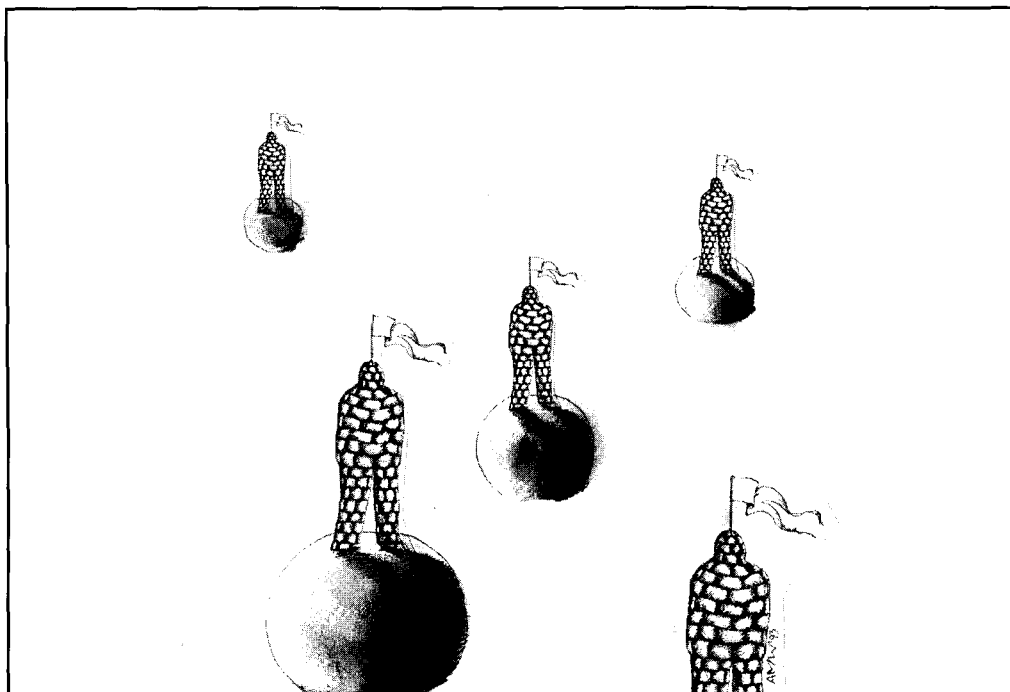


Shades of White

Russia's New Right Opposition

by Wayne Allensworth



Anna Mycek-Wodecki

“Mankind is in crisis . . . a long crisis which began 300, and in some places, 400 years ago, when people turned away from religion. . . . It is a crisis which led the East to Communism and the West to a pragmatic society. It is the crisis of materialism.” Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn.

Following the collapse of communism, Russia finds herself an orphan of the disintegrated Soviet Empire. She has embarked on a course of reform that is essentially a search for a new identity. Boris Yeltsin’s “team” of Westernizing reformers had hoped to integrate Russia into the Global Village through the auspices of the IMF and the World Bank and through the embrace of democratic ideology. The government’s program has been met with opposition not only from the old *no-menklatura* and the neocommunists, but from a nascent “national-patriotic” movement. This amorphous movement opposes not just specific points of the government’s policy, but the general cultural direction of integrationism. Its battle with the government is a struggle over Russian identity, and much of its criticisms echo those of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, who may well become the intellectual and spiritual center of a movement that has yet to adequately define itself.

At the April 1992 Congress of People’s Deputies, Boris Yeltsin and his partisans encountered staunch opposition from a group whose primary goal was to block the continuation of “team” leader Egor Gaydar’s “shock therapy” approach to economic reform. The pro-Yeltsin press was quick to brand the opposition “red-brown,” meaning neocommunist or chauvinist-fascist. What this political tar-brushing missed was the

“white” element inherent in the opposition.

Russia’s whites, led by the Christian Democrats and Constitutional Democrats, or Cadets, are traditionalists who fear, among other things, the secular Westernizing of Russia by the youthful cosmopolites of Yeltsin’s “team” and the concomitant loss of what remains of Russia’s national identity. It is a mistake to dismiss all of them as extremists, for other government critics such as Vice President Alexander Rutskoy, who have not stained themselves with choosing the “red-browns” for bed-fellows, are espousing a similar line that stresses Russia’s unique cultural identity.

The “national-patriotic” opposition composed of “whites” and “center-rightists” such as Rutskoy has struck the chord of national identity, and its resonance is being felt across Russia. Recent polling shows that Russians are reluctant to follow the “Western model” wholesale, that interest in traditional religion is growing, and that the growing phenomenon of keen interest in, and sympathy with, the deposed and murdered (some would say martyred) Czar Nicholas II denotes a people thirsty for the sustenance that only the elixir of national identity can provide. The national-patriots’ lack of a philosophical standard-bearer may soon be assuaged by the return to Russia of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, who could become the moral compass of a patriotic movement too often associated with the spiritual stain of anti-Semitism and imperialism.

In pre-revolutionary Russia, the peasantry, clergy, nobility, and middle class provided the pillars on which the patrimonial czarist state rested. Russia’s new national-patriots see themselves as the inheritors of this tradition, but not without the reservations that come from the passage of time, the historical impossibility (and undesirability) of reconstituting the *ancien*

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régime, and the lessons to be learned from the Western experience. Indeed, Russia's neowhites embrace private property and the market, and, while some remain monarchists, they are, in the main, constitutional monarchists. Hence, national-patriots reject the patrimonial state, a state in which, according to historian Richard Pipes, "authority over people (sovereignty) and objects (proprietaryship) is combined." They propose instead to build a paternalistic state (they stress "social protection" for those suffering under "shock therapy") and find their political and economic mentor in czarist reform minister Pyotr Stolypin. They envision a New Russia based on the peasantry (free farmers owning their own land), a middle class (small-business owners, white-collar workers, intelligentsia), industrial workers, and clergy. This vision of a revamped, streamlined Russia combines the elements of effective governance and economy (rule of law, representative government, private property) with spirituality (a special place for the church in society) and protection of Russia's historical patrimony (monuments, churches, natural resources). It is this belief in Christianity as the moral basis of society that separates the national-patriots from the extremist elements of the opposition: the virulent anti-Semitism and chauvinism of the secular nationalist demagogue Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, the flirtations with paganism of the black-shirted storm troopers of *Pamyat* (Memory), the national Bolshevism of "brown" ex-KGB General Sterligov, and the communism of the "reds." The national-patriots accept on the basis of observation and of the historical experience of Europe, America, and Japan that individual liberty coupled with property rights and limited government has been largely successful in producing wealthy and relatively stable societies; to that extent they are not anti-Western at all, as they are often labeled. The national-patriotic contention that such a system must be built within the parameters of Russian culture and history, with an eye to a revival of Russian traditions and the ideal of a society of small-holders and businessmen, is hardly an absurdity. Japan's success, after all, is based on just such an enterprising plan of national reconstruction.

Yet the label "xenophobia" hangs like an albatross about the neck of national-patriots. Their reluctance to countenance large-scale foreign investment, a position not held by center-rightists like Rutskoy, doubtless feeds this misperception. The fear of more extreme elements that the West wishes to "buy up" Russia as part of a plan to turn her into an exploited milk-cow, drained of natural resources and receiving nothing in return, is balanced by a more levelheaded assessment of massive Western investment as the possible carrier of the disease that is corroding the West itself from the inside: secular humanism. Again, such sentiments echo those of Solzhenitsyn. In a 1974 interview, while defending himself against his critics, Solzhenitsyn pointed to the source of the West's moral decay: the Enlightenment. "Just as mankind once became aware of the intolerable and mistaken deviation of the late Middle Ages and recoiled in horror from it, so too must we take account of the disastrous deviation of the late Enlightenment. We have become hopelessly enmeshed in our slavish worship of all that is pleasant, all that is comfortable, all that is material—we worship things, we worship products. Will we ever succeed in shaking off this burden, in giving free reign to the spirit that was breathed into us at birth, that spirit which distinguished us from the animal world?" The En-

lightenment gave birth to the Jacobinism that inspired the Bolsheviks, while Jacobinism's errant half-brother, social democracy, burrowed itself into the impressionable minds of chattering classes everywhere. Thus did the "democratic" Trojan horse, complete with a belly full of secular humanist liberalism, enter the domain of our own Republic's borders. National-patriotism, having survived the Bolshevik virus, understandably does not wish to expose the battered Russian organism to another, albeit milder, strain of that same disease.

In his 1990 pamphlet "How Are We to Reconstitute Russia?" Solzhenitsyn stresses the importance of the spiritual and moral health of the individual as the guarantor of a moral and democratic society. For Solzhenitsyn and like-minded thinkers, the mistake of man-centered Enlightenment rationalism is misplaced faith in legalistic mechanisms as the foundation of a law-based state. He therefore rejects the humanist faith in bureaucratic institutions with its concomitant legalism. Like Tocqueville, who opined that "if faith be wanting in [man], he must be subject; and if he be free, he must believe," the national-patriots, in the words of Solzhenitsyn, hold that "the moral origins [of a just society] must stand higher than the judicial": thus their stress on obligations as well as rights, the elemental importance of religion in society, and self-restraint. Rutskoy's call for the reanimation of Russia through the village, the whites' belief in the political power of Russian Orthodoxy, and Solzhenitsyn's stress on individual morality are not only modern-day reflections of 19th-century Slavophile articles of faith, but manifestations of a deeper insight, once commonly held in the West: that democratic institutions are built from the bottom up through an organic civil society, which evolves from voluntary associations of individuals acting within restraints built on religion, tradition, and custom. Tocqueville well knew that liberty and individualism may degenerate into selfish egocentrism, that men must "preserve their religion as their conditions become more equal" to counteract the "dangerous propensities" present in the democratic system that "tend to isolate [men] from each other, to concentrate every man's attention upon himself [thereby opening] the soul to an inordinate love of material gratification."

For the national-patriots, democracy is not an end in itself, whose establishment has meaning through the fulfillment of prophecies about the "end of history" or through acceptance into a New World Order. Democracy is a means to revive Russia and free her from the tyranny that curbed her development as a nation during "times of trouble" in the prerevolutionary period and sought to destroy or warp her national identity under the communist regime. Victor Aksyuchits, Chairman of the Russian Christian Democratic Movement, sees democracy as "a system in which society itself can act on its political wishes." Rutskoy envisions Russia as a great power once more, revived and strengthened by democratic reforms. Solzhenitsyn says "we choose democracy with an awareness of its shortcomings," primarily to "avoid tyranny." Likewise, national-patriots choose democracy as an instrument for the betterment of the nation, not as a replacement ideology for communism. The secular, ideological "democracy" of the universalists of the Global Village school is what Solzhenitsyn identifies as one of the West's "weaknesses," a pitfall national-patriots hope to avoid. Believing that only Russians can determine what is best for Russia—and where and how to proceed with reforms—it is no surprise that the national-patriots resent the *diktat* of IMF conditions for economic reform and reject dependency on

foreign aid as beneath the dignity of an independent nation and as counterproductive to the building of entrepreneurship in Russia.

Perplexing and divisive questions remain for a movement still seeking to define itself, questions which have prompted splits and which are wrapped up in the larger question of defining Russian national identity. Such terms as "nationalism" and "patriotism," as used in the Russian context, have yet to be adequately pinned down, thus leaving the whole phenomenon of the "national-patriotic" movement without context.

Still, national-patriotic ideas have gained currency in Russia. As noted earlier, interest in tradition, religion, and history among ordinary Russians is growing in the spiritual black hole that the communists have left behind. Alexander Rutskoy, having blasted anti-Semitism at the February 1992 "Congress of Civil and Patriotic Forces," has emerged as the most credible national-patriotic politician. Rutskoy, together with Boris Yeltsin, is one of the two or three most trusted politicians in Russia as reflected in polls taken since the beginning of the year. The white Cadets and Christian Democrats, despite their small numbers, remain an influential element in the parliamentary opposition. What impact Solzhenitsyn's return will have on the political constellation is still unclear, though his prominent position in Russian life was amply demonstrated by Boris Yeltsin's decision to call the reclusive literary genius during the June 1992 Washington summit. The two men spoke not only of Solzhenitsyn's return to Russia, but of an issue of great importance to the national-patriotic movement, the fate of the millions of Russians now residing in the newly indepen-

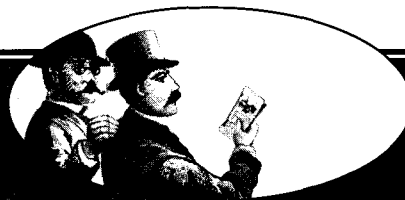
dent republics of the splintered Soviet Empire.

What the national-patriots are faced with is the most daunting of tasks: creating a "modern" market economy without the attendant social poison of the West's modernity, that is, the collapse of traditional culture (or in the case of postcommunist Russia, of the possibility of salvaging and reanimating what remains of that culture) and the concomitant Westernization of Russia, through a secular and vacuous global "pop culture."

The apparent inability of Western political elites to understand such fears (and consequently, to label all national-patriots as antireform and thus dangerous) underscores the intellectual arrogance and moral vacuity of a body of opinion that presumes to not only know what is best for Russia, but that treats with contempt all those who may question the wisdom of turning over national sovereignty to international institutions, which, by definition, are not concerned with the national interests of those whom they require to undergo political, economic, and cultural surgery.

Perhaps the opinion of Rutskoy, the opposition of the whites, and the stinging criticism of the towering figure of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn should alert us, the secularized West, and particularly we in America, to examine ourselves and reevaluate not only our relations with other countries in the post-Cold War era, when no ideological foreign enemy faces us, but our own condition. Perhaps the national-patriots are right to believe, as apparently they do, that some kind of modernization coupled with liberty need not signal the end of the mixture of traditional culture, religion, and patriotism that makes each nation unique and that gave rise to our own Republic.

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The Zhirinovsky Phenomenon

by Alexander Yanov



Anna Mycek-Wodceki

Vladimir Zhirinovsky, one of President Yeltsin's most formidable opponents, is not well known in the West. In the former Soviet Union, though, he is despised and feared by both political camps: the reformers and the "patriots." Even Leonid Kravchuk, president of the Ukraine and a former communist, considers Zhirinovsky extremely dangerous. "Do you want to deal with Zhirinovsky's Russia instead of Yeltsin's?" he once warned his feisty parliamentarians. Zhirinovsky appeared out of nowhere on Russia's political map: the classic emergence of an outsider in troubled times. At first these men are not taken seriously, but sometimes they get lucky. In Germany, in 1933, a frustrated painter from Linz, Austria, became lucky indeed.

In the 1991 Russian presidential elections the previously unknown Zhirinovsky, founder of the miniscule Liberal Democratic Party, came in third, after the popular Yeltsin and former Soviet Prime Minister Nikolai Ryzhkov. He was far ahead of all the other opposition leaders. In fact, Zhirinovsky garnered six million votes—no joke for a candidate who materialized only yesterday, especially if one remembers that in the middle of another civilizational collapse in Russia, in 1917, Lenin came to power with nowhere near as many votes.

What are Zhirinovsky's positions and who are his followers? While campaigning for president in 1991, he promised that he

would feed the country within 72 hours. How? "Very simply. I'll move the troops, about 1.5 million strong, into the former GDR; rattle my nuclear sabers; and they'll give me everything." By "them" he naturally meant the West. To be sure, this would be a gross violation of international law, but this is precisely Zhirinovsky's trump card. He is ready and willing to break all accepted international rules, and this is the nature of his appeal in postcommunist Russia. "What price Paris?" he would ask. "How about London? Washington? Los Angeles? How much are you willing to pay so I don't wipe them from the face of the earth with my SS-18's? You doubt me? Want to take a chance? Let's get started."

Western politicians may assure their constituents that the nuclear nightmare which has been hanging over everyone's head for half a century is over, but Zhirinovsky knows that until at least 2003 Soviet SS-18's will still be aimed at the West. He hopes to become Russia's president long before then, and from that moment on all agreements will be null and void. True, Yeltsin has promised to take the missiles off alert status, but Zhirinovsky will not fulfill Yeltsin's promise if and when he becomes president. By the same token, he has no intention of adhering to any international agreements based on nuclear parity or mutual assured destruction. In contrast to conventional politicians, Zhirinovsky is perfectly ready to risk mutual destruction. He feels there is nothing wrong with perpetrating a vast hijack, using any weapons, including nuclear. He has no notion of legitimacy, property, or law. For him the main thing is Russia's nuclear fist: the readiness to blackmail prosperous

This is a chapter from Alexander Yanov's forthcoming book Weimar Russia. The piece was translated and edited by Leon Steinmetz.