

**"THE DREAMS OF A POLITICAL IDEALIST or HOW WE SHOULD SET UP EUROPE
AND THE WORLD"**

Lecture on the occasion of the author's seventieth anniversary.

Read on the second of March, 2000, in the Architect's House, Moscow.

Published in the journal "New Times", 12. March, 2000.

Dear friends!

I have gathered you here not for the occasion of my seventieth birthday. I simply used this as an excuse to trick you into coming here, to talk about another date — the turn of the millennium. And about thoughts which occurred to me long before this date.

Seventy years — it is nothing more than a large number. And the millennium — this too, is nothing more than a large number. The change of the calendar will not bring with it 'a new earth and new sky'. This will not occur for one simple reason: we have still not carried out the tasks we set out to do in the past few centuries. And this means we still live in the previous era, and our world view continues to be that of the second millennium of the Christian Era. Or to be more specific: the second half of that millennium. In the European historical tradition this epoch is called the Modern period. And we, it seems, remain children of the Modern period.

The Modern period put a particular purpose, not only before Europe, but before mankind. I would formulate this purpose thus: to achieve new forms of social organisation which correspond with the moral values of freedom and justice.

Before I speak about whether this purpose has been achieved today, I will allow myself an observation: there is a considerable number of people who do not share in my prioritisation of these values. There is no need to look far for examples: I can refer to one old Russian writer, someone I respect, and the author of an essay, the title of which is parodied by me in this lecture not only, I swear, out of mischievousness. Solzhenitsyn, as is well known, thinks that Christian humanity generally swerved from the true path in the 16th Century, lured away by the false values of Western European humanism, and has since then wandered lost in the darkness.

I will not start arguing against this point of view for two reasons. Firstly, there is no point in arguing about axioms. Axioms are either assumed or rejected. I, by God, could not prove that in principle justice is better than lawlessness, or freedom better than slavery. Indeed everything depends not even on what we mean by slavery and freedom, but how we understand 'better' and 'worse'. Secondly, during the 20th Century, several major European peoples have already tried to undergo conservative revolutions, that is, revolutions aimed not at increasing societal freedoms, but to limit them. Humanity has already had a taste of several anti-liberal paths of development — and, ultimately, rejected them. This occurred not just because the undemocratic regimes turned out to be bad in and of themselves, but also because they could not compete with the political system known as liberal democracy.

Perhaps what I am saying may seem trivial, but let me remind you that in the 30s, this assertion did not appear nearly this obvious at all. To many it seemed then that time was up, and the liberal society had no prospects of surviving in the age of Stalin and Hitler. And there was after all very few people then, outside Germany and the USSR, who could imagine the degree to which freedom and humanism had been rejected in the countries where a conservative revolution had been victorious; few people in the world knew anything about Dachau or Kolyma!

However, the ideals of the Modern period proved their viability. They proved it twice: first by winning in open military conflict against German Nazism, and then by destroying Soviet Communism from within. Society, based on the principles of justice and freedom, proved to be more flexible, more creative, better suited for ordinary human life, than a society resulting from the complete or partial revision of these principles. It showed its resilience and readiness to challenges of the time, its capability for self-regulation, for improvement and development, its correspondence to nature of the human spirit. Since, out of all existing social and political systems, only it managed to strike a balance between stability and capability for renewal.

That is, in my opinion, the most important result of the past century. And I consider it a positive one.

Are there not, however, even more terrible trials awaiting liberal principles in the coming century? That is the question which worries me the most.

The socio-political construct gathered under the banner of 'human rights' has more or less successfully coped with problems which a hundred and fifty years ago would have seemed intractable under this framework: the gap between rich and poor, between education and ignorance, the 'labour' or 'social' question, the 'women's' question and so forth. Exactly the solution, or to be more precise, the resolvability of these problems aided by the political mechanisms of democracy allowed society to win its deadly struggle with totalitarianism. In essence, the extension of the concept of representative government to that of universal suffrage, and the appearance of strong and independent trade unions as an integral part of civil society; this is nothing more than a deepening of the initial principles upon which the concept of human rights is based. But now we stand before new problems, laying bare the contradictions, perhaps fundamental, that are contained in the very nature of this concept.

That is what I intend to speak about today.

There are more than a few of these contradictions. And only to serve as an example will I go into depth with one of them, although it is in truth the most important and tragic of our time. I am talking here about the contradictions that arise around the so-called 'right of a people to self-determination', about the threat that is posed by this right, and simultaneously, about the threat that is posed by attacks on this right. And about the ways in which I believe we can find a way out of the impasse.

There is no doubt that much of the blood being spilt in the world today, is spilt for this very right to self-determination: some people kill in order to carry it out, others, in order to prevent it from being carried out. All the more reason to understand where it came from and what it means.

I ask you in advance to forgive me for going on a smart historical digression. It is necessary.

Historically, the right to self-determination grew out of the so-called 'right of peoples'. This term originated in the 18th Century and was put in contrast to the 'divine right of kings'. Here is what the

discussion was about: you can only govern people with their consent, expressed explicitly. Concrete formulations varied, up to the radical affirmation of 'the right of the people to rise up against despotism and oppression'. (similar wording still exists in the constitutions of some US states)... The usual interpretation of the 'right of peoples' sounded more moderate though: citizens freely choose a form of government for themselves. In other words, the discussion dealt with the sovereignty of the people relation to the power of the state, the fundamental principle of democracy.

Already then, this right was set radically apart from other rights and freedoms proclaimed by the Age of Enlightenment. In fact, unlike other human rights, this right belongs in its essence not to each citizen individually but to the nation as a whole, and cannot be subsumed under individual rights. I cannot select a form of government for myself personally, independent of my fellow citizens, this choice must be a general national act.

It should not be necessary to remind you that by the word 'nation', the fathers of the liberal political philosophy understood precisely the totality of citizens and certainly did not invest this word with any ethno-geographical ideas. And yet it was tacitly assumed that the choice would occur within the original geographical boundaries. The American revolution does not refute this example, since the authors of the Declaration of Independence saw the separation of thirteen colonies from the British crown primarily as a consequence of these colonies having been deprived of their right to participate in their government: colonists were not represented in parliament. From their point of view, the right to choose a political system arose from the fact of separation rather than the other way around. Incidentally, analogical legal considerations later formed the basis for the process of decolonisation.

In the 20th Century, however, in the process of irredentist and separatist uprisings and wars — events which have led to the creation of Greece, Belgium, Italy, Germany, Romania, Serbia, Bulgaria, Latin American states — the 'right of peoples' have gradually degenerated into the 'principle of ethnic nationality', in accordance with which any people (no longer understood as a totality of citizens, but as an ethnic group) not only participate in the choice of government, but has a right to establish (or re-establish) their own national state.

It seems the Frankfurt Declaration of German national-liberals in 1848 contains the first such interpretation of the 'right of peoples'. But the massive implementation of the 'right of peoples to self-determination' in political practice, particularly as the right to solve the question of independent existence as a national state, began about 70 years later at the eve of the First World War. This process is usually associated with the names of Wilson and Lenin. Though it would probably be unfair to blame everything on these two politicians. The first of them did not enjoy great authority on the world stage, and the second was an outcast. And nonetheless, as if by realisation of their declarations, Ireland, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Finland appeared on the world map.

This is not at all to say that Poles or Irishmen did not have any serious reasons to fight for their independence. They had reasons, and they were more the serious enough. Today, anyway, only a madman would challenge Poland or Ireland's right to exist.

So are we really dealing here with the perversion of liberal and democratic principles? What if we suppose that, on the contrary, this is the logical conclusion of those principles?

Allow me to try and play 'devil's advocate' for a minute (since I am certain that the 'right of peoples to

self-determination' is an invention of the devil) and try justifying the second hypothesis.

Let us take the purest case: we are not talking about an oppressed people deprived of rights, but simply about part of the population of some kingdom-state who do not wish to live in this kingdom, but rather to be separated from it live in their own collective farm. And let us also forget about ethnicities for a minute. We will, in accordance with classical liberal philosophy consider a sovereign people to be a totality of citizens who proclaims themselves to be a sovereign people. Although, of course, in practice this proclamation is usually done on behalf of some ethnic, cultural, lingual or religious community densely populating the territory in question.

It begs the question: does this totality of citizens hold the right independently choose their form of government? The answer, alas, is obvious: within the framework of classical liberal theory — yes, it has. For the basic principle of this theory is that citizens can only be governed with their consent. And the group of citizens in question does not consent to being ruled from Moscow (or Ottawa, or Tbilisi). It wishes to be governed from Grozny (or Montreal, or Sukhumi)... And classical theory does not demand that this wish be supported by rational justifications. It only requires that the wish is properly expressed in a popular declaration of intent.

What objections could we come up with against such a declaration of intent?

Most frequently, it is held up against the principles of national sovereignty and territorial integrity of the state. What is the meaning of these principles? Once again, I would like to come at this from a highly theoretical level of discourse, and not be distracted by various mystical well-intended follies like the inviolability of the sacred borders of the Fatherland. Let us try to figure out how reasonable these principles are for you and me, for common people.

First of all I have to say that neither of these viewed separately have any reasonable meaning. National sovereignty in this case means that the minority does not have a right to secede from the majority against the will of the latter. But this means that the same right that is granted the given (or indeed any!) majority, is not extended to the given (or any!) minority. And that is the end of liberal democracy, for liberal democracy consists not so much in the rule of the majority, but, first and foremost, in the rights of minorities. As regards the principle of the territorial integrity of the state, this principle does not originate in democracy. It originates in feudalism, where political life was not based upon the relation of citizen to state, but the relation of authority to subject territory.

Taken together, these two principles do, however, represent something more meaningful than they do separately. They indicate the following: the territory of a country is the indivisible property of the citizens that inhabit it. And if you want to privatise your room in a communal flat, kindly get the consent of all your flatmates first.

This approach is at least not contradictory. The trouble is that it stack up poorly with the principles of freedom, rights and liberalism. For the highest level of territorial sovereignty that can be derived from these principles is the sovereignty of a private owner over a piece of land belonging to him.

In reality, the notion of the territorial sovereignty of the state is present in contemporary law. But here is the question: in what law? It exists in international law, that is, in the collection of archaic and contradictory conventions that one might find shameful to call a 'law'.

Therefore, if we consider it foolish and criminal to shed blood in service of 'self-determination', here at the threshold of the third millennium, shedding it for the 'preservation of territorial integrity' is even more so.

What then? Is the legal right really on the side of separatism, and is there nothing left to do for us consistent supporters of liberal democracy but to sigh and watch as all sorts of sovereign presidents, diplomats, generals and similar authorities multiply exponentially on our tiny planet?

Let me remind you that separatist movements, and usually violent ones, are by no means the prerogative of post-Communist countries. The Flemish in Belgium and French speakers in Canada remain some of the only examples of comparatively peaceful separatist movements in the world of today. And it seems the only peaceful secessions in the 20th Century were the separation of Norway from Sweden in 1907, and then, perhaps, the 'Velvet Divorce' between Slovakia and the Czech republic in 1992. Everything else: blood, blood and more blood.

And worse still. All of this would have been less than fatal, if only it led exclusively to the budding of new independent states. Well, if people want to feed their own parasites, why, let them. If the small but proud people of Kurzupia are prepared to maintain embassies on all the world's continents for their own money, it is up to them. That is not the problem. The problem is that no one can guarantee that the newly independent states are really prepared to provide the conditions for new independent lives for their peoples under the laws of freedom and justice. The tendency may even be the opposite: Very often, the first thing people do after having achieved independence and their own ethnically homogeneous state is to bring down the boot on their own minorities and everyone in general who does not share in the patriotic sentiment of the majority. And most frequently the political system of newly independent countries can only be called democratic by a very long stretch.

It is easy to understand why and how this occurs.

Let's face it: the slogan of independence is usually carried forth by the romantically inclined national intelligentsia and, as a rule, not by its most talented and creative representatives. (Have you read the poems of Zelimkhan Yandarbiev? No? Well, I have...). But he is being sponsored and propped up by the local elite, by provincial administrators, the usual boring careerists and wildcatters who want to become not just bosses, but the kind of bosses above which there are no other authorities. Except, at most, Allah.

What need do all these small time Napoleons have for democracy and justice? As much as a fish needs an umbrella. Of course they will do anything to promote dictatorship in their countries. And there is no better way to attain personal power than to unleash national-patriotic hysteria, there simply isn't. And you just try talking about the higher values of freedom and the inalienable rights of the individual to people caught up in the throngs of patriotic feelings. They will answer you like my Ukrainian colleagues answered me in 1992. Do you know what they told me? "The rights of sixty million people are worth sixty million times than the rights of a single person", — that is what they said! And by the way, this was at the inter-parliamentary conference on human rights of the CIS countries, and my interlocutors were members of the Ukrainian parliamentary committee on human rights. And, I might add, they were amicably supported by the Georgian and Armenian parliamentarians, as well as observers from the Baltic countries.

That is the logic. That is democracy.

In essence, it is Plato's old paradox of democracy: what are we to do if the people, the majority of the people, voluntarily and democratically choose unfreedom. Such a thing occurs in countries with developed democratic institutions — remember the Weimar republic — but is a hundredfold more frequent in countries where democracy is still developing.

Freedom is, well, an eternal choice between several options. Including the option to freely choose unfreedom.

What way out is there from this logical impasse?

In order to answer this question, we need to try and analyse the very nature of liberalism, to understand the fundamental philosophical basis of this political concept. That basis is, I wish to propose, the rights of the individual.

The concepts of public liberties, the mechanisms of democracy describe principles for the coexistence of large masses of people: ethnic groups, religious communities, social groups, political and cultural communities. What does the priority of individual rights mean, in face of the interests of all of these human collectives?

In reality it is very simple: this priority means that all differences and boundaries that humans have set between each other are secondary. The primary fact of society is that we all belong to a unity of a higher order, that of the human race as a whole.

From the opponents of liberalism one often hears that the principle of individual rights is a principle that divides people, that set people one against the other, that promotes egoism and individualism. Nothing could be further from the truth. The philosophy of human rights, this is a concept that unites people far more strongly than any other world view that has existed thus far.

Who should be for each other? Kinsmen, tribesmen, fellow believers, like-minded associates, comrades sharing a particular historical fate? Yes, all of those things, but above and beyond all else what we have to be for each other is people. Yes, we are all very different, but differences do not divide us — they unite us. There you have the whole philosophy of human rights, and not a penny more.

Strictly speaking, there is nothing new in this. Humanity has been taught this by the great religious teachers of the past, it has always been known to the great poets (I will not cite the well-known lines of John Donne's poem about the island, the mainland and the bell here)... It was only in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that this idea was first formulated as a social project, and not until the nineteenth and twentieth that it was tested out in practice.

There were, by the way, already in the nineteenth century some thinkers (for instance Vladimir Solov'yov) who carefully analysed this idea and came to the same conclusion: the concept of human rights is fundamentally flawed and fundamentally infeasible as long as it is confined to the framework of the nation state. It can only be completely and inconsistently applied within the framework of a united mankind.

What news, then, has the threshold of the millennium brought to the development of this idea?

In this regard I have two bits of news for you: a good one and a bad one.

The bad news are no longer news at all. It consists of the fact that here at the end of the twentieth century, for the first time in all of its history, humanity has been faced with issues of a planetary scale. The global environmental crisis. The global economic crisis (the gap between rich and poor countries). The global issue of nuclear, chemical and bacteriological weapons. The global crisis of culture and education. There is already talk of other crises, connected, for instance, with the biological nature of human beings under the conditions of modern civilisation.

In addition to this, the vast region which has recently been dubbed the 'third world' is still lagging far behind developed countries in the advancement of more just and efficient social institutions. And in the countries who have freed themselves from the so-called 'real socialism', democratic development has been slow, inconsistent, and faced with great difficulty. Accordingly, these countries are today in no position to play an adequate role in solving the global problems faced by humanity. Moreover, many threats are connected precisely with the current economic, political and social situation in the 'second' and 'third' worlds. The divide has not been overcome, only it no longer carries ideological overtones.

Is it possible to deal with this knot of global problems within the framework of traditional national and state separation? Obviously, it is not. The wind from Chernobyl' has blown away all illusions on this account.

This is not to say that humanity has no alternatives to unification. There is always an alternative. Humanity is and can remain politically divided. It is even possible to imagine (if a tad hard to believe), that governments will be able to come to some sort of agreement not to wage war among themselves through existing mechanisms of international treaty. But even this does not solve anything: already now, in front of our eyes, the nuclear bomb is ceasing to be the 'weapon of the rich', and the international community has de facto relinquished control of its propagation. Tomorrow it might well escape the control of governments completely, and fall into the hands of unpredictable political movements. But even if the worst can be avoided, how are we to avoid the environmental consequences of fragmentation? How can we, separately, hope to cope with the prospect of life on a gigantic landfill in fierce competition with the rats? Here, it seems, is Einstein's answer to the question: 'What weapon will be used in the Third World War?', he said. 'I cannot predict how the Third World War shall be fought, or with what; I can, however, predict that the Fourth World War shall be waged with sticks and stones.' Tomorrow's world, if it is anything like today's, will not even need a world war to end up with this outcome.

That is the bad news. Here you have the good news.

The world today has objectively become a single whole. It has been made such by the revolutions in technology, communication and information. The thinkers of previous centuries have preached that unity is what humanity is moving towards — and now it is coming about. It has been brought to unity without losing its national and cultural diversity, since this too is a guarantee of viability. But any national idea today remains a stillborn utopia, if it is not an organic part of the ideal of humanity as a whole.

Humanity, however, still has to be convinced of this. And, first and foremost, the small but most limited, conservative and self-confident part of humanity — modern professional politicians.

A normal, mentally healthy person, if he has not had his head turned by various leaders and ideologues,

would never care about the colour of the flag that is flown above his local village council, or who is depicted on the coat of arms nailed on the back of the District Court judge's seat, whether a two-headed eagle, a one-headed wolf, or even a headless horseman. It matters nothing to him. What does matter to him is whether thieving officials sit on the council, or reasonably honest ones, as long as they don't meddle in his personal affairs, and whether he can expect justice to be served at the local court. And it matters to him whether tomorrow, some higher-ups decide to send him off to die or kill other people in the name of right and justice.

Professional politicians are another matter. For them, the question of what monster is depicted on the state coat of arms is crucial, since for them it decides whether they will be considered the big chiefs or the not so much.

Essentially, separatist and imperial consciousness are identical. Both one and the other arise from the assumption that the main issue of social life is the matter of state sovereignty, that is, on the ability to manage the fates of people. And this can only be contrasted with one thing: the idea of the sovereign human being as part of the human race.

This means that the only way forward lies in fundamentally limiting the powers of the sovereign state in favour of the sovereign person. And this task can only be solved by the efforts of humanity as a whole, and not individual states.

In other words, we are talking about the old, repeatedly proposed and repeatedly mocked idea of a world government. Or more precisely, a quasi-government, for its power should be limited to a much limited number of questions than what contemporary national governments lay claim to.

And here begins the dreams of a political idealist.

Bear over with me, as I will stop apologising for the utopianism of my conceptions, and simply present to you in the most general terms how I imagine a world where political fragmentation has been overcome.

In this world, questions related to the monitoring of human rights, along with issues of survival and development, as well as questions of international security, are subject to supranational authorities. A world parliament puts forth new international law — not the chaos of intergovernmental agreements, declarations and conflicting principles of today, but a comparatively small but solid and internally coherent enumeration of fundamental principles and procedures, build on the same foundation as contemporary democratic national law — i.e., on three principles: public freedom, civic equality and the rule of law. This 'universal codex' would be legally binding and take priority over national legal systems.

A world court (or even an entire system of supranational judicial organs) would handle conflicts that involve the interests of humanity as a whole (and I repeat, this includes abuses against individual rights by state powers!) and it will deliver verdicts that government structures on every level, including national and supranational, are obliged to follow.

Finally, executive power (perhaps this would be something not unlike the current UN Security Council, only with much more extensive powers) would ensure, within this framework of renewed international law, the safety and development of humanity as a whole, as well as individual countries, and indeed,

first and foremost, the rights and freedoms of every human being. I am not afraid to say that this will involve what is probably the most psychologically difficult aspect of the transfer of sovereignty away from nation states to the 'world government'; putting the greater part of national military power at its disposal and recognising its right in certain cases to get intervene in so called internal affairs, even with the use of force. Obviously, this cannot be brought about without a general disarmament, to the extent that nation states will keep only comparatively small police forces, to the extent necessary for maintaining internal order.

Does this seem like science fiction? Well, I warned you that I would tell you the dreams of a political idealist.

Of course, you are in your right to ask me whether a birthday is really sufficient justification for muddling people's heads up with impossible dreams. Had it been someone else's dream, I would answer you with the words of Aleksei Konstatinovich Tostoy: 'I will not answer for someone else's dream'...

It seems to me, however, that the institutions that appear before me in my dreams, already exist in the waking world today. In embryonic state, that is.

I hope you're not thinking it is the UN that I have in mind. That would, perhaps, be a bit too utopian, even for me. It is not a forum of nations, only a forum of governments; not a body of law, but a body for the coordination of interests. This is why the UN can play a certain role, usually not too effective, in the regulation of intergovernmental conflict, but remains completely incapable of serving the interests of peoples. Even the procedures of this forum, where all swine are equal and five of them more equal than the others, have nothing in common with democracy. I'm afraid this organisation is incapable of reform, even in principle.

But primarily, I find the fundamental notion that a new world order can be created 'from above', by extending the prerogatives of global organisations, not only utopian, but extremely dangerous.

This realisation matured in me slowly during the first Chechen war, and was strengthened last year, after the events in the Balkans. The second Chechen war didn't bring anything new in this regard.

In fact, let us assume that Russia's purpose in Chechnya was exactly what was declared by the Yeltsin government in 1994: the restoration of human rights in the Chechen Republic. After all, the Dudaev regime did provide plenty of reasons for this interpretation. But then the situation in Chechnya in the three inter-war years provided ten times as many reasons — and if Putin's government had been smarter, if his propagandists didn't turn at the very mention of 'human rights', then, I assure you, this topic would blasted everywhere on full volume, and the imperial causes of the war hidden away in the darkest corner.

So, here's to you, Sergey Adamovich, and your 'excellent new peace', where the rights of man are restored by armed interference from outside, where the society, undoubtedly suffering from the breaching of their rights, are forced with fire and sword to behave civilised. See how your dreams as a political idealist come true: as a nightmare!

Well, OK, both wars in Chechnya, especially the later one, carry the hallmark of cynical and self-interested political calculation. But what about the NATO operation in Yugoslavia? Here calculation is not particularly evident, attacks were more or less precision strikes, and were not hearing much about

atrocities on behalf of the occupation army. But what's the result? Initially a genocide of Albanians by the Serbian army unheard of in size since WWII, and since the victory of NATO, a massive flight of the Serbian minority from the province. In spite of the best wishes of the entirety of Europe, everything points towards the creation of a new mono-ethnic state in Kosovo. That's unification of humanity on the basis of human rights for you.

Once again we run our heads against the fundamental contradiction inherent to the idea itself. People have the right to choose. In particular, they have the right to choose a way of life that they consider right. What then, if these people freely and with great passion choose a way of life which is criminal and unjust from the point of view of democratic ideals?

Once I believed that a democratic international community would be able to force those who were not prepared to meet these standards to behave in a civilised manner. I assumed that, purposely having been granted powers exceeding those of any national military, the international community would only have to threaten 'offenders' with exercising these powers. That's apparently not the case: A people might be prepared to defend their false idols so sincerely and with such fervour, to the very last drop of blood. Is it then permissible to eradicate a people for the purpose of overthrowing these false idols?

Chechen independence doesn't worry me, and even less does the restoration of Russian sovereignty in Chechnya. As Yavlinsky accurately stated, the Russian Federation ends where people who do not consider themselves Russian citizens are living. But hostage taking, slave trade, persecution of populations speaking another language, imposing 'Islamic standards of conduct' upon the entire population, public executions — these things worry me a great deal. What are we to do about this? Let pretend it wasn't the Russian army there, wiping Chechen towns and villages from the face of the earth, but NATO forces come to teach Chechens sense, and that they were behaving themselves not as the Russians are, but with all their European propriety and politeness. Would Basaev's folk just give up and go home? Like hell they would, they'd shoot at the English and French occupiers just like the are now shooting at the Russian occupiers. Another matter is that, perhaps, the peaceful civilians would not hate the NATO forces as much as they now hate the Russians. But they would still hide the partisans, I assure you. Just as now the Kosovars are already starting to fire upon their liberators when they intervene to protect the remainders of the Serbian population.

A guerilla war isn't so easy to suppress without killing civilians in the process. And it is never possible to completely eradicate terrorism in the name of national, religious, social, or heaven knows what other ideals — just look at the history of Israel or Northern Ireland. One can only attempt to eradicate the conflicts that produce terrorism.

In other words, this is the matter: any idea brought forth on the tip of a bayonet turns imperialist, even if it is the idea of freedom, equality and brotherhood. We might well be able to build a new world founded on human rights, protected by all the power of a united humanity; or as the Bolsheviks put it in the twenties, 'drive humanity to happiness with an iron fist'. But what will remain of human rights in a world whose government will have to pursue an endless struggle against countless terrorist groups of all sorts, who defend the right of this or that ethnic or religious community to practice cannibalism? And to simultaneously suppress numerous insurgent movements, risen up in various corners of the globe to preserve this or that cannibalistic tradition?

And what will come of this world government, what will this new world order degenerate into? I fear that it will very rapidly turn into a grandiose anti-utopian police state.

Our job is not to create a new empire on a global scale, but, in the words of deceased historian and publicist Mikhail Gelter, to create a 'peace of all worlds'. In Russian, that would mean creating a federation, all parts of which can live according to their own, vastly different, sets of laws, but within the limits of a unified law, covering the basic foundations of public life, that are shared among all people. So to speak, 'a rule of law for the peace of all worlds'. Under the banner of a crusade for the propagation of that most progressive liberal ideology of the world, we will, however, end up just creating yet another empire.

But, then you might ask, what's so bad about an empire? And in essence, it isn't so bad at all, and the Pax Romana was in its time far more progressive and even more peaceful for the lives of ordinary people than the ever-changing barbarian kaleidoscope that preceded it, with its war of all against all. The Roman Empire wasn't bad at all for its time, except for one thing: it was created with fire and sword, and maintained by iron-fisted violence against the peoples that it consisted of. And, consequentially, it collapsed. And all of the empires that have arisen since then have also collapsed, burying under its ruins political stability, civil peace, rule of law and the great dream of a united humanity.

Well then, is there no other way? A unification is impossible, in as much as it is based on the coercion and suppression by force of the resistance that it will inevitably meet. But without being united, it is all downhill for humanity from here on out.

I think there is another way after all. Moreover, this other way seems to me entirely constructive, and not the least bit utopian.

This other way is the fast, but not hasty, expansion of already existing regional international structures, and the simultaneous expansion of their powers. In Europe, for example, there are already a few of such structures. That is, the European Community, within which there exist both the rudiments of an executive power, and those of a representative power, the European Parliament. And the Council of Europe, which is both a weaker and a more general kind of association, serving as a sort of antechamber to the EC, and including the organs of a judicial power, the court of Strasbourg, and something not unlike an upper chamber of the pan-European representative — the Parliamentary Assembly. And there are the political and military structures of NATO, which has, to a considerable degree, taken over functions of the defence of its constituent countries. And finally, there is the OSCE, which takes the lead in wideness of scope.

The course of action presents it self as if Gogol's famous model: if we take the Strassbourg court of the PACE, and add that to the European Parliament of the Community, take some of the forwardness of NATO, and, if you please, add to this the corpulence of the OSCE — and our Agafya Tikhonovna, that is to say, Europe, wouldn't even have to give it a second thought. Excuse the irony. It is myself I am making fun of.

First of all, it is of course necessary to create supranational governing bodies on the basis of the existing structures. A unified parliament, whose members would, much as it is in the current European Parliament, be elected directly by the peoples of this new Union and not appointed to represent national

governments. A single executive authority, answering to the parliament and, as I said earlier, with extensive powers in a small number of questions. The unified armed forces in particular would be subordinate to this authority (and most likely be created on the foundation of NATO). Only police forces would remain under national authorities. Finally, and most importantly, a system of judicial bodies, whose resolutions would be binding to both national and supranational powers.

The powers of such a Union must be extended at the expense of certain elements of state sovereignty — elements such as defence, environmental safety, essential resources, immigration policy, and arbitration over the observance of human rights.

I think it would be prudent to make this a more open Union than the current EC, to give it about the same level of openness as the current Council of Europe.

And finally the last and in my opinion most important point: Entry into this Union must be purely voluntary, and depend on nothing else but the candidate country's fulfilment of a few preliminary conditions, most importantly a democratic form of government, a modern legal system, and the observance of some set standard of individual rights. That is, once again, more or less corresponding to the present standards of the Council of Europe.

Particularly the condition of voluntary membership would, God willing, turn this new Union not into an 'empire of good' (worse than an empire of evil; at least you know where they stand), but make it a federation of free peoples, the membership of which would be attractive enough for other countries to make the process of expansion continuous. Even the desire to join the European Council of today is forcing some countries to make concerted efforts to make their national legislation conform with the requirements of the European Convention on Human Rights. And if belonging to this Union confers upon its member states even a small part of the economic benefits the current EU provides for its member states, I can assure you there won't be a shortfall of candidates ready to be set right and become goody two-shoes. And sensible governments, even if they are not themselves particularly inclined to observe the rules of decency, will strive to bring themselves and their countries into fair and just order. Only our miserable Russia has decided somehow that it can turn up at the elite gentlemen's club unshaven and tipsy, and worse, stage bloody fights within its walls. Thus we will be subjected to the full European programme in the next few months: it appears we will find ourselves outside the doors of the Parliamentary Assembly with a bloody nose. And, I must admit, I am not particularly inclined to intercede on behalf of the amiable fatherland in this particular situation.

That, incidentally, brings up another interesting question; one that I honestly don't know the answer to. If this Union I am dreaming of is meant to become the prototype for a new united humanity, is it then possible to imagine a situation where some nation would be excluded from it? Since, obviously, you can't 'exclude a people from humanity', right?

But, if that is the case, it appears we must inevitably provide another fateful answer to another fateful question: that of the irreversibility of the loss of that part of state sovereignty which is ceded to supranational authorities. In other words, even if participation in this new world order must be entirely voluntary, voluntarily ceding from it is already inconceivable. Let us suppose that in some part of our federation forces arise, forces that want to leave and review all of the obligations they had taken on when entering. Should the Union consider this movement as a legal right of the people, populating this

particular subject of the federation? Or as an illegal mutiny against the supreme sovereignty of a united humanity; voluntarily 'leaving humanity' is hardly possible either, is it? And ought we not to consider such rebels as no different from the usual criminals, who simply don't want to abide by the conventional laws — and to deal with them similarly? That would seem logical. But does this answer not simply become the seed of new schisms and new bloody conflicts in the future? Remember that a hundred and forty years ago, a similar problem led to one of the bloodiest wars of the nineteenth century, the civil war between the Northern and Southern states of the USA.

I do not know the precise answers to these questions, and meanwhile there are other no less alarming questions occurring to me regarding my own utopia. For instance: how should our future society react, while it has not yet become global, to the most barbarous and bloody crimes against human rights in those countries that are not yet party to it? Quietly look on while Turks are bumping off Kurds, while tribes cut down one another in Rwanda and so forth? How can we reconcile that with our conscience? Some international structures, such as NATO in Kosovo or the UN in East Timor, have answered this unequivocally: 'no'. Of course, the moral value of this decision is being debased by the fact that other regions and other situations these same structures look on indifferently while no less barbarous and bloody crimes are taking place. But, let us suppose that our ideal federation, armed with a clear and unequivocal international law, will give the same answer to this question always and under any circumstances. Would this not become the beginning of another crusade to assert the foremost ideology of the world — that is, exactly the crusade and the danger which it poses to the very concept of human rights that I was talking of earlier?

I do not know the answers to these questions. I only know we have to seek the answers for them already now. We all have to search for them together, and not in the framework of traditional international diplomacy, that is a dead duck, but with the forces of an international community, concerned about this future which awaits all of us in the coming century.

On this alarming note I would like to rouse myself from my political slumber, and to wake up my listeners.

Thank you for listening.

Renowned sociologist V. Chesnokova on the anniversary lecture of S. A Kovalev

V. Gefter [Congratulations, Sergey Adamovich!](#)