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Transformation of the Russian “Leviathan” over the Centuries

Cover Page Footnote

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Transformation of the Russian “Leviathan” over the Centuries

Towards the end of 2014 the popular Russian director Andrei Zvyagintsev’s film *Leviathan* came to American screens. The following year the American Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences nominated it for an Oscar. The film was named after the treatise by the seventeenth-century English philosopher Thomas Hobbes,¹ which used the image of the Biblical monster Leviathan to describe the power of the state (“mortal God”), which suppresses human rights and his dignity.

The Russian “Leviathan” in the form of Muscovite kingdom began to form at the end of the fifteenth–beginning of the sixteenth century. It formed from a conglomerate of former independent principalities and fiefdoms that had been subordinated in the thirteenth century by the Mongol Tatars. The subsequent formation of a single Muscovite state occurred under the powerful pressure of the politically experienced Tatar’s Golden Horde, who borrowed from the material and political cultures of the Chinese, Mongols, Persians, as well as the Turks.²

Beyond Eastern cultural, political, and historical influences, the Muscovite kingdom evolved following an Eastern developmental pattern that predetermined by other factors. Geographically, the country was located on the Great Russian Plain and was open on all sides to foreign intrusions, which occurred especially often from the Eurasian steppe where over the centuries hordes of nomadic peoples replaced each other. Unceasing raids by the Tatar Mongols on the Rus’³ bore an especially destructive character since they were accompanied not only by looting and the destruction of villages, but also by massive murders of the urban and rural population, with the survivors driven it into slavery. If feudal strife in Western Europe was periodically interrupted by truces, the struggle of the Rus’ with the “Steppe” was almost constant. The outstanding Russian historian N. M. Karamzin, describing the Rus’ of the mid-

sixteenth century, exclaimed pathetically: “Russia, now really strong, still remained a victim of sudden attacks: we wanted the enemy to give us time to prepare a defense, drove him out, but our villages became empty, and the state lacked its main jewel: people!”⁴

As a result, Russian society was forced to spend vast resources—not on the development of the economy and social or spiritual sphere—but on maintenance of a centralized military apparatus for repelling the onslaughts of militant nomads. However, maintenance of permanent, large, armed forces was impossible without an increased tax burden on the population. This need helped form the Muscovite state tax system, created by the Tatars for squeezing out tribute. After the conquest of the Russian principalities, they made a list of the whole local population in 1257-1259 and imposed a tithe on it, which after deliverance from the Tatar yoke shifted into the hands of the Muscovite prince, creating a financial base for his power. In addition, the Horde’s former Yamskaya duty⁵ worked in his favor, and his treasury was enriched by money from redemption of Tatars’ captives and other duties.⁶ The Russian state, by the very logic of its development, became the most effective mechanism of compulsory removal from the bulk of the population their surplus goods (which were quite limited due to the sparse nature of the northern country),⁷ for reallocation for the most important needs, as defined by the authorities.

In the struggle for unification of Russian territories, the Muscovy grand duke tried to replace the right of land ownership of the semi feudal princes with his own right. From formal supreme owner of the land and possessor of the title “Grand Duke of Vladimir,” he turned into a real sovereign.⁸ The other Russian principalities became ordinary districts of the Muscovy Grand Duchy through capture, peaceful association, or purchase. After 1480, when the Muscovy prince Ivan III cast off the Tatar yoke, once voluntary feudal lords switched to a position of servants at his throne, and the boyar⁹ vassalage was transformed into a subordinate relation.¹⁰ The German

diplomat Sigismund Gerberstein, who visited Muscovy in 1517 and 1526, spoke of Grand Duke Vasiliï Ivanovich, son of Ivan III and father of Ivan IV Groznyi (the Terrible):

“The authority that he applies in relation to his subjects easily surpasses all the monarchs of the world. And he also finished what his father began, and precisely took away from all the princes and other lords all their cities and forts. . . . He oppressed all similarly with severe slavery, so that, if he ordered someone to be at his court, or to go to war, or to send someone on an embassy, that person was forced to carry out all this at his own expense. . . . He uses his power on the clergy the same way as on the laity, disposing freely and at his will the life and property of everyone; of all the councilors whom he has, not one uses this position to dare to differ with him or to reject him in an affair.”¹¹

Characterizing this time of transition of Russian society from a period of “*udel’naya Rus*” (when Russia was fragmented into many independent principalities) to Muscovy absolutism,¹² the well-known Russian historian N. P. Pavlov-Sil’vanskii wrote:

“Free *servants* of the grand duke of the feudal period are replaced in the Muscovy state by *slaves* of the sovereign. . . . The feudal order was gradually falling starting with Ivan III by deprecation of the feudal princes under the heavy hand of the Muscovy sovereign. Tsar Ivan Groznyi, having taken in 1565 into his “*oprichnina*” the remains of the hereditary feudal possessions of the princes,¹³ ultimately weakened them, having taken away support for their political claims.”¹⁴

While agreeing on the whole with such characteristics, it should nevertheless be emphasized that there was not “feudal order” in the Rus’ before Ivan IV Groznyi, nor after, but rather only elements of a feudal way of life existed, a kind of “quasi-feudalism.”¹⁵ Initially the Muscovy state was formed not as feudal one, but as a politarian. Politarianism (from the Greek word *πολιτεία*—the power of the majority, that is, in a broad sense, the state¹⁶) is a social system, the basis of which is the supreme property of the state on the fundamental means of production and primary bulk of the population.¹⁷ In Western and Russian scholarship, politarianism is often referred to as “Asiatic mode of production” (Karl Marx), “patrimonial state” (Richard Pipes), “etatism” (Vadim Radaev and Ovsei Shkaratan), “redistributive economy” (Ol’ga Bessonova),”

“state feudalism” (Leonid Milov), and so on.¹⁸ Outwardly it is reminiscent of feudalism: in both cases supreme private (that is, connected with exploitation) ownership of both the land and the laborers working on it exists. In both structures the workers (peasants) though dependent, still to a certain extent are owners of their land (or at least the labor inventory and other property) as well as their person. However, there are also differences. In feudal societies each individual feudal lord was in fact an independent supreme private possessor of a large land property,¹⁹ and to him went the surplus product from it. The last was the basis of his economy, and practically, also political independence, as a consequence of which there was a period of feudal fragmentation in Western Europe. With politarism, only one supreme owner exists, who collectively exploits the whole class of producers—the state (bureaucratic) apparatus. In other words, in one case private-personal property (feudalism) dominates, in the other—private-state (politarism). Since the earliest and most developed forms of politarism had become widespread in countries of the East, Karl Marx designated the local civilizations as “societies with an Asian method of production.”²⁰

Since the Muscovy Rus’ developed within the framework of an Eastern model of civilization, the establishment of a centralized state occurred in a fundamentally different way than in Western Europe. In the West, the decline of feudalism and the formation of royal absolutism were carried out on a base of flourishing of cities, the development of goods-monetary relations, and a union of emerging urban bourgeois with royal authority against the abuses of local lords, which ultimately led to the creation of a nationwide market and state.²¹ In the Muscovy Rus’ it was not market but military power that united the country in a single whole.²² The central princely (and then royal authority) in its struggle with the separatism and willfulness of the local princes and boyars was supported by the bureaucratic apparatus,

landowner nobles, and agrarian communities (societies). The peasants-commoners, incidentally, were well aware of the supreme ownership of their lands by the state in the person of the grand duke (tsar).²³ In the strong royal authority they saw defense from external enemies, looters, and internal oppressors—boyars, governors (representatives of the local administration), and *kulak-miroeds*.²⁴ However, supreme authority needed the community for reasons of convenience when it came to fiscal taxation and control over the local administration. From the symbiosis of the socioeconomic interests of the village-community and royal authority, emerged a society-state of the Eastern type, camouflaged in western Christian religion (more precisely its Byzantine version) and some external European borrowings. “Russian despotism, like all Eastern despotism, rested on the ignorance and conservatism of the Russian peasants, who lived in notorious (communist!) rural communities,” wrote the first Russian Marxist G. V. Plekhanov in 1894. He quite correctly pointed to the indisputable similarity of the socioeconomic development of Russia with Egypt, Persia, China, and other countries of the East.²⁵

The extinction of the Rurik dynasty at the end of the sixteenth century and the following Time of Troubles at the beginning of the seventeenth century, brought to power the new Romanov dynasty, which initially had to take into consideration the interests of the boyar-noble elite and the “Zemshchina”—local urban and rural communities. However, as the “autocratic-landed” state evolved, based on the apt expression of academician M. M. Bogoslovskii, it gave way in the mid-seventeenth century to an “autocratic-bureaucratic” one,²⁶ when the latter having gained strength again takes control of all the basic spheres of the life of society. On a base of Russian politarism a totalitarian regime is again enforced and a cult of personality of the tsar is formed, which was characteristic for Eastern despotism. Thus, the German diplomat Adam Olearius, who visited the Muscovy kingdom in the mid-1630s, reported about the Russians:

“Already at an early age they inspire their children to speak of his royal majesty as of God and revere him just as highly.”²⁷ Two hundred years later, a French traveler, the Marquis Astolf de Custine, wrote about the very same: “Among the Russians supreme power is honored like religion, the authority of which always rests with the great, independent of the personal merit of the clergy.”²⁸

At the same time, it is not possible to say that the Russian “Leviathan” did not change over the course of centuries. Changes, at times externally very significant, occurred under the influence of military threats, economic expansion of the West, and the subjective views of those individuals who led the state. Widely known are the reforms of the first Russian emperor Peter I at the beginning of the eighteenth century, when he tried (often by drastic means) to Europeanize the Russian elite and the life of Russian cities, when he introduced into the country industrial production and modern science.²⁹ However, in the end, all his numerous conversions were reduced to the creation of a modern army, necessary for access to the Black and Baltic seas, for which Peter began a war first with Turkey in the south and then Sweden in the north. “War indicated the order of reform, gave it tempo and methods. The transforming measures of Peter followed one after another in that order, in which there were needs imposed by war,” wrote the noted Russian historian V. O. Klyuchevskii. He continued: “War was the chief driving lever of the transforming activities of Peter, military reform was its initial moment, an arrangement of finance—its ultimate goal.”³⁰

Striving towards a strict centralization of authority and maximal state regulation in the period of the Northern War with Sweden (1700–1721), Peter I relied on his unlimited power, enmeshed society in a mass of all possible government regulations, prohibitions, and instructions (how to build a house, what kaftan to wear, where and how to obtain an education, and so on) to

achieve his goals. A professor at Kiev University, M. F. Vladimirskii-Budanov, stated about this: “The state in the eighteenth century is a *police* state in the strictest sense of the word: it takes on itself the cares of many, even the unimportant requirements of life of its subjects, especially in the sphere of the *economic* and daily way of life, and regulates them.”³¹

In spite of the externally very spectacular transformations, the reforms of the first emperor did not affect the essence of Russian society. This was noted by historians of the pre-Soviet period. Thus, N. P. Pavlov-Sil’vanskii emphasized:

“The highest intension of reforming power of the state in modern times in the era of Peter I did not change the primary foundations of social and state structure The class structure of the state came from the period of reformations without significant change, and serfdom, which lay at the base of this structure, only increased after Peter. . . . Peter’s reform did not reshape a new structure, but only gave it a new façade.”³²

This was not at all surprising because of the totality of natural, social, and political conditions in which the Russian economy was formed and developed over the extent of centuries. The Russian economy required a special mechanism for concentration, distribution, and use of the surplus goods being created in society, and such mechanism, which enforced accumulation and investment of accumulated means, appeared with Peter I’s state, which established new factories and executed control over the quality of the goods being produced, the organization of external trade, and so on.³³ For example, the true owner of private plants and factories in the Petrine period was not capitalist manufacturers, but the government Manufacturing College, which was clearly stated in its regulations.³⁴ Private individuals could begin their business only with its sanction, and they were obligated to present annually samples of their goods and pay 10 percent of their profits. In addition, metal, as a strategic material, had to be surrendered to the state at a fixed price and only if it was rejected by the treasury did the

manufacturer have the right to sell it freely. Careless and unlucky entrepreneurs could have their factories removed and transferred to full ownership of the state.³⁵ It is natural that a bourgeois system was not able to develop normally in conditions of political society—in Russia there were no guarantees of private-personal property or independent judiciary, and entrepreneurs experienced constant pressure by the state bureaucracy, total corruption ruled in a country, and so on (all this is quite characteristic also for modern Russia).

Therefore, in spite of an initial impetus given to the economy and society by the Petrine reforms, the Russian empire over the course of time yielded more and more to the most developed and dynamic capitalistic states, including even in the critically important military sphere, because of a gradually accumulating economic, technical, and technological lag. This was clearly demonstrated by the Crimean (Eastern) War of 1853–1856. It is under the influence of the defeat in this large-scale clash with the leading capitalistic powers of that time—England and France—that Emperor Alexander II began his Great Reforms, which were designed to bring Russia onto the track of capitalistic development, of course, with the assistance and under the control of the state. In 1861, by royal manifest, serfdom was finally repealed, but peasant communities did not receive land in their full ownership and for decades were obliged to pay so-called “redemption payments” to former landlords and the state.³⁶ The government, striving to create a modern military-industrial complex and infrastructure, willingly subsidized and encouraged accelerated construction of the railroad, and then industrialization of the country, actively attracting foreign capital.³⁷ As a result, at the beginning of the twentieth century in Russia, a quite specific variant of state monopolistic capitalism formed, for which a very high concentration and centralization of capital was characteristic, as well as the domination of monopolies connected with the treasury.³⁸ The consequence was a lack of initiative and passivity

of a significant part of the Russian bourgeoisie, its orientation toward “extorting” money from the state treasury, and receipt of various benefits from the government bureaucracy—an occurrence quite close to modern Russian reality.

The merging of domestic capital with the state increased during World War I, which began in August 1914, when government contracts and state regulation of the economy reached its apogee. In the agrarian sector, attempts, by means of the Stolypin Reforms after the revolution of 1905, to put the rural economy on the track of capitalism through dismantling the community and communal land ownership and the development of individual farming, on the whole, was not successful. Most of the peasants continued to work within the framework of traditional rural communities, with their regular equalizing redistribution of the land. At the same time, rapid demographic growth in the village naturally led to the dispossession of the peasantry and growth of social tension. It was increased by the struggle between the urban proletariat and the bourgeoisie, the social, ethnic, and religious discrimination that existed in Russia, and discontent of part of the ruling elite with the existing system.

The sharpest contradictions that formed in Russia at the beginning of the twentieth century were not settled by the revolution of 1905 nor by the February Revolution of 1917, though both events, each in their own way, contributed to the affirmation and development of capitalist relations and bourgeois democracy. The first led to the appearance of a Russian parliament—the Duma, and the second—to the fall of the Romanov dynasty and establishment of a republic. The final formation of a bourgeois society in Russia was hindered by the October Revolution of 1917, which is usually treated in the historiography as a “socialist revolution” carried out by the Bolsheviks led by V. I. Lenin. However, it could be argued that the events of October 1917 were not a socialist revolution but a *politarian* counterrevolution, which pushed

Russia from the course of bourgeois development to traditional politarism, but in new “socialist packaging.”³⁹ Indeed, the Bolsheviks, arriving in power in the fall of 1917, in just one year nationalized and “collectivized” all the primary means of production (including land), having placed them under the control of the state (the party-state apparatus), that is, in fact revived the economic base of politarism. Moreover, the basic plan was laid out by Lenin as early as the summer of 1917 in the work program “State and Revolution.” In it he wrote about the need for the existence of a state with the “dictatorship of the proletariat,” for the normal functioning of “socialism”:

“Accounting and control—that is the main thing needed for ‘smooth running,’ for correct functioning of the first phase of Communist society. All the citizens are here turned into hired employees of the state, which are armed workers. All citizens become employees and workers of one nationwide, state ‘syndicate.’ The fact is that they all work equally, do their proper share of work, and receive equally. . . . All society will be one office and one factory with equality of work and equality of pay.”⁴⁰

Of course, in his theoretical calculations the chief of the “proletariat revolution” forgot to mention that since the primary means of production will be in the hand of the state, and not the workers (who will be forced to go to it as hired workers), this will mean inevitable preservation of exploitation, which is incompatible with the very concept of “socialism.”

Attempts by the Bolsheviks after the October Revolution of 1917 to bring to life the Lenin plan in the form of politics of “military Communism” (in fact: politarism) led to the most severe economic crisis, with peasant uprisings and hunger in the Volga region in 1921–1922. After the uprising of armed seamen in Kronshtadt in March 1921, Lenin was forced to depart from his initial plans for the construction of “socialism” and form a New Economic Policy (NEP). Justifying this step, he wrote in October 1921:

“We calculated—or perhaps it is better to say: we assumed without sufficient calculation—to establish, by the direct dictates of a proletarian state, state production and state distribution of goods in the Communist way in a small-peasant country. Life revealed our error. Several transitional steps were required: state capitalism and socialism, in order to prepare—work for several long years to prepare—the transition to Communism.”⁴¹

Lenin through no accident designated the transition period as “state capitalism,” since the state continued to preserve the commanding heights in the economy and other spheres of life of Soviet society. Of course, Soviet authority during the period of the NEP permitted market trade-money relations, small and medium capitalistic entrepreneurship, admission of foreign capital into the country on a limited scale, but this was only temporary and a necessary measure for restoring the economy of the country ruined by the Civil War. When this problem was solved, the apex of the Bolshevik party made a bid for establishing a planned economy and took a course toward industrialization in order to create in first order a powerful military-industrial complex in the second half of the 1920s–1930s, which in its turn required concentration of all material, financial, and human resources in the hands of the state.⁴² Therefore, at the end of the 1920s the NEP was liquidated by the efforts of Comrade Stalin (“Lenin’s faithful disciple,”) by whom all the economic structures were liquidated except the state and the formally independent kolkhoz sector. On the base of the strengthening of politarism, the Soviet totalitarian regime and the cult of personality of the Soviet chief blossomed in full. At the same time, creation by the state due to unbridled exploitation (including slave labor of prisoners in the “Gulag archipelago”) of powerful Soviet industry permitted the USSR to win the most difficult war with Germany and its satellites, and then to create an atomic bomb, and become the first country to launch Sputnik and a man into space in the second half of the 1950s–beginning of the 1960s.⁴³

Nevertheless, with time the Soviet politarian system began to show signs of decline. After the death of the “father of all times and peoples” in 1953 and the rejection by the state of the most odious forms of exploitation and forced labor (in the system of Gulag and kolkhozes), the politarian system of the USSR gradually deteriorated, not able to provide a labor capacity and quality of basic forms of production higher than in Western countries (with the exception of the production of military and space branches, for which the state did not spare any means). Attempts by N. S. Khrushchëv and M. S. Gorbachëv to reform Soviet politarism at the beginning of the 1960s and second half of the 1980s ended unsuccessfully: in the first case everything ended with a return to the old ways, and in the second, the Gorbachëv Perestroika ended with complete collapse of the system of “developed socialism,” clearly not without external factors and the influence of an internal “fifth column.”⁴⁴

The independent Russia that emerged at the end of 1991 on the ruins of the USSR tried again, as at the beginning of the century, to construct capitalism and democracy. However, on this route it suffered a setback. An orgy of “wild” capitalism began in the country, analogous to the western variant in the period of “initial accumulation of capital,” though with a notable politarian Soviet legacy. As a result of the reformation of the economy in accordance with the prescripts of the first Russian president’s (B. N. Yeltsin’s) economic councilors—E. T. Gaidar, A. B. Chubais, and other homegrown liberals and their western “friends,” led by the International Monetary Fund—privatized state property has fallen primarily in the hands of the former representatives of the party-state apparatus, criminal organizations, and foreign companies. The last were not at all interested in preserving the powerful industrial potential that Russia attained as the legacy from the USSR, and the first strove to enrich themselves at any cost and in the briefest period, as a result of which colossal damage was done to the economy of the country,

and the primary bulk of the people were set at the brink of poverty. The drop in production in the 1990s in Russia exceeded analogous figures for WWII. A wave of deindustrialization passed over the country, with a drop exceeding 70 percent in key branches of industry.⁴⁵ From a rather well-developed industrial power, in just a decade Russia in fact turned into a raw-resources semi-colony of Western countries and China, where representatives of the comprador bourgeoisie in the sphere of energy (oil and gas) and primary industries (aluminum, titanium, platinum, coal, timber, and so on) have become the key economic players under the auspices or with direct participation of the state bureaucracy. Since primary means of production have concentrated in the oligarchy or continued to remain with the state, this meant the lack in the country of a large middle class (the layer of small and medium owners)—the support of any democratic regime. Therefore, it is not surprising that it was not able to take root in post-Soviet Russia: here it simply lacked the adequate socioeconomic base. A natural event in this regard was tanks shooting at the Russian parliament—the Duma—in October 1993 by order of President B. N. Yeltsin, who actually carried out an anti-state coup.⁴⁶ Soon adopted, the new Russian Constitution secured for the president of the country almost unlimited authority, though formally it emphasized its democratic principles. The way out of this ideological conflict was declaration by Kremlin political strategists of the concept of “managed democracy” in Russia—in essence a fig leaf for an actual existing authoritarian regime.

The regime that was formed in Russia in the mid-1990s is hard to call anything other than a “criminal oligarchy and monopolistic bureaucracy.” Its evolution followed the way of imminent degradation, which ended in default in 1998 and the complete discrediting of the supreme authority in the person of President E. B. Yeltsin. V. V. Putin, who replaced him at this post in 2000, followed the proven route of strengthening the role of the state and bureaucracy in

the economy, in fact having created a hybrid politarian-capitalistic system.⁴⁷ Contributing to this in no small degree was the 2007 creation of monopolistic state corporations and an increase in state control and regulation. If in 2000, 80 percent of the gross domestic product of Russia was produced by 1,200 companies, in 2007 it was a total of only 500 companies.⁴⁸ These processes were only increased under the influence of the global economic crisis of 2008, when the state began to save primarily big business and banks by means of generous financial injections, throwing small and medium enterprises at the mercy of fate. An additional painful ordeal for them was an increase in the tax burden in the first half of the 2010s and impossibly high lending rates, which reached more than 20 percent after the ruble's drop in rate of exchange during the second half of 2014–beginning of 2015.

While medium and small business with great difficulty barely made ends meet, large monopolies (private, state, and mixed) flourish in the country in spite of all the formal declarations of the authorities about the struggle with monopolies and with cartel collusions of the leading companies and trade nets. Where monopolies and their merging with the state organizations can lead, especially under conditions of economic crisis, is well known from Russian and global history (think Germany of 1933). Moreover, the crisis processes in the Russian economy, generated by different factors including prohibitive monopolization, intensified even more in 2014 after the annexation of the Crimea to Russia and the introduction of economic and political sanctions by Western countries and Japan. This only increased the gravitation of the Russian economy and society toward politics of autarchy, strengthened the army and military-industrial complex in an atmosphere of promotion of the idea of a “besieged fort” before the person of the hostile position of the West and glorification of the patriotic service to the state.

These factors, multiplied by age-old historical traditions and the logic of development of the Russian economy over the last twenty years have been objectively pushing Russia toward complete restoration of politarism. It can most probably occur in the form of a model reminiscent of the “corporate state” of Italian dictator Benito Mussolini, but without support on narrow nationalism (it is less probable under conditions of multinational Russia). The reality of such a scenario is attested by state monopolization or monopolization by organizations of mass media controlled by it, strengthening of state propaganda and censorship, repression of political opponents, formation of the cult of personality for V. V. Putin,⁴⁹ and the like.⁵⁰ The nearest future will show whether this scenario is fully or partially realized.

In sum, the following pattern of Russian history can be shown: In the face of severe nature, natural and social disasters, external pressure, military and economic failures, blunders by the head of state, the Russian society, being a complex self-organizing system, each time chooses a politarian system as the only form of life suitable for survival in extreme conditions. The Russian elite also prefers politarism as the simplest and most effective way to manage and draw surplus goods from the people. Therefore, in spite of every external or internal crisis, the politarian system of Russia sooner or later is created anew and the state again takes all spheres of the life of society in its hands, imposing and dictating its will. It is this process occurring now, marking the emergence of the Russian “Leviathan” in its next incarnation.

ENDNOTES

¹ T. Hobbes, *Leviafan, ili Materiya, forma i vlast' gosudarstva tserkovnogo i grazhdanskogo* [published in English as *Leviathan, or the Matter, Forme, and Power of a Commonwealth, Ecclesiasticall and Civil*] (Moscow, 2001).

² S. A. Nefëdov, “Mongol’skie zavoevaniya i formirovanie rossiiskoi tsivilizatsii” [The Mongol Conquest and the Formation of Russian Civilization], no. 2, *Voprosy istorii* [Questions of History] (2006), 113–23.

³ Rus' – it is ancient name for Russia before the foundation of Muscovite kingdom in 15th century.

⁴ «Rossiya, uzhe deistitel'no sil'naya, jstavalas' esche zhertvoyu vnezapnykh napadenii: my khoteli, chtoby nepriyatel' daval nam vremya izgotovitstya k oborone, vygonyali ego, no sela nashi pusteli, i gosudarstvo lishalos' glavnoi svoei dragotsennosti: lyudei!» N. M. Karamzin, *Izbrannoe* [Selected Works] (Moscow, 1990), 248.

⁵ Yamskaya duty is the obligation of the local population to supply carts (in summer) and sleighs (in winter), as well as horses of all state servants and loads.

⁶ A. S. Lappo-Danilevskii, *Organizatsiya pryamogo oblozheniya v Moskovskom gosudarstve so vremen Smuty do Epokhi preobrazovaniia* [Organization of Direct Taxation in the Muscovite State from the Time of Troubles to the Period of Reformation] (St. Petersburg, 1890), 14–16; E. N. Starikov, *Obshchestvo-kazarma ot faraonov do nashikh dnei* [Society Barracks from the Pharaohs to Our Days] (Novosibirsk, 1996), 282–3; V. N. Zakharov, Yu. A. Petrov, and M. K. Shatsillo. *Istoriya nalogov v Rossii. IX–nachalo XX v.* [The History of Taxes in Russia. 9th–Beginning 20th Century] (Moscow, 2006), 20–34; and other works.

⁷ Surplus goods, according to Marxist theory, is the result of social production created by direct producers above the required goods designed to ensure the physical survival of the workers and members of their families. Surplus goods (in distinction from excess) is always withdrawn through exploitation in some form.

⁸ N. N. Pokrovskii, *Aktovye istochniki po istorii chernososhnogo zemlevladieniia v Rossii XIV–nachala XVI v.* [Documentary Sources on the History of Land Tenure in Russia in the 14th–Beginning of the 16th Century] (Novosibirsk, 1973), 95–6.

⁹ Boyars were large landowners, reminiscent of English barons beginning of the Middle Ages.

¹⁰ L. V. Cherepnin, *Obrazovanie russkogo tsentralizovannogo gosudarstva v XIV–XV vekakh. Ocherki sotsial'no-ekonomicheskoi i politicheskoi istorii Rusi* [The Formation of a Russian Centralized State in the 14th–15th Centuries. Essays on the Socioeconomic and Political History of the Rus'] (Moscow, 1960), 809–17, 895–6.

¹¹ S. Gerbershtein, “Zapiski o moskovitskikh delakh” [Notes on Muscovite Affairs], *Rossiya XV–XVII vv. glazami inostrantsev* [Russia of the 15th–17th Centuries in the Eyes of Foreigners] (Leningrad, 1986), 51–3.

¹² “Udel'naya Rus'” was a period of independent principalities with some elements of feudalism.

¹³ “Oprichnina” was a system developed by Tsar Ivan IV (the Terrible) for the Russian state in which he placed property under his domain (this process was attended with terror and confiscation of boyar possessions). Ivan IV followed the politics of Turkish Sultan Selim I. On the whole, in Turkey and other oriental countries of that time, all land of the state was divided into two parts—*hasse* and *divani*. Therefore, Ivan IV divided the Rus' into two parts: *oprichnina* and *zemshchina*, using the oriental model in his politics (for details see: S. A. Nefedov, *Istoriya Rossii. Faktorny analiz. T. 1. S drevneishikh vremen do Velikoi Smuty* [The History of Russia. Factor Analysis. Vol. 1. From Earliest Times to the Time of Great Troubles] [Moscow, 2010], 257–64).

¹⁴ N. P. Pavlov-Sil'vanskii, *Feodalizm v Rossii* [Feudalism in Russia] (Moscow, 1988), 121, 125.

¹⁵ A. V. Grin'ev, “K voprosu o sushchestvovanii feodalizma v istorii Rossii” [On the Question of the Existence of Feudalism in the History of Russia]. *1150 let rossiiskoi gosudarstvennosti: problemy, diskussii, novye vzglyady: Materialy mezhdunarodnoi nauchnoi konferentsii* [Eleven Hundred and Fifty Years of Russian Statehood: Problems, Discussions, and New Views:

Materials for the International Science Conference], edited by V. M. Dobroshtan, O. A. Fedotova, and A. S. Minin (St. Petersburg, 2012), 55–7.

¹⁶ The term “politarianism” was introduced by Soviet/Russian scientist Yurii Semënov for the designation of societies where the state had absolute power.

¹⁷ Yu. I. Semënov, “Ob odnom iz tipov traditsionnykh sotsial’nykh struktur Afriki i Azii: pragosudarstvo i agrarnye otnosheniya” [On One of the Types of Traditional Social Structures of Africa and Asia: Pre-Statehood and Agrarian Relations], *Gosudarstvo i agrarnaya evolyutsiya v razvivayushchikhsya stranakh Azii i Afriki* [Statehood and Agrarian Evolution in the Developing Countries of Asia and Africa] (Moscow, 1980), 102–30.

¹⁸ K. Marx, “Voennyi vopros.—Parlamentskie dela.—Indiya” [A Military Question.—Parliamentary Affairs.—India], vol. 9, *Marks K., Engel’s F Soch. 2-e izd.* [K. Marx and F. Engels, Collected Works, 2nd ed.], 222; K. Marx, “K kritike politicheskoi ekonomii. Predislovie” [On a Critique of Political Economy. Preface], vol. 13, *Marks K., Engel’s F Soch. 2-e izd.* [K. Marx and F. Engels, Collected Works, 2nd ed.], 7; R. Pipes, “Rossiya pri starom rezhime [Russia under the Old Regime] (Moscow, 1993), 36–41; V. V. Radaev and O. I. Sharatan, “Vlast’ i sobstvennost’” [Power and Property], no. 1, *Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniya* [Sociological Research] (1991), 54; O. E. Bessonova, “Razdatochnaya ekonomika kak rossiiskaya traditsiya” [A Distributive Economy as a Russian Tradition], no. 3, *Obshchestvennye nauki i sovremennost’* [Social Sciences and Modernity] (1994), 37–47; L. V. Milov, *Velikorusskii pakhar’ i osobennosti rossiiskogo istoricheskogo protsessa* [The Great Russian Plowman and Features of the Russian Historical Process] (Moscow, 2001), 434–5, 437, 479, 554–8.

¹⁹ See M. A. Barg, “O prirode feodal’noi sobstvennosti” [On the Nature of Feudal Property], no. 7, *Voprosy istorii* [Questions of History] (1978), 84–104.

²⁰ K. Marx, “Kapital. Kritika politicheskoi ekonomii. Tom III” [Capital. A Critique of Political Economy. Vol. 3], *Marks K., Engel’s F. Soch.* [K. Marx and F. Engels. Works], 2nd edition, vol. 25, pt. II, pp. 353–4; and other works.

²¹ L. S. Vasil’ev, “Chelovek i vlast’ v istorii (Avtoritarizm ili svoboda?)” [Man and Power in History (Authoritarianism or Freedom?)], no. 1, *Obshchestvennye nauki i sovremennost’* [Social Sciences and Modernity] (2009), 33.

²² See for example Cherepnin, *Obrazovanie russkogo tsentralizovannogo gosudarstva*, 308–26, 341–51, 662–70.

²³ M. M. Bogoslovskii, *Zemskoe samoupravlenie na Russkom Severe v XVII v.* [Territorial Self-Governance in the Russian North in the 17th Century] (Moscow, 1909), pt. 1, pp. 52–3, 56, 58–61.

²⁴ A “kulak” (literally “fist”) was a rich peasant who kept his neighbors (other peasants of his community) in his debt (“in the fist”). He was often the money-lender and was also called by the other peasants “miroed,” i.e., “eater of the mir (peasant society).”

²⁵ G. V. Plekhanov, “Istoriya russkoi obshchestvennoi mysli v XIV veke. (Materialy). Kniga vtoraya. Ot 60-kh do 90-kh godov” [The History of Russian Social Thought in the 19th Century. (Materials). Book Two. From the 1860s to the 1890s], *Sobr. soch.* [Collected Works], vol. XXIV (Moscow; Leningrad, 1927), 26, 168.

²⁶ M. M. Bogoslovskii, *Zemskoe samoupravlenie na Russkom Severe v XVII v.* [Territorial Self-Governance in the Russian North in the 17th Century] (Moscow, 1912), 261.

- ²⁷ Adam Olearius, “Opisanie puteshestviya v Moskoviyu” [Discription on a voyage in Muscovia], *Rossiya XV–XVII vv. glazami inostrantsev* [Russia of the 15th–17th Centuries in the Eyes of Foreigners] (Leningrad, 1986), 355.
- ²⁸ Astolf de Custine, “Rossiya v 1839 g.” [Russia in 1839], *Rossiya pervoi poloviny XIX v. glazami inostrantsev* [Russia in the First Half of the 19th Century in the Eyes of Foreigners] (Leningrad, 1991), 466.
- ²⁹ Science in Russia before Peter the Great was not developed at all because of the opposition of the Orthodox Church, and the state itself, which prevented the emergence of educated and critically thinking people. Only the need for specialists who could understand and create new technology (primarily military and naval) made the Russian state develop a system of science and education in the early 18th century.
- ³⁰ V. O. Klyuchevskii, *Kratkoe posobie po russkoi istorii* [A Short Textbook on Russian History] (Moscow, 1992), 122–23.
- ³¹ M. F. Vladimirkii-Budanov, *Obzor istorii russkogo prava* [A Survey of the History of Russian Law] (St. Petersburg; Kiev, 1888), 241.
- ³² Pavlov-Sil’vanskii, *Feodalizm v Rossii*, 144–45, 147; see also I. V. Volkova, “Voennoe stroitel’stvo Petra I i peremeny v sisteme sotsial’nykh otnoshenii v Rossii” [The Military Structure of Peter I and Changes in the System of Social Relations in Russia], no. 3, *Voprosy istorii* [Questions of History] (2006), 35–51.
- ³³ V. T. Ryazanov, *Ekonomicheskoe razvitie Rossii XIX–XX vv.* [Economic Development of Russia in the 19th–20th Centuries] (St. Petersburg, 1998), 346–7.
- ³⁴ *Polnoe sobranie zakonov Rossiiskoi imperii* [Complete Collection of Laws of the Russian Empire] (hereafter PSZRI), vol. VII, p. 168.
- ³⁵ PSZRI, vol. VII, pp. 167–74; A. S. Lappo-Danilevskii, *Russkie promyshlennye i torgovye kompanii v pervoi polovine XVIII stoletiya* [Russian Business and Trade Companies in the First Half of the 18th Century] (St. Petersburg, 1899), 24–6, 43–5; O. E. Bessonova, *Instituty razdatochnoi ekonomiki Rossii: retrospektivnyi analiz* [Institutes of a Distributing Economy of Russia: Retrospective Analysis] (Novosibirsk, 1997), 15; R. Pipes, *Sobstvennost’ i svoboda* [Property and Freedom] (Moscow, 2000), 247.
- ³⁶ A. V. Grinëv and M. P. Iroshnikov, “Rossiya i politarizm” [Russia and Politarism], no. 7, *Voprosy istorii* [Questions of History] (1998), 40–1.
- ³⁷ *Sud’by Rossii. Doklady i zapiski gosudarstvennykh deyatelei imperatoram o problemakh ekonomicheskogo razvitiya strany (vtoraya polovina XIX v.)* [The Fortunes of Russia. Reports and Memos of Statesmen to the Emperors about Problems of Economic Development of the Country (Second Half of the 19th Century)] (St. Petersburg, 1999), 34–5, 154, 162–3, 179–83 ff; P. G. Ryndzyunskii, *Utverzhdenie kapitalizma v Rossii. 1850–1880 gg.* [Establishment of Capitalism in Russia. 1850–1880] (Moscow, 1973); Ryazanov, *Ekonomicheskoe razvitie*, 34–42; and other works.
- ³⁸ G. R. Aumova, *Rossiiskie monopolii (istochnikovedcheskie problemy)* [Russian Monopolies (Problems of Source)] (Moscow, 1984), 15, 22, 31 ff.
- ³⁹ See “Byl li v Rossii sotsializm? K voprosu o mifakh v otechestvennoi istoriografii” [Was There Socialism in Russia? On the Question of Myths in Russian Historiography], no. 4, *Klio* (2004), 24–32.
- ⁴⁰ V. I. Lenin, “Gosudarstvo i revolyutsiya” [State and Revolution]. *PSS* [Polnoe sobranie sochinennii] {Complete Collected Works} 5th edition. vol. 33 (Moscow, 1970), 101.

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- ⁴¹ V. I. Lenin, “K chetyrekhletnei godovshchine Oktyabr’skoi revolyutsii” [On the Fourth Anniversary of the October Revolution], *PSS*, 5th edition, vol. 44 (Moscow, 1970), 151.
- ⁴² Zh. A. Medvedev, “Ne gonka vooruzhenii pogubila SSSR” [Not the arms race destroyed the USSR], no. 1, *Mezhdunarodnaya zhizn’* [International Life] (1998), 105–6.
- ⁴³ V. T. Ryazanov, *Op. cit.*, 384; A. V. Grinëv “October 17-go: vooruzhennoe vosstanie mass, bol’shevistskii perevorot, sotsialisticheskaya revolyutsiya ili nechto drugoe?” [October 1917: Armed Mass Rebellion, Bolshevik Plot, Socialist Revolution, or Anything Other?], no. 10, *Vestnik Rossiiskoi Akademii nauk* [Herald of the Russian Academy of Sciences] (2017), 895–896.
- ⁴⁴ For more detail see A. V. Ostrovskii, *Glupost’ ili izmena? Rassledovanie gibeli SSSR* [Stupidity or Treason? Investigation of the Death of the USSR] (Moscow, 2011).
- ⁴⁵ O. I. Shkaratan, “Stanovlenie postsovetskogo neoetokratizma” [The Formation of Post-Soviet Neotacratism], no. 1, *Obshchestvennye nauki i sovremennost’* [Social Sciences and Modernity] (2009), 16.
- ⁴⁶ See A. V. Ostrovskii, *1993. Rasstrel “Belogo doma”* [1993. Shooting the “White House”] (Moscow, 2008).
- ⁴⁷ Yu. I. Semënov, *Politarnyi (“aziatskii”) sposob proizvodstva: Sushchnost’ i mesto v istorii chelovechestva i Rossii. Filosofsko-istoricheskie ocherki* [The Politarian (“Asian”) Method of Production: Essence and Place in the History of Humanity and Russia. Philosophical-Historical Sketches] (Moscow, 2008), 390–1.
- ⁴⁸ Shkaratan, “Stanovlenie postsovetskogo neoetokratizma,” 12.
- ⁴⁹ For example, in May 2015 a bronze bust of the Russian president in the form of a Roman emperor was set up in the Leningrad region. See URL: <http://glavred.info/mir/kazaki-v-rossii-ustanovili-byust-putina-v-obraze-imperatora-opublikovany-foto-318338.html> (date accessed: 18 May 2015).
- ⁵⁰ For more detail see N. V. Petrov, “Rossiya v 2014-m godu: skatyvanie v voronku [Russia in 2014: Slipping down the Funnel], No. 3–4, *Pro et Contra* (2014), 57–72.