

psychology and historic aspirations of the Russian people? By conceding that, we would, in fact, lend our support to *their* claim that Communism and Soviet power are inseparable from Russian patriotism, and thus present them with a major propaganda victory. Surely, this is not the way to "instantaneous reciprocity" or to a sound foreign policy. We should not forget that in a not-so-remote past, the Nazis signed their own death warrant on the Eastern front the moment they began to equate the Russians with the Communists, to identify them with Soviet leaders, and to write them off as predestined for a collectivist outlook.

I fear that our support for human rights in the USSR and our intercession on behalf of the dissidents, spurred as they are by a sense of justice and a feeling of compassion, would amount to little, if they are not at the same time founded on the rock-hard conviction that these dissidents—from Solzhenitsyn to Aleksandr Ginsburg, from Andrei Sakharov to General Grigorenko, from Georgii Vins to Father Dmitrii Dudko—not only represent ethnic, religious, or social minorities but speak for the broadest interests and noblest aspirations of all Soviet people, including ethnic Russians.

But let us assume for a moment that I am wrong and Professor Pipes is right. If the Soviet foreign policy, perfidious as it is, is indeed pre-determined by the unavoidable Russianness of its leaders allegedly following nothing but the Russian traditions of expansion, we are then faced with the question: "Is there any hope of preventing their further expansion without teaching a lesson to the whole Russian nation?" Professor Pipes knows the answer:

"Nothing short of a major cataclysm that would demonstrate beyond doubt that impulses rooted in its history have lost their validity is likely to affect the collective outlook of the Russian nation and change it, as defeat has caused the German and Japanese to turn away from dictatorships, and the Nazi massacres have caused the Jews to abandon their traditional pacifism. Unless and until that happens, one can ignore Russia's historical tradition only at great risk."

I can hardly believe my ears that someone would grant the Russians no hope except going through yet another "major cataclysm." This is as if Professor Pipes has never heard of the Great Purge and of the Gulag Archipelago, or of the fact that Soviet victory in World War II was more costly for the Russians than for the defeated Germans and Japanese. The fact that the country did not turn

away from dictatorship makes the dimensions of this cataclysm so much larger. Even if one would grant the fateful honour of suffering a holocaust only to some 15 million Soviet citizens (by the way, mostly Russians *muzhiks*) annihilated during the worst peace-time years of Stalin, one has to be extremely frivolous with historical facts to maintain that all sixty-odd years of the Communist experiment in Russia have been "short of major cataclysm." What kind of other cataclysm, except a nuclear holocaust, Professor Pipes thinks might be in store for the Russian nation defies my imagination.

As one American reviewer of Pipes's *Russia Under the Old Régime* pointed out, this book expresses "his political predestination" of the Russian people, and "serves as a vivid reminder that the historian himself becomes a political force as he influences the way societies view one another."⁴ The same applies even more to Professor Pipes's political writings. Together with another reviewer I wish that he would show "more sensitivity to positive traits, greater readiness to praise what is at all praiseworthy, and more sympathy and warmth for the human being discussed."⁵

A Reply

By Richard Pipes

I REGRET that Mr Krasnow has taken as the text for his criticism of my views one solitary article out of the many articles and books that I have published. This particular essay ("Détente: Moscow's View") is concerned primarily with current Soviet policy toward Europe: the historical background contained in it takes the form of a six-page introduction. While I am fully prepared to defend what I have said on these six pages, I do wish to make it clear that this highly condensed summary presents neither the evidence nor the analyses for the assertions which are to be found in my scholarly writings. Mr Krasnow ought to have been aware that these remarks were meant as a kind of crash course in applied Russian history for policy-makers, at a time (1974) when many of them perceived Russia as a political *tabula rasa* on which a benevolent America could write her own messages. My assertion that foreign policy has to acknowledge the existence of "the most fundamental differences in the psychology and aspirations of [the world's] diverse inhabitants" is not, as Mr Krasnow seems to believe, the *summa* of my methodology but a hoary truism which I felt compelled to make because experience in Washington

⁴ See Dorothy Atkinson's review of Pipes's *Russia Under the Old Régime* in *The American Historical Review* (April 1976).

⁵ See Donald Treadgold's review in *Slavic Review* (December 1975).

had convinced me that our politicians, in their eagerness to come to terms with Moscow, had forgotten it.

As I understand it, Mr Krasnow concurs with my general attitude towards the Soviet régime and the policy of *détente*, but takes exception to my explanation of the reasons behind Communist behaviour. Whereas I seek its roots *primarily* in Russian historical experience, he sees it *exclusively* in the influence on Russia of Marxist ideology. He implicitly denies any link between pre-1917 and post-1917 Russia: in this one respect, at least, he concurs with the official Soviet view of the matter. I find this view very strange. While one can legitimately argue over the extent and the nature of political continuity in Russia before and after the Revolution, to deny any continuity at all seems patently absurd. After all, the same people, occupying the same territory, tilling the same soil, speaking the same language, and inheriting the same thousand-year old history cannot have developed by any stretch of the imagination two distinct political systems that have no features in common. Even the most violent mutations in nature do not yield entirely different biological organisms; and such a phenomenon is no more conceivable in history.

I will not endeavour here to justify my general conception of Russian history and its continuities: I have done so in passing in *Russia under the Old Régime* and hope to do so explicitly and in detail in the history of the Russian Revolution on which I am presently working. I will here concentrate on our fundamental disagreement, the validity of the “ideological” explanation of Communism, and then briefly answer some of Mr Krasnow’s specific criticisms.

BUT FIRST ABOUT MY USE of Russian proverbs. Mr Krasnow makes much too much of this issue. Clearly, I have used these not as proof of my statements concerning the mentality of the Russian peasant but as illustrations: my analyses on the basis of which I made these generalisations can be found elsewhere, especially in Chapter Six of *Russia under the Old Régime*. That they were not capriciously chosen, Mr Krasnow may persuade himself by reading Maxim Gorky’s *O russkom krest’ianstve* (Berlin, 1922), written by a man who, whatever his other sins, surely knew the Russian peasant. Furthermore, the proverbs I cited were meant not to demonstrate, as alleged, the “perfidy of Russian national character”—a term I have

never used in any of my writings—but rather to stress the importance which the Russian peasant, taught by centuries of harsh experience, has learned to attach to cunning and self-seeking as preconditions of survival.

Are perceptions of “national psychology” a solid base on which to conduct a foreign policy? I suppose that if the perception is correct it is an indispensable ingredient of a foreign policy. I do not see how one can engage in competition or conflict without having formed some perceptions, on the basis of past experience, of one’s adversary’s strengths and weaknesses, strivings and anxieties.

Mr Krasnow inadvertently provides an excellent example of that continuity in mentality to which I refer. He says that when he was a student at Moscow University he and his colleagues interpreted to mean “everything is permitted” the following passage from the *Communist Manifesto*: “The Communist Revolution is the most radical rupture with traditional property relations; no wonder that its development involves the most radical rupture with traditional ideas.” Now, in fact, this statement grants no such licence. Marx, who believed that ideas form a superstructure of economic relations, merely reiterates here that a fundamental change in economic relations (the abolition of private property) must be followed by correspondingly fundamental changes in ideas. I believe this idea to be false; but it certainly does not suggest that “everything is permitted”, the more so that the sentences preceding this particular quotation make it clear that what Marx had in mind was the elimination of ideas that throughout history had made possible the “exploitation of one part of society by the other.” But curiously enough, when one reads accounts of Russian peasants during the revolutionary years of 1905–7 and 1917 one finds that their reaction to all news of change emanating from the city (e.g. the October Manifesto) was precisely the one that Mr Krasnow and his fellow-students had to Marx: “everything is permitted”, which in their case meant pogroms of private estates and seizures of someone else’s property. It is in this sense that one is justified in saying that Marx’s idea of “class war” did not determine behaviour but “reinforced” existing predispositions.

The thought that a nation of over one hundred million people with a millennium of recorded history behind it can be completely redone and forced to behave, decade after decade, in an outrageously different manner because of the influence of some “evil ideas” strikes me as fantastic.

IT IS TRUE THAT Marxism contains germs of totalitarianism (although it contains also liberal elements of which Mr Krasnow unfortunately remains blissfully unaware). But how is it that this doctrine, born in Western Europe, has never led to totalitarianism there, its homeland? How come the *Communist Manifesto* did not produce Communist tyranny in Germany, the country in whose language it was written? How explain the completely unrevolutionary effect of *Das Kapital* on England, where it had been conceived, written, and published? Why was it Russia, of all places, a country which of the major 19th-century powers was the least "capitalist" and to which Marx's theories, therefore, seemed the least applicable, that succumbed to their revolutionary gospel? My answer to these questions is that ideas do not generate major political and social changes, but at best encourage them: that is, that they produce an effect only where the climate and the soil for them happen to be propitious.

THE VALIDITY of this view becomes apparent when we look at the fate of Marxism in Western Europe. Whereas in Russia (and in much of Asia and the rest of the non-Western world) where the dominant traditions had been authoritarian, it was the violent and totalitarian elements in Marx's doctrine that found the widest acceptance, in Western Europe these tended to be sloughed off in favour of its reformist and liberal ingredients. In Germany, for instance, the Social Democratic Party, the oldest and at one time the most powerful Marxist organisation in Europe, and a model for Russian Social Democrats, had shed its revolutionary zeal even before the 19th century was over, and then turned into just another law-abiding, democratic party. How different from its Russian counterpart! It is instructive today to contemplate the entirely different developments of the two parties which had sprung from the same doctrine, from the same corrupting *Communist Manifesto*—because it indicates that the root of the problem lies not in what ideas are propounded but in how ideas are received. Even in Eastern Europe, where it is imposed by the Soviet Army, the manifestations of Communism are almost universally milder and more humane than in Russia: and in some Marxist states, for instance, Yugoslavia, we can have régimes that bear no resemblance to totalitarianism. All of which suggests to me that while Marxism indeed has strong authoritarian impulses, the actual shape which régimes based on

it assume depends in large measure on indigenous political traditions: these, in the case of Europe, are more liberal, and in the case of Russia and other countries with predominantly authoritarian traditions, more totalitarian.

The "ideological" explanation postulated by Mr Krasnow and popular among conservative Russian émigrés has interesting analogues in the historical experience of other societies. Whenever people see the world around them collapse they find it difficult to admit that this collapse may have been due to internal, structural defects, and prefer to seek explanations in external causes, of which "evil ideas" are by far the favourite. Thus when Rome fell to the barbarians a century after it had adopted Christianity as its state religion, many Latin writers blamed its downfall on the abandonment of the old gods: Rome had been victorious under its old faith, they argued, and suffered nothing but calamities after it had converted. St Augustine wrote his *City of God* as a repudiation of this simplistic argument: in its Third Book he showed how many disasters had befallen Rome under the old gods. And again after the French Revolution, conservatives like Joseph de Maistre sought the principal cause of the catastrophe in the ideas of the *philosophes*, notably Rousseau, whose *Contrat social* he regarded much as Mr Krasnow regards the *Communist Manifesto*. De Maistre's explanation, however, like others of this kind failed to address itself to the question why the ideas of Rousseau produced a revolution in France and nowhere else (unless carried on French bayonets) although Rousseau's writings were by no means confined to France.

THE POINT AT ISSUE has more than historiographic significance. I believe that to argue as do Mr Krasnow and other like-minded émigrés is to succumb to a delusion which can have dangerous consequences. Some day the Communist régime in Russia will die, as do all things on this earth. What then? If those who succeed it to power will think as he does they will see no need for major reforms that would change the underlying conditions which had made Communism in Russia possible in the first place, and caused its rule to be so terrible and prolonged subsequently. If they are convinced that the tragedies of the past were due exclusively to "evil ideas" they will naturally devote themselves to suppressing these ideas. Logically, Mr Krasnow should favour in his liberated homeland the complete outlawing of the *Communist Manifesto* and other writings of the Marxist school, including

those of non-Communist authors influenced by Marx. This procedure would require not only the prompt restitution of censorship but also of a political police to enforce it and apprehend violators, say, a student who may have had hidden under his mattress a copy of Marx's *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*. And, of course, such violators would have to be denied access to government positions. And so, as they like to say in my country, Russia would be back at square one: the hunted would become the hunters. . . .

TO ANSWER BRIEFLY Mr Krasnow's other criticisms:

I see none but the most superficial resemblance between Russian imperialism and that of Britain, Holland, or the United States: they have little in common in the mode of administration, or in the intensity of colonisation, or in their attitude toward the conquered territories. The United States, Britain and Holland have never treated colonial territories as part of the "homeland" and have, therefore, given up their empires relatively without a struggle: the Soviet Union has yet to surrender one inch of its empire.

I nowhere equate "Communism" with "Russianness." What I do say is that the Russian political tradition causes that country to swing between authoritarianism and anarchy, with very little likelihood of its political pendulum stopping for any length of time between these two extremes. This authoritarianism can be imperial-bureaucratic, it can be Communist, it can be Fascist, or it can be of some new, as yet untried variety.

I sympathise with Mr Krasnow's predicament: it is very difficult for one who deeply loves his homeland to be witness to its appalling behaviour, and it is natural to seek a way out of this emotional difficulty in pseudo-explanations. But it is no service to Russia to blame all the suffering that she has experienced and inflicted since 1917 on a scapegoat, a German writer, long dead. One can imagine the world's hilarious response if anti-Nazi Germans had sought to "explain" the monstrosities of Nazism exclusively by the pernicious influence of the ideas of Gobineau and Houston Stewart Chamberlain. Fortunately, German political thinkers and historians have not been content with such facile explanations as seem to satisfy our Russian friends, and have dug much deeper in their quest for the causes of Germany's tragedy. I do not know how many more cataclysms Russia will have to experience before she can enter the path of more peaceful and normal development: here progress is measured not by millions of bodies killed but by millions of minds illuminated and converted, above all, to the idea of law as a regulator of human relations.

To say this is not to be anti-Russian, surely. Who has not been castigated as "anti-Russian" by misguided Russian patriots who thought that the love of one's country demands decorum with no questions asked? Among them can be counted Nil Sorskkii, Maxim the Greek, Peter the Great, Novikov, Chaadaev, Turgenev, Saltykov-Shchedrin, Struve. But I believe that they and others like them were truer friends of Mr Krasnow's country than those who lull her with fairy tales about Holy Russia, the Christ-loving *muzhik*, and evil foreign "ideas."

About How Many?

About one in six.
What kind of people?
People like us.
Who hasn't wanted
to scream the house down?
Felt there was no point
carrying on?
Sat day-dreaming
at place of employment?
Wouldn't be human
if you hadn't.
Why do five million
people per annum
visit their doctor? . . .
More working days lost

than flu and bad backs.
All walks of life—
executives, soldiers,
old-age pensioners
(hommes de lettres?).
"Different"? "Odd"?
Require reassurance.
Occupational
and industrial
therapy units
help, as can Fine Art,
Music and Drama.
Tolerance, patience,
talk freely to them,
build warm relaxed
relationships with them.

Peter Reading