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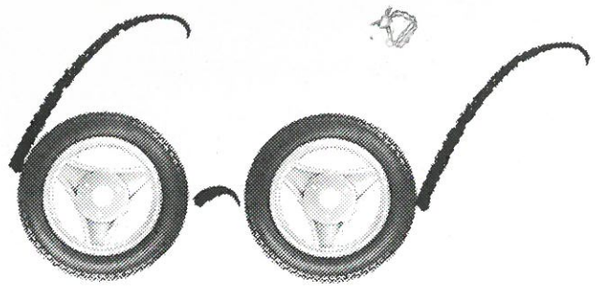

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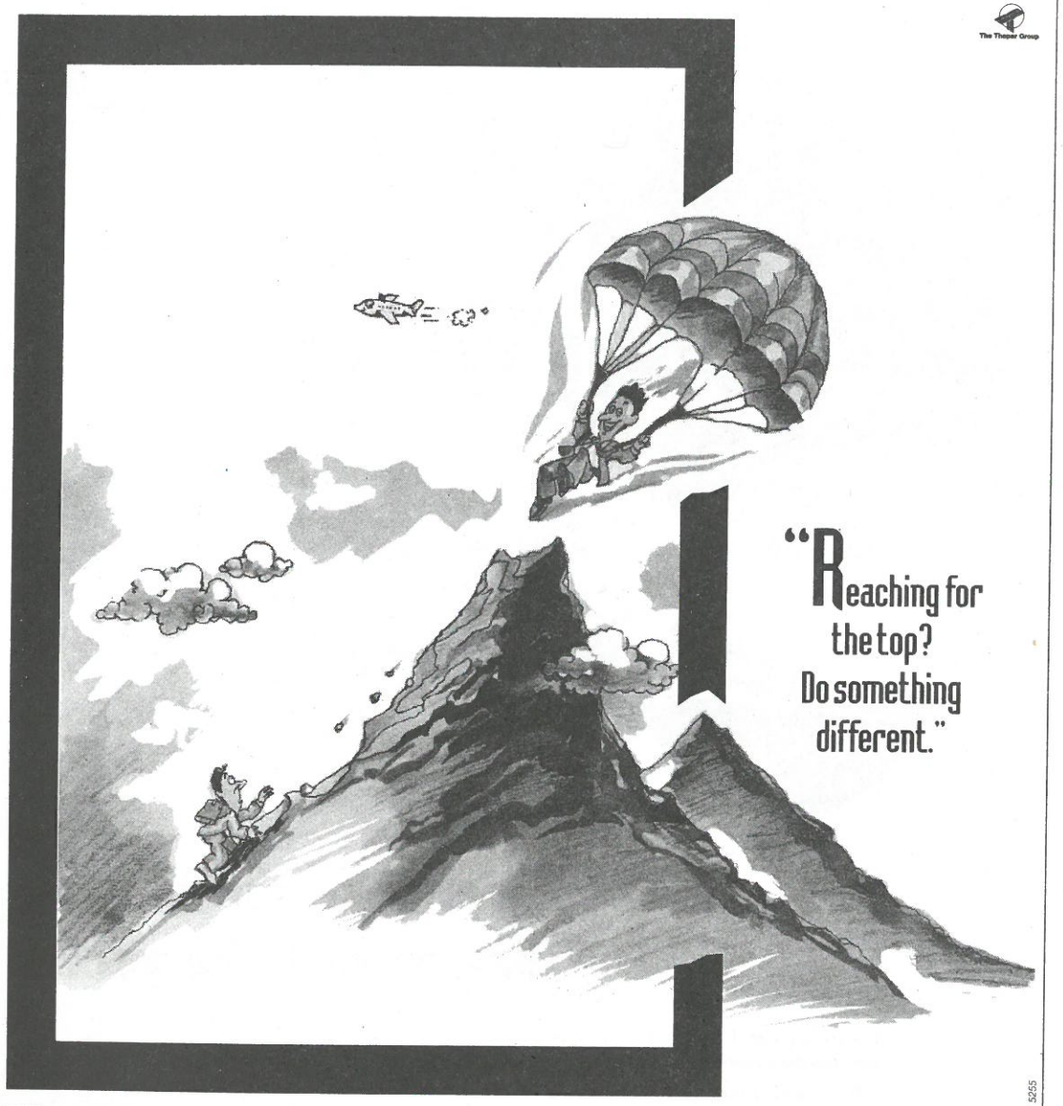

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LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE EDITOR

To mark the centenary of Zhou Enlai, we are devoting a part of this issue to him — to his personality, his character and his political role inside and outside of China. For this purpose, we invited contributions from people who had known him, or who had worked with him or who had written about him. The result is an interesting mix of views. While all of them praise Zhou's humanity and his remarkable role in international affairs, there appears to exist some doubts regarding his performance in China, whenever it was mired in turbulent crises. It has generally been argued that he avoided standing up to defend his views, and had the unfortunate tendency of going along with the opinions voiced and policies proposed by Mao Zedong, even when he had serious doubts regarding their viability. By adopting what was clearly a prudent attitude, was Zhou being opportunistically realist, or was he weak-kneed — fearful of losing his position as many others did? In the different articles published in this issue, both interpretations have emerged, regarding Zhou's political behaviour in moments of crisis.

The other articles in this issue are: Russia's wrenching shift from a planned to a market economy, India's difficulties in coping with some aspects of its foreign policy, the emergence of the three Asias each of which is mired in serious problems within its region, and the terrible holocaust that marked World War II.

Post-Communist Russia is clearly faced with major difficulties while making the transition to a pluralist, politico-economic system. No one really knows how this new "Russian Revolution" is going to evolve.

India has two major foreign policy problems — the new problem of coping with the economic dimension of its foreign policy, and the predicament of

continuing the process of normalisation with China. The task of effectively mastering the economic dimension has been rendered difficult by the absence of any institutional mechanisms that would facilitate viable linkages between India's economic and political diplomacies; while the goal of accelerated Sino-Indian normalisation has become even more problematic by the unexpected and stunningly defiant Indian decision to take the nuclear option in its military strategy, as evidenced by the five underground explosions carried out in May 1998.

The emergence of Central Asian nations as new international actors has altered the Asian landscape radically. We are now faced with three Asian sub-regions (Central Asia, West Asia and South Asia), each of which is entangled in a serious crisis. All are heavily subjected to global pressures, emanating principally from the Western world. Given the fact that some factors link the three of them, will they be able to construct a non-conflictual triangle of three Asias? It seems very doubtful, since what separates and divides them preponderates over what unites them.

The holocaust of the Jews during World War II has marked the twentieth century. Though there have been other genocides and massacres since then (Cambodia, Rwanda-Burundi, etc), the Western world is clearly very affected by this horrendous tragedy — a tragedy that has been a subject of an endless number of books, the most recent and the most important of which we have included in a review essay in this issue.

May 1998
Geneva

Harish Kapur

POST-COMMUNIST RUSSIA:

PROBLEMS OF TRANSITION

For a variety of reasons, post-Communist Russia's transformation from an authoritarian regime has been more complex than the democratisation process of many other nations. In fact, the democratic transition in Russia has been interrupted, and the country seems to be heading toward a hybrid oligarchy whose future remains uncertain.

ANDREI MELVILLE

There has emerged in recent years two distinct schools of thought regarding what happened in post-Communist Russia. For some its transition from authoritarianism to democracy is a part of one global process — a process of "global democratic revolution". For others, post-communism is a specific phenomenon, and there is no reason to compare it with the process of democratisation in southern Europe and Latin America. In line with this thinking, post-communism is perceived as a "peaceful revolution"— a revolution that is hardly comparable to the other processes of democratisation because of its very specific political and socio-economic tasks.

Indeed, the post-communism of today has many elements that can be understood only with the help of different theoretical models — models that see the present developments as a component of the global democratic wave. It is therefore important that we should try to place the whole question of transition from authoritarianism to democracy in larger theoretical perspective before delving into the specificities of post-Communist Russia.

A THEORETICAL PREAMBLE

The theoretical questions we have to ask are: Why does democratisation begin earlier and proceed more smoothly in some countries than in others? Why do some non-democratic regimes initiate a gradual democratisation themselves, while others resist it until they collapse? In an effort to answer these questions some authors emphasise structural factors (socio-economic and cultural conditions as prerequisites of democracy and democratisation), while others stress procedural factors (the sequence of specific choices) which influence decisions and actions taken by concrete political actors on whom the process of democratisation rests.

Thus, some authors like Almond and Verba, Rustow, Ingelhart and Lipset try to demonstrate correlations between socio-economic and cultural-normative variables and the chances of establishing and preserving democratic regimes in different countries. These correlations are often interpreted as proof of the fact that democratisation is conditioned by objective social structures, rather than by subjective intentions and actions.

According to these authors there are three main structural prerequisites for democracy: first, ensuring national unity and achieving a national identity, second, achieving a sufficiently high level of economic development and third, the spread of specific cultural norms and values that recognise democratic norms, tolerance, trust and civic duty.

The first structural condition — the problems of national unity and identity — should be solved before the process of democratisation can be inaugurated. These problems can often create serious obstacles for democratic transitions. In fact, acute national conflicts which lead to a rise in various forms of nationalism and nationalist movements make democracy practically unachievable.

The second prerequisite — the linkage between democracy and the level of socio-economic development and modernisation of society — is less relevant today than a few decades ago, when the supporters of a structural approach to democratisation formulated the hypothesis that there was a connection between the well-being of a nation and the likelihood of it becoming a democracy. These doubts are both of a theoretical and of an actual character.

Theoretically speaking, is it correct to interpret democracy on the basis of economic determinism — as a rectilinear consequence of certain socio-economic conditions? What is important for democracy is not economic development and the achievement of well-being as such. The vital factor is the creation of socio-economic prerequisites for the development of a strong middle class as the social base of a future democracy. However, this factor alone does not guarantee democracy either.

It is well known that there are non-democratic regimes such as Singapore with a high level of economic development. On the other hand, India with a sufficiently stable democratic order does not belong to the developed countries of the world.

Actual experience also confirms that democracy is not necessarily determined by socio-economic development. It is well known that there are non-democratic regimes such as Singapore with a high level of economic development. On the other hand, India with a sufficiently stable democratic order does not belong to the developed countries of the world. Recent studies show that there is no direct connection between democratisation and the level of economic development. Democracy is not a direct product of economic development and modernisation; it can be initiated in economically underdeveloped societies, even though it has more chances of survival in a modern, developed society.

The third correlation relates to cultural conditions, especially the diffusion of values associated with a "civic culture" and certain religious (notably Protestant and to some extent Catholic), traditions as structural prerequisites of democratisation. Modern democracy certainly originated in Protestant countries, but the diffusion of democratic values in the Catholic world was not a simple matter. (What's more, it has still to be convincingly demonstrated that democracy, in the form presently known to us can take deep root in Orthodox, Muslim or Confucian cultural soil). There is no doubt that norms and values like acceptance of pluralism, tolerance, mutual trust and the recognition of democratic rights and freedoms — together with a relatively high level of economic development and well-being — create a climate which is favourable for democracy. In this sense there is a correlation between democracy on the one hand, and economic development and

political culture on the other. The supporters of a structural approach were quite right to emphasise this.

Nevertheless, the existence of certain correlations is not the same as stating that there are preliminary structural conditions without which it is impossible to initiate democratisation. Firstly, such correlations do not present obligatory prerequisites, but only indicate factors which facilitate or impede democratisation. Secondly, what is considered by some authors to be the prerequisites and conditions of democracy can prove in reality to be the results and consequences of the process of democratisation itself.

Doubts about the universal and substantial nature of the thesis regarding common socio-cultural prerequisites of democracy led to the emergence of another methodological approach to the problems of democratisation in modern transition theories. This approach focuses on endogenous factors of democracy and democratisation — that is, not on prerequisites but on specific processes, procedures and political decisions made by the agents of democratisation themselves. From this point of view the sequence and mutual conditions of specific political decisions and actions, and the tactics which are chosen to initiate and carry out democratisation are more important for its outcome than prerequisites that exist (or do not exist) at that moment in time. The main element of such an approach is to focus upon the interaction of competing elites and the elite's deliberate choices of organisational forms and institutions as parts of a new political set-up in the process of their political bargaining.

This second structural approach applies particularly well to the third wave of democratisation, which is characterised by extreme diversity when it comes to points of departure, political trajectories, agendas of transformation and strategies. We can exemplify this by pointing to varieties of democratisation, from Paraguay and Honduras to Poland and Romania. But is it true that these two approaches — the structural and the procedural — mutually exclude each other, as is generally believed?

There is really no insurmountable contradiction between these two methodological approaches and they may even complement each other. In fact, they deal with different aspects of the same type of phenomena, the phenomena of democratic transition. Theoretically, nothing, impedes a synthesis of the two methodologies, with one of them focusing on structural

factors (even taking into account the above mentioned doubts about the universal nature of these factors) and the other on procedural factors.

It goes without saying that the specific decisions and actions of political actors in many crucial moments determine the course of democracy and of the social transformations connected with the transition. The actors themselves choose their actions, strategies, and tactics, and in this way they also choose the procedures and institutions to be established.

However, the actors who choose their actions and thereby create institutions during a transiton period do so in circumstances which are not created by themselves. In other words, the choice is not absolutely arbitrary. It is determined not only by procedures, that is, by specific political actions, but also by structural factors — above all by the burden of the past, by preceding traditions, and by the broad social context in which it takes place. It is possible to begin crafting a democracy without waiting for the right structural conditions; the preceding traditions and the general context in which a choice is made influence the progress and the results of a democratic transition.

Tradition and context determine how the chosen procedures and the established institutions work to a large extent. Structural factors, by their existence and character, affect formal procedures and institutions. This explains, for example, why in one case elections become a most important institution for the emerging democracy and why, in some other cases, they are used by a new oligarchy as a mechanism of self-preservation. Democracy as an institutionalised uncertainty presupposes, nevertheless, a choice between options which are determined to a great extent. They are determined both by the procedures which are used in the process, and by conditions and traditions already in existence before democratisation started.

It must, however, be admitted that at present even a preliminary theoretical synthesis of these two methodological approaches has not yet been achieved. Such a synthesis would be equally important for the elaboration of an integral theory of contemporary post-communism, the last of which has been described above. To reveal what is general and what is particular in various types of democratic transitions (including those in Russia) can provide additional data necessary in the search for answers to this theoretical challenge.

RUSSIA'S POST-COMMUNIST TRANSFORMATION

Russia's post-communist transformation in many respects stands apart not only from the classical Southern European and Latin American transitions, but also from such transitions in Central and Eastern Europe. The specific distinguishing features of the Russian transition can be grouped into two categories: the first is the general context and the conditions in which the processes of reform and transformation was initiated and developed in the USSR and thereafter in Russia; the second refers to the internal specific features of these processes.

I. THE INTER-RELATED TASK OF POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC REFORMS.

It has become almost trivial to speak about the unprecedented task of carrying out both a democratic transformation of the political system and market economy reforms. Ideally, both the tasks should not only condition one another, but also should mutually support each other; while democratisation facilitates the market, the market creates the economic and social basis of democracy. In classical post-authoritarian transitions the problem concerning the simultaneous development of political and economic reforms does not, strictly speaking arise, because a market economy already exists in some form or the other. In the Soviet Union and then in Russia, these two tasks proved in many respects to create obstacles for each other.

By this we are not suggesting that painful, economic structural transformations, including the *de-etatization* of property, were not on the agenda of other democratic transitions; only that successful political and economic reforms, including those taking place in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, were not carried out simultaneously. Nor were they carried out in China, where economic reforms did not only precede, but actually replaced political reforms.

In successful democratic transitions political democratisation was carried out first, then effective democratic institutions were built and consolidated, and only thereafter came the establishment of an "economic society", that is, a system of social guarantees and mediating institutions between the state and the market. Only after these painful economic transformations were carried out, did political democratisation help to ensure mass support for

democracy during heavy economic reforms, on the one hand, and a social contract, on the other hand was provided to facilitate the economic transition.

Neither of the above patterns occurred in Russia. The building of democratic institutions was impeded. After 1991 the partly disintegrated and partly destroyed state was not restored. The new post-communist regime of Russia tried to make its functions its own. In other words, Yeltsin did not either create democratic political institutions that could have supported the economic reforms, nor did the institutions of state support the market economy and the social security system. Painful economic reforms, that were not accompanied by any social contract and that were not supported socially or politically, fell upon the unprotected population.

Yeltsin did not either create democratic political institutions that could have supported the economic reforms, nor did the institutions of state support the market economy and the social security system.

When analysing this, one ought to go beyond the framework of the market's opposition to the command administrative system; this is mainly for theoretical and comparative reasons, for in none of the countries which underwent successful democratic transitions during the last two decades, did the market economy appear in its pure form — undoubtely a major prerequisite of or a guarantee for democracy. Herein lies the source of one of the fatal errors of the early strategies of Russia's transition, which acted out of the belief that an unconstrained market is enough to provide the economic and social basis needed for political democracy.

A comparative analysis of what actually happened during successful democratic transitions shows that nowhere — neither in Southern Europe and in Latin America, nor in Central and Eastern Europe — did the transition to democracy rely solely on the reconstruction of the classical ideal of the free market under a state functioning as a "night watchman". Contrary to widespread misconception, the logic and actions of successful democratisers were quite opposite: first, there was a radical political transformation (the building of effective institutions of democracy) and then social reforms, which provided some sort of a social safety net and a social basis of support

for democracy, followed only after that by profound structural transformations of the economy (the establishment of a modern, social market).

The ideological opposition of the market to state interventionism does not work when applied to the present situation in Russia either. The former administrative system of economic management, which had already disintegrated by the end of the Gorbachev epoch, was completely crushed through the efforts of the reformers. But at the same time many key administrative levers of influence still continued to exist. The previous economic system thus was broken down before an effective democratic power was created. As a result, there has appeared not so much an economic as a political market (which is semi-criminal at the same time) — a market where bargaining between political and economic clans in key positions, combining power and property, takes place.

These clans do not need free market economy competition. They have adjusted themselves well and have also adjusted the state they privatised to their personal and corporate needs. It is the state, now upheld by shadowy political bargains and by state subsidies, that is needed to preserve the monopoly of and the domination by certain cartels of the economy.

Russian economy and politics, today, are no less merged together than they were in the Soviet epoch. The current economy in Russia is actually a mixed one — although it is dominated by monopolies in the financial and raw materials sectors that rely on state support; it also contains a service sector large enough to have an impact and to apply the rules of a wild and criminalised market. The impact of this social segment is not so much economic, as socio-psychological. A stratum of active people, oriented towards independent and individual goals, is gradually emerging. This can gradually become the social basis for real, rather than declared market economy relations.

II. THE LACK OF A SOCIAL BASIS FOR DEMOCRACY

Strictly speaking, and seen from the standpoint of political democratisation and its tasks, the transition to market economy is not an end in itself but a means of creating a middle class as a mass social base for democracy. The processes of modernisation, which went on in a concealed way in Soviet society at least from the 1960s, created a kind of an embryonic middle class that in the end became the grave-digger of communism. However, as

distinct from the middle class associated with Western societies, it was the "old middle class" that was shaped by its professional and institutional position in the state system, and not because of property ownership.

It was with the disintegration of the Soviet state, compounded by the deepening economic crisis and the initiation of market economy reforms that this embryonic Soviet old middle class was actually washed away, as society split up into two poles (a process also typical of Third World countries) — a zone of mass poverty and a narrow stratum of wealthy but socially amorphous elements. As for a "new middle class", it has yet to appear in Russia. Consequently, the problem of shaping an adequate mass social base for democracy, based on private property relations as opposed to attitudes to the state, remains unsolved in post- communist Russia.

The processes of modernisation, which went on in a concealed way in Soviet society at least from the 1960s, created a kind of an embryonic middle class that in the end became the grave-digger of communism.

III CRISIS OF NATIONAL IDENTITY

Another specific feature of Russia's democratic transition is its polyethnic composition, and the emergence of centrifugal forces of nationalism under the slogan of democracy — factors that in the end led to the disintegration of the USSR and which continue to threaten Russia. During the progressive disintegration of Soviet society national and nationalistic ideas were used to give meaning and substance to the programme of anti-communism. However, in the post-communist context the desire for national revival began to assume forms that were hardly compatible with democracy and in some cases were directly contradicting it — nationalism assumed the features of an openly ethnocratic and imperial form of statehood.

Attention should be drawn to the crisis of national identity, which is clearly felt today in post-communist Russia, confronted with the task of ensuring national unity. This is an aspect which is quite specific to Russia and which cannot be found, as a rule, in other cases of democratic transitions. From a long-term perspective it may prove to be the most difficult task,

because at present there is no clear answer to a seemingly self-evident question: what is today's Russia like? Did it really inherit the status of the USSR? Or is it only one of the empire's 15 splinters? Is it true that post-communist Russia represents a fundamentally new type of statehood which emerged, as it were, out of the rubble of the empire's collapse? Or is today's Russia a continuation of the framework of the Eurasian geopolitical entity, which is huge and unique in the history of civilisations, and which existed first in the form of the Russian Empire and then in the form of the USSR?

There is still no answer to the question as to whether it is possible to achieve a different — democratic and non-imperial — regime that could govern and organise these giant territories, which have historically been structured in an autocratic and imperial paradigm. Until answers to these questions are found, until the problem concerning territorial integrity within the framework of a voluntary federation is solved, and until the new national identity of post-communist Russia is established, it is difficult to predict the future and the consequences of Russia's transformation.

OTHER SPECIFIC FEATURES OF RUSSIAN TRANSFORMATION

The democratic movement in Russia was different from similar movements in other cases of democratic transitions. Unlike the small movement of the 1960s-1970s of dissidents among the intelligentsia, which was almost completely crushed during the Brezhnev period, the democratic movement at the beginning of *perestroika* was the product of communist reformism and had numerous ties with the Soviet system. As distinct from opposition movements in Eastern European socialist countries, it was engendered not by the civil society but by the state emerging within the Soviet system, and initiated by the system's most far-sighted and capable segments. By the mid-1980s they came to the conclusion that liberalisation was needed for the sake of preserving the foundations of the system.

For this reason the socio-psychological basis of the democratic movement which emerged in the favourable atmosphere of *perestroika* did not have its roots in the dissident traditions of resistance to the regime (as was the case, for example, in Poland or Hungary), but was to a great extent shaped by a specific conformism, and special kinds of career orientations. This, naturally, in no way belittles the invaluable contribution of the democrats of the

perestroika wave to the cause of democratisation. What we mean is something else: unlike in many other democratic transitions, the democratic opposition outside of the Soviet regime was created in many respects by the authorities themselves.

The idea of democracy initially assumed the character of an amorphous myth containing a general, ideal image of the desired future. Because of this, both the myth of democracy and the myth of the market existed as a kind of symbiosis, as a magic means of solving all economic problems and achieving mass well-being at Western levels. However, in the mass consciousness this ideological symbiosis proved to be short-lived.

Both the myth of democracy and the myth of the market existed as a kind of symbiosis, as a magic means of solving all economic problems and achieving mass well-being at Western levels.

The destructive social consequences of the first economic shock had already put an end to the idealisation of market reforms in 1992. The dramatic political crisis and the repressive violence of the parliament in 1993 dealt a heavy blow to the illusions of democracy in Russia. Both events led to the emergence of a profound, ideological crisis and to a value vacuum in mass consciousness, and eventually to a crisis in the democratic movement.

This crisis was also predetermined by another factor — by the actual betrayal of the democratic movement by the new regime, in the establishment of which the movement had played such an important role. The Yeltsin regime, which put much emphasis on the personal charisma of the leader, did not follow a path that could have led to any real reforms; it neither built up any effective institutions of democracy, nor re-established the system of tough authoritarian power. In this connection other specific features in Russia's democratic transition became apparent.

1. ABSENCE OF ANY PACT BETWEEN REFORMERS AND CONSERVATIVES

After renouncing the compromises which were sought, albeit inconsistently, by Gorbachev, Yeltsin and the radicals supporting him deliberately dismissed the possibility of achieving any compromise or of eventually

concluding a pact with their adversaries, a pact which had an important stabilising function in most successful cases of democratic transition. In other cases, such a pact helped formulate the rules of the democratic game, rules that were subsequently adhered to by the main political forces of the system. As there was no such pact in Russia, quite a big political segment of society was artificially excluded from the democratic process for a long time, until the 1993 elections which legalised the opposition.

It should also be noted that the lack of a formal pact in no way prevented the second and third echelons of the Soviet *nomenklatura* from successfully "parachuting" and becoming part of the new system of authority and property. Today, however, there is reason to believe that a *de facto* pact was concluded — atleast some of its elements came into existence, but in a specific and distorted form.

One of the elements of this partial pact was the recognition by the nation that formal elections were the only acceptable method of legitimisation of power. However, as distinct from the logic of classical transitions to democracy, this pact was not a phase which preceded the democratisation of an authoritarian regime. It was a stage of post-communist transformation at which a new ruling class had already emerged and at which the different ruling groups had already sufficiently "adjusted" themselves to each other; they had found a "common language", determined their interests and zones of intersection, and agreed upon the "rules of the game", without taking into account and even at the expense of the overwhelming mass of the population. As a result, the *de facto* pact only deepened the gap between the authorities and society and kept society away from real politics.

2. THE ABSENCE OF ANY FREE FOUNDING ELECTIONS

When relying on his charisma as a peoples' leader who enjoys the support of everyone and therefore does not need additional legitimisation, Yeltsin also deliberately ignored the need for carrying out the subsequent phase of the classical model of successful democratisation. He refused to hold the first, free, "founding" elections, which could have laid the foundations for a legitimate democratic power and facilitated a smooth and gradual development of a multi-party system in the country. It should be noted that Yeltsin refused to hold these first free elections because radical

democrats would have had the best chance of obtaining a vast majority in the parliament and of initiating radical economic reforms supported by such a majority.

Only one factor can explain Yeltsin's refusal to hold free parliamentary elections in the autumn of 1991: his reluctance to share the laurels of victory with persons who only recently had become his close associates in the democratic movement. As a result, only part of the Russian democrats were co-opted into the new structures of authority, whereas a large section of the democratic movement was excluded, in a position of disappointed observer thus making them even more critical of the government.

Only one factor can explain Yeltsin's refusal to hold free parliamentary elections in the autumn of 1991: his reluctance to share the laurels of victory with persons who only recently had become his close associates in the democratic movement.

The lack of this most important initial insitutional phase in the process of Russia's democratic transition largely explains the results of the parliamentary election in December 1993, which shocked most observers in the country and outside. The important thing to note is that these parliamentary elections were only formally and chronologically the "first" and founding ones. If held up against the general logic of democratic transition, a logic confirmed in most cases by historical fact, the 1993 elections were more reminiscent of "second" elections, that is, of "elections of disappointment".

The brief initial shock phase of market economic reforms — a stage which for various reasons lasted for a short time only — was forced on the population by an executive power which was already associated in the mass consciousness with the radical democrats. It does not come as a surprise that the result of this very short and agonizing stage of shock therapy was the growth of mass discontent with the democratic authorities and their policies. This was the case in practically all similar phases of democratic transition. Reforms have inevitably caused a public reaction with the pendulum of mass sentiment swinging to the left. It also happened in Russia during the first (chronologically speaking) free parliamentary elections in December 1993, which according to the general logic of democratic transitions fulfilled the function of the second elections (the "elections of disappointment").

3. THE PRESERVATION OF THE OLD NOMENKLATURA

A specific feature of Russia's transformation is also the keeping of groups of the old ruling class in power. In cases of successful transition, a pact between parties competing with and confronting each other during the process of democratisation provides for the old ruling class guarantees of political and economic security. As a result of this, the old ruling class can take part in the democratic political process. In Russia, however, there was a lack of social agreement or a pact, but nonetheless the old *nomenklatura* retained its political and economic security and was included in the new political system as a legitimate participant of the democratic process. The *nomenklatura* was not only saved by the camouflaging administrative changes made by the new democratic authorities (for instance by the re-labeling of official positions, while filling these positions with the same officials as before, both in the centre and in the provinces), but also remained in power without any rhetorical explanation for this, as one of the central components of the new authority.

It is partly for this reason that the uncompleted democratic transition in Russia became not so much a radical break with the past Soviet system as a particular metamorphosis of it. As a result of this, the nucleus of the old *nomenklatura*, which included the old party apparatus and economic pragmatists, and new career professionals from democratic ranks, was preserved as part of the renewed ruling class under slogans of democracy and anti-communism (Shevtsova, 1995). This renewed ruling class held on to power and acquired property. It became the winner of the large-scale processes of redistribution of state property and of the transfer of this property to private ownership. All this took place between clans and cartels which were and still are part of the ruling class, behind a smoke-screen of so-called public privatisation. As a result, corporate interest groups created a base for the oligarchic political system which is presently being established in Russia. At the same time, the interests of the masses are still poorly articulated and the lower layers of society do not have adequate political representation.

The present oligarchy in Russia is of a special kind. Strictly speaking, the oligarchy is a method (among others) for managing the big organisations — a method based on power as an expertise. The interests of property and one's own material benefit, rather than of the organisation of power as such, is the main element in the present plutocratic regime of Russia — a regime

under which not only does wealth engender power, but where power gives wealth to those who are party to it. The present situation is actually shaped by a variety of elitist rule that uses the formal institutions of democracy for non-democratic purposes. This situation is the result of a superficial democratisation that provides no mechanisms of democratic control over the actions of the authorities.

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It should be noted that unequivocal categories are hardly applicable to the present political regime in Russia. In its essence it is a hybrid and mixed regime — a regime which drastically limits the possibilities for effective mass participation in politics, while allowing at the same time competition for power at the elite level. But in Russia even this is not the case since at the elite level the rules of the game are not those of open political competition, but consist of clans and corporate laws structuring an "under-the-carpet" struggle for power, although the present hybrid regime in Russia inherited much of the old Soviet political genotype and it resembles to an ever greater extent closed corporate structures of the Latin American type.

4. THE TRADITIONAL METHOD OF CARRYING OUT REFORMS

The almost full subordination of social groups, classes and strata to the paternalistic vertical arrangement of state power was always characteristic of the history of pre-Soviet Russia and the USSR. It was not society which was creating the state, but power itself that was shaping society. Through administrative methods social relations and social groups were emerging, not on the basis of articulation of manifest socio-economic interests, but as a bureaucratic creation (like, for instance, the nobility under Peter the Great). In post-Soviet Russia the embryonic democracy and its representative institutions began to emerge in a flat social landscape in which there were few signs of a differentiated social structure, of diverse socio-economic interests, and of organisations to express them.

Moreover, the new authorities in Russia followed the Russian tradition of carrying out reforms and transformations in an arbitrary way: vertically from top down. In most successful democratic transitions the reform initiative comes from above. However, an important and fundamental difference between Russia and these cases is that in the latter a reform impulse from above acts only as the primary catalyst of profound processes, which emerge and develop in society as a whole. After society's involvement in the process, the functions of the authorities are usually reduced to providing institutional support for these processes in accordance with generally accepted democratic procedures.

Things are different in Russia. Here the new authorities' approach to reform was consistent with traditional administrative methods (mainly due to the new power-holders' ties with the old *nomenklatura*) throughout the whole post-communist period. This, in turn, could create nothing but a split between the authorities and society, a split which is pernicious for democracy and leads to a growing alienation of society from the authorities. According to sociological data, there is a growth of political disappointment and indifference, a discreditation of political leaders and a moving away of the Russian public opinion from public interests into private ones. Certainly, positive factors can also be observed in the data — the "privatisation", for example, of one's personal sphere is about to replace a sense of traditional statism according to which an individual is only in part subordinate to the whole of the state. However, private interest is perceived in the mass consciousness not merely as independent of the state and the authorities, but also as something that is in direct contradiction with them. This does not in any way provide favourable conditions for the development of the forms of political participation needed for a normal functioning of democratic institutions.

5. THE CONTINUOUS INFLUENCE OF AUTHORITARIAN FORCES

Against the background of a disappointment with democracy and democrats in Russia, authoritarian tendencies are manifesting themselves clearly. The authoritarian inclinations of President Yeltsin are not only visible in the directive and voluntarist style of his rule, but equally find their expression in the Constitution. The threat of authoritarianism in Russia, exemplified in

recent times by the growing influence of nationalist forces, also needs to be taken seriously. On the one hand, this is due to the fact that the group of intellectuals who provides services to the authorities, is strongly promoting an idea according to which only the strong hand of enlightened authoritarianism is capable of carrying out painful economic reforms, which eventually lay the ground needed for a subsequent building of democracy. On the other hand, there is in the attitudes of the Russian people undoubtedly, a growing tendency to support a strong authority capable of creating order in the country. On the basis of these sociological data one often comes to the conclusion that there is growing public support for a reversal of the reforms and a change to authoritarian nationalism.

Although several arguments could be used to justify a return to a communist paradise, can Russia enter the new millennium as an authoritarian dictatorship?

But to what extent is the practical implementation of authoritarianism probable in today's Russia? Although several arguments could be used to justify a return to a communist paradise, the need to restore lost law and order, the attempt to mobilise national forces for the sake of carrying out modernisation, can Russia enter the new millennium as an authoritarian dictatorship? One can hardly deny the possibility of the present Russian authorities becoming more autocratic, or being influenced by a new autocrat brought to power by the sad realities of the present socio-economic situation.

Nevertheless, the arguments against labeling the present political regime as authoritarian are also well known. These are, to mention but a few, the authorities' weak vertical influence upon society from the top down, the fragile equilibrium of different elites and interest groups, none of which can, alone or in a coalition with others, monopolise power completely, the malfunctioning or even the absence of previous mechanisms of repressive control, and the growing decentralisation and regionalisation throughout the country. These arguments also contribute to a perspective which holds an authoritarian backlash in Russia to be possible from a theoretical point of view, but rather improbable from a practical point of view.

It seems rather dubious whether authoritarianism might be an efficient mechanism for carrying out market economic reforms in Russia; in the present political situation there are practically no forces that hold

authoritarianism to be a means of modernisation of society through the implementation of a market economy. Quite the contrary, almost all the political forces which are susceptible to authoritarian temptations see authoritarianism as something different, namely as a possibility of returning to state control of the economy and of restoring the position of Russia as a world superpower. As for public opinion polls, they are really indicating not a desire to return to the authoritarian past, but a desire to see democratic rights and freedoms guaranteed by a strong power against arbitrary bureaucratic and even criminal rule.

There are reasons to believe that the emerging pluralism among groups and corporates compounded with the rise of regional interests will serve as an obstacle to the possible resurgence of authoritarianism. At present, there is no political or administrative institution which could implement and secure the horizontal and vertical aspects of a purely authoritarian model in Russia. Moreover, the regional elites, which have already tasted the fruits of the weakening of the vertical axis of power, will hardly respond positively to authoritarian attempts at reconstructing this axis.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Some of the particular elements of the post-communist transformation in Russia examined above should enable us to emphasise its specificity and at the same time to draw some parallels between it and other democratic transitions that are considered components of the present democratic wave. If, by making a comparative analysis one is able to single out what is general and what is particular in different processes of democratisation, this might hopefully contribute to the elaboration of a general and integral theory of post-communism. But it appears that the time for it has not yet come. One of the reasons for this is that post-communism itself has not yet been fully developed and established; its development still continues and it has not yet acquired complete and crystallised features.

The pattern of transformation of the Soviet system during the period of *perestroika* at least partly resembled the typical model of democratisation of the "third wave". However, the democratic transition in post-communist Russia has been interrupted. At the moment the trajectory of Russian transformation is heading toward a hybrid regime of the oligarchic type. Russia's future therefore remains profoundly uncertain.

- promoting cooperation ,in information technology and telecommunications between Asia and Europe for better understanding and mutual benefits through setting up of an Asia-Europe Information Technology and Telecommunications Programme (AEITTP) to be coordinated by Thailand,
- cooperation in improving community health care. A seminar of experts in Vietnam in the third quarter of 1998 will discuss Asia-Europe cooperation in combining traditional and modern medicine and treatment for community health care,
- establishing a network of megacities of ASEM Partners to exchange views, information and experience as well as to extend technical cooperation to support the sustainable development of these megacities. To this end, the first Asia Europe Forum of Governors of Cities (AEFGC) will be held in Thailand in 1999. This initiative as well as Singapore's initiative in convening a World Conference on Model cities in 1999 would contribute to the success of the World Conference on Sustainable Urban Development which would be held in Berlin in the year 2000,
- The establishment of ASEM Education hubs to encourage more academic exchanges between students of Asian and European universities,
- promoting exchange of views and cooperation on the issue of sustainable agriculture through the setting up of an Asia-Europe Agricultural Forum (AEAF),
- the proposal from the Bangkok Business Forum for the establishment , where appropriate, of SME centres,
- establishing an Asia-Europe Management programme at the Asian Institute of Management,
- a Seminar on Labour Relations to be held in The Hague in October 1998, back to back with the ASEF Board of Governors' meeting at the time,
- the holding of a Seminar in the Philippines on "peace and society building" in areas that have been going through crisis and turmoil and whose development is the linchpin of efforts to maintain peace.

TOWARDS ASEM 3 AND BEYOND

23. Leaders confirmed their intention to meet again at ASEM 3 in Seoul, the Republic of Korea, in 2000, and decided to hold the Fourth ASEM in Europe in 2002. They noted that Foreign, Economic and Finance Ministers would meet in Germany in 1999 before ASEM 3.

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