Russia

and Western Civilization

Cultural and Historical Encounters

Edited by Russell Bova

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Edited by
Russell Bova

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Contents

List of Boxes vii

Preface xi

Introduction
Russell Bova 3

I. Historical and Cultural Foundations

1. The Russian Idea and the West
Philip T. Grier 23

2. Russian Orthodoxy and Western Christianity: Confrontation and Accommodation
Theodore Pulcini 78

3. The Russian Revolutions: The Impact and Limitations of Western Influence
Karl D. Qualls 113

II. Literature and the Arts: Russia and the European Tradition

4. Russian Writing/Writing Russia
Robert Bird 145

5. Russian Art in Search of Identity
Elena Duzs 177

6. An Introduction to Russian Music
Truman Bullard 210

III. Perspectives on the Future: Convergence or Divergence?

7. Democracy and Russian Political Culture
Russell Bova 243

8. Russian Business: The Warp and Weave of Its History
Michael S. Poulton 277

9. Youth and Popular Culture: The Common Denominator?
Hilary Pilkington 319

Glossary of Key Terms 351

About the Editor and Contributors 365

Index 367

List of Boxes

1.1	Apocalypse	31
1.2	Pyotr Ya. Chaadaev	34
1.3	Ivan V. Kireevsky	37
1.4	Aleksei S. Khomyakov	40
1.5	Konstantin S. Aksakov	42
1.6	Vissarion G. Belinsky	46
1.7	Aleksandr I. Herzen	48
1.8	Mikhail A. Bakunin	50
1.9	Nikolai G. Chernyshevsky	53
1.10	Dmitry I. Pisarev	54
1.11	Sergei G. Nechaev	56
1.12	Nikolai Ya. Danilevsky	58
1.13	Georgy V. Plekhanov	66
1.14	Embalming Lenin	70
2.1	The Seven Ecumenical Councils	80
2.2	The Conversion of Rus	81
2.3	The Iconoclastic Controversy	82
2.4	Divergent Expressions of Christianity	84
2.5	The "Unia"	87
2.6	Moscow: The Third Rome	89
2.7	Synod vs. Patriarchate	96
2.8	*Sobornost'*	99
2.9	The Ecumenical Movement	103
3.1	Socialism	117
3.2	Vladimir Lenin	121
3.3	New Economic Policy: 1918–1927	127
3.4	Joseph Stalin	130
3.5	Five-Year Plan	131
3.6	Great Purges	135

4.1 Aesopian Language 146
4.2 *Samizdat* 147
4.3 Saints' Lives 148
4.4 Old Church Slavonic 149
4.5 Why Literary Works Have Been Important Factors in the Definition of Russian National Identity 151
4.6 Russian Proverbs 154
4.7 Pushkin and the Literary Vocation 155
4.8 Scythianism 157
4.9 Daniil Kharms's "Blue Notebook No. 10" 161
4.10 Women in Russian Literature 164
4.11 The Three Waves of Emigration from Russia to the West 166
4.12 Literary Movements 173

5.1 Russian Art On-Line 178
5.2 Iconography 184
5.3 Indigenous Artistic Tradition in Russia 191
5.4 Communal Spaces 204

6.1 Stravinsky's *Petrouchka* 221
6.2 The Russian Tchaikovsky Meets the German Brahms 230

7.1 Politics and the Orthodox Church 250
7.2 Soviet Jokes 251
7.3 The Dominos Fall: 1989 and 1991 254
7.4 Russia vs. the Soviet Union 255
7.5 Gorby Runs . . . But Loses 260
7.6 Chechnya 262

8.1 Major Themes of Russian Economic History 279
8.2 Western Investment in Nineteenth-Century Russia 287
8.3 The Western Definition of "Entrepreneur" 293
8.4 The Environment for Successful Entrepreneurship 294
8.5 Russian Managerial "Fudging" 303
8.6 Tricks of the Soviet Manager's Trade 304
8.7 How a Russian Millionaire Was Made 314

9.1 Youth and the Revolution: Constructing the "Bright Future" 321
9.2 The *Stiliagi* 323
9.3 Rock Music: Psychological Warfare Against Soviet Youth? 326

9.4 *Neformaly* 326
9.5 *Tusovki* 327
9.6 *Gopniki* 328
9.7 Featured Articles in Russian Youth Magazines in the 1980s and 1990s 330
9.8 Young People's Views on the West 335
9.9 Recent Neofascist and Skinhead Violence in Russia 338
9.10 Russian Youth on the "Uniqueness" of Russia 340
9.11 Russian Youth on the Meaning of Russian Popular Music 342

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Preface

Russell Bova

The idea for this book came from a new course, Russian Studies 100—Russia and the West—taught at Dickinson College in the spring of 2001. The goal of the course was to provide a broad, interdisciplinary introduction to Russia that would establish a foundation on which majors in either our Russian Language and Literature or Russian Area Studies programs could build as well as to supply a self-contained, one-semester introduction to things Russian for students from other programs.

In conceiving and designing the course, my Russian Studies colleagues at Dickinson and I sought a central organizing theme that would help provide cohesiveness in a course whose readings, lectures, and discussions would range from contemporary Russia to early Russian history and from issues of politics and economics to literature, art, and music. The theme selected was Russia's cultural relationship to the West. As noted in the Introduction, the question of Russia's fit within Western civilization is a very old one, debated by both Russians and Western observers of Russia alike, and it is a question that has been addressed with renewed interest in the post-Soviet era as scholars and policy makers have considered the likely path of a Russia stripped of its Soviet-era empire and ideology.

In looking for a core text that met our three criteria of accessibility to beginning students of Russia, breadth of coverage, and focus on our central theme, we were stymied. While there are many excellent historical surveys of Russia available, we favored a more topical approach that would not duplicate our more traditional Russian history survey courses. Likewise, while there exist some useful "handbooks" of Russian culture, we found either that the focus on our theme of Russia's relationship to the West was not sufficiently developed or that some disciplines, such as politics or economics, were neglected. Also available, of course, were some classic scholarly books that directly addressed our theme, including such notable works as James Billington's *The Icon and the Axe* and Martin Malia's *Russia Under Western Eyes*. But, to be used most effectively, those works, in our judgment, presumed some prior knowledge of Russia among students.

As a result of our inability to find a text that would meet all of our needs,

we decided to write one ourselves. The result is this volume. The contributors are almost all faculty of the Russian Area Studies program at Dickinson College. The only two exceptions are Hilary Pilkington of the University of Birmingham, England, and Robert Bird of the University of Chicago (though Bird was at Dickinson when this book was first conceived).

In survey courses on Russian culture and civilization, our assumption is that this volume will be used as a core text around which other supplemental materials can and should be added. In "road-testing" this volume with our own students, we also assigned poems, short stories, a novel or two, historical documents, and scholarly articles. In conjunction with student reading of the chapter on Russian music, musical selections mentioned in the text were among those sampled in class or assigned for out-of-class listening, and a selected discography is provided at the end of that chapter to help other instructors and students do the same. Likewise, the chapter on Russian art was supplemented by slides that were displayed in class, and a list of Web sites containing images of Russian art is included in that chapter.

This volume was also written to serve as a supplementary text for courses in Russian history or even in courses on contemporary Russian politics and society that adopt a historical or cultural approach. As students in such courses move chronologically through Russian history or through various topics on Russian politics and society, chapters from this volume can be assigned to provide more in-depth examination of the topics covered. Though there is a certain logic to the sequencing of the chapters, each is self-contained and can be read in whatever order the instructor or student might choose.

There are many people to acknowledge for their contributions to the production of this volume, first and foremost, the other eight contributors. Indeed, more than being simply the authors of individual chapters, my Dickinson College colleagues were full-fledged collaborators on this project, involved at virtually every stage of the process as they contributed to the development of the initial concept of this book, read and commented on each others' chapters, contributed to teaching the course from which this book has emerged, and generally provided advice and suggestions every step of the way. Hilary Pilkington, the one contributor without a direct Dickinson connection, must also be acknowledged for her willingness, despite a very busy schedule, to contribute the perfect chapter to round out the volume. Given her research on Russian youth, their culture, and their attitude toward the West, she was uniquely qualified for our purposes.

That one liberal arts college could provide almost all of the contributors to such a wide-ranging volume is testimony to Dickinson's commitment to international education in general and to Russian Studies in particular. At a time when Russian programs are being cut back or, in some cases, eliminated com-

pletely, Dickinson's commitment to the study of Russian language and culture remains steadfast.

Our students have also contributed to this volume, if for no other reason than that it was written with their needs in mind. More specifically, students in the spring 2002 Russia and the West class were assigned draft versions of most of the chapters in the volume. Their comments, both in class discussion and on evaluation forms that they were asked to complete after reading each chapter, were invaluable in helping us improve our final versions.

Among other individuals who must be noted are R. Craig Nation of the U.S. Army War College in Carlisle, PA. Craig read and provided detailed written comments on each chapter. I can think of few other scholars of Russia with the intellectual breadth needed to comment knowledgeably on chapters ranging from Russian music to Russian politics. If any flaws remain in the individual chapters or in the book as a whole, they are less than they would have been without Craig's insights, corrections, and suggestions.

At a crucial early stage in the development of this project, Associate Dean JoAnne Brown provided enthusiastic encouragement and support, and, in collaboration with the Dickinson College Committee on Research and Development, made that support tangible with funding of a summer 2001 faculty seminar at which early draft chapters were presented and critiqued. Vickie Kuhn and Elizabeth Zizzi, whether through work related directly to this project or through the more general secretarial support that they provided, consistently demonstrated that they are as fine a pair of secretaries as one might hope to have. And for their belief in the value of this project, for their willingness to make a commitment at a very early stage, and for their help at various stages of the project, we are also grateful to the people at M.E. Sharpe, especially Patricia Kolb, Irina Burns, Lynda Harris, Therese Malhame, and Ana Erlić.

Last but not least, I need to thank my wife, Candace, and my three daughters, Laura, Sam, and Alex, for putting up with the many moods generated by the ups and downs of my work on this project and for being constant reminders of the things I value most in life. I must also thank my mother, Rosemary Bova. Though she never studied on a college campus, it is from her that I acquired the habits of life and mind that have made possible whatever intellectual achievements I have managed.

Note on Transliteration

Because the Russian language is written in the Cyrillic rather than the Latin alphabet, writing out Russian words in English language texts requires transliteration. Despite efforts at standardization, most notably the Library of Congress system, there are still some choices that authors and editors must make. Since this text is intended to be read by students, we have tried to emphasize simplicity and familiarity whenever possible. Thus, for example, final soft signs have been eliminated on familiar words (*glasnost* rather than *glasnost'*). Surnames ending with *-ii* have been transliterated with the more familiar *-y* (thus Dostoevsky and Babitsky rather than Dostoevskii and Babitskii). Likewise, in the interest of ease of pronunciation for students, we have opted for -*ya*/*aya* rather than *ia*/*aia*, -*yu* rather than *iu*, and -*yo* rather than -*ë*. Exceptions to this approach are found in quotations from other texts and in titles. In the case of very familiar names where the most familiar spelling breaks our rules or Library of Congress rules, we have opted for the transliteration most likely to have been seen by students before.

Russia
and Western Civilization

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Introduction

Russell Bova

Some in the West are trying to "exclude" the Soviet Union from Europe. Now and then, as if inadvertently, they equate "Europe" with "Western Europe." Such ploys, however, cannot change the geographic and historical realities. Russia's trade, cultural and political links with other European nations and states have deep roots in history. We are Europeans.[1]
Mikhail Gorbachev, 1987

The Soviet Union is an Asian, as well as European country. . . .[2]
Mikhail Gorbachev, 1987

In these two quotations from his 1987 book, *Perestroika*, former Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev captures the essence of the centuries-old debate about Russia's cultural relationship to "Western Europe" and about the larger question of Russia's national identity and place in the world. On the one hand, Gorbachev insists that there is but one Europe of which Russia is an unambiguous member. The "some in the West" who earn Gorbachev's wrath by excluding Russia from Europe might include the historian and philosopher Arnold Toynbee, who wrote in 1948 that "Russians have . . . been members, not of our Western civilization, but of the Byzantine,"[3] or the Czech writer, Milan Kundera, who provocatively asserted in 1984 (one year before Gorbachev's selection as Soviet leader) that "totalitarian Russian civilization is the radical negation of the modern West."[4] Gorbachev's insistence that such views are mistaken and that Russia is and must be considered a part of Europe, and, by implication, of a larger Western civilization, has roots in Russian thought and history that reach back at least as far as the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century Westernizing efforts of Peter the Great.

On the other hand, there has always been ambivalence among Russians themselves in accepting that Russia is just another European nation. As Gorbachev himself noted, Russia is, at least geographically, also an Asian nation, with the bulk of Russian territory lying east of the Ural Mountains, which divide Europe from Asia. Its religion, Russian Orthodoxy, was adopted in 988 from the Byzantine Church rather than from the Church of Rome. For more than two centuries of its history (1237–1480) Russia was largely cut off

from Europe by the invasion and conquest of the Mongols. The Mongol influence was to linger after Russia reacquired its autonomy and may be reflected in the fact that many of the defining cultural and historical epochs in subsequent European history—the Renaissance, the Reformation, the Enlightenment—largely bypassed Russia.

To this day, Russia appears to many Westerners as an intriguing blend of the familiar and the foreign. Its literature is still widely read in the West, and it is hard to think of its great writers—Tolstoy, Chekhov, and Dostoevsky, to name a few—as standing completely outside of the Western literary canon. Its music remains a staple of the Western concert hall with Russian composers, such as Tchaikovsky and Rachmaninov, among the most frequently requested and performed. Its religion, though adopted from the Byzantine Church, is a form of Christianity that shares with both Catholics and Protestants a belief in a single God, in the divinity of Jesus, and in the concept of the Trinity. In short, if, as Samuel Huntington suggests, the twenty-first century is to be marked by a "clash of civilizations,"[5] it is much easier to see that manifested in the clash between the West and the Taliban than between the West and the Kremlin.

At the same time, seen through Western eyes, Russia remains exotic. The great works of Russian literature are written in a Cyrillic script unfamiliar to most West European readers. No one stepping into a Russian Orthodox Church could mistake it for a Protestant or Catholic Church. And for most of its history Russia has seemed out of step with its Western neighbors, in both politics and economics. Long after monarchy in the West fell out of fashion, a tsar still ruled Russia. As its Western neighbors democratized in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Russia remained a closed, some would say totalitarian, regime in which tsars were replaced by communist commissars. Whereas the West was the home of private enterprise and markets, statist economics continued to prevail in Russia until the last decade of the twentieth century.

The collapse of Soviet communism and the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991 led many to expect a rapid convergence between Russia and the West. At the risk of only slight exaggeration, one might suggest that the most hopeful convergence scenarios anticipated that post-communist modernization of Russia could take no form other than Westernization and that differences between Russia and the West would, in most significant respects, disappear. If such expectations were fulfilled, then the centuries-old issue of Russia's cultural relationship to the West could, once and for all, finally be put to rest.

But Russia's "transition" from communism since the early 1990s has been anything but straightforward, and the direction of Russian political, economic,

and cultural development remains less than completely resolved. In fact, far from settling the issue of Russia's cultural relationship to the West, the collapse of communism has given renewed importance to the debate on that question. Rather than having the actual events of the 1990s conclusively answer the question of whether or not Russia is a Western nation, it was, instead, preexisting assumptions about Russia's status vis-à-vis the West that provided the conceptual framework within which those events were often interpreted. Those inclined to see Russia as a Western nation whose ties to the West were interrupted by the communist era now expected and tended to see in the collapse of communism the opportunity for Russia to take up its proper place within the Western community of nations. On the other hand, those who emphasized the cultural distance between Russia and the West were much less optimistic that the end of communism implied Russia's return to what Gorbachev liked to call the "common European home."

Thus, the question of whether Russia is indeed a part of Western civilization is much more than an interesting academic issue. It is also a very practical question, the answer to which speaks volumes about the trajectory of Russian politics, economics, and culture in the twenty-first century. It is also a question whose answer has clear policy implications. Should Russian leaders seek to import Western models of parliamentary democracy and market economics? Will such political and economic institutions work in the Russian context? Those are questions that are at least partly informed by one's assessment of the relative degree of cultural affinity between Russia and its Western neighbors. Should Western leaders invite Russian participation in Western clubs such as NATO and the European Union? Can the United States and Western Europe think of and treat post-communist Russia as a political and economic partner? Those are also questions informed by one's perspective on the more deeply rooted cultural relationship of Russia to the West.

The September 11, 2001, terror attacks in the United States add yet another layer of policy relevance to the question of Russia's relationship to the West. As a result of those attacks, many in the United States and in the West in general have been anxious to reopen that question for consideration. While in one sense, the end of the Cold War may have represented a victory of the West, that is, of the "ideological (democratic) West" over the "ideological (communist) East," in another sense, the West now faces challenges of increased assertiveness from other civilizations (from the Islamic world, for example) and increased economic and military power (from China, for example). In light of those challenges, and particularly since "September 11," it would certainly be reassuring if the United States could think of Russia as a Western nation. While Russia's global influence is much reduced from Cold War days, its size, its residual military capabilities, its economic potential,

and, perhaps most important, its symbolic value as an ally have attracted renewed interest in many Western capitals at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

But the renewed motivation to think of Russia as a Western nation does not necessarily make it so. As the twenty-first century begins to unfold, it remains the case that for every similarity one might identify between Russia and the West, one might also cite a significant difference. The purpose of this volume is to assess the relative significance of such similarity and difference. When one adds it all up, should one be more impressed by what separates or by what binds? Are Toynbee and Kundera right in suggesting that the differences between Russia and its Western neighbors are of such a quantitative and qualitative nature that they cross civilizational lines? Or are those differences more akin to cultural variations between France and Germany—real but within the boundaries of a common Western civilization? While the various contributors to this volume may not always agree on the answer to this big question, the goal is to equip the reader to draw his or her own conclusions based on detailed assessments of the relationship of Russia to the West in areas ranging from religion and philosophy to the fine arts, and from historical events of decades and centuries past to contemporary politics, economics, and youth culture.

Prior to turning to those detailed assessments, two preliminary tasks are in order. First, it is necessary to spend a little time defining some of the key terms and concepts that underlie this volume. If the goal is to assess the relationship of Russian culture to Western civilization, we must first be clear on what we mean by culture, by civilization, and by "the West." That will be followed by a brief historical introduction to Russia and Russians, focusing on the Russia and the West theme. It is only on this basis that we can then proceed to examine the various specific facets of Russian culture and their relationship to Western civilization.

Cultures and Civilizations

The term "culture" has multiple meanings. Perhaps its most commonplace usage is in reference to the works of literature, art, and music of a people. Employing the term in this narrow sense, one might further distinguish between "high culture" and "popular culture." Though the line between the two can be porous, vague, and controversial, in general, one would expect to find a greater degree of intellectual and artistic ambition and sophistication in the former. Thus, while Beethoven, Shakespeare, and Picasso might be considered part of Western high culture, contemporary popular culture would include the likes of Stephen King and Britney Spears, as well as the bulk of

what one might find on commercial television. It is valuable to examine both as a means to understand a society and its people. In this volume, Chapters 4, 5, and 6 focus largely (though not exclusively) on Russian "high culture" while Chapter 9 turns our attention to contemporary Russian "popular culture."

But while this volume does indeed examine culture in the sense described above, it also deals with the concept of culture in its much broader meaning as a set of values, attitudes, and ways of thinking about and understanding the world that is common to a particular group of people. Understanding culture in this sense can be facilitated by examining literary and intellectual texts as well as works of art and music, but it can also be understood in other ways, including via the observation of behavior or through survey research. Thus, reading Russian literature, watching Russian TV, conducting a poll of Russian attitudes on issues of gender, or simply observing the behavior of Russians in some sphere of activity (be it politics, interpersonal relationships, or workplace behavior) can all be complementary means of coming to terms with Russian culture, or, to put it differently, what it means to be a Russian.

Of course, not all Russians think and view the world in the same way. As in any community of people, irrespective of size, one is sure to find considerable variation in both attitudes and behaviors. But such variation notwithstanding, the concept of culture assumes that there remains enough of a core of attitudes and beliefs that, on average, distinguishes Russians from non-Russians so that a distinct Russian culture can be observed. At the same time, Russians, like any other group of people, are likely to share much in common with human beings more generally. After all, we all share the same basic genetic makeup and have the same basic human needs. Furthermore, in the era of globalization, geographic and cultural borders are becoming more and more porous, leading some to point to the creation of an increasingly homogeneous global culture. But even if our common humanity was to explain 90 percent of the behavior of peoples, the 10 percent that remains subject to cultural variation provides a basis for a study of what distinguishes groups of people that is at least as interesting and important as the examination of what humans share in common.

In short, the assumption of this volume is that culture matters. But to suggest that cultural distinctions remain important even in a world of globalization, and, more specifically, to suggest that there is a distinct Russian culture, says little about Russia's cultural relationship to the West. As previously indicated, it is commonly assumed that there are distinct and separate French and German cultures, yet it is also assumed that both France and Germany each belong to a larger, common Western culture. That larger Western culture is an example of what one might call a "civilization."

Like the concept of "culture," the concept of "civilization" has multiple meanings and usages. In its most generic sense, "civilization" refers to the complex set of technological, institutional, political, and cultural developments that impose a certain order and refinement upon humans. To "civilize," according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, is "to bring out of a state of barbarism, to instruct in the arts of life, and thus elevate in the scale of humanity; to enlighten, refine, and polish" and from that it follows that civilization is "a developed or advanced state of human society."[6] Yet, at the same time, the concept of civilization can more specifically be used to refer to "a particular stage or a particular type of this"[7] effort at such development and advancement of human society. As one looks around the world, the specific nature of technological, and, especially, institutional, political, and cultural developments varies greatly from place to place. Each represents a type of order and refinement but with great variation among them. Each is a unique form of human civilization.

It is these variants of civilization to which Samuel Huntington refers when he defines a civilization as "the highest cultural grouping of people and the broadest level of cultural identity people have short of what distinguishes humans from other species."[8] It can include multiple national or even subnational cultures as long as there is some larger shared cultural foundation. Acknowledging that civilizational lines are porous, imprecise, and subject to change, Huntington nonetheless suggests that the contemporary world may be home to as many as nine distinct civilizations including: Western, Latin American, African, Islamic, Sinic (i.e., Chinese), Hindu, Orthodox, Buddhist, and Japanese.[9]

Few of those civilizational boundaries can be identified entirely free from controversy. For example, one might question whether there is enough of a common culture among the diverse peoples of sub-Saharan Africa to speak of a larger African civilization. At the same time, one might ask whether Latin America, with its blending of Iberian and indigenous cultures, should be seen as a part of Western civilization. And, of course, the utility of Huntington's identification of an Orthodox civilization centered on Russia that is separate and distinct from Western civilization is itself the concern of this volume.

A key determinant of civilizational boundaries is the reach of the world's great religions. In Huntington's scheme, four of his nine civilizations (Islamic, Hindu, Orthodox, and Buddhist) are explicitly identified by religion, and a religious connection can also be found in the other five not so explicitly named. In most cases, the reach of the world's great religions extends beyond the boundaries of single states and nations, providing a larger cultural affinity that transcends and binds individual national cultures. Note, however, that Huntington does not include "Jewish civilization" on his list. Jews have long been an integral part of Western (Judeo-Christian) and Orthodox civilization. Indeed, the contributions of Jews to both Russian and

Western culture provide yet one more bridge between what, for Huntington, are two separate civilizations.

The close association of religious and civilizational boundaries is likely due to two factors. First, religion can serve as a historical and cultural marker, signifying past patterns of imperial conquest and empire. Long after imperial powers have retreated, after empires have collapsed, and after political lines have been redrawn, the legacy of conquest and empire, religion included, can continue to shape and define local cultures. Second, intrinsic to all religious traditions are sets of values and understandings related to the most fundamental aspects of the human experience. Indeed, as the fundamental belief system of any society, it would be surprising if religion did not play a very large role in both unifying and separating human cultures. In the case of Russia, the ambivalent relationship to the West may be a reflection of the ambivalent relationship between Orthodoxy and Western Christianity. That relationship is discussed in detail in this volume in Chapter 2, and, given the importance of religion to cultural and civilizational identification, it is appropriate that the discussion of religion appear early in the volume.

The West

Having explained the concept of civilization, it remains to address more specifically the matter of "Western civilization." What exactly is this "West" to which neither Russians nor "Westerners" are quite sure Russia belongs? During the Cold War years (approximately 1948 to 1989), the concept of "the West" was most commonly applied to the United States and its allies in the nearly half-century-long confrontation with the communist "East" (the Soviet Union, China, and their respective allies). By definition, the Soviet Union, and Russia specifically, were, thus, non-Western. But this "ideological West," defined as it was by its Cold War struggle, could not survive the collapse of Soviet and East European communism and the resulting end of the Cold War. In its place, the idea of the West as a cultural entity has now reemerged.

Identifying and defining "the West" is not as simple and straightforward as one might imagine. The historian Norman Davies has argued that over the course of centuries there have been at least a dozen variations on the concept of Western civilization in which the borders, origins, and meaning of "the West" have shifted to meet contemporary ideological and political needs.[10] Davies concludes from these constantly shifting definitions that "the West" is little more than an intellectual, political, and ideological construct that "can be defined by its advocates in almost any way that they think fit."[11] In his book, *From Plato to NATO*, David Gress rejects the Norman Davies view, arguing that disagreement over the origins, meaning, and borders of the

West does not necessarily delegitimate the concept.[12] Gress argues that there is such a thing as "the West" and that it is the product of the synthesis of classical Greek and Roman civilizations with Christianity and Germanic culture. But the fact that Gress requires almost 600 pages of text to critique competing visions of the West and its origins and to assert his own concept of Western civilization is itself testimony to the intellectual and ideological contentiousness of the issue.

In an effort to synthesize various discussions of the meaning of "the West," Huntington provides a list of the "distinguishing characteristics" of Western civilization, which, he suggests, find widespread agreement among scholars. Included on his list are both overt manifestations of contemporary Western civilization and references to historical roots. Thus, "the West," for Huntington, is the sum total of:

1. *The Classical Legacy*—including influences from both Greece and Rome.
2. *Christianity*—specifically, in Huntington's view, Catholicism and Protestantism.
3. *European Languages*—according to Huntington, language is second only to religion in distinguishing cultures.
4. *Separation of Church and State*—the idea of two separate spheres of authority, one spiritual and one secular.
5. *Rule of Law*—the idea that men govern via laws to which all, including leaders, are subject. The basis for modern constitutional government.
6. *Social Pluralism*—diverse groups, classes, and interests exist and are accepted as legitimate.
7. *Representative Bodies*—parliaments and other institutions to represent the interests of those diverse groups. The basis for modern democracy.
8. *Individualism*—and a commitment to individual rights and liberties. The basis of the modern concept of human rights.[13]

As Huntington notes, taken individually these characteristics are not completely absent from other civilizations (nor are they always perfectly in evidence in the West), but it is the totality of their influence that distinguishes Western civilization from others.

Critics like Norman Davies have argued that such lists of characteristics of the West tend to be too selective, emphasizing the "superiority" of Western civilization while neglecting its darker sides. Moreover, there lurks within all such discussions of "the West" the dangers of what is sometimes called "Orientalism," that is, the tendency both to lump all non-Westerners together and to assert their inferiority vis-à-vis the more advanced Western civilization. Indeed, Westerners reading through Huntington's list might well be

impressed by the merits of Western civilization, but that would, at least to some degree, simply reveal their status as Westerners. For example, the separation of church and state is far less universally accepted as a positive thing in the Islamic world. Likewise, some Asian critics of the West have argued that there is too much emphasis in Western societies on social pluralism, individual interests, and individual rights, resulting in the neglect of the larger societal and community interest.

In any case, the point here is not to argue the merits of Western civilization (or that of any of its competitors), but simply to emphasize that what we in the West sometimes take for granted as universal truths and values may not be quite so universalized. Despite globalization, and notwithstanding some optimistic post–Cold War arguments predicting and celebrating the global reach of concepts such as democracy, market economics, and human rights,[14] the fact remains that the relatively unambiguous fit of Huntington's list of characteristics of Western civilization is, geographically speaking, limited to the countries of Western Europe along with West European-settled countries like the United States, Canada, Australia, and, possibly, Latin America. Both geographically and demographically, the West and Westerners represent a minority of the world's land and people, even if the wealth and power of the West over the past several centuries have allowed it to project its influence on a more global scale.

Thus, the question underlying this volume is not whether "the West" exists but, rather, how far to the east one might legitimately and realistically extend its civilizational borders. For some former communist states, that question was quickly resolved after the communist collapse. The Central European countries of Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary have been relatively quick to accept and, with somewhat more hesitation, be accepted by the West. Each was swift to adopt Western political and economic models, and their status as Western nations has been institutionalized in their new membership in the NATO alliance. The status of Central Europe was anticipated by Milan Kundera, who made the following observation several years prior to the fall of the Berlin Wall.

> In fact, what does Europe mean to a Hungarian, a Czech, a Pole? For a thousand years their nations have belonged to the part of Europe rooted in Roman Christianity. They have participated in every period of its history. For them, the word "Europe" does not represent a phenomenon of geography but a spiritual notion synonymous with the word "West." The moment Hungary is no longer European—that is, no longer Western—it is driven from its own destiny, beyond its own history: it loses the essence of its identity.[15]

Perhaps Kundera's assessment can be applied more broadly and further to the East—to the former Yugoslav republic of Slovenia or to the Baltic states of Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia. But can it also be extended to Russia itself?

Gorbachev, as noted previously, clearly thinks so, and he has support from Western scholars such as Norman Davies who see the line between Western and Eastern Europe as artificial. Kundera, in contrast, makes it clear that he does not think so, and he notes that from the vantage point of those geographically closest to Russia, Central Europeans like himself, the distinction between Russia and the West is most readily apparent. From their perspective, "Russia is seen not just as one more European power but as a singular civilization, an *other* civilization."[16]

Who is right? Where does Russia belong on the global cultural map? Before turning to the contributors to this volume for more specifically focused discussions of these questions, a brief, and necessarily very general, discussion of Russia and the Russian people will help to provide some context. Who exactly are the Russians, and what developments in their history as a nation are important to note in understanding their relationship to the West?

Russians and the West: A Brief History

Russians today can trace their origins as a nation and as a state back approximately eleven centuries to the days of Kievan Rus. Formed in 882 from the unification of the city of Novgorod, conquered and led after the 860s by Scandinavians and the legendary Viking adventurer Rurik, with the city of Kiev, Kievan Rus was populated by East Slavic tribes who had, according to one version of the story, invited Viking assistance in promoting tribal unity and order. Though important in the political formation of this first "Russian" state, the cultural influence of the Vikings is more limited, and it was they who came to assimilate the language of those Slavic-speaking tribes over whom they would now rule.

Those Slavic tribes were, in fact, not a racial but a linguistic group. Today, what Russians share in common with the West Slavs (Poles, Czechs, and Slovaks), South Slavs (Slovenes, Bulgarians, Macedonians, Serbians, and Croatians), and other East Slavic peoples (Ukrainians and Belarusians) are roots in a common Slavonic language. Russian and other Slavic languages are part of the family of Indo-European languages that also includes, among others, the Romance languages and the Germanic languages (English among them). Strong linguistic similarity among the Slavic languages coupled with the evolution of distinctive characteristics that set the Slavic languages apart from other members of the Indo-European language family have led some to suggest a linguistic basis for a sense of Slavs being "outsiders" in relation to the rest of Europe.[17]

A key date in the history of Kievan Rus (and in Russian history in general) is 988. As discussed in more detail in Chapter 2, that was the date of the

religious conversion of Rus to Eastern Orthodoxy. As the legend would have it, Prince Vladimir of Kiev sent emissaries to examine the religions of the Muslims, the Western Christians, and the Eastern Orthodox, and, impressed with the beauty of its churches and services, chose the latter. That was a pivotal moment in determining the future course of Russia's relationship to the rest of Europe, for Vladimir had chosen a religious tradition that was simultaneously both familiar and foreign to Western Europeans. Like its Western neighbors, Russia was to be a Christian country, but of a very different order from that of the Church of Rome.

The century following this religious conversion was the golden age of Kievan Rus. Under the rule of Yaroslav the Wise (1019–1054), unity and cohesiveness was at its peak, and a Russian nation and Russian culture was being developed. The physical size of Kievan Rus was greater than that of any European state of the time, and relations with other states in Europe were being established. But with the death of Yaroslav in 1054, divisions and tensions within Kievan Rus began to surface. Over the next two centuries, it would deteriorate into a loose confederation of city-states, increasingly challenged by outsiders on its frontiers. Meanwhile, the deepening schism between the Orthodox Church in Constantinople and the Catholic Church in Rome resulted, in 1054 (the same year as Yaroslav's death), in mutual excommunications and an almost complete severing of relations between the two great churches. This religious tension would complicate the evolution of cultural ties between Kievan Rus and Western Europe.

The end of Kievan Rus would come with the Mongol invasion beginning in 1237. The Mongols (or Tatars as they are more commonly referred to in Russia) were descendants of Genghis Khan who invaded Rus from the land of present-day Mongolia. For almost two and a half centuries, 1240–1480, the Mongols controlled the territory and people of Rus and were aided in maintaining that control by continued fragmentation and feuding among the various principalities that once constituted a rising Russian state and nation. While representatives of these various principalities competed for favor with the Mongols by offering tribute, commerce and economic development in former Kievan Rus were significantly slowed.

The impact of the Mongol period on Russia's relationship to Europe was significant in at least two important respects. First, the consequence was to further distance the peoples of Rus from developments to their west. In the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, while Western Europe was embarking upon the period of the Renaissance, Rus was still under Mongol domination and largely isolated from all that the Renaissance represented. This can be seen, for example, in religious developments. While in Western Europe the Renaissance involved an increasing secularization of many aspects

of life, including politics and the arts, under Mongol rule the Orthodox Church was strengthened and more than ever before became the symbol of the Russian nation. This was partly due to the fact that the Mongols had privileged the church by exempting its lands from taxation and its workers from military service, but it was also due to the fact that it provided a source of Russian unity during a time of Russian political fragmentation and domination. Thus, the relationship between church and society was moving in a very different direction within Russia than it was in much of Western Europe.

Second, Mongol rule also shaped the future of Russia's relationship to Western Europe insofar as it contributed to the rise of Muscovy (as Westerners referred to it) with the city of Moscow as the center of a newly reasserted Russian state. At the beginning of the Mongol period, Moscow was a fairly small and insignificant city. During the times of fragmentation and feuding among the cities of Rus, Moscow, for various reasons, proved more assertive and successful than most in adding to its territory and political clout. By 1480, during the reign of Ivan the Great, Mongol rule was finally ended, and a two-century-long period of warfare and territorial expansion and consolidation ensued. The result was the extension of Muscovite territory to almost all of the land of contemporary European Russia and the beginning of exploration and expansion beyond the Ural Mountains into Siberia. Moscow, the new center of this growing Russian state, was more geographically isolated from Western Europe than was Kiev, to the west, and Novgorod, to the north.

By the time that Peter the Great began his reign (1696–1725) as sole leader of Russia, the concern had shifted to the economic, political, and cultural modernization of Russia. For Peter, that meant Westernization. In 1697–98 he embarked on his "Grand Embassy," traveling under cover of an assumed name to Western Europe to see and learn its ways. Among the notable reforms of Russia's great "Westernizer" were an effort to bring the Orthodox Church under state control, the establishment of the "Table of Ranks" in which merit would replace birth as the key to one's place on the social ladder, and reorganization of state and local government and the tax system. Perhaps most symbolic of the direction he intended Russia to travel was his move of the capital from insular Moscow to St. Petersburg located on the Baltic Sea. St Petersburg, built from scratch on swampland to resemble a West European city, was to be Russia's "window on the West" through which Russia's eye could be kept on developments in Europe.

Peter's reforms were not universally embraced within Russia. On the contrary, his reforms were often imposed on an unwilling population, and more than a century later they would inspire heated intellectual debates between the "Westernizers" who, in the spirit of Peter, saw Russia's future tied to that of Western Europe and the "Slavophiles" who rejected the path of Westernization

and sought to carve out a unique Russian road to the future (see Chapter 1 for more on this Westernizer/Slavophile debate). In many ways, Catherine the Great (r. 1762–1796) was to continue the legacy of Peter. She was, like Peter, a reformer interested in the political and economic development of Russia and open to interaction and learning from Western Europe. At the same time, this German-born princess who, like many members of the Russian elite, spoke French, ruled over a country that in some key respects, perhaps most important in the reluctance to abolish serfdom, remained behind the movement of history as it had played out in states to the west.

Indeed, the contradictions and tensions of Catherine's Russia were to remain a part of the complexity of the country throughout the nineteenth century. In many respects, Russia seemed to have embraced the West. For example, in literature and the arts, what began in the eighteenth century as efforts to learn from and imitate the West, led, in the nineteenth century, to a flourishing of Russian culture that the West, in turn, was to receive and embrace from Russia (see Chapters 4, 5, and 6). Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, and Tchaikovsky are just a few of the Russian names that would ring familiar to any Westerner, even to this day. In politics and economics, winds of change could also be felt. The "Decembrist Revolt" of December 1825 was an effort to replace absolutist monarchy with constitutional government and to bring about an end to serfdom. That revolt, led mainly by young army officers, clearly indicated some sentiment within the country to move Russia in a direction that would bring it more in line with developments to the west. But the rebellion was quickly crushed by the new tsar, Nicholas I. Unlike its Western neighbors, Russia remained a feudal country until the liberation of the serfs in 1861, and it remained an autocratic monarchy long after the ideas of the Enlightenment had led to the modification or replacement of absolutist monarchies in much of Western Europe.

There is some basis for arguing that by the beginning of the twentieth century Russia was starting to close the gap between itself and Western Europe, even in the areas of economics and politics. The abolition of serfdom led to an era of significant economic development and industrialization in Russia. And while Russia remained an absolutist monarchy, pressures on the political order were also apparent. Military defeat at the hands of Japan in 1905 added to internal inducements for political change and resulted in the creation of the Duma. Though a relatively weak legislative body with only consultative powers, and though it would eventually be shut down by the tsar, the Duma seemed to symbolize a society that was beginning to outgrow monarchy and to take the first tentative steps toward a more dispersed system of political power. In this respect, optimists might argue that Russia was belatedly following the same path as its West European neighbors. That optimism seemed, briefly, to

have been confirmed when, in February 1917, the mixture of internal tensions and the miseries of war (World War I) once again led to pressures for political change. This time the result was the abdication of the tsar.

For a few short months in 1917, there remained at least a glimmer of hope that Russia would finally and unequivocally claim a place—politically, economically, and culturally—as a member of the Western community of nations. But, at least for a time, that was not to be. In October 1917, Vladimir Lenin and his Bolshevik Party seized power from the more liberal provisional government and proceeded to lay the foundation for the Soviet communist system that was to reshape Russia and the world for most of the twentieth century. The Marxist ideology that sparked and guided Lenin's revolution was itself a Western import. Marx was a German intellectual who spent much of his time researching and writing in the library of the British Museum in London. In fact, Marx had expected that the first communist revolutions would occur not in Russia, but in the more economically developed capitalist economies of Western Europe.

As discussed in Chapter 3, Lenin's Marxism was an adaptation of this imported Western ideology to the circumstances of early twentieth Russia. Whether Lenin's regime owed more to Marxism or Russian history is a question that historians still vigorously debate. In practice, however, the result was to further isolate Russia from the West. Under Lenin and even more so under Stalin, who, with all the power and brutality of the most autocratic of tsars, ruled Russia from the mid-1920s until his death in 1953, Russia was to proceed along a political, economic, and cultural path that was as different from that of the West as it was at any time in Russia's history. This separation of Russia and the West was symbolized in metaphors such as the "iron curtain," which Western leaders said had descended to divide Europe between East and West, and the notion of "two camps" into which Soviet leaders said the world had now become divided. A more concrete symbol of this East–West divide was provided by the Berlin Wall, erected by Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev in 1961 to keep residents of communist East Berlin from escaping to the West.

Russia Today

The beginning of the end of the Soviet Union and its communist system came in 1985 with the emergence of Mikhail Gorbachev as the new leader of the Soviet Union. Prior to Gorbachev, under the leadership of Leonid Brezhnev (1964–1982) and two short-lived successors (Yuri Andropov and Konstantin Chernenko), the Soviet economic and political system had become increasingly stagnant, lagging further and further behind its Western rivals in the

new information-based, global economy. As indicated in Chapter 7, Gorbachev's efforts to revitalize the system set in motion a political process that he could not completely control, resulting in the collapse of East European communist regimes in 1989 followed by the disintegration of the Soviet Union itself at the end of 1991.

Post-Soviet Russia is, in many fundamental respects, very different from the Soviet Union of the Cold War days. Russia today remains, by far, the world's largest country. At 10 percent of the world's land mass, and stretching across eleven time zones, it is double the size of the United States. Yet, stripped of the fourteen non-Russian republics of the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, Russia today is approximately 25 percent smaller than the former Soviet Union. In fact, the territory of Russia today is smaller than it has been for centuries under tsars and communists alike. Similarly, its 146 million people in 2001 make Russia the world's sixth most populous country. Still, that is only half the population of the former Soviet Union. Ethnically, this has led to a much more homogeneous Russia. While approximately 20 percent of the population is ethnically non-Russian, that is down from the 50 percent non-Russian population of the Soviet period. At the same time, the Soviet collapse has left 20 million ethnic Russians living outside of the borders of the new Russian state.

In effect, all of these trends reflect the disintegration of the Russian/Soviet empire at the tail end of a long period in world history in which territorial empires have, more generally, gone out of fashion. This loss of empire, as unsettling as it may be in many ways for Russians, may prove crucial to any prospect of Russian integration into the West. Adoption of Western models of liberal democracy would be hard to contemplate very seriously as long as Russia was to attempt to maintain its control over nations chafing under Russian domination. The effort to maintain control over that remnant of the Russian empire that is Chechnya, and the sheer brutality of this effort, is illustrative of the tension between empire, on the one hand, and liberal democracy and human rights, on the other.

Throughout the post-Soviet period, relations between Russia and the West have run hot and cold. In the early 1990s, the West embraced Russia and its president, Boris Yeltsin. The dominant expectation, or, at least, the prevailing hope, in the West was that stripped of communism, Russia could now become a partner, albeit a very junior partner, of the United States and its West European allies. And while not all Russians equally shared in this enthusiasm for membership in the Western club of nations, it is fair to say that for many the West represented the land of milk and honey to which they themselves aspired, and adoption of Western political and economic models was, at least in theory, the goal of many leaders and ordinary Russians alike.

But, as discussed in Chapter 8, transition to a Western-style market economy, and to the prosperity that such an economic transition seemed to promise, was to prove more difficult than had been anticipated by many in both Russia and the West. Similarly, the end of communism did not automatically mean the emergence of a stable, liberal democratic system. As discussed in Chapter 7, the Yeltsin era combined the emergence of democratic institutions such as multiple political parties and competitive elections with political corruption, the rising power of rich oligarchs, and an elected president inclined, in many respects, toward erratic and autocratic behavior.

By the end of the 1990s, increasing disillusionment of the West with Russia and Russia with the West was clearly in evidence. The failure of Russia to make a smoother and swifter transformation seemed to many in the West a confirmation of Toynbee's application to Russia of the line from the Roman poet Horace: "You may throw Nature out with a pitchfork, but she will keep coming back."[18] At the same time, many Russians began to question the combined Westernization efforts of the Gorbachev and Yeltsin regimes. Like critics of Peter the Great some three centuries earlier, these Russians began to articulate their doubts about the blind imitation of Western models, advocating in its place a search for a path to the twenty-first century more attuned to the uniqueness of the Russian experience. Nowhere can this shift in attitudes be better seen than in the views of Russian youth. As discussed in Chapter 9, attracted, in Soviet days, to the "forbidden fruit" that the West represented, Russian youth by the late 1990s have become, at worst, resentful toward the West, and, at best, characterized by what the author of that chapter calls "reasoned ambivalence" toward all things Western.

Indeed, "reasoned ambivalence" seemed, in general, aptly to characterize both Russian attitudes toward the West and Western attitudes toward Russia in the early years of the Putin regime. Vladimir Putin had become acting president of Russia following Yeltsin's New Year's Eve 1999 resignation, and he was then duly elected in a March 2000 popular vote. His concern with restoring order after a decade of post-communist chaos was interpreted by many in the West as a potential threat to the very promise of democracy, and, more broadly, to the promise of Westernization of Russia after communism. At the same time, Putin's support of the U.S. war on terrorism, and his own frequent insistence that Russia's future is bound to that of his Western neighbors, provides the basis for a more sober assessment of Russia's relationship to the West that steers a middle road between the naive early 1990s expectation of complete embrace and the flat rejectionism of the latter part of the decade.

Only a little more than a decade after the Soviet collapse, post-communist Russia is still a work in the making. In a twenty-first century world that

appears in such a state of flux, the future appears harder than ever to predict. But the assumption of this volume is that clues to the future might be found in a close examination of both the past and the present. Any attempt to answer the question of whether or not Russia in the twenty-first century will be an unambiguous part of the political, economic, and cultural West can be attempted only based on an understanding of how the relationship between Russia and the West has taken shape and evolved over the course of the centuries. The answer to that question will be of crucial importance for Russia, for the West, and for the world as a whole.

Study Questions

1. What is the relationship between the concepts of "culture" and "civilization?"
2. What is "Western civilization?"
3. Based on the brief history provided in this chapter, point to characteristics of Russia or episodes in its history that seem to separate it from the West. Point to other characteristics or episodes that seem to bind it to the West.
4. Why is the question of whether or not Russia is a part of the West an important question? What are the practical consequences of the answer to that question?

Key Terms

Civilization
Culture
Mongols
Rus

Suggested Reading

Gress, David. *From Plato to NATO: The Idea of the West and Its Opponent*. New York: Free Press, 1998.
An extended discussion of the meaning of "the West" and of "Western civilization."

Huntington, Samuel P. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996.
An examination of the role of cultural and civilizational differences in the post–Cold War world.

Milner-Gulland, Robin, and Nikolai Dejevsky. *Cultural Atlas of Russia and the Former Soviet Union*. New York: Checkmark Books, 1998.
A useful survey and reference work on Russian history and culture, with many helpful maps and color photos.

Notes

1. Mikhail Gorbachev, *Perestroika: New Thinking for Our Country and the World* (New York: Harper and Row, 1987), 191.
2. Ibid., 180.
3. Arnold J. Toynbee, *Civilization on Trial* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1948), 166.
4. Milan Kundera, "The Tragedy of Central Europe," *New York Review of Books* 31, no. 7 (April 26, 1984), 37.
5. See Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996).
6. *Oxford English Dictionary*, online edition, Oxford University Press, dictionary.oed.com.
7. Ibid.
8. Huntington, *Clash of Civilizations*, 43.
9. Ibid., 45–47.
10. Norman Davies, *Europe: A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 22–25.
11. Ibid., 25.
12. David Gress, *From Plato to NATO: The Idea of the West and Its Opponents* (New York: Free Press, 1998), 22.
13. Huntington, *Clash of Civilizations*, 69–72.
14. Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992).
15. Kundera, "The Tragedy of Central Europe," 33.
16. Ibid., 34.
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18. Toynbee, *Civilization on Trial*, 164.

I

Historical and Cultural Foundations

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The Russian Idea and the West

Philip T. Grier

The sudden collapse of the Soviet Union in December 1991 confronted those who lived through it with a particularly intense version of the question of the meaning of their history. For nearly seven decades the Soviet Union had portrayed itself as the "Fatherland of Socialism," meaning, according to Soviet ideology, the first country to undertake the building of communism, thereby leading the whole of humanity into the final phase, the culmination, of all of human history. The Soviet population had been called upon decade after decade by the Communist Party to endure suffering and sacrifice on a staggering scale. Each time these deaths and sacrifices were justified by the claim that the Soviet people were fulfilling the highest possible historical mission, a mission for the sake of all humanity. According to Marxist-Leninist theory, the eventual triumph of communism over capitalism was inevitable, and thus the Soviet people could be assured that their enormous sacrifices would never prove to be in vain. Thus, when the Soviet Union quite unexpectedly collapsed, almost overnight, the question of the meaning of all those sacrifices and that suffering, stretching over three generations of Soviet experience, could scarcely be avoided.

Was anything of enduring value achieved? Or was the history of the Soviet Union to be understood as predominantly one of appalling loss, of wasted lives, of tragedies suffered with no redeeming purpose? In the immediate aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union, a fateful phrase taken from the nineteenth-century Russian thinker Pyotr Chaadaev reverberated in many minds: "Perhaps we exist only to teach some great lesson to the world."[1] Perhaps the ultimate historical lesson of the Soviet period, and therefore of Russian history in general, was simply that the utopian dream of building communism was necessarily destined to terminate in catastrophe.

Faced with such an urgent moral question, it seems impossible for contemporary Russians to ignore the problem of the significance of the Soviet period for the nature of Russian identity. Can any continuity be discerned between *pre*-Soviet and *post*-Soviet Russian culture? Or was the older Russian culture entirely destroyed by a brutal discontinuity originating in the Revolution? To

what extent can the categories and values of a previous Russian culture sustain the lives of post-Soviet Russians in the twenty-first century? Can a persisting Russian national identity be found? This issue of the contemporary nature of Russian national identity has been experienced as an acute problem in recent years. President Yeltsin announced an official campaign in 1996 to formulate a new "National Idea" for Russia to replace the discredited Soviet ideology by which the nation had lived for most of the century. The general confusion was reflected in continuing debates over symbols such as the national flag, seal, and anthem. After much controversy, President Putin, through the Duma, instituted a compromise in December 2000. The Russian tricolor flag and the double-headed eagle of the tsars were made official. The music for the old Soviet national anthem was reintroduced as the current Russian national anthem, with modified lyrics, but as of the winter Olympics in 2002 the new lyrics seemed not to have caught on, so Russian winning contestants standing on the medal podium could only hum the "new" national anthem. These are merely symbolic indications of a continuing crisis of contemporary Russian national identity.

Russian Identity and the Meaning of Russian History

But how does one come to an understanding of "national identity" in the first place? What is the connection between personal identity and national identity? What is the basis for talking about "the Russian Idea" or "the meaning of Russian history?" How are these ideas related to discussions about "the meaning of history" in general? All of these terms have figured prominently in a tradition of discourse and controversy that has characterized Russian intellectual life for two or three centuries. The fundamental issues in that debate can be framed briefly in the following way.

Questions about the "meaning" of history originate in the very basic question "Who am I?" None of us can get very far into childhood, much less adulthood, without beginning to wonder about our personal identity as individuals. We compare and contrast ourselves with our friends to gain some sense of that identity. We identify with our families, and compare and contrast our families with other families to gain a further sense of that identity. Depending where we live, we might identify with a clan or a tribe, and derive a substantial element of our sense of ourselves from that identification, or, less explicitly, we may identify ourselves with the population of a certain geographical region or an ethnic grouping. We may further identify with a distinctive religious tradition, so we compare and contrast our religious tradition with others to gain a still stronger sense of our own personal identity. Each of us is likely to identify ourselves in part with various intermediate

social institutions such as a profession, a corporation, a bureau, or some socially recognized activity. Finally, in much of the world, we may also gain an overarching sense of our identity from seeing ourselves as members of a particular *nation*. This leads us to compare and contrast our nation with other nations in order to deepen our understanding of that identity.

In the contemporary world, the experience of conflict among various components of identity in one and the same person are not at all uncommon. It is also clear that individuals often differ in investing the largest share of their sense of themselves in different components of such a complex overall structure of identity. However, one of the enduring and important components of personal identity over at least the past three centuries for a significant portion of the global population has been the nation. When one's national identity is held to be a precious and a major element of one's personal identity, the question naturally arises: What is the special significance of *my* nation and its existence in the world?

A question such as this is normally answered by looking to the history of one's own nation, its particular accomplishments, challenges overcome, triumphs, and reverses. We contemplate the achievements of the state and its political and military leaders, the stature of its religious prophets (if any should be identified with the history of the nation), and the accomplishments of its individual citizens in every area of human endeavor. All of these events can be regarded dispassionately, with the objective eye of an historian. But where the motive for such a consideration of one's national history is *patriotism*, or the inculcation of national identity, elements of the national "history" may be given an exaggerated significance, even inflated to the dimensions of myth. (It is this latter sense of "history," and not the more neutral and dispassionate narratives of professional historians, that is usually incorporated into the early years of the national educational curriculum, precisely for the purpose of building a sense of national identity and patriotism in the next generation.)

If one is seeking to understand, or even glorify, the history of one's own nation, then it is also normal to try to place that history into the larger context of the history of the world as a whole, or at least the history of one's own part of the globe, and to focus on the role that one's own nation has played in that larger story. It can be very satisfying to the individual's sense of importance to see his or her own nation as having played a special or significant role in the formation of the contemporary world, or as presently playing some vital role in it.

But to ask what role one's own nation has played in the history of the world raises one of the broadest questions that can be asked about human history itself: Does the history of the world as a whole reveal any meaningful overall pattern or direction of events? More loosely, does history have a *meaning*?