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THE NEW RUSSIAN SPIRIT:

How Strong Is It? What Lies Beyond Containment?



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Speech, May 1, 1986 at the Smithsonian Institute and shorter version, May 2, 1986 at the Wirth Seminar in the Cannon Caucus Room

Today is May 1. In the Soviet Union, this day will begin the celebration of the greatest week of holidays of the whole year. In an unusual conjunction which happens only once every five or six years, the most important secular and religious holidays will be celebrated in the same week. May 1 falls this year during Holy Week of the Orthodox Church. Today is Holy Thursday; tomorrow Good Friday; Saturday night through Sunday the most profound, important and holy feast day of the Orthodox Church, Easter.

This is followed by Den' Pobeda (May 9) Victory Day, the end of World War II, which will coincide with the end of the Church's "Bright Week" that culminates with Rodinitza, that most dear and ancient celebration for the Russians, the day of commemoration of the dead and honoring of ancestors. On that day thousands of Russian families will go, as they have for 900 years, to picnic on the graves of their ancestors, in a celebration which is most profoundly slavich. The old and the new, the secular and the religious, inextricably mixed in one gigantic celebration in

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which the whole Slavic population of the Soviet Union will be joined; holidays which sum up all the history of Russia, old and new.

Certainly, despite the denials of the government, the coincidence of the Chernobyl atomic plant disaster happening during this unusual week of mass national holidays will not go unnoticed by the Russian people. For believers, this event, happening as it did during the Holy Week of the Church leading to Easter, will be interpreted in a deeply spiritual way. For non-believers, for the government, despite the defensiveness and pretense of business as usual, the secular celebrations will have a more than usual hollow ring and the result may eventually be to subject the party to more questioning about its priorities and policies than ever before.

On May Day the color red is everywhere. Buildings are festooned with huge banners and placards. Red flags stand stiffly at attention on every bridge and are hung before every public building.

Red is a color deeply loved by the Russians. Today appropriated as its own by the Soviet regime, it is in reality a symbol of something much older and deeper in the Russian spirit. Once the word for "red" and "beautiful" were the same. Even today, in modern Russian, the root of the word "beautiful" is "red." It is not "Red" Square, but "Beautiful" Square. Icons are hung in the "red," or "beautiful" corner. In the 17th century ladies painted their cheeks red, plaited their hair with red ribbons. Peasants used red in all their folk art. For Easter, eggs were dyed

red and exchanged with friends and family, a custom which dates back more than a thousand years to pre-Christian days.

And in the church, red is the color of the Holy Spirit.

On May 1 there is the "Demonstration." "Spontaneously enthusiastic" workers parade through the streets carefully watched by a formidable double row of soldiers who line the streets and cordon off much of the city. There are floats from factories with blinking lights, paper flowers and balloons carried aloft by children. "Spontaneously enthusiastic" workers who agree to carry the red flags in the parade are paid 5 rubles each to encourage them to do so.

In front of the tribune, in orange and blue jumpsuits, massed "sportsmen" parade, followed by the enthusiastic workers, the floats -- all of them harangued about the glories of Soviet society by some invisible stentorian voice from the Tribune, eliciting rather anemic hurrahs.

All this week in the farmers markets of Moscow and Leningrad, people from the country will have been selling wooden eggs which they have painted. Near the churches, on Friday and Saturday old women sell paper flowers they have fashioned to place on the kulich or Easter cake that will be brought in baskets along with pashka, eggs and other Easter treats to the churches by a steady flow of people all day Saturday, there to be placed on special long wooden tables often set up outside in the church courtyard and then sprinkled with holy water and blessed by the priests.

On Saturday night, assembling early because there is never enough room for all those who wish to attend, and finally as

eleven approaches, packed, jammed, spilling out on to the streets, the churches will be bursting. The masses of faithful will stand for most of the night holding lighted candles, symbols of the living spirit. The priests, blazing in their robes of silver and gold, their jewelled miters sparkling like stars, will intone the ancient liturgy. At midnight there will be the joyous cry Khristos Voskrese! "Christ has risen!" And the answer, Voistinu Voskrese! "He has risen indeed!" The church bells will toll and the choirs will sing the most beautiful liturgical music in the world, in what is surely the most magnificent church service in Christendom. For believers, this year, the fact that state and religious holidays coincide, means that they will have more free time to attend services today and tomorrow. They will fast until after the Easter service and then go home to feast and make merry until the sun rises. Last year, I had the great experience of spending Easter night at the Holy Trinity St. Sergius Monastery at Zagorsk, and broke the fast after the services at 5:00 a.m. with the monks.

It was a great experience, an extraordinary sight, and for myself, I must say that there was no comparison between this ageless splendor and the tinny um-pa-pas and hypocritical harangues, the sportsmen in their slightly shabby jumpsuits badly in need of dry cleaning, the images of Soviet leaders in much rejuvenated likenesses listlessly carried like false icons above the heads of the "spontaneously enthusiastic" workers who cannot wait to break ranks and go celebrate, preferably with a bottle, somewhere else. I dare say I am not alone in my feeling.

On the 9th of May I was in Leningrad. I marched alongside the sailors on the Vassilevsky Island to the playing of the song "Day of Victory" ("tis a day we meet with tears") and older tsarist marches like the "The Banks of the Slavianka." I watched soldiers march down the Nevsky Prospect, (a taxi driver exclaimed irreverently, "Look at them, like roosters!"). Children were hanging from the street lamps. Recruits were sitting on each other's shoulders. At night there was a great salute of fire works over the Peter and Paul Fortress, filling the air with thunder and the sky with fiery sparkling colors. Afterwards I joined a group of merrymakers dancing on the banks of the Neva to the music of a passing acordionist.

For Rodinitza, I was in Pskov, that citadel of old Russia, whose silver and gold cupolas cut the sky in glory. The church was alight with small candles, placed on what was left of the Easter cakes. After the service, the people left to picnic on the graves of departed family members - an ancient and cherished custom still faithfully observed in Russia today, by non-believers and believers alike. This year, Rodinitza will gain added significance by being joined to the solemn celebrations for those who died in the last war. Nothing breaks Russians from their ancient customs - they have never really given them up, and the expression of these is growing stronger every day.

There is an old saying that goes, "Scratch a Russian - you'll find a Tartar." Today I think one can amend this to say, "Scratch a Soviet and you'll more than likely find a Russian." In Russia, things are changing. Like a sea change over the past

eighteen years, it has been happening slowly -- for nothing happens quickly in Russia -- but now one can see it everywhere. Quietly, but unmistakably, every day in every way, the Russians are beginning to look and act more like Russians.

To understand what is happening in the Soviet Union today, it is vital to understand the distinction between Russian and Soviet. We use the terms interchangeably. We should not. The Soviet government does not. They know there is a difference, and we should too. Russian and Soviet are not synonyms for each other. Michael Binyon, in his recent book, Life in Russia, says that the use of the word "Russia" to refer to all the country, instead of just one of its 15 republics, "is so widespread in the West that it would seem silly to quibble." So, why quibble? Because it's a big quibble, that's why. Gorbachev made international headlines, when he slipped and used the word "Russia" instead of "Soviet Union" twice in one of his first speeches. He does not do it any more. Russians have asked me, "Why is it always Soviet sputniks and Russian tanks?" The Russians are not our enemies. It is the Soviet regime that has called us enemy, not the Russian governments of the past or the Russian people today. So what is Soviet Union and what is Russia?

The term "Russian" refers to a people with a thousand year old history, culture and Christian heritage. "Soviet" refers to the Communist state forged by the Bolshevik coup in October 1917. "Russia" is an ethnic and national entity. The "Soviet Union" is a purely political one, which encompasses not only Russia, but a hundred other nationalities as well, all under the same totali-

tarian regime and ideology. This is why the ideology must be so rigid. Without ideology there is nothing.

It is important to understand the difference because how Russians are thinking, being the ethnic majority in the Soviet Union, is bound to affect the Soviet government.

By now, everyone knows the nature of the Soviet system. No one wants it as a model. Europe has rejected Communism entirely, China is turning off on a new experiment, and increasingly, the Third World too, is rejecting the Soviet model. Even in the homeland many questions are being asked. The boredom, the hopelessness, the shabby vulgarity, the economic stagnation that predominates in a country which before the revolution, had achieved a very high degree of civilization and taste, was leading the world in the arts, and surpassing the United States in its economic growth; a country which was the bread basket of Europe, producing more wheat, barley and rye than the United States, makes it evident that something is very wrong. This is beginning to be recognized, even by the Party.

Ironically, it was Stalin who first let the Russian nationalist genie out of the bottle. To encourage Russians to fight the Nazis during World War II, he called on the feelings of the Russian people for their Motherland, rather than for the Communist Party. These feelings never have gotten back in the bottle again. Perhaps they never really disappeared anyway.

One can make a very good case that the Russians have been more decimated by the Soviet regime than any other nationality, because it was necessary to crush their religion and their



culture more than any other. They were, after all, the majority. So today, conversely, the opinion and feelings of Russians have an importance to the regime which that of other nationalities do not.

The Soviet empire is not really an expansion of the Russian cultural tradition at the expense of others, but the destruction of Russian tradition as well. What remains is the total political culture. The focus of this ideology is the state, and not the nation. Today, the ideology is moribund. It remains the only legitimizing factor for the regime. If there is no ideology, what is there? The ideology is in malaise and in crisis. It is suffocating. Worst of all, it is boring. Especially in the case of young people, it is boring them to death. A country that loses its youth cannot look forward to a bright future. During the past twenty years, there has been a growing vacuum of belief, and nature abhors vacuum. What has been rushing in to fill that spiritual vacuum are revived feelings of Russian nationalism, which I think are better called "Russianist" feelings. These find a great echo in the population.

Every government, however totalitarian, exists in some part either with the consent or, at least, the acquiescence of the governed. There is a public opinion in the Soviet Union, although it does not work in ways that we are used to. What the Russians think is important to the Soviets. If Russian attitudes are changing significantly, there must be some adaptation - or conflict will most surely eventually result. Increasingly, Russianists have been saying that it is precisely Marxist-Leninist

thinking that is destroying Russia, not the threat from Western Imperialism. There is a growing difference between "them" and "us."

Russianist sentiment is not a political party in any sense. Rather, it reflects the thinking of many groups, whose generalized body of concerns bring them more and more into conflict with Marxist-Leninist thinking and priorities. There are indications that these concerns and feelings reach up to the highest levels of government and find strong support among the military.

We in the West have not, up to now, paid very much attention to these growing nationalist feelings, nor to their manifestation. This, I believe, is due to our Western proclivity for looking for mirror images. We in the West have been more interested in the "dissident" movement. These were indeed a heroic few who did much to begin the process of questioning which is now continuing in the Soviet Union along other paths. But the dissident movement was not broad based, it did not reflect the concerns of the majority of the Russian people. Directed toward the West, it was well reported by Western newsmen and closely tied to the question of Jewish emigration, which found echo and support in the West. The nationalist movement finds no such understanding or support here, and we have not been much interested in its development. I think we are very mistaken, because, contrary to the dissident movement, the Russianist movement does represent the deepest concerns and worries of millions of Russians. The regime cannot afford to entirely disregard these strong and growing sentiments.

The fires of revolution no longer burn so brightly. The revolutionary youth has settled into middle age and is facing the problem of paunch, balding, grey hair, and loss of energy. As a Russian song goes,

"One begins to see that autumn has lost  
the brightness of June and the pompous  
power of August,  
That the roads are bad,  
That darkness falls not at ten, but at  
eight,  
That the fields grow dark and that fate  
has not been so kind."

In the Soviet Union these days, not only the economic reality, but the human reality is not so good. The social fabric is decaying. These are no longer secrets, but discussed openly and even passionately in the pages of the newspapers of the Soviet Union. No more talk about surpassing and burying the United States. Much less talk about communism being "built." In his 27th Party Congress speech, Gorbachev himself referred to "Socialist civilization" and of having constructed "a Communist society." The utopia has arrived. And so now what? The USSR may be a powerful military machine, but everything else; roads, communications, and food, are not doing so well. Except for uniforms, it is more and more apparent to everyone that the Emperor has no clothes.

Increasingly, in order to justify its totalitarian power amidst growing awareness of deficiencies at home, the regime is falling back on one theme - that of portraying itself as the protector of the Russian land against outside enemies. In a country which has known so many invasions and has such a deep seated fear of war, this powerful appeal to the instinct for national survival goes very deep and out-

weighs almost everything else. More and more, Russians are being treated to powerful doses of nationalism, rather than Communist platitudes. The cult of World War II grows to ever dizzying heights, treated by the regime as if it happened last week and not forty years ago. It is indeed vitally important to them because the Great Patriotic War, as it is called in the Soviet Union, remains the only area in which the entire nation agreed and participated together.

This War Cult is a manipulated nationalism. The government has manipulated and continues to manipulate Russian symbols. It tries to appropriate them to itself; the love of pictures, symbols, icons, parades, patriotism, and the color red. Of course, the authorities would prefer a non-Christian version of nationalism, celebrating steely, spartan-like Russian warriors. But the people, with some exceptions, are refusing to accept this definition and they are making themselves heard.

Popular nationalist feelings are broader and more humane than the manipulated nationalist feelings that the regime now encourages. The two are a little bit like oil and vinegar in vinaigrette. You can shake them up for a while, but left to rest, they separate. Therefore, when we confuse the two terms "Soviet" and "Russian," we help the regime achieve the goal that it is presently trying to achieve -- that of merging Russian nationalism with itself. That is why it is important for us to know the difference.

This is especially important because the goals of the Russianists are ones with which the US can sympathize. They concentrate on issues which are seen as most injurious to the well-being of the Russian people. What are these issues?

1. The Russianists express great concern over the rape of the environment by the headlong scientific-technical revolution, which has been the cornerstone of the Communist regime (Chernobyl may eventually have a very big effect on public opinion in the Soviet Union. Perhaps the reason that the regime initially released so little news about it at home, initially and so piecemeal now, is because they fear that popular reaction may yet endanger their ambitious nuclear programs.) Nationalists are against Promethean, utopian communist projects.

Curiously, this Russian rediscovery of the environment coincided exactly with ours in the US in the 60's. But it is even stronger in Russians who have traditionally, and still today, maintain a closer connection with nature and land than we do in the United States.

2. The decline of the village and destruction of the countryside and culture of the village. Russianists see the village as being a repository for age old values that are now being eroded and destroyed by the headlong march to scientific-materialistic progress.

3. The preservation of old Russian monuments. Over the past 18 years, Russianists have mounted an effective campaign against the continued razing of historical and cultural monuments, including churches. So effective has this movement been that the preservation of monuments is now government policy.

4. The preservation and protection of religion, particularly the Orthodox Church, which they see as playing a vital role in Russian history and culture.

Basically, Russianists want to throw the Soviet juggernaut in reverse; to promote a concern for the physical and spiritual health of a people threatened with decline and even extinction.

These Russianist goals are, in my view, realistic and patriotic ones which would help to bring Russia back into the family of nations, help her prosper and restore her prestige. Utopian? I don't think so. On the contrary, I find them realistic. I have often heard the word "tupik" (dead end) in the Soviet Union, referring to the present state of affairs. If so, then the only course of sanity is to turn back a bit and look for a more constructive road.

In the West, some academics have tried to portray rising Russian national feelings as dangerous, fascist, antisemitic. I do not share this view. While it is true that every nation, including Russia, has its own home-grown bigots, they are by no means the majority. How would we like our own nationalistic feelings to be judged exclusively by our John Birchers or neo-Nazis? Rather, what I have observed is a people looking through the rubble for its lost soul, trying to find a way back to national morality and values. And where is it more logical to look than in their own past? There is a powerful phrase of Solzhenitsyn, "When a culture is taken away from a people, it is like committing a lobotomy on them." Russians are simply refusing to be lobotomized, and we should be glad for this. They have resisted totalitarianism in whatever form it came clothed - a great feat. "Ethics and aesthetics" is the slogan and positive mission of the "quiet revolution" of the Russianists. Their goal is to resurrect from near extinction, values and moral reflexes which have been out of fashion and, indeed, subject to persecution and derision during the Soviet period.

Today, old Russia is definitely back in style, and this is becoming more and more evident every day in ways small and large.

The revival began sometime in the late 60's. First it was crosses; among young people especially, it became fashionable to wear little golden crosses around their necks. Artists, as it happens so often, were among the first to sense the growing spiritual searching. With increasing frequency, crosses, cupolas, and other religious symbols began to appear in the paintings of unofficial artists. The prerevolutionary Christian philosophers, Solov'yov and Berdayev, were searched out and read by members of the intelligentsia. Through the Russian classics young people found the language of faith. Dostoevsky, after all, was uncensored and published in unexpurgated form only about 20 years ago. Church weddings became more desirable. Some of the children of high Communist officials found them much prettier than the assembly line in the House of Marriages presided over by an uninspiring Party official. Baptisms began to increase.

The new love for Russian style shows in many small details.

Over the past two years I have noticed that young women are more often wearing the long, Russian plait, which used to be the glory of Russian womanhood. They are tying their flowered scarves in graceful, traditional ways. The fur hat, "Boyarina style," was much in demand in Leningrad last fall. Some enterprising young men found fur lined coats somewhere; coats that made them look much more dashing. They have taken, in greater frequency, to wearing beards and mustaches. I even saw several members of the militia wearing mustaches of 19th century style, which made them look quite like old fashioned hussars. I saw a sign for "old Petersburg dishes" in a window of a restaurant not for foreigners. The store windows of the Gostiny Dvor, the famous prototype of the shopping mall built by Catherine the Great, are now

being painted as they were in the 19th century, and the displays much more attractively done by artists who have their names posted in the windows.

Last fall, to my astonishment, I saw, clip-clopping down the Nevsky Prospect a carriage, driven by a liveried driver. I thought perhaps it was for a film until I saw a television program one evening, where the driver was interviewed. It turned out that this gentleman was selling rides in his carriage for 40 kopeks a kilometer. He said his horse and carriage were " very popular among our young people, especially for weddings."

In Leningrad, the Literary Cafe has opened in the very place and building where Wolf and Barringer's, a famous Petersburg cafe once existed. There, legend has it that Pushkin had his last cup of coffee before he left for his fatal duel.

The picturesque Arbat district in Moscow has been partially restored, and is now closed off to automobile traffic. Pedestrians browse among the little shops which have blossomed.

In Leningrad there is a project to close off the Palace Embankment and a parallel street, which was known in the past as Millionarnaya; there to restore horses and carriages and the old store fronts.

A recent study, published in Izvestia, reports that young Russian parents are now no longer naming their children such names as Electrification. Alexander and Ekaterina have replaced former favorites like Tractor, Hypotenuse, and Revolution. One in every thirty boys is now named Alexander, a name which recalls three tsars and the country's greatest poet. Following in popularity were Dmitri, Alexsei, Sergei, and Andrei and, for girls, Anna, Maria, Elena, Olga, and Tatiana -



incidentally perhaps, all Saints names. Some people haplessly named Central Chemical have been changing their names back officially to the more traditional Nikolai and Mikhail. Patronymics, too, are more in style, although some Soviet officials still pompously insist that these be dropped.

This interest in re-naming extends to places. Continuing its campaign for the preservation of "the historical memory" of the Russian people, the newspaper Sovetskaya Rossiya said that the Moscow Executive Committee should discuss with Soviet historians the possibility of returning the old, prerevolutionary names to streets and squares in Moscow.

During my visits over the last two years, I have noticed that there are fewer political banners and placards, and those that remain, are getting a little bedraggled and not being rapidly replaced. There are less Lenin pictures in the store windows and no more five story high banner of a clenched fist Lenin in the Palace Square in Leningrad -- my first impression of the Soviet Union in 1967. Instead, for May Day there was a great banner with a more modest Lenin peeping out from behind the hirsute Marx and Engels.

In Moscow, according to a recent article, young people are singing songs of the White Army, and in Afghanistan, it was reported by a French newspaper recently, soldiers are singing Tsarist songs, playing Russian roulette, calling each other Gospodin (sir) instead of Comrade, and favoring the more elegant champagne instead of vodka. In Leningrad old tsarist marches are rousingly played by military bands.

Even the new leader is in step. Gorbachev is the first full-blooded great Russian since Peter the Great, a fact noted by Russians

with approval.

Along with this renewed interest in all things old, it is perhaps natural that monarchist feelings and nostalgia exist as well.

There has been a tremendous and growing public interest in the lives of the last Emperor, Nicholas II and his wife, Alexandra. Russians gobble up information about their lives and tragic death, seeming to feel that in this period before the Revolution lies the explanation for the events that followed.

It is not unusual to find pictures of the last Tsar and his family on the walls of modest apartments. During the past ten years, a trashy book about Nicholas II, "23 Steps Downwards" by Marc Kasvinov, has been published and was eagerly bought up by the Russian public. Despite its fallacious rendering of the facts, it is a book which Russians found fascinating, if only for the few crumbs of real information it contained.

There have been official attempts to demonstrate that it was not Lenin, but Kerensky, who actually ordered the assassination of the Imperial family and that the killing of the Tsar was done by Russians, not by foreigners as was actually the case. (This is because Russians often insist that no Russian would ever have murdered the Tsar.)

The Ipatiev House in Sverdlovsk, where the Imperial family was murdered, was razed about five years ago. The reason? -- it had become a place for pilgrimages.

Since the mid-60's three films have been made on the subject of the last tsar: "His Majesty's Crown," "Before Judgment" and "Agoniya" -- released to the general public only last year, more than eight years after its completion. Millions flocked to see them.

In 1982 the Moscow poet Yuri Kubalanovskii, now an emigre, wrote: "When one visits the home of a member of the Nomenklatura elite, one is likely to see photographs of our Cyclops (Brezhnev, et. al.) on the walls. But let us turn to the room of the son; here one finds a votive lamp, a photo of the last Tsar and Empress and a simple icon of Saint Seraphim of Saratov."

We should not, I think, dismiss this too quickly as lunacy or merely rear guard narrowmindedness. The aspiration for monarchy as a symbol of a stable and enduring national identity is not so strange. After all, why should it be more unrealistic or wrong for some Russians to be exploring this thought than it is for the English, the Spanish or the Scandanavians, where we find it most natural and acceptable. Socialist governments and kings seem to get along rather well in those places.

During the 70's, the artistic concerns of the Russianists appeared in the works of many painters and writers.

Called the "Village writers" or the "Siberian" group, Valentin Rasputin, Vasilii Belov, the late Feodor Abramov and Vasilii Shukshin were among a new group of writers who sprang up in the late sixties and in the seventies. Vladimir Soloukhin has written several books on old Russian culture and Orthodoxy. We did not pay much attention to these writers in the West, but the Russians did, eagerly devouring their books. The "Village writers" wrote about the problems of the disappearing and decaying life of the villages, the backbone of Russian life, about the destruction of ancient village morality, encroached upon by technocrats and factories. Some of these stories are quite startlingly frank and honest. The stories of Shukshin

remind one of Chekhov in their economy of expression and human understanding.

(Shukshin, since his untimely death at age 45 a few years ago, has become, like the late poet-singer Vladimir Vysostsky, a national hero. Every year pilgrimages are organized to his home in Siberia, where his works are read. A talented actor and film director as well as a writer, his film, "Kalina Krasnaya," has become a contemporary Soviet classic.)

In a lower vein, the writer Pikul, who has turned out trashy historical novels about the reigns of Catherine the Great and Paul I, enjoys an enormous popularity. A Communist official advised me enthusiastically: "You must read Pikul -- he writes about our history! Our tsars!"

Painters, too, expressed the theme of the disintegration of Russian life in their canvases. There are neo-primitives, who seek their inspiration from Russian folk art, and others who portray religious symbols and scenes. Ilya Glazunov, a controversial artist, both there and here, specializes in nationalistic and Russian historical themes. Personally controversial or no, good artist or bad, the fact is that in 1978 and 1979, 600,000 people waited in long lines to see some 400 of his paintings in Moscow (in contrast, a three month long, 60th anniversary exhibit which had been held in Moscow to commemorate the anniversary of the founding of the USSR drew only 50,000 people). Almost a million people in Leningrad - one quarter of the city - flocked to see his exhibition there. Up to 45,000 a day assembled to see the exhibit, despite efforts of the authorities to close or limit attendance. Glazunov was severely taken to task by the Party cultural

establishment in Leningrad and in Leningradskaya Pravda. Yet he was able to hold the Leningrad Party establishment at bay, which indicates that he had some powerful protection somewhere.

The big hit of the show was "The Return of the Prodigal Son," showing a shirtless young man in jeans, on his knees, being comforted by a Christ-like figure, behind whom stand holy men and cultural figures from Russia's past. In the foreground were scenes associated with wild debauch, Soviet prometheism, political terror, barbed wire, a skyscraper. In the visitors book at the exhibition, thousands of comments were written, such as:

"Long live the Great Russian Idea, risen up like a Phoenix" - a group of Russian youth;

"Thank you for Rus', for that which lives in us always and everywhere, which is impossible to kill, to which we shall return."

In music, after a long disappearance or rare performances, the Russian repertoire grows more classic each time I visit. I have seen several of Rimsky-Korsakov's finest operas; operas which can only be seen in the Soviet Union, for they are sadly never performed here. A new production of "Evgeny Onegin" and "The Queen of Spades," by Timurkanov, the conductor and director of the Kirov Theater Orchestra in Leningrad, was the hottest ticket in town. These were beautiful productions, done with perfect taste and attention to the tradition of Petersburg. At the Cappella, or Choir Hall, in Leningrad, Chernushenko has almost singlehandedly resurrected some of the most beautiful of Russian music. This year, I heard there liturgical music of the 16th and 17th centuries, the music of the 18th century composer Bortnyansky, and others, the songs of Peter the Great's time. There

are beautiful concerts given now in the restored palaces of Pavlovsk and Gatchina.

Poets, too, are taking up Russianist themes; poets such as Oleg Okhupkin in Leningrad, a devout Orthodox poet who has been writing for many years using religious and philosophical themes. There is a determined search for more classical language in poetry.

Perhaps one of the most dramatic illustrations of this great surge of interest in the past and in Russian history is the extraordinary work of restoration and preservation of old monuments and buildings. In Moscow, I was told by the head of Moscow Restorations that there are now in the Soviet Union close to 15 million members of organizations concerned with restorations, or people working in such restorations. Said he, "We cannot even touch a bridge now without having a flood of protests."

Perhaps one thing that most differentiates Russians from Westerners is the degree to which the Russian is guided by his emotions. As we all know, emotions are connected with moods. Over and over their history has shown, that urged on by his emotions, the Russian can accomplish great feats. Conversely, when he is not in the mood, he is capable of great laziness. Simply looking at the problems of the economy in the Soviet Union, we can deduct that in this area the Russian today is not highly motivated and even quite discouraged.

However, when we turn to the restoration of palaces and churches we see something quite different. Although everywhere else in the Soviet Union one is surrounded by shabby goods and bad workmanship -- here one sees work that shines like a true diamond. The restoration of the palaces outside Leningrad destroyed by the Nazis during World

War II is a world class feat. No one has done it better than the Russians. There one sees that Russian emotion has achieved miracles -- miracles which deserve to be admired by the entire world. Nothing demonstrates better what Russians can do when they want to -- the perfection and devotion with which they can work when motivated. If Mr. Gorbachev could harness the feelings that have motivated these magnificent efforts for the entire economy, he would have few problems.

What is this motivation? Not love of money, certainly, for many worked as volunteers and there was no way to pay for all the extra hours of devotion above the call of duty. Not love of Lenin, party, or scientific-materialism, certainly -- rather, it is love of country, love of beauty, love and respect for the past. The Russian people have been ready to defend and protect their history and culture from all attacks, whether at home or from Nazi hordes, and they have succeeded. I have often wondered, as I looked at these miracles of restoration, if it had happened to us, what buildings would we consider so important to our national soul, to our culture that we would work with such patience for 44 years to restore them? Or, in love with the future, would we prefer to raze them and start something new?

Perhaps one of the major reasons that the Soviet regime is becoming more concerned with Russianist issues is the sobering reality of the dismal human statistics which are affecting primarily the Russian and European populations of the USSR.

For some time, there has been a declining or stagnat<sup>n</sup> birth rate

in the Russian north, compounding the shortage of labor and leaving vast tracks of resource rich land short of settlers. This is in contrast to the Moslems, who are notorious for their reluctance to move North, or even into cities, who have exploded in numbers.

In Russia, the statistics are 17.6 births per thousand, and in Ukraine 16. In the Asiatic republics, the highest, Tadzhikistan, is 39.7 per thousand and in Kazakhstan, the lowest, 24.4 per thousand. If these trends continue, Murray Feshbach, the leading U.S. demographer who studies the Soviet Union, predicts that by the year 2000, the Russians may no longer be the ethnic majority.

The Soviet government has tried to offer incentives, including cash and extended maternity leaves, for each baby. But the problem is difficult in a country where women make up 51% of the labor force and 92.5% of all working age women work or study. One in three marriages ends in divorce and this is now one in two. Of all those married in 1977, a third had filed for divorce by 1978. (Again, in the Moslem republics, the problems are lesser. There, because of strong religious tradition, divorce is negligible.) The birth rate in the Western industrialized part of the country has fallen to such a low point that in the Russian republic, 56% of all couples have only one child and another 33% have only two. This means that 89% of all families in the largest and most populous republic have fewer children than the replacement rate.

Abortions are soaring. There are more abortions in Russia than any other country in the world; at least three times as many as in the United States according to official statistics. Every woman has six to eight abortions in her lifetime. And since most women in populous



Central Asian republics have none, this means that in the West and in the North, women have as many as fifteen. Soviet medical reports put the ratio of live births anywhere between 2.1 to 4.1.

There is now an all-out campaign to stop women from terminating their first pregnancies, in view of the serious damage this is found to cause health and the chance of ever being able to complete any subsequent pregnancy. Statistics show that 36% became seriously ill after the first abortion, attributed to the blow to their hormonal systems, and I might also add, their psychological systems, for abortions in the Soviet Union are routinely done without anest<sup>he</sup>sia.

Public discussion of the issue is increasing. The state is trying to put sanctity back into marriage. Attempts are being made to strengthen the Soviet family. But as women work an average of 80 hours a week between job and home, and men 50, this is not to the liking of Russian women, who outnumber men by a larger proportion than anywhere else in the world. (This, a sad testimonial to the wars, Stalin's terror, and all the calamities that have befallen Russia.) Today Russians are searching for old values of family and children. The official image is not now that of a bulky superwoman swinging a hammer to build Communism, but a domesticated mother contentedly fulfilling herself by bringing up children at home. But the party knows it cannot get people to marry and have children by decree.

Alcoholism is another terrible social problem. The average age of the chronic alcoholic in the Soviet Union is 15 to 17 years. Eleven percent of workers are absent every day because of drunkenness. There are approximately 42 million alcoholics. Deaths from alcohol poisoning are ten times higher than in the United States. The percentage of

people who began to drink under age 18 has risen from 16% in 1925 to 93% today. Each working adult in European Russia consumes an average of one bottle of hard liquor a day. A terribly sad, tragic statistic for the future is that there is now a high percentage of mentally retarded children born to alcoholics. Teachers who work in the countryside report that sometimes they find whole villages of children are mentally retarded.

Soviet society is also plagued by a rising crime rate and increasing juvenile delinquency, a falling mortality rate for men, whose average life expectancy is now approximately 60.4 years of age. There is an 11.5 year difference in life expectancy between men and women, the highest difference in any developed country. The Russian population is literally drinking itself to death.

And what are the reasons for this? Soviet authorities and social workers say "escapism," "boredom," that Soviet society has lost many of its values. There is, they say, "A spiritual emptiness in our youth." Where to fill this spiritual emptiness and how? Increasingly, as the State fails to come up with answers, more and more Russians are turning to God.

Of all the manifestations of a resurgent Russian national consciousness, the rising appeal and strength of the Orthodox Church is the most important.

It is one of the glories of the Russian people that they are, and remain, deeply spiritual, sensitive to beauty and to mystery. The increasing interest in the past, the restoration of magnificent pre-revolutionary architecture, the interest in peasant culture, the Tsar,

and Russian heroes, was bound to lead to the church, for Russian nationalism relates very positively to the Orthodox Church. The Russian church is the only institution which represents an unbroken continuity with a thousand year old past; the only institution which has remained unabsorbable. It is the only unassimilated, non-Marxist, Leninist organization allowed to exist officially; the only alternative belief system tolerated in the USSR, the only place one can go if one rejects the ideology, the only place to emigrate without leaving the country. Another important aspect is that, in a society deprived of beauty, and for a people as sensitive to beauty as the Russians, the church is beautiful. One has only to look at the expressions of Russians flocking to museums and to churches to understand how important beauty is to them. All the more so, because there is so little anywhere else. It is, therefore, an immensely attractive element for those who do not accept the system, or whom the system will not accept. The integrating role it can play among Belyorussians, Ukrainians and Great Russians, gives this church a particular role at this moment in history when the regime is facing a problem of increasing disintegration and social decay. We are seeing certain signs of a greater rapprochement of the church and the state.

That the church in Russia has survived at all, and that it is growing today is a miracle, for perhaps no state in history has mounted such a concentrated, sustained assault on religion.

For many hundreds of years, Russia was the church and the church was Russia. It was therefore vital for the new Communist regime to destroy it.

In the years immediately following the revolution, thousands of

priests were killed. Churches were destroyed, turned into warehouses, movie theaters, and swimming pools. The first Five-Year Plan confidently predicted, "all vestiges of religion will be destroyed by the end of the first Five-Year Plan." But they were not destroyed then and they are not destroyed now. Today the regime takes a different tone.

Yet so viciously effective was this first campaign against the church that by 1929 there were only four bishops left and by 1939, only 100 churches in a country which had had thousands. The mighty Church of the Saviour, built by contributions of Russian people as a thanksgiving for the victory over Napoleon, as powerful an image on the horizon as the Kremlin, was blown up in 1931. "We'll blow up Mother Russia's skirts a little," said the Party official who pushed the dynamite lever.

Ironically, it was Stalin again, who not only resurrected Russian national feelings at the time of war, but also under pressure, restored the Patriarch and called on the church to help inspire feelings for the Motherland. The church has never been pushed back in the box again. In 1943, in a tremendous concession by the state, the Orthodox Church regained the land given up by the Nazis. By the end of the war, there were 20,000 churches. Yet once again, in 1958 - 1964, under Khrushchev, a mighty anti-religious campaign was mounted by the regime and 1/2 to 2/3 of these newly opened churches were closed, along with an overwhelming majority of seminaries and convents.

But despite all efforts and all the persecution of their government, the Russians have refused to give up their faith. Over the past 20 years, first gradually and now in every growing numbers,

Russians, including the young, have been returning to the church.

There is a profound thirst for the spiritual. As I was told by one young man shortly after he had been baptised, "I couldn't stand lies any more. I thought there had to be truth somewhere." Fifty five to sixty million people are now willing to be registered as Orthodox believers, three times as many as the Communist party. This figure does not include several million Catholics, Baptists, and other Protestants -- nor the underground Orthodox church, for which we have no figures, only estimates. But even official figures make the USSR, along with the US and Brazil, one of the three largest Christian countries on earth (as well as being the fourth largest Moslem nation). The church now estimates that there are more than one million new baptisms a year. Grandmothers have been assailed in the pages of Pravda for refusing to sit with heathen babies. Whatever the numbers, the fact is that Communist ideas are growing weaker and religion is growing stronger.

Russians have great experience with spiritual resistance. Sometimes they remind me of a woman with a bullying husband. She knows he is stronger than she is, she knows he can hit her if he likes, perhaps even kill her. So she keeps her profile low and goes about her own business, fooling him when she can, staying out of his way the best she can, but always keeping her real thoughts and counsel to herself, her opinions unchanged.

How do Russians deal with tyranny? Their history gives some answers. They are a nonconfrontational people. The most ancient teachings of the church instruct them - "Do not resist evil with evil," and to accept with humility the will of God. Their most

potent weapon is patience - and they are masters at it. They survived 250 years of Mongol domination and a 100 years of Westernization and emerged more Russian than before from each ordeal. Champions of endurance, they outlast, outwait, and finally swallow every conqueror, making them over into their own image. This is what they are gradually doing today, for Russia remains always essentially herself.

Russians have been resisting in their own, desperate way. They have brought their economy to a halt by refusing to work. They have refused to reproduce themselves, and have preferred to kill themselves with alcohol rather than to become robots, to lose their souls. The ultimate resistance, after all, is suicide.

One can say that today in Russia everyone is either religious or superstitious, and what is superstition but a primitive belief in an unseen world?

Today slowly, cupolas are being regilded, churches are being restored; a source of historical and architectural pride once again. During the funerals of the last three leaders, the church was present. The church is preparing to celebrate its Millenium - a thousand years of Christianity, in 1988. The Danilovsky monastery, the oldest and first monastery in Moscow, has been given back to the church and is being entirely restored. This monastery holds profound resonances for the Russians. Prince Daniel, the youngest son of Alexander Nevsky, was given Moscow, then a small settlement, by his father. Daniel, a monastic prince, and cannonized after his death, founded the monastery in the 13th century and it became an important first center of spiritual resistance to Mongol domination. The monastery complex includes seven chapels, and a cathedral. In addition, a new building,

which is to be future center of the Orthodox Church, is under construction. In 1988, the Patriarch will move there from Zagorsk to Moscow, a move which also has powerful historic connotations. A few weeks ago, the statue of Lenin was removed peacefully from the courtyard, in the presence of many witnesses. Daily monastic services are conducted there already. Restoration of the monastery has aroused great interest all over Russia; thousands of pilgrims from all over the USSR have come to Moscow and even offered to voluntarily help with the restoration work. In a measure unprecedented since the Revolution, the Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate recently announced that, an account in the name of "Restoration and building of the compound of Holy St. Daniel's Monastery Foundation" has been opened in the Foreign Trade Bank of the USSR Moscow. The Commission for the Restoration announced that from now on anyone, worldwide, can participate in the common enterprise conducted by the Moscow Patriarchate. Contributions in any currency will be accepted.

Of course, as religious sentiment has grown, the government has not stood idly by. Over the past years there have been renewed efforts to teach atheism in the schools. Books have been published purporting to show that the church's contribution to Russian history and culture has been overrated. Propaganda emphasizes the corruption of priests and monks during the tsarist regime.

During the 70's in the Brezhnev period, along with the crackdown on the dissident movement which received much attention in the West, there was an equally harsh, in some respects even harsher, crackdown on Russian nationalist thinkers and independent Orthodox priests. Many were arrested and many were broken. Many still languish in

extremely bitter prison conditions. This crackdown, however, received scant attention in the West.

Alexander Ogorodnikov, founder of the Christian Seminar in Moscow, has been in prison since 1978 and is now in severely deteriorating health because of foul prison conditions. His sentence was extended in February. His current whereabouts are unknown. Father Gleb Yakunin, a courageous, independent priest is also still imprisoned. We pay little attention to these martyrs of conscience. They are Russians, after all, and wish to stay in Russia. A testimonial to our disinterest is that Anatoly Shcharansky's recent release received a great deal of notice. His fellow prisoner of whom Shcharansky spoke in affectionate terms, Vladimir Poresh, a gentle pacific man whose crime was exploring Russian Christian philosophy and Orthodoxy, and leading a Christian seminar in Leningrad, did not. Poresh, who was tried and imprisoned at the same time as Shcharansky and suffered the same harsh imprisonment, was also released shortly after Shcharansky. There was not a single line about Poresh in the Western press, yet in Russia his release was perhaps even more significant than Shcharansky's.

The regime has come to realize that it is an unobtainable goal to eradicate religion entirely, so they have now decided that since they cannot beat it, they will try to join it. Today the Soviet government makes every attempt to infiltrate, control, manipulate and use the church for disinformation, internal and external. The organized church is, of course, very vulnerable to such pressure, but the mass of popular believers is much less. They are the targets of anti-religious campaigns, which now have turned into mostly prophylactic



campaigns aimed at preventing young people from being infected by religion, or from relapsing. But before we dismiss the Russian Orthodox Church as merely a subservient tool of the regime, which it is not entirely, we should remember that these contacts are not a one way street. Interaction between the two forces is very complex. Christian history is full of stories of those who came to scoff and persecute and stayed to pray -- to name one, Saul, who set out on the road to Damascus to organize the persecution of the Christians and somewhere on the road became Saint Paul.

I think we will see a continuing rapprochement between the church and the state in the years to come, for as it did in wartime, the church can play an important unifying role for the nation.

The rediscovery of common roots of nationality and religion, the merger of nationality and religious consciousness, which has, incidently also happened among the Moslems, is an important force. Increasingly, attacks on the church are being perceived as attacks on nationality. Today, even those who are not believers, are opposed to religious persecution: "Let believers believe, it's not our business," is a growing attitude, "Do not interfere in their lives." Increasingly, the church is seen as performing a role in moral education for a regime which is fighting social disintegration. One teacher, I was told, said, "I much prefer the children of believers, they behave so much better." There is a feeling that religion can instill wholesome values in the population, that the church can serve as a powerful medicine for an ailing nation.

We do not know yet whether Gorbachev is more a patriot of his country or of his party, which has traditionally shown a disregard for

the good of the people, treating them as ideological fodder for ambitious projects, or destroying them in war. During the past few days, after the tragedy at Chernobyl, the official attempt to save face at any cost once again illustrates the pathological defensiveness and sensitivity to criticism of a system which knows itself to be vulnerable to public opinion. This official reaction is sad and discouraging. How Gorbachev will react we do not yet know. But before this latest disaster, there have been indications that he is aware and concerned about the problems of his people. His campaign against alcoholism, his efforts to go out to the public directly demonstrate this. He has cancelled the controversial rivers of the North project (a high priority for Russian conservationists) that would have diverted rivers with unforeseeable environmental consequences and by the by, drowned several old and beautiful Russian villages. He has cancelled a majority of the proposed utopian projects in Siberia in order to divert much needed funds and resources to European Russia.

As for religion, under the section of the 27th Party Congress Program "Atheism," it was written that "the Party will use the means of ideological influence for the wide dispersal of a scientific-materialistic world understanding and for the surmounting of religious dogmas, but without giving offense to the feelings of believers" (italics mine) -- a new and startling departure. There is a well substantiated rumor that Gorbachev wanted to remove the section on atheistic teaching all together.

In the first weeks of his leadership, Gorbachev began by going out to the people to seek their support, in a way unprecedented for any Soviet leader. They will give it to him if he begins to attend to

their pressing needs. This means more attention to the consumer economy. It means an end to the war in Afghanistan, which is uselessly killing young Russian men, who are badly needed at home for more constructive purposes, including making babies. Babies who, in turn, deserve the right to see other lands and to develop themselves fully. It means an end to lies, for the lack of free contact with the rest of the world is hurting Russia most of all. (The isolation that we have just witnessed at Chernobyl is not only sad, but as we have seen, terribly dangerous.) It means an end to making mischief in countries in far off places, an end to gigantism, which is costing Russia dearly money that could better be used at home.

An old saying has been whispered among the people; that the troubles of Russia will not end until a new Mikhail came to power. This is a reference to the Time of Troubles, which ended when the first Romanov came to the throne in the early 17th century. Well, he has, and let's hope that the old superstition is right.

The time of Easter is a profoundly symbolic time of hope, of resurrection. In Russia, among the Russian people, there are stirrings of new life, as delicate as new spring branches. The ground is still hard and unfertile, the roots have been damaged but new life there is.

If these observations are true, then what questions does this new life pose for us in the United States in our long-range relations with the USSR? What attitude will we take to these new and developing phenomena? Will we be prepared to meet new developments with an open mind, or only with old stereotypes and prejudices? Will we be discerning enough to recognize constructive change when we see it? We

have often misjudged events in both Russia and the Soviet Union, or we have recognized them too late. At this vital junction in our relationship we must be more sensitive and discerning than we have ever been before. Perhaps a good way to begin is to differentiate clearly between the people and the government.

As the Russians are fond of saying, "Nothing lasts forever, everything passes." We, in the United States, need to develop a little longer view, a little perspective. After all, 67 years is a drop in the historical bucket. Russia is more than a thousand years old. She has seen many masters. Many leaders have passed into the mist, but Russia is still there. As one Russian said, "Russia will always free herself. She should have been spiritually killed by the Mongols, but she was not. She will always liberate herself from any pressure."

One of the great differences between us is that we in America are a country so enamored by the future that we often behave as if there were no past. The Russians have a tendency to do the opposite. We are both wrong. We in the United States need to remember that it was not always like this. We had good relations with the Imperial Russian government. Alexander II freed the serfs two years before Lincoln, and because of this became a national American hero. He corresponded with Lincoln and in 1863, sent a Russian fleet to support the Union. Lincoln spoke of this timely arrival of the Russians in his Thanksgiving Proclamation that year, as "one of God's great bounties which cannot fail to penetrate the heart." And yet, no two systems could have been more different than an ancient autocracy and a young republican democracy. So the difference in systems is not the

problem. The problem is hostile expansionist, Marxist ideology.

However, if we will only be satisfied with a mirror image, we are bound to be disappointed, for Russia is different, has always been different and her answer to her problems may not be ours. In any case, psychologists say that only narcissists want mirror images. Perhaps we should explore the differences -- we might learn something. We are a country of impatience, they of patience. We are a country of rationality, they of emotion. They are comfortable with mystery, we are not. We don't know it yet perhaps, but we need the Russians. We need their strength, their profound spirituality, their humanity, the wisdom they have so dearly won by their suffering.

We, too, in the past ten years, and I think it is a healthy thing, have developed a greater respect for our past and for our values. This, in my view, is a mark of maturity. Healthy patriotism for a nation is like self-respect for an individual. It is the distorted sense of nationalism, megalomania, that is bad. It is good that Russia is beginning to find her nationality again.

At this time, with respect to the Soviet Union, we have a very developed "anti" policy: anti-communist, anti-Soviet expansion, but what are we for? I believe that we must begin to ask ourselves what lies beyond containment? In less than 14 years we will come to a new century. Do we all want to continue on this negative road?

Certainly a country's strength is not measured only by the power to destroy, but the power to create. A releasing of the creative energy of the Russian people means allowing them to express themselves, to travel, to learn from others. After all, before the Revolution, Russia was leading the world in the arts; her artists a

symbol of everything that was daring, beautiful and free. "Our people are not ready," one Soviet official said to me. "Not ready for what?" I asked. I considered his remark an insult to the Russian people. Yes, they are ready, for air, for light, for movement; not only ready, but quite literally dying for it.

In the Soviet Union today, there are some first real signs of facing the human problems of Soviet society in a realistic way. If this is translated into more than rhetoric, it is a development we can and should applaud, for it is perhaps the very modest beginning of constructive change. We cannot solve their problems. It is the Soviet regime who, in the end, must eventually come to the conclusion that continued repression and suffocation of their people is counterproductive. It is they who must learn to trust their quite remarkable nation. If the present Soviet government can begin to do this, perhaps we can begin to trust them.

Is all this impossible? I don't think so. Change is the order of nature. Nothing stands still. Nothing is impossible in Russia. It is a country where the impossible occurs quite regularly, where the most extraordinary things, both bad and good, do happen. In this spring season of renewed life, of resurrection, it is possible to hope for the future and I do.

## Introduction to the Wirth Seminar

I am not an expert on arms control or throw-weight. I am a writer. I am primarily interested in people; how they think, react and feel. Professionally, for almost twenty years, in the Russian people, many of whom I know, whose bread I have shared, whose culture and history I have studied. I know their humor, their warmth, their generosity, their ruthlessness, their cunning, their strength. I know something about their problems, and these are very real. We are not always at the center of their radar screen, as much as we would like to think so, but sometimes on the very edge.

I think it is very difficult to judge the Russian people without knowing them, and without seeing their country, which unfortunately, not only Richard Perle has never done, but too many others in the decision making process in our own country. The danger of over-specialization is that one can get a slight case of tunnel vision. The world is not an exclusively military place. The military has a specific task, but there is much about the world that cannot be dealt with in terms of military strategy alone. Military strategy is only one component of a country's foreign policy, and foreign policy only one component of the life of a nation. This involves a complex set of problems. So it is in the United States, and so it is in the Soviet Union.