

Construction of a Utopian West: The Russian Nineteenth-Century Intelligentsia

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A person's image of a foreign country is often not related to an actual encounter, but limited and one-sided based on the environment of the person's native land. Consider, for example, the Russian elite perception of the West in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Peter the Great's reign shook Russia's traditional society and led to the spread of promiscuity and general immorality. Consequently, for many Russians, whether or not they traveled, the West, epitomized by France, was a place of erotic pleasures and easygoing life. By the beginning of the nineteenth century some members of the Russian elite started to question the political system of their native land. For some of them, like Peter Chaadaev, the West stood as a symbol of the ideal political institutions and Russia for the dead end of history.

Even in the era of globalization and frequent international travel by millions, information about foreign lands is often quite limited. Many visitors are either tourists or students who expect to return to their place of origin fairly soon, or people whose exposure to daily life in the foreign land is extremely limited. Their vision is formed not so much by reality – the experience of people who live there as ordinary folk – as by preconceived images constructed in their native land. This vision usually does not change during or after the visit, unless, of course, the person moves to the country permanently and begins to live the life of ordinary people. Thus, the construction of the image of a foreign land is due not so much to the availability of information, for example, or ease of travel (although this should not be discarded), as to internal changes in the country of origin. Consider, for example, the changes in the approach to the West of the Russian elite from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century.

In Russia in the eighteenth century, after the revolution of Peter the Great, traditional morals and conduct were discarded. The general spread of immorality, sexual promiscuity especially, was related to the West as the model Russia should copy. The image of the West, mostly of France, was reinforced by the Russian elite traveling

abroad. The major goal of their travel was not new knowledge or even sightseeing but pleasure, with unrestricted sexuality one of the most important aspects of the ‘high life.’

The situation had changed by the beginning of the nineteenth century when, in the wake of the Napoleonic wars and the 1825 Decembrist Uprising, a new breed of Russian elite emerged: the Russian intelligentsia, whose members became increasingly hostile to autocracy. For some of them, deep hostility to the regime was translated into deep hostility to the country of their birth. In this context, love for the West, seen as a place of ideal institutions, was incorporated into a sort of self-hatred, hatred of the country of their origin. Peter Iakovlevich Chaadaev (1794–1856), a seminal Russian intellectual who lived during the oppressive rule of Nicholas I, was this type of intellectual.

Russia and the West: The Early Encounters

It was not Russia that discovered the West but the West that discovered Russia. Ever since the Mongol invasion of the thirteenth century, Russia had been under strong influence from the East: first the Mongols with their enormous empire, and later the Ottoman Turks. The latter influence can be seen as late as the sixteenth century. Indeed, it is safe to assume that Ivan the Terrible’s *Oprichina* – the quasi-military force that was the major prop of his rule – was inspired by Turkic examples. Ivan Peresvetov, one of Ivan’s major political advisors and the apparent ideologist of the regime, advised him to create a military force that would resemble the Turkic janissaries. And he definitely endorsed the Turkish form of ‘government and justice’ (Ref. 1, p. 336). Turkish influence could also be seen in the way of life of the Russian nobility. The big hats worn by the *boyars* – nobles – were most likely copied from the Turks.

The change in the global balance of power and the increasing achievements and military prowess of the West led to rising Western influence. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the Russian elite may have been fascinated with the Ottoman military machine and the splendor of the Istanbul court. But they could not avoid noting the technological advances of the West. The Italians, not the Turks, built the Moscow Kremlin and churches the ‘basurmane’ (the term usually used by Orthodox Russians to describe Muslims) apparently could not build; at least, this was the assumption of the Russian elite. Connections to the West grew through the seventeenth century, despite Russian apprehension about Westerners as non-Orthodox. Visits by Westerners of all kinds – diplomats, travelers, merchants, and adventurers – steadily increased. By that time, the Western world saw Russia as part of the non-European, Asian world, in the context of a peculiar ‘Orientalism.’

In his seminal work *Orientalism*, Edward Said (1935–2003), following the postmodernist paradigm, especially that of Michel Foucault, portrayed gaining knowledge about the Orient as a form of domination and control. One might challenge Said’s notion about knowledge/discourse as a means of domination, yet agree with many of his conclusions. He pointed to certain general Western images of the Orient that started to develop with modernity. With all their dislike of one another

and sense of developing national identities, most Europeans had begun to share certain traits in approaching the Orient and the non-European world in general.

In the early modern era, the European image of the Orient could be roughly divided into two sub-images. The first, fear of the Orient as a military power, could be traced to the thirteenth-century Mongol invasions or even earlier (Ref. 2, p. 25). In the fourteenth to seventeenth centuries, it was related to the Ottoman Turks, who expanded in Europe in earnest from the Battle of Kosovo (1380) until the Ottoman defeat near the gates of Vienna (1683). The second had to do with Orientals as despotic, dirty, and favoring a type of promiscuity associated not so much with erotic pleasure as with disgust (Ref. 3, p. 21). But the negative implications of these erotic images started to change as time progressed.

The relationship between unrestricted sexuality and a utopian society of endless sensual pleasures (including drugs) is an old one. The quest for new sexual outlets, slave girls, and wives has been an essential lubrication for conquest since time immemorial. Before the late eighteenth century, however, Orientalism had not offered Europeans much in the way of erotic/pleasure images. Native sexuality appeared animalistic and was often associated with dirt and unhealthy conditions, disgust, and even hidden danger. For example, Muslim men were seen as 'homoerotic' and 'dangerously aggressive' and might rape Europeans.⁴ This de-eroticization of Oriental sexuality was directly related to fear of Orientals, especially Ottoman Turks.

Fear and disgust of the Orient started to subside as Europeans acquired confidence in their power. By the eighteenth century, fear of Turks had disappeared among the elite. Europe was engaged in continuous colonial expansion, with the Orient as one of its objects. The political/cultural/economic climate of the Orient was feminized, and it became safe and desirable as a source of pleasure, with erotic pleasure one of its most potent symbols. Erotica, unrestricted sexuality, became part of the image of the ideal life Europeans could strive for in the Orient and, in fact, all European colonies, where one could enjoy unrestricted sex. Indeed, 'Out and down in the colonies, life can be indulged, life and sensuality in all its forms' (Ref. 4, p. 317). In other cases, images of oriental sexuality were changed to make them more acceptable to the European public (Ref. 5, p. 37).⁶ Pictures of women's bodies revealed their voluptuousness, and the image of animal-type sexuality became culturalized and accepted. Images of the Turks became softer, more domesticated. Dirt and ferocity were still part of the picture of the Orient, but the Ottomans were transformed into an exotic, harmless, alluring people.

The images of other non-Western countries, including Russia, had not moved from negative to positive. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Russia was often seen as a despotic Oriental country, with a dirty, drunk, promiscuous, totally barbaric people, not a threat to the West. Russia's image improved in the eighteenth century, but after the Napoleonic Wars it re-emerged in European eyes as the dreadful 'gendarme of Europe.' Russian defectors to the West were aware of this image. They wanted to please their hosts and, to some degree, assure themselves that they had made the right choice by running from the country of their birth. After the Petrine revolution, which had shaken traditional morality to the core (remember that

Peter the Great married a camp follower, who later became empress), the West came increasingly to be seen as a utopian, paradisaical society, simmering with all possible pleasures. Unrestricted sexuality now came to be seen as an important aspect of Western life; at least as seen by the vast majority of the Russian elite.

The West as Erotic Utopia and the Case of Pragmatic Lovers

To understand these views, one should locate the Russian elite vision of the West in the context of utopia construction. Russians had been aware of the West, and some had even had contact with Westerners, long before the eighteenth century. But this contact was sporadic. The image of the West was extremely vague even for those who had visited, and was related to everything negative. It was a place of heathens, of non-Orthodox, with whom any connection should be minimized so as not to condemn oneself to eternal perdition. The situation changed during the reign of Peter the Great, who disrupted the traditional values of Russian society and pushed the Russian elite toward the West. At this time the first image of the West as ideal emerged, often of a place and society enjoying uninhibited, mostly erotic pleasure.

As the West became a global power, sexuality was integrated into the image of the ideal life in the conquered Orient. The process in Russia was rather different, connected not with imperial power but with the internal evolution of society.

Russia was not a puritanical society. Foreigners pointed to the growth of prostitution in big cities such as Moscow, but it was no different from many other cities of Europe. (For a general review of sexuality, including prostitution, in medieval and early modern Russia, see Ref. 7.) The response of the authorities and society was much the same. Prostitution was seen as disruptive, the source of venereal disease, and was stigmatized by the church. But the situation changed in the reign of Peter the Great. Peter connected promiscuity with the general hue of cynicism in Westernization and advanced views of life. From then on, the eroticization of life, numerous short-lived love affairs, became not a sin to be hidden from society, but something to parade as a symbol of Westernization and elitism. The court set the example: Empress Anna Ivanovna made Biron, a stable boy, her lover, and Catherine the Great changed lovers publicly as if they were ministers or generals. This was in sharp contrast to even the most depraved French kings, who tried to hide their amorous adventures from public view. It provided the model not just for the daily life of the elite but also for intellectual discourse.

It would, of course, be wrong to regard all members of the Russian elite as shallow ignoramus with no real intellectual interests. Throughout the eighteenth century, the works of seminal Western writers from Sir Thomas More to David Hume were translated and found Russian readers. Still, the majority definitely preferred shallow erotic novels to serious work, and their imitation of the St. Petersburg court helped shape their vision of the West. Endless love affairs were incorporated into the image of Western high life and society. The West became the symbol of erotic pleasure and ideal living. Western men became the most handsome and virile, Western women the sexiest, and both the most sophisticated in lovemaking.

This connection between unrestricted lovemaking, loss of inhibitions in general, and the West as the high point of civilization is easily seen in eighteenth-century Russian literature. The West, especially France, became a place every member of the Russian elite needed to visit. The essential aspects of the life of Russian nobles were eroticized and Westernized. Denis Fonvizin (1744–1792) was one of the best-known satirical Russian writers of the second half of the century. His play *The Brigadier General* depicted a young brother and sister who discuss their parents' lives. They are outraged to find that neither parent cheats on the other: this they see as a sign of the parents' backwardness. Moreover, their parents have no desire to visit Paris, the symbol of the West's erotic pleasures and superior civilization. A similar outlook can be seen in one of Fonvizin's most famous characters – Mitrofanushka, the young provincial squire in *The Minor*. He stubbornly resist any attempt to teach him anything and proclaims 'I do not want to study but I want to marry.' The expression, of course, has several meanings/applications. It apparently is related to the decree of Peter I that prohibited nobles from marrying unless they had mastered mathematics and other sciences implicitly related with the West. The other implication is that the West was related not to cultural/scholarly pursuits but to unrestricted sexuality.

This equating of the ideal life with erotica and the West provided the incentive for Russian nobles to visit Paris and other European places from approximately the second half of the eighteenth century on. Russians and the many European tourists were of course not disappointed. Paris swarmed with prostitutes, despite all attempts, especially by Louis XIV, to eradicate prostitution.^{8,9} Tourists, including sex tourists, could be victims of crime and could get venereal diseases. But if this did not happen, Russians brought back from Paris and similar places the experience of foreign lands as ideal places. They continued their fascination with the West and Westerners throughout their life, along with skeptical views of their native land.

Next to those who loved the West because it satisfied their expectations, there were people who were pleased with the West either because accepting it gave them a sense of emotional stability or because they had never been there – an ideological construction they could shape as they liked. And this image of the West reinforced their negative vision of their native land.

These categories of admirers of the West continue throughout modern Russian history, but a new group of people began to travel to the West in the nineteenth century. This generation of admirers started to look at the West not as an erotic paradise but rather as the ideal society, culturally and spiritually absolutely different from Russia.

The West as the Place of Ideal Institutions and People: The Germination of Illusions

To understand this new trend, one needs to explore the changes in Russian political and intellectual life. As noted above, Peter the Great had introduced the West into the lives of the Russian elite. But Western influence was limited even in the upper crust of Russian society. And the peasants – the majority of Russians – were almost entirely

excluded from the process. Consequently, from the early eighteenth century on there was an increasing rift between the cultures and even languages of the upper and lower classes. At least rudimentary knowledge of a foreign tongue, mostly French, became a prerequisite for those who pretended to be upper class. French continued to be extremely popular in Russia, as well as, of course, all over the world, until the end of the tsarist era.¹⁰ The classes were divided even by their dress and the cut of their hair. Since the time of Peter, nobles had been required to shave their beards, a tradition that remained popular, if not strictly enforced, almost until the end of the czarist regime. Peasants continued to wear traditional dress and the men had beards. The increasing divide between the elite and the masses that Westernization brought to Russian society and the quite limited influence of Westernism on the Russian elite explains much about the government attitude toward the elite's increasing opposition to the West.

The influence of Westernization was limited even for the most intellectually and culturally advantaged. Even for the best educated of the Russian gentry – a tiny minority among the elite – it was limited to acquiring some basic practical skills and languages. Westernization in its existential, so to speak, and philosophical-cultural manifestations was mostly related to disregard of the 'Ten Commandments,' cynicism and skepticism on various levels, despising everything Russian as symbols of backwardness, and seeing promiscuity as a token of advanced views on life. On the political level, this elite unquestionably accepted European, mostly French, absolutism. This was not just because autocracy was the political representative of the elite and made their life possible but because even the most advanced members of the Westernized elite did not know or imagine any other sociopolitical system. Some of them knew about republican Rome and Greece but mostly as an intellectual construction, not as a plan for action. They did not consider any alternative and, with a few notable exceptions, were not prone to thinking about sociopolitical subjects.

The limited intellectual horizons of even the most educated members of the Russian Westernized elite were reflected in the popularity of certain French authors, Voltaire in particular (Ref. 11, p. 198). This was not just because of his style and his fame throughout Europe but because of the nature of his writing, which could be interpreted as condoning the lifestyle of cynicism and promiscuity. His pornographic aspect was especially appealing and an inspiration for a variety of Russian writers, from the classical Aleksandr Pushkin to the open pornography of Ivan Barkov, 'whose works were too scandalous to be published' (Ref. 12, p. 25).

This rather shallow aspect of early Russian Westernization explains a great deal about the government approach to the spread of Western culture. Pre-Petrine authorities – with all their acceptance of brief love affairs between landlords and peasant girls – discouraged the open and scandalizing profligacy of the elite, which challenged the authority of the church and the entire cosmos of sociopolitical order. From this perspective, the church – society, in the broad sense – was concerned with sexual probity, at least structurally it was similar to the concerns of the emerging European middle-class culture with moral probity as the foundation of legal order. The church's concern with sexual propriety could lead to a direct confrontation with

autocracy. It condemned Ivan the Terrible more for his sexual improprieties than for his reign of terror.

By the eighteenth century, the authorities were not concerned with the popularity of Western dress and lifestyle or the promiscuity of their subjects. These were concerns of the past. Emperors such as Catherine the Great engaged in openly promiscuous behavior, seeing no threat in it to themselves or the social order, and finding no problem in their subjects behaving similarly. And they believed that potentially dangerous political ideas would have no repercussions on their subjects' lives. First, most people, even those proficient in French, would ignore works on such subjects – if they even encountered them – as boring and basically irrelevant. Second, even if they understood at least some of the notions, they would regard them mostly as an intellectual construct, a ploy with little or no relevance to Russian life. So the Russian authorities were not concerned with the intellectual pollution the West might bring.

This mostly benign approach to apparently subversive ideas could be found not only under Elizabeth, a shallow, albeit not cruel ruler, but even under Catherine II, a shrewd and educated woman who supposedly understood the potential danger of subversive ideologies. Still, almost to the end of her reign, all kinds of books were allowed into Russia. In general, censorship was 'intermittent and unobtrusive' (Ref. 13, p. 209) (the situation changed, of course, during the time of the French Revolution). She not only did not cause problems for those who wished to bring in potentially subversive books, but advertised herself as the greatest free thinker among European autocrats. She engaged in prolonged correspondence with Voltaire, who hailed her as a 'philosopher on the throne,' and 'promoted her as the embodiment of a rational, tolerant and benign ruler, a humane and truly enlightened monarch' (Ref. 1, p. 336). She was also visited by Denis Diderot, another prominent Enlightenment man of letters.

As time progressed, the view of the authorities and the elite on the West and its culture started to change. It would be wrong to assume that the West as a place of erotica and cynicism went completely out of circulation. Such views have continued throughout Russian history, including the Gorbachev and Yeltsin eras, when a considerable part of the emerging elite regarded promiscuity and cynicism as essential attributes of Westernization. At some time, however, a different type of elite started to emerge, with a different vision of the West and new reasons for loving or hating it. They also faced a government quite different from what Russian intellectuals had dealt with through most of the eighteenth century.

As noted above, the authorities were little concerned about Western ideas and books. Critics of Westernization were few and far between, often conservative intellectuals concerned not with the political implications of Westernization, which hardly existed, but with its moral implications. Prince Mikhail Mikhailovich Shcherbatov in *On the Corruption of Morals in Russia* (1797) railed against the spread of Westernism and related it to the moral decay he found among the Russian elite, with possible dire consequences for Russia. He upheld the Russian pre-Petrine traditions and institutions and proclaimed that 'serfdom was perfectly compatible with modern Western agricultural methods' (Ref. 14, p. 561). But his lamentations had few consequences

for the policies of the autocracy. Eroticized cynicism challenged not just the moral fabric of society but also church authorities and, implicitly, the institution of monarchy. But Catherine believed any danger would come from below, from peasant rebellion. Potentially subversive writings in French could hardly affect peasant thinking and behavior. She assumed that the elite who read such books understood that Russia's autocracy guaranteed their social and economic well-being, and that their attachment to subversive ideas remained on the level of loose talk.

The French Revolution came as a shock for Catherine, who discovered that an apparently abstract slogan could lead to such an upheaval, and that educated groups could engage in subversive actions that could undermine the foundation of their own socioeconomic well-being.¹⁵ An even greater shock came after the War of 1812, when several Russian officers – known as Decembrists – organized underground societies, and in the dynastic confusion following the death of Alexander I tried to stage a revolt. The revolt failed, but it showed the new emperor – Nicholas I – that important changes had taken place in the minds of the educated Russian public. For a visible part of them, the West had been transformed from a place of erotic pleasures to one of liberty. Yet Liberty and the West as the ideal society from a political and cultural and spiritual point of view coincided with an opposite view, which, in a way, was similar to that of Mikhail Shcherbatov. For these new haters of the West, the latter became a symbol of alienation, crass materialism, cynicism, and brutality.

Some of those who admired the West and managed to get there for a while, as tourists, for example, might not be fascinated with it, but they still saw it as much better than Russia, perhaps in terms of personal comfort. Others regarded it as the ideal institution and opposed it to Russia and Russians as embodying all the evils in human history. These people often had limited knowledge of the West because they had lived there sporadically, not as ordinary citizens. Peter Chaadaev was such an individual who admired the West as the place of ideal institutions and people.

Chaadaev's View of the West as Promised Land and Russia as the Dead End of History

Seminal Russian author Peter Chaadaev was one of the Russian intellectuals who never resided in the West as an ordinary person.¹⁶ Chaadaev and his fellow ideologues held an extremely negative view of the country of their birth. Chaadaev entered Russian intellectual history mostly as the author of a set of *Philosophical Letters* written in French and translated into Russian.^{17,18} He blasted Russia as a sort of black hole in the family of nations, with no achievements in the past and present, or ever likely to occur in the future. He stated explicitly that backward Russia had nothing to do with Europe, and even doubted it was part of Christendom. It could, however, be compared with the most barbarous and despotic nations of Asia: the Mongols/Tatars from the time of Genghis Khan, for example.

Chaadaev's view of Russia was also similar to that widespread view among the European elite. French Astolphe-Louis-Léonore, Marquis de Custine (1790–1857), and the Polish F.H. Duchinski (1817–1893), saw Russia as a reactionary 'gendarme

of Europe,' essentially an Asiatic country with a people deceptively looking like Europeans. This view stood in sharp contrast to the official imperial stance. It is true that the Russian authorities emphasized the specificity of Russia's historical path and blasted Europeans for moral and intellectual degeneration that brought the calamities of revolutions. But the officials were also adamant that Russia was a bona fide Christian, basically European country. Nicholas regarded it as Russia's sacred duty to save Europe from itself and patronized the healthy (from his viewpoint, of course) aspects of European political culture. It was logical that Chaadaev's *Letters* hardly pleased the authorities, and the fact that they sounded similar to the ideas of the country's sworn enemies in Europe infuriated them.

The ideas in Chaadaev's *Letters* were also an affront to most Russian intellectuals of the time, who belonged to two major groups: Slavophiles and Westernizers. Slavophiles emphasized that Russia, the only truly Christian country, should be the 'city on the hill' for degenerate and basically non-Christian Europe. Russia's spiritualized, Christian collectivity should guide Europe to the true path. Any Russian problems were due to pernicious Western influence; they strongly criticized Peter the Great for his attempt to introduce elements of Western culture completely foreign to Russia. A vast majority of Slavophiles emphasized their attachment to autocracy – a truly Russian institution. Nicholas regarded himself as a legitimate successor to Peter – part of the pantheon of great Russian rulers – making Slavophile barbs suspect. Many Slavophile dicta were incorporated in official discourse, but Slavophiles never received full approval from the top, where conservative Westernism was still rather dominant.

Still, Slavophiles were tolerated and quite influential. For them, Chaadaev's *Letters* were a shock, and they vehemently blasted him as a renegade and moral buffoon who attacked his motherland and engaged in self-hatred for a cheap 'Herostratus' of popularity. In their view, Herostratus burned the temple of Artemis to achieve scandalous fame, and Chaadaev defiled his own country for the same reason.

The *Letters* outraged Westernizers as well. They agreed that Russia had many problems and lagged behind the West, but were convinced it was part of European civilization and would eventually catch up. They pointed out that Russia's integration into Europe had been started by Peter the Great. Consequently, many of them were taken aback by the *Letters* regarding Russia as drenched in the most reactionary Asiaticism and beyond hope.

Not surprisingly, Chaadaev's *Letters* – scandalous for practically all segments of the Russian intellectual community – brought him both fame and trouble. Chaadaev himself made this clear. In a letter to I.P. Iakushkin (October 19, 1837) he stated that his writings had become quite popular. Some were translated into Russian and even appeared in a Russian journal. Soon, however, the authorities decided his writings were subversive. The editor of the journal was exiled, and Chaadaev was proclaimed insane. With an air of sarcasm he commented that this was an act of benevolence; he could have had much nastier punishment (Ref. 17, vol. 2, pp. 121–122).

Chaadaev's view of the country of his birth was basically extremely negative, but one should remember that he lived under Nicholas I, whose reign was harsh even by

the standards of most of Russia's history. Chaadaev would have been engaged in various intellectual and political mimics so as not to end his life at hard labor or in an even nastier way. And, like many people, he was not always consistent, not because of fear of the authorities but because hatred could coexist in his mind with genuine positive feelings toward his motherland.

Chaadaev as a Loyal Subject: An Attempt to Convince the Authorities

Chaadaev understood that his view of Russia as a manifestation of reactionary Asiaticism could hardly please the authorities, and he could assume that their earlier humiliation – declaring him insane and in need of a doctor's supervision – would be replaced by harsh punishment. He wrote several letters to the authorities, or at least to people who could inform the authorities, arguing that he had been slandered by those who described him as a Russia hater and troublemaker. The reason for writing was not just sheer fear of the dreaded 'Third Section,' Nicholas' secret police. His feelings toward the country of his birth were contradictory, and contempt of Russia could well coincide with pride and hope. Still, fear of repression was likely the major reason he wrote to the top officials of the empire.

Nicholas, the absolute ruler, had personally noted the subversive aspect of Chaadaev's writings, so it is not surprising that Chaadaev addressed a letter to the czar to prove his loyalty and patriotism. In the letter Chaadaev said he believed Russia had a special role in global history (Ref. 17, vol. 2, p. 83). Count Alexander von Benckendorf, chief of the 'Third Section,' was the second individual to whom Chaadaev wrote. He tried to present himself as a good subject of the czar with an outlook quite different from that in his *Letters*. He stated that Russia is part of Europe: 'We live on the east of Europe, still we never belonged to the Orient' (Ref. 17, vol. 1, p. 531). Part of the empire indeed belonged to the Orient, but these regions were not the center but a peripheral appendix. Russia had belonged to Europe since the dawn of history and was finally integrated into Europe by Peter (Ref. 17, vol. 1, p. 531); he fully understood Peter's contributions, and attacked the Slavophiles who rejected them (Ref. 17, vol. 1, p. 530).

Chaadaev's praise of Peter had clear implications. The emperor who Westernized Russia top down, and whose political legacy implied that strong power was the only engine for progress, was fully integrated into official ideology. He was the central positive figure for radical and liberal Westernizers, and he was also praised by conservative Westernizers, whose ideology was important if not central to the regime. The regime was more concerned with Slavophiles, who, in spite of assertions of deep patriotism and hatred of the 'rotten West,' regarded Russia's post-Petrine development as a perversion of the country's true sociopolitical and spiritual core.

Thus, Chaadaev's assertion of respect for Peter and his criticism of Slavophilism should indicate that his position was close to the regime's official Westernism. Officially, Russia was part of Europe and integrated into European intellectual life, but it accepted only what the regime regarded as wholesome intellectual traditions. It discarded the delusions of eighteenth-century philosophy that brought such destruction

as the French Revolution. Chaadaev rejected these as well (Ref. 17, vol. 1, p. 521). Indeed, he stressed in another letter to Benkendorf, he had never expressed the ideas widespread in France, and he understood how harmful they were (Ref. 17, vol. 2, p. 85). His Westernism was close to the official version and went along with wholesome patriotism, so he should not be regarded as a dangerous troublemaker, and he predicted a grand future for his country (Ref. 17, vol. 1, p. 536). Chaadaev also tried to downplay the importance of the letters. He noted that the *Philosophical Letters* were private letters to one woman, and he did not understand why these intellectual pranks had caused such public response.

Chaadaev as Good, Wholesome Patriot: The Attempt to Convince Public Opinion and Demonstrate his Intellectual Sophistication

While Chaadaev's letters to the czar and Benkendorf were driven mostly by self-preservation, his letters to other members of the elite had more complicated motivations. It is clear that he may have believed his pro-Russian views would reach the authorities and lead him out of trouble. There was yet another explanation for Chaadaev's desire to repudiate the ideas of the *Letters* and demonstrate his convoluted and often contradictory vision of past and present. Like most educated Russians, he was influenced by German and French culture. German romanticism and nineteenth-century philosophy – especially Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel – had induced Russians to write long, complicated sentences studded with not easily understood words to make the text comprehensible to only the clever few. The French influence was more complicated but also important for understanding Chaadaev's narrative. The French apparently brought Russia the Cartesian logic and clarity of writing espoused by René Descartes. Still, it was not much of an enduring cultural legacy.

Another, much more influential tradition emphasized playfulness and sophistry as a sign of intellectual dexterity. There is no doubt that Chaadaev was influenced by this trend and possibly found a sort of twisted delight – together with other feelings – in discarding the very ideas he had promulgated in the *Letters*, that Russia's differences from Europe doomed it to be a sort of dead end of history. In some of his other writings too, we find mutually exclusive statements. Chaadaev often repudiated the major premises of the *Letters* not just in the letters to the authorities but also to his other correspondents.

This line of thought can be seen in Chaadaev's 1884–1885 letter to Aleksandr Turgenev. At the beginning of the letter, he seems to criticize Russia and emphasize its separation from Europe, reaffirming his fascination with the West. In his view, European nations had a long and productive history, whereas Russia seemed to have no history to be proud of and to be permanently cut off from Europe. Some European intellectuals believed Russia could play a role only in Asia, and should engage in a civilizing mission there and abandon any role in Europe. The implication – which Chaadaev seemed to support – was that Russia's focus on Asia was due to Russia's political culture. In its despotism, Russia could better understand and deal with despotic Asian regimes. While at the beginning of the letter Chaadaev seemed to

support the notion that Russia was absolutely different from Europe, in another part he strongly refuted this notion.

This vision of Russia as an Asiatic, implicitly backward, tyrannical country should be challenged, according to Chaadaev. Those who insisted that Russia was part of Asia had forgotten Peter. Chaadaev could not accept the notion that Peter was not a true European ruler or that Peter's Russia did not belong to Europe and should be seen as politically and culturally retarded (I. S. Gagarin (July [?] 1842), stated that before the Mongols Russians had a strong connection with the West (Ref. 17, vol. 2, p. 151)). Elaborating on this notion, Chaadaev noted that Europeans might assert that Peter's reforms were superficial and the Asiatic, despotic aspects of Russian political culture were preserved. This, indeed, could have been the case. But a strong, despotic regime and a political culture that supported such a regime did not necessarily lead to spiritual and cultural retardation and make Russia different from the West.

Indeed, some despotic governments create conditions for great ideas and cultural splendor. For example, the Arabs gave the world many great ideas (Ref. 17, vol. 2, p. 97). At the same time, Chaadaev implied, Arabs of the past were hardly a people who shared the values of the modern West. Europe itself acquired its spiritual and cultural treasures not under the current political liberties, but in the distant past when these political arrangements had not been realized. European civilization was most productive during the Middle Ages (Ref. 17, vol. 2, p. 151). Thus, Chaadaev asserted, a despotic society, at least one without the political liberty of the present West, is part of the historical legacy of the West and could be much richer spiritually and culturally than one with political liberty as the framework.¹⁹ In this interpretation, the absence of political liberties in Russia did not mean Russia is essentially different from the West.

Finally, this and other letters reveal still another streak of Chaadaev. Indeed, he acknowledged Russia's difference from the West and the despotic underpinnings of Russia's political culture, but saw these not as liabilities but as advantages. In the context of this theory, the European development of political liberty could be seen as a sort of continuous cultural and spiritual debasement. In approaching Russia from this perspective, Chaadaev embraced the notion that Russia was, indeed, quite different from the West. Still, this notion required a fresh look at the entire problem of Russia's isolation and at certain aspects of Russian history, the Mongol invasion, for example. Chaadaev downplayed the antagonistic relationship with the Mongols and emphasized cooperation between them. Russians easily accepted foreign rule because they understood that this would be beneficial for them.²⁰

Elaborating on this idea, Chaadaev noted that the Mongols did not conquer Russia. Their invasion and yoke were a harsh blow, but they never controlled the whole country. The Russians accepted their rule for many reasons. First, they understood it as a sort of divine punishment, a way for Russia to cleanse itself. Second, it helped Russia develop its essential national faculties and emerge as a country. Russia became accustomed to obedience, which Chaadaev saw as positive because it helped its rulers unify the country (Ref. 17, vol. 2, p. 161). Mongol rule, seen by Europeans as a blemish and a major reason for Russia's inferior position, had actually helped create a better government than the European ones.

Russia's social structure also had clearly positive features. This was, for example, the case with serfdom. Chaadaev stated that in Europe the peasants were originally free: serfdom was brought by invaders of a different race/ethnicity.²¹ It was not surprising that European peasants resisted it. In Russia, peasants and landlords belonged to the same ethnic group, and peasants did not actually object to serfdom (Ref. 17, vol. 2, p. 162), which was as a sort of spontaneous, organic process. From this perspective, social development in Russia, while clearly different from the European model, was overall beneficial for the country. Russian Orthodoxy, distinctly different from Western Christianity, was also beneficial, at least in the long run. In his letter to F.A. Dolgorukova (January 22, 1850), Chaadaev stated that the major problem with the Popes is that they tried to behave not as spiritual leaders but as rulers (Ref. 17, vol. 2, p. 237). The fact that the Orthodox Church did not rule in the Western manner and that Patriarch Nikon's attempt to make it independent of the czars was thwarted provided a chance to develop its spirituality (Ref. 17, vol. 2, p. 238).

Clearly all aspects of life – political, social, cultural/spiritual – made the Russian path different from the European one, but these differences were not a curse but a blessing. Indeed, because Russia was free from the traditions of European civilization, it could create something extraordinary, a sort of last word in European and global history, and lead Europe (Ref. 17, vol. 2, pp. 98–99).

Chaadaev asserted the same idea in a letter to S.G. Stroganov (November 8, 1831), with an interpretation of Russian history in which it would benefit from isolation from any neighbor including Asia (Ref. 17, vol. 2, p. 113). Similar ideas can be found in other letters. In 'Otvét na stat'iu Khomiakova' ('Response to the Article by A.S. Khomiakov'), Chaadaev claimed that because Russia inherited Orthodoxy from the Byzantines it had a flourishing civilization, quite different from that of the West. This idiosyncratic, advanced civilization suffered from the Tatars/Mongols, who brought not a positive but a negative force (Ref. 17, vol. 1, p. 541). Yet the unique features of Orthodox civilization were not destroyed, and Russia should be proud of its spiritual heritage.

Seeing Russia's isolation from the West as a positive phenomenon, Chaadaev sometimes even changed his tack on Peter the Great, denying that Peter had brought too many changes to Russia. In his letter to Turgenev (August–November 1843) he noted that some people believed Peter had changed Russian society for the good. This was wrong. No nation could abandon itself, and Russia was no exception. Here Chaadaev, of course, followed the popular Romantic line of thought that each nation had its own basically immutable spiritual kernel. Any attempt to change this kernel could bring nothing but harm. Chaadaev implied that Peter understood this and so removed the rudeness and prejudice and 'some remnants of liberties' that no one needed (Ref. 17, vol. 2, p. 160). This stress on Peter's firm integration in Russian historical tradition, the conservative/organic element of his rule and actions, gave a different emphasis to Peter's achievements. Chaadaev saw these achievements not in bringing Russia closer to Europe but in guarding Russia from Europe. If not for Peter, Russia would have been conquered by the Swedes (Ref. 17, vol. 2, p. 166). In this stress on Peter's military prowess, Chaadaev emphasized distancing Russia

from Europe, Westernization notwithstanding. This isolation might be his greatest and most positive legacy.

Chaadaev's view of Russia was clearly controversial, and some of his praise for Russia was a sincere manifestation of genuine love for the country of his origin. This combination of love and self-hate can be found in many authors who did not think about consistency in their writing and provided readers an opportunity to engage in 'deconstruction' – recall the famous notion of Jacques Derrida (1930–2004) – and find in the text whatever they wished. Some of Chaadaev's repudiation of the *Letters* could also reflect the sophistry he had absorbed from French culture. But most of his pro-Russian pronouncements, especially those in his letters to the emperor and the chief of the secret police, were caused by fear, and his love of Russia was a manifestation of Orwellian love of 'big brother.'

In these feelings and in how he saved his skin, Chaadaev was similar to intellectuals in other societies with similar political arrangements. Procopius of Caesarea, historian of sorts of the Byzantine emperor Justinian, produced an official work that presented the emperor as a godlike hero who accomplished many great deeds. He also wrote a *Hidden History* portraying the same Justinian as a bloody monster and his wife Theodora as a whore. This sort of behavior can also be found in Chaadaev's approach to the authorities; he could simultaneously criticize the regime's enemies in public and praise them in his private correspondence. In 1851, he wrote a letter to Count A.F. Orlov, an important official, assuring him of his patriotism and general loyalty. He also attacked Alexander Herzen, the seminal Russian radical thinker, as a renegade who ascribed to Chaadaev ideas he had never supported. He said he would be very glad to provide a written criticism of Herzen's book, but since the book was outlawed in Russia, he could get it only from the authorities (Ref. 17, vol. 2, p. 255). At the same time, he wrote to Herzen expressing warm feelings toward him.

One might, of course, ask whether Chaadaev's readers and correspondents believed his patriotic pronouncements or, at least, whether he was not as anti-Russian as one might assume from his *Letters*. Some foreigners were deceived by his assertions that Russia was a bona fide part of Europe. They could even be led to think that he denied the Asiatic aspects of Russian political culture. Responding to one French correspondent (April 1845), Chaadaev wished not to dispel the Frenchman's assumption that he, Chaadaev, saw Russia not as part of Europe. Indeed, there were many Oriental aspects in Russia's political culture. Ivan the Terrible, for example, had features of both Byzantine emperors and Tatar khans (Ref. 17, vol. 2, p. 486). Yet the notion that Russia was not part of Europe was unacceptable, in fact, blatantly wrong. Europe should accept Russia as a European nation, and not forget that it protected Europe from the Asiatic barbarian Mongols.

One can make a guess about the real motivation for Chaadaev's response to this French correspondent. But it is safe to assume that he surmised his correspondent would be convinced that Chaadaev believed that Russia was part of the West and that rumors about his critical views were just rumors. Perhaps Chaadaev assumed that his correspondent would spread the word about the former's alleged patriotism, and that

this information would reach the Russian authorities, who then would stop harassing him. It is likely that, in correspondence with Westerners, Chaadaev succeeded in part of his plan, proving that he was, in fact, patriotic.

However, while some foreigners could be deceived, this was not the case with Russians. It is unlikely that the authorities or even Russian private correspondents took his positive view of Russia and the regime as a manifestation of his true feelings. For most of them, Chaadaev despised, even deeply hated the country. It is not surprising that the Slavophiles and those close to them blasted Chaadaev for his attack against the Russians. Nikolai Iazykov's (1803–1846) poem against Chaadaev (1844) was quite critical (Ref. 17, vol. 2, p. 353). Iazykov argued that Chaadaev had praised not Russia but the 'Babylonian whore' of the West (Ref. 17, vol. 2, p. 354). A.S. Khomiakov (1804–1860), a well-known Slavophile, called Chaadaev an 'arrogant slave' of everything foreign (Ref. 17, vol. 2, p. 355). Mikhail N. Zagoskin (1789–1852), a popular patriotic nationalist writer, in an untitled 1836 article also attacked Chaadaev for presenting his motherland in a very negative light. He said Chaadaev saw Russia as a country with a dark past whose dealings with Europe brought nothing but harm to Europeans. Zagoskin was, it seems, especially outraged by Chaadaev's suggestion that Russia's liberation of Europe from Napoleon subjugated progressive Europe to despotic Russia and delayed European progress (Ref. 17, vol. 2, pp. 544–55). Other Slavophiles or people close to them, such as Peter A. Viazemskii (1792–1878) and Vladimir F. Odoevsky (1804–1869), also held quite negative views of Chaadaev's theories (Ref. 17, vol. 2, p. 23).

Chaadaev's anti-Russian feelings and writing were also shocking to Westernizers with critical views of Russia. Alexander S. Pushkin (1799–1837), the classical Russian writer, in an 1836 letter to Chaadaev agreed that the church schism of 1054 had separated Russia from the West and that Russia had not participated in major European events for a long time. Yet Russian history was full of great events, and the separation from Europe was not absolute. Russia had contributed to European history, at least indirectly so. Russian heroism against the Mongols made it possible for Europeans to reach the heights of cultural advancement.

According to Pushkin, one should also not overestimate the role of the Byzantine tradition and its peculiar approach to life in Russia's spiritual make-up. The Byzantines did not greatly influence Kievan Russia, and Russia was open to European influence. From the time of Peter the Great, Russia had been continuously integrating with Europe. Catherine the Great placed Russia 'near the threshold of Europe' (Ref. 17, vol. 2, p. 46). Czar Alexander had brought Russian troops to Paris, but this was a sign that Russia was part of Europe, not its enemy.

It is clear that Chaadaev's writings on Russia and the West were controversial, and one could easily find statements that presented him as a bona fide patriot, a person not much different from the officials. He had many reasons to write in such a way, but the major one was fear of the authorities and desire to avoid punishment. For this reason, one could question the notion that most of his pro-Russian, pro-government statements reflected his real thinking. In any case, it is clear that Chaadaev entered Russian history because of his critical views, not his patriotic ones.

Russia as the Dead End of History

When Chaadaev spoke his mind and was not trying to please the authorities, his vision of the country of his birth was extremely negative. Its negative characteristics had nothing to do with Russia's ethnic background. Indeed, one should not emphasize the racial and ethnic divisions of humanity. Chaadaev believed Christianity emphasizes the unity of mankind (Ref. 17, vol. 1, p. 476). He rejected the views of those Westerners who, following the then increasingly popular notions of racism, deduced sociopolitical and cultural attributes from the racial composition of particular nations.

Chaadaev implicitly agreed with European observers who believed that the nations and civilizations of the world are sharply divided. Regarding the West as the small elite of mankind, the only force that propelled the progress of humanity, he believed Europeans should be unified; and for this reason he praised Catholicism, which unified Europe, and castigated Protestantism, which divided it (Ref. 17, vol. 1, p. 413). While Europeans are the only engine of progress, their numbers are small (Ref. 17, vol. 1, p. 19). Although not seeing Russia as among the chosen few, Chaadaev did not see its separation from Europe as exclusively due to ethnicity ('Turanian,' of Turkic and Mongolian descent), the view quite popular in France. But he did agree that Russia's cultural matrix, so to speak, destined the country and its people to be a sort of black hole of humanity.

Chaadaev rejected the 'proto-Eurasianist' vision of Russia's historical fate held by some of his contemporaries. He noted that some people proclaimed Russia a special civilization, different from Europe and Asia. But belonging to neither of these civilizations did not make it a civilization in its own right (Ref. 17, vol. 1, p. 469). Russia's intermediate position simply meant it had not received the traditions of either (Ref. 17, vol. 1, p. 329). Unable to benefit from either West or East, Russian civilization had only one distinctive feature – unbridled despotism. 'Russia is a special world, subject to the whims and fantasies of one man. It is the very manifestation of arbitrariness. Contrary to all laws of humanity, Russia is marching in the direction of its own enslavement and the enslavement of all neighboring people' (Ref. 17, vol. 1, p. 77).

While despotism is a bona fide part of the Russian tradition, this can also be said about serfdom, and Slavophiles who praised Russia's special path and tradition should remember this. In his letter to E.A. Sverbeeva (July 10, 1842), Chaadaev mocked the Slavophile emphasis on the importance of Russian traditions, calling it an idiotic assumption because to follow Slavophile logic one should worship serfdom (Ref. 17, vol. 2, p. 150). Not only did Russia have no positive features but it could not progress either. Russian history was nothing but 'stagnation' (Ref. 17, vol. 1, p. 325). Russians had no sense of history; they were unable to learn from their own experience and even less from the experience of humanity. If Russia could be compared with some part of the world, it would be Asia. But Russia could not receive any positive achievements even of Asian civilizations, even if they were closer to Russia than the West.

European civilization was great, regardless of its problems, but Russia as a nation and even the few Westernized Russian liberals could not partake of Europe's glory. With all their attempts to mimic Westerners, Russian liberals could not erase their barbaric make-up; they were a 'meaningless fly' playing in the light of the sun of the West (Ref. 17, vol. 1, 469). Unable to develop and frozen in its despotism, Russia was 'not a part of humanity' (Ref. 17, vol. 1, 19) and would remain in a pitiful condition in spite of all attempts to change it. It is clear to the observer that Russia could hardly play a positive role in the family of nations, and Russian history clearly indicated this.

At the beginning of the country's existence, Chaadaev thought, Russia chose the wrong model to follow. In a letter to one of his French correspondents (June 15, 1846), Chaadaev noted that the major problem with Russia was that it had followed the Byzantine-Roman tradition in which the church became absolutely dependent on the state (Ref. 17, vol. 2, pp. 186–89). This tradition permeated all of Russian society. It inculcated Russians with the tradition of slavery, not enlightenment, so they continued to be uneducated barbarians. The Mongol invasion just reinforced what had been the nature of Russian life for centuries. 'In the beginning, we had brutal barbarity, then primitive superstition and then foreign rule, brutal and humiliating to our own national power. This is the gloomy history of our youth' (Ref. 17, vol. 1, p. 320).

The Mongols finally cemented the country's political culture, but they hardly made Russia great. Russia was an insignificant outskirts of the world, generally ignored by the rest of humanity. Indeed, it was only because of the Mongols' moving through the territory that Russia was even mentioned in the annals of world history (Ref. 17, vol. 1, pp. 330).

Over centuries of Byzantinism and Mongolianism, Russians lost the craving for freedom so natural in other human beings; hence the willingness with which they accepted serfdom. Russian serfdom was quite different from European serfdom, which was the result of foreign conquest (Ref. 17, vol. 2, p. 191). In Russia, everything was influenced by slavery (Ref. 17, vol. 2, p. 493). The predisposition to slavery explained recent Russian history and the country's inability to move closer to the West. Peter tried to civilize Russia without success (Ref. 17, vol. 1, p. 330). His failure lay in his inability to bring the ideas of Western liberty and self-respect to the Russians. Indeed, Peter provided additional reinforcement to the culture of slavery. At the same time, he brought in the negative aspects of the West; indeed, the pervasive tradition of slavery led Russians to accept foreign ideas without critical assessment.

Only when the Russians came to fully recognize the gravity of their prevailing traditions and repented would they have a chance to be free (Ref. 17, vol. 2, p. 192). Freedom could only be achieved by the force of an idea from the West, and it was doubtful that even this force or ideology would do any good. During the war with Napoleon, Russians moved throughout Europe and brought back revolutionary ideas that inspired the Decembrist uprising. But the uprising brought nothing but a harsh reaction (Ref. 17, vol. 1, p. 330). In this assessment of the ill-fated rebellion, Chaadaev seems to have found reinforcement for his cardinal idea that the immutable cultural matrix Russians received at the beginning of their history made liberation from despotism close to impossible.

However, Chaadaev did not completely give up hope that Russia would abandon its dreadful despotism and join the family of free European nations. Moreover, despite his dread of the authorities and his attempt to present himself as a patriotic subject of the czar, he engaged in direct subversive activities and was the author of a subversive proclamation. In his 1848 proclamation to the peasants, Chaadaev encouraged them to follow the examples of the rebellious French.

Regarding Russia as a black spot in history and an Asiatic monster deeply hostile to Europe, Chaadaev agreed with Europeans such as the Marquis de Custine, author of the famous critical book *Empire of the Czar: A Journey through Eternal Russia* (1839), which he wrote after visiting the country. In one of his letters, Chaadaev noted that he was in absolute agreement with Custine, especially that many of Russia's problems were due to the fact that Russia was an Orthodox, not a Catholic country. Many Russians could see this view (Ref. 17, vol. 2, pp. 246–248), which was in full accord with foreigners' views that Russia is an Asiatic empire completely alien to Europe.

Chaadaev certainly knew that the fear that Russia would militarily dominate Europe, even the entire globe, was popular in the West, but he rejected this notion. He noted that some pundits believed Russia would dominate the Slavs and the Slavs would dominate the world. Others saw a quite different scenario: the Tatars would be global rulers. Still, the assumption that either Slavs or Tatars would be a dominant global force was simplistic and ignored the complexity of global development (Ref. 17, vol. 1, p. 469).

Thus, Chaadaev represents the Russian intellectuals who never lived in the West as ordinary residents and so had quite a positive view. The West, in his view, was a land of promise, whereas Russia, where he was born and spent most of his life, was the dead end of history.

Conclusion

The construction of the image of a foreign land, especially one that belongs to an entirely different civilization, is a complicated phenomenon. Most observers had limited experience living in a foreign society as citizens of that society. Even those who toured foreign lands did so mostly as tourists, travelers, or in similar capacities. It was not their personal experiences but their views about their own society often shaped their vision of the foreign land. The Russian elite's approach to the West from the eighteenth to the early nineteenth century is an example of this. Petrine reforms and the rules of the eighteenth-century emperors and empresses who followed him not only brought elements of Western culture to Russia but shook up the old moral norms and related the image of the West to unrestricted sexuality and general immorality and cynicism. The fact that most members of the Russian elite visited the West, mostly France, in search of frivolous entertainment reinforced this preconception. The emergence of Russian dissident intellectuals changed the vision of the West. Since the West was in opposition to czarism, it was glamorized and, in some cases – as Chaadaev's, for example, demonstrated – was transformed into a place of ideal institutions.

This pattern of the construction of the West continues to the present. Not just the Soviets, most of whom never ventured outside the Iron Curtain, often idealized the

West; even most post-Soviets who visited Europe or the USA, mostly as tourists, vacationers, or exchange students, and who usually returned to their native land, constructed a vision of the West that often had little resemblance to reality. The story has been, of course, much more complex for those who lived in the West, especially if faced with its often harsh realities. Here, the image of paradise might be quickly transformed into an image of hell as the experiences and writings of such diverse personalities as Father Vladimir S. Pecherin, or the writer and politician Eduard Limonov, who lived generations after Chaadaev, testify.

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6. In some cases, the animal elements of Oriental life and sexuality were preserved, but at the time they were mentioned just to underscore the absolute license Europeans enjoyed outside restrictive, moralizing, metropolises. Indeed, the colonies, and implicitly the Orient, were a place where a 'fellow can let his pants down and relax, enjoy the smell of his own shit.'
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15. I. Gorbатов (2006) *Catherine the Great and French Philosophers of the Enlightenment: Montesquieu, Voltaire, Rousseau, Diderot and Grim* (Bethesda: Academica).
16. Chaadaev did travel extensively in the West, but he was not a permanent resident of any European country and finally returned to Russia. From this perspective, he was quite different from Vladimir S. Pecherin and Alexander Herzen, his contemporaries.
17. P. Ia. Chaadaev (1991) *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i izbrannye pisma (Philosophical Letters & Apology of a Madman)*, 2 vols (Moscow: Nauka).

18. Quotes in the text below are translated from this edition. Chaadaev's works continued to be reprinted in post-Soviet Russia as well.
19. This vision of European history was popular in European Romanticism and was undoubtedly known to Chaadaev's correspondents. This idea continued in Russian conservative thought in the late nineteenth century, Konstantin Leont'ev for example.
20. The Russian-Mongol/Tatar 'symbiosis' would be developed by the Eurasianists, a group of 1920s' Russian émigrés. Neo-Eurasianism was popular in late Yeltsin-early Putin Russia.
21. This explanation was popular in Chaadaev's time. It was suggested, for example, that serfdom emerged in France because the Franks, Germanic conquerors and outsiders, imposed their will on the native population.

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