

## **The Mental & Psychological Inheritance Of Contemporary Russia**

*"No wise Intelligence Officer should ask himself 'what would I do if I were in someone else's shoes? The essential issue is to understand what are the driving forces that impel him to act, think and react the way he does'."*<sup>1</sup>

It would be entirely wrong to discuss Homo Sovieticus and the recent Communist past as the driving force in such a context since the Communist Party (CP) came to power in Russia at the, largely self inflicted, demise of the Tsarist Empire society whose basic system, weaknesses, faults and instincts were largely carried forward by the Party. It would be as well, therefore, to examine the deep rooted driving forces that go to the formation of Russia, Russians and Russianness before we look at the effect of the Communist regime itself.

The assumptions of this paper are firstly that every country, whilst exhibiting some common features, at the same time has some features which are the result of its history and which provide key differences in culture. An understanding of that culture is essential in dealings with people who have inherited it.

Secondly that no element of the make up of the present leaders and opinion formers, executives and the mass of the peoples of Russia is unique to Russia; these traits can be found, to a lesser degree perhaps, in almost every other country in western Europe, the USA and Japan. This suggests that the basis upon which we might consider ourselves to be superior and therefore to be able to teach the Russians, is severely constrained. Such advances as we have gained have taken decades and indeed centuries to evolve. Even if the Russians were 100% convinced that they had to adopt our ways there is no reason why they should be able to do so more quickly than we have.

So, while we consider the specific Russian attributes, let us bear in mind the second assumption and avoid any temptation to assume a superiority of our culture against theirs. I suggest furthermore that people, especially with such a history as theirs, are somewhat touchy if they think they are being treated as inferiors, especially when they and their country are plainly going through a bad period.

### **The Essential Elements Of Eternal Russia**

Let us consider each of the most important in turn:

#### **Patrimonialism**

This term, quoted by my colleague, Dr Mark Smith<sup>2</sup> to whom I am indebted, has been used to describe the Russian state under tsarism. "The Ruler and his administrative machine feel that the country belongs to them and that they may use its resources as they wish. The whole of Russia is but a giant Royal estate." The

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<sup>1</sup> I am indebted to my colleague Lt-Col (Retd), Dr A Clayton, Intelligence Corps, for drawing my attention to this remark by Brig Williams, who was Gen Montgomery's chief Intelligence office.

<sup>2</sup> "Russia's State Tradition", CSRC, May 1995.

American historian Richard Pipes wrote 'under a patrimonial system there can be no clear distinction between state and society in so far as such a distinction postulates the right of persons **other than the sovereign** to exercise control over things and (where there is slavery) persons. In a patrimonial society there exist no formal limitations on political authority, nor rule of law, nor individual liberties.<sup>3</sup> In fact this condition began to develop amongst the Grand Dukes of central Russia in the 14th century. For various reasons the landed gentry did not grow in power as they did in Southern Russia and in Western Europe. The rulers of the central area grew in power till they became the masters of all Russia. Although there were some struggles between the Ruler and his "barons" who in Russia were known as Boyars, progressively from Ivan I (1328-41) onward the ruler successfully became an autocrat. Ivan III had himself recognised as Tsar, in recognition of the magnificence of his victories over other dukes and in throwing off the Tatar yoke in 1480.

I continue to quote from Mark Smith & from Pipes:

*"Patrimonialism at its height rested on four pillars:*

*Monopoly on political power*

*Monopoly on economic resources and on wholesale trade*

*The ruler's claim to unlimited services from his subjects; absence of individual as well as group (estate) rights*

*Monopoly on public information."*

As my colleague, Dr Clayton, points out, these attributes are described by Hegel, a German 19<sup>th</sup> century philosopher with a cold blooded taste for autocracy who described in some detail his concept of an all-powerful State.<sup>4</sup> Hegel held that "the State is the Divine idea as it exists on earth and that the individual achieves self-realisation only as a member of it." Marxism derives to a significant degree from Hegel. This provenance explains, for example, the negative attitude of the Soviet Communists under Lenin to the disabled, who by definition were not fully fledged members of communist society because they could not perform the honourable tasks of physical work.

*Fundamental Laws of Russian Empire defined the Tsar as 'unlimited' and 'autocratic'. This meant that he was subject to neither constitutional nor institutional constraints. He was the exclusive source of laws.*

Tsar Nicholas the Second, completing his return in the first national census in 1897, gave his rank as "first nobleman of Russia and his occupation as "Master of the Russian land", while his German wife described herself as "Mistress of the Russian land." His reactionary concepts led Russia to defeat in 1914-17, to social ruin and to the victory of the CP. It was he who ruled by the slogan "Faith, Loyalty and Autocracy". His "Ministers" were powerless, they had to wait upon his pleasure, as did the Duma. It is true that he, like Alexander II, felt impelled to give a little to sharing power with the aristocracy and the educated classes. However these occasional relaxations in autocratic power were followed by further repressions as the fear of democracy getting out of hand was reinforced by events.

The General Secretaries of the CP, Lenin and Stalin, were also all-powerful; their associates lived in fear and had little influence on the policies. Their successors

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<sup>3</sup> "Russia Under The Old Regime", Penguin, 1974.

<sup>4</sup> Hegel's contribution to Communist dogma is well described in "Theory and Practice of Communism", R N Carew Hunt, 1957, Geoffrey Bles Ltd, London.

retained much of that power, although it was to a greater degree shared by the Central Committee. Yel'tsin, an old CP Boss, tries to follow the line in his relations with his "Government." It is the only way he knows. His own "Cabinet" promulgates decrees. The decision to go to war in Chechnya [1994] was almost certainly taken within his Security Council without time being given to the Ministry of Defence to lay the proper planning, training and logistic support for the armed forces. It gave every impression of a sudden 'whim', a caprice to use the Russian term. At the same time his Ministers treat their ministries as a personal fiefdom which provides them with opportunities to enrich themselves and friends. There is no coherent Cabinet Governmental policy; ministers fight each other for their own "line" and privileges. However Yel'tsin has to take some notice of the Duma; but plays one faction against another. His statements to them are often in conflict with each other and with those made for western consumption.

The political history of the western world from the 15th to the dawn of the 21st century has seen a generally increased enlargement of democracy, perhaps punctuated by some reversals from time to time in some countries. In Russia, by contrast, the rule of autocracy over the same period has been at best constant, and for long periods became more rigid with time, although some modest and short lived relaxations have been visible. This is the unfortunate inheritance of the rulers and peoples of every part of the former Soviet Union. It would be a miracle if they were to move steadily toward a democratic society.

They have no experience of accountable and delegated responsibility; political parties with coherent programmes - with the exception of the Communist parties; the rule of law to which the State itself is also subject. Their experience is that of arbitrary law without justice; Russia has never been a society that lived under the rule of law. "Law existed not to enforce justice but to maintain order." Count Benckendorff, the Chief of the Secret Police under Nicholas I (1825-55) argued that "laws are written for subordinates, not for the authorities."<sup>5</sup>

*"Progress cannot be made whilst Government policies are inimical to sensible investment; we are waiting for a Good Tsar".<sup>6</sup>*

Russians have always waited for gifts from a Boss, any Boss - God, the Tsar, the CP General Secretary or the President. It does not occur to them to act for themselves. Faith in a Good Tsar flies in the face of normal experience. However Russians always had faith that the "Little Father" - Batushka - would give them justice if only they could get past the functionaries to him. From them nothing could be expected. The local bosses could do what they liked. They were not accountable. **"God is too high and the Tsar is far away" as the Russian proverb goes.** See the story in "The House on the Dvina"<sup>7</sup> about the young man Alexander who had an altercation, when tipsy, with a sentry in Archangel; in the struggle the soldier's gun went off and he was killed. It was an accident but Alexander in being party to killing a soldier was found guilty of high treason and sentenced to Siberia. His pregnant wife travelled in the depths of winter by sleigh to St Petersburg to see the Tsar, who exercised clemency during certain holy days at Christmas and Epiphany to petitioners who came in person. Alexander II, just before his assassination in 1881,

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<sup>5</sup> Compare: "Was its der Freiesten Freiheit?", spoken by the Duke of Alva, the Spanish Governor of the Netherlands to Egmont in Goethe's play "Egmont".

<sup>6</sup> Remark made by the Deputy Minister of Social Services of the Russian Federation, Boris Stepanov, to me, 19 October 1995.

<sup>7</sup> "A Russian Childhood", Eugenie Fraser, Corgi Books, 1984.

promised that her husband would be freed. He was. Even people going to their deaths decreed by Stalin considered that if he knew the injustice he would right it. But he never did. Even Molotov, the Foreign Affairs Minister, did not dare to intercede with Stalin for the release of his wife from the Gulag.

I was in Moscow in 1962 when my cousin, Lesha, a psychiatrist, successfully defended his dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Medicine. We held a party that went on for 48 hours in the family's two-room flat. I found myself sitting next to Lesha's boss, the head of a big psychiatric hospital. The talk was all about the case of a senior psychiatrist who released a patient into community care on condition that he regularly visited a psychiatric social worker. All went well until one day the patient decapitated the social worker, went around the flats on her floor and cut off 11 more heads, arranged them neatly into a 3 by 4 matrix and called the police to see his handiwork. The police were upset, especially since one of the heads belonged to the local police chief. The psychiatrist was accused of negligence but the medical fraternity supported him and he survived. I asked what happened to the killer. He was shot in spite of the legal code which prescribed life imprisonment for such murders. It was such an awful crime that an exception was made for him, said my companion. It did not occur to him that he was condoning an act by the state that flouted its own law.

Law nowadays, as it always has been, is created by the whims of the President who issues decrees, *Ukaz*, by the thousand. These are usually ill thought out, often contradictory, require withdrawal or amendment and are ignored by the rich and powerful. If one is neither, to get one's rights under such a law requires patience, knowledge of whom and how much to bribe and increasingly, strong-armed protection.

In December 1994 A deputy Minister of Science told me in Moscow that the complex system of taxation was killing education and research. I checked with the Rector of a recently declassified Institute who confirmed the existence of the tax structure but added "we are so important that we ignore it. Indeed we have just had a 50% rise in Government support."

Peter the Great, the moderniser through coercion,<sup>8</sup> thought that he could impose change and modernisation by a top down series of decrees. When one idea failed because the people would not or could not respond properly he issued yet another more detailed decree which had only to be obeyed to ensure success, when that failed another was issued and so on. Finally, he was immersed in the detail he wished to delegate, created a super state of powerful bureaucrats and enslaved the whole population. His system lasted almost till 1914 and was de facto recreated by the Bolsheviks from 1917 onward. He was the first Bolshevik. In effect Russians have lived under one form of slavery or another for 200 years.

According to Prime Minister Chernomyrdin, Post Soviet Russia has seen an increase in the number of state employees from 715,000 in the USSR to 921,000 for the Russian Federation with only half the population of the former; nearly 60% rise per capita [1995]. Other estimates suggest the rise is more like twice the number, giving a fourfold rise/capita. This is also a good old Russian tradition. In Tsarist times the nobility and upper classes accepted paid sinecures in Government that required only notional attendance at the office.

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<sup>8</sup> "The Reforms of Peter the Great. Progress Through Coercion", Evgenii Anisimov, M E Sharpe Inc, 1993.

## Suspicion Of Foreigners & Foreign Ideas

This has always been prevalent in Russia. In olden times, Russians were forbidden to travel abroad without permission of the Tsar; if they did their families could be tortured, executed and have their property confiscated. Foreigners could only enter with special permission and their place of abode and travel were restricted. Contact with foreigners was discouraged. Until 1703 all domestic and foreign news was considered to be a State secret. Especially important was the preservation of the True Religion against Ungodly Europe. Every aspect of nationalist and religious propaganda is pressed into service even today. The KGB has released some papers to show that the Catholic Church was conniving with western military plans to invade Russia with the aim of supplanting orthodoxy. The KGB penetrated the Orthodox hierarchy before and during WW2 and has unashamedly exploited its appeal to the people.

The Decembrist rising in 1825 was organised by young nobles who had been in France after the defeat of Napoleon and absorbed some revolutionary, democratic ideas. As a result Tsar Nicholas I increased political repression, forming the 3rd Section of the Imperial Chancery; it acted as an intelligence body penetrating every "subversive" organisation. Stalin almost automatically exiled or jailed large numbers of soviet people and even ex-POWs who had lived under German occupation in WW2 because of the contamination that they might have received.

Currently Russians are complaining that:

western engineers trying to help to improve the competitiveness of the Russian military-industrial complex now have all the defence secrets and thus obviate the need to have intelligence agents in Russia.

admitting foreign world-class firms needed to improve the performance of the mineral extraction, transport and manufacturing is to sell the Russian birthright to foreigners.

the Norwegian researchers into ecological damage in the Barents Sea are spying on the military.

allowing a western firm to re-record old performances by top musicians in Russia is also to sell its national treasures abroad. The contract provides for royalties to be paid to Russian artists.

Coupled with this phobia it is not hard to show that historically Mother Russia has been attacked and invaded by - Tatars, Turks, Poles, Swedes, French under Napoleon, French and English in the Crimea, Germans in WWI & II, Japanese in 1905, English and Allies in the 1919-21 Intervention, Afghans and Muslims in the south. Truly Russia has been beleaguered, surrounded from all sides. Since 1917 the hostility, of course, has been compounded by class enemies bent on destroying the first Socialist State. Events from 1945-91 are seen through Russian eyes as continuing the ring of enemies bent on destruction of USSR. It is as well to keep in mind Tutchchev's remark "Russia cannot be understood with the mind alone".

A frequently heard remark from even quite balanced Russians illustrates some of the basic features which mark contemporary Russia:

*"We are a proud people with over a thousand years of civilised history. Every intervention from foreigners has been to the detriment of Russia. We*

*saved western civilisation from tyranny at least three times: Once from the Tatars whose occupation we endured for 300 years; once from Napoleon and more recently from Hitler. We have learned in the past how to absorb and adapt foreign ways to suit our circumstances. No one can save us except ourselves. If you do not like our way of doing things or our policies and you threaten to remove your aid in order to make us follow your wishes then we will do without your aid. Our ability to survive, to suffer, to endure hardships for decades indeed centuries is legendary and we will do it again rather than bow the knee to suit foreigners."*

This is the heroic view of Russian history which can be justified by a careful selection of facts. It represents a widespread viewpoint which we would do well to understand.

### **Romantic Paranoia**

*" We have two complaints against the West; firstly that you have not given us the aid that was promised, secondly that you do not accord us the respect due to a Great Power."<sup>9</sup>*

How can one be simultaneously a beggar and a Great Power? What were his criteria for the latter? "Our mineral wealth, our intellectuals, our huge territory". All poorly exploited potential sources. By these criteria Brazil is a Great Power. However, before we dismiss this observation let us reflect. Did we consider the USSR and Tsarist Russia before it, at the turn of the 19th/20th century, to be a Great Power because of those potentials or because to them were added a mighty military machine which the Ruler did not hesitate to use in the perceived interests of his country? I have in mind the expansionist policies of Pan-Slavism, and the attack in 1939 on Finland by Stalin in what he regarded as a preventive strike. Was the USSR post 1945 regarded as a Great Power because she was feared? If the answers to those questions are "Yes", then we surely would be unwise to deprecate Russia today when her military strength is weak. We would be inviting the Russians to rebuild that strength in order to command our respect.

*"Today, when Russia has already abandoned its pro-western romanticism which only hindered the development of a normal partnership, there is a danger of falling into another extreme-namely, that of the 'Soviet' tough confrontational rhetoric."<sup>10</sup>*

This is already happening. The present state of Russia is attributed entirely to evil Western policies; there is some truth in this view. NATO is again being cast as the enemy.

Let us take a moment to determine in what ways Russia is to be considered and therefore treated and respected by other Europeans as a Great Power over and above our acknowledgement of Brazil's economic and cultural potential. The following suggest themselves:

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<sup>9</sup> Spoken by a senior Russian Academic from the USA & Canada Institute in Moscow to CSRC Sandhurst, Summer 1994.

<sup>10</sup> Extract from the speech by Petr Shirshov, Chairman of the Committee on Defence and Security in the Russian Federation Council, at NAA Defence & Security Committee, 6 October 1995.

1. By virtue of her geographical position Russia has played significant roles throughout European history. Europe, at least to date, has been, at least in its own eyes, the cockpit of advanced civilisation.<sup>11</sup> Let us be reminded of Russia's self perception as the saviour of European Civilisation.

2. Other Powers in Europe and Asia Minor have had to take her fears, ambitions and potential as an ally or opponent into account for centuries.

3. She has contributed much to world culture, as much as can be expected having regard for her tragic history of repression of creativity. Out of that repression came the innovation of the serious novel with its analysis of personal character, to say nothing of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century music, ballet, opera and painting which culminated in the amalgam created by Diaghilev. Russia, like Germany, by forcing many of its most talented peoples to emigrate has enriched other countries. In so doing they provide the proof that Russians are neither generically barbarians nor backward.

4. Russia absorbed and adapted the cultures of Western Europe, the Byzantine Empire and Christianity as well as suffering and surviving the cruelty of its invaders - Eastern, Western, Northern and Southern.

5. Russia absorbed and adapted the educational, military, commercial and industrial systems of western Europe. The first tradition remains in spite of difficulties at a high level for all its people. The last two were debased by Tsar and General Secretary alike; this trend has been accelerated since 1991 by so-called reformers spurred on by western economists.

6. Returning to its geographical position, we note that it is contiguous with China, Korea, Japan and with Muslim States to the south. Russia has a many centuries-old experience of those peoples and could provide expertise in collaboration with us in understanding and defusing any potential threats from them.

We should not gratuitously be seen by them to despise them, to treat them with inadequate respect nor to adopt a lofty tone if we consider ourselves as their tutors and benefactors. We should reflect that from the psychological point of view, recipients of charity are rarely grateful or friendly to the lordly provider. Russian folk tales are full of the proper respect due to people who are poor and down on their luck; they also warn of the consequences to the lordly of the converse. Come to think of it so is the New Testament; the Russian folklore is heavily based on traditional Christian values.

### **The Inheritance Of Belief In Miracles**

Folklore, myths and legends may be considered to affect the emotional responses of people. According to a Russian scholar, fairy tales perform the role of a social utopia, they are a dream compensation for real life. They are relied upon especially by ultra-nationalists in their appeal for support and action against groups other than those considered to be their own. The militarists of Japan called in aid the ancient devotion to Emperor worship, to the uniqueness of the Japanese people.

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<sup>11</sup> Europeans frequently ignore the earlier achievements of the Chinese in science and technology (see J Needham's books), poetry, painting and ceramics, social organisation and philosophy and exploration (see the seven long distance voyages by Zheng He (1405-33) in ships far larger than those of da Gama.

General Ludendorff is supposed to have said that the old German and Scandinavian Gods such as Thor were much more likeable than Christian Gods; Hitlerian propaganda relied on those myths to propagate the untruth of a pure and superior German race. Mussolini had to invent a glorious past; most Italians were reluctant to fight for King & Country in WWII.

The English have few myths and legends, theirs are Celtic or Norman. Perhaps this is why the English are pragmatic, impatient with theories, are emotionally reserved, perhaps to their own disadvantage, and why the Celts are less disciplined and why they have a historical affinity with Slavs. This is an interesting commentary on the contrasts of English military folklore and that of some other nations: the English are proud to recall their serious defeats. For example: the retreat from Coruna, the Dardanelles, Dunkirk. A catastrophe has its advantage, it makes people looking into the abyss bestir themselves. A gradual slow death, say by economic decline as is being experienced by the Russians, and indeed by some west European countries, including Britain, does not have that effect.

Russian folklore<sup>12</sup> is enduring and is all about accepting one's fate, knowing one's humble place in society, yet poking sly fun at the Ruler who is often less wise than the peasant, Ivan the Fool. But its most exaggerated and possibly dangerous features are those which glorify magical, epic deeds of victory over great odds, expectation of deliverance by miracle and without personal effort and lastly those which demonstrate the superiority of Russian culture over all others. The danger lies, in my view, in that such romantic concepts allow Russians to believe their own illusions. One such tale tells of a 10 year old boy who with 29 companions defeated the army of the Turkish Sultan that was threatening Kiev in the Middle Ages. Another ends, *"Thus not only mighty men have luck! He who shouts loudest about himself fares best."* Another well known tale concerns the gift presented by an English king, possibly Henry VIII, to the Tsar. It was an exquisite, tiny, jewelled gold flea. The Tsar was determined to show that anything English craftsmen could do a Russian could do better. So he ordered his man to fit another version of the flea within the feet of the original; he then returned the gift.

The belief in miracles to my mind goes some way in explaining the credulity of Russians in trusting their money to bankers, promoters of chain letter 'investment' schemes, in astrology, strange and enslaving religious cults such as the Moonies, medicines appropriate more to witchcraft than to science, their willingness to be hypnotised by TV personalities into orgasm and speaking with tongues. True, these irrationalities were repressed by the Soviets and what was forbidden and is now available exercises a certain appeal, but especially to those who are predisposed to believe in the irrational.

The legends also lead to

### **Unjustified Boasting**

*"What I have here is unique, it is far superior to anything in the West".*

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<sup>12</sup> Suggested reading: "Russian Fairy Tales" in English. A selection from Afanasev's books, ed R Jackson, Routledge. The best tales, nearly 600, were collected by Afanasev in 19<sup>th</sup> century but the first collections were made by an Oxford doctor of medicine, Samuel Collins (1619-70) who was physician to Peter the Great's father, Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich. Another Englishman, Richard James, wrote down secular folk songs, returning to Oxford in 1620. His collection is to be found in the Ashmolean.

This is an oft heard remark by scientists, engineers and administrators in fSU, especially the mediocre ones. It usually turns out to be old hat and not very wonderful anyway. In other countries one hears from the truly great, "I would like to show you something that may interest you". The Russian has not bothered to look elsewhere, not even in his own city let alone abroad. If he invented it, it must be the best, since everyone knows that soviet science is the best. This boasting is irritating and self-defeating. The problem is that many Russians to this day believe it to be true. And therefore everyone demands its continued subsidy.

There is also a basic problem about Soviet and Russian "science". It is the preference for

### **Philosophising Instead Of Applying One's Intellect To Solving Useful Problems**

This is an old Russian disease; the papers, party meetings and even the scientific press was and still is full of philosophy. It is easier to blather on in a dialectical fashion than to get down to some real work. On that basis even the incompetent, with good party connections, could get a PhD or even DSc. In spite of Marx's view that theory without submission to practical test was useless the Communists eagerly adopted the old Russian love of chatter. It was probably Lenin assisted by Stalin who picked up this habit as a means of "educating the masses through a higher culture by the vanguard of the proletariat." This approach leads to solemn discussions purporting to find an important philosophical content in day to day activities like making a film, or using a telephone. Mark Twain's book "A Connecticut Yankee at the Court of King Arthur" beautifully parodies such stuff. [AK himself wrote a parody of Russian scientific research in the style of Gulliver's Travels.]

One might conclude that it is easy pickings for the lazy intellectual if he can receive a good stipend merely by talking about what needs to be done and the benefits to be gained once the "Shining Heights" have been achieved rather than actually doing the job. The disease is contagious; at a NATO conference in Kielce, Poland, a Polish professor of Economics commented after my talk "You are far too interested in facts, I am interested only in theory." I asked him, "How do you confirm your theory if you do not look at the facts?" He replied, "I don't bother."

*"We need to maintain the strength of the Armed Forces according to one or other or both of the following rules of thumb - 1% of the population under arms at any one time or N soldiers per km of frontier. Compare with other countries ... Numbers of soldiers per km of borders: France has 79 soldiers, Germany, Poland and Romania 77; in China 123, in USA 90; we have 28; we have gone to the minimum. US Military Budget is \$242 billion; ours is 79 trillion rubles [= \$17.5 billion] in the draft budget but to make ends meet we need 134 [= \$29.9 billion]."*<sup>13</sup>

This is standard fare in Russian military journals. The comparisons with USA are spurious. Its territory is big but has short frontiers, that with Canada is "open" with an ally. Mexican problems require police patrols more than armed forces. The 1% figure was an 18th century "norm". Is it still in the tables of the Senior Staff Colleges in Russia? Is such a mechanistic approach the norm for a senior Russian officer? Should he not be encouraged to think instead?

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<sup>13</sup> From an interview with Col-Gen Zherebetsov quoted in Rossiskaya Gazeta, 7 October 1995.

The Soviets subsidised aspects of their society often purely because they are seen by themselves to convey prestige upon the society, regime and its dogma. These activities were also intended to impress the rest of the world with the might and advanced nature of the new Soviet Society.<sup>14</sup> These aspects include the military, especially a large seven ocean Navy, even though it was so huge that in the 1980s it cost too much to keep in proper repair, space research, "science", the ballet, opera and music, chess as well as other sports, technical dinosaurs such as the world's largest heated ship tank, the world's largest optical telescope. These are, in the words of the Deputy Minister of Science "technological treasures that belong to the world, the West simply must pay for them now that we cannot afford to do so." Must - it is to be noted, regardless of whether we need them, want them or could afford them. In 1995 the principle that the customer decides is absent from his mind.

This love of big, visible toys demonstrating military might also has its parallel in Tsarist times. The Japanese in 1904/5 destroyed the Pacific and Baltic Russian Fleets at Tsushima. The Army did not do too well either. Tsar Nicholas II was faced with two groups of military advisers. The first was the French who counselled that he spend his resources building up his land forces so that the Russians could give a good account of themselves on the Eastern front against the Germans in the coming war. On the other hand were the Admirals who advocated an enlarged and modernised Navy. The Tsar looked at the build up of the German and British Battle fleets and exclaimed, "How can Russia be a Great Power if we do not have the ships that my cousins have?" Neither the German nor the British battle fleets - as opposed to smaller craft - were particularly significant, except as threats, in 1914-18; the Russian fleets were bottled up in the Baltic and Black Seas and contributed even less to the war effort. The Army, deprived of resources, went into battle under-equipped, under-supplied, under-trained and poorly led. The losses and defeats led to the end of the tsarist regime and the contraction of its Empire. The same crude illusions and hankering after grandeur through dinosaurs has persisted since his day.

Soviet propaganda claimed that every technical advance had been invented in Tsarist and Soviet Russia before the western claimant. Major-General Thurnvald, the Czech Defence Attach, in London told me in summer 1995,

*"When I was at school in Prague during the war we were told that the Germans invented everything; after the war we had to learn anew that it had all been invented by the Russians."*

It all seems a bit unnecessary since both Germany and Russia have had their fair share of outstanding scientists and engineers. Boasting and untruthfulness seem to be psychologically essential to a nationalistic regime.

The urge to subsidise the merely prestigious but socially useless has a long Russian history. For example, Russian nobles in the latter half of the 18th century were so prodigal, gambling and living well above their huge income derived from serfs that "the luxurious tastes and the excessive prodigality of a large part of our nobility will lead soon to most of our villages winding up in the hands of manufacturers, merchants, clerks, secretaries, doctors and surgeons and they, not we, will be the

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<sup>14</sup> Swallowed hook, line and sinker by people like Bernard Shaw and the Webbs who wrote a book called "Soviet Communism, A New Civilisation?"

masters and proprietors".<sup>15</sup> As a result, the Government established from 1754 to 1786 several banks to lend to impoverished nobles. The point was to rescue them from usury of private moneylenders.

Empress Elizabeth (1741-61) in her *ukaz* proclaimed "many of our subjects, mostly from the nobility, having need of money have been compelled to borrow from others at high rates of interest and with big collateral". In 1797 the Tsar Paul wrote "with extreme grief we see that many noble families are groaning under the burden of debt, having fallen into the hands of greedy misers and usurers." By 1800 the Government loans exceeded all other state expenditures. In the end these debts were forgiven. The money was a gift from the State to the Noble drones. Loans were rarely foreclosed because their purpose was to save the properties of the nobles.<sup>16</sup>

The difference between 1800 and 1995 is that then the State could and did pay; now it cannot and should not continue to subsidise unnecessarily large numbers of ex-Soviet drones in, for example, academies and military factories nor should the West allow its resources to be used in this way. They are being misused and squandered on projects that cannot pay their own way so that eventually Russian debts to the advanced industrial countries will have to be written off whilst the state of the country does not improve. The indebtedness of loss-making enterprises will also be written off since the purpose of subsidies is to keep the prestigious but loss-making state enterprises in being in their present condition; the regime cannot see how to cope with the consequences of reorganisation even if it understood how to do it.<sup>17</sup>

As a result the Russians thought, until very recently, that foreigners would invest funds to bring up to acceptable standards of performance and competitiveness every aspect of their ramshackle society and its dangerous and uncompetitive industries which have even lost, to a large degree, their internal markets. West Germany has poured billions into the former DDR and still, five years on, the DDR is nowhere near the standards of West Germany. The DDR in many ways was economically ahead of the USSR and the rest of Eastern Europe. A simple calculation shows that similar expenditure per capita in rSU requires sums of money which do not exist, even if the conditions were favourable for effective investment.

### **The Oblomov Syndrome**

In 1858 I A Goncharov published his work on the life of his hero - or anti-hero, Ilya Ilyich Oblomov, who, in spite of his serious anxieties about the declining fortunes of his estates, spends most of his life either in bed or contemplating trying to get up. His steward writes repeatedly to ask, in vain, for his master's guidance and influence over the peasants on the estate. His set of acquaintances urge him to join in the social life of St Petersburg, which in abstract attracts him but he lacks the

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<sup>15</sup> Quoted in "Lord and Peasant in Russia from 9<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> Century", chapter "Rich Noble, Poor Noble", Jerome Blum, Princeton University Press, 1961.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> However, simply sacking them on the capitalist model will not do: social support comes through the employer and the State organs are not equipped or funded to deal with mass unemployment and retraining. Russian directors have a long tradition of looking after their people and do all in their power to support them and the pensioners of the enterprise. Loyalty downwards exists in civilian society even if it is less marked toward conscripts in the Armed Forces.

motivation and energy to dress and go out. His manservant criticises him but, along with his friends, cheats him and is just as slovenly and idle.

"Oblomschina", the condition of being Oblomov, is a model of Russian attitudes to work which are regrettably too prevalent. Some well known symptoms of this disease are: a talismanic belief that putting things on paper is the same as doing them, an indifference to keeping to agreed schedules and actions, a preference to theorise rather than to apply an undoubted intelligence to the identification and solution of real problems. These habits affect ordinary practical intercourse and are somewhat irritating. But Russians can be graceful at apology, add plausible reasons for the fault and are masters at improvisation. Such responses may suffice in social life but not so in the commercial world. "Oblomov" is required reading for foreigners with serious intentions.

**'Initiative is Punishable'** Another aspect of the Oblomov syndrome, with the same consequences as indolence but different causes, is the very real fear of taking responsibility for decisions. The possibility that these decisions may offend powerful interest groups and thus have unwelcome repercussions for one's own career (or indeed life, in these violent times as in Stalin's day) results in even the most trivial decisions being referred to the boss, who may well do the same and refer them to his boss. The top boss in his turn wants all the decisions, however unimportant, referred to himself, because he is in charge. This causes a logjam at the top, effective decisions cannot be taken, and the whole system grinds to a halt.

### **The Shock Of The Loss Of Empire<sup>18</sup>**

The Russian Empire is a land empire contiguous with the heartland, Muscovy, of its dominant people. The Russian Empire at various times during the past grew outwards in every direction from Muscovy; Russian losses following the withdrawal from its Warsaw pact allies in the late 1980s were followed by the disintegration of the USSR in 1991; the CIS can not be regarded (except by certain Russians) as the new Russian Empire. Points of special importance are: Russian expansion into the Empire extends back many hundreds of years. Russians as farmers, workers, administrators, soldiers, retired pensioners and those exiled and deported by the Authorities have lived in these territories for hundreds of years. Except for the deported nations, they regard them as "home". Indeed most of them have no other home and no means of acquiring one back in Muscovy. Like other colonisers, the Russians have had their ups and downs in relations with the "colonised", but in their own mind the Russians have been the superior people and imposed their own culture on the 'natives'.

For these reasons the Baltic Republics, Ukraine, Belarus, the Caucasus and the areas of central and Eastern Siberia are "ours". Under the Soviets the separate republics were only independent on paper - and who in Soviet Union paid any attention to paper, especially Constitutions? They were fully integrated into every aspect of the Soviet system. Their economies are interlocked with those of the territories dependent upon the needs, orders and supplies of materials and components largely from Russia. The whole military system created by the Soviets was interlocked. The Soviet Officer Corps was almost entirely composed of Slavs with Russians predominating, followed by Ukrainians and Belarussians.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> The paper "The End of Empire", May 1995, by my colleague Antony Clayton provides a short, stimulating account.

<sup>19</sup> Belarussian independence presents a somewhat unreal picture; it is possible that there will be a gradual reunion with Russia.

Ukraine occupies a special place in Russian history, heart and mind. It was the origin of Christianity in Russia, and of the Russian orthodox religion, language and alphabet. In spite of the usual battles between neighbouring lords, the relationship from the Russian point of view has been one of harmony and indeed identity of culture. Naturally Ukrainian nationalists who struggled for independence from Turk, Pole, Hungarian, Swede and Russian alike, saw it differently. The separation of the Ukraine into an independent state is more of an affront to Russians than that of other Republics. An analogue in England would be a unilateral declaration of independence by the County of Kent, with the Archbishop of Canterbury, the head of the Anglican Church, living abroad and proclaiming a rival Protestant Church owning the ancient Cathedral, dating back to St Augustine, and all church property in Kent<sup>20</sup>, leaving the Anglicans under the Archbishop of York.

The withdrawal from the garrisons of its Warsaw Pact allies and from the Baltic Republics and Ukraine has had two devastating effects on the Russian armed forces. The first is the retreat into the homeland of hundreds of thousands of officers who regarded their garrisons and barracks as their permanent homes; they like the civilians in the Empire had none other. Many retired locally in congenial areas such as the Baltic Republics, Kaliningrad. Other favoured locations were to be found in the South, in "our" territories of the Caucasus and the Crimea. In the Good Old Days the Soviet Army could provide retired officers with a flat or a dacha there or in the capital cities of their choice. The retreat coincided with the collapse of the Soviet economy which provided the main reason for the political and military chaos following the events of August 1991. (Of course the collapse of the economy was itself due to the over-militarisation of the USSR and to the incompetence and inefficiency of its centrally directed Command Economy, but that is a subject for a different paper.)<sup>21</sup>

The second catastrophic effect, from the point of view of the Russian Ministry of Defence, was the loss of all the forward bases, garrisons, early warning systems, repair workshops, depots and living quarters. All these have to be re-located within Russia itself. The means for doing so were limited, although ameliorated by the German Government in paying for the relocation, training and building of accommodation for the garrisons stationed in the DDR.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore the MOD was laggardly in planning for the moves; some divisions were dumped into open fields and left to improvise their living and other quarters. As a result many officers are justifiably disgruntled, unhappy with their lot and their Government and politicians. Small wonder that there are many in the Armed Forces who see the withdrawal and its architect, M S Gorbachev, as a betrayal of loyalty toward them. The Russian Armed Forces continue to see their need to prepare to engage in future conflict as a massive, high technology force and that their potential opponent continues to lie in the West.

Red Army training exercises post Second World War usually predicated a NATO strike which had to be repelled by a massive counter blow; it is probable that staff plans to invade Western Europe, to occupy the Rhine and the Channel Ports, lay more in western minds than in Russian ones. It is almost certain that, during the

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<sup>20</sup> In Ukraine the current arguments between the Ukrainian and the Russian Orthodox churches, the Roman Catholic and the Greek catholic churches are about property more than about doctrine.

<sup>21</sup> The argument is developed in some papers available from CSRC.

<sup>22</sup> A recent article in the Russian Press quotes the admiring remarks of returning servicemen for their Turkish built flats "We never had it so good, not even in Germany", Rabochaya tribuna, 2 October 1995, p1&3.

Cold War, the military on both sides used their arguments of potential threats from the other side to increase support for R&D and for military expenditure. The Russian people have not exhibited the latent, and sometimes patent, chauvinism and support for expansion that has, for example, characterised the German from the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> to the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

This is how most Russians view themselves today; they can be mobilised for defence of the homeland but do not support adventurism, not even in Chechnya. Many a Regimental Commander has had conscripts dragged out of barracks by their mothers. The lies and deceptions of the authorities concerning the Afghan war helped to turn the old patriotism of many Russian women to hostility to military service for their menfolk.<sup>23</sup>

### **Western Approaches To Russia**

One has also to reflect upon the experiences of West European Powers in their own retreat from Empire. The British withdrawal coincided with the upturn in demand following the end of WWII; the economic conditions although not altogether favourable were better than those which face Russia. It was possible for servicemen and civilians alike to return "home", to find a home and pay their way whether in retirement or in a second career. The French have had a less pleasant experience in their withdrawal, especially from Algeria. This was both legally and emotionally regarded as part of Metropolitan France; the colonisers regarded it as their permanent home. France even today has a large immigrant population of both "native" French and Algerians, many of whom do not feel integrated into French life and many do not wish to be French. Their experience is not unique; other countries, including Portugal, Belgium and Holland, even Greece and Turkey, have not been free of difficulties; the experience should provide grounds at least for sympathetic understanding of the Russian predicament.

The above should be kept in mind when considering the chances of success in getting the Russians to alter their ways and to accept that we are genuinely trying to help them and not to destroy them further. The following are some examples of some western attitudes which are counter-productive:

*"Communism is dead, capitalism won."* A frequently heard comment, especially from Americans.

Which version of Western capitalism are we talking about? Are they all successful in delivering well being to the nation? How long did it take for the present state of affairs to evolve, even assuming positive answers to the previous two questions? Is Communism really dead? Did it not provide for the mass of the people in USSR and elsewhere in Eastern Europe a better life than they are experiencing now? Is this not why practically every country in C&E Europe has returned communists in one guise or another to power? The Russians see correctly and clearly that whereas we have in western Europe a civilised form of capitalism, theirs is a "Capitalism of Robbers".

*"Acquire a parliamentary democracy, without it membership of the EU and NATO will not be possible".* Chorus of advice from the West.

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<sup>23</sup> See "Zinky Boys, Soviet voices from a forgotten war", Svetlana Alexievich in English translation, Chatto & Windus, London, 1992.

How long did it take us, Great Britain for example, to evolve a true parliamentary democracy with full and equal adult suffrage? How long has it taken for Governments to consider the wishes of the people, to pass laws that would be obeyed and therefore could be policed? Do our people fully accept their political system?

*"Become like us, learn from the hordes of highly paid consultants who will tell you how a market economy works."* A common aspect of the methods of western aid agencies.

A wise person in a situation new to him asks himself "what has this situation to teach me before I can be effective?" This is especially true when he is ignorant of the culture of the country. I define culture as "the way of life". In the Royal Navy we have a phrase "Different ships, different long splices". In other words, there is more than one way of going about a job, one has to understand it, respect the reasons for it before attempting to alter it.

*"A market economy can be defined thus: if I wake up at 2am in my Manhattan apartment and I feel hungry for a Kentucky Fried chicken, all I have to do is to call up and it's delivered within 15 minutes".* An American businessman at a lecture for Russian army officers at George Marshall School, Garmisch Partenkirchen. This phrase was the subject of a bitter, sarcastic article in Izvestiya.<sup>24</sup>

The European Communist Command economy was nearly monolithic, but there are many models of a market economy. Russian students actually are looking for the Holy Grail and are hurt by flippant remarks like that, even when they do contain a grain of symbolic truth. They consider that they are not being taken seriously.

*"Put in place the financial superstructure of capitalism such as a stock market, make the ruble freely convertible and the benefits will permeate down and you will have a successful, competitive economy."* Advice from both British and American macro-economists and Chicago-boy monetarists.

A top-down approach has had some success when aimed at modifying an already working market economy, but it has absolutely no useful effect on promoting competitiveness in agriculture, industry or infrastructure which has never had to work in that way. Furthermore massive loans to third world countries have often done more harm than good. Their repayments of interests alone exceed their total exports in some cases.

## Summary & Conclusions

Russia is still driven by its old, inherited forces

Autocratic, Patrimonial Government

The resources of the State belong to the Government

The Heads of Government fight for power, privilege and spoils

The State is not subject to Legal constraint

The Head of State continues to issue ill-thought out *ukaz* which may not be capable of implementation and are ignored by the powerful

An assumption that centrist direction and policies are the only way for Russia

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<sup>24</sup> V Nadein, Izvestiya, 26 August 1994, p3.

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A suspicion and distrust of everything foreign, accompanied by an extreme sense of defensiveness rather than expansionist aggression

An easily fostered extreme nationalism glorifying Russianness

Belief in their own illusions of greatness

Faith in irrational, even mystical and magical solutions to problems without the need for personal effort

The Oblomov syndrome relates to lack of personal effort and to a casual approach to obligations

The paradoxical concept that they can do it all themselves in spite of the above

A touchiness concerning their own dignity.

To which must be added the experience post 1991, ie

A loss of Empire and of a sense of national identity

The catastrophic decline in living, health and environmental standards, law and order, the social fabric, increased crime and blatant corruption from the top downward

The exploitation by the nationalists, communists and allies of all the above and increasingly to lay the blame at the door of the West and of the Russian reformers.

These tendencies are fuelled by:

Western attitudes of superiority, disdain of even the most modest appeals to take Russian sensibilities into account, for example in the North Atlantic Council

Expensive and inappropriate counselling by western consultants with little understanding of Russian culture, conditions and practicalities.

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