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OSWALD SPENGLER ON THE SOUL OF RUSSIA

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Summary

It would be easy to regard Oswald Spengler, author of the epochal *Decline of The West* in the aftermath of World War I, as a Russophobe. In so doing the role of Russia in the unfolding of history from this era onward could be easily dismissed, opposed or ridiculed by proponents of Spengler, while in Russia his insights into culture-morphology would be understandably unwelcome as being from an Slavophobic German nationalist. However, while Spengler, like many others of the time in the aftermath of the Bolshevik Revolution, regarded Russia as the Asianised leader of a 'coloured revolution' against the white world, he also considered other possibilities. This paper examines Spengler's views on Russia as a distinct culture that had not yet fulfilled its destiny, while Western civilisation was about to take a final bow on the world historical stage. His views on Russia as an outsider are considered in relation to the depiction of the Russian soul by seminal Russians such as Gogol.

Key Words: Berdyaev, Dostoyevski, Gogol, Petrinism, Russia, Slavophil, Spengler, *Tarus Bulba*.

Russia's 'Soul'

Spengler regarded Russians as formed by the vastness of the land-plain, as innately antagonistic to the Machine, as rooted in the soil, irrepressibly peasant, religious, and 'primitive'. Without a wider understanding of Spengler's philosophy it appears that he was – like Hitler – a Slavophobe. However, when Spengler wrote of these Russian characteristics he was referencing the Russians as a still youthful people in contrast to the senile West. Hence the 'primitive' Russian is not synonymous with 'primitivity' as popularly understood at that time in regard to 'primitive' tribal

peoples. Nor was it to be confounded with the Hitlerite perception of the 'primitive Slav' incapable of building his own State.

To Spengler, the 'primitive peasant' is the well-spring from which a race draws its healthiest elements during its epochs of cultural vigour. Agriculture is the foundation of a High Culture, enabling stable communities to diversify labour into specialisation from which Civilisation proceeds.

However, according to Spengler, each people has its own soul, a German conception derived from the German Idealism of Herder, Fichte et al. A High culture reflects that soul, whether in its mathematics, music, architecture; both in the arts and the physical sciences. The Russian soul is not the same as the Western *Faustian*, as Spengler called it, the 'Magian' of the Arabian civilisation, or the Classical of the Hellenes and Romans. The Western Culture that was imposed on Russia by Peter the Great, what Spengler called *Petrinism*, is a veneer.

The basis of the Russian soul is not *infinite space* – as in the West's *Faustian* (Spengler, 1971, I, 183) imperative, but is '*the plain without limit*' (Spengler, 1971, I, 201). The Russian soul expresses its own type of infinity, albeit not that of the Western which becomes even *enslaved* by its own technics at the end of its life-cycle. (Spengler, 1971, II, 502). [9] (Although it could be argued that Sovietism enslaved man to machine, a Spenglerian would cite this as an example of *Petrinism*). However, Civilisations cannot do anything but follow their life's course, and one cannot see Spengler's descriptions as moral judgements but as observations. The finale for Western Civilisation according to Spengler cannot be to create further great forms of art and music, which belong to the youthful or 'spring' epoch of a civilisation, but to dominate the world under a technocratic-military dispensation, before declining into oblivion that all prior world civilisations. It is after this Western decline that Spengler alluded to the next world civilisation being that of Russia. At that stage Spengler could only hint at the possibilities.

Hence, according to Spengler, Russian Orthodox architecture does not represent the infinity towards space that is symbolised by the Western high culture's Gothic Cathedral spire, nor the enclosed space of the Mosque of the Magian Culture, (Spengler, 1971, I, 183-216) but the impression of sitting upon a horizon. Spengler considered that this Russian architecture is 'not yet a style, only the promise of a style that will awaken when the real Russian religion awakens' (Spengler, 1971, I, p. 201. Spengler was writing of the Russian culture as an outsider, and by his own reckoning must have realised the limitations of that. It is therefore useful to compare his thoughts on Russia with those of Russians of note.

Nikolai Berdyaev in *The Russian Idea* affirms what Spengler describes:

There is that in the Russian soul which corresponds to the immensity, the vagueness, the infinitude of the Russian land, spiritual geography corresponds with physical. In the Russian soul there is a sort of immensity, a vagueness, a predilection for the infinite, such as is suggested by the great plain of Russia. (Berdyaev, 1).

'Prussian Socialism', 'Russian Socialism'

Of the Russian soul, the ego/vanity of the Western culture-man is missing; the persona seeks impersonal growth in service, 'in the brother-world of the plain'. Orthodox Christianity condemns the 'I' as 'sin' (Spengler, 1971, I, 309). Spengler wrote of 'Prussian Socialism', based on the Prussian ethos of *duty to the state*, as the foundation of a new Western ethos under the return to Faith and Authority during the final epoch of Western civilisation. He contrasted this with the 'socialism' of Karl Marx, which he regarded as a product of English economics, (Spengler, 1919) as distinct from the German economics of Friedrich List for example, described as the 'national system

of political economy', where nation is the *raison d'être* of the economy and not class or individual.

The Russian concept of 'we' rather than 'I', and of impersonal service to the expanse of one's land implies another form socialism. It is perhaps in this sense that Stalinism proceeded along lines different and often antithetical to the Bolshevism envisaged by Trotsky et al. (Trotsky, 1936), and established an enduring legacy on Russia.

A recent comment by an American visitor to Russia, Barbara J. Brothers, as part of a scientific delegation, states something akin to Spengler's observation:

The Russians have a sense of connectedness to themselves and to other human beings that is just not a part of American reality. It isn't that competitiveness does not exist; it is just that there always seems to be more consideration and respect for others in any given situation.

Of the Russian concept of property and of capitalism, Berdyaev wrote:

The social theme occupied a predominant place in Russian nineteenth century thought. It might even be said that Russian thought in that century was to a remarkable extent coloured by socialistic ideas. If the word socialism is not taken in its doctrinaire sense, one might say that socialism is deeply rooted in the Russian nature. There is already an expression of this truth in the fact that the Russian people did not recognize the Roman conception of property. It has been said of Muscovite Russia that it was innocent of the sin of ownership in land, the one and only landed proprietor being the Tsar: there was no freedom, but there was a greater sense of what was right. This is of interest in the light that it throws upon the rise of communism. The Slavophiles also repudiated the Western bourgeois interpretation of private property equally with the socialists of a revolutionary way of thinking. Almost all of them thought that the Russian people was called upon to give actual effect to social truth and righteousness and to the brotherhood of man. One and all they hoped that Russia would escape the wrongness and evil of capitalism, that it would be able to pass over to a better social order while avoiding the capitalist stage of economic development. And they all considered the backwardness of Russia as conferring upon her a great advantage. It was the wisdom of the Russians to be socialists during the period of serfdom and autocracy. Of all peoples in the world the Russians have the community spirit; in the highest degree the Russian way of life and Russian manners, are of that kind. Russian hospitality is an indication of this sense of community. (Berdyaev, 97-98).

Here again, we see with Berdyaev, as with Spengler, that there is a 'Russian Socialism' based on what Spengler referred to as the Russian 'we' in contrast to the Late Western 'I', and of the sense of brotherhood dramatised by Gogol in *Taras Bulba*, shaped not by factories and money-thinking, but by the kinship that arises from a people formed from the vastness of the plains, and forged through the adversity of centuries of Muslim and Mongol invasions.

The Russian Soul - Русская душа

The connections between family, nation, birth, unity and motherland are reflected in the Russian language.

род [rod]: family, kind, sort, genus

родина [ródina]: homeland, motherland

родители [rodíteli]: parents

родить [rodít']: to give birth

роднить [rodnít']: to unite, bring together

родовой [rodovói]: ancestral, tribal

родство [rodstvó]: kinship

Russian National Literature starting from the 1840s began to consciously express the Russian soul. Firstly Nikolai Vasilievich Gogol's *Taras Bulba*, which along with the poetry of Pushkin, founded a Russian literary tradition; that is to say, truly Russian, and distinct from the previous literature based on German, French and English. John Cournos states of this in his introduction to *Taras Bulba*:

The spoken word, born of the people, gave soul and wing to literature; only by coming to earth, the native earth, was it enabled to soar. Coming up from Little Russia, the Ukraine, with Cossack blood in his veins, Gogol injected his own healthy virus into an effete body, blew his own virile spirit, the spirit of his race, into its nostrils, and gave the Russian novel its direction to this very day.

Taras Bulba is a tale on the formation of the Cossack folk. In this folk-formation the outer enemy plays a crucial role. The Russian has been formed largely as the result of battling over centuries with Tartars, Muslims and Mongols. Cournos writes of the Gogol myths in reference to the shaping of the Russian character through adversity and landscape:

his same Prince Guedimin freed Kieff from the Tatar yoke. This city had been laid waste by the golden hordes of Ghengis Khan and hidden for a very long time from the Slavonic chronicler as behind an impenetrable curtain. A shrewd man, Guedimin appointed a Slavonic prince to rule over the city and permitted the inhabitants to practise their own faith, Greek Christianity. Prior to the Mongol invasion, which brought conflagration and ruin, and subjected Russia to a two-century bondage, cutting her off from Europe, a state of chaos existed and the separate tribes fought with one another constantly and for the most petty reasons. Mutual depredations were possible owing to the absence of mountain ranges; there were no natural barriers against sudden attack. The openness of the steppe made the people war-like. But this very openness made it possible later for Guedimin's pagan hosts, fresh from the fir forests of what is now White Russia, to make a clean sweep of the whole country between Lithuania and Poland, and thus give the scattered principdoms a much-needed cohesion. In this way Ukrainia was formed. (Cournos, 'Introduction', *ibid*).

Their society and nationality were defined by religiosity, as was the West's by Gothic Christianity during its 'Spring' epoch. The newcomer to a *Setch* or permanent village was greeted by the Chief as a Christian and as a warrior: 'Welcome! Do you believe in Christ?' — 'I do', replied the new-comer. 'And do you believe in the Holy Trinity?' — 'I do'. — 'And do you go to church?' — 'I do.' 'Now cross yourself'. (Gogol, III).

Gogol depicts the scorn in which trade is held, and when commerce has entered among Russians, rather than being confined to non-Russians associated with trade, it is regarded as a symptom of decadence:

I know that baseness has now made its way into our land. Men care only to have their ricks of grain and hay, and their droves of horses, and that their mead may be safe in their cellars; they adopt, the devil only knows what Mussulman customs. They speak scornfully with their tongues. They care not to speak their real thoughts with their own countrymen. They sell their own things to their own comrades, like soulless creatures in the market-place. The favour of a foreign king, and not even a king, but the poor favour of a Polish magnate, who beats them on the mouth with his yellow shoe, is dearer to them than all brotherhood. But the very meanest of these vile men, whoever he may be, given over though he be to vileness and slavishness, even he, brothers, has some grains of Russian feeling; and they will assert themselves some day. And then the wretched man will beat his breast with his hands; and

will tear his hair, cursing his vile life loudly, and ready to expiate his disgraceful deeds with torture. Let them know what brotherhood means on Russian soil! (Spengler, 1971, II, 113).

Here we might see a Russian socialism that is, so far from being the dialectical materialism offered by Marx, the mystic we-feeling forged by the vastness of the plains and the imperative for brotherhood above economics, imposed by that landscape. Russia's feeling of world-mission has its own form of messianism whether expressed through Christian Orthodoxy or the non-Marxian form of 'world revolution' under Stalin, or both in combination, as suggested by the later rapport between Stalinism and the Church from 1943 with the creation of the Council for Russian Orthodox Church Affairs (Chumachenko, 2002). In both senses, and even in the embryonic forms taking place under Putin, Russia is conscious of a world-mission, expressed today as Russia's role in forging a multipolar world, with Russia as being pivotal in resisting unipolarism

Commerce is the concern of foreigners, and the intrusions bring with them the corruption of the Russian soul and culture in general: in speech, social interaction, servility, undermining Russian 'brotherhood', the Russian 'we' feeling that Spengler described. (Spengler 1971, I, 309). However, Gogol also states that this materialistic decay will eventually be purged even from the soul of the most craven Russian.

And all the Setch prayed in one church, and were willing to defend it to their last drop of blood, although they would not hearken to aught about fasting or abstinence. Jews, Armenians, and Tatars, inspired by strong avarice, took the liberty of living and trading in the suburbs; for the Zaporozhtzi never cared for bargaining, and paid whatever money their hand chanced to grasp in their pocket. Moreover, the lot of these gain-loving traders was pitiable in the extreme. They resembled people settled at the foot of Vesuvius; for when the Zaporozhtzi lacked money, these bold adventurers broke down their booths and took everything gratis. (Gogol, III).

The description of these people shows that they would not stoop to haggling; they decided what a merchant should receive. Money-talk is repugnant to them.

The Cossack brotherhood is portrayed by Gogol as the formative process in the building up of the Russian people. This process is, significantly, not one of biology but of spirit, even transcending the family bond. Spengler treated the matter of race as that of soul rather than of zoology. (Spengler, 1971, II, 113-155). To Spengler landscape was crucial in determining what becomes 'race', and the duration of families grouped in a particular landscape – including nomads who have a defined range of wandering – form '*a character of duration*', which was Spengler's definition of 'race'. (Spengler, Vol. II, 113). Gogol describes this 'race' forming process among the Russians. So far from being an aggressive race nationalism it is an expanding mystic brotherhood under God:

The father loves his children, the mother loves her children, the children love their father and mother; but this is not like that, brothers. The wild beast also loves its young. But a man can be related only by similarity of mind and not of blood. There have been brotherhoods in other lands, but never any such brotherhoods as on our Russian soil. It has happened to many of you to be in foreign lands. ... No, brothers, to love as the Russian soul loves, is to love not with the mind or anything else, but with all that God has given, all that is within you. Ah! (Gogol, IX).

The Russian soul is born in suffering. The Russian accepts the fate of life in service to God and to his Motherland. Russia and Faith are inseparable. When the elderly warrior Bovdug is mortally struck by a Turkish bullet his final words are exhortations on the nobility of suffering, after which his spirit soars to join his ancestors:

'I sorrow not to part from the world. God grant every man such an end! May the Russian land be forever glorious!' And Bovdug's spirit flew above, to tell the old men who had gone on long before that men still knew how to fight on Russian soil, and better still, that they knew how to die for it and the holy faith. (Gogol, IX).

The depth and duration of this cult of the martyrs attached to Holy Mother Russia was revived under Stalin during the Great Patriotic War. This is today as vigorous as ever, as indicated by the celebration of Victory Day on 7 May 2015, and the absence of Western representatives indicating the diverging course Russia is again taking from the West.

The mystique of death and suffering for the Motherland is described in the death of Tarus Bulba when he is captured and executed, his final words being ones of resurrection:

'Wait, the time will come when ye shall learn what the orthodox Russian faith is! Already the people scent it far and near. A czar shall arise from Russian soil, and there shall not be a power in the world which shall not submit to him!' But fire had already risen from the fagots; it lapped his feet, and the flame spread to the tree.... But can any fire, flames, or power be found on earth which are capable of overpowering Russian strength? (Gogol, XII).

The characteristics of the Russian soul that run through *Tarus Bulba* are those of faith, fate, struggle, suffering, strength, brotherhood and resurrection. *Tarus Bulba* established the Russian national literature that articulated the Russian soul.

Pseudomorphosis

A significant element of Spengler's culture morphology is 'Historic Pseudomorphosis'. Spengler drew an analogy from geology, when crystals of a mineral are embedded in a rock-stratum: where 'clefs and cracks occur, water filters in, and the crystals are gradually washed out so that in due course only their hollow mould remains'. (Spengler, II, 89).

Then comes volcanic outbursts which explode the mountain; molten masses pour in, stiffen and crystallize out in their turn. But these are not free to do so in their own special forms. They must fill out the spaces that they find available. Thus there arise distorted forms, crystals whose inner structure contradicts their external shape, stones of one kind presenting the appearance of stones of another kind. The mineralogists call this phenomenon *Pseudomorphosis*. (Ibid.).

Spengler explained:

By the term 'historical pseudomorphosis' I propose to designate those cases in which an older alien Culture lies so massively over the land that a young Culture, born in this land, cannot get its breath and fails not only to achieve pure and specific expression-forms, but even to develop its own fully self-consciousness. All that wells up from the depths of the young soul is cast in the old moulds, young feelings stiffen in senile works, and instead of rearing itself up in its own creative power, it can only hate the distant power with a hate that grows to be monstrous. (Ibid.).

Russia is the example of 'Historic Pseudomorphosis' given by Spengler as being 'presented to our eyes to-day'. A dichotomy has existed for centuries, starting with Peter the Great, of attempts to impose a Western veneer over Russia. This is called *Petrinism*. The resistance of those attempts is what Spengler called 'Old Russia'. Spengler, 1971, II, 192). Spengler described this dichotomy:

...This Muscovite period of the great Boyar families and Patriarchs, in which a constant element is the resistance of an Old Russia party to the friends of Western Culture, is followed, from the founding of Petersburg in 1703, by the pseudomorphosis which forced the

primitive Russian soul into an alien mould, first of full Baroque, then of the Enlightenment, and then of the nineteenth century. (Ibid., II, p. 192).

Spengler's view is again in accord with what is spoken of Russia by Russians. Nikolai Berdyaev wrote in terms similar to Spengler's:

The inconsistency and complexity of the Russian soul may be due to the fact that in Russia two streams of world history East and West jostle and influence one another. The Russian people is not purely European and it is not purely Asiatic. Russia is a complete section of the world a colossal East-West. It unites two worlds, and within the Russian soul two principles are always engaged in strife - the Eastern and the Western. (Berdyaev, 1).

With the orientation of Russian policy towards the West, 'Old Russia' was 'forced into a false and artificial history'. (Spengler, II, 193). Spengler wrote that Russia had become dominated by Western culture from its 'Late' epoch:

Late-period arts and sciences, enlightenment, social ethics, the materialism of world-cities, were introduced, although in this pre-cultural time religion was the only language in which man understood himself and the world. In the townless land with its primitive peasantry, cities of alien type fixed themselves like ulcers – false, unnatural, unconvincing. 'Petersburg', says Dostoyevski, 'it is the most abstract and artificial city in the world'.

After this everything that arose around it was felt by the true Rusdom as lies and poison. A truly apocalyptic hatred was directed on Europe, and 'Europe' was all that was not Russia... 'The first condition of emancipation for the Russian soul', wrote Aksakov^[1] in 1863 to Dostoyevski, 'is that it should hate Petersburg with all this might and all its soul'. Moscow is holy, Petersburg Satanic. A widespread popular legend presents Peter the Great as Antichrist. (Spengler, 1971, II, 193).

Berdyaev also discusses the introduction of Enlightenment doctrines from France into Russia:

The Western culture of Russia in the eighteenth century was a superficial aristocratic borrowing and imitation. Independent thought had not yet awakened. At first it was French influences which prevailed among us and a superficial philosophy of enlightenment was assimilated. The Russian aristocrats of the eighteenth century absorbed Western culture in the form of a miserable rehash of Voltaire. (Berdyaev, 16).

The hatred of the 'West' and of 'Europe' is the hatred for a Civilisation that had already reached an advanced state of decay into materialism and sought to impose its primacy by cultural subversion rather than by combat, with its City-based and money-based outlook, 'poisoning the unborn culture in the womb of the land'. (Spengler, 1971, II, 194). Russia was still a land where there were no bourgeoisie and no true class system but only lord and peasant, a view confirmed by Berdyaev, writing:

The various lines of social demarcation did not exist in Russia; there were no pronounced classes. Russia was never an aristocratic country in the Western sense, and equally there was no bourgeoisie. (Berdyaev, 1).

The cities that emerged threw up an intelligentsia, copying the intelligentsia of Late Westernism, 'bent on discovering problems and conflicts, and below, an uprooted peasantry, with all the metaphysical gloom, anxiety, and misery of their own Dostoyevski, perpetually homesick for the open land and bitterly hating the stony grey world into which the Antichrist had tempted them. Moscow had no proper soul'. (Spengler, 1971, II, 194).

The spirit of the upper classes was Western, and the lower had brought in with them the soul of the countryside. Between the two worlds there was no reciprocal comprehension, no

communication, no charity. To understand the two spokesmen and victims of the pseudomorphosis, it is enough that Dostoyevski is the peasant, and Tolstoi the man of Western society. The one could never in his soul get away from the land; the other, in spite of his desperate efforts, could never get near it. (Ibid.).

Berdyayev likewise states of the *Petrinism* of the upper class:

Peter secularized the Russian Tsardom and brought it into touch with Western absolutism of the more enlightened kind. The Tsardom of Moscow had not given actual effect to the messianic idea of Moscow as the Third Rome, but the efforts of Peter created a gulf between a police absolutism and the sacred Tsardom. A breach took place between the upper governing classes of Russian society and the masses of the people among whom the old religious beliefs and hopes were still preserved. The Western influences which led on to the remarkable Russian culture of the nineteenth century found no welcome among the bulk of the people. The power of the nobility increased and it became entirely alien from the people. The very manner of life of the landowning nobility was a thing incomprehensible to the people. It was precisely in the Petrine epoch during the reign of Katherine II that the Russian people finally fell under the sway of the system of serfdom. The whole Petrine period of Russian history was a struggle between East and West within the Russian soul. (Berdyayev, 15).

Russian Messianism

Berdyayev states that while *Petrinism* introduced an epoch of cultural dynamism, it also placed a heavy burden upon Russia, and a disunity of spirit. (Ibid.). However, Russia has her own religious sense of Mission, which is as universal as the Vatican's. Spengler quotes Dostoyevski as writing in 1878: 'all men must become Russian, first and foremost Russian. If general humanity is the Russian ideal, then everyone must first of all become a Russian'. (Spengler, 1963, 63n). The Russian Messianic idea found a forceful expression in Dostoyevski's *The Possessed*, where, in a conversation with Stavrogin, Shatov states:

Reduce God to the attribute of nationality?...On the contrary, I elevate the nation to God...The people is the body of God. Every nation is a nation only so long as it has its own particular God, excluding all other gods on earth without any possible reconciliation, so long as it believes that by its own God it will conquer and drive all other gods off the face of the earth. At least that's what all great nations have believed since the beginning of time, all those remarkable in any way, those standing in the vanguard of humanity...The Jews lived solely in expectation of the true God, and they left this true God to the world...A nation which loses faith is no longer a nation. But there is only one truth; consequently, only one nation can possess the true God...The sole 'God bearing' nation is the Russian nation... (Dostoevsky, 1992, Part II: I: 7, 265-266).

Spengler saw Russia as outside of Europe, and even as 'Asian'. He even saw a Western rebirth vis-à-vis opposition to Russia, which he regarded as leading the 'coloured world' against the white, under the mantle of Bolshevism. Yet there were also other destinies that Spengler saw over the horizon, which had been predicted by Dostoyevski.

Once Russia had overthrown its alien intrusions, it could look with another perspective upon the world, and reconsider Europe not with hatred and vengeance but in kinship. Spengler wrote that while Tolstoi, the Petrinist, whose doctrine was the precursor of Bolshevism, was 'the former

Russia', Dostoyevski was 'the coming Russia'. Dostoyevski as the representative of the 'coming Russia' 'does not know' the hatred of Russia for the West. Dostoyevski and the old Russia are transcendent. 'His passionate power of living is comprehensive enough to embrace all things Western as well'. Spengler quotes Dostoyevski: 'I have two fatherlands, Russia and Europe'. Dostoyevski as the harbinger of a Russian high culture 'has passed beyond both Petrinism and revolution, and from his future he looks back over them as from afar. His soul is apocalyptic, yearning, desperate, but of this future he is *certain*'. [65] (Spengler, 1971, II, 194). Spengler cites Dostoyevski's *The Brothers Karamazov*, where Ivan Karamazov (Dostoyevski, 1880, 34: II: V: 3) says to his mother:

I want to travel in Europe... I know well enough that I shall be going only to a churchyard, but I know too that that churchyard is dear, very dear to me. Beloved dead lie buried there, every stone over them tell of a life so ardently lived, so passionately a belief in its own achievements, its own truth, its own battle, its own knowledge, that I know – even now I know – I shall fall down and kiss these stones and weep over them'. (Spengler, 1971, II, 195).

To the 'Slavophil', of which Dostoyevski was one, Europe is precious. The Slavophil appreciates the richness of European high culture while realising that Europe is in a state of decay. Berdyaev discussed what he regarded as an inconsistency in Dostoyevski and the Slavophiles towards Europe, yet one that is comprehensible when we consider Spengler's crucial differentiation between *Culture* and *Civilisation*:

Dostoyevsky calls himself a Slavophil. He thought, as did also a large number of thinkers on the theme of Russia and Europe, that he knew decay was setting in, but that a great past exists in her, and that she has made contributions of great value to the history of mankind. (Berdyaev, 70).

It is notable that while this differentiation between *Kultur* and *Zivilisation* is ascribed to a particularly *German* philosophical tradition, Berdyaev comments that it was present among the Russians 'long before Spengler', although deriving from German sources:

It is to be noted that long before Spengler, the Russians drew the distinction between 'culture' and 'civilization', that they attacked 'civilization' even when they remained supporters of 'culture'. This distinction in actual fact, although expressed in a different phraseology, was to be found among the Slavophiles. (Ibid.).

Tolstoi, who sought to overcome the problems of *Civilisation* by a 'return-to-Nature' in the manner of the Western Enlightenment philosopher J J Rousseau, on the other hand, is the product of the Late West, 'enlightened and socially minded', and sees only a problem, 'whereas Dostoyevski 'does not even know what a problem is'. (Spengler, 1971, II, 195). Spengler states that the problematic nature of life is a question that arises in Late Civilisations, and is a symptom of an epoch where life itself has become questionable. It is a symptom of the Late West transplanted as a weed onto the soil of Russia, represented by Tolstoi who,

stands midway between Peter and Bolshevism, and neither he nor they managed to get within sight of Russian earth.... Their kind of opposition is not apocalyptic but intellectual. Tolstoi's hatred of property is an economist's, his hatred of society a social reformer's, his hatred of the State a political theorist's. Hence his immense effect upon the West – he belongs, in one respect as in another, to the band of Marx, Ibsen, and Zola. (Ibid.).

Dostoyevski, on the contrary, was indifferent to the Late West, looking beyond the physical, beyond questions of social reform and economics, and to the metaphysical: 'Dostoyevski, like every primitive Russian, is fundamentally unaware' of the physical world and 'lives in a second,

metaphysical world beyond'. The living reality is a religious one, which Spengler compares most closely with 'primitive Christianity'. Dostoyevski is a 'saint', Tolstoi, 'only a revolutionary', the representative of Petrinism, as the forerunner of Bolshevism, 'the last dishonouring of the metaphysical by the social', and a new form of *pseudomorphosis*. The Bolsheviks and other such revolutionaries were 'the lowest stratum of ... Petrine society'. (Ibid., II, 196). Imbued with ideas from the Late West, the Marxists sought to replace one Petrine ruling class with another. Neither represented the soul of Russia. Spengler states: 'The real Russian is the disciple of Dostoyevski, even though he might not have read Dostoyevski, or anyone else, nay, perhaps because he cannot read, he is himself Dostoyevski in substance'. The intelligentsia hates, the peasant does not. (Ibid.). He would eventually overthrow Bolshevism and any other form of Petrinism. Here we see Spengler unequivocally stating that the post-Western civilisation will be Russian.

For what this townless people yearns for is its own life-form, its own religion, its own history. Tolstoi's Christianity was a misunderstanding. He spoke of Christ and he meant Marx. But to Dostoyevski's Christianity, the next thousand years will belong. (Ibid.).

To the true Russia, as Dostoyevski stated it, 'not a single nation has ever been founded on principles of science or reason'. Dostoyevski continues, with the character Shatov explaining:

[N]ot a single nation has ever been founded on principles of science or reason. There has never been an example of it, except for a brief moment, through folly. Socialism is from its very nature bound to be atheism, seeing that it has from the very first proclaimed that it is an atheistic organisation of society, and that it intends to establish itself exclusively on the elements of science and reason. Science and reason have, from the beginning of time, played a secondary and subordinate part in the life of nations; so it will be till the end of time. Nations are built up and moved by another force which sways and dominates them, the origin of which is unknown and inexplicable: that force is the force of an insatiable desire to go on to the end, though at the same time it denies that end. It is the force of the persistent assertion of one's own existence, and a denial of death. It's the spirit of life, as the Scriptures call it, 'the river of living water', the drying up of which is threatened in the Apocalypse. It's the æsthetic principle, as the philosophers call it, the ethical principle with which they identify it, 'the seeking for God', as I call it more simply. The object of every national movement, in every people and at every period of its existence is only the seeking for its god, who must be its own god, and the faith in Him as the only true one. God is the synthetic personality of the whole people, taken from its beginning to its end. It has never happened that all, or even many, peoples have had one common god, but each has always had its own. It's a sign of the decay of nations when they begin to have gods in common. When gods begin to be common to several nations the gods are dying and the faith in them, together with the nations themselves. The stronger a people the more individual their God. There never has been a nation without a religion, that is, without an idea of good and evil. Every people has its own conception of good and evil, and its own good and evil. When the same conceptions of good and evil become prevalent in several nations, then these nations are dying, and then the very distinction between good and evil is beginning to disappear. Reason has never had the power to define good and evil, or even to distinguish between good and evil, even approximately; on the contrary, it has always mixed them up in a disgraceful and pitiful way; science has even given the solution by the fist. This is particularly characteristic of the half-truths of science, the most terrible scourge of humanity, unknown till this century, and worse than plague, famine, or war. (Dostoyevski, 1872, II: I: VII).

Here we have the expression of the Russian soul, its repudiation of Petrinism, and in a

manner similar to Spengler's, the identification of faith, not darwinian zoology or economics, as the premise of culture-nation-race-formation, and the primacy of rationalistic doctrines as a symptom of decay.

'Conflict Between Money & Blood'

Spengler states that at the Late – 'Winter' - epoch of a Civilisation where money-thinking dominates, a point is reached where there is a reaction: a 'Second Religiousness' which returns a decaying Civilisation to its spiritual foundations. There proceeds a revolt against oligarchy and a return to authority, or what Spengler called 'Cæsarism', and from there the fulfilment of a destiny before being eclipsed by a new high culture.

The Second Religiousness is the necessary counterpart of Cæsarism, which is the final *political* constitution of a Late Civilisation... In both phenomena the creative young strength of the Early Culture is lacking. But both have their greatness nevertheless. That of the Second Religiousness consists of a deep piety that fills the waking-consciousness... (Spengler, 1971, II, 310).

Spengler states that the 'profoundly mystical inner life feels "thinking in money" *as a sin*'. The money-thinking imposed on Russia as Communism was 'Western' insofar as Marxism *reflects* the economic thinking of Western civilisation in its Late epoch, (Ibid., II, 402):

[A]n upper, alien and civilised world intruded from the West (the Bolshevism of the first years, totally Western and un-Russian, is the lees of this importation), and a townless barter-life that goes on deep below, uncalculating and exchanging only for immediate needs. We have to think of the catchwords of the surface as a voice, in which the Russian, simple and busied wholly with his soul bears resignedly the will of God. Marxism amongst Russians is based on an inward misunderstanding. They bore with the higher economic life of Petrinism, but they neither created it nor recognised it. The Russian does not fight Capital, but he does not *comprehend* it. Anyone who understands Dostoyevski will sense in these people a young humanity for which as yet no money exists, but only goods in relation to a life whose centre of gravity does not lie on the economical side. (Ibid., II, 495n)

Spengler states above that the Russians do not 'fight' capital. (Ibid., 495). Yet their young soul brings them into conflict with money, as both oligarchy from inside and plutocracy from outside contend with the Russian soul for supremacy. It was something observed by both Gogol and Dostoyevski. The anti-capitalism and 'world revolution' of Stalinism took on features that were drawn more from Russian messianism than from Marxism, reflected in the struggle between Trotsky and Stalin. The revival of the Czarist and Orthodox icons, martyrs and heroes and of Russian folk-culture in conjunction with a campaign against 'rootless cosmopolitanism', reflected the emergence of primal Russian soul amidst Petrine Marxism. (Brandenberger, 2002). Today the conflict between two world-views can be seen in the conflicts between Putin and certain 'oligarchs' and the uneasiness Putin causes among the West.

The conflict that arises is metaphysical, but oligarchy and plutocracy can only understand the physical. Hence, 'money-getting by means of money is an impiety, and (from the viewpoint of the coming Russian religion) a sin'. (Ibid.). 'Money-getting by means of money' manifests in speculation and usury. It is the basis upon which the economics of the Late West is founded, and from which it is now tottering. That this was not the case in the Gothic era of the West's 'high culture' is indicated by the Church's strident condemnation of usury as 'sin'.

Spengler predicted that in answer to the money-ethos a 'third kind of Christianity', based on

the 'John Gospel', would arise, 'looking towards Jerusalem with premonitions of coming crusades'. (Ibid.). The Russian also eschews the machine, to which Faustian man is enslaved, and if today he adopts Western technics, he does so 'with fear and hatred of wheels, cables, and rails', and will 'blot the whole thing from his memory and his environment, and create about himself a wholly new world, in which nothing of this Devil's technique is left'. (Ibid., II, 504).

Has time proved Spengler wrong in his observation that the Russian soul is repelled by the materialism, rationalism, technics and scientism of the Late West, given that the USSR went full throttle to industrialise? Spengler also said that Russia would adapt Western technics for her own use, as a weapon. Anecdotally, in our time, Barbara Brothers, a psycho-therapist, while part of a scientific delegation to Russia in 1993, observed that even among Russian scientists the focus is on the metaphysical:

The Russians seem *not* to make the divorce between 'hard' science and heart and soul that we do in the United States. Elena is probably a classic example. In her position as a part of the Academy of National Economy, a division of the Academy of Science, she works in facts and statistics all day long; when you ask her how (how in the world!) she thinks they will make it, she gives you a metaphysical answer. The scientist part of her gave a presentation that showed us how it was absolutely impossible for the economy to begin to work. Yet, she says, 'I am not pessimistic'.

Again, Spengler's observations of the Russian soul are confirmed by this anecdote: the true Russian – even the scientist and mathematician - does not comprehend everything as a 'problem' in the Late Western sense. His decisions are not made by Western rationalism, but by metaphysics and instinct. It is an interesting aside to recall that under the USSR, supposedly predicated on dialectical materialism, the metaphysical and the psychic were subjects of serious investigation to an extent that would be scoffed at by Western scientists. (Kernbach, 2013).

By the time Spengler had published *The Hour of Decision* in 1934 he was stating that Russia had overthrown Petrism and the trappings of the late West, and while he called the new orientation of Russia 'Asian', he said that it was 'a new *Idea*, and an idea with a future too'. (Spengler, 1963, 60). To clarify, Russia looks towards the 'East', but while the Westerner assumes that 'Asia' and East are synonymous with Mongol, the etymology of the word 'Asia' comes from Greek *Ἀσία*, ca. 440 BC, referring to all regions east of Greece. (Ibid., 61). As an ethnic, historical, cultural or religious designation it means as little as as the World War I propaganda reference to Germans as 'Huns'. During his time Spengler saw in Russia that,

Race, language, popular customs, religion, in their present form... all or any of them can and will be fundamentally transformed. What we see today then is simply the new kind of life which a vast land has conceived and will presently bring forth. It is not definable in words, nor is its bearer aware of it. Those who attempt to define, establish, lay down a program, are confusing life with a phrase, as does the ruling Bolshevism, which is not sufficiently conscious of its own West-European, Rationalistic and cosmopolitan origin. (Ibid.).

Of Russia in 1934 Spengler already saw that 'of genuine Marxism there is very little except in names and programs'. He doubted that the Communist programme is 'really still taken seriously'. He saw the possibility of the vestiges of Petrism Bolshevism being overthrown, to be replaced by a 'nationalistic' Eastern type which would reach 'gigantic proportions unchecked'. (Spengler, 1963, 63). Spengler also referred to Russia as the country 'least troubled by Bolshevism', (Ibid., 182) and the 'Marxian face [was] only worn for the benefit of the outside world'. (Ibid., 212). A decade after Spengler's death the direction of Russia under Stalin had pursued clearer definitions, and Petrism Bolshevism had been transformed in the way Spengler foresaw. (Brandenberger, 2002).

Conclusion

As in Spengler's time, and centuries before, there continues to exist two tendencies in Russia : the Old Russian and the Petrine. Neither one nor the other spirit is presently dominant, although under Putin Old Russia struggles for resurgence. Spengler in a published lecture to the Rheinisch-Westphalian Business Convention in 1922 referred to the 'ancient, instinctive, unclear, unconscious, and subliminal drive that is present in every Russian, no matter how thoroughly westernised his conscious life may be – a mystical yearning for the South, for Constantinople and Jerusalem, a genuine crusading spirit similar to the spirit our Gothic forebears had in their blood but which we can hardly appreciate today'. (Spengler, 1922).

Bolshevism destroyed one form of Petrinism with another form, clearing the way 'for a new culture that will some day arise between "Europe" and East Asia. It is more a beginning than an end'. The peasantry 'will some day become conscious of its own will, which points in a wholly different direction'. 'The peasantry is the true Russian people of the future. It will not allow itself to be perverted or suffocated'. (Ibid.).

The 'Great Patriotic War' gave Stalin the opportunity to return Russia to its roots. Russia's Orthodox foundations were returned on the basis of a myth, an archetypically Russian mysticism. The myth goes that in 1941:

The Virgin appeared to Metropolitan Ilya of the Antiochian Church, who prayed wholeheartedly for Russia. She instructed him to tell the Russians that they should carry the Kazan Icon in a religious procession around the besieged city of Leningrad (St Petersburg). Then, the Virgin said, they should serve a molieben^[2] before the icon in Moscow. The Virgin said that the icon should stay with the Russian troops in Stalingrad, and later move with them to the Russian border. Leningrad didn't surrender. Miraculously, Moscow was also saved. During the Battle of Stalingrad, the icon was with the Russian army on the right bank of the Volga, and the Nazi troops couldn't cross the river. The Battle of Stalingrad began with a molieben before the Kazan Icon. Only when it was finished, did the troops receive the order to attack. The Kazan Icon was at the most important sectors of the front, and in the places where the troops were preparing for an offensive. It was like in the old times, when in response to earnest prayers, the Virgin instilled fear in enemies and drove them away. Even atheists told stories of the Virgin's help to the Russian troops. During the assault on Königsberg in 1945, the Soviet troops were in a critical situation. Suddenly, the soldiers saw their commander arrive with priests and an icon. Many made jokes, 'Just wait, that'll help us!' The commander silenced the jokers. He ordered everybody to line up and to take off their caps. When the priests finished the molieben, they moved to the frontline carrying the icon. The amazed soldiers watched them going straight forward, under intense Nazi fire. Suddenly, the Nazis stopped shooting. Then, the Russian troops received orders to attack on the ground and from the sea. Nazis died in the thousands. Nazi prisoners told the Russians that they saw the Virgin in the sky before the Russians began to attack, the whole of the Nazi army saw Her, and their weapons wouldn't fire. (Voices from Russia).

The message to Metropolitan Ilya from The Theotokos^[3] for Russia was that:

'The cathedrals, monasteries, theological seminaries and academies have to be opened in the whole country. The priests have to be sent back from the front and released from incarceration. They must begin serving again.... When the war will be over, Metropolitan Elijah has to come to Russia and witness how she was saved'. The metropolitan contacted

both Russian church representatives and Soviet government officials. Stalin then promised to do everything God indicated. (Russia before the Second Coming).

During 'The Great Patriotic War' 20,000 churches were opened. In 1942 the Soviet Government allowed Easter celebrations. On 4 September 1943 Stalin invited the hierarchs of the Russian Orthodox Church to the Kremlin to discuss the need for reviving religious life in the USSR and the prompt election of a Patriarch.

This is the type of Myth that is nation-forming. It exists as a constant possibility within Russia. Spengler stated in his lecture to the German businessmen in 1922 that,

There can be no doubt: a new Russian people is in the process of becoming. Shaken and threatened to the very soul by a frightful destiny, forced to an inner distance, it will in time become firm and come to bloom. It is passionately religious in a way that we Western Europeans have not been, indeed could not have been, for centuries. As soon as this religious drive is directed towards a goal, it possesses an immense expansive potential. Unlike us, such a people does not count the victims who die for an idea, for it is a young, vigorous, and fertile people. (Spengler, 1922).

The arch-Conservative anti-Marxist, Spengler, in keeping with the German tradition of *realpolitik*, considered the possibility of a Russo-German alliance in his 1922 speech, the Treaty of Rapallo being a reflection of that tradition. 'A new type of leader' would be awakened in adversity, to 'new crusades and legendary conquests'. The rest of the world, filled with religious yearning but falling on infertile ground, is 'torn and tired enough to allow it suddenly to take on a new character under the proper circumstances'. Spengler suggested that 'perhaps Bolshevism itself will change in this way under new leaders'. 'But the silent, deeper Russia,' would turn its attention towards the Near and East Asia, as a people of 'great inland expanses'. (Ibid.). Berdyaev, discussing the Slavophil outlook, wrote:

Russian reflections upon the subject of the philosophy of history led to the consciousness that the path of Russia was a special one. Russia is the great East-West; it is a whole immense world and in its people vast powers are confined. The Russian people are a people of the future; they will decide questions which the West has not yet the strength to decide, which it does not even pose in their full depth. (Berdyaev, 70).

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^[1]Ivan Sergyeyevich Aksakov (1823-1886) a Pan-Slavic leader, established the 'Slavophil' group at Moscow to restore Russia to its pre-Petrine culture.

^[2]Orthodox service for the sick.

^[3]Mary.

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