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Transition to Liberal Democracy*
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The Paternalistic Tradition and Russia's Transition to Liberal Democracy

By Alexey L. Alyushin

The process of political and economic liberalization in Russia has been underway for more than six years. But the radical shift toward democracy and a free market economy became possible only after August 1991. At that time, after the failure of the reactionary coup, Communist Party activity was suspended and the former Soviet Union states gained at least their formal independence, along with the real possibility to seek their national self-identity.

I will examine the prospects of this transformation as well as its hindering factors, viewing it in the context of the world experience. I will focus on Russia in the first place. This is not only because it is the largest among all other states of the Union, and as the center of the Empire had been for a long time profoundly determining their political and economic life. The main reason is that Russia, due to its geographical position and history, combines the features of both the Asiatic and European types of civic and political culture.

The paternalistic tradition, rooted deep in Russian history, vividly manifests this peculiar combination of features, and is decisively shaping the current process of democratization and economic liberalization. As I will argue below, this tradition acts mainly as an impeding factor but has, in a paradoxical way, some potential to promote the process of the transformation.

Russia, therefore, presents itself as an especially interesting object of study in terms of examining the relevance between the developing democracies of Asia and of Europe. To start, let me examine the factors which underlie the pattern of the rise

of a modern authoritarian regime and the consequent challenge of overcoming authoritarianism in a process of establishing political democracy.

This basic underlying factor is the attempt at a rapid economic modernization of a society, considered most usually as a way to its general modernization. I would argue that such evidently differing social phenomena as German Nazism, Soviet or Chinese or Rumanian Socialism, and the numerous authoritarian regimes of the second half of the century in Africa, Latin America, and Asia (including the Philippines), are all ultimately examples of this process.

Modernization Authoritarianism

An attempt to modernize a society is closely connected with the rise of a national consciousness and the search for a national identity, often following decolonization. It can be explained only partly by a country's objective need for economic modernization; every underdeveloped economy needs modernization, but not every country at all really tends toward rapid and persistent modernization.

There is rather a phenomenon of "catching-up" development, motivated substantially by a feeling of national inferiority and necessitating a kind of race toward the higher stage of industrial development achieved by the leading states. In this example, a country takes the shape of a speeding vehicle, where a sophisticated driver seems to be needed, pretending to be authorized to decide himself how to operate and where to direct it, as well as to prosecute those who spread panic and disorder on board.

This mode of action may be successful up to a point, but sooner or later there comes a recognition that political authoritarianism, by its very nature and because of its many negative consequences—state arbitrariness and violence, a corrupt, inert bureaucracy, etc.—is inconsistent with the goals for which it has been acting. This is followed by the recognition that to go on with real economic and social modernization, nothing less than democracy is needed (which is itself a part and a goal of the modernization process).

We may conclude that the common pattern, making relevant

the experiences of Russia and the new Asian democracies such as the Philippines, is the attempt at economic modernization, first bringing the society to a seemingly helpful authoritarianism, then leading it to a recognition that democracy is the only political environment fully compatible with the goal at hand. Paradoxically, then, it is through authoritarianism that we are recovering democracy. Now the question becomes how to make democracy work for modernization and how to preserve it from the remaining authoritarian threat? To clarify this task, it is helpful to distinguish it from two other specific types of situations.

One is when democracy is more or less a self-evident value in the eyes of the people and has never been seriously contested, as in the former Soviet Baltic states, or Eastern European states like Czechoslovakia or Poland. Authoritarian rule was only mechanically imposed there from the outside and was passively adhered to by the bulk of the population as only a temporary break in traditional democratic institutions.

Quite the opposite case are pre-modernization societies. The Soviet Central Asian states are a good example. Their economies are noticeably underdeveloped, despite having some huge industrial plants as branches of the All-Union production structure. Agriculture is overexploited, and often unbalanced (cotton production in Uzbekistan, for instance). Meanwhile there has never been a tendency toward persistent economic modernization in these countries, and there are few signs of it for the near future. The system of power relations functioning there is on the scheme of political traditionalism, dominated by Islam and clannish relations, along with strong elements of feudalism and the predominance of the patriarchal family. After the collapse of Communist rule in these states, which had, for the most part, been superimposed on the latently functioning power system there, they seem to retain the same type of traditional authoritarianism although it is now shaped by some new formal democratic elements such as presidential elections, or even an Islamic theocracy, with the anti-modernization orientation being preserved.

This political authoritarianism of the traditional kind may somewhat resemble that arising from the modernization tendency, and it can even overlap in the same society. The dis-

tinctive difference is, however, that the former remains basically stable and legitimate for decades and even centuries, giving no rise from its interior to democracy as its insistent and natural successor, which is the case with the latter.

It would be unwarranted to assume that modernization authoritarianism will be succeeded by democracy in every case. This is only a tendency, to respond to which some initial understanding of the value of democracy is needed. Such understanding may come either from pre-colonial political reminiscences or from the metropolitan political impact, which is usually the case with former U.S. or British colonies. Some minimal social prerequisites, like the presence of a middle class, are also necessary. Otherwise, an exhausted modernization authoritarianism may collapse back into a traditional tribalistic or clannish authoritarian substructure.

The common modernization pattern having been revealed, I will now focus on the distinctive features of the process in Russia. Understanding these features is crucial to understanding what is currently happening in this country.

The Antinomies of the Modernization Process in Russia

Let us start with history. There have been at least four large-scale attempts to modernize radically the Russian economy and society, starting with the reforms of Peter the Great at the beginning of the 18th century, up to Stalin's "great industrialization, collectivization, and cultural revolution" experiment. The task of modernization that this country now faces, after the total failure of the Communist experiment, is evidently a fifth attempt (some scholars count even more) in this three-century-old line of succession.

For centuries, Russia had been painfully split between Europe and Asia, the two contrasting yet inseparable sides of its being. The efforts to modernize appeared to be a breaking away from Asia and "becoming Europe." The reformers, beginning with Peter the Great, treated Russia as a stagnant body, or in their own words, an empty vessel to be filled with the European substance and mentality. The Westernizers, especially in the second half of the 19th century, were outspoken in their

support of capitalism and liberal democracy in their European, and thus, as they believed, universal samples.

Their opponents, the Slavophiles, treated Europe and the Western world as totally aspiritual and sunk in pernicious bourgeois industrialism. The universal Russian mission, they claimed, was to fertilize bourgeois Europe with morality and religion, detaching the Russian people from all others as God's blessed bearers, to save Europe and the whole world from decay. Russian society, according to the Slavophiles, was inherently alien to capitalism and liberal democracy which are purely Western inventions.

As the Slavophiles and the official doctrine of the 19th century czarist regime proclaimed, no economic modernization or democratization was needed in Russia, but rather, an enhancing of the stagnant and thus stable peasant community, of the true Orthodox religion, and of the authoritarian rule of a benevolent monarch. Only these features, they said, really identify Russia. "The Monarch loving his people and the people loving their Monarch—this is our Constitution!" argued Fyodor Dostoyevsky in a personal letter of 21 March 1868, refusing the requests of his opponents, the liberals, to adopt the Constitution and to establish formal democratic institutions in Russia.

Reforms were deeply contradictory, both in their means and their consequences. Aimed at bringing Russia closer to the European civilization, and appearing to achieve that goal with some immediate results, in the long run they have instead been hindering the process of modernization and throwing the country backward.

Reforms had always been initiated and carried out from above, most often in a compulsory or violent way. This constantly strengthened and reinforced the authoritarian and paternalistic trend in Russian government. It could seem grotesque, as when Peter the Great forced the boyards to cut off their beards in order to look like Germans. Much more dubious an undertaking, however, had been the foundation of metallurgical works in the Ural mountains and elsewhere, based on serf labor. Having profoundly contributed to industrial modernization during the following decades, the innovation at the same time consolidated serfdom, hence hindering

the long-term economic and political modernization in Russia for a century or more.

By 1864, serfdom had at last been abolished. But what was established instead was a peasant community with communal land ownership and mutual guarantees among the peasants. This undoubtedly reinforced the anti-individualistic and anti-market trends in the society, although it gave peasants a formal personal freedom and some democratic rights within a community. Attempts to introduce individual farming at the beginning of the 20th century were resisted by the peasants themselves, and thus failed.

Under Bolshevism and Stalin's rule, the antinomy of subjective intentions and real outcomes of reformatory activity in Russia took its most dramatic forms. Initially aimed at attaining the most advanced stage of economic and political development and thus making Russia a leading country of Western civilization, the Bolsheviks' activities triggered an unintended regressive transmutation of the society, back to a type of socio-economic order that was similar in many essential respects to that of an archaic Asian despotism.

The Paternalistic Rule

This socio-economic order has as its principal factors the overall state hold on the means of production and on the use of the labor of its citizens. Thus the government (with the Communist Party as its pivot) functions as an exclusive distributor and redistributor of goods and resources among the population, as well as being a monopolistic employer and profiteer. The citizens become totally lumpenized, that is, deprived of any property which would be unconditionally inalienable from them, and deprived of the right to assert themselves as persons. They lose stable links with any large social stratum.

A society is stratified according to quite different determinants depending on private ownership formations, whether slave-holding, feudalism, or capitalism. What here determines one's attachment to this or that social stratum is one's relationship to the system of distribution of values, not their production and possession. Under a Communist order, all pre-revolutionary social elites are eliminated, and no legal private enter-

prises remain. This differs in the most distinctive way from an authoritarian rule within the private ownership framework. Neither in the former Asian or Latin American authoritarian states (e.g., the Philippines, Chile, etc.), nor even in Nazi Germany, had legal private ownership and the enterprise line of succession been totally separated. The larger part of the former social elites retained great influence over the later development of their countries. Moreover, the rise of authoritarian regimes in private ownership societies was instigated by a desire to escape total nationalization of industry, or to overcome its consequences. From this viewpoint, then, the term "authoritarianism," often used as a synonym for undemocratic and oppressive political regimes, becomes irrelevant when we are comparing these two systems in terms of their socio-economic orders.

The term "paternalistic stateocracy" could be used to accurately describe the nature of the so-called Socialist or Communist systems. By "stateocracy" it is meant that the state is not only an instrument of the will of some part of society (i.e., the majority in a democracy, the rich in a plutocracy, etc.), but an instrument of its own will, being imposed on society as the object of its supervision.

To clarify the notion of paternalism, let us look at its linguistic definition first. The Oxford English Dictionary defines paternalism as "the principal and practice of paternal administration; government as by a father; the claim or attempt to supply the needs or regulate the life of a nation or community in the same way as a father does those of his children." This definition exposes the fundamental principle of paternalistic rule. Society is viewed as a family, with the government carrying out the role of the father, and the citizens being treated as children. This is much like the semi-familial relations within modern Japanese corporations, on the scale of an entire society.

Many of those who are studying the Communist system consider violence and fear its ultimate foundation. Viewing it as a paternalistic system helps to avoid this widespread simplification, which precludes an understanding of why such a system is so stable and self-perpetuating, and why the people are so sincerely devoted to it. Violence only supplements the main

regulating mechanisms of paternalistic rule, and is used regularly only as a factor of deprivation against political deviants. Paternalism's motivational system in its citizens' relationship to the state could be described as basically similar to that of a child's relationship to its parents. This is possible due to the regression of the personality to its infantile level. Infantilization of the personality under paternalistic rule serves as the main psychological mechanism of the state's self-maintenance. Explanations which treat a citizen as a basically adult personality, valid for non-paternalistic communities, are misleading when applied to paternalistic societies.

The paternalistic government-to-citizen relationship cannot adequately be understood as simply one of unilateral oppression or command, which may be the case under other types of authoritarian rule. This is a system of reciprocal claims and expectations, one side expecting to have its needs directly fulfilled, the other expecting compliance and diligence according to the regulations. Granted, the nature of this system involves exploitation of the workers, but the rulers, who hold in their hands all the labor facilities as well as the total wealth of the society, distribute them in a practical and merciful way, and thus are widely believed to be the benefactors of the people, winning grateful childish love rather than mass hatred and fear.

At this point, another major difference between the paternalistic and the private ownership authoritarian systems reveals itself. The latter, while tending to manage the larger part of national industry in order to speed economic modernization, does not even pretend to supply directly all the needs of its citizens, leaving most of these functions to the private sector. The infantilization of personality is not actuated there.

A comparison of ideological doctrines and forms of legitimization of the two types of systems can, I believe, corroborate this argument. In North Korea and Stalinist Russia, for example, the father image of the leader was obtrusively employed and heavily imprinted on the mentality of the population; there were no signs of this in South Korea or in formerly authoritarian countries such as Chile or Argentina.

Let me stress again my central point concerning the relevance of the Asian and Latin American experience to that of Russia's

in their aspirations to democracy. The challenge facing Russia, as well as China, North Korea, Cuba, and other countries of essentially similar social order, is the radical shift from that order to a distinctively different one. Meanwhile, the transitional trajectory of such states as the Philippines and the Latin American authoritarian states runs within the existing socio-economic framework. The former is a political and economic revolution, along with the transformation of a paternalistic social mentality, while the latter is a political revolution along with economic reforms.

Paternalistic rule in Russia would never have been set in so firmly for over seven decades had it not been nourished by the long paternalistic tradition of treating rulers as benefactors of the people, as the people's legitimate ideological supervisors and autocratic guides toward some transcendental goal. I view the paternalistic tradition as directly opposed to the liberal one, with its treatment of rulers as principally bound in their control over the people and being subordinate to them, deriving their authority from the people through a social contract.

Democracy and economic freedom are characteristic of the liberal tradition, just as autocracy and economic restriction are characteristic of paternalism. The transition to a democratic, free-market system in Russia hinges on the defeat of the paternalistic tradition; as well as coping with the lingering remains of paternalism in such a way as to minimize its influence, or even—to a limited degree—channeling it in a positive manner.

The Threat of Russian Nationalism

As stated above, there has been a centuries-long split in Russian national thought between, on the one hand, Westernization and European modernization, and on the other, preservation of autocratic monarchical rule, anticapitalist communal ownership systems, and the ideological supremacy of the Orthodox Church, all of which were considered features of Russian national identity. There is a controversy among the modern adherents of these two schools of thought, each side accusing the other of having instigated the rise of Communism in Russia. However, the fact is, these trends complemented each other in reinforcing paternalistic rule. Both modernizers and

their opponents tended to think and act in a paternalistic manner.

Let us look at the messianic orientation of the Russian mentality, one of the main prerequisites of a paternalistic ideology. This orientation is clearly expressed in both sides of the modernization/tradition debate. For the Slavophiles, it is Russia which ought to save the world through religious and moral ascent. For the Marxists, it is also Russia which ought to save the world, but through the emancipation of labor. In either case, Russia is viewed as being inherently charged with a mission of care and guidance with respect to other peoples; hence an exaltation of state and leader not only as ruler, but as "Fuhrer," directing the country from wherever to wherever else. It is noteworthy that long before Stalin came as "The Father of Peoples," the czar had been enthusiastically known as "The Benefactor," and "The Guide of the Russian Land" by his Slavophil adherents. A disregard for democracy is characteristic of the messianic paradigm, for a mission entrusted to an autocratic ruler remains independent of the opinions of the common people. It is the sacred mission which endows a ruler with authority, not the will of the people.

Another characteristic of messianic paternalism is the absorption of the functions of ideological control by the ruling body. The Russian Orthodox Church had served for centuries as an instrument of the state in securing the ideological control and mobilization of the masses; it was succeeded in these functions by the Communist Party. Unlike the Catholic Church, the Russian Orthodox Church had long ago lost its independence from the state; this further contributed to the establishment of totalitarianism in Russia.

Is Russian messianism still in effect, challenging the new democratic institutions? I would argue that this threat remains only within the anti-modernization wing, succeeding the Slavophil doctrine. Bolshevism as the ideology of the world proletarian revolution is dead now, with the Russian Communist Party being banned and the state completely deprived of its ideological functions. There are obvious signs, however, that the most orthodox remnants of the Communist Party are now joining the extreme right-wing Russian nationalists, who have recently become a distinct political force. This is no sur-

prise, given their common imperialistic and undemocratic way of thinking.

The nationalists claim that the loss of Russia's centuries-old leading role among neighboring peoples, along with Russia being accused of hindering their development and leading them into a social disaster, is heavily damaging Russian national dignity and is thus intolerable. There should be an end to the selling of Russia to foreign monopolies, making it a raw material appendage of the foreign countries. Russia must revive and restore its guiding role for both Europe and Asia.

Not fully rejecting the value of democracy (mostly in concession to current public opinion), the nationalists claim that Russia is not ready for it, and an authoritarian rule of "the Russian patriots" is urgently needed to preserve Russia as a whole. Their economic program admits some elements of private ownership, but in general it has an obvious antiliberal and semi-paternalistic orientation.

The social base for extreme nationalism is formed mostly of those who directly suffered from the collapse of the Soviet Union, namely the Russian minorities in former states of the Union, refugees from these states, and especially the elements of the military which served on Soviet Army bases in these territories and in other Eastern European states, having lost both their jobs and their lodgings. Whether the Russian nationalist movement will seriously threaten democratic development depends on the ability of the present government to protect the rights, and provide for the basic needs, of these groups, as well as its ability to respond to their demands for the strengthening of the country's economic and political position in the world.

Prospects for Social Transformation

One of the chief prerequisites for a stable democracy is a well-balanced class structure with a developed middle class. The stratification of Russian society presents quite the opposite picture. The present homogeneity is the aftermath of the lengthy Communist rule with its policy of total nationalization of property, and the purposeful elimination of classes that has resulted in the overall lumpenization of society. The former social structure based on one's relationship to a values distri-

bution system is destroyed, and a new one, that of legal possession and production, is not yet formed. There is an urgent need, therefore, to develop a legal private ownership system so as to lay down a firm basis for newly formed democratic institutions. It is encouraging that the task is currently being recognized by the Russian authorities as a top priority and that a wide denationalization and privatization program is being carried out. "Allot each citizen with his share in what has been expropriated by the state!" runs the number one demand set forward by authorities and strongly supported by public opinion.

The leading forces in the current revolutionary transformation are the recently established groups of private industrialists, businessmen, and farmers, along with the professionals and intellectuals. In a word, these are ambitiously oriented owners of either material wealth or needed skills, thus forming a body quite contrary to that of the Bolshevik revolution of 1917.

The old Russian traditional business ethic having been broken off, the new generation of business is facing the problem of reviving or elaborating it again. The lack of business ethics is evident thus far in the lack of responsibility in partnership relations, as well as in the pursuit of instantaneous profiteering rather than diligent work with a reasonable, though stable, profit. Such attitudes are bringing an air of uncertainty and instability to business relations for both local and international partners. There are real grounds for these attitudes indeed, due to the extremely changeable government business policy during the last five years, on the one hand, and to a constantly rising pressure of racketeering groups, on the other hand. One can assume that the development of a free enterprise system in Russia and the involvement of this enterprise system in the world economic network will invariably help the business ethic in this country rise to world standards.

A much more difficult problem exists concerning common public attitudes toward private ownership and private businessmen. What profoundly is hindering the development of a free-market system in Russia is a strong leveling sense in the national mentality. This is a case where elements of Western socialist ideology amalgamated with the traditional Russian

dislike (inherent to the Orthodox religious doctrine) for "money-grubbing." Owners and ownership are not respected, or at least far less respected than in the West. The people who rise above the average level are treated suspiciously and commonly are disliked. For instance, the individuals or family farmers who detached themselves from the recently all-encompassing collective (as a matter of fact, state-owned) farms, very often are ignored and distrusted by their former neighbors (on whom they still depend) as those "who wish to get more than others." One may happen to hear the common person say quite seriously that "I would rather stay poor than make it up with money-bags."

The infantile attitudes of the bulk of the population toward the state, coming from a paternalistic past, are far from being surmounted. A begging mentality, as opposed to an enterprising one, remains. A majority of people heavily rely on state-controlled distribution channels to procure wealth (goods, lodgings, material privileges, etc.), complaining when they fail instead of working to accumulate wealth through industriousness and venture.

To be realistic, it will take a number of years or even decades to overcome the former paternalistic frame of thinking among the bulk of the population. Russia will retain and simultaneously sustain two trends of civic culture and mentality—one of a liberal and individualistic nature, backed by the rising bourgeois class, and another of a paternalistic nature, expressing itself through a strong social-democratic movement. The paternalistic functions of the state will be localized up to the social care of only the most disabled groups of the population. It seems improbable that one of the trends will oust or annihilate the other. On the contrary, they may happen to balance each other well.

A Quest for Liberalism

When comparing the countries that have experienced capitalism in its earliest phase, like England, Germany, or the United States, with those that have joined them later in the 20th century, like the Asian "little dragons" or Russia nowadays, an important difference arises. The former have undergone a pro-

cess of religious reformation in one form or another, which has decisively contributed to the rise of an autonomous individual as a free-market-system actor and has spread a liberal view of state and society. Neither the new Asian democracies nor Russia have experienced this change of social mentality.

On the one hand this is a scenario highly relevant and encouraging for Russia, for it shows that the free market system can develop rapidly even as it is being imposed on a traditional communal social substructure with the individual being submitted to its restrictions and imperatives. On the other hand, however, the Asian experience does not entirely withdraw the challenge of the individualistic and liberal overturn in the public mind as an ultimate prerequisite for the further unbounded development of capitalism and democracy in any country. Democracy is not enough. Liberal democracy is needed as an ultimate goal of the further development, i.e., the goal of a democratic system having assimilated to its core the liberal view of an individual and his relationship to the state and other social entities.

I would argue that Russia, through the existing preconditions for disseminating the individualistic ideology, is outdoing even the Asian post-authoritarian states in its quest for liberal democracy. The existing pattern of family relations is of great importance in this respect. Ever since the second quarter of this century, an atomized and non-patriarchal family has been most typical in both urban and rural areas of Russia. This is not the case for most of the Asian countries, including the former Soviet Central Asian states, where patriarchy and clannish relations are the norm and consequently hinder a radical shift toward individualism.

Paradoxically, it was Bolshevik policy that destroyed the peasant household. The total collectivization of agriculture also contributed to the liberation of the individual from the traditional patriarchal family bonds in Russia. A patriarchal family and communal relations initially had formed a sort of mold for imprinting a "father" image of the state and a "big family" image of society. However, these have been eroded by the paternalistic state itself, claiming to attain total control over the individual and thus trying to replace the "natural" father authority by its own.

As a result of the collapse of paternalistic rule, the individual is placed in a type of intermediate position. On the one hand, he still retains some vague images of the "caring state" and does not feel distinctively detached from society as an autonomous person. A good example, which vividly exposes the continuing notion of communal ideology among the Russian people, is the parliamentary debates on a draft law on emigration at the Supreme Soviet of the USSR in the spring of 1991. A number of deputies asserted as self-evident that citizens have no right to leave the country on their own free will, since they all owe "the Motherland" for their education and so forth, i.e., that citizens belong to and are morally obligated to the community, which had cared for and invested in them since their infancy.

On the other hand, the individual has already become detached from the patriarchal or clannish structure. Therefore, there seems to be no major obstacles for the dynamic advance of free-market relations and the realization that an individual is basically an autonomous social unit.

It is the barriers of paternalism, the father-like image of the state, that block Russia's movement toward liberal democracy whereas it is patriarchalism, the traditional submission of a personality to the head of a family or clan, that hinders Asian societies. The latter seems to be a much more complicated and enduring tradition than the former. The strong system of patriarchy and clannish relations that hinders the establishment of the paternalistic rule of the state is simultaneously thwarting the emancipation of the person as an autonomous social actor.

Along with the common notion of exalting the ruler and envisioning the state as a unit superior to the individual, there is a strong anarchist ingredient in the Russian national mentality as well. There is not solely a father-exalting pattern, but rather a father-exalting and father-dethroning pattern as a recurring sequence in public attitudes. Contrary to Asian societies, there has never been a deep tradition of respect and obedience to elders in Russia, which has indeed reinforced an anarchist element in Russia's political culture. Yet elements of morality and humanity as the criteria for appraising politics are characteristics of it as well, due mostly to the influence of

the Orthodox religion. It gives Russia, as compared to Asian democracies, some favorable odds in its quest for liberalism.

Strong impediments of the Confucian political tradition are revealed when examining the causes of China's recent failure to move rapidly toward a political democracy. The idea of "maintaining the social order" as the supreme political value and the common treatment of "mutiny" as the heaviest criminal offense were both used by the Communist authorities to legitimize the massive murder of the rebellious students in Tienanmen Square. On the contrary, no such argument was heard when the murder of a number of peaceful marchers in Tbilisi in May 1989 caused a tornado of public criticism in Russia and an official parliamentary investigation of the case.

As is shown by the experience of some formerly authoritarian states in having successfully made the transition to democracy (Germany in the first place), the federalist structure of a country and a government can form the basic underpinning of a stable democratic system in a country as a whole. Russia, aspiring to renew itself as a federation of states and autonomous lands, has better prospects in this respect, as compared to a unitary state.

Moreover, the recognition of liberalism could be encouraged by the inculcation of a federalist ideology into the national mentality, applying principally the same pattern of relations, though now for the level of states instead of the level of individuals. Thus, I believe, a spreading of a federalist doctrine could act in Russia, at least to some extent, as the Reformation, as a historically missing developmental stage of the 20th century democracy.

There is some encouraging evidence for this idea in recent intellectual transformations in Russia. The very necessity to argue for the rights and freedoms of one's own national state as primary, the powers of a federal government being simply derived from them, is molding the framework of political thinking similar to that of a contractual liberal one. It is true that the liberal ideology originated from the struggle for religious autonomy of an individual during the Reformation era. But as a universal value it could well be imbibed through some updated intellectual pattern as well.

The Evolution of Democratic Institutions

There is an evident trend today toward the strengthening of executive power in Russia, not only of President Yeltsin's power, but of the executive bodies on the municipal level as well. The parliament, which has been functioning for no more than a year and a half, is weakening its role.

To what extent may this trend threaten the newly established democratic institutions? Is it not leading the country to a new authoritarian rule? I will try to argue that generally it is not. However, if the present radical economic reforms fail on this or that ground, and the existing governmental institutions are dismissed, an authoritarian rule may well be reestablished. To come closer to the issue, let us consider the nature of the current social transformations.

Russia is experiencing the long-ripe process of bourgeois economic and political modernization. It succeeds the previous unfortunate attempt to modernize society by means of the total socialization of property and the overall planning of the economy, and is aimed at the surmounting of its disastrous aftermath. What distinguishes Russia from the other modernizing states in Asia, Latin America, and Africa, is that it had already experienced authoritarianism during the Communist era, and is strongly disposed now to hold on to democracy. The weakening of the parliamentary structures, as compared with the executive bodies, is a quite natural process, and is not transgressing the general democratic framework so far.

Speaking about the role of parliament during the transitional period from paternalistic rule toward democracy, one can account at least three distinctive phases of its evolution. Initially, it was the parliament which instigated the shaping of public opinion and the establishment of a political opposition to the Communist structures. One can hardly overestimate its role in this stage.

The second phase, a relative weakening of parliament, is occurring now. The role of a political enlightenment and the formation of a democratic front is generally complete. It may seem a surprise, but it is mostly the former Communists who are now standing up for parliament and claiming that presi-

dential authoritarianism is coming. Generally, it is around the Russian parliament where the social-democrats and communists, as well as the national minorities, are currently grouping, whereas the rising bourgeois class is overtly in favor of a strong executive. In all likelihood, in the coming years the situation essentially will not change. The parliament will retain its stabilizing and mostly inertial role, while the executive bodies will focus on reformative dynamics. However, the proper balance between both sides is the factor most essential in aiding successive and peaceful transformations.

The third phase will come when the new framework of social stratification is laid down. The parliament will then be restored to its dominant role as an institution to balance and coordinate the interests and demands of the distinctive social strata, e.g., employer and employee, landowner and tenant, etc.

There are several encouraging factors which will help avert the collapse of democratic institutions and the backsliding to a new authoritarianism in Russia.

First, a military coup remains highly improbable in Russia. The military has never been politically active, and did not form a caste with vested interests and demands that were seriously opposed to those of society at large. The previous military-industrial complex, which had such interests, has collapsed. The fact that the military as a whole did not support the August 1991 coup is highly indicative.

Second, the consensus on the sharing of power between the parliament and the executive seems to have been achieved quite recently. Nobody in the governing structure is seriously contesting the necessity of the rapid and radical reforming of the economy and its distinctive free market orientation. After all, there is no other alternative.

Third, the Communists as a political force, are almost totally wiped out of the political arena, their remnants being divided and demoralized.

Fourth, there exist no family or traditional legal monopolistic private ownership groups that might be inclined to capture power and retain privileges through authoritarian rule, with the excuse of the need for "extraordinary measures" to spur economic growth (as was seen with President Marcos). The Russian case more closely resembles the 19th century Ameri-

can Wild West, with all facing the same conditions. There are private companies, secretly financed in the past by the communist party and thus with some advantage, but such companies do not form a monopoly and are more interested now in liberal economic policies.

Fifth, there exists the strong charismatic influence of Boris Yeltsin, an altruistically motivated and fully legitimate political leader, striving to accomplish reform and lead the country out of ruin. Paradoxically, this is a case where the former paternalistic tradition can play a positive role. The image of a "caring leader" may help bridge the gap between radical reformers and those who remain deeply suspicious about the free-market system itself. These people are encouraged by the very feeling that they are not abandoned in these hard times, that they are being led and cared for.

To conclude, there are good chances so far that radical economic reform in Russia will be successfully accomplished within the bounds of the existing democratic framework. If the democratic institutions happen to fail, two main political forces will compete for power, one of extreme Russian nationalism and the other of radical Western-oriented economic liberalism. The latter has the better chance to triumph. In this case, the radical economic reform will be continued, though under authoritarian rule.

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