

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF PETER THE GREAT

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In the summer of 2013, the author of this report participated in a five-week seminar for educators in Britain and the Dutch Republic sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities and the University of Massachusetts at Dartmouth. The theme of the seminar was “The Making of Modern Society and a European World Economy.” Since it also coincided with the Netherlands-Russia Year which emphasized the bilateral relations between the two states that grew as a result of Peter the Great’s trips to the Dutch Republic and Great Britain, the author examined the impact of the Czar’s trips on Russian relations with the West.

*The Czar, His Trips
to the Dutch
Republic and
England and the
Impact on Russian
Relations with the
West*

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Introduction

In the 17th and 18th centuries, two relatively small, predominantly Protestant countries in northwestern Europe created the foundations of a modern economy and society that ultimately resulted in the ascendancy of the West over the rest of the world. These two countries are Britain and the Netherlands. Historians such as Jan DeVries, Keith Wrightson, Robert C. Allen, and Jonathan Israel make compelling arguments that a combination of economic, political, and cultural factors that were unique to these countries contributed to their unprecedented and sustained prosperity. These were countries that created commercial empires, first locally and then overseas, and arguably more than anywhere else in the world saw the emergence of a proto-industrial period which witnessed the economic dependency of town on country, the lowering of production costs and the increasing of wages that triggered a growth in demand of non-essential products and ultimately led to the Industrial Revolution. All of this was facilitated by political systems in both countries that, although not yet democratic, were certainly more representative than anywhere else in the world. The ruling classes in Britain and the Dutch Republic promoted these economic policies, in some cases with significant help from the state, to forge the modern societies that emerged even prior to the Industrial Revolution of the nineteenth century. This is the main idea of the 2013 summer NEH Seminar for school teachers, *The Dutch Republic and Britain: The Making of Modern Society and a European World Economy*, which was held over a five week period at The Institute for Historical Research in London, United Kingdom and Webster University, Leiden, Netherlands.

Although from a historical perspective, if one accepts the premise of the arguments mentioned above as legitimate, then what becomes obvious today was not so obvious beyond the confines of the European continent in the 17th and 18th centuries. According to the British economist Angus Maddison, two Asian countries, India and China, accounted for anywhere between 45-50% of the world GDP between the second

century of the Common Era and as late as 1820.¹ The “Western,” or more precisely, the British and Dutch methods of modernizing were not yet models of development for any country in the world except one: Russia. In 1697-1698 and again in 1717-1718, Peter I, better known as Peter the Great, was the first Russian ruler to travel outside of his domain. The main purpose of his journeys was to figure out how to modernize his underdeveloped and backward state and transform it into a European power. To do this, he chose the Dutch Republic and Britain as his primary destinations.

There is little doubt that Peter the Great’s two trips abroad were critical in his transformation of Russia, from a country that was hardly taken seriously by the leading European powers to an empire that spanned two continents and eleven time zones. But was Peter’s “Great Embassy” in 1697-1698 and his second trip in 1717-1718 successful in transforming Russian and Western European perceptions of one another to the point where Russia was accepted into the European fold, particularly by the two countries he admired the most? The main premise of this essay is to demonstrate that, although the leading Western European states clearly identified Russia as European geographically, and they were forced to come to terms with Russia as a force to be reckoned with, they refused to accept it as an equal partner, fully integrated into Western culture, civilization, and decision-making. The exception to this general Western policy of shunning Russia was when the leading Western powers felt their national security threatened to such an extent that even help from Russia was necessary. Examples range from the alliance with Russia against Napoleonic France and the two World Wars when Russia was seen as essential in the struggle against German militarism. Russian historians go further and claim that their country first saved Western civilization from the Mongol hordes by absorbing most of the Asian marauding armies and enduring a 200-year occupation. Russians, from czars to commissars to intellectuals to common people have also felt ambivalent about their country’s relations with the West. Peter’s transformation of Russia, using the West as a model, set off a debate that still resonates to this day in a

¹ Manas Chakvaraty and Vatsala Kamat, “India and China GDP: Trend During 1000-2014.” *Live Mint* and the *Wall Street Journal*, January 3, 2010. Accessed July 29, 2013. <http://www.livemint.com/Money/tjnQtQuq545v3CaP4fPCKJ/India-and-China-GDP-trend-during-10002014.html>

country that once again is trying to determine what its identity is and define its status in the contemporary world.

This essay, on the long-term impact of Peter the Great's journeys to the Netherlands and Britain on Russian relations with the West does not pretend to be comprehensive. As it spans the three hundred and fifteen years from the year of the Czar's first journey to the present, there will be events, ideas, and thinkers that will be omitted due to time and space constraints. The inspiration to examine the state of Russia's relations with the West was the NEH summer teacher seminar focusing on the Dutch Republic and Britain and the year 2013 being officially designated by both the Russian and Netherlands governments as the Year of Russia and Holland. In light of the re-emergence of Russia as a major player in international affairs and the persistent differences the West and Russia have on such social and cultural issues as homosexual rights makes this examination, from the author's perspective, necessary.

Part I: Peter in the Dutch Republic and England

Russian-Western Encounters Prior to Peter the Great

From its inception when the capital city was in Kiev and when Prince Vladimir converted the country to Christianity in 988, Russia was not well known to the rest of Europe. When Vladimir decided to convert the country according to the Byzantine Orthodox Christian tradition, he embraced a denomination that had been increasingly suspicious of the Western Roman Catholic Church. Besides the rejection of the Roman Catholic Pope as the leader of the Orthodox community, conversion to the Eastern Rite meant significantly different cultural traditions for Russia as well, as the Greek-dominated Byzantine culture with its Cyrillic alphabet developed especially for the Slavic people by the monks Cyril and Methodius added another aspect of distinction with the Latin West.

Russia's experiences with the Christian West were far from cordial and contributed to its suspicion of its European neighbors. During the thirteenth century, when the Mongols from the East were threatening Russia, two Roman Catholic powers, the Swedes and the Teutonic Knights looked to exploit its vulnerability and attacked. The prince of Novgorod, Alexander Nevsky defeated the Swedes and the Teutonic

Knights in 1240 and 1242 respectively, and as a result, the Russian Orthodox Church made him a saint.² Russia may have been successfully defended from Western powers bent on imposing Catholicism on Russia but it could not avoid being overwhelmed by the Mongols who ruled the country for the next two and a half centuries. This extensive period under Mongol rule on the one hand strengthened the power of the Orthodox Church but on the other contributed to the alienation of the country from the rest of Europe.

As the Mongol Empire declined and Russia broke free of its rule in 1480, the princes of Moscow set out to unify the country by gathering through subjugation the other Russian principalities. Russia was still vulnerable to attacks from the West, particularly from Catholic Poland, which had occupied modern-day Ukraine and Belarus which were part of the original Kievan Russian state. In the beginning of the seventeenth century, when political turmoil over the question of succession to the throne threw Russia into chaos known as the Time of Troubles, once more the Swedes, now Lutheran, and Catholic Poland seized on the opportunity, with the Poles occupying the Kremlin and looking to convert Russia to Catholicism.

Around the time of Russia's liberation from Mongol rule, the Byzantine Empire, and its fabled capital city, Constantinople, fell to the Ottoman Turks in 1453. As a result, Muscovite Russia increasingly saw itself as the "Third Rome," or the new guardian and defender of the Orthodox Christians. In the words of the monk Philotheus, who wrote his epistle to Grand Duke Vasilii III in 1511:

The Church of old Rome fell for its heresy. The gates of the second Rome, Constantinople, were hewed down by the axes of the infidel Turks; but the Church of Moscow, the Church of the new Rome, shines brighter than the sun in the whole universe... Two Romes have fallen, but the third stands fast; a fourth there cannot be. The kingdom shall not be given to another.³

According to the early twentieth century philosopher Russian philosopher Nikolai Berdyaev, the doctrine of Moscow as the Third Rome became the fundamental foundation idea of the Muscovite state that Peter the Great inherited in 1682. Religion

² Theodore Pulcini, *Russian Orthodoxy and Western Christianity: Confrontation and Accommodation in Russia and Western Civilization: Cultural and Historical Encounters*, ed. Russell Bova (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2003), 88.

³ *Ibid*, 89.

and nationality in Russia developed side by side. The Orthodox faith was the Russian faith; what was not Russian faith was not Orthodox faith.⁴ This was the major factor that separated the Russian state from the West. But Russia was beginning to significantly fall behind the rising powers of Western Europe, including countries like France, Britain, and the Dutch Republic. With this in mind Peter set out to transform Russia when he took sole possession of the country in 1696.

Initial Western Contacts in Russia

Peter the Great was the first Russian leader to travel beyond the borders of his country when he embarked on his Great Embassy in 1697. Prior to this, both Europeans and Russians knew very little about the other. The prevailing European opinion of Russia was that of a wild, semi-Asiatic country⁵ where the Grand Duke of Moscow ruled despotically over his subjects who were prone to servility and even slavery. Sigismund von Herberstein, who had twice visited Russia in 1517 and 1527 as an ambassador and diplomat from the Holy Roman Empire, created this image of Russia. Herberstein, who was from Slovenia, was able to acquaint himself with the Russian reality by virtue of his capacity to speak Slovene, a Slavic language related to Russian. His depiction of Russia was one of an eyewitness and therefore it became highly influential in shaping Europe's image of the Grand Duchy of Muscovy.⁶

Russian perceptions of the West and Westerners were not friendlier. These perceptions were largely based on the very limited interactions of Russians and the small number of Westerners who had settled in Russia. Peter's first inspiration to learn from the West came from his initial experiences and contacts with these foreigners that lived and worked in Russia. The "German Settlement" as it was known, was created in 1652 by Peter's father, Czar Alexei, as a ghetto for all foreigners who did not wish to convert to Eastern Orthodoxy.⁷ Alexei felt that the potentially pernicious influence of these foreigners on the Russian people needed to be safely minimized while allowing them to

⁴ Nicolas Berdyaev, *The Origins of Russian Communism* (University of Michigan Press, 1960), 11.

⁵ A.A. Gus'kov, *Velikoe posol'stvo Petra I: Istochnikovedcheskoe Issledovanie* (Mosvka: Rossiiskaia Akademia Nauk Institut Rossiiskoi Istorii, 2005), 4.

⁶ Florian Gassner. *Germany Versus Russia: A Social History of the Divide Between East and West* (Ph.D. Thesis, Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 2012), 27.

⁷ Emmanuel Wagemans, *Petr Velikiy v Belgii* (Sankt-Peterburg: Giperion, 2007) 11.

continue to live their style of life according to their customs, traditions, and beliefs. Over 3000 people of various ethnic and religious backgrounds resided there so the “German” identification is linguistic and not ethnic. Back then, Russians referred to all foreigners as “Nemtsy, (Немцы – German) or “Ne moy” (не мой) meaning “dumb” because they couldn’t speak or comprehend the Russian language.⁸

The biggest foreign influence on young Peter came from the Netherlands and this would explain why he visited the country twice and spent most of his time abroad there. The majority of Peter’s contacts were Dutch, among them was Franz Timmerman, who was Peter’s tutor of arithmetic, geometry, ballistics, and the art of fortification.⁹ Among Peter’s first experiences with ships were with Kartsen Brandts, a ship-carpenter who was recruited by Peter’s father to work in Russia and Gerrit Musch, whom the Czar met in Archangel in 1696. Andrei Vinius was the only Dutchman that had the distinct honor of being in Peter’s inner circle of ‘drunken fools.’¹⁰ It was Vinius, the product of a Dutch father and Russian mother that taught the young czar to speak Dutch fluently. Years later, in 1710, when Peter had already consolidated his rule over Russia and completed his Great Embassy abroad, English diplomat Charles Whitworth wrote of the Czar, “He speaks quite quickly in Dutch, which is fast becoming the language of the court.”¹¹ Even the czar’s favorite outfit on state occasions was Dutch. When there were official celebrations to commemorate the Russian capture of Swedish ships during the Great Northern War in 1719, “Czar Peter was dressed in the garb of a Dutch sailor.”¹² It is also well-known that the czar was inspired by the Dutch flag when he introduced the new white, blue, and red tri-color in Russia, modifying it slightly to differentiate it from the Dutch.

The Dutch presence was significant in the White Sea city of Arkhangelsk, the Russian port city through which virtually all of the country’s trade with Western Europe was conducted prior to the establishment of St. Petersburg in 1712. Even after most trade

⁸ “Rossiyskaya Imperiya: Proekt Leonida Parfenova,” Petr I, Chast’ 1. Noyabr’, 2000. NTV – Russia.

⁹ Jake V. Th. Knoppers. *The Visit of Peter the Great to the United Provinces in 1697-97 and 1716-1717 As Seen in Light of the Dutch Sources*. (M.A. Thesis, McGill University, Montreal, 1969).

¹⁰ Knoppers, “The Visit of Peter.”

¹¹ Sergey Gorbatenko, *New Amsterdam: St. Petersburg and the Architectural Images of the Netherlands* (Saint Petersburg: Pechatny Dvor, 2003), 8.

¹² Ibid, 8.

shifted to the new capital city, a permanent community of 34 Dutch merchants and their family members totaling around 100 people was established in Arkhangelsk in 1740. The Council of the Dutch Reformed Church even established a branch there prior to 1733.¹³

But the amount of the time that Peter was spending in the German Settlement with foreigners, where he acquired a taste for tobacco, wine, and beer, and often parodied the Orthodox Church and the Patriarch with his foreign and Russian friends, irritated many Muscovites. They started referring to the czar as an atheist and the Antichrist. There were even rumors that he wasn't the real czar but had been switched at birth by foreigners, or that he was Franz Lefort's son.¹⁴ Lefort, who was born in Geneva and served both in the French and Dutch militaries, came to Russia in 1675 essentially as a mercenary, seeking to secure a position in the Russian army. Eventually he was given the rank of captain and then head of the fleet in Peter's early naval campaigns against the Ottoman Turks. His service made him one of Peter's closest confidants. It is Lefort who encouraged Peter to embark on a trip to Western Europe and it was he that led the Great Embassy in 1697.

As soon as Peter announced his intention to take part in the Great Embassy, his conservative opponents criticized his decision as a threat to the Orthodox faith and Russian values.¹⁵ Almost ten years earlier, his sister Sophia, who served as regent to the young Peter and his brother Ivan, engineered a conspiracy against him among a special military unit known as the Streltsy. The goal of the conspiracy was to kill Peter, liquidate the German Settlement, exterminate foreigners in positions of power, and reorganize the army so that it would be loyal only to Sophia. A Scot in the service of the Russian army, Patrick Gordon, ultimately saved Peter. Gordon's loyalty to Peter would place him in the czar's inner circle. Peter trusted him so much that he was left in charge of Moscow when the czar left for the Great Embassy to Europe.¹⁶

¹³ Jan Willem Veluwenkamp, "The Arkhangelsk Business Venture of the Amsterdam Merchant David Leeuw, 1712-1724." *Baltic Studies*, (1997): 92-93.

¹⁴ Vyacheslav Fyodorov, "Peter the Great," in *Peter the Great: An Inspired Tsar*, (Amsterdam: Hermitage, 2013), 25.

¹⁵ A. Yazikov, *Prebivanie Petra Velikago v Sardam I Amsterdam v 1697 I 1717 Godah*, (Berlin: B.Behr's Buchhandlung E.Bock, 1872), 10.

¹⁶ Adam Muskin, "Foreigners in Russia: Patrick Gordon," Russiapedia, accessed August 28, 2013, <http://russiapeda.rt.com/foreigners/patrick-gordon/>

‘Peter Mikhailov’ in the Dutch Republic and England

The Great Embassy set out for Western Europe in March 1697 led by Lefort. Peter, who became the sole ruler of Russia in 1696 by virtue of the death of his brother and co-ruler Ivan, travelled incognito under the pseudonym of ‘Peter Mikhailov’ with 250 other members. The Embassy was to visit Austria, Prussia, the Netherlands, Britain, Venice, and the Vatican to learn about Western maritime technology, science, and medicine to modernize Russia. Peter’s ability to secure foreign experts to work in Russia would turn out to be successful.

The Czar’s military campaign against his adversary to the south, the Ottoman Empire, was another factor that inspired his decision to travel to Western Europe. In 1696, the Russians captured the Ottoman fortress of Azov, located at the mouth of the Don River. At the time, Russia’s only maritime outlet was Arkhangelsk in the White Sea, and because of its northern location, that port remained closed for a good portion of the year because of ice. Securing access to the Black Sea and ultimately an outlet to the Mediterranean were major strategic goals for Peter. To do so, the Czar pondered the need to gain expertise in building a navy and therefore, the necessity to travel to the seafaring powers of Europe. It was necessary to recruit experts in ship-building and carpentry from abroad. There weren’t any comparable experts in Russia capable of fulfilling the lofty goals that Peter set. In the Czar’s own words:

All of my thoughts were focused on building a fleet and when I decided to lay siege to Azov, despite all of the grief the Tatars caused us, we took it. None of my wavering prevented me from thinking too long: soon I began to act.”¹⁷

Although the itinerary of the Great Embassy included Catholic states, during this period Peter favored the Protestant, bourgeois countries of the Dutch Republic and England.¹⁸ This was mainly because Catholicism posed a greater threat to Russia historically. Even in pre-Petrine Russia, the German Settlement had four Protestant churches: two Lutheran, one Dutch Calvinist and one Anglican.¹⁹ The first Catholic Church was only built in 1694

¹⁷ M.M. Bogoslovskii, *Petr I: Materiali dlya biografii. Tom pervii – Detstvo, Yunost’, Azovskiye Pohodi 30 Maya 1672 – 6 Marta 1697.* (Gosudarstvennoe Sotsial’no – Ekonomicheskoe Izdatel’stvo, 1940), 351.

¹⁸ Wagemans, pg. 21.

¹⁹ Sergey Tominsky, “The Moscow State in the Seventeenth Century,” in *Peter the Great: An Inspired Tsar*, (Amsterdam: Hermitage, 2013), 69.

as a burial place for Peter's close friend, Lieutenant-General Patrick Gordon who was a devout Catholic.²⁰ The czar had an aversion for his contemporary king, Louis XIV of France, an aversion that was shared by the stadtholder of Holland and eventual King of England, William III. Peter had openly encouraged Huguenot refugees fleeing persecution in France to settle in Russia after the 'Sun King' had revoked the Edict of Nantes in 1685.²¹

An equally important factor that led Peter to focus more on the Dutch Republic and England was their economic and technological strength. Since its formal independence from Spain in 1648, the Dutch Republic was in the midst of its "Golden Age." Her ships dominated world trade. The size of the Dutch merchant fleet in the 1670's probably exceeded the combined fleets of England, France, Spain, Portugal, and Germany.²² Amsterdam was the banking and financial center of Europe. Under the leadership of William III who took the throne in Britain in 1688 as a result of the 'Glorious Revolution,' the Dutch had withstood the powerful Louis XIV of France.

Peter arrived in the Netherlands in August, 1697. He worked as a carpenter in the shipyards of Zaandam but within a week his incognito status was exposed, which led him to move to Amsterdam. There he worked in the shipyards owned by the United East India Company. In this capacity he was able to concentrate on mastering the art of Dutch shipbuilding.²³ Peter's embassy remained in Amsterdam for nine months. When the carpenter-czar was not working on building ships, he was visiting museums, theaters, purchasing weapons for his army, studying mathematics, physics and the microscope with Anton van Leeuwenhoek. He also learned the art of pulling teeth.²⁴ Peter was so impressed with the Dutch Republic that he returned a second time twenty years later.

One aspect of the Dutch Republic that did not impress Peter was the lack of any blueprints or measurements for the construction of ships and yachts. Peter's close friend, Nicolaas Witsen, the Mayor of Amsterdam and the person responsible for securing a job

²⁰ Muskin, "Foreigners in Russia: Patrick Gordon."

²¹ Anthony Cross, *Peter the Great Through British Eyes: Perceptions and Representations of the Czar Since 1698* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 2000), 6.

²² Jan De Vries, *The Economy of Europe in an Age of Crisis, 1600-1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 118.

²³ Fyodorov, 30.

²⁴ *Ibid*, 33.

for the czar at the United East India Company's shipyard explained to him that Dutch shipwrights worked mainly by eyeing up the construction task and experience. The czar was not impressed with this explanation. An Englishman working with Peter at the East India Company learned of his frustration and explained to him that in England shipbuilding was done with more precise use of mathematics.²⁵ Noting Peter's heightened interest in shipbuilding, William also invited the Russian czar to his island domain where technical drawings were used to build fast modern ships with standardized proportions.

The Great Embassy in England

Peter and fifteen members of his entourage departed from the Dutch Republic and arrived in London on January 11, 1698. They remained in England for 105 days, mostly in Deptford, located approximately 5.5 miles southeast of London on the Thames River.²⁶ He chose the suburban location because of its shipyards and to keep out of the public eye. Only three days after his arrival, none other than William came to visit the czar in Deptford. The two first met secretly in a town just outside of Utrecht in Holland on September 7, 1697. Their relationship, by all accounts was a good one, with Peter addressing the king of England as "the Most Serene Lord, Brother, and most affectionate Friend."²⁷ William provided unhindered access to the shipyards of Deptford, Portsmouth, and Chatham, and to Woolwich Arsenal. Peter freely visited military bases, docks, arsenals and armories looking to acquire technical drawings and models of ships.²⁸ One of the highlights of Peter's trip was the mock naval battle that William organized for him off the Isle of Wight. Peter was in ecstasy. Upon completion of the demonstration of England's naval might, Peter is purported to have said, "I would rather be an English admiral than a Russian czar."²⁹

²⁵ Cross, 14.

²⁶ Ibid, 18.

²⁷ *Pis'ma I Bumagi Imperatora Petra Velikago: Tom Perviy.* (1688-1701). (S. Peterburg: Gosudarstvennaya Tipografiya, 1887), 291.

²⁸ Fyodorov, 35.

²⁹ "Rossiyskaya Imperiya: Proekt Leonida Parfenova," Petr I, Chast' 1.

Although studying the techniques of shipbuilding was Peter's primary interest in England as it was in the Netherlands, he continued to soak up as much as he could about other disciplines that interested him and that he thought would strengthen Russia. He studied mathematics, geometry, and astronomy intensely. He visited the Observatory at Greenwich, the Royal Society, and Oxford University.³⁰ He purchased many instruments, tools, lathes, and weapons. He brought home huge quantities of medicines and surgical instruments and recruited many specialists to Russia, promising to compensate them handsomely for their expertise.³¹ As absolute monarchs go, Peter did not spend much money on himself. But he did spend a lot on the things he felt were essential for the country. Thus, when he ran out of money in England, and with no bank willing to lend to the Russians, Peter turned to Lord Carmathen who provided the czar with a £ 12,000 advance.³² In return, Carmathen received the exclusive monopoly for importing Virginia-grown tobacco into Russia. Ironically, smoking was illegal there, punishable by flogging, lip splitting, Siberian exile, and sometimes death. Peter not only repealed the ban against the will of the Orthodox Church but he even encouraged Russians to smoke to be more Western.

The Czar left England in April, 1698 for Austria, passing through the Netherlands yet again. After visiting Vienna the czar planned to travel on to Venice but word of the Streltsy revolt prompted him to return to his country. He came back to Europe in 1717, twenty years after he first set out West. Besides pursuing his interest in science, technology, medicine, and mathematics, as well as recruiting more European specialists to help train Russians in the fields that they were masters in, Peter expressed a strong interest in the art and culture of the Dutch Republic. Like the first trip, Peter went to try to secure an alliance of Western powers against an adversary. This time it was against Sweden. Peter was in the midst of a long, protracted conflict with the Swedes known as the Great Northern War (1700-1721). But his attempts at forging an anti-Swedish alliance, like his attempts to secure an anti-Turkish alliance two decades earlier, were rejected.

³⁰ Fyodorov, 35.

³¹ Ibid, 35.

³² Cross, 29.

Results of Peter's Trips to Western Europe

Peter set out to modernize his country and transform it into a modern European power by going to the leading Western nations and learning ship-building, mathematics, science, technology, medicine, and later, art and culture. He also hoped to secure two separate alliances with the leading Western powers against his two biggest enemies, the Ottoman Empire in 1697-98 and Sweden in 1717-1718. So, how successful was he in these goals he set out to accomplish?

Arguably, the most productive aspect of his two trips was what he learned about shipbuilding from the Dutch Republic and Great Britain. Upon visiting Czar Peter House, the museum in Zandam dedicated to where the Russian ruler dwelled when he first arrived in the shipbuilding port city on August 18th, 1697, one can read the ode to him and the city by poet Vasilij Zhukovsky on the wall next to czar's sleeping closet:

Holy angels bless this humble dwelling.
Oh Grand Prince, freeze in awe:
Here is the cradle of Your Empire,
Great Russia was born here.

The Dutch contribution to the rise of the Russian Navy was clearly emphasized by Peter's great adversary, Swedish King Charles XII who had to face the formidable Russian armada in the Great Northern War. In the quote below taken from the special exhibit dedicated to Peter the Great's trips to the Netherlands at the Hermitage Museum in Amsterdam in the summer of 2013, Charles scoffs at the "Russian" nature of the navy that he fought against:

There was nothing Russian about the Muscovian fleet except the flags.
We fought against a Dutch fleet, with Dutch commanders, manned by
Dutch seamen and we were exposed to Dutch bullets propelled by Dutch
gunpowder.

As important as the opinions above are, it must be admitted that the naval fleet that Peter worked so hard to create was built on the British, and not the Dutch model, and this is the fleet that had defeated the Swedes in the Great Northern War. The Russian navy was now so formidable that the British recalled all of its men in that country's service in 1719, although few had left because of the privileges they enjoyed courtesy of the czar. Peter left his country with 48 major warships and 787 minor and auxiliary crafts, serviced

by 28,000 men.³³ Most of the 750 foreigners that he was able to recruit to serve in Russia were Dutch, so their contribution was nevertheless significant.³⁴ Peter understood quite well that to become a leading power, it was essential to have a strong navy and that was one of his legacies he left Russia. Another quotation from the Hermitage exhibit in Amsterdam, is this from the czar in 1702 that clearly illustrates the meaning behind his premonition: “A monarch who has a land army has just one hand; He who also has a navy has two hands”.

One of the unintended consequences of the Great Embassy, but no less important than the others, was the influence Amsterdam and London had on the creation of Peter’s new capital city, St. Petersburg. English diplomat Charles Whitworth wrote in 1710 “the Czar hopes that the new city will someday become a second Amsterdam or a second Venice.”³⁵ Drawing parallels between the location of Amsterdam and St. Petersburg, he conceived the idea of creating a ‘town on water’ on Vasilyevsky Island.³⁶ Count Francesco Algarotti, famous for saying that “St. Petersburg is a window onto Europe,” observed, when visiting the city in 1739, that Dutch architecture predominated. He wrote: “It seems to me it was a memorial to Holland that he built in the manner of that country, planting lines of trees on the streets and intersecting the city with canals.” As in London, it was a city that was initially constructed so that it would be entered from the sea. When the Great Embassy sailed into the English capital along the River Thames, they saw the city’s façade facing them and projected a feeling of grandeur. Peter’s capital was constructed with the same idea in mind. While not so impressive when approached from land, the new capital of the emerging Russian empire was conceived as a fortress, shipyard, and port. No other capital city in the world contained the Senate, the Synod, the Cathedral, the Admiralty, the emperor’s main residence, and the city’s main garden on one side of the river and on the other, the Academy of Art, the Governor’s Palace, the University, the Academy of Sciences, The Exchange, and the fortress where

³³ Nicholas Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, Fourth Edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 230.

³⁴ *Ibid*, 220.

³⁵ Gorbatenko, 14.

³⁶ Militza Korshunova, “Peter the Great’s St. Petersburg,” in *Peter the Great: An Inspired Tsar*, (Amsterdam: Hermitage, 2013), 79.

the city was founded.³⁷ Once completed, St. Petersburg greatly surpassed both Amsterdam and London in its size and rivaled the latter in greatness.

One of the ironies of Peter's rule is that the country that Russia modeled its navy on the most after Great Britain became its biggest adversary in the 18th and 19th centuries. Another irony is that, for all of his love and admiration for Britain and the Dutch Republic, the country that influenced his reforms the most was Sweden, a country he never visited and that he fought for twenty-one years. Indeed, most of Peter's reforms were implemented after the Great Northern War against the Swedes, the Battle of Poltava. In the words of Russian Historian Vasili Klyuchevsky:

All of the fundamental Petrine laws stem from the second half of the reign, the epoch after Poltava. The war turned Peter, the builder of navies and the organizer of armies, into a versatile administrator, and turned temporary into permanent legislation.³⁸

Klyuchevsky further illustrates the increased tempo of reforms after the victory at Poltava by citing the Complete Collection of the Laws of the Russian Empire of 1830. For example, for the period of 1700 to 1709, there were 500 acts. For the next ten years, there are 1,238, and from 1719 until his death in 1725 there were about as many.³⁹ Although the reforms were driven by the needs of the state to prosecute a total war, they covered a wide arrange of aspects of Russian society: the military and navy, central and local government, the Church, the economy, social life, education, and culture.

On the down side, the Russians were neither able to secure a Western alliance against the Ottoman Empire nor the Swedes. The Dutch Republic and England were consumed with the pending struggle for power in the War of Spanish Succession and securing their own economic interests rather than entering into an alliance with Russia against the Ottoman Empire. For example, the Russian delegation at The Hague asked the States General to help arm at least 70 warships and over 100 galleys against the Sultan. The Dutch declined, arguing that they were in no position to supply Russia because of their own war against the French. As a token of appreciation, the States General did acknowledge that the Dutch in Russia enjoyed more privileges including

³⁷ "Rossiyskaya Imperiya: Proekt Leonida Parfenova," Petr I, Chast' 1.

³⁸ Vasili Klyuchevsky, *Peter the Great*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958), 74.

³⁹ *Ibid*, 74.

commercial and freedom of worship than other foreigners and thanked the diplomats for this.⁴⁰ The British interest in Russia and in the czar himself was made clear by Matthew Prior, Secretary of the British Delegation to Ryswick:

The King has seen the Czar of Muscovy incognito at Utrecht. The immediate use we endeavor to make of him is that he would allow tobacco to be imported into his dominions, which has been forbid since the year '48.⁴¹

Peter's own premonition was that, when push comes to shove, the English and Dutch would choose France over Russia due to their closer commercial ties and he conveyed this sentiment to the Bohemian Count Kinsky in 1698.⁴²

The French were openly allies of the Ottomans and the Swedes and therefore Peter could not get them to even be neutral when he travelled to Paris in 1717. Hapsburg Austria came to its own agreement with the Ottomans in the Treaty of Karlowitz in 1699, which ended their sixteen year struggle with the Turks and began that country's slow decline. As a matter of fact, upon leaving the Dutch Republic in May of 1698, Amsterdam Mayor Nicolaas Witsen and three of his colleagues were subjected to angry accusations by the Russian diplomats that the States General and William III secretly encouraged the Austrians to sign a separate agreement with the Turks while Russia was still at war with the Muslim empire. Witsen and his colleagues did not respond to the accusation but parted with the Russians by voicing his hope that the merchants of Amsterdam would continue to enjoy the commercial privileges they had to that point.⁴³ If the accusations were true, were the Dutch facilitating a peace agreement between Austria and the Ottoman Empire to secure its significant economic interests in the Levant and as a sort of 'thank you' to the Turks for being the first country to recognize Dutch independence from Spain? In any event, eighteen years later, during Peter's second trip to the West, Austrian cooperation was again elusive when Emperor Charles VI agreed to initially provide sanctuary to Peter's son Alexei who in effect, defected from the country rather than deal with his father, embarrassing the czar diplomatically throughout Europe.

⁴⁰ Knoppers, 33.

⁴¹ Cross, 13.

⁴² *Pis'ma I Bumagi Imperatora Petra Velikago: Tom Perviy. (1688-1701)* (S. Peterburg: Gosudarstvennaya Tipografiya, 1887), 260.

⁴³ Knoppers, 37-38.

Surely feeling slighted, upon returning to Russia in 1718, Peter never returned to Western Europe again.

Beyond being unable to secure military alliances against the Turks and the Swedes, diplomatic relations between Russia and the United Provinces on the one hand and Russia and Britain on the other deteriorated after Peter's trips. In retrospect, the problems with the Dutch did not have a significant long-term impact on relations with Russia but they did begin soon after Peter's first visit. After going out of their way to thank the Russians for such good treatment of their merchants, the Dutch began sending letters complaining of the opposite and much to their dissatisfaction, their representative in Moscow Jacob De Bie failed to get a response as to why. When the Russian delegation came the Netherlands again in 1717, the Dutch pressed Boris Kurakin, one of Peter's closest aides and former ambassador to The Hague, for new commercial concessions as a sort of compensation. Kurakin replied that new advantages could be considered if the Dutch would guarantee the Swedish territories and harbors conquered by the Russians to that point in their ongoing Northern War. For their part the Dutch showed no interest in undertaking any actions that looked as though they were taking Russia's side in the conflict and they refused. They hoped that by being neutral between Russia and Sweden, they would be able to maintain good commercial relations with both.⁴⁴ Despite their differences, commercial relations as a result of Peter's visits expanded in the short term. During the first years of the 18th century, almost 250 ships went from Holland to St. Petersburg. It is not until fifty years later that their numbers decreased by two-thirds, and in 1795 only ONE Dutch ship as compared to over 500 English ships.⁴⁵

Tensions between Russia and Britain proved to be deeper and more enduring. They began with the accession of George I, who was also the Elector of Hanover, to the British throne in 1714. Like William III, George was chosen because of his Protestant religious background and also like the Dutch monarch, the German George used his position as British monarch to promote the interests of his native state. However, unlike William, George and Peter did not get along well. But George became King of England

⁴⁴ Ibid, pg. 48.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 55.

when Russia was in the process of defeating the Swedes and becoming a Baltic power and that threatened the interests of both Hanover and Britain. He was also displeased with the Russian military presence in northern Germany that was established there with the marriage of Peter's niece Catherine to Duke Leopold of Mecklenburg in 1716. On three separate occasions George refused Peter's offers to meet until the czar pulled his troops out of Germany.⁴⁶

Tensions rose in January, 1717 when a rumor that Peter had backed a Jacobite plot to overthrow George and replace him with James II's son was circulated by a financier close to Charles XII of Sweden. The rumor turned out to be false but the mutual animosity and mistrust was now entrenched. Three years later in May, 1720, with the British Navy increasingly active and sympathetic to the Swedes, and the Russians refusing to accept British "mediation" in the war, Admiral Sir John Norris received instructions to bring Peter "by force of arms to reason and destroy that fleet which will disturb the world..."⁴⁷ Norris never did carry out these instructions. But the tensions between Russia and Britain specifically, and Russia and the West in general only increased.

As the eighteenth century progressed, Britain began to industrialize; its imperial appetite grew larger while the Dutch saw its Golden Age decline. Since Peter's transformation of Russia, Britain's economic and geopolitical ambitions were now being challenged by the rising Eurasian power in the East. The clash between Russia and the West, which had roots going back to the 13th century, would now be more sustained. Peter's admiration and even deference to the West endeared him to leading circles in Europe as a leader of an exotic and perhaps semi-barbarous land but it did not lead to an integration of Russia into the West. The West could no longer avoid Russia, but it also did not have to accept it as an equal partner.

Part II. Russian – Western Relations Since Peter the Great's Rule

Peter the Great created a Russia that had become stronger than the country he

⁴⁶ Robert K. Massie, *Peter the Great: His Life and World* (New York: History Book Club, 1999), 637.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, pg. 735.

inherited in 1689 largely through his Western-inspired administrative and social reforms and the creation of a modern army and navy, though these had not yet significantly challenged the hegemony of the leading European powers, Great Britain and France. Because Petrine reforms were inspired by the West, European intellectuals of the Enlightenment era generally took a more favorable view of Russia and its place in Europe, with no less important thinkers than Voltaire, Diderot, and Montesquieu believing that it could even serve as an example to the rest of Europe of what an enlightened society, albeit absolutist, could look like. Still, the view that Russian absolutism was enlightened was not shared by most in Europe who saw instead the despotic rule of the czars, the oppressive nature of serfdom, and the Muslim tribes that inhabited substantial parts of the country that precluded it from being considered a genuine member of European civilization.⁴⁸ As Russia began asserting its national interests more aggressively under the rule of Catherine II, also known as Catherine the Great, hostility towards Russia became more pronounced. The possibility of accepting Russia as an equal European partner virtually disappeared for the likes of Britain and France followed by Austria and Prussia/Germany later in the mid-nineteenth century.

Russian Relations With Great Britain and France

To reiterate what was stated earlier in this report, Russian commercial relations with Great Britain expanded since Peter's visit to that country in 1698. The number of British ships arriving in St. Petersburg grew from 315 in the early 1740's to over 500 in 1795, while the number of ships from Britain's main competitor for the Russian market in the beginning of the eighteenth century, the United Provinces, dropped dramatically from 167 to 1 during the same time. Meanwhile, only 10 French ships reached the Russian capital in the 1740's.⁴⁹ But British governing circles feared Russian economic dominance of the Baltic region and the supply of pitch, tar, hemp, and timber, all of which were essential for the maintenance of Britain's merchant and military fleet. This

⁴⁸ Gassner. 39.

⁴⁹ Ibid, 21.

was already a major concern for the British as early as 1716, as Prime Minister Robert Walpole declared:

It is our misfortune at this juncture by the knavery of the Muscovites in imposing on our merchants last year, to have our naval magazines so ill provided with stores, particularly with hemp, that if the fleet of merchantmen, now loading in the Baltic, should by any accident miscarry, it will be impossible for His Majesty to fit out ships of war for the next year, by which means the whole navy of England will be rendered perfectly useless.⁵⁰

As for France, its economic dominance was exerted in the Levant, where it controlled up to three fifths of the European trade. This explains its close relationship with the Ottoman Empire, one of Russia's biggest adversaries during Peter the Great's rule as well as beyond. It actively sought to drive a wedge between Russia and Austria, which throughout the eighteenth century and up to the Crimean War in 1853 increasingly shared interests in reducing Turkish influence in the Balkans. France was also one of Poland's biggest supporters and as such, was a source of constant tension between the it and Russia. Louis XV, reflecting the state of relations with Russia, declared that the sole objective of his policy towards Russia was to keep it as far as possible from the affairs of Europe.⁵¹

The Czarina's active opposition to the French Revolution, in spite of her personal friendship with several of the philosophes whose ideas inspired it, as well as Russia's leading role in defeating Napoleon's army in 1812 resulted in the country's inclusion in the so called "Concert of Europe." The emergence of this new lineup of European powers was initially comprised of Great Britain, Austria, Prussia, and Russia. Of the three continental powers, only Russia did not succumb to French occupation, and was instrumental in contributing to the liberation of the German states. Although Britain and Russia were nominally allies, the animosity and fear of a powerful Russia was shared by the British Government and public alike. When Russian Czar Alexander I proposed a "Holy Alliance" of victorious nations that would return Europe to the Christian values that the French Revolution had challenged, only Britain refused. As for France, the reality of Russian troops occupying Paris was a severe blow to the nation's pride and

⁵⁰ Ibid, pg. 19-20.

⁵¹ Ibid, pg. 22.

animosity towards the Eastern giant was likely greater than in Great Britain. Not long after the Congress of Vienna, France was permitted to rejoin the elite countries of Europe on equal footing despite the fact that it had threatened the very political and cultural foundations of its own European civilization by violently exporting revolution throughout the continent. Russia, by contrast, arguably contributed the most to saving Europe from its own radical member, and its reward was increased hostility from Britain and France.

Nowhere did the British and French exhibit their Russophobia more consistently than in the Balkans where they usually supported the Ottoman Turks in the frequent clashes that empire had with Russia. British Parliamentarian Sir John Sinclair reflected this policy in *his General Observations Regarding the Present State of the Kingdom of Denmark*, which he wrote at the end of the 18th century. In it he called on Europe to “unite to check the ambition of a sovereign, who makes one conquest only a step to the acquisition of another.” Support of the Turks was necessary because, as “bad as the Turks are, were the Russians to succeed them, it would only be one brute driving out another.”⁵² The British and French encouraged the Ottoman Turks to attack Russia in 1788 in an attempt to repeal concessions made to the latter in the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca. Among other things, the 1774 treaty gave Russia the right to intervene in the Ottoman Empire and protect the rights of the Orthodox Christians which affirmed the responsibility that Russia believed it had going back to the Moscow as the Third Rome doctrine of the early 16th century. The British also instigated the Swedes to attack Russia to support the Turkish war effort, but this came to no avail.⁵³ Another Russian victory over the Turks only increased British efforts against their adversary in the Balkans where the desires of the Slavic and Orthodox population for liberation from Ottoman rule only increased as the century progressed.

The French and British opposed virtually every attempt by the Russians to assert themselves in the part of Europe that was the most similar to it in culture, religion, and ethnicity – the Balkans. When Russia ultimately came out in favor of Greek independence from the Ottoman Empire in the 1820’s, the British and French were forced to compromise its Ottoman ally to support the Greeks out of pressure from popular

⁵² Ibid, 79.

⁵³ Ibid, 78.

opinion but also to prevent independent Greece from becoming a Russian protectorate.⁵⁴ But the most obvious case of Anglo-French hostility to Russia was when they militarily sided with the Ottoman Turks in the Crimean War (1853-1856). Britain and France, two unlikely allies who had competed intensely for global colonial dominance, seemed to find common ground in keeping Russia “contained” and out of the Balkans. At the Congress of Berlin in 1878 and again with Austria’s annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1908, British, French and now Austrian and German diplomacy worked hard to deny Russia and its Serbian ally a leading role in uniting the Slavs in a unified state as the Italians and Germans had done earlier. Only the rise of an economically and militarily powerful Germany at the turn of the nineteenth century threatened the Anglo-French order and forced the British and French to reconsider their Russophobia and reluctantly enter into an alliance with the giant from the East. Just like a century earlier, when the West needed Russia’s help to save itself from Napoleonic France, it once again called upon Russia to prevent a European power, this time a united Germany, from achieving European hegemony.. For a brief moment during World War I and especially after March, 1917 when the revolutionaries that overthrew the Romanov dynasty declared their intentions to transform the country into a democracy, Russia looked as though it might finally become part of a Europe as Peter the Great had intended. But the Bolshevik Revolution of October of that same year put the country on a path where it was once again ostracized from the West.

Part III: The Impact of Peter’s Trips on Russian Intellectual Development

Three countries primarily influenced Peter’s reforms: Sweden, the Dutch Republic, and Britain. Arguably the most important reforms came as a result of the protracted war with Sweden and the need to be able to raise money to finance the conflict and secure troops to fight. Specifically, the following spheres needed to be reformed: the military; the maintenance of a standing army and navy and the staffing of the military command; improving the efficiency and maximizing tax collection to increase the

⁵⁴ Ibid, 125.

financial resources of the state; administrative reforms and the establishment of educational institutions.⁵⁵

The long-term philosophical significance of Peter the Great's journeys to Western Europe and his overall reign in Russia are twofold. First, the question of Russian identity became paramount. Was Russia after Peter's rule becoming more Western? Russians had to deal with the legacy of a Westernizing czar that attempted to superimpose what many felt was an alien culture and civilization on the country. The second question is closely tied to the first. What should Russia's relations be with the West if the latter was seen as alien to it? More importantly, was Russia now seen as a legitimate an integral part of the West?

Westernizers

For the vast majority of Russians, the rural peasantry, Peter's reforms brought more misery and the increasing burden of serfdom. They were the fodder that was needed to create the powerful state that Peter envisioned. Significantly, Peter's "revolution from above" created a large gulf between the peasants, steeped in tradition based on Christian Orthodoxy, and the nobility, who Peter's Westernization was aimed at.⁵⁶ Although the nobility resented the changes in dress, appearance, manners, and worship that Peter learned in the Netherlands and England and imposed on them, exactly a century after his death it was precisely the nobility that spearheaded a revolt against Czar Nicholas I in 1825 in the name of liberal reform and British-style constitutional monarchy. The Decembrists, a group of Russian army officers who had seen Europe and France in their war against Napoleon, had a contradictory view of Peter's role in Russian history. On the one hand they saw him as a bloody tyrant, but on the other he was the creator of a modern Westernized Russian state. According to professor of History Andrzej Walicki:

Although grateful to Peter for bringing them closer to Europe, they detested the despotic system he had strengthened because they felt

⁵⁵ Klyuchevsky, 76-77.

⁵⁶ Robert English, *Gorbachev, Intellectuals, and the End of the Cold War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 20.

themselves to be Europeans and thought of autocracy as the main obstacle to further Westernization.⁵⁷

Nicholas I quickly crushed the Decembrist Revolt in 1825. It led to a period of conservative backlash in the country until the reign of the “Czar-Liberator, Alexander II. Ironically, Alexander’s rule may have been the most “revolutionary from above” since Peter’s for the simple fact that he finally abolished the institution that the latter had helped to make more oppressive – the much-hated institution of serfdom. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the Decembrist republican, Western-inspired ideology found little success in the Russian political arena for the next ninety years leading up to the Bolshevik Revolution. This is perhaps symbolic of the limited influence that Western liberalism exerted on Russian political thought as represented by Great Britain, France, and the Netherlands in the nineteenth century and beyond.

The Decembrists were influenced by an intellectual movement in Russia known as the “Westernizers.” This group emphasized the positive role of Western influence on Russian political, cultural, and even religious development and it hoped for the eventual assimilation of the country into the West. Although it did not form a homogenous movement with a single ideology, thinkers who were associated with the movement made it quite clear where Russia belonged and it sounded like a vindication of Peter’s Westernization:

In Europe, in most civilized countries, institutions have developed by stages; everything that exists there has its sources and roots in the past; the Middle Ages still serve, more or less, as the basis for everything that constitutes the social, civic, and political life of the European states. Russia had no Middle Ages; everything that is to prosper there must be borrowed from abroad.⁵⁸

For the Westernizers and their intellectual adversaries, the Slavophiles, who will be discussed below, the philosophical interpretation of Russian history begins with the role of Peter the Great. Vissarion Belinsky, (1811-1848) one of the most articulate representatives of the Westernizers movement, believed that “before Peter, Russia was

⁵⁷ Andrzej Walicki, *A History of Russian Thought: From the Enlightenment to Marxism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1979), 68.

⁵⁸ English, 21.

only a people, while thanks to his reforms it became a nation.”⁵⁹ He rejected the notion that the gulf that separated the aristocratic elites and the peasant masses begun under Peter was a problem. He argued that this gulf would disappear when “the people” were elevated to the level of society and not forcing society back to the level of the people as had existed before Peter.⁶⁰ Belinsky rejected the notion that Russia had a literature of its own. Anything that could be called literature in Russia was copied, without historical continuity, or internal organic development. Anything that could be taken as valuable in Russian writing was thanks to the West.⁶¹ If there was any doubt about Belinsky’s opinion of the importance of Peter the Great to the development of Russian history it was dispelled in 1847 when he wrote to liberal historian Konstantin Kavelin, “ Peter is my philosophy, my religion, my revelation in everything that concerns Russia.”⁶²

Slavophiles

At the opposite end of the philosophical divide regarding Peter the Great’s role in the development of Russian history were the Slavophiles. The meaning of “Slavophilism” is “love of Slavs” but in the original Russian context it had less to do with solidarity for fellow Slavs than it did with the glorification of the native and Slavic elements in the social life and culture of ancient Russia.⁶³ Ivan Kireevsky (1806-1856), a leading Slavophile thinker argued that European civilization was made up of three components: Christianity, the young barbarian races, and the classical heritage. Russia’s parting with the West happened when it was excluded from the Roman heritage. He saw this as a positive development since he characterized Rome as a rational civilization that represented the “triumph of naked and pure reason.”⁶⁴ According to Kireevsky, Roman society was nothing more than a combination of rationally thinking individuals motivated by personal advantage that knew no other social bond other than common business

⁵⁹ Walicki, 137.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid, 139.

⁶² Ibid, 138.

⁶³ Ibid, 92.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 94.

interests.⁶⁵ Russia had been spared this affliction because its heritage was based purely on Orthodox Christian principles that were in complete harmony with the spirit of the village commune, which was founded on the common use of land, mutual agreement, and was governed by a council of elders who settled disputes based on traditions.⁶⁶

The main Slavophile critique of Peter is that he knocked Russia off of its natural and organic path of development and helped destroy what had made its civilization unique. Peter's reforms cut the ties between the upper class and the common people when the former began adopting Western culture. The common people had remained faithful to ancient traditions whereas Westernized Russians had become "colonizers in their own country" according to another prominent Slavophile, Andrei Khomiakov.⁶⁷ Ironically, even this "anti-Western" ideology developed in Russia borrowed elements from Western thought. Historian of Eastern Europe and Russia Robert English accurately points out that

fundamental elements of Slavophilism were indeed borrowed from European, primarily German, thinkers, from the idea of the 'organic' nation to reverence for the traditional peasant commune."⁶⁸

We will see later how Russia will borrow another ideology from the West. But in this case the impact on Russia's history and relations with the West will be far more significant.

Pan-Slavism

The Slavophile idea evolved during the nineteenth century as Russia began asserting itself in Europe, particularly in the Balkans, while Great Britain and France consistently sided with the Ottoman Turks and propped up "the sick man of Europe" in the hope that the empire would not collapse and the Orthodox Slavic population would come under Russian influence. Pan-Slavism, a movement whose aim was to force the czarist government of Alexander III (1881-1894) to adopt a more aggressive foreign policy especially towards the Turks, saw the West as more than just a civilization in moral and spiritual decay. It argued that the West was outwardly hostile to Russia:

⁶⁵ Ibid, 94.

⁶⁶ Ibid, 96.

⁶⁷ Ibid, 98-99.

⁶⁸ English, 21.

In the future Europe will be divided into two camps: on one side Russia, with all Orthodox, Slavic tribes (not excluding Greece), on the other – the entire Protestant, Catholic, and even Muhammadan and Jewish Europe put together. Therefore, Russia must care only about the strengthening of its own Orthodox-Slavic camp.

Along the same lines:

It is high time for Russian diplomacy to become finally convinced that everything that is happening in Europe is nothing but a plot against us, against the natural moral and political influence of Russia on the Balkan peninsula, against its most legitimate claims and interests.⁶⁹

English makes the point that even many Westernizers had begun to doubt their faith in the Western European model that Russia was supposed to follow. Among them were such figures as Fyodor Dostoevsky, Peter Struve, and Alexander Herzen, who initially welcomed Peter's opening to the West, but later described it as "a civilization that had been ordered from abroad and bore upon it a German trademark."⁷⁰

Marxism and Russia

By the 1890's a new ideology from the West swept into Russia and captured the imagination of many in the intelligentsia: Marxism. Marxism was the radical offspring of the earlier Westernizer tendency and those early adherents in Russia saw themselves as scientific, progressive, and Western thinkers.⁷¹ It mattered little to the Russian Marxists that the founder of scientific socialism had virtually nothing but contempt for Russia; they were more than ready to follow Marx's call for proletarian revolution in advanced capitalist countries that mirrored Western European development and that Russia's time had not come yet. It was Vladimir Lenin and his supporters in the Bolshevik Party that revised Marx to allow for the necessity for a proletarian uprising in Russia. After the Bolsheviks came to power in 1917 and Lenin's death seven years later, something akin to the Westernizer-Slavophile debate took place within the Bolshevik (Communist Party) when Leon Trotsky warned that the Soviet workers state would perish from its own backwardness if the proletariat from the West did not overthrow its capitalists and come

⁶⁹ Ibid, 22.

⁷⁰ Ibid, 22.

⁷¹ Ibid, 23.

to the aid of the USSR. In contrast, it was Joseph Stalin who summoned the nativist forces by proclaiming the goal of constructing socialism in one country, regardless of what was happening in the West. To this day, among communists and non-communists, Stalin continues to enjoy substantially more support than Trotsky in polls about and discussions regarding their roles in Soviet history. But in terms of the impact of Soviet rule on Russian-Western relations, although the seventy-four year history of the Soviet Union witnessed an adaptation of Marxism to the Russian reality, nevertheless, the wholesale application of a clearly Western ideology by leaders of a Russian (Soviet state) did not bring Russia closer to the West. If anything, the period of Communist rule in Russia drove a bigger wedge between Russia and the West since the period prior to Peter the Great's journeys to Western Europe.

Part IV. Contemporary Russian Relations with the West

Netherlands

Relations between the Netherlands and Russia have improved significantly since the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991. This is particularly the case in the sphere of economics where commercial relations have grown steadily from the early 1990's to 2005 and then fell as a result of Russia's economic recession in 2008. The Netherlands, as one of the founding members of BENELUX (Belgium Netherlands, Luxembourg) was a precursor of the European Union, is a key player in both the European and global economic system. This adds a sense of importance to the Russian-Dutch relations over the last twenty years.

In recent years, The Netherlands is an important trading partner for Russia. The EU comprises 49% of the total value of Russian imports and exports for 2012. Among EU countries, countries, the highest percentage of Russia's trade was with the Netherlands at 10.3% of the EU total. It fell slightly to 9.9% in the first six months of 2013 but the Netherlands still remained on top among EU countries. Overall, Russia's volume of trade with the Netherlands is the highest of any other country in the world.⁷² The Dutch main exports to Russia are diverse and can be organized into three categories: agriculture, the chemical industry, and machine and transport equipment while Russia

⁷² Ministerstvo Ekonomicheskogo Razvitiya Rossiiskoi Federatsii: Portal Vneshneekonomicheskoi Informatsii http://www.ved.gov.ru/monitoring/foreign_trade_statistics/countries_breakdown/

largely exports fuels, which in 2005 made up 85% of all Russian exports to the Netherlands, as well as metals, and metal products.⁷³ In April of this year a Russian company Summa and a Dutch storage business VTTI agreed to have the Russian company construct an oil terminal in the Port of Rotterdam. Investment in the terminal is approximately 800 million euros. Thirty percent of crude oil and forty five percent of oil products entering Rotterdam originate from Russia, making it by far the most important supplier.⁷⁴ Overall, Russia's economic relations with the European Union can be characterized as productive, but that hasn't stopped Russian President Vladimir Putin and the Russian Government to seek to create its own "Customs Union" with Belarus, Kazakhstan and, a recent addition, Armenia to counterbalance the economic clout of the EU and the United States.

But not everything has been as positive as the economic relationship forged between Russia and the Netherlands. Several political, strategic, and cultural issues continue to divide Russia and the West. And here is where the divergent cultural and political values between Russia and the West are most evident. The following issues have proven to be the most divisive: NATO expansion, the role of the International War Crimes Tribunal, the status of Kosovo, the Syrian Conflict, and Homosexual rights.

NATO Expansion

A major thorn of contention between Russia and the West has been the continued existence and even more so, the expansion of NATO closer to the borders of the Russian Federation. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), a Western military alliance founded in 1949 by twelve nations was the result of planning meetings by diplomats from the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Belgium, the Netherlands, and

⁷³ Govert Gijsbers, Johannes Roseboom, Geert Schoch. "Technological Cooperation Netherlands – Russia Final Report. TNO Innovation Policy Group, November 2006. <http://www.tno.nl/downloads/Quick%20scan%20Rusland-Nederland.pdf>

⁷⁴ "Russian Oil Terminal in Port of Rotterdam." Government of the Netherlands Web Site. 09-04-20013. Accessed July 30, 2013. <http://www.government.nl/news/2013/04/09/russian-oil-terminal-in-port-of-rotterdam.html>

Luxembourg to defend against a possible invasion by the Soviet Union and is generally seen as the beginning of the Cold War. With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 most Russians believed that the necessity for such a military alliance was no longer necessary. Already in 1990, as the Soviet Union under Mikhail Gorbachev began imploding as a result of the changes unleashed by reforms known as *perestroika* and *glasnost*, the Russian leadership began unilaterally pulling its forces out the countries of the Warsaw Pact in Eastern Europe. The one contentious issue between the Soviet Union and the West that remained in Europe was German unification and what to do with Soviet forces stationed in the German Democratic Republic that was in the final days of its existence. According to a 2009 article in the German weekly news magazine *Der Spiegel*, on February, 1990 in Moscow, U.S. Secretary of State James Baker gave assurances that "no extension of NATO's jurisdiction for forces of NATO one inch to the east" would take place provided the Soviets agreed to the NATO membership of a unified Germany.⁷⁵ A day later, in a conversation with Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shervardnadze, West German Foreign Minister Hans Dietrich Genscher reiterated this position and specifically referred to Eastern Europe. What the Russians got instead was NATO expansion into Eastern Europe beginning in 1999 with the accession of the Czech Republic, Poland, and Hungary and then in 2004 when three former Soviet Baltic Republics, Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia joined the alliance. Russia's brief one week military conflict with Georgia in August, 2008 was likely as much about Moscow "drawing a line in the sand" on NATO expansion into the former Soviet Union as it was the killing of Russian peace keepers in Southern Ossetia by Georgian forces.

The International War Crimes Tribunal

Another international institution that is dominated by the Western powers that Russia has found itself at odds with is the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY). Established in May, 1993 by the UN Security Council in response to

⁷⁵ Uwe Klussman, Matthias Schepp, and Klauss Wiegrefe, "NATO's Eastward Expansion: Did the West Break Its Promise to Moscow?" *Spiegel Online International*, November 26, 2009, accessed August 21, 2013, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/nato-s-eastward-expansion-did-the-west-break-its-promise-to-moscow-a-663315.html>

the vicious civil war that brought the destruction of Yugoslavia, the goal of the tribunal is ostensibly to “try those responsible for violations of international humanitarian law in territory of the former Yugoslavia since 1991.”⁷⁶ The ICTY led to the establishment of the first permanent international criminal court, the International Criminal Court (ICC) which is located in The Hague, Netherlands.

Russia’s main criticism of the ICTY is the organization’s lack of objectivity in prosecuting war crimes in the Balkans. The Russian position is that Serbia has been disproportionately targeted by the tribunal, a tribunal that is run by the same countries that militarily intervened against the Serbs in the Yugoslav wars of the 1990’s. Of the 161 people indicted on war crimes charges, 94, or almost 60% are ethnic Serbs. Of the 18 acquitted of war crimes charges, only 2 (12%) were Serbs.⁷⁷ According to Alexander Mezyaev, Head of the Chair of the Academy on International Law and Governance in Kazan, Russia, the purpose of the Tribunal was “the destruction of the top political and military leadership of just one of the countries involved in the Yugoslavian conflict.” The country that was the target of the aggression” was Serbia.⁷⁸ Mezyaev goes on to mention the irony that it was actually the Russian Federation that sponsored the draft resolution that led to the establishment of the ICTY in 1993 but it was “obviously a different Russia and today Russia’s foreign policy has radically changed its attitude towards this court of law.”⁷⁹ This statement is clearly a derogatory reference to the overtly pro-western Russian policies of the 1990’s that were contrary to the country’s long-standing interests and the implication that today’s Russia is on much more solid ground in countering Western hegemony. In December, 2012, Russian UN Ambassador Vitaly Churkin again brought attention to the tribunal’s lack of objectivity by freeing two Croatian generals,

⁷⁶ “International Criminal Tribunal for Yugoslavia,” Global Policy Forum, accessed August 22, 2013, <http://www.globalpolicy.org/international-justice/international-criminal-tribunals-and-special-courts/international-criminal-tribunal-for-yugoslavia.html>

⁷⁷ “List of People Indicted in the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia,” accessed August 22, 2013, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_people_indicted_in_the_International_Criminal_Tribunal_for_the_former_Yugoslavia

⁷⁸ Alexander Mezyaev, “The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia: The Twentieth Anniversary of an Illegal Court,” Global Research, May 27, 2013, accessed August 22, 2013, <http://www.globalresearch.ca/international-criminal-tribunal-for-the-former-yugoslavia-the-20th-anniversary-of-an-illegal-court/5336597>

⁷⁹ Ibid.

including Ante Gotovina, the most senior Croatian military officer convicted of war crimes during the Balkan Wars of the 1990's. He also pointed out the tribunal's acquittal of Ramush Haradinaj, a Kosovo Albanian former guerilla commander who briefly served as prime minister of the breakaway province. Churkin said the war crimes tribunal in The Hague demonstrated "neither fairness nor effectiveness."⁸⁰

The Status of Kosovo

Closely related to Russia's disagreements with the ICTY is the status of Kosovo. In 1999, NATO conducted a 78-day aerial bombing campaign of Yugoslavia that at the time was comprised of Serbia and Montenegro. The purpose was to eject Yugoslav forces from the Serbian province of Kosovo, where nine tenths of the population was ethnic Albanian. Yugoslav forces were sent to the province by then president, Slobodan Milosevic, to stamp out an Albanian armed separatist movement known as the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA). This rebel group was described by U.S. President Bill Clinton's special envoy in the Balkans, Robert Gelbrand, as "without any questions, a terrorist group."⁸¹ The conflict ended in June of 1999 with the departure of Yugoslav forces from the province and the adoption of UN Resolution 1244 by the Security Council. The resolution called on member states to recognize the "sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the other states in the region" while at the same time calling for "substantial autonomy and meaningful self-administration for Kosovo."⁸² Nowhere in the resolution is there any mention of independence for Kosovo. But the ethnic Albanian leadership in Kosovo did declare independence on February 17, 2008. Although more than half of the countries in the world do not recognize the independence of Kosovo, the United States extended recognition the very next day. The

⁸⁰ Russia Slams Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia," RFEL, December 6, 2012, accessed August 22, 2013, <http://www.rferl.org/content/russia-tribunal-former-yugoslavia-/24790587.html>

⁸¹ Michael Moran, "Terrorist Groups and Political Legitimacy," Council on Foreign Relations, March 16, 2006, accessed August 22, 2013, <http://www.cfr.org/terrorism/terrorist-groups-political-legitimacy/p10159#p4>

⁸² U.N Security Resolution 1244 (1999), 10 June, 1999, United Nations Security Council, accessed August 22, 2013, <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N99/172/89/PDF/N9917289.pdf?OpenElement>

Netherlands, Belgium, and the United Kingdom all recognized the separatist government within the next two weeks after the formal declaration and to date, 22 of the 28 EU member states have recognized Kosovo's independence.⁸³ Russia strongly opposes Kosovo's secession in support of its Balkan ally going as far as blocking a declaration of independence by the Albanian-dominated breakaway Serbian province in the United Nations Security Council.⁸⁴ Russian President Vladimir Putin called the declaration "immoral and illegal," while the Russian Foreign Ministry declared:

Those who are considering supporting separatism should understand what dangerous consequences their actions threaten to have for world order, international stability and the authority of the U.N. Security Council's decisions that took decades to build.⁸⁵

In an article illustrating the connection between Kosovo and the Russian-Georgian conflict in the summer of 2008, J. Victory Marshall, a research fellow at the Independent Institute illustrated the hypocrisy of Western policy toward Russia. Six months after Kosovo's declaration of independence, "just as NATO justified its intervention in 1999 as a humanitarian defense of Kosovo's ethnic Albanians against Serbian atrocities, so Russia said it came to the defense of South Ossetia, which suffered terrible atrocities at Georgian hands in the early 1990s, after Georgian troops shelled its capital earlier this month."⁸⁶ After the conflict which saw Russian forces evict Georgian troops from Abkhazia and Southern Ossetia, the two declared their independence. Only three countries recognize their new status, none of them from Western Europe or the United States.

The Conflict in Syria

Another issue dividing the Western world and Russia is the conflict in Syria. None of the leading Western states envision a future Syria with Bashar Assad as president

⁸³ "Who Recognized Kosova as an Independent State?" accessed August 22, 2013, <http://www.kosovothanksyou.com>

⁸⁴ "Serbia: Putin Pledges Continued Support Against Kosovo Independence," adnkronos international English, March 23, 2011, accessed August 22, 2013, http://www.adnkronos.com/IGN/Aki/English/Politics/Serbia-Putin-pledges-continued-support-against-Kosovo-independence_311822492406.html

⁸⁵ J. Victory Marshall, "Russia, Georgia, and the Kosovo Connection," The Independent Institute, August 22, 2008, accessed August 22, 2013, <http://www.independent.org/newsroom/article.asp?id=2301>

⁸⁶ Ibid.

whereas Russia and China are seen as Assad's biggest supporters. In late 2012, the Foreign Minister of the Netherlands Uri Rosenthal represented the Western position when he told Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, "I hold the regime responsible for the violence. It must stop, and Assad must go." Acknowledging Russian influence in Syria and the vital role the UN could play in settling the conflict, Rosenthal once again urged Russia to cooperate in the UN Security Council "to make sure Assad goes."⁸⁷

Homosexual Rights

Possible one of the biggest indicators of the cultural divide between the West and Russia is over the issue of homosexual rights. A recent study conducted in 2011 by Saskia Keuzenkamp of The Netherlands Institute for Social Research at The Hague, found that the Netherlands is the most tolerant European country towards homosexuals while Russia was the least. In response to the survey statement, "Gay men and lesbians should be free to live their lives as they wish," 91% of Dutch answered either strongly agree or agree, while in Russia it was more than three times lower (30%).^{88*} Recently, Russian president Vladimir Putin signed into law a measure that prohibits "propaganda of non-traditional sexual relations." The lower house of Russia's parliament, The Duma, by a vote of 436-0 passed the bill on June 11 while the upper house approved it two weeks later. According to this Associated Press article published on the Guardian UK's website, "the ban is part of an effort to promote traditional Russian values over western liberalism, which the Kremlin and the Russian Orthodox Church see as corrupting Russian youth..."⁸⁹

⁸⁷ "Netherlands and Russia Discuss Syria," Government of The Netherlands Web Site, September 27, 2012, accessed July 30, 2013, <http://www.government.nl/news/2012/09/26/netherlands-and-russia-discuss-syria.html>

⁸⁸ Saskia Keuzenkamp. "Acceptance of Homosexuality in the Netherlands, 2011: International Comparisons, Trends, and Current Situation." The Netherlands Institute for Social Research | SCP, The Hague, September, 2011. Accessed: July 30, 2013. <http://www.government.nl/documents-and-publications/leaflets/2012/01/10/acceptance-of-homosexuality-in-the-netherlands-2011.html>

*Belgium was ranked 5th and the United Kingdom 8th with 85% and 80% of respondents agreeing with the statement.

⁸⁹ "Russia Passes Anti-Gay Law," The Guardian, Sunday, June 30, 2013. Accessed: July 30, 2013. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jun/30/russia-passes-anti-gay-law>

The controversy over what the Western media calls “anti-gay” laws in Russia is heating up as the Winter Olympics, which will be held in Sochi, Russia in February 2014, approaches. Even athletes haven’t been excluded from the debate. World champion pole-vaulter Elena Isinbayeva recently criticized two Swedish athletes competing in Russia for protesting the ban on homosexual propaganda. When pressed further on the controversy at a press conference she wondered out loud “Maybe we (Russians) are different from European people.”⁹⁰ Another Russian athlete, a national team standout and Detroit Red Wings star Pavel Datsyuk, asked to comment on Isinbayeva’s statements opposing openly homosexual activity simply responded, “My position – I am (Russian) Orthodox. I think this says it all.”⁹¹

Conclusion

With the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, an independent Russia emerged determined to shed its communist past and everything else that separated it from the West for all of these centuries. Unfortunately for Russia and for its relations with the West, the period between 1992 and 1999 saw the Russian economy contract to World War II levels, the brutal Chechen conflict threatened the territorial integrity of the country, NATO expansion now include former Soviet republics, and the standard of living declined for the overwhelming majority of the population to levels once again not seen since the end of World War II. Ironically, Russia’s image in the West seemed to be at a peak during this period, with the last Soviet President, Mikhail Gorbachev and post-Soviet Russia’s first president Boris Yeltsin, enjoying almost movie-star appeal. Gorbachev and Yeltsin became mesmerized with all things Western, and “reformers,” who believed copying Western models would miraculously create a stable and liberal democratic society in Russia, were seen by the West as those who would transform Russia. It shouldn’t

⁹⁰ Simon Hart, “World Champion Elena Isinbayeva Criticizes Swedish Athletes for Supporting Gay Rights,” The Telegraph, August 15, 2013, accessed August 22, 2013, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/sport/othersports/athletics/10245582/World-champion-Yelena-Isinbayeva-criticises-Swedish-athletes-for-supporting-gay-rights.html>

⁹¹ “Pavel Datsyuk: Otnoshenie geyam? Ya pravoslavniy, etim vse skazano,” Sovetskiy Sport, August 22, 2013, accessed August 22, 2013, <http://www.sovsport.ru/news/text-item/635479>

surprise anyone that is familiar with the conditions of Russia during this period of time, and the great influence the West had on Gorbachev and Yeltsin, that they are now seen as the least popular Russian leaders of the twentieth century.⁹² It took Vladimir Putin, a native of Peter the Great's capital who, like Peter learned much about the West when he lived in the German Democratic Republic from 1985 to 1990, to slowly stabilize Russia and begin to restore its Great Power status that the great czar had first created. But as was the case in the late 18th century, and especially after Russia's role in defeating Napoleon, that when the country is perceived as too strong, the West reacts coldly. Public approval of Putin in the West is much lower than their opinion of Gorbachev and Yeltsin, but in Russia Putin is viewed much more favorably.

It is clear when surveying Russian-Western relations over the last fifteen years that relations are much better than they were during the lion-share of the communist period. Russia under Putin, although asserting Russia's historic national interests in the former Czarist Empire and USSR, has nonetheless demonstrated that Russia once again wants to be treated with respect and as an equal partner. Putin has demonstrated his desire to be a partner of the West by being the first to offer condolences and help to George Bush Jr. and the American people after the events of 9/11. Russia unilaterally closed its military bases in Cuba and Vietnam and in the most recent example, helped get the Obama Administration out of a potentially destructive military conflict in Syria.

Vasili Klyuchevsky, writing about Peter the Great's motivation for reaching out to the West, said the following:

Indeed, it was for technical reasons that the West was necessary to Peter. He was not a blind admirer of the West; on the contrary, he mistrusted it and was not deluded into thinking that he could establish cordial relations with the West, for he knew that the West mistrusted his country, and was hostile to it.⁹³

This statement sums up a long history of Russian-Western relations since Peter the Great's journeys to the Western Europe. What is in store for Russian – Western relations on the deep horizon only time will tell.

⁹² "Russians Name Brezhnev Best 20th Century Leader, Gorbachev Worst." *RT*, May 22, 2013. Accessed September 15, 2013. <http://rt.com/politics/brezhnev-stalin-gorbachev-soviet-638/>

⁹³ Klyuchevsky, 262.

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