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CORRUPTION IN RUSSIA: NO DEMOCRACY WITHOUT MORALITY

By Barbara von der Heydt¹

Corruption threatens to strangle the new democracy of the former Soviet Union in its infancy. *Glasnost* and *perestroika* have been replaced by *naglost* (brazen insolence) and *perestrelka* (shootouts). Whether order based on both freedom and responsibility can emerge from the rubble of collapsed communism is an open question. There is no rule of law, no clear definition of property rights, no genuine democracy or market economy for most of the newly freed peoples.

Criminal elements have joined forces with the corrupt bureaucrats of the old guard to form networks of collusion. The old *nomenklatura* still have a chokehold on the country; they may have new business cards, but they are still in power.² Corruption extends from the police through the courts, into the highest levels of the present government, confirms Alexander Gurov, director of a security research institute at the Ministry of Security, formerly the KGB. "Before, the criminals tried to influence officials with bribes," says Gurov. "Today they already have their own lobby in the government and the parliament—not to mention the police and the prosecutor's office."³

Duma experts have issued a report estimating that 25 to 30 percent of the members who will be elected to the parliament in the coming December elections will represent influence of the criminal structures, either openly or covertly, and will be a significant force capable of influencing policy decisions to benefit the mafia.⁴ No real economic or political force is capable of implementing an anti-corruption campaign, because it is increasingly difficult either to do business without encountering illegal or corrupt practices or to get elected without the money they produce.

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 - 2 Barbara von der Heydt, "Russia's Spiritual Wilderness," *Policy Review*, Fall 1994, p. 12. Portions of the research first published here are used with permission.
 - 3 "Russian Underworld's on Top of Police," *Chicago Tribune*, August 8, 1993, p. 4.
 - 4 Author's interviews with Duma members, Moscow, May 1995.

What Russians call the *mafija* is a generic term encompassing organized crime, although it is not one organization under a “godfather.” Those operating in the shadow economy are outside the boundaries of legality, but there are varying shades of gray. Not all of those outside the law are involved in extracting or paying protection money.

A Moral Vacuum

The explosion of criminality, corruption, and mafia activity is evidence of a moral crisis of major dimensions. When communism collapsed, it left behind the legacy of a moral vacuum, claim many Russians. What fills this vacuum will determine the future of Russia. Even though half the Russian populace lives in poverty today, the moral needs are even more acute than the economic ones. As economist and former St. Petersburg legislator Mikhail Dmitriev observed, “The economic problems are not a crisis. Give us ten years and we’ll be a normal country. But the moral crisis is far more serious.”⁵

The Communist Party and its ideology of Marxism-Leninism were the source of collective moral authority. Now that the ideology has been rejected, its subjects are cut free of any moral mooring. Russians characterize the result as total disorientation. Alexander Zaichenko, former economic advisor to Mikhail Gorbachev, describes the lingering socialist malaise as “collective responsibility and individual irresponsibility.”⁶ Under the communist regime, “There was a strict but hypocritical code of behavior,” claims Evgueni Volk of the Heritage Foundation’s Moscow office. “Everyone knew what he was eligible to steal.”⁷ Now there is “freedom with neither responsibility nor morality,” says Alexander Mitroshenkov, editor of *Poesk*.⁸

The result is visible in Russia’s prisons, where detainees wait for a trial in cells so overcrowded that they can sleep, sit, or stand only in shifts. The Deputy Director of the Russian Federal Prison System, Valery Orlov, reflects on the explosion of criminality: “In a law-abiding person, there is something holy left. If it is absent, he turns to robbery, crime, violence, and murder, mainly for material gain. Such a person doesn’t feel responsible for his own actions.”⁹

Communism’s Poisonous Legacy

Alexander Solzhenitsyn claims that the communist system was deforming, destroying the personality to make it governable. The legacy of communism is the poison left in its former subjects. Vaclav Havel, in his New Year’s address in 1990, made the diagnosis: “We have become morally ill because we have become accustomed to saying one thing and thinking another.” The children of communism learned to speak one way among family and closest friends, and another way outside the inner circle. The result is “moral schizophrenia.”

In the introduction to *Remaking Russia*, an intriguing collection of contemporary thought from Russia’s leading publicists and scholars, Richard Pipes writes, “[I]t can be argued that Russia’s gravest problems are not economic.... Communism’s most ruinous legacy lies in the moral and psychological sphere: economic failures appear as a consequence rather than cause of Russia’s current predicament.”¹⁰

5 Author’s interview with Mikhail Dmitriev, Moscow, June 1994; quoted in “Russia’s Spiritual Wilderness,” p. 15.

6 Author’s interview with Alexander Zaichenko, Moscow, July 1994.

7 Author’s interview with Evgueni Volk, Moscow, May 1995.

8 Author’s interview with Alexander Mitroshenkov, editor of *Poesk*, journal of the Academy of Sciences, and an executive with Logovaz, Moscow, November 1994.

9 Author’s interview with Valery Orlov, Moscow, August 1994; quoted in “Russia’s Spiritual Wilderness,” p. 14.

10 Richard Pipes in introduction to *Remaking Russia* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1995), p. 3.

Mikhail Dmitriev diagnoses the traits in his own nation: “The legacy of totalitarianism in human character is a combination of personal irresponsibility and aggression. Everything was decided from above, and there was no risk-taking. Now the people are not capable of combining risk-taking and responsibility.”

Russian writer Fazil Iskander claims, “The transition from a rather enduring totalitarian regime to democracy has brought unimaginable psychological difficulties along with it. Under a totalitarian regime, it was as if you were forced to live in the same room with a violently insane man.... Many people in Russia have been gripped by anguish, rage, and an all-encompassing suspiciousness.”¹¹

People who had reason not to trust under the old regime find it hard to do so today. Those who were absolved of responsibility before often find it a burden now. People denied the opportunity to make decisions earlier are paralyzed now when they must decide; socialism bred passivity and penalized personal initiative. People who have never lived in an open society have little practice in resolving conflicts peacefully. The ideology which preached hatred and class struggle sowed seeds of strife, suspicion, and confrontation. If there are no moral boundaries from within, and no external limits, all things are permitted. Those who lived in what Solzhenitsyn called the “culture of the lie” find it hard to live transparent lives in harmony with truth.¹²

Among the most alarming symptoms of sickness are those in young people. Young Russians were asked last year what professions they would like to pursue. A majority answered they would prefer racketeering and prostitution because they could “earn hard currency, travel and meet people.” In a poll of Russian children this spring, they were asked what would prevent them from stealing. Of 100, 99 answered they would be afraid of getting caught. One said he would not steal because it is wrong.

Democracy Is Not Enough

In the absence of internal law of the human heart, no laws of a state can create good citizens or a good society. As Edmund Burke observed, those who are not governed from within must be governed from without. In the absence of moral renewal in Russia, the institutions of democracy and a market economy cannot take root and flourish. Corruption will choke them. Democratic institutions are value neutral and no guarantee of wise or moral policy. They must be filled by the character of a nation. Sociologist Mikhail Tarusin makes the crucial point:

Democracy is only an outward form, which can be used for good or evil. Hitler came to power democratically, and so could Zhirinovskiy. . . . If we don't have the moral tradition, we have no future.¹³

No sustained period in the history of Russia has permitted ownership of private property and fostered the responsibility to manage it or one's life autonomously. Neither a reliable framework of laws nor the moral foundations of a market economy and democracy are evident in Russian culture today, although brief flowerings are to be found in the country's history.

In *Remaking Russia*, Vyacheslav Ivanov asserts, “What is lacking above all is the legal, ethical, and psychological basis necessary to establish new market relations. Without fundamental change, the feeling of instability, giving rise to fraud and frustration, will persist.”¹⁴ As the chaos increases, so do the calls for a “strongman” to impose order.

11 Fazil Iskander, “Who Are We?” in *Remaking Russia*, pp. 46-47.

12 Based on interviews of some 200 people from the former Soviet Union since 1989.

13 Author's interview with Mikhail Tarusin, Moscow, July 1994.

14 Vyacheslav Ivanov, “Russian Social Life and Thought,” in *Remaking Russia*, p. 35.

Deadly Consequences of Corruption

Evidence of corruption and collaboration with organized crime abounds. According to a report prepared for Boris Yeltsin by the Analytical Center for Social and Economic Policies, three quarters of Russia's private enterprises pay 10 percent to 20 percent of what they earn to criminal organizations.¹⁵ Some 40,000 state and privately run companies, including most of the country's banks, are controlled by 150 criminal syndicates.¹⁶ Altogether there are as many as 3,000 to 5,000 gangs.¹⁷ Known generically as the *mafiya*, these interlocking bands of organized crime exercise control over their own specific regions of a given city, a region of the country, and a segment of the economy. Some specialize in forging documents, others in drug and weapons trafficking, illegal monetary transactions, auto theft, prostitution, smuggling of raw materials and military hardware, extortion, bribery, and executions.¹⁸

Paying protection money to them has become a normal cost of doing business for many. Those who refuse to pay may discover an auto bomb, an arsonist, a kidnapper, or an assassin's bullet waiting for them.

Politicians vowing to crack down on crime have become its victims. Three members of the Russian Duma have been shot in gangland-style executions. The leader of the Christian-Liberal Party of Crimea was executed in June 1994, as was his successor two months later. The Chairman of the National-Democratic Party of Georgia was gunned down in December 1994.¹⁹

Those who have uncovered corruption and brought it to light publicly have done so at their peril. Vladislav Listyev, Russia's popular TV journalist, who had recently been appointed executive director of Russian Public Television, was gunned down March 2 this year. Listyev had begun revising policies on advertising revenues to break the "circle of corruption."²⁰ No traces of the hitmen have been found. As one Muscovite observed wryly, "Who wants to investigate Listyev's death? He will be next."

When the 27-year-old journalist Dimitri Kholodov pursued the whiff of corruption, he discovered evidence of illegal arms sales by the Red Army forces withdrawing from Germany. His investigation led him to the top: Matvei Burlakov, former commander in chief of the forces in Germany, to the military intelligence, and to Defense Minister Pavel Grachev. On October 17, 1994, the journalist was murdered with a booby-trapped briefcase he had been told contained incriminating evidence. The killers have not been found. The *Moskovsky Komsomolyets* has charged Grachev and other top military officers with complicity in Kholodov's assassination.

Corruption among the police is rampant. When a new Russian car was stolen this May in Moscow several days after a Duma advisor purchased it, he reported it to the local police. They advocated getting in touch with the criminal elements in his region, suggesting that he could get the car back by paying half its original purchase price. The police offered to help him contact the mafia. This kind of maneuver has become standard procedure, confirm other Russians.²¹ Rings of auto thieves in Europe

15 "The High Price of Freeing Markets," *The Economist*, February 19, 1994, p. 57.

16 *Sunday Times London*, April 10, 1994.

17 See "The Russian Mafia" (Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of Energy, Office of Intelligence and National Security, Office of Threat Assessment, 1993); Stephen Handelman, "The Russian 'Mafiya,'" *Foreign Affairs* 73 (March/April 1994), p. 83; Claire Sterling, *Thieves' World, The Threat of the New Global Network of Organized Crime* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), pp. 34, 90; Mark Elliott, "Economic Crime and the Necessity of Morality," a chapter in William Clark, ed., *Economic Crime and Market Reform in the Former Soviet States* (Boulder, Col.: Westview Press, forthcoming).

18 Author's interview with Valery Orlov, Deputy Director of the Russian Federal Prison System, Moscow, July 1994.

19 "Information from the Ukraine," *Christian-Democrat International*, Issues 1 and 2, January 21 and 31, 1995.

20 "Anchor's Murder Stuns Public," *Russian Travel Monthly*, March 1995, p. 3.

21 Author's interviews, Moscow, May 1995.

smuggle cars from Germany to Poland, or into the Czech Republic—so many that insurance companies have placed agents on site to purchase cars back from the mob.

Violent and Economic Crime Rising

The Russian Ministry of the Interior reports that in 1994 violent crime increased, as did economic crime. Police recorded 5,000 murders in Moscow alone in 1993; there were 10 percent more in 1994. Kidnappings increased threefold last year, with 272 cases in Moscow alone. Smuggling rose dramatically, 13 times the amount discovered in 1993. Illegal currency transactions were up 60 percent. Three times as many investors were deceived in 1994, losing \$4 billion worth of investments.²² More than 14,000 persons were reported missing last year, feared to have been killed by gangs who duped them into signing over rights to their privatized apartments in return for lifetime support. These victims, many of them elderly women, simply disappeared.²³ Some 16,600 cases of criminal activity by government officials were reported for 1994, about a third of them involving bribery. However, these statistics on crime most certainly represent only a fraction of the reality.

The report by the Russian Ministry of the Interior also documents threatened acts of sabotage for ransom in 1994. A criminal band demanded \$1 million not to poison the city water system of the town of Vladimir. In Maikop, bandits demanded \$100,000 not to blow up a hospital. In both cases, the criminals were arrested and the act thwarted, but the potential for such future threats is obvious and chilling.

Former KGB agents are now employed in industrial intelligence, peddling their information to the highest bidder. Military weapons are routinely stolen and sold to gangsters: nearly 6,500 cases of such theft were reported in 1993, including machine guns, hand grenades, and explosives.²⁴ More menacing yet are the attempts of organized crime to steal nuclear material for sale on the international black market. Mikhail Yegorov, head of the organized crime department of the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs, acknowledges 47 investigations into attempts to steal radioactive materials in Russia.²⁵ However, German intelligence sources estimate the number of sales of nuclear material from former Warsaw Pact countries and the former Soviet Union at “between 300 and 350.”²⁶

Natural resources such as timber, oil, and precious metals have been hemorrhaging over the borders of Russia. The Russian Interior Ministry claims smuggling of oil and other resources jumped 50 percent from 1992 to 1993.²⁷ Copper, nickel, and cobalt are bought up at subsidized local prices and spirited over the borders for lucrative sales abroad. Although Estonia produces no metal, enough passed through it in 1993 to make the tiny country one of the world’s largest metal exporters.²⁸

The Geese That Lay Golden Eggs

It is no accident that laws limiting such activities have not been passed in Russia. There is a substantial segment of the existing power structure which benefits from these transactions. The first people to profit from “privatization” were party functionaries who seized profitable capacities for themselves, rechristening them with new names to sound like Western firms. The Russian newspaper *Golos* claims 80

22 Report of the Russian Ministry of Interior published in *Rossiiskaya Gazeta*, February 23, 1995, is the source for all crime statistics cited (except those otherwise attributed).

23 Author’s interview with Evgueni Volk, The Heritage Foundation, Moscow, August 1994. See also “Babushkas Are Missing, by the Thousands,” *USA Today*, March 28, 1995.

24 “The High Price of Freeing Markets,” *The Economist*, February 19, 1994, p. 57.

25 “Russian Says Gangs Try to Steal Atom Matter,” *The New York Times*, May 26, 1994, p. 10.

26 “The Wise Guys of Russia,” *U.S. News and World Report*, March 7, 1994, p. 46.

27 “Russia’s Smugglers Gain Strength,” *The Wall Street Journal*, March 30, 1994, p. 12.

28 *U.S. News and World Report*, March 7, 1994, p. 38.

percent of the joint ventures involve former KGB officers. Organized crime has linked arms with the old guard and new legislators to protect these geese which lay golden eggs.

Those under mafia protection can circumvent the prohibitive taxes, which can take 80 percent of income all told. At those rates, a mafia contract for 10 percent to 20 percent looks like a godsend. Confiscatory tax rates are one of the strongest incentives toward collusion with the mafia. With total tax levels between 55 percent and 80 percent of net income, and theoretically up to 120 percent of profits, no one in their right mind pays all the taxes that are due. Because the mafia net extends into the offices that review tax collection, and into the banks which extend credit, the squeeze to collaborate is inexorable.

The problems facing Russia are acute, if not overwhelming. In order to encourage stable reform in Russia, it is necessary to identify short-, medium-, and long-term strategy to combat criminality and encourage the growth of a healthy society. No amount of aid will be sufficient to solve Russia's problems. The fundamental problems must be addressed from within. Rather than trying for a "quick fix," the U.S. should acknowledge that major change in the former Soviet Union may be measurable in generations rather than years.

There are three levels where action is needed: immediate measures Russians can take, measures the U.S. can take, and U.S.-Russian cooperative efforts.

What Russians Can Do Now

- ✓ **Reform tax laws to non-confiscatory levels.** As long as total tax rates hover between 55 percent and 80 percent, the incentive to collaborate with the mafia to avoid them will remain exceedingly attractive.
- ✓ **Define property rights and enforce them.** Ownership of the land on which buildings stand is still enshrouded in legal fog in Russia, permitting authorities to act arbitrarily in collusion with criminal elements.
- ✓ **Pass new legislation on banking and securities.** The laws of three years ago are long outdated in light of the rapidly changing economic situation. Until the law is up to date, unscrupulous operators will continue to dupe investors.
- ✓ **Penalize fraud and aggression.** Only a fraction of the criminals are apprehended, and fewer yet actually tried and sentenced. If there are no consequences for crime, it will continue to increase.
- ✓ **Require public disclosure of public servants' income.** At present, bureaucrats on the take can easily collect illegal income and bribes with no fear of revealing sources.
- ✓ **Protect witnesses.** At present, there is no provision to encourage truthfulness among those who know of corruption but have good reason to remain silent.
- ✓ **Increase cooperation across international borders** in apprehending criminals, weapons, nuclear material, and drugs. Sophisticated criminals benefit from the snafus between international law enforcement agencies.

What the U.S. Can Do Now

U.S. efforts to help Russia at the government level have not been effective. Representatives Richard Gephardt (D-MO) and Robert Michel (R-IL) delivered tough criticism last year, complaining "there remains a yawning gap between America's good intentions and the actual performance of our assistance programs."²⁹ Delays, personnel problems, and bickering have thwarted assistance. Exacerbating the problem is AID's inexperience in this region of the world and its slow learning curve. AID's experience in Africa is not transferable; nor are most of its usual contractors appropriate.³⁰

Delivering the goods in Russia is no easy task. Much humanitarian aid and funding for training programs have disappeared into black holes of corruption. The old structures which ruled Russia before are virtually all still in place. They were corrupt before and still are. Few Westerners have taken the time and effort to dig down into a given institution to discover an honest person at the middle level who can be trusted. Large grants to public institutions are almost certain to end up in the Swiss bank accounts of the top administrators and not in the hands of those intended to benefit. Conversely, hefty consulting fees to Westerners have enriched them, but seldom helped the Russians in need.

The entire strategy of assistance must be revamped, based on personal accountability and cultural prudence. Much of what has been done through foreign aid should be privatized. There are organizations in the private sector which have years of experience in Russia; they should be called on in contracting assistance for the Newly Independent States.³¹ A partnership between the public and private sectors is needed, with the emphasis on mobilizing the private sector both in the U.S. and in the NIS.

- ✓ **Train Russian police, lawyers, and judges** in the moral foundations of a rule of law. Nowhere in their educational system was there such training available, and there is an acute shortage of qualified personnel. Western legal foundations have the resources to train promising Russians and to assist in drafting new law needed now. More student scholarships are needed, as are programs to retrain professionals. Reaching out through legal foundations in Russia like that of Duma advisor Anatoly Pchelintsev is a place to start.³²
- ✓ **Train Russian entrepreneurs** in the moral foundations of a market economy. As long as business ethics is an oxymoron, the economy will remain a jungle. Economist Alexander Zaichenko trains businessmen in the principles of organization, but also exhorts them to deal honestly. Zaichenko is building groups for "Fair and Ethical Business" to help them help each other preserve integrity. His proteges have succeeded in setting up new businesses and creating jobs.³³ The Canadian government has lauded his group as the most effective of ten they have funded. His organization needs computers and Western investors looking for reliable Russian partners.
- ✓ **Target loans to Russian businessmen of integrity** with accountability. The approach of Enterprise Development International in granting microloans to budding businesses puts the incentives in the right place. The Center for International Private Enterprise (CIPE) is advancing private enterprise and market institutions which support democratic development. Encouraging self-sufficient small businesses will create jobs and opportunities in a country struggling to make the transition from a planned economy.

29 Memorandum, "United States Efforts to Assist Russian Reform," April 11, 1994.

30 See Ariel Cohen, "Aid to Russia: Yes, But Needs Reform," Heritage Foundation *Committee Brief* No. 1, February 6, 1995.

31 The Kriebel Institute has staged seminars on democracy and the market economy throughout Central and Eastern Europe and in the NIS; since the fall of communism, it has established 37 field offices with locals as regional representatives. The Slavic Gospel Association and Peter Deyneka Ministries bring decades of experience in administering programs in Russia during the communist period. "Light in the East" has done charitable work in Russia for 75 years. These are non-profit groups with a wealth of hands-on experience.

32 Anatoly Pchelintsev, a former military lawyer, has co-founded the Christian Legal Center and the Institute of Religion and Law in Moscow. Joining him as partners are Vladimir Ryakhovsky and Sergej V. Turin. They also serve as legal advisors to the Federal Duma.

33 Dr. Alexander Zaichenko served as an advisor to the Council of Economic Ministers under Gorbachev and later headed a project on entrepreneurship. He has since founded the Association of Christians in Business and is co-founder of the Russian-American Christian University.

- ✓ **Create “Spheres of Integrity” in the economy.** This intriguing concept was developed by Czechs to break the stronghold of corruption there. Business associates make a covenant with each other to honor contracts and deal honestly, even if it is not possible in the rest of the outside world.³⁴ Where there is light, the darkness recedes.

The same principle applies to focusing aid to a limited number of geographic regions where the U.S. can make a difference. A country stretching over ten time zones is too big to help with diffuse efforts. Moscow, St. Petersburg, Nizhny Novgorod, Vladivostok, and the Ural mountains region are good candidates for focused efforts.

German assistance to the former Soviet Union has taken this approach. Undersecretary of the Interior Horst Waffenschmidt has concentrated aid on six regions, building up an infrastructure with honest partners to create “*Insel der Hoffnung*,” or “Islands of Hope.”

- ✓ **Help television transmit the values underpinning democracy.** Russian bureaucrats are dragging their feet to privatize their media. Former dissident Mikhail Kazachkov has founded “Freedom Channel-Persona” for broadcasting in Russia. Endorsed by Yelena Bonner, this team produces award-winning programming to lay the foundations of a free society. Highly motivated, professional, and effective, this group focuses on principles like respect for the individual in developing a pluralistic civil society. They need broadcast equipment and program funding to establish a Russian version of C-SPAN. They have applied for AID assistance, but in vain.
- ✓ **Use the Russian media to tell the story of freedom.** Russian newspapers are willing to run articles on the foundations of democracy and the market economy, and on morality. German businessman Waldemar Murjahn has placed articles on the Christian roots of morality in such newspapers as *Argumenti i Fakti*, *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, and *Poesk*. The combined press runs total one billion, and the costs were modest.
- ✓ **Keep the Voice of America and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty on the air.** Anybody who thought the job was over when communism collapsed is wrong. Restructuring the post-communist order is at least as tough as opposing communism, and there is no blueprint. An entire culture is seeking reorientation. What passes for democracy today is a far cry from the real thing.

More ominously, criminal elements are brazenly executing those who uncover corruption. The slayings of journalists Dimitri Kholodov and Vladislav Listyev illustrate the deadly consequences of telling the truth. An international source of reporting is needed to offset Russian media likely to be increasingly intimidated by organized crime or political extremists.

Note for U.S. budget cutters: No new funds needed. See the proposals of Ariel Cohen of The Heritage Foundation on reprogramming \$225 million by abolishing the Commodities Import Program and scrapping the Russian Officer Resettlement Program.³⁵ AID obligated \$2.5 billion but expended only \$1.2 billion for combined FYs 1992-95.³⁶ It is just as well: most of this could be done far better in the private sector anyway.

34 See Elliott, “Economic Crime and the Necessity of Morality,” in Clark, *Economic Crime and Market Reform in the Former Soviet States*, manuscript p. 14.

35 Ariel Cohen, “How U.S. Aid Can Support Democratic Capitalism in the Former Soviet Union,” draft, 1995, p. 3.

36 “Obligation and Expenditure Report as of December 31, 1994. US AID Programs in the New Independent States of the Former Soviet Union,” p. 1.

In for the Long Haul

There is no way that Russia can become a true democracy with a flourishing market economy overnight. Overcoming 70 years of communism is difficult enough, but the problem is deeper yet. Nowhere in the entire history of Russia was there a sustained period of personal freedom linked to economic and political sovereignty for the individual. The transitions of East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Hungary to democratic capitalism may not be smooth, but they are taking place because these countries are returning to a form they once knew. The roots were in the culture, even if they had been buried for a time. That is not the case with Russia. It may well take many years before the Russian culture can unlearn the traits inculcated under communism and the czars and become a culture which restrains itself by choice rather than by force.

Investing in human resources through scholarships and training programs, enabling help for self-help, and strengthening the private sector and civil society there are likely to yield long-term benefits. Only if Russians are equipped to master their own problems can they revitalize their society from within to make Russia a country which is free, democratic, and stable.

The U.S. has a great deal to offer toward this end. However, Western efforts to help Russia and the former Soviet republics have been thwarted for a variety of reasons. There is an increasingly allergic reaction of Russians to the arrogant and often ignorant Westerners who have descended on their country. Cultural sensitivity is needed, as is patience. Russia does not want to be a Western knock-off, as a growing number of Russians are quick to point out.

There are many Russians who have identified the problems of their country and who are eminently qualified to address the needs for both political reform and moral renewal. They stand in the strategic realms of academia, in the media, and in grass-roots movements. America can help best not by trying to make Russia a copy of itself, but by nurturing indigenous Russian efforts. In the words of Vitaly Zhurkin, Director of the Institute of Europe in the Russian Academy of Sciences, "These are Russian problems, and we need Russian solutions."³⁷

There are areas where Russians have asked for Western help, or have acknowledged a special role the West can play.

- ✓ **Foster the growth of Russian civil society.** It was the cells of civil society that contributed to unraveling communism throughout the entire East bloc, and it is precisely here that the culture can be reknit. Clusters of grass-roots organizations of lawyers, farmers, teachers, writers, businessmen, and doctors are proliferating, but they have little or no knowledge of each other. Newsletters and data-base exchanges would permit them to help one another. They need computers and fax machines from the West, as well as organizational know-how.

The private sectors of America and Europe are needed to help, through thousands of partnerships. The Center for Civil Society is tackling this task honorably, but much potential in America is still untapped.³⁸

Until there is growth of a genuine civil society to create culture separate from the state, the threat of a totalitarian throwback will loom large. It is in our own interest to insure that this not happen.

- ✓ **Create a Resource Bank for Western groups aiding the NIS.** There is a wealth of private sector initiatives in the West which are active, motivated, and largely unaware of one another. For understandable logistical reasons, few have an overview of the vast array of needs and possibilities in the

37 Author's interview with Vitaly Zhurkin, Munich, July 1994.

38 M. Holt Ruffin is Director of the Center for Civil Society International in Seattle, Washington.

East. There is a crying need for an “honest broker” to simply connect the existing resources from those who want to help with receivers. This is a task for the private sector in the U.S.

Resource materials on the private sector helping from the West exist. A *Compendium* of nearly 700 U.S. nonprofit activities in Central and Eastern Europe and the New Independent States has been published by the Citizens Democracy Corps. There is also an excellent catalogue of *East-West Christian Organizations*, listing nearly 700 church and para-church organizations providing assistance.³⁹

- ✓ **Build bridges between academics, cultural, religious, and economic and political leaders.** Networking in the Western sense is non-existent. But until cultural and political reformers make a common cause, they cannot succeed. They do not know or trust one another, and will remain ineffective until they converge. This is one place where the U.S. can render a service by helping to knit up the fabric of a fragmented society, both in the public and private sectors.
- ✓ **Support Russians revamping their school curriculum and retraining teachers.** Dr. Aleksandr Abramov, President of the Moscow Institute for Development of Educational Systems, heads an effort with a team of 200 Russian intellectuals who have developed new textbooks of non-revisionist history, literature, and books which include moral teachings. They also offer training seminars for educators, many of whom are genuinely seeking a new orientation. Further manuscripts are ready, but the titles cannot be printed without financial sponsorship. Some of Abramov’s books adopted into the Russian curriculum have press runs of a million. The potential to reach the coming generation is staggering.⁴⁰ Abramov has applied for an AID grant but has received nothing.
- ✓ **Give intellectual ammunition.** The way to moral renewal in Russia is through its own writers, claim many Russians. A rich literature articulates morality and virtue, stemming from such writers as Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Chekhov, Pasternak, Solzhenitsyn, and Pushkin. A *Book of Virtues*, organized along the lines of Bill Bennett’s book,⁴¹ could compile the Russian vision of such virtues as self-discipline, compassion, responsibility, friendship, work, courage, perseverance, honesty, loyalty, and faith. How can young Russians better learn virtue than from the best of their own cultural roots?⁴²
- ✓ **Equip teachers now required to teach “ethics and morality”** in Russian schools, replacing “scientific atheism” in the curriculum. Most teachers have neither new textbooks nor anything in their own education to prepare them for this task.

It is possible to reach them: Waldemar Murjahn from Germany has single-handedly sponsored a series of articles on morality for the past two years in the Russian publication *Uchitil'skaya Gazeta*, which is sent to all teachers in the former Soviet Union. The publication is willing to accept other material, not only on morality, but on the foundations of a democracy and market economy.⁴³

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- 39 *Compendium: U.S. Nonprofit Activities in Central and Eastern Europe and the New Independent States, 1993-1994*, published by the Citizens Democracy Corps, Washington, D.C., and *East-West Christian Organizations: A Directory of Western Christian Organizations Working in East Central Europe and the Newly Independent States Formerly Part of the Soviet Union*, ed. Sharon Linzey, M. Holt Ruffin, and Mark Elliott (Evanston, Ill.: Berry Publishing, 1993).
- 40 Author’s interview with Dr. Aleksandr Abramov, President of the Moscow Institute for the Development of Educational Systems, Moscow, April 1995.
- 41 *The Book of Virtues: A Treasury of Great Moral Stories*, ed. William J. Bennett (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993).
- 42 Beyond that, there is a body of literature from the West, not yet widely known in Russia, which lays the moral foundations of democracy and the market economy: books such as Michael Novak’s *Democratic Capitalism*, Wilhelm Roepke’s *A Humane Economy*, Friedrich Hayek’s *The Road to Serfdom*, Russell Kirk’s *The Conservative Mind*, Milton Friedman’s *Free to Choose*, and *The Federalist Papers*, to name only a few.
- 43 Personal conversation with representative of *Uchitil'skaya Gazeta*, Moscow, March 1995.

The impact of such efforts should not be underestimated. As Vyacheslav Ivanov writes,

The present-day revival of freedom in the arts may have most significant social results. The cultural and educational consequences of the recent economic reforms may become even more important than all other aspects of the changes.⁴⁴

Mobilize the Private Sector

The most active segment of the private sector stepping in to fill the gaps left by the collapsed state has been the religious community. Forbidden from charitable works under the communists, parishioners of various denominations are now tending the children of Chernobyl, prisoners, the aged, the homeless, and the handicapped. There are significant ways the U.S. can help by enabling Russians to care for their own. In a cash-strapped country where people used to look to the government for their security, such people are providing help no one else can.

There is religious freedom now, but there are winds blowing which would limit that of the denominations which are not Russian Orthodox. Some elements of the Orthodox Church are extremely hostile to Protestantism and Judaism and have made a common cause with nationalist extremists. However, there is spiritual hunger in Russia, and there are increasing numbers of highly motivated believers eager to put their faith into practice. Here are concrete needs America's believers can help meet by helping Russians to help themselves.

- ✓ **Support efforts in the private sector to retrain prisoners.** Former prisoners of conscience are actively reaching detainees to help them begin a new life. Yakov Dukhonchenko in Ukraine, and Ivan Fedotov and Alexander Ogorodnikov in Russia are successfully turning lives around.⁴⁵ Supplying them with the equipment to run a bakery, or seeds to plant farms, enables prisoners to be honestly self-sufficient when they are released.

“Faith, Love and Hope” is an initiative run by Natalia Vyssotskaya which teaches women prisoners in Russia skills which will serve them once they are released. It has received the approval of the Patriarch of Moscow.⁴⁶

- ✓ **Support efforts to scoop the youth off the streets.** One of the most effective ways to fight juvenile crime is preventive care. Church-related groups are taking teenagers in off the street and teaching them job skills other than racketeering and prostitution, the favored choices of many young Russians. Providing sewing machines, tools, and job training is an investment in a productive future. Linking American youth to these fledgling help organizations could provide motivation for both.
- ✓ **Keep the door open for churches.** An enormous amount of humanitarian assistance and aid for training has poured in from Western churches and para-church organizations. Unfortunately, as the door opened for such groups, every variety of exotic sect and cult descended on Russia as well. Add to that the Russian Orthodox Church's hostility to other denominations, and it becomes clear why there are Russians in power trying to slam the door to the West.

44 Vyacheslav Ivanov, “Russian Social Life and Thought,” in *Remaking Russia*, p. 32.

45 Yakov Dukhonchenko, a Baptist minister, spent ten years in prison. Ivan Fedotov, a Pentecostal bishop, spent nearly 18 years. Russian Orthodox Alexander Ogorodnikov was in jail eight years. All were imprisoned for their Christian faith. See von der Heydt's *Candles Behind the Wall* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1993) for their stories.

46 “Helfen im Geiste der Bergpredigt” (Help in the Spirit of the Sermon on the Mount), *Rheinischer Merkur, Christ und Welt*, May 26, 1995, p. 26.

Twice legislation limiting access to Russia by other denominations has been presented to Yeltsin, and twice he has refused to sign it into law. A new amendment was also rejected by Yeltsin on May 22 this year.⁴⁷ Although it was intended to block totalitarian sects like Japan's Aum Shinrikyo while preserving room for responsible groups, Yeltsin surprised its proponents by rejecting the amendment as too restrictive.⁴⁸

Mikhail Gorbachev realized nearly ten years ago that for *perestroika* to be effective, the religious segment of Russia needed to be mobilized. Gorbachev reasoned that the country needs workers who do not drink on the job and do not steal, as a matter of principle.⁴⁹ The same is true today. Now that the state has collapsed, charitable work caring for the homeless, the aged, and penniless pensioners is sorely needed. People of faith in Russia are stepping in to fill the gaping holes. Believers abroad can, and do, help them.

However, elements of both the government and the Russian Orthodox Church oppose the influence of the foreign religious community. The days of the open door may be numbered.

Obedience to the Unenforceable

This is a realm beyond that of policy. It is one in which it is only possible to answer for one's own conscience. Duma member and former dissident Valerie Borschov has observed: "The main problem is society's passage from communism to democracy without passing through a stage of personal renewal ... Society cannot be renewed, but individual persons can."⁵⁰

The founders of America structured its government on the premise that man is endowed with abilities and responsibilities and a moral obligation to his Creator. They also understood man's propensity for evil, and therefore created a system of laws and institutions of government designed to limit the amount of damage we could inflict on one another. The Founding Fathers knew very well that order in a free society depends on the character of its citizenry. Adam Smith knew that a market without benevolence and a moral foundation would yield immoral business. The American experiment, which fused the concept of limited government with a market economy, flourished as long as the morality of the country did so. It can function only as long as its citizens are governed by what Midge Decter astutely terms "obedience to the unenforceable."

A sense of personal, transcendent morality was all but eradicated in the communist countries. But arguably it has deteriorated in the West as well. As products of a secularized culture, whose roots in the Judaeo-Christian heritage have been largely forgotten and wrenched from the public domain, we have little to offer. How can we communicate what we no longer hold ourselves?

The experiment of communism attempted to eradicate God. Its ideology was not agnostic, but aggressively atheistic: Jews, Christians, and Moslems were all anathema. Communists silenced, imprisoned, and executed untold numbers of men and women of faith. There may be more modern martyrs than in any previous century.

The virtues of personal restraint and homage to the transcendent, which are embodied in the Ten Commandments, the Golden Rule, and the Torah, are remarkably consistent. Judaism and Christianity are unanimous in condemning murder, stealing, and lying while acknowledging our need for family, forgiveness, and a right relation to our Creator. The harmony of the world's great religious teachings on these basic precepts reveals an immutable Natural Law each faith has discovered.⁵¹

47 Duma member Vitaly Savitsky drafted the amendment to prevent further restrictions on religion in Russia.

48 Larry Uzzell, Keston News Service, May 24, 1995.

49 See Michael Bourdeaux, *Gorbachev, Glasnost and the Gospel* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1990), pp. 43-45.

50 Author's interview with Valery Borschov, Moscow, December 1994.

These eternal precepts were replaced by the secularized religion of Marxism-Leninism. We are in the process of trading them for secular humanism and materialism. As Russian sociologist Mikhail Tarusin puts it, "A non-believer is unpredictable, can do anything. A believer has in his soul a system of restraints. When the Russian people realize this, maybe there will be hope for change."

The same is true for Americans. Any culture which no longer acknowledges eternal truths unravels morally. We see the results not only in the former communist countries, but in our own. If we attempt to raise the banner of virtue and honor, it is for ourselves as well.

Russian poet and novelist Fazil Iskander describes his despair, but also his hope for Russia. The truth of his words transcends our borders.

The great bluff of communism is being replaced by the provincial bluff of nationalism....In our confused, dark time, who will restore our appetite for creation? Darkness can be opposed only by light and clarity. We need a natural authority with a clearly expressed will to good, with a clearly creative program, with clear laws that defend the work of those who create. But while bickering continues in the structures of power, while the representatives of national authority hang on one another like exhausted boxers, we cannot expect any creative energy. Hatred reigns. When the earth becomes parched for lack of love, it is irrigated with blood....It is high time for us to resign ourselves to changing our slovenly universality to an honest particularity. Thus we will be closer to eternity.⁵²

51 See C.S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man*, (New York: Macmillan, 1955), Appendix, Illustrations of the Tao, pp. 95-121. Lewis cites examples from ancient Greek, Roman, Chinese, Egyptian, Norse, Hindu, Babylonian, Jewish, and Biblical teachings to illustrate the consistency of traditional Natural Law.

52 Iskander, "Who Are We?" pp. 47-48.