

# Russians as Asiatics: Memory about the Present

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History as recorded very often follows the desire of political pragmatists. Nineteenth-century French views of Russia are a good example. France was in conflict with Russia through most of that century. As racism grew across Europe, French historians presented Russians as brutish Asiatics and a mortal threat to civilized Europe. The Russo-French alliance in 1894 changed these views, but the stereotypes continued to hibernate in the collective subconscious of the West to be resurrected in times of political expediency.

Postmodernists have asserted that ideology shapes political reality and defines the nature of political alliances, but the opposite is closer to the truth. Political and geopolitical arrangements shape the historical imagination and provide the ideological framework for actions. One might say that the ideological trappings of historical logic, or to be more precise: ‘pseudo-logic’, are actually the result of political pragmatism. The European, especially the French view of Russians for most of the nineteenth century illustrates this use of history. During Putin’s rule, Europeans returned to their early vision of Russia as not a European but an Asiatic power. ‘Asiatic’ is used here in a pejorative context to stand for despotism, brutality, and aggressiveness. It discards the eighteenth-century notion that the Russian elite had desperately tried to make Russia a true member of the European community, with all possible positive characteristics.

During most of Soviet history, conservative pundits (for the Left, of course, the USSR was a most democratic country) asserted that the USSR was a despotic regime with bad historical genetics. Nothing positive could emerge in a country with a thousand years of autocratic rule that had produced such monsters as Ivan the Terrible and Peter the Great, who wasted human life without concern. Stalin’s fascination with both of these predecessors further proved that Russians – most pundits did not distinguish between Russia and the USSR – could not escape their destiny to be ruled by tyrants to the end of time. In the Gorbachev and Yeltsin eras (1985–2000), the Perestroika and early post-Soviet period, it was asserted that the Western political and socioeconomic model was universal, or at least definitely applicable to Russia, which was seen as part of the West. The Bolsheviks with their millenarian, totalitarian proclivities and insatiable drive for power

and criminality had subverted these healthy elements in Russian life. Now, after a long and painful zigzag, Russia was back on the right track. In this political contingency, Western pundits busily revealed the democratic tradition deeply embedded in Russian history and blasted the Bolsheviks for the millenarian utopianism and brutality that had separated Russia from the democratic, market-oriented West.

Since the beginning of the Putin regime in 2000, when Russia once more took a position vis-à-vis the West and acquired distinct authoritarian features, Western pundits have again changed their vision of Russia and its past. Some look for an explanation for the reversal of the 'natural' drive for liberty; others quickly rediscover Russia's authoritarian past. To them, this past explains Putin's penchant for authoritarianism and his flirtation with Chinese, Iranian, and similarly authoritarian 'Asiatics,' instead of affirming his commitment to the European community with its entrenched market democracy. This pattern is similar to that in early modern history. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when the Europeans finally discovered Russia, they saw the country as despotic and barbaric in all possible respects. The situation changed by the time of Peter the Great, when the Russian elite started the long process of at least external Westernization. Through most of the eighteenth century, nearly all the French – one could say European – elite approached Russia in ways similar to what we saw earlier.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Europeans discovered that Russians were barbarians who lived under a despotic government. In the eyes of Europeans of that era, Russians were even worse than Turks. The Turks, while seen as brutal, despotic Asiatics, at least had a powerful military machine that Europeans envied. The Russians did not have even this, and were deeply despised. This dislike was not just related with the European self-image that had emerged by the beginning of the modern era and colonial expansion, where Europeans confronted the rest of the globe, but had internal implications. Russians were seen in the same way as the lower class masses of the European countries. The European aristocracy and emerging middle class regarded the general populace as dirty, promiscuous, lazy, and obsessed with liquor. Viewing all non-Europeans with contempt, the elite pretended they feared neither external (e.g., Russian) nor internal (European masses) barbarians. While brutish by nature, the Russians, like the European populace, could be easily suppressed/controlled by a 'civilized,' organized European elite.

By the eighteenth century, Russia had had a long process of at least external Westernization, in the view of at least some Europeans. The elite were seen as engaged in the hard labor of civilizing the Asiatic/barbarian masses. But the reason for this benevolent approach was not the external Westernization of the regime. As a matter of fact, the major aspect of Russian life was serfdom, a distinctly non-Western institution that had almost completely disappeared in Western Europe by the eighteenth century. In Russia, serfdom not only lasted but expanded during the eighteenth century. By the end of the century the state of the peasantry was not much different from that of slaves. Thus, the position of Western observers toward Russia, often positive or at least neutral, was due not so much to external Westernization of the elite and a façade of statehood as to pragmatic geopolitical considerations. Russia was not a threat to Europe and even helpful to some European states.

The situation changed again in the early nineteenth century. Russia had been a major force in the Napoleonic collapse. It emerged as a major military power in Europe, and, because of European global domination, the world. Only England with its strong navy was definitely out of reach of the armies of the tsar. This rise of Russia led to a change in its image. Russia was no longer considered part of Europe, and this political alienation was immediately translated into civilizational alienation. Russia was once again relegated to Asia and assigned the attributes of Asiatics—such as brutality and a penchant for despotism—that harked back to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Still, at this point in time also some new elements came into play as far as the image of Russia and of Oriental powers in general was concerned. In this interpretation, the Orient's political tradition, despotism, and brutality were not just cultural/geocultural traits (for example, under the assumption that anyone outside Europe would be brutal and despotic), but also racial characteristics. The Russians, like all Asiatics, were brutish beasts, and this made their acculturation impossible. Europeans could not transform Russians into Europeans any more than they could monkeys into humans. Monkeys could perform tricks and be dressed in human clothes. But they remained beasts and easily forsook human-like actions. Russian Westernization/Europeanization was also skin-deep, and the pundits implicitly supported Napoleon's statement that one should look at Russians the better to find Tatars – brutal Asiatics under a European veneer.

There were other differences between the Russian image in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and that in the nineteenth century. In the earlier picture, Russians were disgusting Asiatics but no match for the European military machine. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Asiatics/Russians had assimilated not just Western trappings but modern Western technology and culture. They were especially dangerous because they had ambitions for global predominance. They were especially brutal toward Europeans on the borders of the Russian empire – the Poles.

These views of Russians circulated among travelers and social scientists with a sort of general interest and finally became a framework for discussion among those who regarded Russia as the focus of their scholarly interest or at least an important part of it. Astolphe, Marquis de Custine (1790–1857), composed a book on Russia on the basis of his travels to the country, which was important in this respect and laid the foundation for further work, especially by the French.<sup>1</sup> The works of Slavic scholars, especially Poles, who had grudges against Russians for centuries, provided West European – again mostly French – scholars with the argument that Russians were in fact Asiatics who just pretended to be Europeans.

### **Schnitzler: The Early Follower**

Jean-Henri Schnitzler (1802–1871) was among the first scholars to follow in Custine's footsteps and elaborate on Russia's implicitly Asian nature. In the 1830s and 1840s, Schnitzler pointed out that the non-European nature of Russians could be traced to their origin. The region around the city of Suzdal' was the original nucleus of the Russian nation, and the people around Suzdal' were Finns who had adopted Christianity and the Slavic language.<sup>2</sup>

According to Henri Martin (1810–1883), Schnitzler thus saw Russians as non-Europeans (Ref. 3, p. 126) and thus foreign to European civilization. Russian political culture had nothing to do with the European tradition of liberty found, for example, among Germans. The Russian spirit was absolutely different from the German spirit, which was European and embedded in the idea of liberty. Russians were drenched in ‘Asiatic despotism and communism’ (Ref. 3, p. 128), which reinforced each other.

Schnitzler supported Custine’s vision of Russians as barbarians who would invariably lapse into brutal anarchy if not held in check by the power of Oriental autocrats. As Asiatics, Russians had no creative abilities or talent for developing a culture on their own (Ref. 4, p. 2:44). They did, however, have a talent for imitation, put to good use by Peter the Great. This skill was not taken in account by Europeans, who could not believe that Asiatics, with their intellectual dullness, absence of creativity, and debilitating oriental power, could absorb the achievements of European civilizations. But the Russians under Peter demonstrated that this was possible, and were able to create an immense empire that combined Europe and Asia (Ref. 4, p. 35).

Later in his career, Schnitzler elaborated on Russia’s quest for a Pan-Slavic empire as essential to world domination. Pan-Slavism, unification under the aegis of the Russian tsar, was in many ways an imitation of Pan-Hellenism. The idea, however, was Utopian (Ref. 5, p. 397). Pan-Slavism could not be regarded as a viable political design. Slavs could not live in one state, and their supposed unity could be reduced to mere cultural similarities (Ref. 4, p. 402). The Russian elite understood that other Slavs would never voluntarily band together with Russians; they used Pan-Slavic arguments more as ideological propaganda than as a tool of real politics. They were not an appeal to a common Slavic bond but a force the tsar saw as a way to build his Pan-Slavic empire and subjugate other nations, including Poland, with horrible brutality (Ref. 5, p. 8). Here, of course, Schnitzler was pointing to the brutal suppression of Poland in 1830–31, when the Poles rose against Russian hegemony. Russians could suppress a Polish uprising, but never make Poles obedient subjects of the tsar. Thus, Schnitzler supported Polish nationalists who regarded Polish-Russian unity as impossible (Ref. 4, p. 399). He saw Russia as not just non-Western but also as anti-European.

### **The New Realities and Russia’s Image**

This position was elaborated on by a generation of French historians in the second half of the nineteenth century. Views of all countries have of course been shaped by political reality. French historians who started to publish on Russian subjects by the middle of the nineteenth century, unlike Schnitzler, who touched on Russian subjects in the first half of the century, did not have much of a direct problem with Russia. For these first generations the memory of the Napoleonic wars was fresh, and veterans could easily depict to younger people everything horrible they faced in Russia – from unimaginable cold to ferocious attacks by guerrillas and non-European-looking cavalry. (Russian groups of veterans also conveyed their vision of war to a younger generation, proclaiming the glory of Russia’s victory, as was the case with, for example, seminal Russian poet Mikhail Lermontov who was informed about the Borodin battle by an anonymous ‘uncle’.) The French were probably aware of

Nicholas I's intention to intervene in their affairs during the 1830 Revolution. With their romantic imagination, they were probably terrified by the image of Delacroix's Liberty ravished by savage Cossacks on the very barricade from which she called the people for final liberation. They were also aware of the poor Poles suffering under the boots of Russian autocracy. But they had no immediate contact with Russians, and their apprehensions were rather theoretical. Their actual knowledge of Russia and the world outside Western Europe was limited and almost anecdotal.

The situation changed in the second half of the nineteenth century. More or less abstract antipathy toward Russia was replaced by real conflicts. Russian troops played an active role in putting down the revolutions that swept across Europe in 1848. Later, a coalition led by the French and British engaged in open war with Russia, known as the Crimean War. The Crimean War had been launched by Nicholas I, whom Custine had presented as a harsh authoritarian; despite his European veneer, Nicholas, and certainly the bureaucratic system that supported his power, were more Asiatic than European. A new uprising in Poland also helped shape this image of Russians as Asiatic beasts. Nicholas' suppression of this uprising was even more important than the Crimean War in maintaining a negative vision of Russia, a manifestation of brutality almost to be expected.

The story of his successor, Alexander II, was expected to be different. Alexander launched a variety of changes aimed at transforming Russian society in the most radical way since the time of Peter the Great. Both Alexander and Peter engaged in Westernization, but its nature was different. Peter, while creating a modern western-type army, navy, and educational institutions, dramatically increased the power of the state; after his reign, serfdom started to proliferate. Alexander, by contrast, was the first Russian ruler who did not increase by decree the power of the state. In what were called the Great Reforms, he freed the Russian serfs and, mostly for these deeds, went down in Russian history as the tsar liberator. Europeans who watched this process could have concluded that after the humiliating defeat in the Crimean War, the Russians understood that despotic Asiaticism would hardly make them strong. Asiatics had never been able to make a stand against first-rate European powers. Understanding this, the weakened and more humble tsar would try genuine Western-type reforms and a more humane treatment of his subjects.

Alexander's brutal suppression of the Polish uprising – in a fashion hardly different from that of his father, Nicholas I – confirmed to European observers that a change of reign and even an element of Western-looking liberalization of life – did not mean much. Russia preserved more than a streak of what Europeans regarded as Asiatic brutishness (their own unsavory treatment of non-Europeans was conveniently overlooked), and also (implied but not elaborated upon) its geopolitical vitality. Thus, even after a humiliating defeat, Russia remained a danger for Europe.

The European powers' relationship with Asian nations also played a role in shaping the image of Russia in a broad historical/geopolitical context. On the one hand, European global predominance was not challenged, and no Asian power could defeat Europeans in direct confrontation. This had led to what Edward Said (1935–2003) called 'Orientalism.' This Orient, mostly the Middle East, corresponded with Europeans' feelings of domination over the non-European world. It was full of images of erotica and mystery, pleasure and entertainment. Actual European dealings with Asia were not always smooth: Asians had always resented

European encroachment. Thus the image of a place of pleasure and mystery coexisted with that of a brutal and destructive force that would bring much harm to civilized Europe.

Another dimension of this negative image of Asia was related to internal problems of European society, albeit intellectuals did not always acknowledge this. The image of the revolution and the masses started to change in the minds of a considerable part of the middle class. The old image often saw revolution as a positive phenomenon and the people as a noble force who had the right to fight against tyranny. The new image was related to the rise of the ‘fourth estate’ – the urban proletariat that put forward its own demands – and a rise in revolutions in which it openly opposed the middle class. This was the case in the 1848 Revolution in Paris. In the new reading, the noble free-loving people of romantic legend were transformed into a vicious mob.

The image of the populace as dirty, drunk, and promiscuous had, of course, a very long history. It could be traced to the beginning of the modern era, when the aristocracy and the middle class started to undergo what Norbert Elias (1897–1990) called the civilizing process: accepting self-restraint in daily life. But there were substantial differences between the old and the new negative images of the masses. The old image implied that the masses were ugly and brutal, but not much of an organized force. The new image implied that they could not be easily subdued. The masses became ‘mobs,’ not just unpleasant but dangerous animals not easily tamed.

This negative image of the masses became fused with the image of the dangerous Asiatic, and in turn with that of Russia. Russia became the embodiment of all the evils of Asia, even when these were mutually exclusive. Russia was the symbol of brutal despotism that suppressed both liberty in Europe – the drive of the Europe middle classes – and intact multinational empires such as the Austria-Hungarian empire. Russian Asiatic despotism had prevented the European proletariat from rising, and this was why Marx directed numerous invectives against not just czarism but Russia in general. These statements of the supposed founder of ‘proletariat internationalism’ and father of the famous slogan, ‘the proletariat of all countries, unite!’ was so anti-Russian, in fact, openly racist that Soviet scholars have tried to avoid these passages. And, of course, the Nazis later would quote these same passages with special enthusiasm. Furthermore, Russia manifested destructive Asiatic anarchy, the unruly behavior of the Asiatic beast.

All these aspects of internationalism and external European developments shaped European and French scholars’ visions of Russia as a non-European and dangerous Asiatic force. There were other aspects to this approach: by the middle of the nineteenth century, European pundits could employ an emerging racism framed in the studies of non-European civilization. French intellectuals could also appeal to Polish pundits who more than anybody else were anxious to help Frenchmen – all Europeans – to develop the notion that Russia was a danger not just for Poland but for all of Europe.

### **The View of Professional Historians: Auguste Viquésnel**

Auguste Viquésnel (1800–1867), a French specialist on the Ottoman Empire, was one of the new generation of scholars who looked at Russia as a solidly Asian power and related all the problems of Russia to its Asiatic nature. The major framework of his view of

Russians was the assumption that Russians were not Slavs but people close to Turks and might have the blood of other Asiatics such as the Chinese (Ref. 2, pp. 1, 84). These Asiatic roots of Russian ethnicity and culture were the reason for the Russians' problems. Viquesnel pointed out that 'Moscovites had nothing to do with Europe and belong to Asia' (Ref. 2, p. 85). Consequently, the idea of Russia belonging to Europe should be dismissed, and the geographical and cultural/racial definition of Europe reconsidered. In connection with this, Viquesnel stated that Europe was defined by Martin both as a geographical and ethnographical entity, but it was wrong to say Europe ended at the Urals. He fully supported Martin's assumption that Europe actually ended along the Dnjeper River (Ref. 2, p. 85).

Viquesnel stated that this notion of being Asiatic was not pleasing for Russians, so they pointed out that their attachment to Christianity attested to their belonging to European civilization. But this attachment could be questioned, for they counted more than 200 sects and the 'Christianity' of many of these sects could be questioned (Ref. 2, p. 35).

Viquesnel pointed out that his views on Russia should not be seen as an exception but were in accord with the views of other savants. He especially praised Franciszek Duchinski, a Pole, as one of the most important scholars who revealed the Asiatic nature of Russians. Duchinski was certainly not the only one who understood the nature of Russian ethnicity and political culture; and Viquesnel quoted a variety of pundits who supported his view that Russians were not actually a Slavic people (Ref. 2, p. 76). Thus, Viquesnel implied, he just elaborated on what had been discovered by others, Duchinski first of all.

Viquesnel stated that one could not understand that Russia belonged to Asia without looking at Russian history and exploring it from the beginning. Following Duchinski's outline of Russian history, Viquesnel discarded the idea that the Slavic Kievan state had anything to do with Russia. Viquesnel regarded Vladimir Dolgorukii as the founder of the Russian state, and a close analysis of this state would reveal its non-Slavic and so non-European origin. To start with, the territory Dolgorukii had controlled was a territory occupied not by Slavs but by Turkic and Finnish people who professed Islam and Judaism. The very name 'Moscow' is not of Slavic origin (this has been proved by Russian savants). A close look at Dolgorukii's dynastic lineage also revealed that even the elite of the early Russian state had nothing to do with Slavs and Europeans in general. The dynasty that created the principality around Moscow was not related with the Kievan princes at all or had at least experienced a strong infusion of Asiatic blood. Dolgorukii's name revealed a connection with 'Khitan,' whom Viquesnel related to Polovtsy and Chinese.

Viquesnel believed these Asiatic roots of the earlier Russian rulers strongly influenced their political behavior. They became quite autocratic. Elaborating on the actual Asiatic roots of Russian statehood, not the European nature of the Vladimir-Suzdal' principality, Viquesnel appealed to specialists who discarded the notion that Russia's origin could be found in Europe. Asiatic ethnicity and the despotic political culture derived from it implied the way later Russia had been created on the rise of Moscow, the legitimate heir, as Viquesnel suggested, of the Vladimir-Suzdal' principality.

Among Russian historians who had studied the rise of Moscow there was a widespread notion that Moscow in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries had forged a unified

state out of many principalities. The word ‘unification,’ however, implies voluntary or at least natural gravitation of the other Russian states to Moscow. In Viquesnel’s view, there was actually no unification of Russia: Moscow conquered these principalities (Ref. 2, p. 32). Force was clearly present in the foundation of the Asiatic Russian state. Yet this Asiatic principle of unification, based not on the free unity of people but on the domination of one political center over others – did not lead to much resentment among the majority of the subjects of Russian rulers. Most of the people in Russia were not actually Slavic but Asiatic Turanians who accepted despotism as the normal way of ruling (ref. 2, p. 33). Thus, a unified Russia, Viquesnel believed, was not so much European but Asiatic.

The expansion of Moscow’s realm was also facilitated by the fact that its neighbors were often non-Europeans who could easily accept Russian conquest for a variety of reasons. First, they accepted violence/conquest as the normal way of political interaction. Second, they found in the Russians their Asiatic kin. As a result of these conquests, Russia as a great Asiatic empire was formed. This demonstrated the possibility of great alliances/empires that included a variety of people who shared racial/cultural origins. These grand empires of Turanians, unified by despotic governments, created problems for Aryan Europeans.

Indeed, the threat from the Asiatic hordes was a constant problem. Viquesnel proclaimed that ‘Cossacks, Tatars and Mongols are eternal enemies of our race’ (Ref. 2, p. 83). Europeans engaged in political arrangements and international alliances always took into account that the primordial threat to Europe came from the East. This shaped the nature of many early European alliances. The fear of Mongols/Tatars and Kipchaks (Cumans or Polovtsy) drove the Slavs of Kievan Russia, as well as the Lithuanians, to a voluntary union with the Poles. The Mongol invasions had been the most serious threat for Europeans in Viquesnel’s general vision of global history, and particularly of the relationship between Russia and the rest of Europe. In the Russian interpretation of events, Mongols had been brutal Asiatic hordes that had attacked Russia, an essentially European nation. Russia shielded Europe from the Mongols and sacrificed itself to make it possible for Europeans to flourish. Alexander Pushkin, Russia’s seminal poet, saw events from this perspective. Viquesnel discarded this theory. In his view, the Mongols were an Asiatic menace for Europe, but not for the Russians. The Russians actually had fused with and become part of the Mongols who had fallen upon Europe (Ref. 2, p. 32).

This fear of Asiatics from the East had been a powerful shaper of European politics in the past and, now, also in the present. In the past, Europeans had formed powerful alliances and started the trend for unification of Europe, the only efficient way to save themselves from the Asiatic menace. The same trend, Viquesnel insisted, should speed up and acquire a truly all-European dimension, for the threat from present-day Asian colossuses is much greater than it was from the Mongols. While the Mongols were simple Asiatics; the Russians were Asiatics with modern technology. Only a united Europe could stand against the Russian threat, so it was absolutely essential to forge one grand alliance, to be precise, one state – something that Europeans could do. This union should be easy, for all Europeans shared common racial and cultural roots. Viquesnel emphasized that Martin pointed out that Europeans belonged to the Aryan race and should finally create a great pan-European confederation. While this model ‘is not



Utopia,' it is the logical consequence of European development. Elaborating on the great push to unity, he pointed to the USA, where many different people were unified. He discarded the notion that this alliance should have anything in common with a 'Holy Alliance' in which Russia would play a leading role. One could assume that the logic here was as follows: the people who compose the USA, who had merged in a new nation of Americans, were all of European extraction. All of them had belonged to similar racial stock, which would make their assimilation in the melting pot natural. The situation with a 'Holy Alliance' was altogether different. Here, Europeans would be in alliance with racial foreign entities, and the amalgamation of these groups – Aryan-Europeans and Asiatic Russians – was impossible. Even their peaceful coexistence was out of the question; a collision between Europeans and Asiatic Russians was almost inevitable as a conflict between the races/species.

### **Henri Martin: Russians and Europeans as Battle of the Races**

Viquessel explicitly framed the conflict between Russia and Europe in the context of racial theories, but it was Henri Martin who developed this theory to its almost logical end.

Martin was probably the most important of the intellectuals described here. He was not just the well-known author of many books on European/French history. His eminence in the field was such that he could easily support/justify his statements by reference to both West and East European peers. Furthermore, perhaps more than anyone else, he could frame his views in the context of racial theories, which were becoming popular throughout Europe. While quite a few Europeans – West and East – entertained the notion that Russians were mere Asiatics with nothing to do with European civilization, Martin seems to have been mostly responsible for the popularity of such views in the wake of the Crimean War and the Polish uprising.

### **The Importance of Race**

Like Duchinski, scores of Europeans believed that it was 'race' that had defined the nature of Russian history. It was race that primarily shaped the course of national history; national characteristics played a secondary role (Ref. 3, p. 2). As one of a score of scholars who studied the problems of race, Martin did not approach it from the position common in present-day American and most Western academies, where race is usually connected with the color of one's skin. For him, and for the majority of Europeans interested in these problems – including those who could be regarded as the fathers of racism (e.g., Arthur Gobineau [1816–1882]), the definition of race was much broader; people with the same skin color – e.g., white/Caucasians – actually belonged to different races, which defined the course of their history, and consequently global history.

Similar to later European racists – German National-Socialists were, of course the best example – Martin paid great attention to facial features as distinguishing one racial group from another. For Martin, the different facial characteristics of the various nations, actually races, did not just imply that the nations were different. These features actually defined one's position in the hierarchical order of the human species. With this idea in

mind, Martin approached the nations/races that interested him most, the Aryans and Turanians. In his view, the conflict between Aryans and Turanians defined the nature of human history.

Most, if not all, Europeans are Aryans. Aryans, in Martin's view, are definitely superior members of the human race, endowed with a variety of positive attributes. They are a creative people responsible for building European society, which became the beacon for the rest of humanity. European society rested on personal liberty, family and property, and, of course, respect for the law (Ref. 3, pp. 1, 10). Asians, and implicitly also Blacks, were at the bottom of the racial hierarchical ladder; they had no positive characteristics and were a clear wasteland of the historical process. Turanians were a people of intermediate position, between Aryans and Chinese and the people of Indo-China. In Martin's view, Turanians were close to Chinese in their social systems and values (Ref. 3, p. 9). They had the artificial external appearance of Caucasian-Aryans, but were almost Asian in their essence (Ref. 3, p. 98) At least they had much more in common with Asiatics than with Europeans. Still, they were not fully Asiatic and therefore occupied an intermediary position in the pecking order of the races. Turanians had some positive faculties and had made a contribution to global history; for example, they had a penchant for religion (Ref. 3, p. 1) and had been quite creative in this area. Still, their negative features made their overall contributions to world history questionable. The most important difference was their penchant for arbitrary despotism, which had led to their confrontation with Aryans.

Martin acknowledged that Europeans had not been ruled by democratic governments throughout their history. Europeans had also experienced rule by one man, but Caesarism had never become the rule of absolute arbitrariness (p. 133). The rule of Caesar and Napoleon provided their subjects with a sort of autonomy and rights, whereas for Turanians/Asiatics no such arrangement existed and people were nothing but slaves of the ruler.

It was also suggested that Turanian racial characteristics denoted aggressiveness, brutality, and a drive for global predominance. Geophysical/political conflict between Turanians and Europeans was inevitable: it was racial/biological and could not be resolved by negotiation. With a talent for building a military machine, a sort of compensation for lack of real creative abilities, Turanians had been a mortal threat since the dawn of European history. These Turanians finally created the most powerful empire – the Russian Empire (Ref. 3, p. 9).

### **Russians as Turanians**

That the Russians were not Slavs – a benevolent branch of Aryan people – was Martin's unshakable axiom. He pointed out that he was hardly alone in espousing this theory. It was supported, he insisted, by leading Slavic scholars such as Pavel Schafarik (1795–1861) and Duchinski (Ref. 3, p. 117), but also by Orientalists such as Viquesnel, discussed earlier, and yet others (Ref. 3, pp. 119, 120, 123). Belonging to Asiatic/Turanian stock predestined the historical development of the Russians, and their relationship with neighboring European nations. The Russian 'spirit' was absolutely different from that of Aryans. Russians had no sense of personality; Russian society was without personal

liberties and based on arbitrariness (Ref. 3, p. 1), which provided the opportunity for a despotic ruler to create the Turanian Empire, which was a greater threat to Aryan Europeans than any other empire. This mortal threat, actually for the entire global community, was not an invention, Martin believed.

### **Russians as Turanians: Historical Route**

To understand the nature of the Russian threat and substantiate the assumption that Russians were not Slavs-Aryans but Turanians who constituted a mortal threat to Europe, Martin turned to history. Following other specialists on Russia, such as Schnitzler, already mentioned, Martin discarded the notion that Kievan Russia had anything to do with Russian history or that Kiev could be seen as a Russian city. Vladimir Dolgorukii was the founder of Moscow, and this event should be seen as the actual beginning of Russian history. While Martin did not preclude that perhaps a tiny elite of Dolgorukii's state may have been of Slavic or Scandinavian origin, the majority were not Slavs but 'Russo-Finns' (Ref. 3, p. 1). Dolgorukii collected tribute from the conquered tribes but also spread 'Christianity among the Finns' (Ref. 3, p. 29). The spread of Christianity depended upon the Slavic language, and for this reason the latter spread among the tribes of Dolgorukii's realm (Ref. 3, p. 50). However, this artificial 'Slavonization' and 'Europeanization,' manifested in the Russians' acceptance of the Slavic language and Christianity, did not make them Slavs and Europeans. Therefore, it did not instill them with that love of liberty characteristic of Europeans. Russians might look like Slavs – because of their Christianity and language – and therefore European, but they were not European by nature and in fact much closer to Asians.

The Mongol invasion in the thirteenth century thus had not constituted a break with the past but had rather reinforced the old Asiatic-Turanian tradition. The Mongols actually brought only one novelty to Russia: they made the Russians more aggressive; and, after being 'Mongolized,' the Russians adopted the Mongol dream of a worldwide empire (Ref. 3, pp. 104–105). Also after Mongol rule had come to an end, the Russian elite proceeded according to the same model. At the same time, they acquired the trappings and material achievements of European civilization. This combination of Asiatic ruthlessness, the Mongol drive for global conquest, and a desire for the material achievements of European civilization, made the Russians into a danger for Europe, and for the entire world.

The Russian attempt to catch up with European civilization started in earnest in the sixteenth century. Ivan the Terrible had already tried to adopt some of the material achievements of European civilization. Peter the Great (Ref. 3, p. 67) replaced Ivan's huge, bureaucratic machinery with scientific and military copies of the West, implemented with the rigorous logic of despotism (Ref. 3, p. 70). It was precisely the combination of modern technology with ruthless determination and autocratic rule that made the Russian empire more dangerous to Europe than had been its Asiatic predecessors. In his testament, Peter the Great pinpointed the acquisition of modern technology as the route to global conquest (Ref. 3, pp. 74–76). This posed a threat not just to continental Europe but even to maritime empires such as England. In fact, Russia's drive to dominate

the world would leave no room for other empires. This plan for global conquest was executed by Peter's successors, and in the nineteenth century led to Russia's drive to conquer Central Asia and Constantinople. At a given moment the Russians were even poised to conquer India, and this certainly alarmed the British (Ref. 3, p. 252), who remembered that such plans had already been entertained by Peter. With his rule, then, Russia became a major menace to Europe, and thus the true successor of the Turanian/Asiatic threat. But in its drive for global predominance, Russia wished to be an empire that would be several empires combined. It wanted to be a 'Pan-Turanian' empire with domination over Asia, a 'Pan-Slavic' empire with domination over Eastern Europe, and a Pan-Greek-Slavic empire with domination over the West (Ref. 3, p. 251).

### **The Defense of Europe**

According to Martin, Europe however had also acquired a cohesiveness and a stamina that made it possible for Europeans to defend themselves from the Asiatics/Russians. Two countries here stood out: France and Poland. France's leaders understood that the nations of Europe should be independent, and that Europe could maintain its civilizational unity only through preserving the political individuality of each European nation. This was not understood by Austria, which wanted to subject other Europeans to its rule. Martin's implication was that Austria actually followed in Russia's footsteps and thus was a traitor to a true Europe. Resistance to Austrian encroachment thus made France the acknowledged leader of the European community. While the Austrians, then, could not make reliable partners in the fight against Asiatic Russia, the British could. Martin pointed out that France and England should stand together to stop Russian encroachments (Ref. 3, p. 253). He evoked the memory of the Crimean War, when the British and French were allies fighting Russia.

### **The Role of Poland**

The alliance with Britain was important, but for Martin the Slavs, and especially the Poles, together with the French, became the most valiant defenders of European civilization from the Russian-Asiatic onslaught. The primordial racially/biologically-based conflict between Russians/Turians and Aryan-Europeans also underlay the conflict between Russians and Poles. Slavs, European people, were characterized by individualism, a desire for progress, a drive for democracy, and a love of liberty (Ref. 3, p. 97). They had laid the foundation of a democratic, freedom-loving European/Aryan state in Eastern Europe. Poles and other Slavic nations on the eastern edge of European civilization had always had been the first to face an onslaught from the Asiatic East. According to Martin, Poland was the Eastern-most European nation. To understand this we should remember that Martin believed the Poles had built Kievan Russia (Ref. 3, p. 98).

While Kievan Russia was one of the best examples of a Slavic-Aryan state on the eastern edge of Europe, it was not the only one. Slavs, and therefore Aryan Europeans, were also responsible for the creation of a state in the north of present Russia. Slavs populated not only the Dnjeper River but also the region near Valdai, Volkhov, and

Ladoga, where they created states with Novgorod and Pskov as centers (Ref. 3, p. 99). They looked on the Polish states of the south and southwest as their natural allies, and recognized the supremacy of the Lithuanians in the north (Ref. 3, p. 39).

With due credit to the Kievan state, Poland emerged in the early modern era as the major state of the Polish people and the bulwark of European civilization on the East. Elaborating on the Poles' national character, Martin pointed out that they were genuinely European people with a love for individual liberty (Ref. 3, p. 111). The Polish soul was a Slavic soul, and could not stand the despotism of Moscow. This attachment to liberty manifested itself in the principle, 'liberum veto' (free veto) (Ref. 3, p. 53). It was not just the feudal liberties of the elite that made the Poles different from the Russian elite, virtual slaves of the tsar. The position of Polish peasants, the majority of the population, was also completely different from that of their Russian counterparts; they were mostly free proprietors.

The Poles' European, freedom-loving nature made peaceful coexistence with Asiatics from the East impossible. The Poles and other Eastern Slavs took the first and heaviest brunt of invasion from the Asiatic East, whether from Mongols, Turks or Russians (Ref. 3, p. 121).

The Poles had started their heroic protection of Europe from the Turanic-Asiatic threat early on, courageously resisting the Mongols in the thirteenth century (Ref. 3, p. 57). Later, the Poles engaged in a centuries-long conflict with other Turanian-Russians. This conflict, inevitable because of the biosocial and political incompatibility of Polish-Aryans and Turanian-Russians, constituted not just an episode in European history but was a central part of it (Ref. 3, p. 111). The centrality of the Polish experience for European history lay not just in the fact that the Poles demonstrated that Europeans could render heroic resistance to much stronger Asiatic forces. The Slavic Aryans of Eastern Europe provided an example of broad geopolitical thinking. They showed the Europeans early on that individual countries would not be able to stand against Asiatic monsters such as the Mongol Empire or its successor, the Russian Empire. Instead, they showed that European nations should unite against the threat. As an example, by the sixteenth century, Poland and Lithuania united to defend their independence (Ref. 3, p. 49).

In the seventeenth century, the conflict between freedom-loving Poles and Russians drenched in the culture of despotism resumed with even greater intensity. Martin approached the struggle for Ukraine from this position. Ukraine had been part of the *Rech Pospolitna* until the middle of the seventeenth century, and the Bogdan Khmelnytsky uprising marked the beginning of the crumbling of Polish control over mostly Orthodox Ukrainians. The uprising was a combination of religious, ethnic, political, and social protest, for most Ukrainian peasants were Orthodox whereas their landlords were often Catholic Poles. The uprising also led to horrific anti-Jewish pogroms. Khmelnytsky most likely entertained dreams of an independent Ukrainian state, but it seems he soon understood that he alone would not be able to beat the Poles, and he swore allegiance to the Russian tsars, the Orthodox rulers. On accepting Ukraine under the aegis of the tsar, Russia entered the war and was finally able to beat Poland. And at least one part of Ukraine became part of the Russian Commonwealth.

The event has had, of course, different interpretations. Pre-revolution and Soviet Russian historians saw in Ukraine's incorporation into Russia the marriage/fusion of two

brotherly Slavic peoples, ethnically, culturally, and religiously closely related. Ukrainian nationalist-minded historians have a different view. There was no free unification: force and deception were used to incorporate Ukraine into the Russian empire. Martin brought his own interpretation. The problem Martin faced was that he regarded the Ukrainians as Slavs and, therefore, ethnic/racial kin to Poles, not to Asiatic Russians. So he needed to explain why the majority of Ukrainians were on the side of the Russians. Martin's explanation was that the Cossacks living in Ukraine were not Slavic but had Turkic blood (Ref. 3, p. 111). Thus they were closer to Russians, and hence joined the Russians in fighting against Aryan Poles and Ukrainians. Cossacks were racial-cultural kin of Russians and Mongols, and the fight for Ukraine was a continuation of the struggle between Europeans-Aryans and Asiatic Turanians.

The Russians-Turanians finally succeeded in defeating the Poles. By the eighteenth century, Poland was not just defeated but partitioned, with most of it absorbed, Martin implied, by Russia. Yet, the freedom-loving Poles could not reconcile themselves with being enslaved by Asiatic Russians and therefore rose endlessly against their masters. But they were not able to stand against the Russians, who suppressed the uprisings with the ruthlessness of Tatars (Ref. 3, p. 103). This happened, Martin implied, because the rest of Europe had failed to defend the Poles from Russian encroachment.

The image of Russians as the Asiatic horde against which Europeans should be united – led, of course, by France – persisted in French thought for most of the nineteenth century. By the end of the century it had started to crumble. The major strike, of course, was the humiliating Prussian defeat of the cocky French. A unified Germany emerged as a major threat for coming generations, and the idea of an all-European alliance against Russia disappeared from the minds of not just the French but apparently also the majority of European politicians. By the end of the nineteenth century, France embraced an alliance with Russia, and discussion about Russians as 'unholy Asiatics' against whom France should protect Europe ceased.

As the First World War struck, the Germans were dubbed 'Huns' – Asiatics who had somehow emerged in the middle of Europe. Hitler would try again to resurrect the image of Russians as Mongols, and his Reich's need to save Aryan Europe. But by then no one except the Germans took these comparisons seriously. In addition, Hitler was not consistent in his views on the Mongols and sometimes tried to equate himself not just with Roman or Greek leaders but with Genghis Khan as well. As Richard Breitman put it, 'To a certain extent, Hitler's policies in the east were designed to remedy the "Mongol problem"—not as salient as the Jewish question, but perceived as a long-term danger nonetheless. In other ways, however, Hitler was consciously following what he had learned about Genghis Khan's methods' (Ref. 6, p. 37).

The way Hitler and his fellow Nazis saw the Mongols, and their invasion of Russia, was clearly ambivalent. On the one hand, the Nazis appreciated the Mongolian destruction of Russia; they identified with the armies that conquered Russia and exterminated a significant part of the country's population. On the other hand, they definitely saw in the Mongols the embodiment of Russians as brutish barbarians determined to conquer and destroy European civilization. Nazi Germany thus emerged as the protective shield that courageously saved Europe from the Eastern tide. This identification of

Mongols with Russians explains the popularity in Nazi Germany of Russian émigré Michael Prawdin's book on the Mongol conquest.<sup>7</sup> By the beginning of the Cold War, the notion of the USSR/Russia as a non-European civilization was implicitly present again, albeit possibly in diluted form, in the Western image. It seems to have returned after the short hiatus of Perestroika and the early post-Soviet era.

All this indicates that centuries-old stereotypes are hard to dislodge. They can hibernate in a sort of collective subconscious for a long time, and easily be resurrected to provide guidance for action, or at least to explain certain actions when geopolitical pragmatism demands it.

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