

## Toward a New Russian Federation

Recent changes in the Soviet Union have been nothing short of revolutionary. Almost as startling was how little scholars or journalists were prepared for them. Partly to blame was their "Copernican" approach to Soviet politics, a tendency, says Nicolai Petro, to look only at the top leadership. To understand the Soviet Union today, he argues, it is necessary to consider popular politics and the nation's emerging civil society. A new national consensus, based on traditional Russian values, may well provide the foundation for a future non-Soviet federation.

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*by Nicolai N. Petro*

In just five years, much to the astonishment of professional Sovietologists, the Soviet Union has gone from being the world's most menacing superpower to a weak agglomeration of states uncertain of its very future. Why were most Moscow-watchers so ill-prepared for this dramatic transformation? The fault lies partly in what may be called their "Copernican" view of the Soviet Union, a view which has dominated the field since the 1960s. According to Copernican Sovietology, all political life revolves around the sun, and the sun most recently has been Mikhail Gorbachev. Copernican analysts tend to view the rest of society—at least everybody below the top Party leadership—as bit players, seemingly content to play out secondary roles in a well-worn script.

Such a perspective, as Moshe Lewin noted in *The Gorbachev Phenomenon* (1988), led to rather bizarre ideas about Soviet political reality: "A political system without a social one, a state floating over

everything else, over history itself. Such a state submitted only to its own laws, was explainable in its own terms. . . . [W]hile change was posited as possible, it was conceived of as small variations within the unalterable framework: that such a state could undergo serious reform seemed unthinkable."

Most Copernicans also believed in a fundamental continuity between Russian and Soviet political culture. Scholars like Adam Ulam, Stephen Cohen, Robert V. Daniels, and the late Cyril Black argued that specifically Russian values lent support and stability to the regime. Identifying the ruled with the rulers, they saw little possibility of change coming from below. Harvard's Timothy Colton, in *The Dilemma of Reform in the Soviet Union* (1986), predicted that there would be no serious challenges to the regime's legitimacy for at least another decade because it was so firmly "moored in familiarity, past successes, and Russian nationalism."

It is not easy to escape Copernican

thinking. Even today, the fate of reform in the Soviet Union is tied almost exclusively to the fate of Gorbachev. There are good reasons for this. Gorbachev is the prime instigator of perestroika and, as such, deserves enormous credit for initiating change at the top of the political pyramid. But after giving Gorbachev his due, we must look beyond him. After all, Gorbachev's initial vision of perestroika was limited to a program of economic restructuring; glasnost was merely a convenient tool for breaking the resistance of recalcitrant factory managers. Public pressure forced him repeatedly to revise and expand his agenda.

During the past five years, in fact, Gorbachev found himself presiding over an expanding civil society with its own ideas about reform and openness, and with its own ideas about what the greater Russian federation should be. More than 60,000 informal social and political groups have sprung up around the country; at the same time, assorted non-political groups concerned with ecological or historical preservation have increasingly been adopting their own political platforms and asserting themselves in areas where the Party is losing influence. This embryonic civil society has its own independent information outlets—more than 700 non-official publications in the Russian language alone. These groups, these movements, and these publications are now the driving force behind perestroika.

To understand what is going on in the Soviet Union, we need to develop a more "Newtonian" approach that takes into consideration not only the constituent parts of Soviet society but also culture, particularly literature, folk traditions, and religion. Only by looking at society and culture can we begin to comprehend the frustrations and aspirations of Soviet citi-



*Drawing 200,000 marchers, a Moscow demonstration organized by the Democratic Russia coalition last February included scores of nationalist organizations, from monarchists to social democrats.*

zens who are rejecting communism and turning ever more insistently to traditional Russian values as a desirable foundation for a future Russian federation.

To be sure, ethnic Russians make up only half the population of the Soviet Union—a vast federation consisting of about 50 political units (including peoples with republic status, peoples with autonomous republic status, and peoples with autonomous region status). Nevertheless, Russian language and culture, or at least what historian Hugh Seton-Watson called a "mutilated" version of the latter, form the core of the Soviet federation. It is no coincidence that leaders of reform are often figures of cultural authority—writers, artists, editors—or, more to the point, that many of the more popular USSR People's Deputies, including actor Mark Zakharov and Academicians Dmitry Likhachev and Sergei Averintsev, have made traditional Russian values the centerpiece of their political proposals.

The questions of Russian cultural identity and Russian nationalism are matters of importance not only to Russians. If there is to be a nonviolent evolution toward greater autonomy for the Baltic, Central Asian, and other peoples, then the core of

the Soviet Union—the “vast Slavic territory of Russia, Byelorussia, the eastern Ukraine, and northern Kazakhstan,” as political scientist Martha Brill Olcott defined that core—must be confident of its cultural and national identity. Even Baltic independence leaders such as Virgilius Chepaitis and Lagle Park say that a healthy Russian nationalism should be encouraged.

To understand what Russians are striving to restore, one must first understand what they have lost. They have lost their history. Vladlen Sirotkin, a professor at the foreign ministry’s diplomatic academy, is not alone in deploring the “nihilistic attitude toward the country’s past” that has prevailed since the 1920s. At the end of that violently transformative decade, the doyen of Marxist historians, Mikhail Pokrovsky, declared that the very concept of “Russian history” was anti-revolutionary. Russia’s religious heritage has been nearly destroyed: As many as 95 percent of the country’s churches may have been demolished. Perhaps most devastating of all, Russia’s national patrimony—a rich and vibrant peasant culture with all its traditions, crafts, legends, songs, and proverbs—was nearly extinguished by the forced collectivization that took the lives of millions during the 1930s. Historian Ksenia Mialo aptly compared Stalin’s rural collectivization drive to the extermination of Inca civilization by the conquistadors.

The first openly to lament the destruction of peasant life, and thus to restore these events to the national memory, were the so-called “village prose writers.” Novels such as Valentin Ovechkin’s *A Difficult Spring* (1956), Efim Dorosh’s *Village Diaries* (1958), and later Vasily Belov’s *That’s How Things Are* (1966) and Valentin Rasputin’s *Mark You This* (1974) depicted the costs of precipitous industrialization and the uprooting of an entire way of life. The tremendous popularity of the village prose writers during the Brezhnev era (1964–82)

owed largely to their championing authentic Russian values. Maurice Friedberg identified the best of these values as “hatred of war; an affirmation of Russian ethnic identity, nostalgia for a pastoral Russian past, a desire for a measure of privacy protected from state interference, a need for personal ethics, and a sense of compassion . . . .” As social critics appealing to Russian traditions and eternal human values, the village prose writers saw themselves, often correctly, as working in the tradition of the great 19th-century Russian writers such as Turgenev, Dostoyevsky, Tolstoy, Gogol, and Goncharov.

Their main concerns centered on the preservation of villages, religion, historical monuments, and the environment. Although they organized no political parties, their work aligned them with other individuals opposed to the policies of the regime. A notable example was the decade-long campaign waged by writers, scientists, historians, artists, and journalists to reverse the government’s decision to divert major northern rivers into the country’s arid south. Arguing that such an undertaking would destroy much of the northern Russian heartland, this spontaneous coalition eventually forced the government to shelve the project in 1987.

Such informal associations to preserve Russia’s environment and its historical and religious monuments grew more common during the 1980s. Yet it was not until Gorbachev and glasnost that cautious supplication yielded to an active search for alternative Russian values and for more open ways of expressing them.

Many in the West view the re-emergence of Russian national self-awareness with justifiable concern. While sympathetic to the anguish caused by the Soviet destruction of Russian national heritage, foreign observers worry about the revival of anti-Semitism, imperialism, and anti-Western sentiment. The village writers

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themselves, notably Rasputin and Viktor Astafyev, have frequently been criticized for their anti-Semitism and for their insensitivity to other non-Russian nationalities. The crucial question, however, is whether such sentiments are shared by most Russian nationalists. If so, any future reforms based on Russian national values would clearly be odious to liberals both within the Soviet Union and abroad.

Discussion of anti-Semitism has certainly increased under glasnost. In such prominent literary journals as *Molodaya Gvardiya* (*The Young Guard*) and *Nash Sovremennik* (*Our Contemporary*), the issue of Jewish participation in the Russian Revolution and in the subsequent Party leadership has become virtually an editorial obsession. When *Nash Sovremennik* published an essay on "Russophobia" by dissident mathematician Igor Shafarevich, it brought the issue to a head.

Shafarevich, a friend of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, based much of his provocative essay on the ideas of Augustin Cochin, a 19th-century French historian who had argued that revolutions were caused by alienated "little nations" within the "larger nation." Just as Cochin blamed the French revolution on anti-national, self-contained groups like the Masons, so Shafarevich attributed the distinctive character of the Russian Revolution to the "Jewish element." Little matter that relatively few of the revolutionary leaders, and even fewer of the later Soviet leaders, were Jewish—or that the most famous, Trotsky, was exiled from Russia. Shafarevich got around such empirical deficiencies by claiming that the "Jewish element" meant not so much individual Jews as an iconoclastic Jewish spirit which had infected traditional Russia. Anticipating his critics, moreover, Shafarevich denounced as "Russophobes" all those who tarnish Russian nationalism by equating it with a resurgence of anti-Semitism. Nevertheless, it is hard to read his article and think that those who see such an equation are completely wrong.

What about the resurgence of imperialist chauvinism? Here again, one finds several nationalist groups, including the Association of Russian Artisans and Fatherland, that want the empire held together at any

cost. In general, though, most nationalist groups believe that such unity is to be achieved not by force of arms but by establishing a new common bond—resting on vague, rather romanticized notions of common historical ties—among the various ethnic groups in the country. While all Russian nationalists pay lip-service to the principle of self-determination, some seem noticeably hesitant about implementing it. As more Soviet nationalities opt for secession, the distinction between those who support freedom over empire and those who do not will emerge.

A third concern is that Russian nation-



*Many nationalists romanticize the village life and ideals of Old Russia. They consider greater local autonomy the only road to democracy.*

alism is anti-democratic and anti-liberal and thus poses a threat to the ascendancy of Western values. As it turns out, there are some Russian nationalists who oppose the introduction of free markets and a multi-party system on the grounds that they are not Russian. Many others fear more simply that at present such moves would produce greater anarchy and turmoil. While the former are anti-Western, the latter are looking for reassurance that a realistic alternative to anarchy exists, that political forces outside the Party can prevent chaos and even bloodshed.

Acknowledging the dark side of the

Russian national revival, one must at the same time avoid blurring some important distinctions, a mistake that would be as serious as confusing the conservatism of a William Buckley or a George Will with the reactionary racism of the Ku Klux Klan. Indeed, the failure to distinguish between chauvinism and patriotism feeds the counter-accusation of "Russophobia." Russophobes, Shafarevich charges, fear a strong and nationally healthy Russia; they would rather see the country destroyed by communist rule or dismembered by national tensions before they would countenance any Russian national revival.

The debate over Russia's national revival is sensitive precisely because it touches so directly on the character and historical prospects of the Russian people. The polemic in the Soviet press over the recent publication of excerpts of Vasily Grossman's novel *Life and Fate* (published abroad in 1980) goes to the heart of the quarrel: Who should be blamed for the dismal failure of the Soviet Union? Socialist ideology, say the Russian nationalists. The backward economic and political traditions of Russia, say the radical reformers. The reformers read *Life and Fate* as an exposé of the crimes of Stalinist collectivization and the corruption of Lenin's idealism. But conservative nationalists are offended by the novel's depiction of Lenin as a well-intentioned liberal intellectual whose progressive impulses were thwarted by "Russia's thousand-year tradition of slavery." They were incensed that Soviet historian G. Vodolazov, in his preface to the novel, absolved Lenin of any blame for the events leading to Stalin's dictatorship. Wrote Vodolazov: "I believe that people who wish to assist humanity's progress should not be thinking about how to 'replay' October and Leninism, but about how to 'replay' the years 1929 and 1937, relying on the values of October and Leninism."

People like Grossman and Vodolazov follow in the footsteps of 19th-century Westernizers such as Alexander Herzen and Nikolai Chernychevsky. Although they reject the current political system, they are attracted to Western-style socialism. In the Soviet Union today they are known as "radical Westernizers," or "radical reform-

ers," or "left radicals."

Many others charge that socialism—by which they mean communism—is itself largely to blame for the country's current crisis. Socialism, they claim, infected the Russian intelligentsia with disdain for all that was traditionally Russian. What is needed today, they argue, is to cast aside the present value system and to pick up what Ksenia Mialo calls "the broken thread to the past." Sharing many philosophical assumptions of the early 19th-century Slavophiles such as Ivan Aksakov and Yuri Samarin, these people today are variously referred to as "Russites," *vozhzdentsy* (revivalists), "Russophiles," or "the Russian Party."

The philosophical differences between radicals and restorationists lead, as might be expected, to significant practical differences. Radicals tend to want a rapid introduction of free markets, while restorationists usually stress social guarantees. Radicals view the secession of republics as a step toward a healthy decentralization, while restorationists are fearful of the costs of fragmenting the empire. Radicals at times seem almost eager to dismantle the Soviet military; restorationists are concerned about security and foreign policy.

But these differences should not obscure the fact that both groups have learned to compromise and work together on key Soviet reform legislation. In the Supreme Soviet last year, they came together to repeal the electoral provisions that guaranteed a certain percentage of seats to the Communist Party; together, they are pushing for a new law on the freedom of the press that goes far beyond Gorbachev's proposed version of the law. On at least seven other occasions, radicals and conservatives working together have rejected Gorbachev-proposed legislation as too restrictive.

Both sides acknowledge that they need each other to promote changes in the system. The progressive deputy-mayor of Moscow, Sergei Stankevich, in a speech to the Supreme Soviet last fall, commented on how essential conservatism was to providing a balance of ideas in the new parliament. Likewise, Anatoly Salutsky, the arch-conservative commentator for *Literatur-*

*naya Rossiya (Literary Russia)*, has argued that today's Slavophiles and Westernizers are not opposing forces but complementary wings of a movement that is shaping a new Russian national consensus.

There is much about this new consensus that should be appealing to the West. Both radicals and restorationists share a belief in the rule of law, in a national revival based on Russian patriotic sentiment, and in an educational system resting not on ideological slogans but on a critical understanding of Russian and foreign history. Supporters of the consensus are likely to be wary of any foreign adventures that would further bleed the country. They are already skeptical of the value to Russia of many non-Slavic areas of the Soviet Union. In a remarkable public letter published this year, three prominent nationalist organizations warned that if tranquility did not return soon to the Caucasus, they would launch a campaign to remove Russian servicemen from the region. The reluctance of conservatives to use troops echoes earlier appeals by liberals not to use force to keep regions like Lithuania in the Soviet Union.

The new Russian consensus is not without historical precedent. A strand of turn-of-the-century Russian thought—represented by the religious philosophers Nikolai Berdyaev and Semyon Frank and the political economist Peter Struve—combined many of the same disparate elements. Although the earlier thinkers were, as the late Leonard Schapiro pointed out, “first and foremost nationalists and patriots,” they “stood midway between Slavophiles and Westernizers. They accepted the Slavophile veneration of Russian national tradition, while rejecting their romantic idealization of innate Russian virtues as a substitute for the more usual civic virtues.” For these people Schapiro employed the oxymoron “liberal conservative”—an epithet first used to describe Russia's most famous poet, Aleksander Pushkin. It applies equally well to many of the radicals and nationalists of today.

The liberal conservative consensus has found organizational expression in the more than 40 political groups active throughout the Russian federation. This

broad spectrum of political opinion should not be confused with the factions that have developed within the Party itself, even though certain ideas are shared across the non-Party-Party divide. Party factionalists, whether reformers like the historian Roy Medvedev or conservatives like Egor Ligachev, still insist that the Communist Party remain the guiding force in Soviet society.

The Party, however, is rapidly losing its credibility. Over 10 million young people have abandoned the Communist Youth League since 1985. After local elections this past March, Party members were, for the first time in Soviet history, a minority among people's deputies elected to Russia's supreme legislative body. In large Russian cities like Moscow and Leningrad, Communists have relinquished power to the democratic opposition.

The establishment of pluralistic politics in rural Russian areas has been much slower. Nevertheless, Russia's political evolution seems clearly foreshadowed in the experiences of Eastern Europe and the Baltic States. And as in Eastern Europe, the new political parties, rather than the discredited remnants of the Communist Party, are likely to guide the country's future. Most of these parties fall into political categories analogous to those on the rest of the European continent.

- *The Social Democrats.* During the first days of perestroika, reformist intellectuals organized discussion clubs. A number of their political leaders—Yuri Afanasyev, Gavril Popov, Sergei Stankevich, the late Andrei Sakharov—eventually “graduated” to the influential Moscow Rostrum and the leadership of the Interregional Deputies Group in the USSR Supreme Soviet. The social-democratic groups see themselves as standing for a humanistic renewal of socialist values. They support the introduction of Western constitutional guarantees as well as radical economic reform, but they are rightly concerned about the extent of popular support for radical change. Even so, the social-democrat orientation appears to be the most active in Russian politics today, both within the Communist Party and as a separate party itself, the Social-Democratic Association. In recent local elections, social-demo-

cratic candidates won a majority of seats in over 20 large Russian cities, including Moscow, Leningrad, Gorky, and Sverdlovsk.

- *The Conservatives.* Last fall a number of the conservative groups moved beyond their strictly cultural preoccupations to form a political organization—the Bloc of Russian Public-Patriotic Movements—in order to counter the growing popularity of the social democrats. Before that, conservatives had been as reluctant to enter politics as social democrats had been to appeal to Russian patriotic sentiment. Both have abandoned their reluctance.

Most conservatives, rejecting Marxism-Leninism, see Russian patriotism and religion as the only alternative to decay. They are united by five common assumptions: the need for a moral and religious revival; skepticism about Western intellectual imports such as capitalism, pop culture, and especially Marxism; fear of unconstrained market competition and “windfall profits” (some, like Mikhail Antonov, propose a Japanese model, with the economy more closely attuned to native cultural traditions); the need to return land to the peasantry; and belief in the nobility of military service. But conservatives differ widely on how to resolve Russia’s current problems. Some recommend radical decentralization and even Russia’s secession from the Soviet Union; others see a strong centralized authority as the only thing preventing the country’s collapse.

The conservatives have not done well at the polls. In direct confrontations with social democrats in last March’s local elections, they were easily defeated. (Only 16 out of 65 conservative candidates in Moscow even made it to the run-off elections.) Their prospects are hampered by a lack of clarity about how to achieve a Russian revival, by a contradictory economic and political platform, and by ambivalent attitudes toward the Party’s monopoly on power. In the not-too-distant future, conservatives are likely to split over the central political issue of the day: whether the Party is still a viable political force or simply a burden to the country. Those who support the Communist Party are likely to join forces with reactionaries within the Party such as Nina Andreyev and Egor

Ligachev. Those who abandon the Party are likely to edge closer to the views of the Christian democrats.

- *The Christian Democrats.* Christian democrats are found in the middle of the political spectrum. Like the conservatives, they reject Marxism-Leninism and believe that Russian patriotism can contribute to promoting reform. But like the social democrats, their program includes an insistence upon the rule of law, a clear separation of church and state, and privatization of markets. Christian democrats, however, stress that all politics needs a firm moral foundation. Many of the Russian religious philosophers that they turn to, including Semyon Frank, Nikolai Berdyaev, and Father Sergei Bulgakov, had themselves been Marxists in their youth but later abandoned Marxism in favor of democracy and religion.

Christian democracy has no political precedent in pre-revolutionary Russia, but it is quickly finding a following. Three members of the newly elected Russian Supreme Soviet—among them noted human-rights activist Father Gleb Yakunin—recently joined the Russian Christian Democratic Movement. As André Louis, secretary-general of the Christian Democratic International, recently observed, “In the long run, I think Christian Democracy has its best opportunity in the Soviet Union. Christian Democrats there have come to political life out of religious conviction. In searching for a more fraternal and useful religion, they come to recognize the need for political activity.” The movement’s uncompromising rejection of communist ideology may be the best guarantee of its future success.

- *Extremist groups.* A number of small but vocal chauvinistic groups—Pamyat (Memory), Vityazi (Heroes), and Patrioty (Patriots)—go far beyond professing concern for Russia’s revival and openly accuse “dark forces” and “foreign elements” of engaging in a conspiracy to destroy Russia. They typically identify these forces as people of Jewish origin and those who do their bidding.

Extremists of both the left and the right often form strange and paradoxical alliances. In Leningrad, Pamyat groups have received open help from two district Party

organizations. In a recent interview, Elena Bonner, wife of the late Andrei Sakharov, noted that the Leningrad KGB was protecting and promoting Pamyat.

Western concern about these groups stems from the fear that they may eventually have a decisive influence on national policy. Many of these organizations are actively seeking allies among disgruntled soldiers, workers, and Russian minorities in the outlying republics. In the event of a weakened and demoralized Soviet state—a “Weimar Russia”—such groups might seize power, unleashing a campaign against minorities (particularly Jews) and threatening military aggression abroad.

Such a turn of events is possible but highly unlikely. First of all, in the aftermath of the Afghan war, foreign military adventures have no popular constituency. We are witnessing in the Soviet Union today perhaps the most widespread peacetime rejection of military service in the 20th century. Not only are individuals in many parts of the country refusing to serve; a number of the country's leading universities are no longer offering the required courses in military indoctrination. Furthermore, given the country's dire economic straits, it would be almost impossible to mobilize support for a war—absent the immediate threat of foreign invasion.

For all the attention it receives in the Western and Soviet media, Pamyat has never attracted more than a few hundred people to its rallies (compared to nearly 200,000 for Democratic Russia rallies in Moscow this past February). It has failed to elect a single candidate to public office, ei-

ther in national or local elections. In Moscow, the Pamyat candidate, Tamara Ponamareva, received five percent of the votes for, and 86.5 percent of the votes against, her candidacy.

Moreover, public opinion surveys report that the overwhelming majority of the population favors continued glasnost, despite doubts about the economic success of perestroika. And there is still reported to be strong support for expanding friendly contacts with the West. In one recent survey, for example, the only ministry

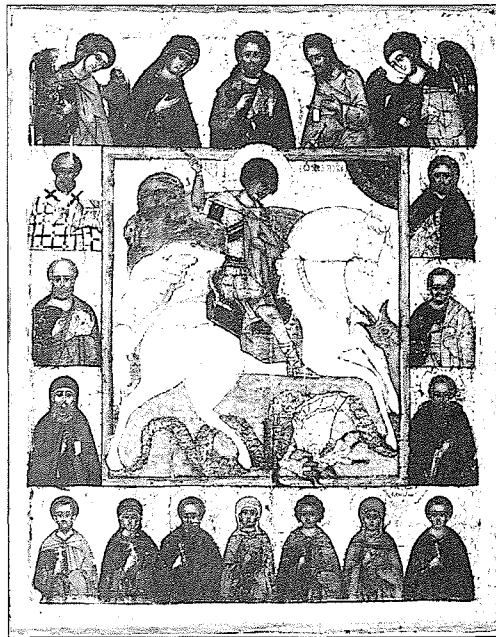
to get a favorable rating was the ministry of foreign affairs, presumably because of its role in fostering better relations with the West.

Thus while there are dangers associated with the emerging Russian national consensus, notably authoritarianism and intolerance, there are good reasons for thinking that the Soviet Union has what S. Frederick Starr calls “a usable past.” Starr and other scholars—including James Billington, John Dunlop, Geoffrey Hosking, and Helen Carrere D'Encausse—have all pointed to the resurgence of interest in Russia's pre-revolu-

tionary classical liberal heritage. It is a fragile flower in Russian history, they all acknowledge, but it exists.

The question is how to cultivate it in the present. The weakness of the Russian liberals in the past, according to émigré historian Nicholas Zernov, was their indifference to the more conservative traditions of the populace. This led first to their isolation, then to disillusion with liberalism, and finally to a fatal attraction to radicalism.

Today, however, particularly in the po-



*An early 16th-century icon of St. George, surrounded by various other saints. Images of St. George, the patron saint of Russia, are popular among contemporary nationalists.*



litical arena, radicals and restorationists are consciously striving to build bridges, to wed the best elements of Western universalism and Russian particularism, rule of law and healthy patriotism. Their efforts embody Dostoyevsky's insistence that to "become a true Russian" means "to become a brother of all men, a *universal* man." The Democratic Russia coalition of People's Deputies is the most promising fruit of their labors. With over one-third of People's Deputies in the next Russian Supreme Soviet under its banner, the Democratic Russia coalition is likely to play a key role in the passage of legislation in the republic's supreme governing body.

The recent election of coalition leader Boris Yeltsin to the chairmanship of the Russian Supreme Soviet will only increase that likelihood. Yeltsin himself exemplifies the spirit of liberal conservatism: He champions the social-democratic agenda and greater independence for the republics while calling for the restoration of religious and other traditional Russian values. The Russian national consensus is also beginning to build momentum at the local level. There we are witnessing efforts to restore land tenure to peasants, to bring back pre-revolutionary symbols and place names, and to promote a more prominent role for religious organizations. With the election of local governments oriented toward radical economic reforms, the search for political alternatives is likely to proceed even more rapidly than before.

The thorniest issue facing supporters of the new national consensus is the question of other Soviet nationalities. Apart from the Slavic majority of Russians, Byelorussians, and Ukrainians, there are 19 other major nationalities and scores of smaller national and ethnic groups. How will the minorities abide an explicitly Russian federation? History provides a possible answer. During the 19th century, the word *rossiiskoe* (which suggests the broad multi-ethnic Russian national state) was as commonly used as the narrower term *russkoe*

(meaning only ethnic Russians), a distinction roughly analogous to the difference between British and English. Today, a number of Russian political organizations are using *rossiiskoe* to broaden their appeal. But they will succeed only if their inclusiveness is backed up with real assurances: of mutually beneficial economic ties between the center and periphery; of full cultural and religious freedoms for all nationalities; and of the right of any people to independence. Treated fairly, non-Russian peoples will have good reasons for remaining within the federation, including a shared defense burden and a huge, established outlet for manufactured goods. It is worth remembering that Russians made up only half of the population of the empire during the 19th century; yet for most of that century—until restrictive nationalities policies were imposed by Tsars Alexander III and Nicholas II—ethnic frictions were minimal.

At its best, then, the emerging Russian consensus is one that both Western liberals and conservatives can be comfortable with. It promotes decentralization, political accountability, domestic tranquility, and international retrenchment. It is also an ideal that Russians themselves find increasingly attractive, preferring it to either the restoration of communism or the vagaries of Gorbachev's perestroika. Surveys by the Center for Public Opinion Study show that while three-quarters of ethnic Russians believe that "relying on their national roots" is an important consideration for Russia's salvation, a mere 14 percent now expect government to solve their problems. Nearly a third feel that they "must at last become free people and make the state serve [their] interests."

The combination of economic necessity and national revival is a powerful prod to the development of a healthy national self-conception. The best traditions of Russia's pre-revolutionary past may hold the key to Russia's post-revolutionary future.