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Russia on the Threshold: Orthodox Tradition and Protestant Ethics

By Leons G. Taivans

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Long before autocratic Mr. Putin started his career as the President of Russia, many publications have advanced the old thesis that the deepest roots of Russian autocracy are to be found in the Russian Orthodox religion. Grigory Benevich from The School of Religion and Philosophy, St. Petersburg, Russia, argued:

Speaking of today's Russia, one can say that Western ideology is not successful in this country. I believe that the reason for this lies not so much in the force of the old communist ideology as in unwillingness of the majority of population to accept any ideology /.../ It is dangerous insofar as Russia, while rejecting Western ideology, does not assimilate the values of an open society either — and these values presuppose, among other things the defence of the weak and handicapped, the defence of minorities. Neither does the Patriarchate speak out resolutely and persistently in defence of the values of an open society. Sometimes it even rejects them."¹

Andrey Desnitsky, a research fellow of the Institute of Oriental Studies, Moscow, argues that

"Non-acceptance of the idea of social service of the Church, the attempt to suppress the activities of the foreign missionaries, violating the monopoly of the Orthodox Church in spite of its own passivity in the mission field among national minorities, is the consequence of the corresponding public opinion in a large segment of society. /.../ Contemporary political system for many is accepted as a stage from communism to monarchy. Some time ago I happened to see a slogan in a street: "Yeltsin is a way to monarchy"². Recent canonisation of the last Russian czar Nicholas II, a weak "ruler", is a scandal because of his close links with the religious and political adventurer from Siberia, Grishka Rasputin, and is not easily explained using religious arguments. This canonisation was for a long time promoted by Russian Church hard-liners, such as the

¹Benevich G., "Judaism and the Future of Orthodoxy," *REE*, XVIII, 2 (April 1998) : 32.

²Desnitsky A. "Svyaschenstvo i tsarstvo v rossiyskom obschestvennom soznanii (iz istorii odnogo arkhetaipa)" [*Sacerdotium and Monarchy in the Russian Public Opinion: History of the Archetype*]. *Continent*, No. 2 (104) April-June 2000, Paris-Moscow : 227

influential priest Valentin Asmus.³

Authors who discuss Russian political and social conduct in its relationship to religion some 40 years ago, based their findings mainly on consideration of ancient stereotypes of Russian religious mind. They pointed especially to the Messianic ideas that circulated so freely in Russia, especially among Old Believers and the various Orthodox sects during 18th-19th centuries. These ideas, they maintained, prepared the masses psychologically for the total overthrow of the existing order in 1917 and for radical, Communist reshaping of political and social conditions.⁴

The collapse of communism raised a hope that Marxism had eliminated forever Orthodox stereotypes of Russian mind in favour of democracy. At the end of the last decade of the 20th century it turned out that the situation in Russia was not so simple and the renaissance of Orthodox faith revitalised the age old discussion about the question whether Russia belongs to a European type of society or whether it is much closer to a Turkish type of political culture as Leibniz in 18th century Germany and Russian political theorist Leontiev in 19th century Russia thought.⁵

A very important argument in this respect is the fact that totalitarian ideas and attempts to implement them in the West (Italy, Germany, etc.) faded away after a decade or so, but Russia practised political terror under the communist regime for 70 years and today the new menace of autocratic rule seems to appear. Under the pressure of current political problems, there is a tendency to look at Russia and list all the ways in which her intellectual, political and social structures are at variance with those of Europe. In short, Russia is consigned to "Asia". Scholars also point to the special ecclesiastical development in Russia, her choice of the Byzantine form of Christianity, as specific

³V. Asmus' noteworthy publication with the apology of the restoration of monarchy in Russia "*Regnum Aeternum*" (Moscow: Nash Dom—Paris: L'Age d'Homme, 1996) aroused harsh criticism in different scholarly and political journals (Cf. Desnicky A., "Svyaschenstvo...": 267 ff.).

⁴Benz E. *The Eastern Orthodox Church. Its Thought and Life*. (New York: Doubleday, 1963): 157—61.

⁵In a youthful essay written in 1669 Leibniz treated the Grand Duke of Moscow from the Polish and Roman Catholic point of view as the "Turk of the North". Later on, in the memorial on European politics which he wrote in 1670, entitled *Considerations on the Security of the German Empire*, he viewed the Grand Duchy of Moscow as "a possible future ally" of the European powers for their common defensive struggle against the Turks and Tartars.

example of her "Asiatic" character.

While in the contemporary discussion between new generation of "Slavophiles" and "Westerners"⁶ the former use structural analysis, the latter rely on quantitative analysis, based on sociological research. The results of the research of both contradicts each other.

The Analysis, using "Slavophiles" methodology

Let us try to analyse one of contemporary Western society's fundamental issues - individual freedom, rooted in Martin Luther's well known thesis: "A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all"⁷. Contemporary Western insight, close to the feeling of post-communist Protestant communities is expressed by Leslie Newbigin:

There is no room for a piety that seeks personal holiness by opting out of the struggle for a measure of justice and freedom in public life. This faith enables us to be politically realistic without cynicism, to be sensitive to the supreme rule of love without sentimentality. It enables us humbly to acknowledge that even the best social order is - in God's sight - an organisation of sinful men and women and therefore always prone to corruption.⁸

According to Moltmann, human dignity is based in God's redeeming history with the world. Human rights reflect what God is doing and requiring to meet basic human needs, to free human beings from idolatry, and to bring human beings into communal

⁶Theories of an deep gulf existing between Russia and Europe are represented by the historical views and cultural philosophy of the Slavophiles — Ivan Kireevsky, Constantine and Ivan Aksakov and Yury Samarin. These authors of early 19th century stressed the contrasts between Russia and the West, these contrasts being attributed to the Orthodox character of Russia. They claimed that Russia is the carrier of Orthodox "truth", and argued that the inner degeneracy of the West is due to Roman Catholicism and its offspring - Reformation.

Their opponents "Westerners" underlined the Russia's belonging to the Europe. They stressed that even the ideology of the Slavophiles was rooted most strongly in German romanticism and in German idealistic philosophy, chiefly the philosophies of Hegel, Schelling and Franz von Baader. "Westerners" argued that it can be traced further back to the ideas of Herder. In this interpretation Slavophile theory moved completely within a European framework.

⁷M. Luther. "The Freedom of a Christian". *Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings*. Ed. Timothy F. Lull. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989): 596.

⁸Newbigin L. *Foolishness to the Greeks. The Gospel and Western Culture*. Geneva: WCC, 1986: 137.

relationships, including relationships to past and future generations. This conception of human dignity and human rights provides the framework for the political theology of the contemporary Christian West as a whole. Responsibility of the free man and woman towards society is the main task of social preaching of the Church. But the concrete individual is free to act according to his private faith and feeling of justice. He himself is the ultimate authority when taking decision in the public affairs.

In the concept of the Orthodox Church - quite opposite - a person has no absolute freedom, because freedom exists only in God as an absolute harmony. Therefore man's freedom means harmony of his will with the will of God. "I will get freedom in God when my will becomes one with that of God's", explains the volume "Pastoral Theology" of the official "Handbook for the Priests."⁹ The way to this ultimate goal is obedience. Well known Russian theologian and sociologist Serge Bulgakov declares that a man is a living antinomy, conflicting duality, contradiction incarnate. This antinomy man finds in the depths of his heart, as an expression of his genuine substance. Man is in the image of God, he has the formal nature of God, he is God *in potentia* and this *potentia* opens the way to *theosis*.¹⁰ There are some Russian religious philosophers, namely Vladimir Solovyov, who declare the absolute freedom of a man — both in God or outside Him,¹¹ but this is not accepted in conventional Orthodoxy.

Orthodox anthropology declares man to be a mixture of Nature and Personality. Personality is free from the Nature and doesn't depend on it. The main principle of asceticism is to deny one's own will, which is an illusion of one's individual freedom and thus attain ultimate freedom — freedom of Personality, which is the image of God¹².

In order to be in the image of God man must follow the example of Jesus Christ. Logos is always in full harmony with the Father. The work of Christ would be impossible

⁹“Pastirskoye Bogosloviye” [Pastoral Theology]. *Nastol'naya knyga svyaschennosluzhitelya* [Handbook for the Priests], vol. 8, (Moscow: Edition of Moscow Patriarchate, 1988): 203-204.

¹⁰*Ibid*:200.

¹¹ Solovyov V. S. *Opravdaniye dobra. Nравstvennaya filosofiya* [Justification of Goodness. Ethical Philosophy]. In *Sochineniya*, vol. 1. (Moscow, 1990: Misl'): 715.

¹² [Handbook for the Priests], vol. 8: 201-202.

without self-denial and sacrifice of the both natures in Christ, both of His two wills. The spiritual model of salvation is the denial of Jesus' will and surrendering it to the will of the Father, when at Gethsemane. The greatest lie of the existing world is the separation from the Creator, the disposition to live according to one's own will. It means the misuse of the gift of freedom and practice of atheism.¹³

These are not quotations from early Church Fathers, but from the newly published Handbook for the Orthodox ministry. Bishop Ignatius Bryanchaninov (1807-1867), canonised 12 years ago, and one of the most frequently quoted religious authors in contemporary Russia, wrote: "Jesus Christ was a perfect servant of God, who never failed to fulfil the will of God, who always was obedient to His father. Nobody else managed to fulfil this most holy of man's duties towards God in a proper way".¹⁴ The resistance to God's prescribed fate is Satan's work.¹⁵ Your task, oh, people, is to fulfil God's will. The pattern of this work is given to us by the perfect Man; God who became man. With the faith in God, follow the Laws of the Kingdom and surrender in the fear of the Lord to the fate, prescribed by God!¹⁶ The poor! You must know that you are suffering according to God's will. Without the knowledge of God nothing would happen to you /.../ He has given sufferings to you in order to purify you, as means for you to become perfect. "Wherefore let them, that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls *to Him* in well doing as unto a faithful Creator" (I Pet. 4:19).¹⁷

The Orthodox theologian Alexander Schmemmann wrote that "the ecclesiastic life in the East is built according to a monastic blueprint, inside monasticism or according to the image of monasticism as the only proper way of Christian life."¹⁸ Eastern monasticism

¹³ *Ibid.* 268.

¹⁴ Bryanchaninov Ignatij. "Asketicheskiye opiti" [Ascetics]. *Sochineniya*, vol. II. (Moscow: Moscow Patriarchate, 1989): 101.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 103.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 104.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 106.

¹⁸ Cf. Schmemmann A. *Dogmaticheskiy soyuz* [The Dogmatic Union]. Vstupitel'naya lekciya v kurse istorii Vizantiyskoy Cerkvi, pročitannaya 11 oktyabrya 1945 g. [Introductory Lecture to the History of

dominates both in Orthodox theology and orthopraxis, which is the core of orthodox religiosity. The systematic Pastoral Theology (1988), already quoted, declares, that the "anthropology of desert, monastic cell and mystical bliss" is the core of the real ecclesiastic mind and theological reflection.¹⁹

The Orthodox pastoral theology prescribes, that said principles of submissiveness to God's will must be implemented through the practice of the father-child relations between the confessor and the penitent. The "Handbook for the Priests" recommends: "There are several principles in the relations between a confessor - a *starets*, (or a priest) and a penitent. The member of a Christian congregation never takes a serious step in his life without approval or, at least, without informing his confessor."²⁰ The priest is the image of Christ, His icon, Christ's care, Christ's love, he can become Christ's flesh, which may be crucified, he is Christ's blood, which may be shed for many".²¹

These peculiarities are not marginal elements of a greater, and perhaps more liberal Russian Orthodox tradition. Deacon Andrey Kurayev, previous speech writer of Patriarch Alexey II stresses in his book *Tradition, Dogma, Rite: Apologetic Essays*. (Moscow-Klin: Izdatel'stvo Bratstva Swyatitelya Tikhona, 1995):

Would Roman Catholics be saved? It is doubtful that they will be saved as Catholics. In case they consider themselves "simply Christians", then it may, probably, happen. /.../ They may be saved due to those elements, which have survived in Western Christianity from the Orthodox legacy. It means that a Western Christian may be saved in spite of his or her "Roman Catholicism."²²

The relations between the confessor - *starets*, or priest and penitent is the central nerve of Russian culture. They are known in Europe mainly through the literary works by Dostoyevski, but the consequences in public life are much more serious. All this does not

Byzantine Church History, red at 11th of October, 1945] (No data of edition).

¹⁹[Handbook for the Priests], vol. 8: 195.

²⁰Ibid.: 195; Vedernikov A. "Velikiy uchitel' khristianskoy npravstvennosti". [The Great Teacher of Christian Ethics]. *Journal of Moscow Patriarchate*, No. 12, 1988: 63.

²¹[Handbook for the Priests], vol. 8, 409-410.

²²Kurayev A. *Tradiciya, dogmat, obryad. Apologeticheskiye ocherki* [Tradition, Dogma, Rite: Apologetic essays]. (Moscow-Klin: Izdatel'stvo Bratstva Swyatitelya Tikhona, 1995): 209.

mean that the Church has no business meddling with matters of politics and economics; that its business is with the eternal salvation of the human soul; and that if it undertakes to give ethical advice at all, it should be confined to advice about one's personal conduct. But monastic relations in the congregation feed the minds of individuals and deeply infect their public conduct. Monastic stereotypes, during its thousand years long history have deeply influenced the pattern of public relations. Russian society is passive, submissive to public authorities, it has no traditions of organising itself and solving problems.

The Marxist putsch of 1917 overthrew the pyramid of the Christian Empire but did not destroy it. All structures of the society have been left standing unmoved, but they have been filled with Marxist ideology which was met by the Russian people as a new religion. Nevertheless orthopraxis remained the same. In matters of freedom the place of *starets* and priest was usurped by a Bolshevik commissar, who periodically demanded not only complete submission by the party members, but also their almost religious confession of their political and moral conduct. The most surprising fact is, that the Christian renaissance in Russia means a very active return to the old practice of surrendering one's freedom to a *starets*. This process began in the last decade of the pre-Gorbachov era mainly among young intellectuals of Moscow and Leningrad. It is going on now on a larger scale. The political ideal of the Orthodox people is monarchy, but it is ready to support any authoritarian rule.²³

The dramatic return to Christianity in Russia is connected now with the restoration of the lost Christian heritage. It is quite obvious, that changing realities of this visible and tangible world will pose a question: what should be the Christian's attitude toward Russian moral and economic catastrophes? Religious wars of the 17th century marked the final destruction of Christendom's synthesis of Church and society in the West. Since the 18th century, Europe has turned away from a Christian vision of man and his world, and has accepted a radically different vision of its public life, and relegated the

²³The monistic Orthodox conception of Christian freedom gives way to a specific imperialistic feeling among the Russians. The ideas of self-determination of the nations are foreign to the Orthodox mentality. All must be one in Christ; national or personal freedom is possible on the way to ascetic submissiveness to the authorities, or to the imperialistic nations, chosen for the peoples by God for their own sake. Empire is Cosmos, national independence is Chaos.

Christian vision to the status of a permitted option for the private sector. That is not typical of the Russian society, which is still living in the 19th century world, in the world of old Russian ideals of the Christian state. This world view can explain the extraordinary popularity of autocratic V. Putin in Russian society and his would-be undemocratic reforms, and the canonisation of the last Russian tzar.

The Analysis, using "Westerners" methodology

In April 1997 the private Russian "Institute of Sociological Analysis" conducted an opinion survey on public attitudes toward basic religious and life values.²⁴ The poll covered the whole country, including 1593 persons living in all regions of Russia. The questionnaire included groups of statements concerning existential and religious attitudes of the respondents.

The "existential" part of the questionnaire was based mainly on Max Weber's sociological approach, represented in his well-known *Die protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus*, adapted to Russian and Orthodox milieu. It was considered, that (1) "Protestant ethics" is the agent of modern liberal and individualistic society; (2) Orthodox values (which are similar to Weber's "Catholic" values) are leading the society back to communist, or feudal community. Both "Protestant" and "Orthodox" approaches does not mean dogmatic systems, but popular orientation towards the one or the other system of values. The third (3) position is secular, or even cynical, which can be expressed in a maxim: "Things which benefit me here and now, are good".

The thesis of the research was as follows. The dominance of "Protestant" values indicate the modernisation of the Russian society; the "Orthodox" value system is able to contribute to much political stability, but will result in stagnation of economy and loss of democracy; the "cynical" approach to existential values will lead to great dynamism of the society without political stability and clear prospects in future economic prosperity.

This opinion survey revealed a deep gap between the three value orientations mentioned. Let us consider one of the positions, already discussed in the previous section

²⁴Zubov A. B. *Granitsy razlomov i urovni yedinstva v segodnyashneyi Rossii: uroki sociologicheskogo issledovaniya*. [Borders of Destruction, and Level of Unity in Contemporary Russia: Results of the Sociological Research] "POLITEIA", Moscow, No. 2 (8), 1998, pp. 41-101.

- freedom and responsibility of a person. 60,8% of respondents selected the "Protestant" statement "Freedom is God's given privilege, everybody can use it as he/she likes, but one should always remember, that everybody is responsible to the people and one's own conscience". 31,9% selected the "secular" statement: "Freedom belongs to the person by right of birth, one may use it as he/she likes and be responsible exclusively to oneself." Only 7% selected the "Orthodox" statement: "Freedom is God's grace, but it is a heavy yoke and it is better to surrender it to a person with authority".²⁵

Individual freedom is closely connected with attitudes towards political authority. To complete this analysis, the same questionnaire asked the respondents to estimate their understanding of the state authority. 60,1% of the respondents chose the "Protestant" statement: "Authority is needed to maintain order in the state, but it should not dominate over the society. Society must control the state authorities". Only 16.8% of the respondents agreed with the opposite "Orthodox" statement: "Authorities are needed to provide order in the society and for this reason they should not depend on the society". The "Cynical" statement: "The authorities use the power for their own sake and statements about the control of society over the state authorities are null and void" gained 22,8% of respondents' sympathies.²⁶

A much discussed question is the relation of the Russian religious mind towards civil law. Ancient societies considered law a sacral norm which should be observed with religious zeal. Hobbes' idea that the lawgiver himself is free from the civil law does not agree with the oldest religious conceptions of the God-given-Law. During Soviet tyranny the Law was changed into an ornament or worse - into chains for slavery. Soviet legal nihilism did not emerge spontaneously. Before the Bolshevik Revolution the peasant society of Russia, living under the yoke of serfdom, used to praise "the law of conscience" instead of formal Law. The remnants of both types of law-understanding are still alive in this society.

The questionnaire asked respondents to choose one of three possible statements.

²⁵Zubov A. B. *Granitsy razlomov i urovni yedinstva v segodnyashneye Rossii: uroki sociologicheskogo issledovaniya*. [Borders of Destruction, and Level of Unity in Contemporary Russia: Results of the Sociological Research] "POLITEIA", Moscow, No. 2 (8) 1998: 76.

²⁶Ibid.: 84.

"Protestant": "Existing laws are not perfect, but they must be served, otherwise society will go to chaos; "Orthodox": "Existing laws are not perfect, for this reason it is better to live according to conscience instead of obeying laws;" "Cynical": " Existing laws are not perfect, they can be ignored. The interests of a man are prior to law and there is no place for feeling guilty in case of breaking law". 50.9% chose the "Protestant" statement; 38.9% accepted the "Orthodox" attitude to the Law, while only 10% supported the "cynical" attitude.

The sociological research revealed that (1) Russian society is at least willing to be moral; (2) they feel a certain "moral imperative" in their souls, but they don't want a "person with authority", to decide for them what is good and what is bad. (3) Most Russians are aware that public authorities must be controlled by the society. (4) The greatest part of the society are Law-obedient. (p.90) We may conclude then, that Russian society is ready for democracy and the traditional "Orthodox" orientation in existential questions is not valid any more.

"Protestant", "Orthodox" and "cynical" attitudes do not correlate with corresponding religious affiliation. 55% of the respondents declared themselves as "believers" (48% said that they are Orthodox, 1.4% called themselves Protestants, 6% said they are Muslims), 37% of the respondents confessed themselves atheists, 8% could not answer. Among those, who identified themselves as "believers", only 11% were regular church-attenders. 42.2% answered that they never participate in religious services. One third of the respondents believed in an afterlife, but 45.6% did not. Even 13.3% of regular church-attenders did not believe in an afterlife.

Nevertheless, approximately one third of the Russians are using religious criteria in their philosophy of life, but these people do not form a specific religious confessional subculture (Orthodox, Protestant, etc.), or a religious segment of society apart from the secular one, as it was in 19th century France. The religious values are cross-confessional and even transcending the borders of one religion. They are accepted even by people, who declare themselves "atheist". "Protestant" values are accepted by the majority of Orthodox church-attenders, as well as atheists. About 20% of Orthodox believers choose "secular" statements.

How does it happen, that after 70 years of totalitarian Marxist ideology Protestant

values are so popular? To answer this question the Theological Faculty of the University of Latvia conducted a parallel sociological poll, using the same questionnaire as in Russia. According to its longer religious tradition²⁷ Latvia is a Protestant country and for this reason the results were expected to contrast with those in Russia. 758 persons were interviewed in all regions of Latvia. The central thesis in this research was that 50 years of Russian soviet occupation could not destroy the Protestant ethic of labor, cultivated during 400 years of Protestantism in Latvia. Respondents had to choose one of three statements. The "Protestant" one: "Work is a moral necessity; industriousness will give you success and prosperity". The "Orthodox-Catholic" position: "Work is a hard necessity of life. Extra work is evidence of greed." Secular position: "Work is a way of getting money; the best job is that which gives much money with minimal work". "Protestant" statement was selected by 76% of Letts and 67% of Russians, living in Latvia. The corresponding figure in Russia was only 53,1%. Contrary to what was expected in Russia only 15% of Russians supported the "Orthodox" statement. As to Letts, only 5% of those interviewed selected "Orthodox-Catholic" statement. But of Russians living in Latvia, 10% confirmed their sympathies with this attitude to labor. The main alternative to Protestant value orientation in Latvia as well as in Russia is the secular orientation which was selected by 31.7% of Russian residents and 17.1% of

²⁷ According to recent data 45% Latvians identify themselves as Lutherans (*Kato u bazn cas v stnesis* [The Catholic Church Report], No. 17 [157], 4. Aug. 2000., p.7.) In Weber's eyes, Lutheranism seem to operate in the opposite way to Calvinism, accepted by Weber as the model of "Protestant ethics". The most important theoretical conviction in Lutheranism is the idea of salvation *sola fide*, and thereby the idea that one's actions have no impact on salvation. The central system of values in Lutheranism contains an idea that everything should better be left as it is, and since the salvation is given by God's grace and the idea of predestination has not had the same central position as in Calvinism, the basic mood of Lutheranism seems to be pessimism. In Weber's view, the Lutherans, ideal-typically, have no incentives for rationale action, since the stress on a personal relation to Christ tends to orient them towards contemplation. Taken together, the construction of the Lutheran view of life does not give any strong motives for action, but rather impels the individual to passivity and quietism. (Ekstrand Th. *Max Weber in a Theological Perspective*. Uppsala: Department of Theology, 1999, p.79).

Concerning Latvia Weber's strongly dogmatic position doesn't work. It should be remembered, that for Weber, religions historically have had two main functions, namely to provide value orientation and an overall interpretation of reality. It goes without saying, that the value orientation of German, or Latvian Lutherans is closer to the Calvinist model, than to Russian Orthodox. Compared to neighboring Russia the value system differs greatly and the ethnic Latvian population before World War II in this respect was closer to Germans, than Russians. In 1721, when Russian czar Peter the Great integrated Latvia into Russian Empire, Latvia became the "locomotive" for modernisation of Russia. German Lutheran elite of Latvia took key positions in the Ministries in St. Petersburg, but Latvian "blue collars" became the bulk of skilled manufacture workers in the capital of Russian Empire.

inhabitants of Latvia.

Max Weber argued that refusal to get rich by legal means is contrary to the principles of Protestant ethics as he understood them. Russian theologian A. Zubov, one of the co-authors of the sociological research, that was conducted in Russia (Zubov, 1998, 65),²⁸ stated that the traditional Orthodox position towards riches is expressed in *Ecclesiastes* 9:11: "I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favor to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all". "Russian society always looked with suspicion on riches acquired in a short span of time except as a legacy or thanks to "royal service". Riches, obtained in business were considered polluted by murder, fraud, and avarice. Poverty, in opposite, was glorified as "the fate of Christ", and, by the way, the tremendous scale of robbery during the *coup d'état* in 1917, can be explained by the early 20th century Russian society's hatred towards the *nouveau riche*. (The Roman Catholic mind is not so hostile to riches, but, according to M. Weber, Catholics, contrary to Protestants who are fond of good food, which is available when you have money, prefer good sleep, which would be impossible, in case you have a lot of business troubles.)

Statements in the questionnaire were formulated as follows: "Protestant": "Wealth is better than poverty, but in any case one must live unpretentiously, and with dignity"; "Orthodox-Catholic": "There is no use trying to get rich, because it is impossible to do so by honest means. The life of a poor person is honest contrary to that of a rich person"; "Cynical", or "secular": "Wealth in any case is better than poverty. One should do everything to get money, and avoid poverty". The "Protestant" statement was chosen by 46% of Russians and 67% of Latvians, without considerable difference between the ethnic and confessional communities.

We have already discussed the attitude of the contemporary Russians towards freedom of the individual, which is a very crucial element in the modernisation of society. Compared to the 60.8% Russian respondents who chose the "Protestant" position, in Latvia the result was 73.9% of the respondents with no difference between

²⁸Zubov A. B. Granitsy razlomov....: 65.

the representatives of different ethnic communities and their religious affiliation. The "Orthodox-Catholic" position was accepted by 7% of Russians and by 4% of Latvians. The "Secular" position was maintained by 31.9% of Russians, and by 21.2% of Latvians.

Unfortunately Latvians expressed their Protestant identity only in these three positions: attitude towards work, wealth, and freedom of an individual. The rest of the statements, concerning philosophical and theological viewpoints of the respondents revealed that Russians are more "Protestant" than traditionally Protestant Latvians.

These results were contrary to the prognosis. Looking back to the history of Stalin's Russia, a Church historian would probably find slight parallels with John Calvin's theocratic regime in Geneva (1541-1564). How did this Protestant current appear in traditional Orthodox Russia?

It should be remembered, that the intellectual circles of Russia were greatly interested in Protestant ideas. A hundred years after John Calvin had ruled Geneva, there was an anti-Protestant polemic in Russia by a pastor Matthew Filhober in connection with the prospects of marriage between Russian princess Irina and a Danish prince. Even later, in the 17th century the influence of the European Reformation was still growing in Russia (Bulgakoff Makariy, 1996, 19). It is quite probable, that the discussion resulted in reforms by Peter the Great, leading to westernization of 18th century Russia. Then the neighbouring Livonia (now Latvia and Estonia) with its Protestant population and European technical and administrative skills was incorporated into Russian Empire to serve as a leading force in the modernisation of Russia.

Concerning theological discussion, Georges Florovsky revealed in his research *Ways of Russian Theology*, (1937),²⁹ that this aspect of academic activity was systematically suppressed in Russian seminaries. (Universities in Russia never have had Theological faculties). The suppressed interest in Protestantism found its way in philosophical literature and fiction of the 19th and early 20th centuries.³⁰ The social dimension of the suppressed will to inner reform expressed itself when the Revolution of

²⁹Florovsky G. *Putyi russkogo bogosloviya* [A History of Russian Theology] (Paris, 1937; facsimile ed., Vilnius: Vilnius' Diocesan Department, 1991).

³⁰Müller L. *Russischer Geist un Evangelisches Christentum. Die Kritik des Protestantismus in der russischen religiösen Philosophie und Dichtung im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert.* (Witten a.d. Ruhr, 1951).

1917 happened. Destroying everything reminding one of the Orthodox Church, the Revolution was trying to create a kind of "Marxist Protestantism" which included several elements of Weberian Protestant ethics concerning work, wealth, etc. For this reason Protestant Church preaching concerning everyday ethics was not prevented by Soviet authorities in Latvia, because it did not differ from the norms, as promoted by soviet schools and official propaganda. In other words - Russian Communism in 70 years created a Protestant value system in Russia.

Obviously the two value orientation systems, the traditional Orthodox one, looking for restoration of authoritarian structures and represented by the political elite on one hand, and the Protestant viewpoint with its modernisation expectations of the society - on the other hand are in mutual balance now. This could be an answer to the crucial question "Whether Russia can develop a civil society?"