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SUMMARY.

Two Superpandemics for One Humanity Is Too Many!

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Digital tools have become a lifeline for millions of people during the coronavirus pandemic. The Internet, which facilitates communication between people, is becoming increasingly open, but at the same time, it poses an enormous risk. As enterprises, businesses and government agencies transition to operating remotely, they are exposing their internal data. And the deeper humanity “dives” into the cyber sphere, the more we see virtual crime growing.

An even more dangerous trend could emerge: increased terrorist activity in the information space. One strategic challenge that has grown in the current environment is the risk of interstate confrontation in the digital sphere, which cannot be contained on a local scale due to the cross-border nature of information and communication technologies (ICT), and the intertwining of national processes and lifestyles.

All states, regardless of their political orientation and level of socioeconomic development, are vulnerable to acute global problems. COVID19 demonstrated the interdependence of the new challenges we face and confirmed the urgent need for interstate cooperation in the field of international information security (IIS).

For our part, we consistently advocate establishing such cooperation in a professional and constructive manner.

The lack of evidence and the political motivation of fake news is obvious. The sad thing is that it is not only our American partners who are taking these provocative actions.

Disinformation campaigns, especially in the field of health care, are being used to manipulate public opinion.

The COVID-19 pandemic has particularly highlighted the risks and consequences of malicious activity that exploits vulnerabilities at a time when societies are under great strain. Russia shares the opinion of a number of countries on the need to protect ICT infrastructure in the health care sector. We propose that states commit to refraining from attacks not only on medical facilities, but also on the critical information infrastructure of institutions providing vital public services in general – particularly in the fields of education, energy and transportation, as well as in the banking and financial spheres. We will work in this area at UN negotiating platforms on IIS: OEWG and GGE.

We need facts, not the “high likelihood” that the German media so actively tout. In their absence, we resolutely reject the unfounded and highly politicized accusations of the involvement of Russian state agencies in the 2015 hacker attack on the German Bundestag.

The digital age is our new reality; it does not exist in a vacuum. Human progress cannot be imagined without cyber technologies, the free exchange of data in the virtual space. Unfortunately, the number of challenges related to the illegal use of ICTs is growing every day. The situation in the world is sharply deteriorating.

The greatest danger is that online incidents could lead to full-scale offline conflicts. Russia is calling for more effective international counterterrorism cooperation, especially in the digital age. The use of ICT by terrorists is a clear challenge to international peace and security stemming from the illegal use of these technologies. This is not just a criminal problem, it is also a political one. Such actions could violate the sovereignty of states and interfere in their domestic affairs.

International Organizations and the Fight Against Novel Pandemics.

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THE GLOBAL SPREAD of the novel coronavirus infection has irreversibly transformed world politics. Major international organizations cannot ignore these tectonic changes. The question is: How do we respond to them? Under what flag and with what slogans should we wage war against an unseen enemy?

Answers to the aforementioned questions differ, to say the least. On one end of the spectrum are appeals to the UN Security Council to recognize the coronavirus as a threat to international peace and security, with all possible consequences under the UN Charter. On the other end is a call to leave the fight against the infection to national governments and not worry about it in international formats.

The common threat pushed apart rather than drew together the common European home with its supposedly sacred principles of solidarity. There is a widespread belief that supranational formats are good only in years of prosperity and abundance, when there are excess resources and time, when the vacuum in the international cooperation agenda needs to be filled.

“A public health emergency of international concern (PHEIC) is an extraordinary event which is determined to constitute a public health risk to other states through the international spread of disease and to potentially require a coordinated international response.”

Under the IHR, states are required to notify the WHO of events that, according to certain criteria, may constitute an emergency. Note that when accusing the Chinese authorities of allegedly covering up information at the initial stage of the spread of the novel coronavirus, White House lawyers demand that China be held accountable for not meeting this particular obligation.

the WHO has no leeway in situations where a government either intentionally or unintentionally misjudges the scale and/or significance of an emergency. Granted, in such cases, subject to a certain procedure described in Article 49 of the IHR, the WHO does have the right to declare an emergency without reaching an agreement with the state in which the events are taking place. Nevertheless, even after the declaration of an emergency, the WHO is not authorized to act in those territories independently and unilaterally.

It seems that the spirit and letter of the UN Charter do not allow situations and phenomena that occur from outside the social system to be deemed a threat to peace, a breach of the peace, and especially an act of aggression. Only acts related to human will (of course, tort) can be deemed as such within the meaning of Article 39 of the Charter. In general, law is a direct effective regulator only for social relations and systems. It is obvious that legal norms, including the norms of international law, cannot directly influence, for example, natural phenomena – even if these, in turn, affect individuals and the human population.

Are there currently grounds to declare the coronavirus pandemic a threat to international peace and security? What would be a suitable criterion for making such an official qualification? It can be argued unequivocally that the criterion cannot be the number of real or potential victims. Indeed, according to that logic, traffic accidents, which take more people's lives every year than all armed conflicts around the globe combined, would have to be deemed a threat to peace. Compliance with traffic rules can significantly reduce the number of traffic accidents. In the same way, compliance with sanitary requirements is a passive but nonetheless the most effective way to prevent rampant infection.

Perhaps the deadlock on passing a coronavirus resolution is the very cause to reconsider certain approaches to filling the Security Council agenda – for example, to analyze the extent to which the UN should continue down the path paved by the U.S. Democratic administration in the early 2000s, when it saddled the Security Council with issues only indirectly relating to its purview.

The coronavirus pandemic has become a historic challenge for the entire system of international relations. The WHO, the UN Security Council and other international institutions are facing waves of criticism. There is certainly an excess of unrelated things in this criticism. But there are also several questions that will remain after the foam subsides. Experts and practitioners need to be ready to jointly seek answers to them, taking into account the development of Russia's foreign policy interests.

Multipolarity Taking Shape in the Real World.

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THE MODERN WORLD is constantly undergoing structural realignment. The existing political reality is facing such a great number of challenges and threats that it is heading toward systemic instability. The Yalta-Potsdam system is being eaten away by attempts to redesign fundamental international institutions. We are witnessing efforts to destroy the world order that arose from the victory of the anti-Hitler coalition over German National Socialism, Italian fascism and Japanese militarism in World War II. A new world order is taking shape that is based on the principles of multipolarity.

Time continues to march on; we have already been living for five years without the main proponent of multipolarity, the exceptional scholar, diplomat, and statesman Yevgeny Maximovich Primakov. Among his merits is the development and scientific substantiation of the concept of a multipolar world that were put forward in a book titled *Mysli vsluhk* [Thoughts Aloud], in which he notes that the seeds of the multipolar system go back to the time when the Cold War ended.

The destruction of the modern world system based on the Westphalian architecture of international relations, later improved upon by the Yalta and Potsdam agreements, can be seen as a process that is indisputable and inevitable. The modern world is undergoing constant change while becoming more complex and acquiring new qualities. These changes are triggering the modernization and adaptation of older models and schemas of international relations, many of which are falling behind or falling apart as they give way to new systemic solutions.

The U.S. does continue to play a significant role in the world. Former U.S. President Barack Obama, in his final message to Congress, said that Americans were “the most powerful nation” on planet Earth and that they were only getting stronger every year. Meanwhile, the transformation of the world after the end of the Cold War into a one-person show, with the U.S. in the starring role, confirmed not the strength of the modern system of international relations, but really its inability to adequately respond to what was happening. After a protracted and fierce struggle, the world community was able to put

forward only a single option for development – unipolarity, i.e., one indisputable world leader who combined the functions of judge and executioner. This model, contradictory and unbalanced in nature, turned out to be highly dependent on the mood in Washington and was often not immune to mistakes by incompetent leaders who happened to find themselves atop the power structure.

June 2020 saw the publication of *The Room Where It Happened: A White House Memoir* by John Bolton, former national security adviser to the U.S. President. Many experts have called this book a “stab in the back” to Trump.

Within the system of international relations, the transition to unipolarity was associated with a state of turbulence, since any mistake in the policy pursued by the world’s sole pole of power would immediately throw the entire system into crisis. This is because the system was built upon the principles, ideology, interests, and values inherent to this pole itself. The unipolar world demonstrated its systemic weakness instantly, and this was immediately taken advantage of by new generations of states rushing to the forefront of world politics today.

U.S. President Donald Trump may not be considering the lessons of the Cold War. He may be heading deliberately toward a confrontation with Russia, gathering under his banners a multitude of satellite nations that are ready to do anything to gain Washington’s approval. These include Poland and the Baltic states, which have forgotten the harsh lessons of the past, and the Banderovites [Ukrainian nationalists], whom one would have to be blind not to recognize as neo-Nazis. In full accordance with historical tradition, the European Union is left playing the fall guy. What will such actions lead to? And are they good for America itself? The eminent Russian 19th-century historian Vasily Klyuchevsky correctly wrote: “History does not teach anything; it only punishes ignorance of its lessons”.

We share the assessment of the Director of the Latin American Department of the Russian Foreign Ministry, Alexander Shchetinin, regarding Russian foreign policy approaches during this era of ongoing change around the world: Russia continues to pursue a multivector foreign policy aimed at protecting its national and state interests. We are promoting the consolidation of positive trends across the world stage, the search for collective solutions based on international law for the problems facing all states, and are ultimately striving to contribute to forming a more just, democratic, representative and polycentric model of the world order, as the objective realities of the modern world demand.

Five Hypotheses About the Future World.

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THE POST-GLOBAL WORLD is still in embryo, but it is already clear what some of its basic characteristics will be, and it is details and limits of these characteristics that are yet to manifest themselves.

This article is part of a larger study. Some of the conclusions stated in it have received academic and expert approval.¹ The article addresses fundamental global political and economic developments since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Until now, all principal theories of the post-unipolar world have rested on two premises. First, the emergence of this world would be a relatively smooth process that would not destroy principal global institutions and would leave the basis of global economic interdependence intact. Second, the birth of this world would essentially be an economic process with changes to the economic weight of key global

and transregional actors. It is obvious, however, that the latest changes to global politics have been neither gradual nor economically determined. They have been tortuous but comparatively rapid processes that have undermined many of the institutions of global interdependence. But more importantly, although the ultimate goal of these processes is the creation of a new geoeconomic space, key strategic operational decisions are based on noneconomic considerations.

In the foreseeable future, the main factors in the emergence of such rivalry zones would be the relative weakening of the global influence of the United States; the withdrawal of individual countries and regions from the sphere of complete U.S. influence as a result of some regional processes; and U.S. President Donald Trump's alliance "optimization" policy, which Trump will probably make more rigorous if he is re-elected to a second term. Nor can one rule out struggles for "the American succession" – regional conflicts with new power centers beginning to emerge. But the United States would still for a comparatively long time be able to control those processes through political, economic and cultural influence infrastructures it has created.

WE DO NOT KNOW how the future world will be structured, but we can put forward five hypotheses about its fundamental principles.

First. The new world order would have an economic basis, which would reflect predictable effects of the world economy entering into a new long-term cycle (a new Kondratieff wave), and consequently a new system of investment priorities.

Second. There would arise conflicts between the network-based world and the "hierarchical" (state-based) world at the junctures of "gray" spheres of influence of new economic and political centers. There would be greater possibility of direct, including military, rivalry in such "buffer zones."

Third. Institutional policy is beginning to lose its role as an identifying factor and is becoming much less of an influence on the power of a nation. This is largely the result of the destruction of the institutional system that the global political system is based on. The destruction of the institutional basis of global politics began long before the coronavirus pandemic.

Four. The deep involvement in geo-economic processes (e.g., occupation of key monetization niches) of various ethnic, religious or sociocultural communities that have previously existed in network formats may become a significant factor in forming new foci of consolidation.

Fifth. A global armed conflict is unlikely as nuclear deterrence policies remain in place. However, as Western political elites' conflict escalation culture has deteriorated, regional conflicts are increasingly likely with greater risks of their going out of control. There may also be complex stratagems with deferred results. And, moreover, as the geopolitical model underlying later stages of globalization degrades, nuclear deterrence systems become less reliable.

RUSSIA'S STATUS in global transformation processes is determined by a complex and dialectically contradictory system of factors. On the one hand, Russia cannot be a full-scale global power as it does not possess the military, political and economic resources that this status requires. On the other hand, Russia has comparatively numerous domestic economic and social vulnerabilities – logistic and otherwise – that it does not have sufficient domestic resources to eliminate.

This multi-aspect duality of Russia's status means that the country has not yet finished building its new statehood and has not yet chosen either a medium- or long-term model for its social development. It also determines the nature of risks to Russia's development, risks some of which the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbates and lays bare others that have been latent.

This is how Russia's development strategy may be summed up: being a regional power is impossible as a long-term status, but it is crucial to regain regional leadership, which Russia cannot achieve without

having new statehood. This maps out the order of tasks for Russia to carry out and makes it impossible to completely separate domestic policy from foreign policy.

The main long-term priority for the majority of states seeking the role of a geo-economic consolidation center is to create protected geo-economically important regions around themselves and ensure the structural and technological integrity of these regions.

A New Political Evil and the Crisis of the European Integration Project.

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IN JANUARY 2020, Russian President Vladimir Putin put forward a package of amendments to the 1993 Constitution of the Russian Federation. In the spring, a broad discussion of the proposed changes in the Basic Law began.

The one most cited in the global mass media was the proposed amendment to define marriage as a “union between a man and a woman,” in effect prohibiting the possibility of same-sex marriage in the territory of the Russian Federation.

The most discussed was the amendment put forward by Valentina Tereshkova on “nullifying” presidential term limits, which would allow the current president of Russia (following the new Constitution’s entry into force) to run again for the highest office in the land without counting the terms he had served as president under the previous version of the Constitution.

Even so, the most significant to this author is the package of measures put forward to strengthen the sovereignty of the nation, which includes an amendment that declares the supremacy of Russian law over international law.

Experts, including those close to the inner circles of power, started issuing calls to abolish the primacy of international law over national law almost immediately after the previous Constitution was adopted. One reason for the displeasure among some politicians, lawyers, and public figures was the fact that Russia was formally obligated to carry out rulings passed by the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) even in cases where implementing such decisions contradicted our country’s Basic Law.

gal realm. The critical situation in today’s Europe demonstrates the importance of the changing relationship between national law and those legal norms that are being fashioned on the supranational level by so-called “communitarian” methods and are entirely alien to the classical norms of international law.

How – and, most importantly, when – did it happen that the EU turned from a role model into practically the weakest link in the global political and economic system? And while bureaucrats big and small in Brussels keep trying with a vengeance to prove their usefulness to the EU member states, the elites and the general public, the crisis of 2020 has marked the turning point that made it clear that the ability of this structure to overcome difficulties as a unit is very limited. Scientists, political analysts and sociologists have begun to conclude (disappointingly for the advocates of integration) that the old maxim about the EU emerging stronger from every crisis it overcomes no longer applies.

As soon as the coronavirus epidemic began simultaneously threatening the economies of European countries and the lives of millions of people on the continent, they all immediately decided that it would be easier to cope with their misfortune alone.

It must be emphasized that this was not a bolt from the blue that came crashing down on the Brussels architects of the common European future; it was no more than a completely predictable consequence of their own policies. After all, they were the ones who invented the legal palliative that became the basis of an ideology and a “symbol of faith” for the EU: i.e., a set of common values that was upheld as the political and legal basis of this integrated unit.

However, the roots of the problem lie deeper. The start of this process can be considered the growth of xenophobia in Europe, which has been multiplied by the ambivalence of the European identity.

In his exploration of the origins of modern Europe’s new political evil, Castells particularly examines such factors as xenophobia and ethnonationalism, as well as uneven development. But while the strategists in Brussels have learned to use the latter factor to maintain the viability of the EU core, xenophobia has undoubtedly become a rapidly spreading and difficult-to-control process that is no less an evil in the 21st century than anti-Semitism was in times past.

Perhaps this is one of the reasons why the European establishment’s connections with not just nationalist, but openly racist, xenophobic, and anti-Semitic political forces are becoming plain to see. Moreover, the nature of these ties is blatantly anti-European, even in the cases of the rising influence of Islamophobic sentiments.

“Post-Truth” as a Social Phenomenon and Political Technology.

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IN RECENT YEARS, an interest in the post-truth phenomenon has spread far and wide into political and other social sciences. On the whole, it is related to the process of psychological impact on human consciousness and subconsciousness, in the course of which people might radically change their opinion about any important social or political event that has already taken place.

This interest in the “post-truth” phenomenon was caused by a wave of what is known as “wars of historical memory,” the attempts to revise history, the history of World War II in the first place, and eventually (conceivably), its results.

The Oxford English Dictionary pointed to the fact that the “post-truth” phenomenon distorts reality by replacing the objective facts with “fake news” that stir up agitation, excitement or even panic in people’s minds. This does not make the “news” more objective or more exact in their description of an event, phenomenon or a process. The “processed” news are easier to accept: the traffic of news agencies increases as “dry facts” are replaced with “fakes” or simplified narratives.

In 2016, the authors of The Oxford Dictionary made the term “post-truth” Word of the Year. They wrote that the term owed its popularity to the 2016 presidential election in the United States and the Brexit referendum in the UK and defined “post-truth” as the word “related to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief”.

The decline of the traditional media as information intermediaries has transformed – and coarsened – social and political communication, making it easier for misinformation and vitriol to spread.

“Fake news” is responsible for continued existence of “the post-truth” phenomenon and the meanings it produces; this explains why in 2017 “fake news” was made Word of the Year by the OED authors.

It seems that nobody would dare to deny that “fake news” as a method of political struggle and propaganda is more and more often used in the “post-truth” epoch.

THE APPROACHES described above suggest the following classification of “post-truth” based on the aims that certain political forces hope to achieve by using this instrument of external guidance of human consciousness and behavior.

- (1) Justification and concealment.
- (2) Increasing popularity, traffic, sales, etc.
- (3) Removing rivals and destroying reputations.
- (4) Manipulation and puppeteering (pushing man to certain acts by imposing on him distorted ideas about reality).
- (5) Diverting attention to a “worthless object”.

The “post-truth” technology is used to change the attitude of people to certain events and facts of the past (even the recent past) and impose on them certain models of acting in the interests of the manipulator. This means that the “post-truth” phenomenon and the accompanying technologies (up to and including the “fake news” technologies) used for political purposes should be strictly controlled and regulated.

“The Koran Commands Us to Be Law-Abiding”.

Author: Kazem Jalali, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Islamic Republic of Iran to the Russian Federation.

This was the 30th visit of Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif to Moscow. The minister brought a very important message from Iranian President Hassan Rouhani to Russian President Vladimir Putin. This message was delivered in a telephone call, which was followed by fruitful negotiations with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and a news conference. The main subject of the negotiations was the Iranian nuclear program and the need to keep the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in place. Other subjects that were raised had to do with the activities of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Resolution 2231, the situation in Syria, and Iranian and Russian actions against terrorism in Syria. Bilateral relations were also discussed.

The first thing that comes to mind when the United States says they want a new deal is that presidents in the United States change every four or eight years. Where’s the guarantee that every new president won’t insist on a new deal? In the first place, the Americans should comply with international law. They should realize that the U.S. administration has the responsibility of adhering to the international treaties signed by the United States no matter whether a specific president likes any of those treaties or not.

Russia had a revolution in 1917, then the Soviet Union broke up. But the Russians never said they wouldn’t adhere to earlier treaties. The Islamic Republic of Iran also had a revolution in 1979, and the Shah emigrated. But we don’t disavow the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, for instance, even though it was signed and ratified during the rule of the Shah.

The Americans have left the JCPOA, but Iran remains in it. The supreme leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran has said that we will adhere to our commitments. As the Koran says, be obedient to what has been established by law.

We have several objectives as a JCPOA signatory, primarily the ability of the Islamic Republic of Iran to make peaceful use of nuclear energy. The West had the goal of creating the atom bomb, and he did create it. Iran has no such intentions. This is recorded in a fatwa by our supreme leader, who is an exemplary person. We even have no right to take any steps toward developing an atomic bomb. We have been fulfilling our commitments under the JCPOA.

Another objective is to have the sanctions lifted. This reflects our economic interests. The Americans' withdrawal from the JCPOA and the Europeans' inability to comply with it have prevented Iran from exercising its rights that are enshrined in the agreement.

Mr. Trump miscalculated the effects of the assassination of General Qassem Soleimani. The Americans couldn't have imagined that the general's assassination would unify huge numbers of Iranians. There had never been anyone in Iran whose funeral was so grand and brought together such vast numbers of people throughout the country. The Iranian people consider the general a martyr and hero who has died for his country.

The U.S. president doesn't know what he's talking about. He puts Soleimani among odious terrorists, terrorists whom the Americans themselves have brought into the political scene. It's clear he doesn't understand what happens in the world in general.

The Americans neither obey nor accept international law. The United States has only one principle – to comply with international law only if the latter defends direct American interests. The Americans only obey the rules they themselves create. They interfere in the internal affairs of other countries, force their military presence on various regions in the world, and create terrorist groups. Their behavior is unacceptable.

I'd like to emphasize that Russia is providing effective assistance in combating terrorists in Syria. This is very important for the entire region. Our two countries interact intensively and fruitfully with the Syrian government in combating terrorists and in seeking an end to hostilities on Syrian territory. In Syria, we are dealing with a new generation of terrorists – terrorists who are well-financed and are supported by some of the countries in the region and by the United States. One doesn't know how these terrorists would be behaving now if the people of Syria and the governments of Iran and Russia hadn't intervened.

The leaders of our countries are maintaining a permanent dialogue and trust one another. It is true that there exist good political relations, collaboration in security affairs and military-technological cooperation between our countries. Both sides should take care to make these relations more extensive. At the same time, we have to admit that we don't have sufficient cultural interaction. Unfortunately, the Iranians and Russians know very little about each other, about each other's presentday life. For example, if you ask someone in Iran about Russia, they will talk about czarist Russia or the communist period whereas modern-day Russia is an essentially different country. The same goes for Iran. We need direct information about one another, we need to know one another better, increase cultural exchanges, boost tourism. This can be achieved quickly.

Tradition and Fundamentalism of Late Modernity.

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THE GROWTH of fundamentalism can no longer be ignored, an alarming fact. It seems that the process has been caused, among other factors, by what is defined as "a crisis of dominant ideology." Today, this point is accepted by many.

It seems that the growth of fundamentalism is probably a compensatory mechanism of sorts in the situation of ideological uncertainty. While the worn-out dominant ideology is gradually losing ground, the commonly accepted views, as a rule, are growing primitive, dogmatic and mythologized.

Fundamentalism – one of the markers of archaization and simplification of ideological space – is moving to the fore, not limited by the frames of any specific form of paleo-conservatism and radical religiosity.

TODAY, it has become much harder to define fundamentalism than it was in the 20th century. It is a potential state of any “exhausted” ideology that, having reached its social limits, still clutches at its leadership. The result is an obscurantist, harsher and simplified ideology that lost much of its arguments and gathered an increasingly growing share of contradictions and contraventions. This ideology can no longer cope with them and is gradually slipping from a system of knowledge into a set of dogmas.

The classical “tradition-modernity” opposition of modernist consciousness is receding into the past. Today, the axiological and philosophical boundaries run along different lines.

The methodologically and culturally responsible traditionalism that understands the tradition not as a certain isolated and sacral part of the past but as a method of thinking and orientation in history is found within these two trends, in the center of ideological space. This traditionalism relies on consistent accumulation of collective experience, without “sacral sacrifices” and “detachments”; without tossing part of this experience overboard or removing it from the pedestal of a “true and uncorrupt teaching.”

THE GROWTH of modernist fundamentalism is especially acute and obvious in the church space probably because religious consciousness is occupied, to a great extent, with the so-called ultimate questions of being which, in turn, are conditioned by the super-task of Christian world outlook with the idea of salvation in its center.

Traditionalism thinks in absolutely different terms than fundamentalism. It develops within the tradition without surgical intervention, so to speak, of history, without detaching and discarding parts of the cultural-historical “body,” in short, without historical sacrifices.

Today, it has become undoubtedly very important and absolutely necessary to shed new light on the subject of tradition and fundamentalism. We should mark up this field of problems to clearly separate the conceptions of traditionalism, fundamentalism, orthodoxy, authenticity, conservatism, and modernity.

Rebalancing Oil Supply and Demand.

Author: Yuri Shafranik, *Chairman of the Board of Directors, International Group of Companies SoyuzNefteGaz*

In the past ten years, the energy industry has been undergoing a serious transformation that is already evident to many. What is the reason for this? First, it is the growth of the Asian economy, primarily but not only that of China. Second, the consumer structure in the world has changed, but the United States has been and remains the principal consumer of energy. Hence the high prices for oil and gas, the development of new technologies, etc.

Third, analytical centers previously predicted a collapse because of a resource shortage, but now it has become clear that resources are abundant. It is not a question of resources.

Finally, at the beginning of the year, one could already see a speculative component in oil prices. Oil purchases increased while consumption slowed. By March, experts were well aware of this.

Some time ago, Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak said that oil prices would be around \$40 by the end of the year, and I agree with him. As for a recovery, it could take a year or even 18 months.

The world has been and will remain multifaceted. In my opinion, there are two processes at work: the oil and gas market will remain global, while the electric power industry will have distributed networks and, consequently, distributed sources. Green energy is an important component here. Solar power supplied by cable from Sahara to Europe is not a fantasy. The projects being discussed are real-life ones.

The course has been set for green energy. As a veteran energy specialist, twenty years ago, I could not have predicted that in 2019 renewable (wind) energy in Germany would account for 42% of power consumption in the country.

To electrify the country using wind turbines, as in Germany, would not be a wise thing to do, to put it mildly, because it is clear that their purchase and installation costs cannot be recouped in the near future. As for hydropower projects, especially small hydro, I support them.

Ukraine has taken a certain political course of action. For decades, we tried to persuade them to place the pipelines under common ownership, to sell the transit pipelines to us or to merge their transit systems with German companies. But they did not agree to that.

Whenever we say that something makes economic sense or not, we should take into account political decisions.

Let us be frank: Ukraine is poised to sell itself off. Actually, it is 100% dependent on our oil, gas, and more. But they have made a political decision: they found the money and cut themselves loose.... This was also what happened in the Baltic.

As a "healthy pessimist," I believe there are very few or almost no examples of someone withstanding U.S. pressure, except Russia. Let us recall the deal with Iran. There was a lot of talk, and everyone was against its cancellation. So what? I am pessimistic about the current situation. This is not because of despondency, but because we have to understand that it will take a great deal of effort to help our European partners stand firm for their own benefit and enable us to finish our work together. The project is nearly complete, with only a month or two to go. But the main point here is not to complete the project; the point is to make the pipeline work.

The situation in Russia differs from that in the United States. First, the energy industry for us is a source of revenue, and the outside world, the foreign market, and global prices are important for us: we depend on them. In America, the main focus is on domestic prices, the domestic market, and domestic consumption. The two cannot be compared.

And second, what are the Russian president's main concerns? They include the market, prices, export earnings, and the solution of domestic problems. What is the U.S. president's primary concern? It is the stock market. I am sure that our president is not particularly worried about the stock market, because only less than 1% of our population is involved in it.

At a meeting with the president on the issue of support for the oil complex, a proposal was made to continue drilling without starting production. This is as good a storage facility as any. Thus, when demand picks up and there is a decent price for oil, the wells can be put back into operation. If the oil industry launches such a mechanism, this will be of great benefit, because one person working in the oil complex means seven workers in other areas. The oil complex will survive in any event, but investment and orders for equipment and drilling rigs should not be allowed to dry up.

The Eurasian Economic Union: Directions for Strategic Development.

Author: Sergey Glazyev, *Chairman of the Scientific Council of the Russian Academy of Sciences on Complex Problems of Eurasian Economic Integration, Modernization, Competitiveness, and Sustainable Development, Full Member of the Russian Academy of Sciences*

IT IS TEN YEARS now since a Customs Union was established within the framework of the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC).

In the past ten years, the Customs Union has demonstrated its viability. It has been supplemented with basic elements of a Single Economic Space (SES) and has been expanded and transformed into the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) with the accession of Armenia and Kyrgyzstan. An extensive legal framework has been created to ensure uniform rules of customs, technical, tariff, and non-tariff regulation; uniform sanitary, veterinary, and phytosanitary control; harmonization of antimonopoly (antitrust) law; and operation of common markets of goods, services, labor, and capital. The groundwork has been laid for the coordination of macroeconomic, industrial, and agricultural policies and for the development of the Union's transport and energy infrastructure. A Digital Transformation Roadmap has been adopted, and an Integrated Information System (IIS) of the Eurasian Economic Union is being put in place.

To promote and upgrade Eurasian economic integration, the EAEU member states adopted a Declaration on Further Development of Integration Processes within the Eurasian Economic Union (Order of the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council No. 9 of December 6, 2018), a document that sets the direction for the Union's long-term development.

The Declaration states that full implementation of agreements in the areas specified by the EAEU Treaty, further improvement of the Union's operation, and the need to unlock its integration potential require its members to make ambitious decisions on developing integration, expanding economic cooperation, and improving EAEU institutions.

At a meeting of the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council (SEEC) in Nur-Sultan on May 29, 2019, timed to coincide with the fifth anniversary of the signing of the EAEU Treaty, the heads of state reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening and developing the Union. They confirmed their intention to deepen integration, with a redistribution of powers between the national authorities and the supranational governing body when the Parties are ready and find it necessary.

THE EFFICIENCY of the EAEU common market depends in large part on the quality of work of its regulatory bodies. The Single Economic Space implies a single system of governance, which now consists of two components: supranational and national. Under current legislation, regulatory rules are established at the supranational level, while national regulators apply these rules. At the same time, the supranational Eurasian Economic Commission has no authority to control the activities of national regulators.

The EEC's lack of authority to control the application of Union-wide rules by the Parties undermines the ability of EAEU institutions to regulate the common market. A typical example here is the low efficiency of technical regulation as manifested in the abundance of counterfeit, poor quality or dangerous products that do not meet the Union's technical, sanitary or veterinary requirements.

IN ORDER TO ENSURE effective regulation of the common market, the EEC should have an appropriate set of powers. In particular, the functioning of a common market for goods implies harmonization of systems for antimonopoly (antitrust) regulation, public procurement, and indirect taxes. Today, there are still a number of significant inconsistencies in these areas.

Regulation of monopolized areas is not the only problem to be addressed at the supranational level in order to ensure the efficient operation of goods markets. For example, it is very important to regulate prices for exchange-trade commodities produced by individual EAEU countries. Since these prices are formed abroad, domestic producers are obliged to sell their goods at a discount, suffering significant losses.

IF THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS took full account of the EAEU's best regulatory practices, this experience could be used effectively to optimize the regulation of the Union's common markets and to eliminate inefficient duplication at the national level.

Another manifestation of duplication of functions in establishing customs tariffs at the national level is the commitment made by one of the Parties to bind its import tariffs at a level below the CCT for 20% of commodity lines as it joined the World Trade Organization (WTO). To neutralize the distorting effect of this decision on import flows, this Party should take measures to limit trade in the respective goods to its domestic market. For many goods, however, there are no effective measures to administer such forced unilateral trade barriers in the absence of customs control at the border.

REGULATION of export duties is one of the stumbling blocks that arose during the creation of the Customs Union and on which the integration process occasionally falters. It was not transferred to the supranational level, because oil exporting states had decided that the right to dispose of their resource rent was their own business.

THE CURRENT STATE of the EAEU and its development rates are not encouraging and clearly fall short of the goals set by the leaders of the Union states and public expectations. The low rates of economic growth are due to the stagnation of the Russian economy, which accounts for 87% of the Union's GDP. The main reason is the slow and fragile growth in fixed investment, largely financed by enterprises from internally generated funds in a situation where bank lending rates are above the profitability of the production sector.

THE STRATEGY of advanced development requires a radical change in macroeconomic policy.

After the tight credit squeeze on industrial enterprises from 2014 to 2017, credit stabilized at a very insufficient level. As long as interest rates are higher than the average profitability of manufacturing, one should not expect an increase in lending for investment and innovation activity. The transmission mechanism of the banking system, which serves to transform savings into investment, has been virtually brought to a halt.

Current economic theory and practice see modern fiat money as an instrument of economic growth. In order to maintain the desired rate of growth, the monetary authorities of advanced countries create the necessary amount of money sufficient to provide credit for long-term investment in production.

Mutual confidence between economic actors is impossible without a clear system for enforcing established supranational and national rules in the Union. Its creation requires serious efforts by national law enforcement and judicial bodies, which have not yet been included in the process of Eurasian integration.

The strategic directions (guidelines) for the development of integration listed in this article, as well as the measures proposed for their implementation do not cover the Union's entire development agenda. The article does not consider the directions that have already been agreed by the Parties and are beyond any doubt. We did not address non-economic directions associated with potential new areas of integration. Nor did we address a key direction such as creating a common ideological framework for Eurasian integration based on the centuries-long experience of the EAEU peoples as makers of their common history.

“The Multiethnic People of Russia Are the Locus of Sovereignty and the Source of Power in the Country”.

Author: Konstantin Kosachev, *Chairman of the Federation Council’s Foreign Affairs Committee* This interview was taken by *Armen Oganesyan, Editor-in-Chief of International Affairs.*

There is a view that since Russia recognizes the supremacy of international law over national law in the current Constitution, this means that our partners or opponents may impose their will from the outside, citing international law. That is not the case and has never been the case.

There are generally recognized norms that are codified in the UN Charter and other international documents, such as refraining from the threat or use of force in international affairs, and equality and respect for the rights inherent in sovereignty. These are comprehensible principles, and Russia as an inalienable part of the international community considers them acceptable.

In 1996, Russia joined the Council of Europe and in 1998, it ratified the Convention. We have complied and will continue to comply with its provisions. However, in accordance with this Convention, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) was established, which monitors and reviews compliance with the Convention. We would have no need to amend the current Constitution if the ECHR diligently followed not only the spirit but also the letter of the Human Rights Convention, and if it did not arbitrarily expand the interpretation of the Convention. Regrettably, this is precisely what is happening, as Russia’s experience with the Convention shows.

Remember that in Soviet days, the attitude toward compatriots was mostly negative. It took years for Russian citizens’ mindset to change and view compatriots as part of our Russian nation. We have passed a law on compatriots. They are defined as people who have Russian or other citizenship, live abroad, and have freely chosen to maintain spiritual, cultural and legal ties with the Russian Federation.

I believe this is a wise decision. It is not a matter of ethnic, let alone religious identity. There are several countries that use the same principle in defining the concept of compatriots. Our current legislation is more advanced and more civilized in this regard.

I sincerely hope that this Constitutional amendment will become known to as many of our compatriots abroad as possible, including people who have yet to decide on their identity. This will be an additional incentive for self-identity.

A positive news story or media coverage directly or indirectly confirms that our country is playing quite an important role in international affairs. We are not indifferent to the world, and this is very good. I can tell you with full responsibility that I see most comments as a healthy, objective reaction and the realization that the Russian people are exercising their sovereign right to determine the current and future vectors of the country’s development.

But of course, the West would not be what it is if it did not try to discredit Russia this time as well. The media provide a distorted, sometimes false picture of the essence of Constitutional amendments. For example, the Western press claims that Russia is no longer part of the international community, is not honoring its international obligations, and will now live only according to its own national laws.

Incidentally, this absolutely applies to the U.S., which considers its national laws to be above any international obligations and in addition, follows the principles of the exterritoriality of its national laws

– i.e., extending them beyond its national borders. For some reason, this stance is raising no questions and drawing no condemnation in the West.

Where does the intervention in Syria, Libya and Iraq originate? They saw that these countries were economically and militarily weaker and would not be able to put up much resistance. Ultimately, the liberal West violates the rights of people who live in these countries. In my opinion, this is the most important topic on the global agenda. Respect for the rights of a nation that is unable to defend itself militarily, economically and politically should be a key element of global discourse and relevant legal decisions on a par with the protection of human rights in a strong state.

The U.S. single-handedly destroyed the system of arms control agreements. I am saying this because this process is irreversible. Even if the New START treaty is extended, that would be a tactical decision, not a strategic one. It would most likely be extended by two or three years, not more. After that, the treaty would either disappear or the Americans would impose it on China, which I personally doubt.

The UN remains a place where it is simply impossible for one state or a group of states to impose its will on other countries. This is in fact the golden mean of veto power that must be preserved at any cost not for the sake of granting some special rights or pleasures to those who hold it but for the sake of preserving the UN as a venue where no one state has any preferential or privileged rights. I believe that this is a very important interpretation of veto power.

I am in favor of reforming the Security Council, preserving veto power and expanding the scope of countries that could use it. But then comes the problem of defining, identifying this additional group of three or five or 10.

The Federation Council is preparing a plan of international contacts for September – it is very much business as usual. At the end of the spring session, in July, we intend to advise our counterparts to coordinate a plan of joint activities and events. If there is a second wave of the coronavirus and something changes for the worse, we will have to review this plan. However, we hope for the better and are determined to restore international contacts in full.

Rossotrudnichestvo: Soft Power Tools in Practice.

Author: Mikhail Bryukhanov, *deputy head of the Federal Agency for the Commonwealth of Independent States, Compatriots Living Abroad and International Humanitarian Cooperation (Rossotrudnichestvo) at the Russian Foreign Ministry*

The federal agency is indeed unique. It has missions in more than 90 countries across the world. Our work is based on principles of people to people diplomacy and a diversified network of public communications.

It is of a strategic nature. In other words, it is not aimed at getting immediate benefits but pursues midterm and long-term objectives. I would especially like to note that the idea of building effective communications as such runs through all elements of our country's international life, especially today, when information and communication technologies literally connect people on the planet.

With regard to the humanitarian, historical and cultural legacy of states, the interpretation of the concept of soft power may also have negative consequences. According to this logic, for example, by declaring war on memorials, in particular World War II monuments as elements of Russian influence, representatives of certain countries are depriving future generations of historical memory and an objective view of contemporary events, prodding them toward repeating past mistakes.

It is not only and not so much soft power as public diplomacy, communications and relations between people that form the environment in which your agency operates. Processes of regionalization and interregional cooperation have become noticeable amid global transformations recently. One area of Rossotrudnichestvo's activity is helping Russian regions in implementing their projects in various spheres, as well as promoting inter-municipal cooperation.

Rossotrudnichestvo is a state agency and component of the Russian Foreign Ministry that, in accordance with the Russian president's decree "On Certain Matters of State Administration in the Field of International Cooperation," is endowed with authority in coordinating and promoting foreign policy contacts with sister cities, as well as providing assistance to Russian Federation members in developing their international ties. The relevance and viability of this area of activity have been proved by practice. In the first quarter of this year alone, two important events took place, literally one after the other.

The agency has a division responsible for interaction with Russian regions, cities and municipalities, using nontrivial methods, among others. In particular, our colleagues have already managed to analyze the entire normative-regulatory basis of Russian and international intermunicipal cooperation; have developed a special questionnaire for municipalities; and are creating info-graphical profiles of various cities. Incidentally, the recently updated section "International regional and inter-municipal cooperation" on our Web site provides plenty of useful information – from normative legal acts to drafts of standard agreements between cities. Needless to say, there is also news and useful links to social media accounts.

In the 20th century, there are many public movements that were highly instrumental in implementing international programs and projects, at the same time campaigning against the arms race and unconstructive, counterproductive rivalry between countries. It is also important to recall movements such as International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War and the Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs, a movement that brought together scholars and public figures to work toward peace, disarmament and international security, preventing a world thermonuclear war and promoting scientific cooperation. Incidentally, scientific diplomacy is actively developing today, recovering its former status.

Another format of public activity that has been restored recently is the World Festival of Youth and Students. It is encouraging to see that our regions and cities can host such large and important events at a high level.

Several successful examples of public diplomacy were highlighted by the online conference titled "The Experience of Sister Cities in Preserving the Common Memory of the Victory over Nazism in World War II," which was organized by Rossotrudnichestvo jointly with the All-Russian Congress of Municipalities in late June. It was attended by representatives of Russian, Belarussian, U.S., UK, French, Israeli, Slovak, and German municipalities – around 100 participants in all. For more than two and a half hours, sister cities shared their unique experience in implementing relevant projects.

The main obstacle to intensifying international cooperation between Russian municipalities is the existence of so-called gaps in legislation.

The creation of an interagency working group would help address the entire range of these pressing matters and enable us to advance to a new level of international activity.

The Establishment of International Control Over the Traffic of Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Dedicated to the 100th birth anniversary of Eduard Babayan.

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Boris Tselinsky, *head of the division of legal foundations at the National Scientific Center of Narcology, a branch of the Federal State Budgetary Institution-Serbsky National Research Center for Social and Forensic Psychiatry under the Ministry of Health of the Russian Federation, Candidate of Science (Law)*; borneo1@mail.ru

ALL MANNER of social processes, including sometimes those of international significance, are often closely connected to the personal contribution, energy, talent, knowledge, and life experience of specific individuals and their ability to lead others and inspire them with their enthusiasm and belief that a given idea is correct and a certain goal is achievable. In this article, we would like to tell about one such extraordinary individual: a talented scholar, organizer and promoter who lived a difficult but vivid, active and eventful life.

The United Nations conference that discussed and adopted the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs came at a dramatic time. The world was facing an unprecedented threat of the uncontrolled distribution of narcotics and a global drug addiction epidemic. The existing international drug control measures needed to be revised and improved as quickly as possible.

The UN Conference for the Adoption of a Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs was held at UN Headquarters from January 24 to March 25, 1961. Representatives of 73 states, including the Soviet Union, participated in the conference.

The conference resulted in five resolutions for adopting the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, as well as the coordination of the text of the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs.

The Single Convention is clearly the brainchild of a considerable number of scholars and practitioners in various fields. And Eduard Babayan played a significant role in drafting it.

The 1971 Convention on Psychotropic Substances established an international control system for substances like central nervous system stimulants, sedatives, hypnotics, and hallucinogens. Some of those substances are generally prohibited for medical use, while others can only be prescribed by a doctor. Under the provisions of the Convention, prescriptions must be written in strict accordance with medical practice, and drug labels must supply instructions on their use and necessary warnings.

The 1988 UN Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances was of no less significance for the regulation of the international narcotic drug and psychotropic substance control system. The Convention was adopted at a special UN conference in December 1988 and entered into force in November 1990. The main incentive for adopting it was the need to strengthen and complement the measures in the 1961 and 1971 Conventions.

In accordance with the 1988 Convention, states agree to amend their national laws to facilitate the confiscation of drug trafficking proceeds. This includes allowing courts to disclose the secrecy of bank deposits in the course of investigating cases involving narcotic drugs; facilitating the extradition and prosecution of accused drug traffickers; promoting the use of the "controlled delivery" method, as well as tracing and intercepting illicit consignments of drugs; and preventing the illegal mailing of drugs.

An important innovation of the 1988 Convention was the definition of aggravating circumstances for offenses related to illicit drug trafficking.

Founded in 1968 under the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, the INCB became an independent quasi-judicial body for monitoring compliance with the provisions of the Single Convention and the de facto successor to a number of international agencies previously established under the drug control conventions of the League of Nations.

The INCB operates as an agency independent of governments, as well as autonomous from the UN. It has 13 members, serving in their personal capacity independent from governments. INCB members are elected by the ECOSOC to a five-year term, and their work is funded by the UN.

INCB members are highly qualified, competent, impartial, and disinterested professionals who command general confidence. Once elected, INCB members work together independently of governments, without representing the interests of any state.

The INCB provides an annual report on the drug control situation. The report contains an analysis of the current drug control situation in the world; provides information to governments about the risks threatening compliance with international treaties; identifies shortcomings in national control systems and recommends a list of measures aimed at correcting the situation at the appropriate level.

An invaluable contribution to organizing the implementation of many of the aforementioned functions of the INCB was made by Eduard Babayan, who from 1995 to 2004 was an INCB member and deputy chairman of the INCB. In addition, Eduard Babayan was a member of the Standing Committee on Estimates (1995-2004), Chairman of the Standing Committee on Estimates (1997 and 2000) and First Deputy Chairman of the Committee on Estimates (2003).

Many people who had the fortunate opportunity to work with Eduard Babayan note that he maintained the highest level of professionalism and had vast expertise while at the same time showing great modesty and a sincere desire to thoroughly understand any problem and help solve it. His contributions to the international community should be emphasized and remembered for as long as possible as an example of selfless service for the benefit of society.

Relations Between Russia and the Southern African Development Community.

Author: Viktor Sibilev, *Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of the Russian Federation to the Republic of Botswana and Special Representative of the Russian Federation to the Southern African Development Community (SADC)*, embrus@info.bw

RUSSIA established official relations with the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in March 1999 by appointing its then ambassador to Botswana, Valery Kalugin, as its official representative to SADC. This regional organization dates its history to 1980, when nine countries established what is known as the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC) and is the forerunner of the Southern African Development Community (SADC). A declaration issued by the SADCC founding member countries and newly independent Namibia and a treaty signed by them established SADC in August 1992.

The SADC has 16 member states – Angola, Botswana, Comoros, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. It is one of Africa’s largest and most influential regional organizations.

Laying the documentary basis for relations between Russia and SADC began with the Memorandum of Understanding on Basic Principles of Relations and Cooperation, signed in September 2003. The memorandum has been used as the basis for regular consultations between Russia and SADC on regional and pan-African matters.

High-level Russia-SADC contacts, Russian presence at SADC summits and meetings of the SADC Council of Ministers, and informal and working meetings between the Russian ambassador to Botswana, who is simultaneously Russia’s special representative to SADC, and the organization’s executive secretary have helped foster ties between Russia and SADC and gave the two sides clearer comprehension of objectives set by an updated version of the Memorandum of Understanding on Basic Principles of Relations and Cooperation that had been championed by Russia since 2014 and was signed in 2018.

The memorandum clearly indicates fields in which the two sides are going to join forces – science and technology, infrastructure and energy projects, transportation, communications, management of water resources, agriculture, food security, education, healthcare, and others. The memorandum also makes provision for annual consultations between the Russian Foreign Ministry and the SADC Secretariat and establishes an interaction mechanism for program implementation.

The SADC Secretariat drew up a road map for joint energy, mining, infrastructure, agricultural and environmental projects based on the memorandum and submitted it to the Russian side in May 2019 for approval.

Lavrov described a Russia-SADC investment forum that was taking place in Moscow that day as “an important event” corroborating “the new, more specific and promising quality of our cooperation.”² The forum had been organized by the ambassadors to Russia of SADC member countries in coordination with the Russian business community. It was pointed out at the forum that Russian companies were increasingly eyeing opportunities in African countries and that there existed significant unused resources for trade and economic cooperation between Russia and SADC member countries.

In supporting SADC measures to combat COVID-19, Russia has given free aid to the worst-stricken SADC member countries. Among other forms of assistance, Russia has sent disposable laboratory materials and personal protective gear to the Democratic Republic of Congo and test system kits and food to Comoros and Madagascar.

Russia’s Industry and Trade Ministry, for its part, has offered to provide SADC member countries with medical anti-coronavirus aid.

On April 1, 2020, Lavrov sent Tax a message congratulating her on SADC’s 40th anniversary. “We commend the community’s successes in advancing political and economic integration, and in maintaining peace and security in southern Africa,” Lavrov said in his message. “We note their importance and relevance in the context of the goals and objectives of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the African Union Agenda 2063.... I would like to express my confidence that the existing format of partnership between Russia and SADC will be beneficial for promoting the entire range of our ties.”

The Croatian Vector in Russia's Foreign Policy.

Author: Anvar Azimov, *Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Russian Federation to the Republic of Croatia*

THE HISTORY OF RUSSIA is closely connected with the history of the Balkans. Our country has for centuries been considered a defender and protector of Slavic peoples in the Balkans, connected to them by shared cultural, linguistic, spiritual, and religious values, as well as by shared identity and civilizational roots. At the same time, Russia has never brought confrontation to the region, pursuing its policy in a purely constructive and friendly key, to the best of its ability countering the Westerners' course toward dragging the Balkans into the policy of dividing lines by promoting and inculcating anti-Russian elements.

Despite the fact that the Balkans have always been and remain a field of clashing interests among the key global political players, we would not want to regard the region as the last European line of confrontation between the West and Russia. Strengthening bilateral relations with all countries in the region, supporting their independent foreign policies and increasing their political weight is in Russia's interests. We believe that following the lead of European and Euro-Atlantic policy narrows the Balkan countries' opportunities, limits their capabilities and does not entirely respond to their national interests.

Russia is interested in stabilization, peace and security in the Balkans, in eliminating the consequences of military conflicts and ethnic differences, and promoting steady economic development. Russia needs an unequivocal and clear-cut political strategy in the region.

Croatia occupies a worthy place in Russia's Balkans policy. Our contacts have been developing for centuries, and our cultures and our interests are closely intertwined. In 2022, we will mark the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between our countries, which have mirrored all the ups and downs of Russia's relations with the West. Not surprisingly, they were affected, first, by Croatia's accession to NATO in 2009 and then by its accession to the European Union in 2013. Due to Zagreb's Euro-Atlantic obligations, it had to synchronize its foreign policy with Brussels and Washington, which impacted the dynamics of our relations with Croatia. NATO's eastward expansion, the Eastern Partnership policy, the Georgian and Ukrainian crises, and the EU's sanctions regime against Russia also inevitably affected our ties with Croatia despite the traditionally friendly attitude toward us on the part of ordinary citizens who had sympathized with the Soviet Union and were friendly toward Russia.

When I arrived in Zagreb in July 2015 as Russia's plenipotentiary representative, I faced a difficult task – namely, overcoming a certain downturn in our relations and working to ensure their positive development.

I believed that my priority was to arrange the visits of the Croatian president and foreign minister to Russia. In May 2017, Croatian Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Davor Stier made a working visit to Russia. In October 2017, we organized Croatian President Grabar-Kitarović's official visit to Russia. After talks in Sochi and Moscow, six important joint documents were signed to boost bilateral cooperation in various areas.

High-level contacts were maintained at various international forums. In 2017, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and Croatian President Grabar-Kitarovic had talks at the Munich Security Conference and in 2018, they met on the sidelines of the 73rd session of the UN General Assembly. In 2018, Sergey Lavrov had talks in Munich with Marija Pejčinović Burić, Croatian foreign minister at the time who later became the secretary general of the Council of Europe (Russia supported her candidacy). In 2020, dialogue in Munich continued with Croatia's new foreign minister, Gordan Grlić-Radman. In short, top and high-level contacts were fully restored.

Strengthening bilateral trade and economic ties is an unquestionable priority. In recent years, the bilateral Intergovernmental Commission on Economic, Scientific and Technical Cooperation, which includes four working groups, has stepped up its activity. Working meetings of commission co-chairs and its plenary sessions have been held on a regular basis since 2017.

Humanitarian and cultural contacts based on a bilateral intergovernmental cooperation program have intensified in recent years. In 2018, the Hermitage organized an exhibition, titled Catherine the Great, which was unprecedented for the entire region, and Moscow and St. Petersburg Days festivals were held, featuring shows by the renowned ballet troupes of the Bolshoi and Mariinsky Theaters. Tours by Russian drama theaters were organized. A Russian film festival was held for the first time in many years, and photo, arts and educational exhibitions took place in the main museums and at other venues of the Croatian capital between 2016 and 2019.

To summarize, our dynamic bilateral relations are steadily gaining momentum. I am confident that sensible, pragmatic calculation and the pursuit of national interests, both political and economic, will convince the Croatian leadership of the need to further strengthen mutually beneficial ties with Russia, which are definitely not aimed against Zagreb's NATO or EU membership. Unlike certain countries, we are rightly considered an important global power not because we seek to control others and impose our rules and approaches on them, but due to our unique ability to bring good in the name of universal security, stability and economic growth, including in the Balkans. This is precisely the goal of the Croatian track in Russia's foreign policy activity.

My five-year presence in Croatia as Russia's plenipotentiary representative convinces me that Croatia is an important partner (albeit not an easy one) in the Western Balkans, who is willing to cooperate with our country on various issues of the bilateral, international and regional agenda. This well-intentioned approach also fully responds to Russian interests.

Russia and Estonia: 100 Years of Diplomatic Relations.

Author: Sergey Tambi, *Press Attaché, Embassy of the Russian Federation in the Republic of Estonia, Master, Moscow State Institute (University) of International Relations, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation; Sergey.Tambi@gmail.com*

THE ESTABLISHMENT of diplomatic relations between Russia and Estonia and the history of the first two years of their bilateral cooperation is an important landmark in the history of our interstate dialogue. In the first quarter of the 20th century, both states were making their first steps on the world arena and often looked together for the solutions of many important and urgent problems.

Soviet power was established in the Governorate of Estonia soon after the October Revolution. The government of Soviet Russia looked at the leaders of the newly formed Commune of the Working People of Estonia as legitimate power. On December 7, 1918, the Soviet of Peoples' Commissars of the RSFSR recognized independence of the Commune. Soviet power was short-lived in the east of Estonia. In February 1919, Estonians and armed units of the Whites pushed out the units of the Commune and the 7th Army of the RKKa outside the Governorate. The Soviet of the Commune moved to the RSFSR and dissolved itself on June 5, 1919.

The treaty that suspended hostilities between the armies of the RSFSR and the Estonian Republic was signed on December 31, 1919 [34] and came into force on 12:00 a.m. Moscow time (10:30 a.m. Tallinn time) on January 3, 1920.

The beginning of the Soviet diplomatic courier service is associated with Estonia.

ON FEBRUARY 2, 1920, at 00:45 p.m., the RSFSR and Estonia signed in Yuriev (today Tartu) the Yuriev peace treaty that opened the road toward international recognition for Estonia.

The Russian Federation officially treats the Tartu Peace Treaty of 1920 as invalid; it belongs to history since both sides later found themselves within the same subject of international law, the Soviet Union. As distinct from the Russian Federation which is the heir to the Soviet Union, Estonia is a new state which appeared when the Soviet Union fell apart.

THE OFFICIAL HISTORY of diplomatic relations between our countries began somewhat later, on November 27, 1920, when the Constituent Assembly of Estonia headed by Ants Piip invited Moscow in a written form to establish regular diplomatic relations.

On December 6, 1920, People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs of the RSFSR Georgy Chicherin informed the Estonian side that the Soviet Russia accepted the offer. The de jure regular diplomatic and consular relations between the RSFSR and Estonia were established on January 13, 1921.

Maxim Litvinov was appointed plenipotentiary (and trade) representative of Soviet Russia to Estonia. Previously, at a plenary session of the CC All-Russia Communist Party (Bolsheviks), Chicherin had suggested Litvinov as fully suited to the post of plenipotentiary to Estonia and Finland; the plenary meeting limited his diplomatic appointment by Estonia.

During the ten months of Litvinov's term of plenipotentiary and trade representative in Tallinn, Soviet Russia received over 36 thousand tons of all sorts of foodstuffs and other cargoes. Together with transit cargoes bought, with Litvinov's agreement, in other countries and sent via Estonia to the RSFSR, the total amount was over 185 thousand tons.

THE ESTONIAN Repatriation Commission (Eesti kontroll-opteerimiskomisjon, KOPT) set up on May 12, 1920, was a predecessor of sorts of the Estonian diplomatic mission in the RSFSR. It occupied the building now used by the Estonian Embassy in Moscow and was engaged in repatriation of refugees who had left Estonia during the war.

Late in 1920, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Estonia set up a Russian Section (later, department) that supervised contacts with the Soviet Union and repatriation of Estonians; there was a Russian-Estonian joint commission that exchanged prisoners-of-war.

At the first stage of the relationships between the two countries there was warm cooperation between them and the readiness to help when the help was needed. Estonia helped the young Soviet state during the famine in the Volga area (massive famine after the Civil War in Russia in its European part and the adjacent territories in 1921-1923).

Russia is represented in Estonia by its embassy in Tallinn, Consulate General in Narva and the Chancellery of the Consular Division of the Russian Embassy in Tartu. Estonia has its embassy in Moscow, Consulate General in St. Petersburg and Chancellery of St. Petersburg Consulate General in Pskov.

Today, cooperation between Russia and Estonia in culture, cross-border and other forms of cooperation is developing successfully. The 100th anniversary of de facto diplomatic relations will be marked later this year; it is an important date that will give us a chance to look into the past in order to successfully and consistently widen our cooperation in future.

“Russian-Tajik Relations Have Been on the Upswing in Recent Years”.

Author: Igor Lyakin-Frolov, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Russian Federation to the Republic of Tajikistan

I would venture to say that in the past several years, relations between Russia and Tajikistan have been on the upswing. They are based on the solid foundation of distinctly friendly and trusting contacts between our heads of state, mutual interest in intensifying their multidimensional development, and the desire to expand cooperation.

I would like to point out that our countries' approaches toward practically all international issues are similar or identical, and political dialogue is actively developing.

Russia and Tajikistan share the same desire to find mutually beneficial solutions to regional security issues, respond to current challenges, and combat international terrorism, religious extremism, and drug trafficking.

We have established close cooperation between our foreign ministries, and there are regularly scheduled bilateral consultations on current international issues. Work is currently under way to hold the third ministerial meeting in the “Russia+CA5” format. Such events are highly relevant and effective foreign policy mechanisms for discussing and working out common approaches toward international and regional issues.

To all of us, May 9 is a sacred day when we pay tribute to the memory of veterans who made it possible for us to enjoy life and confidently look to the future. Preparations for the anniversary began well in advance. For example, last fall, the Embassy, in conjunction with the Rossotrudnichestvo (Federal Agency for the Commonwealth of Independent States, Compatriots Living Abroad and International Humanitarian Cooperation) mission and Russia's 201st Military Base, started preparing for military-patriotic events.

There is now a core of enthusiasts who regularly hold Victory memorial events on their own initiative and look after WWII burials at Dushanbe's Orthodox cemetery. For our part, we intend to provide every assistance possible to such valuable initiatives and hope that more young people will join these important activities.

Plans for the immediate future include the unveiling of a memorial plaque in the town of Karatag in memory of its residents who were killed in the Great Patriotic War. The unveiling ceremony will be held together with public and veteran organizations of the republic's Tursunzade District. Several other events dedicated to the outbreak of WWII, including a roundtable, are scheduled for September.

I believe that Russian-Tajik humanitarian cooperation is among the most dynamically and successfully developing areas. Currently, about 21,000 Tajik nationals are studying at Russian higher educational institutions and another 7,000 are studying under Russian university programs in Tajikistan, as well as at Russian-Tajik (Slavic) University.

On the whole, the Russian language, Russian culture and Russian literature have retained their relevance in Tajikistan. We have a common understanding with our Tajik partners that Russian is a major tool for the country's development through broad access to Russian education, science and culture. Russian is mandatory at all schools in Tajikistan.

We are currently making preparations for launching a new wide-ranging project to build five Russian-language schools in Tajikistan. The best possible sites are being selected, which should be in line with the presidential status of this initiative, and talks are under way on the schools' working conditions.

Cooperation in migration is another significant aspect of our countries' bilateral interests. We have a clear understanding that labor migration from Tajikistan, as well as from a number of other countries in the region, is a long-term and mutually beneficial trend. Cooperation in this area provides Tajikistan with an essential source of hard currency revenues and helps improve the living standards of many Tajik families.

In recent years, positive changes have taken place in relations among Central Asian countries. People became fully aware of not only the increasing level of trust between their political leaders, but also of the advantages of good-neighborliness that have strengthened relations based on mutual respect and friendship.

Incidentally, Russia has always supported the Central Asian countries' course toward deepening integration processes in both the region and within the framework of organizations such as the CIS, the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), and the Eurasian Economic Union (EaEU).

This year, our U.S. partners presented a new Central Asian strategy that includes the main principles of U.S. policy in the region. It proclaims apparently noble goals aimed at strengthening the sovereignty and independence of Central Asian countries, expanding support to ensure stability in Afghanistan, assist reforms related to the rule of law and human rights, and so on. However, it seems that lurking behind all these statements and lofty motives is the intention to sideline Russia, which has traditionally held and continues to hold leading positions in the Central Asian region. It should be recalled that our countries and our nations are bound by centuries-old, historically established, multidimensional ties.

Russian-Tajik cooperation in the media is traditionally developing in a dynamic way. A key role in this cooperation is played by Russian, which is a language of interethnic and interstate communication.

I should also mention the international media project that we initiated in collaboration with the Tajik Society of Friendship and Cultural Ties with Foreign Countries. A special 60-page illustrated issue of the *Dusti* magazine was published with the active participation of diplomatic missions from Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and China accredited in the Republic of Tajikistan, as well as local historians. It featured materials about Great Patriotic War and World War II events and accounts by war veterans relating to the heroic deeds of soldiers from all former Union republics. I will venture to say that during the pandemic, far from scaling down our information and media efforts, the absence of routine forms of communication actually stimulated us to look for new interaction opportunities and became a kind of a catalyst of fresh ideas and projects.

The Coalition Factor: How Adversaries Became Allies and Won the War.

Author: Alexander Borisov, *Professor, Moscow State Institute (University) of International Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Doctor of Science (History); albor@rambler.ru*

HISTORY knows any number of fantastic metamorphoses, when adversaries or even enemies became partners and even allies (or vice versa), of which the anti-Hitler coalition of the Soviet Union, United States and Great Britain during the Great Patriotic War (1941-1945) and their collective contribution to the victory over fascism are the greatest examples. Having approached the critical point in history, the

leaders of the coalition members – Stalin, Roosevelt and Churchill – demonstrated a lot of wisdom. They pushed aside the enmity and mistrust of the prewar years to close ranks in the face of the threat from the bloc of aggressor states.

THE QUESTION that causes a lot of pain and has no answer – “Why did the states threatened by fascism fail to close ranks against it, its misanthropic ideology and its intention to enslave other peoples?” – remains on the agenda. After all, this could have been done fairly painlessly and, what is even more important, promptly. Who should be held responsible for the huge losses sustained by the world that had already approached a total catastrophe?

An analysis of the extremely complicated and highly contradictory political situation between the wars is indispensable if we want to assess the ideological, geopolitical, economic and other tightly intertwined factors which, in the final count, stirred up an unmanageable course of events.

Between the wars, Great Britain, still a strong imperial power, called the tune in European politics. Having accomplished its aim of disintegration of the Russian Empire of the Romanovs, London was unpleasantly surprised to discover that Soviet Russia developed into a new influential actor in European politics. The old and new challenges and contradictions generated a very specific animosity of the British elite toward the Soviet state. No wonder that at the eleventh hour of European and world history, it pushed the UK to irrational and inadequate decisions that could result in a loss of national independence.

Today, this should be carefully analyzed since the erroneous, or even catastrophic prewar British experience is repeated by their closest relatives probably due to their common Anglo-Saxon political culture. Today, Americans spare no effort to preserve, regardless of costs, their domination in the world even if this strategy is fraught with huge troubles for all actors of world politics and threatens international stability.

IT IS A WELL-KNOWN FACT that in view of the coming war, the Soviet Union tried to consolidate its security by persuading the Finns to move their border farther from Leningrad (it was at a distance of artillery fire) in exchange for a generous part of Soviet territory elsewhere along the Soviet-Finnish border. Intractable or even stubborn Finns refused. The self-conceited elite of this part of the former czarist empire that had used (like Poland) the revolutionary chaos in Russia to achieve independence, was cultivating anti-Russian syndrome. The Finnish stubbornness supported by the promises of outside assistance (Poland was another object of the same treatment) was actively fanned by Western powers: fighting against the Soviet Union should be continued.

France, a great European power, fell victim to German aggression and capitulated after less than 40 days of resistance. It was an important watershed in the course of this world war that sent the Western capitals into a shock: practically entire continental Europe was united under the sign of the swastika. The Kremlin that had never imagined such developments to happen, was also shocked.

In the final count, a clash between the old and new claimants to world domination was inevitable. Global challenges were mounting at a fast pace, which explains the key issue: why the turn from prewar enmity to a military alliance between the Anglo-Saxon powers and the Soviet Union after Germany's attack at the USSR was so fast.

Everything changed in the small hours of June 22, 1941. Having perfidiously violated the Nonaggression Pact, Hitler created objective conditions for a wide anti-fascist coalition, very much needed to undermine his plans of subjugating Europe and prevent world domination of fascism. Mutual enmity retreated under pressure of political expediency.

Britain and the United States were the Soviet Union's only allies, even if the U.S. remained out of the war till December 1941, when Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. Until that time, Washington preferred

caution and the role of a “reserve player” and the “great arsenal of democracy,” as President Roosevelt defined it.

The military alliance of the three powers survived despite acute disagreements and conflicts. It passed even harder tests of the postwar peaceful settlements. We all know that wars were and are waged not for glory but for tangible fruits of victory, for re-division of the world in favor of the victors at the expense of the defeated. World War II differed from the previous big and small wars not only by its global scope and the use of latest deadly weapons but also by the lavish democratic rhetoric of U.S. President Roosevelt who had learned the messianic lessons of Woodrow Wilson, his predecessor and teacher.

The 75th anniversary of the Great Victory was marked in a joint statement of Moscow and Washington, the fact that should not be underestimated. “The ‘Spirit of the Elbe’ is an example of how our countries can put aside differences, build trust, and cooperate in pursuit of a greater cause. As we work today to confront the most important challenges of the 21st century, we pay tribute to the valor and courage of all those who fought together to defeat fascism. Their heroic feat will never be forgotten.”

Kuybyshev as the Soviet Diplomacy Hub During World War II.

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IT WAS AT THE COST of tens of millions of lives and vast-scale devastation that our country defeated Nazi Germany and its satellites, saving humankind from the Brown Plague. The Red Army fought heroically, those who had not been drafted into the military worked selflessly, and Soviet diplomats made their contribution to the victory too.

The Great Patriotic War was a test for the entire government system of the Soviet Union. It made the USSR change its foreign policy agenda and revise its forms of diplomacy. The country mobilized all its domestic and international resources to safeguard its sovereignty and territorial integrity. Diplomacy was one of these resources.

The autumn of 1941 was our country’s hardest time during the war. Toward the end of August, rumors began to move around Moscow that the city was going to be surrendered to the Germans. Those rumors stirred anxiety among the population of the capital and among foreign diplomats posted in it.

The relocation of the diplomatic corps to Kuybyshev was not an impromptu act. By July 17, the NKID had packed 26 tons of archives into 510 boxes and sent them off to Melekess, 150 kilometers from Kuybyshev.

It would be a logical question why Kuybyshev was chosen as the Soviet Union’s wartime capital. Apparently, the main reason was that Kuybyshev was a large rail junction with direct rail links to practically all eastern regions of the country. Moreover, it stood on the Volga, which was a principal waterway and a major obstacle to a potential German advance.

Although, by evacuating the diplomats, the Soviet government protected them from danger, it made it impossible for them to monitor the situation in Moscow.

On October 19 and 20, 1941, the embassies of 12 countries – Afghanistan, Bulgaria, Britain, Greece, Iran, China, Mongolia, Norway, Poland, Tuva, Yugoslavia, and Japan – plus several other diplomatic missions, including the mission of the French Committee of National Liberation, relocated to Kuybyshev.

Altogether about 300 foreign nationals moved to the “reserve capital” from Moscow. Some of the diplomats brought their wives, children, translators, cooks, servants, and drivers with them. Janitors and stokers were practically the only personnel who were hired locally.

Some of the embassies kept three to five people behind in Moscow to look after their buildings and property. Larger embassies left some of their diplomats in Moscow to maintain contact with Soviet leaders who remained in the capital.

Being split into two parts was a serious hindrance for the NKID, affecting its efficiency and coordination between its different divisions. Some of the officials had to make regular courier trips between Kuybyshev and Moscow, a task made difficult by wartime conditions.

November 6, 1941 may be considered the date when the Kuybyshev-based diplomatic establishment officially began to function. On that day, the entire diplomatic corps and foreign journalists were present at a festive meeting at the Opera Theater marking the 24th anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution.

On arriving in Kuybyshev, foreign diplomats, who were used to comfortable living conditions, were shocked to see the apartments provided for them.

The fact that about 20 of the best mansions in downtown Kuybyshev had urgently been made vacant for foreign diplomats to move in didn't prevent discontent in the diplomatic corps.

One of the main tasks of Kuybyshev-based diplomats was to organize foreign units in the Red Army. For this purpose, Poland and Czechoslovakia had military missions in addition to diplomatic missions in the city.

Not all the evacuee foreign diplomats behaved the way they were expected to. Soviet security officers noticed that some of the embassies, mainly the Polish one, were getting involved in black marketeering and in more dangerous activities. The Polish Embassy was caught spying, and Ambassador Stanisław Kot was declared *persona non grata* and expelled from the USSR. A Japanese agent arrested in Syzran in 1942 was suspected of links to the Japanese Embassy, and Ambassador Tatekawa himself was sending intelligence messages not only to Japan but also to Germany.

The diplomatic corps remained in Kuybyshev until August 1943 and returned to Moscow after the Soviet victory in the Battle of Kursk. It was brought back by special trains from August 10 to August 25. The Japanese Embassy had the largest amount of baggage to carry across and ordered about 80 railcars via the NKID. Other embassies had a lot less. The Americans needed 15 and the Swedes only 12 cars. The missions of Cuba and Tuva shared one car. Moscow definitively regained the status of the Soviet capital late in 1943.

The Crimean Conference as Remembered by My Father.

Author: Alexey Podtserob, *Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary*

MY FATHER, Boris Fyodorovich Podtserob, was the senior assistant of the People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs of the Soviet Union during the war. This position allowed him to attend a number of

historic diplomatic talks. That is how he came to participate in the Yalta Conference. My father did not leave written memoirs, but he used to tell me about the fateful meeting among three of the world's giants.

It seems that my father's story, which I have set down in writing, may help fill in the general picture of what happened at that time, in February 1945, on the Black Sea coast of Crimea.

There was strong disagreement about where the conference was to be held. Initially, the British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, refused to go to Yalta. He proposed Edinburgh, Nassau, La Valletta, Athens, Nicosia, Cairo, Jerusalem, or Rome. All these cities had hotels, airfields, and communication facilities. Joseph Stalin, Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR, insisted on Crimea.

During the course of the Crimean meeting, which took place February 4-11, 1945, coordinated decisions were made on everything, with the exception of the Polish question, which took up most of the eight sessions of deliberation.

No agreement was reached concerning Poland's western border. Churchill insisted that satisfying Poland's demands would only give the Poles "indigestion" [from eating too much "rich German food" – Trans.]. His stance was supported by the Americans. Later, at the Potsdam Conference held from July 17 to August 2, 1945, it was decided that part of East Prussia and Danzig [Gdansk] would be included in Polish territory, and that its western border would pass along the Oder and Western Neisse rivers.

The Yalta discussion also included the USSR's participation in the war against Japan. This issue was central in the negotiations between Stalin and Roosevelt. Churchill did not take part in the discussion but put his signature on the final document. The U.S. was extremely interested in having the Soviet Union join the war against the Japanese after the surrender of Germany. The Americans were willing to pay any price for this.

Stalin agreed with the President's point of view and promised that within two or three months after Germany's surrender, the USSR would enter the war against Japan. In return, the Soviet Union wanted Southern Sakhalin, the Kurile Islands, Port Arthur, and joint operation of railways with China.

The discussion of plans to create a new international organization was a central focus of the talks. Stalin agreed that the Soviet Union would participate, but on the condition that it be given 16 votes: one for each of the republics. Roosevelt objected to this demand as going against the founding principles of the new body. However, he added, if the USSR insisted, then the U.S. would demand 48 votes based on its number of states. Stalin made concessions and agreed that two republics – Ukraine and Belarus – would receive the right to vote along with the Soviet Union.

At the Yalta conference it was confirmed, upon the insistence of Stalin and Roosevelt, that Germany would be divided after it surrendered, but the participants decided to keep these plans secret until the capitulation of the Third Reich.

As a fellow victorious power, France was supported primarily by Winston Churchill and Anthony Eden, who was the British Foreign Minister. Their argument was that, since the French were neighbors of the Germans, only they could form an army to contain Germany. At the same time, Stalin noted that France's participation in the war with eight divisions was less than the Yugoslavs' participation with nine divisions and could not be compared to that of the Polish government in Lublin, which had sent 11 divisions to the front. But in the end, the Soviet delegation did agree with the Western proposals.

Despite such differences of opinion, an atmosphere of trust reigned over the sessions. One example is a remark made by Churchill during one of the dinners. He asked Stalin which was the highest among the Soviet honors. Stalin replied that the title "Hero of the USSR" was the highest distinction, and then inquired why the Prime Minister wanted to know. Churchill replied that after the Bolsheviks disbanded

the Tsarist army in the wake of the revolution, he himself had helped run the remobilization that compelled the Bolsheviks to create the Red Army, which was now winning such brilliant victories over the German troops. Therefore, Churchill concluded, he had created the Soviet army and deserved the highest Soviet award.

Some Episodes of the 1799 Visit of a Russian Squadron to Palermo: Commemorating Admiral Fyodor Ushakov.

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IN AUGUST and September 1799, the Sicilian port of Palermo hosted a visit from a Russian-British-Turkish fleet. As one historian said, there was “a forest of masts all over the Palermo harbor.”¹ The visit isn’t really a historical landmark, nor is it a reason for anniversary celebrations. But amazingly, there is, as it were, a bridge between that event and the present day.

In 2018-2019, Russkoye Polye (Russian Field), an association of Russians living in Italy and headed by Yekaterina Kornilkova, worked hard on a project to erect a monument to Russian Admiral Fyodor Ushakov in Palermo. Although the monument had been designed and the Russian side offered to bear all the expenses for making, transporting and installing it, Italian local authorities were reluctant, and at times were plainly refusing to give the go-ahead to the project.

Surely, arguments about past events aren’t the best basis for international unity. Worse than that, one even comes across denials of what are obviously axiomatic facts of the recent past. Controversies over World War II, which were rekindled this year by the 75th anniversary of the victory over Nazism, are a case in point. In view of all this, it was an interesting task to look for various documentary sources confirming the important role played by Ushakov’s squadron in Palermo and elsewhere in southern Italy.

It may seem convenient to someone from the viewpoint of today’s politics to question the rationality and strength of the Russian-Neapolitan alliance formed in December 1798 and to wonder how much the population of Sicily supported the Bourbon king Ferdinand who was ruling the island at that time. Let’s leave aside records of the peculiar behavior of Nelson and his officers toward his Russian allies, for example playing down the Russian contribution to coalition victories, disavowing the terms of a truce with the Parthenopeans, promising to put Malta under a hunger blockade if the Russian flag were hoisted anywhere on the island, and spreading untruths about Russian plans with the precautionary use of the word “likely.” Documentary coincidences would make more sense to focus on within the tight limits of a journal article.

According to Musin-Pushkin-Bruce, on September 2, 1799, the day after arriving in Palermo, Ushakov and Turkish admiral Kadir Bey visited the royal palace and were introduced to Ferdinand, Maria Carolina, and Crown Prince Francis. The Russian envoy said that Ferdinand had thanked Ushakov for coming over, praised “the heroism of the Russian warriors, who had displayed outstanding courage and bravery,” and expressed special gratitude to Russian Emperor Paul I for “the liberation of Italy from its burden of oppression,” for restoring “well-being and peace” in Europe, and for achieving “lasting peace based on genuine welfare.” Ferdinand also records the visit of the allied commanders, though he focuses on the sumptuousness of their cortege – a long string of wagons with at least 20 officers walking behind them.

The coalition fleet's stay in Palermo was marred by protests of local people on September 8 at the rowdy behavior of Ottoman sailors.

The clashes had cultural, religious and language roots with Palermitan women being one of the sources of violence. There were fights over women at several taverns with a local man killed by a Turkish bullet. Palermitans fought fiercely with whatever they could lay their hands on – sticks, rocks, anything. Up to 50 Turks were killed or injured. Russian and British ships cut short an attempt by a Turkish ship to swing around to make its cannon face the city's main street, which was running from the seafront to the royal palace. Eventually, Kadir Bey was forced to visit Ferdinand and apologize for the behavior of his sailors but claimed they had been provoked by Palermitans.

This is how those events were described by Musin-Pushkin-Bruce in a report of September 1214 (Italinsky made a similar description in his above-mentioned message): By their sheer presence, which “manifested outstanding bravery that is typical of Russian people, [Ushakov's officers] instantly dispersed many thousands of agitated Palermitans who had gathered in many places without causing them any harm in doing so; thereby they saved the lives of many Turks; their courageous and bold behavior amazed the entire local population and set an example of outstanding bravery to the Palermitan army.” With the personal intervention of Ushakov, who visited Kadir Bey's ship on September 10 for talks with the Ottoman admiral, the conflict was subdued. However, by general agreement, the Turkish fleet withdrew to Constantinople thereafter. The Russian squadron set off for Naples on September 14.

The Russian squadron was given high honors in Palermo and its stay caused no problems to the local population but, on the contrary, helped resolved a crisis. Consequently, it would be right and fair to put up a monument to Ushakov in Palermo as a symbol of old positive ties between Russia and Italy.

A Russian Cathedral in Karlovy Vary.

Author: Yuri Balbyshkin, Candidate of Science (History)

KARLOVY VARY, a spa in the Czech Republic, is well known in Russia: many visited it and even more heard about it. In the last couple of centuries, the share of Russians among those who came as patients and those who wanted to settle permanently remains fairly big. Its popularity among Russians goes back to the September 1711 visit of Russian Emperor Peter I to Carlsbad (the German name of this Czech city). It got its status and name in 1370 from Charles IV, Holy Roman Emperor and King of Bohemia, who, having injured his foot during hunting, immersed it in a natural reservoir of local mineral water and felt much better. Carlsbad in German means “Karl's hot spa,” and Karlovy Vary in Czech means “Karl's Boiling Waters.”

The very fact that members of the imperial family, Russian aristocracy and the cultural and artistic community appreciated the spa made it highly popular across the empire. Alexander Pushkin, great Russian poet, contributed to the general enthusiasm.

Germans predominated in this part of Austria-Hungary; its much smaller Czech population was not alien to the historic tradition of Orthodoxy which became especially obvious in the late 19th century: Saints Cyril and Methodius were and remain venerated in the Czech Republic in which July 5, the Day of their Memory, is a cultural, religious and state holiday and an official day-off.

The first Orthodox church in Carlsbad was temporary and functioned at high season in the Bohemian Hall of the famous grand hotel of the Pupp family. In this context, Grand Duchess Elena Pavlovna of

Russia, Hereditary Grand Duchess of Mecklenburg (1806-1873), deserves special mention. Having visited Carlsbad with her husband in 1835, she returned there in 1862-1864 and 1866-1868. A deeply religious person with a Russian soul, she was inspired by the idea of an Orthodox church in Carlsbad. The cathedral was consecrated, thanks to her efforts, on August 30, 1863 by priest Vasily Voytkovsky invited for this purpose from Üröm in Hungary. The fact that Alexander II had signed an imperial permission to establish an Orthodox church in Carlsbad only a month earlier, on July 22, 1863, speaks volumes about the meticulous preparatory efforts.

Count Alexey Ivanovich Musin-Pushkin (1825-1879), who belonged to the glorious noble family, also played a great role in setting up a Russian church in Carlsbad. Contemporaries wrote about him as a great man involved in small projects, charities in the first place. He was the first warden of the Russian church, head of the committee established to gather money (which started functioning on June 29 (July 11) 1862 on the Memory Day of Saint Apostles Peter and Paul. By that time, they had been chosen as saint patrons of the future cathedral).

In 1877, an Anglican Church of St. Luke was built on the place which the Russian committee had rejected; this outstanding monument of architecture built in pseudo-Gothic style did not survive the ordeals of 20th century. Today, it houses a wax museum.

In 1872, the Russian Empire celebrated the 200th birth anniversary of Emperor Peter the Great; the Russian colony in Carlsbad joined the celebrations that began on May 30 with the Divine Liturgy in the house church. On the same day, at the gala dinner, Dmitry Lepyoshkin, a prominent merchant and banker from Moscow, said that the greatness and glory of Peter and Russia meant that the Russians needed a new church. Money gathering for this worthy aim began.

The Grand Duchess Elena Petrovna died in 1873, and her daughter Ekaterina Mikhailovna (1827-1894) replaced her in the board of guardians. Count Musin-Pushkin died in 1879. In 1891, when Alexander Abaza (1821-1895), privy councilor, a finance minister in the past and a very wealthy person, became the churchwarden and brought a new lease of life into fundraising.

In 1882, Archpriest Nikolai Apraksin (1847-1907) became the priest of the Russian church in Prague and served in this capacity till 1901. During the holiday season, he was moving from Prague to Carlsbad. The history of the present cathedral is closely connected with his name.

A man of outstanding intelligence and organizational abilities, a graduate of the St. Petersburg Theological Academy, he dedicated his life to preaching Orthodoxy in the Czech lands.

By 1883, the sum of about 25,000 rubles and over 31,000 guildens was collected. In March, the St. Petersburg consistory gave its permission for the construction of a church in Carlsbad. The suitable plot of land found between the Parken Strasse (today Park Street) and the Edward Knoll Street (today, Král Jiří Street) belonged to the city council. Invariably interested in bigger flows of Russian visitors to Carlsbad, it met the Russian community halfway.

The cathedral was built in the traditions of 17th-century Russian churches in Moscow and Yaroslavl in less than four years.

The consecration took place on May 28 (June 9) 1897 and was attended by all three archpriests of the Russian cathedral in Carlsbad. The service was conducted by mitered Archpriest Alexander Lebedev (at that time, priest of the Kazan Cathedral in St. Petersburg); Archpriest Nikolai Apraksin, the first priest of the cathedral who had supervised its construction, and Nikolai Ryzhkov, still a psalm singer in the Cathedral of St. Nicholas in Vienna, graduate of the St. Petersburg Theological Academy.

The 110th anniversary of the Cathedral of Sts. Peter and Paul, Prime Apls. was marked in 2007. Celebrations were headed by Metropolitan of Smolensk and Kaliningrad Kirill (today, Holy Patriarch of

Moscow and All Russia) and attended by numerous guests and officials. Metropolitan Kirill deemed it necessary to point out that the history of the Sts. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Karlovy Vary brimmed with many tragedies of the 20th century: World War I, the revolution in Russia and German occupation. The cathedral that has survived these tragedies is one of the pillars of Orthodox culture in Western Europe and the spiritual center for all Orthodox Russians in Czechia.

Soviet Ambassador to China Dmitry Bogomolov: Diplomatic Brilliance and Personal Tragedy.

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AFTER THE SOVIET UNION and the Republic of China restored diplomatic relations in 1932, the USSR's foreign ministry – the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs (NKID) – began to ponder who to appoint as the plenipotentiary representative (ambassador).

There was a lot of speculation among the Russian émigré community in China and in the press about who would be the Soviet ambassador in Nanjing, the then Chinese capital.

The position was given to Dmitry Bogomolov, a comparatively young – he was 42 at the time – but experienced diplomat who had previously had senior postings in Warsaw and London. What made the Soviet Union's top leadership choose him?

Bogomolov was an extraordinary person. It's hard to believe that that refined intellectual who seemed to have been born to be a diplomat, a talented analyst, and a rare polyglot (he spoke German, French, English, Spanish, Italian, Polish, and Ukrainian) didn't have a higher education and was in fact a self-taught man.

Ivan Maysky,⁷ an outstanding Soviet diplomat, has some words of praise for Bogomolov in his memoirs. Both Maysky and Bogomolov did two stints at the embassy in London and were there together on both occasions. "The important post of first secretary at the plenipotentiary representation was held by Dmitry Vasilyevich Bogomolov, a man about 35 years old, intelligent, businesslike and a competent administrator," Maysky says.

Bogomolov was born in St. Petersburg in 1890. He was less than three years old when his father died and began to work, still a child. After finishing four-year secondary school, he became a bank clerk. In 1910, he was drafted into the army and, while stationed in a reserve force in Yamburg, a town near St. Petersburg, was able to pass all gymnasium (high-class secondary school) graduation exams and received a gymnasium graduate certificate. He left from the army with a junior officer rank and went to Vladivostok, where he worked as a company accountant from 1911 to 1914.

In fact, Bogomolov had a chance of being posted in China before 1933. When Soviet-Polish relations soured in 1928, Bogomolov, at that time ambassador in Warsaw, was offered the position of consul general in Harbin, which had been vacant since March 1927. When Bogomolov was on vacation, he made a blitz visit to Harbin at the behest of the NKID, bringing his wife with him. That trip was planned to evolve into a long stay, but this didn't happen – the NKID brought the Bogomolovs back to Moscow. But that visit enriched Bogomolov's knowledge of China.

Chinese issues had been on Bogomolov's diplomatic agendas long before he had received his Nanjing posting. As we have said, he did two stints in Britain, being the embassy's number two figure and "chief writer" during the second stint, which immediately preceded his transfer to China.

Possibly, one reason for posting Bogomolov in China was his involvement in drafting the Soviet-Polish Non-Aggression Pact during his ambassadorial tenure in Warsaw. The Soviet Union planned a nonaggression pact with China. We may be sure that Bogomolov's experience of work on the Soviet-Polish accord came in very handy in negotiating the non-aggression treaty with the government of Chiang Kai-shek.

Bogomolov was at first skeptical about the offer of the position in China – by that time, he had spent more than ten years abroad practically uninterruptedly, needed rest, and asked for a Moscow-based job at the NKID but there was no vacancy there – but eventually got enthusiastic about it. He was inspired by the challenge of being at what was a scene of such a diversity of rivalries.

THE INTERNATIONAL SITUATION was extremely grave in the early 1930s. The fragile peace that followed World War I and the revolutionary upsurge was aggravated by the Great Depression, which started in the United States and spread worldwide. Western powers, though formally recognizing the Soviet Union, did not abandon their plan to put the socialist state out of existence. They decided to use Germany's National Socialists, who took power in January 1933, as the instrument to carry it out.

The Soviet Union was meanwhile building a new reality, trying to rapidly industrialize its economy and create modern armed forces that could guarantee the country's sovereignty. Needing peace, the USSR made persistent efforts to win international recognition for itself and worked hard for the creation of a collective security system in Europe. But simultaneously it continued to support the struggle of the world proletariat against the bourgeoisie and to help communist parties worldwide, including the Communist Party of China. The Soviet Union's serious foreign policy achievements proved unable to resolve the international antagonisms of those times and at one point it became obvious that a world war was approaching.

Bogomolov had the task of proving to Chiang that he was mistaken and to win him over to the Soviet side. This wasn't an easy job.

AT FIRST, Chiang ignored Bogomolov. He avoided the ambassador's mediation in communicating with the Soviet leadership and preferred unofficial contacts with Moscow via his personal emissaries.

Chiang hailed the establishment in November 1933 of diplomatic relations between the Soviet Union and the United States and the USSR's desire to join the League of Nations. He expected it would now be easier for the USSR and China to interact.

NANJING SUMMERS are unbearably hot and humid. Time and again, black rainclouds envelop the sky and, with a lot of thunder, throw torrents of rain on streets lined with plane trees. In the summer of 1937, Bogomolov's personal life was getting just as gloomy.

On August 21, Bogomolov sent the following telegram to Moscow with a "top priority" mark: "Non-aggression pact signed at 22:00 today. I made oral statement. Agreement reached to make text of pact available to press on August 29, so it appears in newspapers in morning on 30th."

The pact consisted of only four articles but each word in it was priceless.

Bogomolov said that he had had a meeting with Chiang before the pact was signed. "He accepted all our proposals, including the proposal to sign an arms supplies agreement in Moscow," the ambassador said.

The non-aggression pact and military aid that Soviet Union did provide under it saved China from a catastrophe. The treaty radically changed the military situation in the Far East. The five-year pact proved viable and was extended for another five-year term in 1942.

But China wasn't the treaty's only beneficiary. It was mainly this accord that enabled the Soviet Union to achieve its strategic pre-World War II goal of avoiding a two-front war. But the Soviet ambassador wasn't thanked for it. In October 1937, Bogomolov, the godfather of that historic document, was summoned to Moscow.

ON OCTOBER 13, 1937, Dmitry Bogomolov was arrested in Room 308 of the Moskva Hotel in the center of Moscow.

According to Stalin's statements, his main accusation was the allegation that Bogomolov had misinformed Moscow about the state of affairs in China and the military and political situation in the Far East in general.

Bogomolov was also slammed for statements during final talks on the non-aggression pact that could have been interpreted as implications that the Soviet Union might reconsider a proposal for a mutual assistance treaty.

Bogomolov's incautious statements during meetings with Chinese leaders were increasingly angering Stalin and eventually made him mistrust the ambassador.

BOGOMOLOV was a uniquely hard worker, and his prolific writing was one of the ways in which this manifested itself. In addition to encrypted telegrams, he nearly daily transcribed his meetings, corresponded with deputy people's commissars and kept a diary. He did a lot of analytical work too. In exploring intricacies of home politics in a country he was posted in and in examining international situations, he would never stop and made every effort to get to the truth. He would scrutinize every detail and foresee various scenarios. This explains why his reports to Moscow contained so many details some of which might have seemed redundant.

A man of keen intelligence and brimming with initiatives, Bogomolov was showering the NKID with proposals. Some were dryly turned down and others sparked annoyance as accepting them would have meant intruding into the prerogatives of other agencies.

A conflict in the summer of 1935 between Bogomolov and Soviet intelligence officers posted in China might have poured fuel on the fire. NKVD intelligence officer Yakov Walden,⁴² who was posted in Shanghai, was arrested by Chinese counterintelligence and jailed in Hankou. Fellow intelligence officers unsuccessfully tried to bribe Chinese officials into releasing him and drew members of official Soviet missions into the scheme. Bogomolov, in a report to Moscow, blamed the unseemly incident on specific individuals at the Soviet intelligence headquarters.

Bogomolov's accusers also remembered sanctions slapped on him by the Communist Party in 1921. A party commission, at a meeting in Moscow, ruled that Bogomolov be expelled from the party as ineligible for membership as a former czarist army officer, even though by that time he had already joined the diplomatic service of Soviet Russia and was secretary of the diplomatic mission to Ukraine.

JUNE 16, 2020 was the 130th birth anniversary of Bogomolov, an outstanding diplomat whose contribution to the advancement of the interests of our country is yet to be fully appreciated.

Our Common History: Key Approaches to the Assessment of the Events of the 1940s in the Baltic Countries.

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THE EVENTS of summer 1940 in the Baltics remain the subject of largescale discussions at all levels – from classrooms to offices of heads of state. This is to be expected: “The basic trends of historical politics in the Baltic countries are the use by the political elites of administrative and legal instruments to consolidate the preferred ‘versions of the past’ as well as active political efforts at the interstate level to make the Baltic ‘versions of the past’ part of the common European memory policies.”¹ I should say that these efforts were fairly successful. Late in the last century, Russia failed, for objective and subjective reasons, to present its interpretation of these historical events in their fullness. In the last decade, the situation changed.

The majority of Russian historians believe that historical-political discussions of this subject will not end soon: these issues and suggested assessments are fundamentally important for both sides. This conclusion is supported by a fairly big number of practical reasons and an analysis of the key foreign policy documents related to Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

Any studies of historical questions from the positions of this science are burdened by additional problems created by politically biased assessments and dual legal nature. This is typical of the studies of the events of 1940 in the Baltic countries.

In some cases, our colleagues, jurists and historians of the Baltic states, practice this approach. Magnus Il'miarv has pointed out that the loss of independence by the Baltic countries was one of the results of the European international political crisis stirred up, on the one hand, by the Munich Deal, the treaties between the Soviet Union and Germany, German perfidy, skillful propaganda, and expectations that both the Soviet Union and Germany would be defeated. On the other, this loss was caused by lack of realistic and independent foreign policy of the Baltic states in 1939-1940 and by their internal policy.... This means that the quiet loss of independence by the Baltic states and their total disappearance from the European political scene were the result of a long process and not only due to an absolutely hopeless situation and forced steps caused by the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact.

The events of June-August 1940 were predated by the events of 1939. In Europe, the interval between August 1939 and July 1940 was filled with numerous very important events that could have corrected the political processes unfolding in the eastern part of the Baltic. Any denial of this discredits the academic approaches practiced today. We call on all and everyone to accept the fact that history of Europe began not in August 1939 and admit that the events of 1940 should be analyzed in the context of the entire “between the wars” period. There is a frequently voiced opinion that the mutual assistance treaties with the Baltic states signed in September 1939 were the first step toward making the Baltic states part of the Soviet Union.

Today, nearly 30 years after the 2nd Congress, this opinion and legal assessment are the most balanced and, probably, the only possible.

The governments of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania had no choice but let the Soviet Union to station its troops on their territories. This was not annexation since they preserved their sovereignties. The term “annexation” used by Baltic politicians and historians cannot serve an adequate foundation for the “doctrine of occupation.” More than that, sometimes, historians of the Baltic states do not use the term “occupation” as applied to the Soviet Union and rely on the term “annexation” or “formal annexation.”

This construct contains a flaw. In 1940, this form of annexation did not contradict international law.

Today, historiography in the Baltic states relies on old and tested patterns. First, much is written about the unique nature of the Soviet-German secret protocols which is not true. This fully applies to the explanation of the terms “sphere of interests” and “sphere of influence” as the instruments of solely Soviet diplomacy. In fact, secret protocols and spheres of interests/influence were common diplomatic practices of the time, British diplomacy in particular. Second, there are numerous attempts to equalize the policies of Hitler and Stalin. The British academic publication of the materials of the Nurnberg Trials quotes the former foreign minister of Nazi Germany who was the first to offer the thesis of shared responsibility of Hitler and Stalin.¹⁵ The judges rejected his arguments, the fact of fundamental importance. This means that Baltic politicians wittingly or unwittingly promote the opinion of the foreign minister of fascist Germany executed according to the death sentence passed by the tribunal.

The analysis of a certain number of legal categories as applied to the situation created in the context of legal continuity of the Baltic states after the Soviet Union’s disintegration is a prerequisite of detailed studies of political repercussions in case of acceptance of certain formulas of legal continuity. The legal continuity issues are not purely academic.

The teaching aids for Estonian teachers published on the order of the Integration Foundation have pointed out: “For Russia, an official recognition of occupation is fraught with imagined or real dangers be it the legal status of the Baltic Russians or potential compensations that Russia would try to avoid at any cost.”

No wonder the most radical groups of nationalists closely connected with emigration were actively promoting the concept of “occupation” and legal continuity.

THE EVENTS of June-July 1940 cannot be assessed outside the historical context. The following rhetorical question to the contemporaries has been regularly asked in the last three decades in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania: Is it true that there were people who wanted to live under socialism, let alone, in Stalin’s USSR? Today, the answer is not that clear as it was some 80 years ago.

First, left and socialist governments came to power through the usual procedure, that is, elections, a rare thing in the 1930s in Europe.

Second, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia were authoritarian states to the greatest extent. Today, state coups, banned political parties and suspended Constitutions are regarded as the classical features of totalitarianism yet it is wrong to apply contemporary assessments to the past.

Third, everything said about the left democratic or even socialist ideas as alien to the Baltics are far-fetched. In the 1920s, Socialist-Revolutionaries, Trudoviks (Labor Group) and Social-Democrats were elected to parliaments in the Baltic states and even formed governments.

Historical discussions with the Baltic countries are taking place in unequal conditions. The academic community of Russia represents the entire range of opinions about the events of 1939-1940. Here is a pertinent example. Yelena Zubkova, Doctor of History, chief research associate at the Institute of Russian History, Russian Academy of Sciences, supports, on the whole, the concept of “occupation” in her fundamental monograph published in Russia.

ployed by a state organization of equal importance. Having realized that Russian diplomats, historians, scientists, and experts share different interpretations of the region’s history, our neighbors announced, with a lot of pathos that brought to mind Roman Caesars: “The Letts have the right sine irae e studio decide what happened and what did not happen in Latvia; the Letts have the right to write their biography themselves.” The same is heard from Estonia and Lithuania. They have the right to write their own biographies, this much is obvious, yet Latvia, Estonia and even Lithuania are homes of not only

“titular” but also other nations with different opinions about the past in the part unrelated to dainas, song festivals and the Vilnius Baroque

We are aware of the highly complicated nature of tribulations, to which the Baltic peoples were subjected, and are prepared to look for balanced assessments of the past yet these tribulations do not “give a special right to exclusiveness since many peoples of Europe suffered in the past...”

Crime Against Childhood: Tragic Pages of the Armenian Genocide.

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John S. Akopov and Igor Bondarenko have just published a new book in Bratislava. The former is an essayist and member of the Union of Russian Writers, and the latter a professor, Doctor of Law, and president of the European Academy of Security and Conflictology. It relates one of the most terrible pages in the history of the Armenian people – the destruction of their future through the indiscriminate slaughter of children in an episode of genocide under the Ottoman Empire.

The prologue was written by Ara Abrahamyan, President of the Union of Russian Armenians and UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador. The words of William Saroyan, a famous American writer of Armenian origin who won a Pulitzer Prize and an Academy Award, are used as an epigraph in the preface: “These children... [i]f they belonged to any nation, it was to the nation of children.” This statement emphasizes the unacceptability of the very thought of a crime against a generation just coming into being.

Addressing unjustified brutality against children, the most defenseless part of any nation, Abrahamyan writes the following: “Studying the history and consequences of genocide has revealed a number of repercussions, including harmful impacts on demography, psychology, morality, economics, culture, and politics. Leaders of the Young Turks movement attempted to solve the Armenian issue through the total physical extermination of Armenians, including children, with the aim to totally erase the concept of “Armenian” from the slate of the new Turkey” (p. 7).

This monograph by Akopov and Bondarenko is the final book of a trilogy devoted to the Armenian issue. The first two, *Genocide of the Armenian People* and *By Strength and Cross*, were also published by the European Academy of Security and Conflictology.

This publication also contains some facts that have escaped the attention of historians and political scientists, having been overshadowed by World War I and the genocide itself. For example, the Armenians comprised the cultural and scientific elite of the Ottoman Empire. It is difficult to overestimate their contribution to the development of Turkish society and the creation of its unique identity.

Yet, the researchers of this dark page in world history also note the fact that it was Turkish leaders who cultivated the idea of exterminating a whole people. Granted, there were many in the Ottoman Empire who openly opposed the brutal policy of eradication. “It is necessary to emphasize that despite the deadly threat, a considerable number of high-ranking Turkish officials, officers, representatives of the clergy, and ordinary citizens... resisted the official state policy of Armenian extermination by refusing to comply with the criminal orders, thereby saving Armenians even at the cost of their own lives,” the authors write (p. 19).

The numbers alone speak volumes. "As a result of the Armenian pogroms committed by the Turks during the years of genocide, about 500,000 Armenian children were slashed, stabbed, burned, poisoned, strangled, drowned in the Black Sea, lakes and rivers, or died of starvation and epidemic diseases. Hundreds of thousands of Armenian children were orphaned and forcibly Islamicized" (p. 20).

As one would expect, the book provides an answer to why it was the Armenian people in particular who became the focus of their historical neighbors' aggression and violence.

The genocide itself did not arise instantaneously; The extermination process had been prepared in advance. Moreover, mass assaults of Christians had occurred earlier and were certainly not isolated events. Casualties numbered in the hundreds and thousands, and many Armenians were deprived of shelter and driven out of their places of origin.

The text provides numerous eyewitness accounts of the barbaric annihilation of Armenian children. They were mercilessly wiped out merely because they happened to be born. Children were subjected to forcible Islamization with the intent to make them forget their roots and to renounce their heritage.

Children who survived without a guardian were assigned shelter somewhere, but their fate was no easier, although such "care" was portrayed by the Turkish authorities of the time as an unquestionable act of kindness. "The real reason for 'concern' about the fate of Armenian children is revealed in a secret circular (No. 830) by Talaat Pasha, the Minister of Internal Affairs of the Ottoman Empire, dated December 12, 1915, which reads as follows: 'Pick up and feed only those orphans who are unable to remember the horrors that their parents underwent. The rest are to be rounded up in caravans and destroyed.'" (p. 61)

The study builds its narrative on objective facts. It also tells about acts of self-sacrifice that were committed by many Turks who stood up for members of this nation that was being exterminated.

It should be noted that the Turks' assistance to the Armenian population during this period of persecution finds little mention in official documents. One explanation for this fact is that in the Ottoman Empire, any Turk who rendered assistance to Armenians could immediately be put to a painful death. However, numerous cases of Armenian children being rescued by Turkish families, as well as protests by Turkish officials who refused to participate in bloody massacres, have nonetheless come to light. The mayor of Aleppo opposed the deportation of Armenians and outlawed any form of repression against them.

The great Turkish poet, novelist and public figure Nazım Hikmet was among those who asked forgiveness from the Armenian people. His example was followed by other prominent Turkish intellectuals.

Russia – and this is specifically noted by the authors – has always come to the aid of the Armenian people in their difficult times. In 1897, in Moscow, even before the events surrounding the genocide, Grigor Janshyan's book *Brotherly Help to Armenians Who Have Suffered in Turkey* was published in Russian. The interest in it was so great that it was even republished because there were not enough copies to go around.

This book is a testament, a warning, and a work of academic research dedicated first and foremost to the commitment that nothing like this be allowed to happen again. "Those who do not remember the past are doomed to repeat it." These words of George Santayana, an American philosopher, famous humanist, and writer of Spanish origin, are the best possible illustration of what happened in the Ottoman Empire at the beginning of the 20th century, and what today is known to humanity as the Armenian genocide.

Only someone who has neither honor nor conscience could wage war against childhood, committing crimes that assault the bases of commonly accepted morality and rectitude.

Thought-Provoking Books.

Igor Demyanenko, *Head of the Consulate General of the Russian Federation in Kharkov, Candidate of Science (Law)*; demyanenko.igor@yandex.ru

THE IMPORTANCE of books has long been characterized aphoristically. This is corroborated by quotes from great people who have become prophets of social developments and human fates.

Every bibliophile and every ordinary reader have their own evaluation criteria for books, but everyone will probably agree that there are books that are not to be missed. At the same time, there are research projects that offer new ideas and new ways to communicate with the reader.

In 2020, the Moscow publishing house Kanon+ brought out a collection of biographical sketches about Soviet ambassadors who participated in the Great Patriotic War, titled "From the Frontline to the Diplomatic Front," prepared by a team of authors from the Russian Foreign Ministry under the editorship of P.V. Stegnyy and N.M. Barinova.

It would seem that this is a purely thematic format, a biographical reference book that at first glance may be interesting to Russian foreign service officers and the relatives and friends of those people whose photographs are alphabetically arranged in the book. Needless to say, you admire many of these fates as you read the book. They are amazing and exciting. But when you close the book, these fates remain under the closed cover. However, if a reader is really interested in the professional life of diplomats and their wartime record, thanks to which we can live and work in peace, then the book as such becomes a source of its new life.

Meanwhile, a Foreign Ministry publication that diplomat A.E. Turovsky, a member of the Russian Writers' Union, presented to the Consulate General brought forth the idea to organize an exhibition featuring biographies of ambassadors/war veterans who were born in Ukraine.

Eight stands with the heroes' biographies were set up at the Consulate General and an exhibition opened, timed to coincide with the 75th anniversary of the Great Victory and Russian Diplomats Day, attracting visitors every day.

Employees of the International Relations Department at the Kharkov City Administration used the materials published in the book to implement a city-wide project, Kharkov diplomaticheskyy [Diplomatic Kharkov], an eponymous calendar for 2020, a copy of which was presented to the Russian Foreign Ministry.

Another project implemented by the Consulate General involved the K.I. Shulzhenko City Museum of Famous Residents, which marked its 25th anniversary by adding two new stands to their collection of exhibits: "Kharkov residents – Soviet ambassadors – Great Patriotic War participants" and "Foreign ministers of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic: Fates associated with Kharkov." The museum used materials from local archives, telling Ukrainians about the lives of diplomats/war veterans.

This is how a book presented to the Russian Consulate General in Kharkov less than a year ago has brought forth ideas whose implementation has opened new horizons of professional knowledge.