnic

¹⁸ Elder Philotheus, *Epistles of the Elder Philotheus*, Library of the Literature of Ancient Rus', St. Petersburg: Nauka, 1997, p. 290-305 p., 539-542 p.

¹⁹ *ibid*

meaning, contrary to other countries, and will become more of an open identity that includes others based on their ideological compatibility.

Saint Rus'

The concept of Saint Rus' was tied with an extent with which every person and the whole society were living not for themselves but, first, were looking for God's Kingdom and His Truth. And that search of God's truth was the main distinctive characteristic of the Russian people and because of it Rus' was seen as a place of eternal kingdom of God, of truth, of life, of goodness. This was also represented by the fact the whole life of a person was filled with Christianity and was built around it, by the special attitude towards all God's people: monks, blissfuls, spiritual elders, "holy fools" that during the course of the Russians history were always the main teachers of the people and a main authority, higher than a Tsar, by the amount of monasteries, churches, and people's passion towards them and all together by the whole society that lived with Orthodoxy, by the state itself that was built on it and had as the only goal to live in the name of it. For this reason, Russia was seen as a special God's chosen place that exists solely for Christianity and has a mission of protecting it in the world.

However, the concept of Saint Rus' is tied not to special moral qualities of people, or that they lived better, more morally than any other people in other countries but more to the deep conscience of the ideal that always lived in people and which they always strove for and at the same time deep conscious of its difference with the real life. Meaning that a Russian man did not sin less than others but more sharply understood that he was sinning and, most importantly, always confessed and accepted that it was a sin.²⁰

Interestingly, out of all explanations of what Russia is this is the only one that has origins from simple people, that it was, first, formed as people's understanding of what Russia is or what it should be, and then was waved on the surface and spread further on the other parts of the society shaping the understanding of the Russian identity.

²⁰ Talberg N.D. Kievan and Moscow Rus' // The Orthodox Way (Church-Theological-Philosophical Yearbook. Supplement to the journal "Orthodox Rus"). 1966. Pp. 104-116.

A new contribution to the ideology of Saint Rus' was made by educated intelligentsia that after the revolution had to leave Russia and when being already abroad in an alien foreign surrounding, when they encountered with the Western non-religious secular society that they wanted to build at their home, changed their view on Russian history and opened for themselves a very distinctive, original country which they did not notice when they were living in it and saw only when they had to leave it. And many former revolutionaries started to make works that examine the distinctiveness of Russian ideology, people, history and its mission.

Orthodoxy, Self-rule, Peopleness

In the first quarter of the 19th century the question of Russian ideology started to be very acute. Russian Tsar Nicolas I after an attempt of revolt by a group of aristocratic officers that went through the Napoleonic wars and managed to defeat Napoleon but returned from Paris with revolutionary ideas, ordered Russian minister of education Sergey Uvarov to develop Russian ideology. And in 1832 an official answer to what Russia is was given. Russia is Orthodoxy, Self-rule, Peopleness.²¹

Orthodoxy. Orthodoxy means that Russia exists not for itself, not for its own development, for satisfying the desires of people, its own national interests and benefits but for Christianity and is fully subjected to it. Therefore, it exists not for itself but for the truth and has to maximally correspond to it.

Self-rule. The way of political management was always a special question in Russian ideology. Since Russia exists not for itself or for the desires of people but for the truth, there should be someone who would protect it. In this case the political expression of this principle is Self-rule, an idea of Tsarism, self-governance, that would best manage to meet this goal.

The Tsar in Russia, unlike the European absolute monarchies that in reality were always limited by formal or informal ways: by a document, assembly, aristocracy, had the most absolute and unlimited power in the full sense of this word. All the possible power was concentrated in his hands and nobody could limit it. All of the property and land were in his possession. Thus, an institute of property did not

²¹ S. S. Uvarov. Report on the Review of Moscow University (December 4, 1832)

exist in Russia because nobody could process anything, nobody had its own property, even in their own pockets because absolutely everything belonged to the Tsar.

In this sense the Tsar in his service to the truth, having already from his very birth and for the whole his life the most absolute power and the most absolute wealth, firstly, could not strive for this and, thus, base his politics on his own personal pragmatic interests, because they were all in the fullest extent already satisfied, secondly, is not bounded in his service - neither by politicians that can pursue their own goals nor by an opinion of people that could mistake or because of certain difficulties that the country encountered (famine, war, revolution) could forget it and choose something else, but, on the other hand, had to protect it and teach people, making sure that they follow it.

Therefore, the whole idea of the political system of Russia is that the ruler serves not to the people, unlike in Europe, but to the truth itself. And he has to build his politics based on its interests and not on the desires of people.

For this reason, for example, from the point of view of Russian ideology, Nicolas II, who is considered a saint and a martyr, was right and the people were not. He in the moment of challenge remained faithful to the truth and faithful until the end while the people were seduced and sinned.

Peopleness. Peopleness means an opposition to individualism.

The term “the people” (il popolo) does not mean all people that live in a current moment in a current territory but that unity that appears between them and makes from singles - One, the will of which as an independent actor can be defined. When the parts become the whole and that whole becomes something bigger than just a number of parts.

Moreover, in this sense the people - is a timeless notion, it is a constant, a notion given and defined. For example, it is known what resembles the Russian people and what it is like, but if that unity that appears out of people that currently live on Russian territory does not meet this definition it means that the people cannot be already called Russian. Meaning that it is not in the hands of people to choose the shape of what Russian people is but they have to try to correspond to what it should be.

In this view a democracy is not a power of the people, but of an individual. For example, the Russian people as a whole, as a unity if it is proposed: humility, goodness, love, God-fearing, truth instead of itself - to this all it will say in one voice from all of the centuries of its history - yes. But under democracy, on the other hand, from this unity is taken one single person - and is placed in front of a choice: goodness, love, truth - or his own benefit, meaning between what should be and what is right and what he wants himself. And an individual due to his corrupt nature in majority chooses exactly the latter, his own good. And that sum of individual decisions, from the point of view of the Western thought, is a will of the people.

From the point of view of Russian ideology, it is a system where it is impossible to make a choice for something good but it is ruled only by the majority of wills of individuals, in majority, corrupted: the people say “yes”, but if to split the people into individuals and tell an individual to vote, he, in majority of cases, will choose his own desires and comfort and is not ready to pay that price, to suffer those losses that may or always follow what is right. That is why, in particular, in the head of the country there should be someone who will be able to make this choice.

The reforms of Peter I

With the beginning of Peter's reforms, Russian history and, therefore, political thought divides on before and after: before the Peter Russia and after the Peter Russia. The meaning of this period is that in Russia, previously, a very closed country that was living in its own socio-cultural realm based on many centuries of its distinctive way of development, the reforms began that were aimed to rebuild Russia according to the model of European countries. In a previously very closed and isolated country a window into Europe was now opened. Huge reforms were undertaken in politics, culture, economy, state institutions, education and many more - the reforms which began to reshape all spheres of Russian society in order to organise its life on new European principles.²²

Nevertheless, the undertaken reforms had an ambiguous character. They changed the usual image of Russia quite substantially, and yet the inner life of the

²² Nikolai Yakovlevich Danilevsky, *Russia and Europe: A Look at the Cultural and Political Relations of the Slavic World to the Germanic-Roman World*, 1895. Chapter XI

society was influenced much less and mainly left the same. If to look closely we can see that many reforms had a superficial character and did not or could not change the fundamental sides of the Russian society and, therefore, they changed only the form while the essence remained the same - something that will be seen quite often in future when Russia adopted something from Europe and then in European form poured in its own content. For example, Peter wanted to change the previous Russian aristocracy and made them change their habits, put on European suits and shave their beards but their morals and world view did not change. And the same would be correct in relation to Peter himself. Another example that is usually given that can quite concisely summarise the character of reforms as well Peter's understanding of Europeanisation is that he took the printing press from Europe but left the freedom of speech abroad.

Probably, the main meaning of these reforms was in the fact that they placed Russia on the Western rails by accepting the Western organisation of society as a norm and ideal to which they should move and at the same time left the fundamental distinctive characteristics of Russian society and state that do not or could not correspond to it. Therefore, the more Russia was Europeanising and going away from its original path by introducing foreign Western elements into it the more contradictions were increasing - that in turn was leading it to the culmination of the Western development - revolution.

As we said, the state management was represented by self-rule. However, in reality such a form of governance did not always exist in Russia and self-rule appeared relatively recently: out of the whole history of Russia it existed only in the last two centuries before the revolution: in the 18th and 19th century. Such concentration of power was justified that in such a way the truth would be protected better and the ruler would not be limited by anything or anyone in its saving, meaning in executing the main reason why he was given power.

Nevertheless, apart from the obvious risks of giving an absolute power in the hands of one man, we could repeatedly witness during Russian history that self-rule did manage to cope with its task. For example, Peter I or Elizabeth II which based on self-rule and unlimited power in their hands by force Europeanised Russia. In reality,

self-rule appeared exactly under Peter I who concentrated in his hands absolute power in order to be able to undertake his reforms. And self-rule represents itself more of a Western, more precisely Roman-Catholic ideal of power, where the most unlimited personal power in the hands of one man is a main principle of power philosophy.

Previously, the political system in Russia was based not on self-rule but on the synthesis of power of the Tsar and the Patriarch.²³ For that reason there was an institute of Patriarchy that always complemented the power of the Tsar and that was abolished by the same Peter I.

Therefore, before the XVII century Russian the system was based not on self-rule but on symbiosis of power: the Tsar who from his birth renounced his interests and offered himself and his life to the serving of truth. And the Patriarch, a man often from simple people, who by his life proved his loyalty in his serving to this truth. And that unity based on humility and refusing each other's will for the sake of truth could protect it and each other so that somebody of them instead of it did not want to make his own wishes. And that was the system by which the truth could be maintained and protected.

On the other hand, the Roman-Catholic way of protecting the truth by a strict vertical towards one person (Pope) fails to meet its objective. This strict vertical leads to an acceptance that this one person is always right and is not able to make mistakes even if he does them and becomes, as in Catholic Church, “sinless” and, therefore, instead of being someone who protects the truth becomes the one who substitutes the truth with himself. And as we could see based on the history of the Roman Church that brought many novelties and deviations to it and on many other historical examples where this principle was used, the way of protecting the truth by a strict vertical is not able to accomplish its goal.

Another important change that is related to the epoch of the reforms is that from this period a split appeared in society. If before Russia resembled something whole, independent and harmonic, now, on the other hand, the question arose: “What is Russia?”, “Is Russia Europe or not?” Over time this split in society only increased. The common people, who still preserved Orthodox Russian identity, along with clergy

²³ Archbishop Seraphim (Sobolev), Russian ideology, Sofia: Type. “Rakhvira”, 1939, 180 p. Ch. 6

and the Tsar responded negatively and advocated that Russia is not Europe but is something different and original. The intelligentsia, on the other hand, responded positively and saw Russia not as something independent and unique, but all of the distinctive features of the Russian society which made it different from Europe, considered more as a deviation, as something that should be changed and reformed so that they would become like in Europe.²⁴ The Russian society at that time was divided into classes: peasants, clergy, nobility and “city dwellers” (usually vendors, small and huge). The intelligentsia, on the other hand, mostly consisted of the people that did not belong to any of these classes. Usually they were the people that originated from peasantry, clergy or small vendors that received a secular education in universities and remained to work in the cities usually engaged in intellectual work. Nevertheless, in the class of intelligentsia it is also appropriate to include a huge part of the high society: nobility and aristocrats that in many cases shared the same pro-Western opinion and that in the beginning of the XX century served as the main driving force for revolution.²⁵

In this sense Russian intelligentsia represents an absolutely unique phenomenon which is hardly seen anywhere else. In all of the countries the intelligentsia - is the first ones from their people which are the brightest representatives of all distinctive characteristics of their nationality and from the deep down of it express its essence, exactly about such people it is possible to say that they are their country, that they resemble its main meaning and main idea. In Russia, on the contrary, intelligentsia is a part of the Russian people that represented a foreign idea.

Despite that the main objective of intelligentsia was the people and its good for which they were advocating, a huge problem for them remained their isolation from the people and that they hardly knew it. It is fair to say that Russian intelligentsia represented a part of foreigners that were living in Russia: it spoke mainly foreign languages, lived completely in a European cultural space, was raised on European books and had European education and because of that looked on Russian people

²⁴ Comp. B. A. Uspensky, Russian Intelligentsia and Western Intellectualism: History and Typology, Proceedings of the International Conference, Naples, May 1997

²⁵ Metropolitan Tikhon (Shevkunov Georgy Alexandrovich; Metropolitan). Death of the Empire. Russian lesson, Moscow: Free Wanderer, 2024, 400 p.

through the European glasses, and if to do so follows a conclusion that Russian people are enslaved and deprived from their freedoms by the despotic state that consciously does it.

Because of it from this time until today we can say that the intelligentsia divided into two parts. The one that does not know the people and, therefore, pity it thinking that it is in slavery and oppressed. And another one which knows the people and knows that the Russian state is just a representation of the ideals of the Russian people itself (and if criticized by the people, criticized only that it is not Russian enough) and, therefore, wants to make Russia Europe by force.

The Metropolitan of Yaroslavl, Tikhon, future first Patriarch of Moscow and all Rus' after the restoration of Patriarchy, in his sermon related to the incoming news about the riots in one concise phrase described the meaning of that rivalry that was happening in Russia at that time and will continue further in its history: "Our intelligentsia in its desire to be Europeans, condemned the people and hated the government."²⁶

Over time this split in society only raised and, finally, resulted in revolution.

Slavophiles

Slavophiles in the 40-50s of the 19th century were the first ones that noticed that divide, that contradiction between the whole history of Russia and its current development, between what Russia resembled on the course of the centuries and that unnatural position in which it was placed after the Peter's reforms that rebuilt Russian life on a new European ground that is in many cases alien to it. They also noticed that gap that existed between the people with its world view which remained the same as in previous centuries and the highest class, intelligentsia, nobles, aristocrats which by that time were already oriented on the West to which they tried to be similar. Having noticed that, Slavophiles tried to open this original Russian identity which now was hidden and already unknown, incomprehensible to the high educated society. They advocated for the return to the original roots of Russian life which they saw in the

²⁶ Patriarch Tikhon. - 3rd ed., suppl. - M.: Mol. Gvardia, 2004. - 383[1] p.: ill. Life of remarkable people: Biogr. Series; Issue 877). Chapter: Yaroslavl period

spiritual religious foundation of Russia - Orthodoxy, by placing it back on its natural path of development and excluding alien Western influence.

Universality and unity with other countries which would all together resemble a brotherhood based on equality and love is one of the main objectives of Orthodoxy which later was inherited by Russia and, thus, became one of the most characteristic traits of Russian ideology, that never thought only about Russia but always tried to define its global mission and its relations to the world. This element of unity Slavophiles were basing on nationality, on slavism. They were advocating for the unity of slavs in Europe (Russians, Polish, Serbians etc) attributing to them one common identity, against the German nations that oppressed them and by such they were planning to rebalance the order of power in Europe.²⁷

Communist revolution

After 1917 the power in Russia was taken by the bolsheviks. The very fact that bolsheviks managed to get power is a paradox worth its own examination. Bolsheviks represented by themselves the most radical out of all radical and the most marginal out of the most marginal political forces that existed in Russia at that time even among all the revolutionary parties. Bolsheviks did not represent any substantial group of the society. If there were parties that represented intelligentsia, peasants, aristocracy, army, industrialists or holders of huge capital, the bolsheviks represented the proletariat meaning that part of society that was almost absent in Russia and had to be first created in order to be later supported. But if among intelligentsia and other revolutionary parties they could find at least something common, the most alien and unusual force they were for the 100 million Russian Orthodox people itself.

Indeed, out of previous chapters we could make an impression about what Russian ideology, Russian people, its values and ideals represent and in relation to that communism was not something different but something completely opposite. Communism - is the most radical Western project where the prerequisites of rationality, materialism and Godlessness were brought to a maximum limit, meaning everything that fundamentally contradicted Russian ideology. If for a Russian person

²⁷ M.A. Shirokova, Slavophiles as the founders of Russian National Philosophy, BBK 87.3

the main purpose of his life was to live for God, in communism - a human becomes a measure of all things, if in Orthodoxy the main is spiritual and the material is seen as something that should be neglected, in communism material is the only important thing. If in Orthodoxy a person is a living soul that always strives for the good and love but because of his weakness does not always do that, in communism every person is a conscious pragmatist, who only looks for his own benefit for the bad of others and united with the same people by the principle of classes, to which they belong, fight with the rest. If in Orthodoxy society - is a unity based on love and humility towards each other and on the desire of the wills of others over your own, in communism - society is a ground of war, where people divided into classes are in a constant conflict, each looking for its own benefit. If in Orthodoxy a unity in society is based on humility and love, in communism there is collectivism based on envy towards material incomes of each other and because of it forceful equalisation of everyone. If in Orthodoxy the main value is love and mercy towards others, and justice was seen as something much lower, simpler, where there is no truth, but only a person's prideful opinion on it, in communism the only objective is a fight for that image of just society that they drew. If on an international level in Orthodoxy the goal is a unity of all nations based on love and solidarity, in communism - a spread of rivalry in one society on all others and a unity of one part of society through the fight with all others.²⁸ If for Russian people patriotism was always important as well as love towards their motherland, careful attitude towards their history and culture, communists, on the other hand, from the very beginning saw themselves not as a new Russian government but as an international force for which Russia was only a material which they could use to spread the revolution on other countries and Russia as well as any other country was seen as a temporary phenomenon, and neither history of Russia that was seen only as a history of oppression of one class by another, nor culture that was a product of that oppressive society, were perceived or treated as a value.

Nevertheless, with help of well organised arm groups of revolutionaries they managed to get power in the state and started to undertake their reforms.

²⁸ Victor Aksyuchits, Russian philosopher, theologian, publicist, political and statesman, People's Deputy of the RSFSR (1990-1993), , December 16, 2003, <https://pravoslavie.ru/76.html>

The main idea of communism is to build a perfect society, a heaven but on earth, which constitutes in the organisation of society in a way which would maximally satisfy the needs of a person, mainly material ones, but also cultural, social etc.

Communist world view consisted of all progressive Western views: humanism, progress, rationality, social equality, justice, materialism etc. Therefore, after the revolution the main ideology of Russia was building communism.

Nevertheless, very soon the theory collided with reality and the initial plan started to diverge with it more and more.

For example, according to communism its construction is possible only on an international level, under the condition of revolution in all countries. But in 1921 bolsheviks were defeated in the war with Poland which, in turn, put an end to an export of revolution to Europe and led to a decision of building communism in one country. Later when they were exercising their policies inside the state they also had to compromise with communist ideology and adjust it to practice.

In the first decades of establishment of the bolshevik government the state and the people were in a condition of struggle and fight. Only after the Second World War which united the state and the people under common disasters, when the efforts of the state and the people were focused on protection of the country and then during the post-war times on resolving practical issues of its reconstruction, when a new government already stepped back from its initial communist ideology and represented more a national power which was occupied not by bringing into life its theory but by particular national issues of social and economic policies of the state and providing of its international security, only after that the confrontation between the new government and the people was finished and the new rule was settled and accepted.

Over time this process continued, communist ideology continued to dissolve, wash out and as a remainder were left only those main traits that were always present in the Russian state.

For that reason Russia approached the 90th without any particular ideology. Declared communist ideology by that time was only a formality that already did not mean anything particular but mainly meant only the protection of Russian sovereignty

from the West, which due to absence of any other mean was expressed by communist slogans.

There is a very widespread view that there is a lot in common between the Soviet Union and previous Russia. This is mostly related to the fact that Russia did not become a free country (did not become a liberal democracy), also to some similarities in their ideology, in organisation of society, and in foreign policies.

In reality, there is a similarity only between the external sides while the essence of these sides is fundamentally different.

The Soviet Union represented itself a construction externally very similar to Russia but without the main pillar that was taken away from it why the whole construction has distorted, all of the virtues represented something either perverted in comparison to original, or much lower, ruder, simpler and because of it the whole building in such distorted look managed to stand only for 70 years.

The virtues of communism, of Soviet society were like a projection of heavenly originals of them but on earth, without a spirit in them and reproduced only the material side, why they looked so distorted, incomplete, plain and, without a spirit, followed the life cycle of the materia and, eventually, decomposed.²⁹

²⁹ Archpriest John Vostorgov, The Complete Works of Archpriest John Vostorgov in 5 volumes, Socialism in the Light of Christianity, St. Petersburg: Tsarskoe Delo Publishing House, 716 p., Vol. 5, part 1

Chapter 2. Ideological development of Russia from 1991 to 2022

The Soviet Union fell in 1991. There are many explanations of why this could happen. The established approach used by many researchers is to examine different economic and socio-political issues that the Soviet Union had and suggest that they led to its disintegration. For example, some perceive the Soviet Union as something that was initially doomed to collapse due to insolvency of its economic system and the question was only when would it happen, others, on the other hand, explain the reason for its fall by the pressure from the West and incapability to compete with it anymore etc.¹

In my opinion, it is obvious that none of the social, economic, or political reasons cannot serve as an explanation of the collapse of the Soviet Union since Russia lived through much worse economic and socio-political turbulences in its history. The main reason was ideological one - that people could no longer understand why they should endure all of the issues and inconveniences in the Soviet Union that were, in one way or another, always present in Russia, while there is a pleasant picture of the West across the border. The generation of the Soviet citizens that still remembered the Second World War, whose parents witnessed the Civil War and the generations prior to them always lived through the periods of crop failure and famine so that the forest became their only nourisher, could stand in a queue for groceries or deal with other inconveniences of the everyday Soviet life. Therefore, the main reason for the fall of the Soviet Union was the ideological reason, that by that time nobody had any reason to protect it as well as a desire to make those sacrifices that were needed to save the ideology towards which the people were already indifferent. It turned out that to invent new weapons and build new factories that produce them, what the Soviet Union was successfully doing, was not enough for providing its sovereignty, but the main thing was to explain why you do it, with what the Soviet

¹ Zubok, Vladislav M., Collapse: The Fall of the Soviet Union, Yale University Press, 2021

Union had particular problems.² That is why the understanding of why the fight should be continued disappeared and the Soviet Union gave up, agreeing to destroy their weapons and sell their factories.

For that reason when we say the fall of the Soviet Union we should understand that it did not fall due to a particular economic, social, military or political issue which occurred and which the government did not manage to resolve but, quite contrarily, the government of that time voluntarily renounced its further existence. The leaders of that time were captivated by the image of the Western society and the Soviet Union could no longer fit into it. For that reason they decided to renounce the Soviet Union and lead a country to a new Western path of development. In 1991 the leaders of the three founding Republics of the Soviet Union: Russia, Belarus and Ukraine secretly gathered at the state dacha in Belavezhskaya Pushcha near the Polish border (so that in case of the failure they could flee to the West) and signed over the head of the Soviet president a treaty that established the Commonwealth of Independent States which practically meant the cease of the Soviet Union existence and creation of new independent states on its place. After that they phoned the American president to announce their decision. Then they informed the rest of the country that the Soviet Union does not exist anymore.³ Therefore, the reason for the fall of the Soviet Union is not any social, political or economic issue, but ideological one, that the leaders of that time shared already by themselves the Western ideology and gave away the Soviet Union voluntarily.

Nevertheless, these issues also played their role because the dialogue about the future of the Soviet Union appeared when the state began its attempts to resolve many of the economic and social problems that it had.

The understanding of the necessity of reforms had been growing for many decades in the Soviet Union. And in the 80s when they finally began along with simple modernization of the economy, ideological changes started to be implemented as well: liberal reforms on the domestic level and rapprochement with the West on the

² Boris Kapustin, Ideology and the Collapse of the Soviet System and Its Continuity in Modern Russia, No. 6, November/December, 2016, <https://globalaffairs.ru/articles/ideologiya-i-krah-sovetskogo-stroya/>

³ Textbook of Modern Russian History. History of Russia: A Textbook for Universities, Ed. Yu. A. Petrov. – Moscow: Nauka, 2024. – 521 p. §101. The Collapse of the USSR, p. 413

international one. The main question that became increasingly obvious as the reforms went further is whether to reform the Soviet Union introducing some Western changes or to renounce it completely. Since the ideological element of the Soviet Union was almost absent by that time and communism resembled already only a name without an essence, it meant whether to reform Russia saving its state sovereignty and independence or to completely redirect Russia to the Western path which meant to put it under Western influence.

Gorbachev, the head of the Soviet Union, who started the process of the reforms tried to go in the middle advocating in favour of serious reforms such as more political liberties and establishing friendly relationships with the West but at the same time he was trying to save the Soviet Union in this new reality. Nevertheless, this process of liberalisation and decentralisation of power opened a huge space for the critique of the Soviet Union and brought to the political arena the players who had different opinion on the Soviet future. The most prominent of them was the president of the Russian Republic, Boris Yeltsin, who became the main opponent of Gorbachev and actively advocated in favour of renouncement of the Soviet Union and creation of independent Russia. This political debate was happening in the background of huge social and economic problems which could not be resolved due to political disagreements between the sides. Quite soon the situation in the state started to be critical. This, in turn, gave rise to anti-Western opposition that disagreed with the current political course. That resulted in the Soviet coup attempt in 1991. A group of old communist party officials who named themselves “the State Committee on the State of Emergency” saw an increasing chaos and disintegration of state as well as the loss of the Soviet influence on the international arena and decided to take power in their hands and lead Russia away from the path of pro-Western reforms. They arrested the Soviet president on his dacha in Crimea and made a statement before the people saying that the president cannot perform his duties due to his health condition and declared a regime of emergency announcing their orders to be compulsory for execution. The meaning of their statement was that the liberal reforms were over and the Soviet Union came back. After that Yeltsin stood in opposition to them and barricaded in the White House with other pro-democratic forces starting to issue

orders against the Emergency Committee. Despite the fact that the army and special forces were in the hands of the Emergency Committee they lacked a political will for decisive actions, meaning a clear ideological explanation of their actions for themselves and for the people, and Yeltsin with the support of pro-liberal protesters managed to stand and keep the White House. After that the militia was withdrawn from Moscow and the Emergency Committee announced its self-dissolution. Then Yeltsin freed Gorbachev and from this moment he gained a huge popularity and had in his hands real power in the country since the activity of the communist party and the communist institutions which provided the power to Gorbachev were suspended. Soon he removed Gorbachev with his course of keeping the Soviet Union and in 1991 a treaty of renouncement of Soviet existence was signed.⁴

After the fall of the Soviet Union the main ideology of the newly created state, Russian Federation, was to become Europe, which meant integration of Russia into global Western society and reformation of the state by European standards to become an ordinary European country.

And that objective was clearly declared and all of the state's and society's efforts were focused on its realisation.

For that reason a series of huge reforms began in Russia: from politics, economy, law, constitution to education, medicine, culture that were to change the very foundation of all Russian institutions. The main difference of these reforms from any of the previous attempts to reform Russia is that this time their aim was to reform not the form (by modernization, bringing technologies etc) but the very essence of the Russian state and society.

The ideological system of this period from the 90s and onwards represented: the main official ideology - which is to become Europe, and different political forces around it, both official and outside of the official system, that can be divided on: liberal forces, patriotic forces and pragmatists.

Liberal forces represented the liberal part of society which related to the government based on its main objective - to become Europe - either loyally,

⁴ Textbook of Modern Russian History. History of Russia: A Textbook for Universities, Ed. Yu. A. Petrov. – Moscow: Nauka, 2024. – 521 p. §101. The Collapse of the USSR, p. 412

supporting its activity of reformation of the state, or being in opposition to it, criticising how this process was undertaken, meaning that the reformation was happening not fast enough or with certain drawbacks.

At that time liberal ideology occupied the main position in the country and the Western view was dominant everywhere: in politics, economy, culture, ideology etc. It was considered as that ideal for the state as well as for people based on which they should organize their life. The objective of the reforms was to rebuild the Russian society on the deepest level so that the most basic and fundamental sides of it such as: what is a human, what way of life is right, and what rights and obligations a person should have, his relationships with other people in society, with a state - all of these aspects now should have been answered in the Western manner. The reforms were aimed not just to change Russian society externally but to change the very way of thinking and the view of a person on the world.

Because of that, for example, a Russian man whose life was always determined by the state of duty - towards other people, society, the state, now was liberated from any obligation and, on the other hand, became an independent individual and in such a position that others are obliged to him, to his personality and individuality. If before the relationship between a man and his country were built on patriotism, meaning on love of a person towards his country, no matter of the issues that his country may have, now between them there were solely pragmatic relationships, i.e. that Russia existed only as mechanism of income redistribution that provided him certain public goods: economic development so that he could have a good salary, health insurance, city infrastructure, roads, - and a good attitude towards his country he can have only when it performs its functions well.

The liberal view on what Russia is, on its history and its role today was also dominant at that time.

The liberal view suggests that the history of Russia represents a mistake, consisting in the fact that it deviated from the correct European path, and a series of failures when during its history the attempts were made to return Russia back on it, and now a new historical opportunity appeared to reform the state and to place Russia on a right path of development.

Because of that any view on Russia as something separate, distinctive or any patriotic sentiment that tried to separate Russia from the West and position it as something independent were criticised and shown as something not serious, that does not correspond to the current historical moment.

Probably in not a single period of Russian history the liberal part of society was so dominant in all spheres of life. The main difference was that if before it was only a part of the ideological landscape in Russia, that could control culture, education and was concentrated in small circles of academic society or intelligentsia now the state itself agreed with it and accepted its ideology. In this sense all of the other political movements in society were marginal in relation to the liberal one.⁵

Another political force that existed at that time was patriotic opposition. It included communists, nationalists, traditionalists and other political forces that were united based on their antipathy towards the Western path which Russia was following and support of Russian sovereignty from the West. Most of these movements had a very weak ideological character but rather simply stood for independence of Russia from the West and in favour of national interests instead of alignment with the interests of the global Western community. Because of it they had a wide support among ordinary people.

It was particularly popular in the beginning of new liberal reforms, when the first results of them turned out for many people as a socio-political and economic collapse, followed by uncontrolled growth of prices, non-payment of pensions, salaries, closure of factories and loss of jobs.

For that reason all of the political forces that denied the new liberal political course united and stood in opposition to the state.

Interestingly the support of anti-democratic forces was based on democratic institutions, on an elective parliament, where the opposition was concentrated. And, on the other hand, the forces that wanted to democratise and westernise Russia were represented by a centralised state power in the face of the president. The confrontation between them began when the Congress of People's Deputies of Russia and the

⁵ Trofimov A. V. The Liberal concept of Russian history // History and modern perspectives. 2020. Vol. 2. №3. P. 11-19

Supreme Soviet of Russia expressed their dissatisfaction with a new radical course of reforms initiated by president Yeltsin and his administration. For that reason the deputies started to make a coalition in order to remove the president. Yeltsin, on the other hand, named the situation of “dual power” that existed in the country the main reason for the failure of the reforms and advocated for a transfer of power from the deputies to the president. In 1993 Yeltsin signed an order on a constitutional reform that would eliminate The Congress of People's Deputies of Russia and the Supreme Soviet of Russia (that could make changes in constitution and impeach the president). In response the deputies refused to obey the order and signed a resolution that terminated the power of the president. Following the example from 1991 they barricaded themselves in the White House supported by the street protesters that started to spontaneously gather around it. Nevertheless, the patriotic opposition was suppressed after the White House was shot by the president's forces. That reaffirmed the president's supremacy and gave in his hands all of the power that he wanted.⁶ Therefore, after that event instead of democracy, an official ideology returned to Russia which now was democracy.

Later during the 2000s patriotic forces resembled a marginal part of society that continued to exist on a periphery of the political processes, whose voice was almost unheard, while Russia continued to move on the path of Western reforms and integrate into global Western society.

The third political force at that time was a pragmatic force. The period of reforms gave not only a chance for different political movements to debate on the future of Russia but also provided a huge space for personal enrichment and many tried to use these new opportunities in their own interests.

Indeed, the refusal of communist ideology, of your own sovereignty in favour of the West and higher living standards was seen by many as a refusal of any ideology in general. That is why another view that was very widespread in Russia at that time along with the liberal one was a solely pragmatic approach deprived of any moral principles except of your own benefit. It is fair to say that along with “freedom and

⁶ Textbook of Modern Russian History. History of Russia: A Textbook for Universities, Ed. Yu. A. Petrov. – Moscow: Nauka, 2024. – 521 p. §101. The Collapse of the USSR, p. 417

democracy” “everything is allowed, and the main thing is only money” was the second official slogan of the Russian Federation in the period from 1991 to 2022. That is why at that time one of the main purposes of the existence of Russia, that was building Europe on its ground, was that it was possible to make a lot of money in it and take them abroad where this Europe was already built.

Such a view on this period as exceptionally cynical is very widespread among common people which during the liberal reforms and democratisation of the country that turned out for them as a huge trouble also repeatedly witnessed many cases of fraud and corruption that came along with these reforms.⁷

Due to this the period from 1991 to 2022 is seen as a period deprived of any ideology, where the only important thing was money, as a period of moral decay, collapse of the state in the background of the total westernisation of the country and loss of its sovereignty that eventually strongly reaffirmed in the conscience of the people negative attitude towards the West.⁸

The development of Russia itself during these three decades after the fall of the Soviet Union up until 2022 can be characterised as a gradual process of stumbling over the inner political contradictions as well as the events on an international level that was increasingly leading it to the refusal of the Western course.

After the fall of the Soviet Union Russia took a role of a democratic country but, nevertheless, over time started to show its incapability and, more importantly, non-desire to act in such a way when the results of the democratization of the country started to appear - when the government said that “more freedom - is good” but when they saw that “more freedom - is good” also means more dissoluteness, disorder and immorality they started to be less and less able to tolerate something that contradicted its whole previous historical and ideological development.

⁷ Survey: Russia in the 1990s: Days of Defeat or Victory? The campaign to whitewash the image of the 1990s proved incapable of overcoming the resistance of the living memory of the majority of Russians, WCIOM, December 8, 2015

⁸ Survey: Western influence and Russian culture. Over the past two decades, the proportion of Russians who negatively assess Western influence on our civilization and culture has grown significantly, WCIOM, August 23, 2022; Survey: Perceptions of friendly and unfriendly countries, relations with the West, attitudes toward certain countries, and destinations for international travel, Levada, June 5, 2025

Because of it a huge dissonance appeared in Russia between what it did and what it said, when Russia continued to position itself as a democratic country, to confess its commitment to democratic course and its principles but at the same time could not behave in such a way.

If before Russia was openly stating that democracy is something unacceptable and it will fight against it and by such untying its arms for an open confrontation against revolutionaries and Western influence and at the same time could count on the people's support having a moral rightness on its side. Now it found itself in such a situation when it had to behave in the way it cannot, does not want and thinks as something deeply not right but at the same time cannot openly declare that.

And because of that, now any of its fight lost any legitimacy and was seen as a purposeful lie and deception, and not the inner inability to follow these principles. Therefore, it kept fighting with opposition and Western influence but continued to say that it was democracy. Because of it the liberal part of society perceived the government as a conscious autocratic regime the main goal of which is a hold of power and personal enrichment (preserved high level of corruption fitted quite well into this picture) that it does by any means necessary including deceptions and oppressions. Indeed, the Western view was so dominant, and was seen so unquestionable that many from liberal opposition could not believe that Russia acts in such a way because it actually thinks so and not because of its corrupt interests. And because of that inability to allow themselves a thought of the non-universality of the Western worldview, everything that was left for the opposition was to explain any action of the government by its evil intention.

The reason for that ambiguous position is, firstly, Russian indecisiveness to stand against the Western order and its values that were completely dominant in the world at that time. Secondly, an absence of an ideological alternative to the Western view that was present in the world. And the best example of it is Russia itself: on the one hand, Russian lost its own identity, and, on the other hand, it had the Western ideology that was introduced into Russian society with such force and non-alternativeness in the period of undisputed Western dominance, so that when eventually Russia began to behave itself like Russia again it could no longer

ideologically explain its own behaviour. Therefore, Russia not only did not dare to stand against the Western view but already did not have anything to offer against it except its own feeling of rightness which it could not express by any clear ideological system.

The relationships between the state and the people were also due to a certain ambiguity. Now when the state tries to justify its anti-democratic policies (e.g. more order, censorship, fight with foreign influence etc.), deep down being very anti-democratic itself, before the people which never needed any justification for this and always supported the state in this sense, in the end it also reassures its strong commitment to democracy leaving people with an awkward smile on their faces. Therefore, a clear ideological connection that always existed between the state and the people was lost and now their dialogue looked as if both of them were not allowed to speak freely or as if two natives were taken away from their mother tongue and had to communicate with each other with a foreign one.

All of the Russian distinctive characteristics were also speaking against it since they became already unfit for that Western course which it continued to declare and that, in turn, led to many contradictions between the state and the society. If before the material disorder in the country or corruption were unpleasant but still quite an ordinary fact of Russian society, maybe a pay for having all of the state's attention focused on non-material things that were supposed to cover these disadvantages. Now, on the other hand, when the state itself accepted that the material and financial relationships between the state and society were the only relationships that exist between them and the state is only an agent of redistribution of people's incomes, then a fact of corruption now becomes something extraordinary and that cannot have any excuse. In reality in the broad sense not the state but a Russian person himself became to be unfit for that new course, because many characteristics of the Russian state are just a projection of distinctive characteristics of a Russian person himself, including his negligence towards material things and non-attentiveness towards the arrangement of his everyday surroundings. They started to expect a German order and organisation from a Russian person, while both of them had very different historical development

which shaped the distinctive national person that also resulted in different characteristics of the states.

The same processes Russia was experiencing also on the international level. After the fall of the Soviet Union Russia began to integrate into the global Western community. Nevertheless, during the period from 1991 to 2022 there were a number of issues that stood in its way.

First of all, on the international level there were more and more events about which its opinion diverged from the global Western one, when theoretically Russia was included in the community of Western countries, but could not agree with its policies that were contradicting its fundamental views on international relations and how the states should interact with each other and, thus, it increasingly often stepped into the debate over different issues occurring on an international arena. Mainly, it is related to the Western perception of sovereignty and its position that the installment of democratic regime is a legitimate reason for the intervention into domestic affairs of a foreign country. At the end of the 20th century this policy found its use in the Middle East in the wars in Iraq (2004), Afghanistan (2001-2021) and Libya (2011). In all of these cases the justification for the war was a regime change and transfer of the country to a democracy.⁹ Besides a direct confrontation the US also actively funded “democracy assistance programmes” financing non-profit organisations, media and oppositions in different countries all over the world which, in Russian point of view, means an intervention into their domestic policy and promotion of pro-Western view and reforms or if resisted revolutions.¹⁰ Such Western policy deeply contradicted the Russian view on sovereignty. In its opinion a state has a right to choose its own identity even if it does not correspond to the Western standards. That is why, for

⁹ The Long, Sad History of U.S. Regime Change Promises by Robert Satloff, Mar 2, 2026 <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/long-sad-history-us-regime-change-promises>; Wood, Ruairidh. “Promoting Democracy or Pursuing Hegemony? An Analysis of U.S. Involvement in the Middle East.” *Journal of Global Faultlines* 6, no. 2 (2019): 166–85. <https://doi.org/10.13169/jglobfaul.6.2.0166>.

¹⁰ Žielys, Povilas, and Rūta Rudinskaitė. “US Democracy Assistance Programs in Ukraine after the Orange Revolution.” *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, vol. 47, no. 1, 2014, pp. 81–91. JSTOR, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48609802>. Accessed 22 May 2026; USAID Spent More than \$1 Billion to Build Democracy in Moldova: What Happens Now? by Corina Cepoi, issue 2026 <https://oig.usaid.gov/dem-human-gov>; <https://harriman.columbia.edu/usaaid-spent-more-than-1-billion-to-build-democracy-in-moldova-what-happens-now/>

example, the leaders of these countries were called legitimate by Russia since the countries have different historical development, and democracy is not the only legitimate way of organisation of political life.¹¹

Second of all, despite the fact that Russia declared to be a Western country and expressed its loyalty to this course, it felt an unequal treatment in international relations, and often could notice that the image of an enemy or a competitor remained in the Western view on Russia and its policies towards it. The new world order that appeared after the fall of the Soviet Union which Russia increasingly saw as an unjust played a particularly important role.

The issue is that initially the process of convergence of the Soviet Union with the West was seen as a process of reconciliation of the sides. For this reason there was supposed to be created a new European system of security that would be built not on the fact of rivalry between the West and Russia but on equal cooperation for their mutual benefit and development. In particular, for such purpose the Soviet Union agreed on withdrawal of troops from Eastern Europe bearing in mind that the rivalry came to an end and they did not need a buffer zone anymore. In reality, after the withdrawal of troops from Eastern Europe these countries were occupied by the forces of the Western bloc and the policy of the Soviet Union started to be seen not as a voluntary move but as a capitulation. Quite soon the new system of security that was supposed to be based on equality and include the interests of both sides began to be a sole Western dominance which later throughout the 2000s in many cases neglected the Russian interests.¹²

Probably it would be fair to say that the reason of misunderstanding between the West and Russia is in the fact that the West is not used to take into account anyone's opinion in its foreign policy except of the Western one, Russia, on the other hand, no matter how hard it tried is not a Western country, and the West itself understood it and never saw it as such.

¹¹ Speech by Vladimir Putin and Selected Reactions, Munich Security Conference 2007

¹² Interview. Vladimir Putin explained the nature of the contradictions between Russia and the West, July 13, 2025; Expanded Board meeting, December 17. Putin: Since the collapse of the USSR, the West has resolved all issues with Russia from a position of strength. 12/17/2025; Interview. Putin: The West decided to ignore Russia's interests after the collapse of the USSR. July 13, 2025

Therefore, a gradual latent increase of contradictions was developing in Russia both on a domestic as well as international level until, eventually, it did not openly refuse the Western course.

Chapter 3. Russian ideology after 2022

In 2022 a Ukrainian war began and Russia openly stood against the West. It is important to understand, though, that the Ukrainian war itself is not the reason for today's increasing confrontation between Russia and the West but it served only as a trigger that let free the contradictions that have been growing between them for many years. Probably it would be fair to say that when you have a misunderstanding with a friend - you try to negotiate, when you have a misunderstanding with an enemy - you confront him. And Russia and the West came to 2022 exactly in such kind of relationships between each other.

From the Russian point of view, the main reason for the beginning of confrontation is that the West systematically neglected Russian interests.¹ And in this case a misunderstanding over the situation in Ukraine was only the last drop that was needed for an open conflict.

The reason for the Ukrainian war itself Russia divides into two parts: the international and the domestic one. The international reason is tied to NATO expansion. Indeed NATO expansion that has been taking place over the 30 years after the fall of the Soviet Union played an important role in the increasing confrontation between Russia and the West.

Russia perceives the problem of NATO expansion in such a way that NATO is a military organisation. At a certain point Russia expressed a desire to join NATO but received a rejection. Nevertheless, NATO year after year gets closer to its borders. That is why if for the West NATO expansion is a freewill joining of new member states, for Russia it is a growing global military threat. In the past years, when relationships between Russia and the West were still in a good condition, Russia repeatedly pointed out this contradiction, stating that despite good relationships,

¹ Interview. Putin: The USSR was liquidated in the hopes of joining the West. July 13, 2025; Treaty between the Russian Federation and the United States of America on Security Guarantees. December 17, 2021

Russia from the point of view of its strategic security cannot perceive this situation differently.²

The second reason for the war is an inner political situation in Ukraine itself. The main point of it is that Ukraine is a multinational country but after the overthrow of the government in 2014 it started to implement mononational policy. Russia repeatedly mentioned that historically Ukraine was never a one country with one national consciousness, but was always a state composed from different parts that were joined to it in different times.³ It is especially clear on the example of the 20th century when the bolsheviks in many cases drew the borders based not on historical or cultural affiliation but on convenience of their administrative management and many of the territories were joined to Ukraine exactly in such a way.⁴ And in its borders after 1991 it could exist as one country only when it had in its state the governance that accepted this fact and in its policies could satisfy the interests of both major groups: Ukrainians on the West that inclined more to Europe and Russians on the East that inclined more to Russia. And Russia preserved this consensus after the disintegration of the Soviet Union and did not demand from Ukraine to return any of its historical lands under the condition that the interests of Russians will be protected on these territories. Nevertheless, after the change of governance in 2014, the state began to exercise policies only in the interests of one part of the society and Ukraine took a path on building the national state, meaning exercising such policies that in Ukraine should live only Ukrainians, that led to the beginning of the civil war: between Ukrainians and Russians. And Russia joined this war with a goal to end it and protect the interests of Russians living in Ukraine.⁵

From the Russian point of view these are the main reasons for the ongoing conflict between Russia and the West which in a particular case resulted in the war in Ukraine.

² Interview. Putin: The agreement on NATO's non-expansion to the East should have been put on paper. June 13, 2017; Joint News Conference with President George Bush of the United States of America, Ljubljana, June 16, 2001

³ Interview. Putin called Ukraine an artificial state. February 9, 2024

⁴ Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR of February 19, 1954 "On the transfer of the Crimean region from the RSFSR to the Ukrainian SSR"

⁵ Address by the President of the Russian Federation, February 24, 2022

Nevertheless, it is just a description of purely political side of this conflict.

As we already said the foundation of the Russian mindset is Orthodoxy which was the reason and the purpose why Russia initially was created. And we can see that it keeps to be today as well even though it cannot already name it - about which we will talk later. For this reason a considerable part of modern Russian ideology also does not perceive the ongoing conflict with the West as an accidental event caused by particular misunderstandings between them but as a conflict with a much profound meaning.

Orthodox church in principle does not go into detail and try to understand who was right or who was wrong in a conflict. Since the state of a conflict is a natural state of a human with a corrupt nature after the Fall of Man. One pulled the blanket on his side and said that it was his, another one pulled it on his side and said that it was his. And in these circumstances it is pointless to find the right one, since everyone always perceives himself as such. And for this reason the Church never goes into worldly people's quarrels. But it suggests that a man is not Russian or Ukrainian but he is first a citizen of the Celestial Kingdom. But to be a good citizen of the Celestial Kingdom he first has to be a good citizen of that country in which he happened to be born. And in the case of a conflict to express such good qualities as devotion, bravery, courage. For example, the Russian Orthodox Church had a mission in Japan. When the Russo-Japanese war started the Russian Orthodox Church in Japan was praying for the victory of Japan and its bishop St. Nikolas of Japan blessed it himself.⁶ Nevertheless, the war in Ukraine seems to fall out of common rule. First of all, because of obvious historical and cultural ties which unite Russia and Ukraine whose foundation was the Orthodox Church who raised them and for this reason perceives it as a single nation. And the second which seems to be the core one.

In Christianity the nature of a war can be seen in two ways: in a narrow and a broad sense. In a narrow sense a war is a bad phenomenon: people kill and die, the morals decrease, people move from peaceful existence and creation to survival and destruction. But there is also a more global context. This context is eschatological one.

⁶ Archimandrite Georgy (Tertyshnikov), *The Missionary Labors of Saint Nicholas, Equal-to-the-Apostles, in Japan*, Alfa and Omega. 1998. No. 3 (17), p. 85–105.

Eschatological context means that the forces of evil are real and they exist. Eschatology means that the time has an end and this end depends on the interconnection of two sides. The first one is a bearer of God's truth. They were the Jews - the most zealous people for God. Then the Greeks - the most talented and smart people which were the bearers of the New Testament and its protector in the world. The third one is Russia, the most humble and meek people, that inherited from the Byzantium after its fall this lot to be the bearer of God's truth in the world.⁷ Nevertheless, there is also another force which is confronted to it and instead of God's truth wants to establish its own. As in Revelation: "The great harlot who sits on many waters and wants to make drunk all the nations with the wine of her fornication. And the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich through the abundance of her luxury".⁸ In different times this flag was also passed to different countries. But now she is sitting on the Hudson - the center of the human's exaltation over God, which spreads it to all nations. Moreover, the ongoing confrontation is only a continuation of the very first war: war of fallen angels against God: a war of a spirit of disobedience, pride, self-exaltation against humility, God and His truth. In this sense Moscow became a katechon (from the Greek - the one who withholds) that power that holds the time from enthronement of the forces of evil in the world and following apocalypses. Therefore, the ideological meaning of the current war of Russia with the West is whether the gates of hell will get one step closer to Russia and whether they will be able to seduce another nation under the guise of freedom, its brotherly, Orthodox nation with which it shares a thousand-year history.

Despite many important consequences of this conflict on an international level, for Russia, though, this conflict is more important for those which it brought inside Russia itself and in particular how it influenced its ideology.

After the beginning of the war in Ukraine Russia took a course on a complete dewesternisation of the country.

⁷ Saint Nikolai Velimirovich, "God Needs You": Words and Teachings, Moscow: Eksmo, PSTGU, 2013, Ch. "On Russia".

⁸ Rev. 17-18

For this purpose it started a very active and energetic reformation of the state. The most interesting thing in this process is that Russia began this active reformation before it got a clear ideological or rational explanation of them, meaning that the actions came before the rational which it started to search already after it initiated them. As if today's Russian society was moved on a path of huge reforms not after careful reasonable consideration that they should be made but by a certain collective urge or feeling that they should be done and that it is the right thing to do but yet it still cannot clearly explain why it is so. For this reason we can say that today's process of reformation represents the fact that from the 90s Russia substituted Russian view with a Western one, now, on the other hand, Russia refused the Western view yet still not managing to find and formulate a clear Russian one, but only knowing for sure that the Western one is wrong.

When Russia approached the reformation it made a thorough analysis of all spheres of its society: education, politics, law, culture, economics, army, ideology. The result of this analysis is that all of them are based on the Western model and many either deeply contradict the Russian view or are hostile towards it. Therefore, Russia found itself in such a position that besides an enemy abroad it also had an enemy inside the country which happened to be the Russian state itself which in the situation when Russia is in a conflict with the West already worked against Russia.

And for this reason Russia began to reform very urgently all these spheres or more precisely to completely rebuild the whole state and society.

When the government began the reformation and society started to gradually discover what some of its sides represent, such a total mismatch between the Russian view and what today's Russian state is, led to a spread of a view that this situation is a result of someone's purposeful activity aimed at destruction of the country.⁹ In reality, such a condition of Russian institutions is only a result of the main goal of Russia before 2022, meaning to become Europe. And everything that is called a problem is a normal situation in a Western society. For example, due to the beginning of the combats, the fact that during the 2000s most of the military schools were closed

⁹ The meeting of the Federation Council Commission on the Protection of State Sovereignty and the Prevention of Interference in the Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation, 02.02.2026

looked like someone purposeful hostile activity aimed at demilitarization of Russia. In reality, such a tendency is just a result that Russia followed a common European path because in Europe most of the military schools were closed not in the 2000s but decades before that.¹⁰ The same we can say about other tendencies in society: morality, culture, economy, immigration etc. That is why what was called a destruction of the country was only a reformation of Russia according to the European standards, just for the Russian conscience such reformation was similar to a destruction.

In particular, a special attention was paid to the problem of education.

Highest school of political science conducted a study of the Russian education system and concluded that Russia is in the state of total epistemological occupation.¹¹ That means that the whole system of Russian education, all of the disciplines and, therefore, those prerequisites on which they are studied (meaning the questions Why? For what reason?) are based on a Western system of thought and on Western values. If before the Western view could sneak into the Russian education system bringing some of its tendencies in some of its separate spheres, now there was only the Western view itself. A special attention was paid to humanitarian subjects. For example, they analysed the state of modern political science in Russia and concluded that the political science which is taught today in universities is a science of democracy and how to make a democracy from a non-democracy. The same result was in schools where the students from the very beginning were offered the Western view on the world and educated with such concepts as individual rights, civil society, democracy etc.

That is why Russia found out that the modern Russian system of education works in such a way that it graduates students which are deliberately hostile towards Russia itself.

This state of epistemological occupation also explains the main disadvantage of the undertaken reforms.

¹⁰ Data: military expenditure of European Union, World Bank

¹¹ 25th World Russian People's Council: Educational Section, 2023

Russia initiated huge reforms but at the same time did not free itself from the Western prerequisites, which very tightly grew into the Russian conscience during the years of Europeanisation and which it can already not notice, but which limits it and does not allow to fully solve these issues and reform the country.

For example, after 2022 the state paid a very close attention to the youth. Now the state policy is built not on the fact that a child should be left to its own will and desires but on the fact that a child must be educated on what is right. If before Russia shared the Western view on this issue that comes from a recognition that good and bad do not exist and people have only opinions on it and, therefore, nobody has a right to explain or educate them on it, now the feeling that "what is right" exists has come back and, therefore, people, in this case children, must be informed on this (what is right) and educated (what is good) as well as protected from negative influence.

In a practical sense it means censorship and the limit of freedom of speech.

Nevertheless, Russia is still in the state of ideological captivity and its understanding of the necessity of the reform then collides with learned Western values over the past decades when Russia positioned itself as a Western state, where censorship is bad and freedom of speech is good.

For that reason these and other policies remain to be only half finished and every attempt of the state to reform the country is drawn back by its ideological confusion. Therefore, official meetings concerning the protection of the youth, children, or damaging Western influence on them, are followed by the affirmations that what the state does is not censorship and it is in favour of free democratic development of the society which brings a huge contradiction and does not allow the state to finish the initial task.¹²

Another huge problem is the political system. After the beginning of the war Russian political system consolidated and cleansed itself of all hostile, mainly pro-Western, elements and, therefore, all of the different political parties became one single political force that commonly share the main principles: acceptance of the supreme role of the central power in the face of the President and those vectors of

¹² Address to the Federal Assembly. February 21, 2023

development that come from him, an attitude towards the war and acceptance of the Russian sovereignty over the Western submission.

Nevertheless, Russia due to its ideological confusion still represents its system as being a democracy which harms it very seriously both on domestic and international level. For that reason, the international image of the Russian state remains to be the same: as an autocratic regime that holds power by force and uses questionable elections as a justification of its legitimacy. On the domestic level as well - there is still an element of an ambiguity, untruth in the Russian system when Russia declares itself democracy which makes its position very unsteady and gives the claims of the opposition a certain legitimacy and for this reason it seems like Russia still exists from a revolution to a revolution which can be sparked by any small social upheaval which the opposition can overflow in the name of overcoming this lie.

Therefore, a clear manifestation that Russia is not democracy and does not want to be as such, which represents the reality and can find an understanding among the people that do not have a conviction that democracy should have a special privilege, along with clear explanation why it refuses it and perceives it as a negative phenomenon, would very strongly affirm the position of the Russian state both inside the country as well as outside and give a concrete foundation for its actions and for its further existence.

Obviously, such a manifestation must be followed by a change in the official law that would finally eliminate this huge gap between the law and how the country actually lives, that exists in today's Russian society.

In this sense probably the best way would if each instrument is engaged in the task for which it is suitable. Thus, the central ideology, the core idea for which the state actually exists and not vice versa cannot be questioned. While the material issues of the state's life: how to improve economic activity, how to decrease unemployment, where to put a new traffic light, should be given to the processes which can best solve them including democratic procedures. But in no case the solution of the latter cannot lead to the disinstallment of the former since there should be a clear line between what is a main thing and what is a secondary one and for what the state and society exist for the former or for the latter.

When Russia began the reforms it found that many spheres of Russian society are in a catastrophic condition. Many of them, though, were not fully the problems when Russia was following the European path, but were more as a consequent result of the Western development and only when Russia tried to come back to its own path of development they became to be obstacles on its way.

And today Russia very actively tries to solve these issues in all of these various spheres of the country. But still its activity looks like a construction of separate levels that cannot result in a complete building without a strong foundation that Russia does not have today, which is ideology. Therefore, a clear ideological system, clear explanation of what Russia is would make it much easier for Russia to solve these issues and would open a set of legitimate tools to successfully implement them.

For that reason Russia started to search for that ideology that would be able to meet its desires and, on the one hand, explain and justify its policies inside the state and, on the other hand, be able to counter the West on a global scale. Therefore, it started to grasp different aspects of its rebellion against the West, different aspects of why it stood against it and try to make a full-fledged system out of it.

Traditionalism

One of the main boundaries which appeared between Russia and the West and reassured Russia of the inevitability of leaving the Western path, became their ideological divergence. More precisely, those radical changes in values which happened in the West in the past few decades. From the point of view of Western development, these recent changes do not represent something unusual or unexpected but rather a logical continuation of the Western secular and rationalistic development, when the reason was placed before the morality or, more precisely, when the reason was allowed to determine the morality, for Russia, on the other hand, which was outside of this development, such radical changes looked like something unacceptable and that it cannot agree with.

When Russia stood against the West on the ideological level it meant that it stood against liberalism. Liberalism suggests that society should develop along with moral values that should develop as well. Russia, on the contrary, refused the Western view and stated that there are moral values that are unchangeable and society should

develop based on them as its foundation that, in turn, would determine the frame of the society's development.¹³

That is why the value incompatibility between Russia and the West is one of the main reasons for Russia to leave the Western path.

Because of that Russia began to promote traditional values in its policy which serve as a foundation of its society and which the state took a responsibility to support and protect.

In particular, the term “traditional Russian spiritually-moral values” was introduced on the jurisdictional level.¹⁴ The necessity of creation of such document is dictated by the situation of “global civilizational crisis of value that poses a danger for humanity of losing traditional spiritually-moral values. Such a threat comes from the US and other unfriendly states. This harmful activity is aimed at cultivating alien and disruptful values for Russian society: egoism (individualism - my note), immorality, rejection of family values ...”.¹⁵

This document serves as a strategic planning for the development of Russian society that must provide a foundation for it and answer the main questions which Russia poses before itself: why and for what purpose Russia exists? What are its goals and objectives? What are the principles based on which it can develop? With this document Russia refused its previous role when it tried to copy the Western system where the state follows the desires of the people and took a goal of leading the people where it is right to go. And such a policy is to be realised on all of the levels of the Russian state: education, mass media, culture, science, international relations.¹⁶

The education system, for example, now has a goal not only to give knowledge to the students, to teach them certain disciplines, but more importantly to build that ethical ground based on which they will receive the knowledge. And that would be the

¹³ Anna Vladimirovna Kostina, *Traditional Values: What They Mean for Russia and the Western World*, Moscow Humanitarian University, 2023

¹⁴ Decree of the President of the Russian Federation dated November 9, 2022 No. 809. On approval of the Fundamentals of State Policy for the Preservation and Strengthening of Traditional Russian Spiritual and Moral Values

¹⁵ *ibid*

¹⁶ *ibid*

main purpose of schools: to educate children and not only give them a certain knowledge.

Also an introduction of the term “traditional values” as an official state ideology means a prohibition of those political forces which contradict it and which have been very actively developing in Russia for the past decades.

As for the global meaning, the aim of this document is to form on international arena the image of Russia as a protector of traditional spiritually-moral values against those forces that try to harm them.¹⁷

Patriotism

The revival of patriotism became one of the main traits of the new Russia. Before that time in the period of 2000s when Russia was going on the path of Europeanization, a dismissive attitude towards Russia was very widespread and that could be seen not only among the youth which already from the childhood began to be raised on Western culture and, therefore, inclined towards the West, but also among ordinary people which were explained that now there were only pragmatic relations between them and a state.¹⁸ It is tied to the fact that when Russia positioned itself as a Western country for which the Western values are primary ones (meaning wealth and freedom) then, obviously, it was standing in this list in the very end and was not able to meet this criteria why the attitude towards it was correspondent: as to something backward in the shadow of Europe but when it did not climb on this ladder but fundamentally refused the Western path saying that Russia is something independent it consequently made it possible again to love Russia and look at it not as something insolvent which cannot become Europe but as something different.

From a number of official statements we can say that the view of the state on patriotism means that Russia is a multinational country and all of the nations work for a common goal of mutual development, security, protection of values and culture, all which every nation that lives on a Russian territory, both major and minor, can receive

¹⁷ *ibid*

¹⁸ Survey: Russia and Europe: Yesterday, Today... But Will There Be a Tomorrow?, WCIOM, July 28, 2023; Survey: How are young people adapting to worsening relations between Russia and the West?, WCIOM, August 29, 2023

only when they work together and exist in that unity named Russian Federation and that is why every nation ought to treat their common motherland with love and be patriotic.¹⁹ Such an attitude towards their country is especially important under the condition of an external threat, both military and ideological under which Russia exists today.²⁰

Another aspect of patriotism can be named a revival of Russian culture, traditions and overall Russian identity which previously was put aside when Russia was following the European path.

Multinationalism

One of the fundamental sides of modern Russian policy is its view on Russia as a multinational country. In the official documents, meetings and conferences state officials always highlight that Russia is a multinational country and the prerogative of the state is an equal development of all nations that live on the Russian territory. It implements wide policies aimed at avoiding national conflicts and promoting the unity of all nations of the Russian Federation.²¹

Historical memory

One of the specific characteristics of the Russian ideology is a special attention to the past and preservation of the memory of those people who contributed to the development of the modern generation. In this sense Russia clearly counterposes its policy to the modern Western trend to reevaluate the history from the modern views which can lead to a refusal of the past, its history and culture (e.g. taking down the monuments).

A huge part of it is related to a special attention to the Second World War. The victory day remains to be one of the main festivals in the country. The memory of the past and previous generations was always a part of the Russian tradition because of its religious foundation. Today when the life of the society was mainly taken out of the Church stream this idea tries to find its expression by different social means. For

¹⁹ Meetings of the Council on Interethnic Relations, 05.11.2025; Meeting with representatives of the public on issues of patriotic education of youth, 12.09.2012

²⁰ Decree of the President of the Russian Federation of July 2, 2021, No. 400 "On the National Security Strategy of Russia"

²¹ Meeting of the Council on Interethnic Relations, November 5, 2025

example, there is an annual action called “the Immortal Regiment” when people march on the streets with pictures of the fallen ones during the Second World War by such highlighting the immortality of their deeds.

The Second World War remains to be one the events of its history based on which Russia tries to unite the society.

The Soviet heritage

Here it would be also appropriate to mention a difficult question of the Soviet heritage. Obviously, in order to move further Russia first has to clearly make its mind on its past and decide for itself what it was. And in this sense the Soviet question is quite acute. How to perceive the Soviet Union? Positively or negatively? How to look at the Soviet period: as an organic development of Russia or as a historical mistake? It seems that the state itself tries to smooth the rough edges and stand somewhere in between. The official state's view tries to perceive all of the periods of the Russian development as its historical heritage which it does not refuse and which it accepts with all of its difficult or sometimes tragic events.²² However, in my opinion, such an ambiguous indecisive position holds it back from moving further and creating a clear ideology.

In this case it is useful to listen to a position of the Church which remains to be the only source of clear ideological position in Russian society. From the point of view of the Church the Soviet Union is a God's punishment of the Russian people.²³ Previously the whole attention of Russia was always paid not on its own prosperity, but on life in the name of God, and because of it Russia was given a country which it deserved. By the beginning of the 20th century Russia came as one of the richest, biggest and strongest countries. And after all what God gave it and all what it achieved when it was working and living in His name, Russian people which were

²² Valdai International Discussion Club. November 7, 2024; Andrey Kondrashov, The film "Russia. Modern History", 2021

²³ 25th International Christmas Educational Readings "1917-2017: Lessons of the Century." 2017; Methodius (Zinkovsky), Hieromonk, Kirill (Zinkovsky), Hieromonk. The Russian Catastrophe of 1917 through the Eyes of the Saints of the 20th Century: Causes and Lessons, Bulletin of the Yekaterinburg Theological Seminary. 2018. No. 2 (22). P. 17–44; John of Shanghai and San Francisco. A Sermon Before the Memorial Service for the Tsar-Martyr, Bishop John – Saint of the Russian Diaspora / Comp. Archpriest Peter Perekrstov. - 4th ed. - Moscow: Sretensky Monastery Publishing House, 2014. - 831 p. (Lives of the Saints).

always calling their country with an awe “Saint Rus”, started to look on the West and began to ask the Tsar freedom, meaning that we do not want anymore to do what is right, but you give us freedom and we will decide by ourselves what we want to do and what is right and bad. And Russia was hit by communism - the most radical out of all radical Western ideologies, where the prerequisites of rationality, materialism and Godlessness are brought to the limit. Meaning that it was given a chance to try what it wanted. Moreover, this view becomes clear if we look at what those 70 years of the Soviet Union were in the Russian history: 20s - civil war and repressions, 30s - the end of the war and, therefore, even more repressions, 40s - the Second World War, 50s - destroyed country after the war, repressions, 60s, 70s, 80s - the period when after so many challenges people were happy about the very simple things: peace above their heads, calm life and absence of hunger, 90s - the biggest disgrace in the Russian history and the first case when Russia did not lose during the battle but voluntarily gave up. Meaning that the Soviet Union began with blood and ended with the biggest humiliation of Russia which it ever experienced when the Saint Rus’ was given away for the Western profanation.

Previously, Russia had as its main goal to live for God and if got richer, got richer in God and never lacked anything. The Soviet Union, on the other hand, made as a main goal of its existence this one thing - to get richer and then everything that it managed to obtain with such difficulty over the decades of its existence at a cost of many human sacrifices and a strain of the whole society, all its wealth which it managed to collect and which was obtained by sweat and blood in the Siberian mines - disappeared during a couple of years of reformation and as a result Russia went out of the Soviet Union not with wealth but in injuries and in huge debt.

Quite often there can be noticed a nostalgia among the people towards the Soviet Union, especially, in the background of an absence of ideology, devastation and complete subjugation to the West during the 2000s.²⁴

Nevertheless, it worth mentioning that nostalgia is directed not towards the Soviet Union but towards all that Russian that was the constant features of Russia and that also managed to grow through the Soviet Union - strict order, meaning that

²⁴ Survey: Back in USSR, WCIOM, 17.03.2026

everything was done according to what is right, and that for the West, who says that what is right does not exist, the entrance was completely closed to the country.

For that reason an ambiguous position still remains in Russian society which is also strengthened by the state's indecisiveness. The people acknowledge that the Soviet Union had many negative sides like repressions of huge groups of population or oppressions of the Church, but from a certain point of its history, after the Second World War, it does not divide itself from the state and looks at it as its motherland with which it went through a common tragedy and then victory and for this reason feels sympathy to it and cannot simply refuse it. Nevertheless, a strong division between the Soviet Union and Russia should be made. It is important to understand that the Soviet Union with a communist ideology, meaning what was happening after the revolution up to the 40th, represents everything that completely contradicts Russia and which, in turn, mainly came to an end after the Second World War when the Soviet Union mostly lost its ideology and there remained only Russia that was trying to survive with a pragmatic policies. Apart from the common history that tied the people and the state, people also tend to perceive the Soviet Union positively because of its wide social policies that it exercised towards the people, a very common argument in favour of the Soviet Union is that it provided people with flats for free.²⁵

In my opinion, a clear condemnation of the revolution and the Soviet period by the state and society, on the one hand, and, on the other, a repentance of the Russian people that they gave away “the only important thing” for material comfort are necessary for Russia to create a strong foundation for the new Russian ideology and move further in its development.

Besides new ideological changes inside the state, Russia also began to build a new ideological system on the international level where Russian participation started to be increasingly active.

²⁵ Survey: 100 years of the USSR: to forget impossible to return?, WCIOM, 30.12.2022

Chapter 4. Russian ideology on a global level

The unipolar world order that appeared after the fall of the Soviet Union became one of the main reasons for the beginning of the conflict between Russia and the West. According to Russia, in the last thirty years international relations have been based on the sole dominance of the West and because of that the interests of other countries were neglected and not taken into account. Due to this fact Russia stood up against Western hegemony so that the relationships on the international arena would be built on the principles of equality and consideration of interests of all sides, so that to make the world order multipolar.¹

Nevertheless, such a Russian position of equality, multipolarity, consideration of everyone's interests quite strongly contrasts with an established image of Russia in the West.

A common image of Russia in the Western view is that Russia is a huge aggressive country which consists of different territories which it conquered and always tries to conquer even more, while the main goal of Russia is to take over the world.²

The mainstream Western view also explained the modern conflict in the same way - that Russia is just on its another conquest of taking new territories.

Nevertheless, if we look closer, outside of the Western stereotypes, we can see how far away from reality such a view is. Historically, the reason why Russia had different territories in its borders is mainly because they either first attacked Russia and then lost or voluntarily joined Russia seeking protection. The fact that Poland, Latvia, Lithuania were a part of Russia is explained by the centuries-long history of military campaigns against Russia and that they happened to be a part of Russia is explained that prior to that they were sitting in the Kremlin. In the South, Kazakhstan, middle Asian steppes became a part of Russia because they served as a constant source of

¹ Degterev D.A. Multipolar World Order: Old Myths and New Realities, Vestnik RUDN. International Relations, 2019, Vol. 19, N. 3, p. 404-419

² Paul, Michael C. "Western negative perceptions of Russia: 'The cold war mentality' over five hundred years." International Social Science Review 76, no. 3/4, 2001

destruction of Russian cities and before that Russia itself had been in slavery to those people for three centuries. But even when they eliminated the danger, the rulers of these tribes were asking Russia themselves to be accepted into its jurisdiction due to devastation from constant wars that they had between each other. In the East, Tatarstan was a many centuries-long source of raids and violence against Russian cities which Russia, eventually, eliminated. Georgia and Armenia, the Christian countries in the non-Christian region, voluntarily asked Russia to join it asking for protection. Ukraine became a part of Russia because its leaders asked the Russian Tsar to accept them into the Russian state because of Polish-Catholic oppressions against the people. Estonia, Finland - were the reason that Russia along with its allies defeated Sweden, the hegemon of that time. The fact that Russia went through the whole Europe to Paris preceded the fact that the whole Europe first came to Russia. Also the fact that a part of Germany was under Russian rule was a result of the same reason, that Germany first came to Russia trying to conquer it. Because of that it is very obvious how far away from reality this European image of Russia is: as a huge evil country that wants to conquer Europe. And quite contrary, if we look at history - it is Russia for whom the neighbourhood with Europe served as constant source of troubles when from century to century Europe prepared a new campaign into Russia. And, moreover, having suffered itself it later was obliged to free the rest of Europe as well. Nevertheless, this image is very firmly established and has very deep roots. For example, there is a very famous counterfeited testament of Peter I, which was spread at that time by one French adventurer and which always laid very well on anti-Russian moods that from time to time were rising in Europe.³ It went even to such high levels that it was quoted by Truman when he was discussing the containment of the Soviet Union.⁴ It took a couple of thorough investigations to expose this testament in which Peter I allegedly said to his heir that the mission of Russia is to take over the world in the name of Orthodoxy.

³ Resis A. Russophobia and the "Testament" of Peter the Great, 1812–1980. *Slavic Review*. 1985;44(4):681-693

⁴ Clifford, J. Garry. "President Truman and Peter the Great's Will." *Diplomatic History* 4, no. 4, 1980, p. 371–85

For anyone, though, who is at least a bit familiar with Orthodoxy it is clear how anti-Orthodox this idea of taking the world is and, on the contrary, how obvious it is that it was written by a Catholic mind for which to spread the light of Christianity literally means to subjugate the countries over the Pope's power.

To take over the world in the name of Orthodoxy seems particularly far-fetched if even on its own territory Russia had many indigenous people that remained to be non-Christians. And the enlightenment of these people was happening in the course of many centuries by the forces of a small mission with a couple of monks who in many cases were travelling from yurt to yurt talking to the natives individually.⁵ Or if we look how the missionary was happening in Alaska, former Russian territory, which now remains to be Orthodox. A couple of monks from one of the Russian monasteries were sent to Alaska where, having settled among the local population, they began to live a purely Christian life spending their time in prayer and helping people and by such they were spreading the light of Christianity and converting locals who voluntarily asked them for it.⁶ And to compare it with how the Catholic missionary was executed which in many cases happened with all sorts of cruelties, compulsion and violence. In the same Alaska its first Saint happened to be a local aborigine, St. Peter the Aleut, who was taken along with a couple of others by the Dominicans, which tried to convert them into Catholicism when they found out that they Orthodox, and was tortured to death because he refused to do so.⁷ Another example of Catholic missionary is Latin America where they arrived with a cross and a weapon giving the locals to make a choice between them. In any case their land became subordinate and their country a source of resources. The attitude towards non-Christians, on the other

⁵ Macarius Nevsky. *Selected Words, Speeches, Conversations, Teachings* (1884-1913), Moscow: Moscow Metochion of the Holy Trinity. Sergius Lavra: Otchiy Dom, 1996, p. 3-28; Macarius of Altai. *Instructing with Word and Life: The Life and Works of St. Macarius of Altai*, S. V. Nesterov. - Moscow: Pravoslav. St. Tikhon. Humanitarian University, 2005. – 540; Innocent of Moscow. *Saint Innocent, Enlightener of Alaska*, October 6, 2008, <https://www.pravmir.ru/svyatitel-innokentij-prosvetitel-alyaski/>

⁶ Herman of Alaska. *The Life of the Valaam Monk Herman, an American Missionary*, [Valaam] [pseud.]. - St. Petersburg: Synodal Printing House, 1894, 24 p.

⁷ *The Russian Orthodox Religious Mission in America, 1794–1837, with Materials Concerning the Life and Works of the Monk German, and Ethnographic Notes by the Hieromonk Gedeon*. Originally published in St. Petersburg, Russia in 1894.

hand, was that they remained to be non-humans and were treated relatively.⁸ For this reason not feeding the enslaved locals was an ordinary practice since there was, anyway, a great amount of them spread on the territory. In any case Europeans looked on the locals with negligence and from the point of their own supremacy and never saw them equal to themselves. And the history of the Catholic missionary is full of such examples that became more of a practice: from the countries of Latin America, Africa, China, Japan to the southern slavic nations and Greeks when the brothers Christians were executed because they did not want to join Catholicism. Most of those known cases of abuses are described by the Catholics themselves. Some of the Catholic priests after returning from their missions under the impression of all what they saw left their serving. Moreover, due to the specific characteristic of Catholicism which poses the subjugation to the Pope as its necessary condition, Catholicism became a reason for many wars everywhere where it was spread, when the interests of the Pope came into contradiction with the interests of the civil authorities in this country and he ordered the citizens as to his subjects not to obey to the government, what was the case not only in new countries where it was preached but in Europe itself which suffered a lot from internal conflicts when the Pope tried to manoeuvre between the interests of different states and pitted them against each other trying to find his own profit in their conflict.⁹ For that reason it is clear that it is European history that is full of wars and occupation of other states in the name of its ideology.

And, in my opinion, this difference that the West today pursues the policy of the sole dominance and Russia advocates for something as “multipolarity” comes exactly from their religious divergence, from their belonging to different Churches. Previously there was only one Church which became to be the Church only out of the unity of all separate churches with each other: Roman, Constantinople, Jerusalem, Antiochian, Alexandrian and the relationships between them were based on equality of the sides, on a unity and, therefore, all of the questions were managed only based

⁸ Avdiy Vostokov [Pseudo-Anatoly (Martynovsky, Avgustin Vasilyevich; Archbishop of Mogilev and Mstislav)], *On the Relationship of the Roman Church to Other Christian Churches and to the Entire Human Race*, St. Petersburg: Eduard Prats Publishing House, 1837, Ch. 23

⁹ Avdiy Vostokov [Pseudo-Anatoly (Martynovsky, Avgustin Vasilyevich; Archbishop of Mogilev and Mstislav)], *On the Relationship of the Roman Church to Other Christian Churches and to the Entire Human Race*, St. Petersburg: Eduard Prats Publishing House, 1837, Ch. 17

on universal council and a consensus when each of the sides was agree with a solution. Nevertheless, the Roman Church refused this unity and declared its undisputed supremacy in the church affairs, so that others must obey it. The rest of Orthodox Church continued to exist based on equality of the sides and unity, where the views of all sides are considered. And, in my opinion, this Church divergence which later was inherited by Russia and the West is a root of why they hold today different opinions on how the relationships on an international level should be built.

This also speaks in favour that the established image of Russia as a country that wants to take over the world is deeply wrong and contradicts its ideological foundation.

And, on the contrary, if we look at the history of the West there is no better way of describing it than that the main idea of the West was always to take over the world. And we can see it through the whole Western history: Roman Empire, Crusades, Napoleon, colonialism, the Second World War. In all of the cases the main plan was quite clear - to take over the world.

But if in the time of the Roman Empire the goal of the West was to take the world physically purely out of practical reasons, which did not distinguish it from other empires that had the same goal and when taking over other countries it did not have a claim on the supremacy of its worldview and was by itself under the influence of Greek culture dominating at that time, - it was exactly from the times of Catholicism when this dominance gained an intellectual character, meaning that it was no longer enough for the West to take the world physically but it started to pursue this goal out its ideological supremacy that its worldview was the only legitimate one. At first, the moving force of it was Catholicism, later when the population of Europe became secular - different social ideas: enlightenment, nazism, liberalism, which they spread by force in the world.

Such a view also preserves in the Russian contemporary political thought which suggests that today the goal of the West has not changed compared to its historical past, and the only difference is that it executes it not with military force, or

not as often as it usually does, but with its cultural and ideological expansion which, nevertheless, shares the same level of intolerance.¹⁰

In any case, the main root of the Western idea remains to be the same - the West is reassured in the universality of its values for the whole world and does not count as legitimate any other view that would be different from the Western one.

Today this means that from the point of view of the West any country that does not share the Western opinion on a person, state, society, meaning that is not a liberal democracy, is illegitimate.

For the same reason many of what was mentioned in previous chapters as the reasons for the today's conflict (NATO expansion, internal situation in Ukraine) would not just be considered by the West as legitimate not because they examined them and found them just or unjust, sufficient or insufficient, reasonable or not, but because Russia itself is an illegitimate player and any of its argument automatically becomes illegitimate and can be skipped. And that is the representation of today's dialogue between Russia and Europe: Russia offers a reason why the war began, Europe responds that Russia is not a democracy. Obviously, in such a situation any chance for finding a solution through reasonable negotiations is not possible, since the starting position of Europe is that Russia first should stop existing and become Europe.

For this reason, for example, for most of European countries the sufficient legitimate argument for the beginning of today's war of the US against Iran was the fact that Iran is not a liberal democracy.¹¹

Also because of it there is such a divergence in the assessment of the actions of Russia and the US. When Russia claims a threat for itself from another country and takes actions and when the US claims the same - the reason why what Russia does is called war of aggression, and the US is a protection of its security is Russian non-belonging to the Western ideology and because of it any of its action would be interpreted against it.

¹⁰ Interview: Putin spoke about the West's attempts to impose its values throughout the world, April 25, 2019

¹¹ The EU Ambassador Conference. 9. mar. 2026 Bruxelles; Bundestag, 1 March 2026

In simple terms the reason for this is that the US is a good country because it is liberal democracy and it is allowed to do so, Russia, on the other hand, is a bad country because it is not liberal democracy, and it is not allowed to do so.

And because of this ideological intolerance of the West that does not recognise any view that deviates from its own, the above mentioned facts from Russian as well as world history would be hardly capable of changing the established image of Russia which would remain to be negative in the West.

Therefore, in my opinion, the centuries-long anti-Russian moods in Europe have two reasons. The first is that Russia is not Europe which, however, does not automatically make it an enemy. The second is that Russia is not only not Europe but comes in competition with it proposing a different path of development.

However, such situation works in both ways and for the same reason Russia remains to be seen as a certain mystery in the West, as a riddle that no one cannot understand: the Western analysts, supposing that the rest of the world works like the West as well, look at Russia through Western concepts and when they do not work they conclude that its behaviour is paradoxical, irrational, spontaneous. It is always quite strange to see when Western analysts comment on Russian politics and apply to it their own metrics, thinking that Russian politics works as the Western one, and count the ratings of the current government or economic situation in the state in order to predict how the situation will develop (i.e. try to predict when the government will fall). Which in reality of course lacks any sense and Russian politics or more broadly the way the Russian head works cannot fit into the Western models such as ratings or economic situation and, moreover, a decrease in them does not lead to dissatisfaction of the government like in the West or when it does not in the direction where the West would think it would. For example, when these lines are being written the conflict seems to intensify and the Western provisions of weapons made it possible to move the combats to the Russian land with long-distance strikes pursuing the logic that it would raise dissatisfaction in the Russian people and lead to a demand for the end of the war. Nevertheless, it is quite clear that this assumption will not have any result since that is the logic of how the Western person would react to the emerged inconveniences caused him by the state, while in Russia, on the contrary, the

dissatisfaction leads not to a demand for the end of the combats but to a demand for more decisive actions. And as long as the Western analysts will approach Russia with their Western presetting they will be left only with an illusion of understanding and such events like the beginning of the modern conflict would meet them as a huge surprise.

In response to such unipolar order which developed in the world Russia started to take actions to make it multipolar so that the interests of other countries on an international arena would be heard as well. In the sense of liberating the countries from the Western influence Russia began to use the term “decolonisation” which means that many countries during the course of centuries have been under the Western control and now they are given a chance to free from it and declare its own identity that is not defined by the Western values.¹² It also relates to their political, economic and social dependence from the West that these countries had and which they continue to have today in different indirect forms. In a practical sense for a country that seeks its independence and joins this Russian attempt to build a new world order it would imply that it is ready for economic turbulences due to rebuilding of previous trading ties and sanctions from those with whom they were terminated.

For this reason Russia started to establish relationships with other countries all over the world going out of the Western orbit and at the same time making it easier for others to do the same.

¹² Federation Council Committee on International Affairs. Russia's Role in Decolonization and Countering Western Neocolonialism, July 1, 2024

Chapter 5. Final remarks

In the previous chapters we saw how Russia is actively trying to build its new ideology today. It takes different views which it confesses and tries to build a full-fledged ideology based on them. Nevertheless, I have to say that these attempts have little success because they lack a deep epistemological foundation that would be able to, on the one hand, unite these views in one complete system and, on the other hand, to overcome global Western ideological dead end.

To answer this question we should take a closer look at the development of Russia and Europe.

If we go back to their origins we will understand that both modern Europe and Russia are entirely the product of the Church.¹ Europe the same as Russia did not appear accidentally, as a result of a certain process of development, but they appeared with one particular goal - in order to be the Christdome, the place which exists and lives for Christianity, for the Church.

Originally the Church of that time resembled a unity based on love. It existed in the way that there was no Roman, Constantinople, Jerusalem Church but there was a Church only out of a unity between them. But it ended when in 1054 the Roman church declared its supremacy over other churches and in order to prove it started to use rational and logical arguments - something that initially does not make any sense because you can always provide as many arguments pro and contra as you want. It took some of the arguments from the Gospel that support its position of being supreme. Nevertheless, there are also other arguments from the Gospel that say otherwise. Therefore, if argumentation from the very beginning is pointless something else moved the Roman church to declare its supremacy. It is its pride, meaning that the Roman church has just fallen through a sin - a pride.²

¹ Brent F. Nelsen (Furman University), James L Guth (Furman University), Roman Catholicism and the Founding of Europe: How Catholics Shaped the European Communities, September 2003

² Archimandrite Hilarion, A.S. Khomyakov and the ancient church polemicists. - The Church as a union of love. Moscow: PSTBI Publishing House, 1998. First published in "Faith and Reason", No. 18, 1911

That is how all the heresies worked. When a person goes out of love and unity with others and insists on the rightness of his own position by using logic and reason which is initially pointless because you can always prove or disprove anything and, therefore, shows only that he did not have enough virtue but fallen through his pride.

And the Saint Fathers always knew that logic and reason are helpless to gain the truth and their obtainment of truth was based on something different - on a virtue, on love, since God Himself is love. And that love was possible only when they were together and were united by a circle of mutual humility towards each other that would eliminate pride that does not have truth in itself but only its own desires. Therefore, the only thing that they were seeking was to put aside their own opinions, own wishes and desires but for God Himself to speak through them. That is how the Symbol of Faith was created. Saint Fathers from all Churches gathered and because they had love between each other God was speaking through them.

And that is possible only when there is more than one because one - is only person's pride meaning his own wishes moved by his own corrupt nature and love is possible only when there is more than one, because there is someone to humble yourself before, that, therefore, destroys the pride.

The Roman church, on the other hand, broke this circle of love when it declared its supremacy and was left alone outside of unity and truth and only with logic and rationality.³

Then it inherited this sin and started to develop closely with it. That what happened on a theoretical level but which we can even forget if we just look at practice. We know that to know whether a tree is a good or bad one - we should look at the fruits of it. And what do we usually think of when we think of the Catholic church? We think of all contradictions that exist between the Church and Christianity: we think of popes, inquisition, indulgency, jesuits, Catholic missionary and the Western society, that the Catholic church called as an exclusive place of its preaching, and that is the only society in history that did not only refuse God but put itself in His place.

³ *ibid*

Then a part of the Catholic church used against it the same principle that the Catholic church once used itself and started to rationally and logically question its rule over them and parted from it, calling them protestants.⁴ Then the same did the national rulers towards the church and went out of its rule. Then all the people did the same towards the national rulers and started to logically think and question why they should obey them. Then it spread to every person which did the same towards God.

And how to describe this modern condition in the West where everyone is a separate independent individual that says: "I have my own opinion, I know what is good and bad by myself"? One way, how it is usually described, is to call this freedom. But let's look domestically and internationally if this actually can be called freedom.

Is there freedom domestically? The Western system represents itself as being free because it has democracy but if we look closer we will see that it is quite rigid defined system where the choice is available only within the system of liberal democracy. The non-democratic candidates who openly express their non-alignment with democracy are not allowed to participate in the elections. To balance this the Western system created the division on right and left - which is only an illusion of a choice. Since the left advocates for a change, the right advocates for a change but at a slower pace. In this case the right is always left to argue only to go back a couple of decades ago in comparison to where the left went. Therefore, the values of modern society are always only a result of bargaining between the left and right. The fundamental choice to exit this system and make a choice for the values that are unchangeable is not available for the Western person. The only choice a person is given is to live in the same system with others where the truth does not exist but is subjected to a choice - that is the meaning of Western democracy.

Let's look internationally. Is there freedom on an international level? Probably the Western behaviour internationally is the best argument that the Western system is not about freedom. The West positions itself as being free and in favour of freedom, and if it so, we may suggest that it should accept other views as well. But what in reality? The West does not recognise any country that is organised differently from it

⁴ *ibid*

as being legitimate. The modern Western mind works in such a way that it does not allow itself a thought that its values are not universal and that for some societies Western revolutions and fight for rights and freedoms represent a deep fall of a person when in favour of momentary worldly goods he forgets eternal values such as humility and love. For this reason, the Western system is not about freedom but it is quite clear defined ideology that wants to affirm its rule and spread itself.

Therefore, the foundation of the West is not freedom but something else. And the today's condition of the Western society where everyone is a self-sufficient independent individual for whom the truth is his own opinion means not freedom but something different. What is it? It is pride. The very root of the Western society that goes from the Catholic church. Therefore, the whole history of development of the West is not a history of liberalisation but a process of a continuous fall through pride spread to different levels. The only difference is that today every single person became a Pope, that Dominus whose view is unquestionable and absolute.

And what idea did this “pride” result in?

That the truth does not exist and a person can determine it by himself. That human is over God and can say what is good and bad by himself. That the truth does not exist and everything is allowed. And that is the main idea that the West, undercover of “freedom”, wants to spread in the world in the form of democracy - a system once installed is impossible to escape or have a choice outside of it.

“The great harlot who sits on many waters and wants to make drunk all the nations with the wine of her fornication”.⁵ As we said this title is passed from country to country. Today it is obvious that she sits on Hudson. But if we try to understand where it came from, take this thread and trace it, we will see that all roads lead to Rome. It planted this root of pride. Paris made a wine from it, naming it "freedom, equality, brotherhood". And now America wants to drink all the nations with it.

Russia, on the other hand, because it was fostered by Orthodoxy, did not experience the same process of development that would lead it to a path of rationalism and, therefore, to a consequent absence of truth and the truth still remained in Russia. That in turn resulted in a different form of political organisation, contrasting to the

⁵ Rev. 17:1

Western one. Since the truth does not exist in the West the aim of the system is to work for the desires of people, in Russia, on the other hand, the system serves not the desires of people but the truth itself.

In my opinion that is the most fundamental idea of Russia that answers the initial question of what Russia is? Russia is a country where truth does exist. And if we look through this idea at Russia, its behaviour, its policies on domestic as well as international level will become clear. Moreover, that is something that always was its main trait and keeps to be today, even though it cannot already explain it - the fact that Russia never lived for itself nor for this world but was living for the truth.

The only question remains is what is that truth? We saw how Russia tried to create its ideology out of different characteristics of its behaviour, out of its views that it already exercises but cannot find a name for and put them together in a one complete system. And the name of what Russia does is called Orthodoxy. Orthodoxy is that complete full-fledged system that puts together all what it confesses, all of the sides of its behaviour that it has already managed to express such as: traditionalism, patriotism, memory of the past, multinationalism and many others which it did not yet find.

Orthodoxy is precisely that abstract pure truth, hovering somewhere above, untouched by anyone but, on the contrary, at the foot of which there are thousands and thousands of fallen people shielding it with themselves when someone wanted to take it in their hands and bring in their carnal wisdom. And in order to return to it Russia has to refuse the logical and rational path that does not work and led the Western society to the dead end and return to a virtue - trust, faith.

And when it does, it will understand that gaining the truth is not an act of intellectual bravery when you read a lot and think a lot, but of a moral one when you break yourself, defeat your pride and say: "I don't know, if You want, You can tell me".

Today ideological systems which make attempts to provide Russia with ideology try to combine both of its periods and find a consensus between them, standing with one leg in the Russian Empire and with another one in the Soviet Union why Russia keeps to be in such an uncomfortable ideological position.

In my opinion, there should not be attempts to justify all the periods of Russian history but it is necessary to clearly state that the Russian people made a huge mistake when they refused God for the sake of material comfort. Russia always lived in the name of God and never lacked anything, but in the beginning of the 20th century Russian people started to look at the West and instead of how it must be started to ask the Tsar for freedom. And Russia was given to try what it wanted - communism - the project where the Western ideas were brought to the limit. And immediately Russia was given a chance to understand what a huge mistake it made and for those 70 years without God Russia suffered the amount of catastrophes which it had not experienced for the past 700.

Nevertheless, this reunion must be followed by a repentance of the Russian people. For this reason the state should explain to the society that all of the nostalgia and sympathy that it has are not towards the Soviet Union but towards Russia and those qualities which were always present in it such as strict order and morality and which disappeared when Russia tried to follow the Western path in the 2000s that caused this nostalgia falsely attributed to the Soviet Union. Meanwhile, all of the challenges which the people went through remain to be its historical heritage to the reverent memory of which an understanding of why they happened should be added. The Soviet Union itself, on the other hand, is a renunciation from God for material prosperity, meaning a huge mistake. Therefore, the new Russia should be built on a clear acceptance of this fact and repentance of the Russian people for this mistake.

And now when Russia is in such a difficult position or even, it is fair to say, in a historical moment of defining its future a clear straightforward choice is necessary for it. While today Russia continues to hold an ambiguous position and for that reason the results which it will have both inside the country and on international level will be ambiguous as well.

At the same time it is important to understand that Christianity is not some kind of Russian tradition which should be returned back to Russia from the Russian Empire, but it is “path, truth and life”. And if Russia wants to avoid the fate of Europe that rebuilt all of its beautiful buildings destroyed after it did the same as Russia in the

beginning of the 20th century but managed to restore them only in a beautiful quiet cemetery, it has to make a choice.

And whenever Russia does that, it will not need any theoretical or logical explanation but it will have an experiential knowledge that Christianity is the truth. And the truth of Christianity itself is proven not theoretically but practically which comes down only to one thing: “trust Me and do what I say and you will have life, and trust Me and I will do so that this life will not end”. And when Russia does that, it will have not theoretical but already practical knowledge that Christianity is the truth and all its ideological and other problems will be resolved. And in Russia there will be again “path, truth and life”.

Conclusion

The purpose of this work was to prove that today's conflict is not an accidental episode in the relationships between Russia and the West but has a much deeper meaning.

The reason for a conflict between Russia and the West is that Russia and the West have different ideological foundations. The foundation of both Russia and the West was Christianity but they were raised by different Churches, Orthodox and Catholic.

At a certain moment the Catholic church parted from the Universal Church when it questioned its rule and declared its own supremacy and by such has fallen through pride. Later it transferred this seed of pride on the soil of those nations which it raised and which followed its example. And they did the same first towards the Church itself, then to the national rulers, then to God Himself. For this reason the result of European development under the Catholic management was that the West renounced from God. After it renounced from God the truth had disappeared in the West and it substituted it with its own desires which it made a cornerstone, enclosing them in the concept of “freedom, equality, brotherhood”, which means that human is above God and he himself is entitled to decide what is good and what is bad.

The instrument which pride uses is rationalism and logic, which cannot reach the truth but can justify everything what a human's will would want. This rationalism and logic which first developed in Catholicism under the name of scholastics later moved to the foundation of the Western secular worldview which in the end came to the dead end. Because with help of rationalism and logic it is possible for some time to satisfy your esthetic feeling or your interest with different interesting theories and abstract systems, moving from one to another, but the ending knowledge that it is possible to acquire with rationalism and logic is that “I know that I don't know anything”. That led to a dead end: epistemological and as a result existential. For this reason the Western society has left without God, without truth but only with their desires which they want to satisfy and confront everyone who would want to prevent it, reminding them about God and truth.

Russia, on the other hand, was raised by Orthodoxy and for this reason it kept its connection with God and truth remained in its society. That in turn is the main character of Russia - that it lives not for itself, not for its interests but for God and His Truth that was in the past and continues to be today what we can see based on its behaviour despite the ideological confusion in which Russia is today after the period of pro-Western development and why it cannot clearly formulate it.

Russia today is at the crossroads trying to find its ideology. That ideology is Orthodoxy which, on the one hand, puts together all of its views, on the other hand, because it is not based on the rationalistic and logical Western prerequisites, solves that ontological dead end which the Western influence spreads today in the world together with its culture.

The Western society called the result to which it came as freedom. And those nations that do not share its opinion, which preserved its connection with God and acknowledge eternal moral values instead of those which change based on humans' desires, as unfree.

That is the meaning of today's conflict - it is a war between the truth and that the truth does not exist and everything is allowed. Between God's Truth and that there is nothing higher than the desires of people.

For this reason it is not an episodic phenomenon between Russia and the West but this conflict existed before them and will continue in the future with or without them.

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