Mikhail Khodorkovsky

HOW DOU SLAY A DRAGON?

A Manual for Start-Up Revolutionaries

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How Do You Slay a Dragon?
Foreword, by Stephen Dalziel

Right at the start of this book, I had a great surprise. I know Mikhail Khodorkovsky's story well. I reported for the BBC on his rise to prominence in the YUKOS oil company, his disputes with the newly-elected Russian President, Vladimir Putin, in the first years of the twenty-first century, and his arrest on trumped-up charges in October 2003 and subsequent imprisonment. Four days after his arrest I was due to have a meeting with him in Moscow. Instead, a meeting was arranged with a representative of the Russian Prosecutor's Office to explain the arrest. The trial hadn't yet begun. But the outcome was already evident.

So when I was asked to translate this book, I thought I had a pretty good idea of what Khodorkovsky's attitude would be to Putin. But then came the surprise. "Putin…sent me down, thus depriving me and my family of ten years of my life; yet he also saved my life," Khodorkovsky writes, adding, "He could have killed me, but he didn't. He could have left me to rot in jail, but he didn't. I haven't forgotten this."

My interest was piqued. This man who was locked away for ten years in what was still, effectively, the Gulag, was not declaring that he was out for revenge on the man who put him there; he hadn't forgotten that the same man

released him. This balanced view set the tenor of this book.

Khodorkovsky is one of the most astute observers of today's Russia. He's known the best and the worst of the country. He's discussed the country's future with Putin himself, and with fellow inmates in prison. And like many Russians who now live abroad, he longs for the day when he can return to his country; when it's a free, democratic country. He is a true Russian patriot.

Patriot is a much-abused word these days. Many virulent Russian nationalists cloak themselves in it to try to disguise their nationalism. The best definition of these terms I have ever come across was from the brilliant Russian Academician, Dmitry Likhachev, whom I met in 1989. "A patriot," he told me, "loves their own country and respects others. A nationalist loves their country – and hates other peoples'."

Khodorkovsky's patriotism doesn't cloud his view of modern Russia, nor its often troubled history. He wasn't wearing rose-tinted spectacles when he wrote this book. Point by point he examines the opposite sides of what is happening in Russia now and what could happen in the future. He starts from the obvious – though often unconsidered – reality that whatever is happening in and with Putin's Russia, there will be a *post-Putin* period. Putin may be in his seventies, but he's not immortal.

Khodorkovsky has a deep appreciation of the cyclical nature of Russian history. A revolution against an autocracy has produced…another autocracy…followed by another revolution…followed… If Russia is to find its place as a contributor to global civilisation as it is capable of doing, then this vicious circle has to be broken.

I reported on and from Russia from the latter years of the Soviet Union, through the often crazy 'nineties, and finally on Putin's first term. I saw people's hopes rise and fall more than once. But by the time I left the BBC in 2004 I could already see that the wheel was coming full circle again, and some aspects of life once again resembled Soviet times.

The author of this work considers what happened in those times and what's happened since. He acknowledges the mistakes that have been made – not just by the authorities, but by society as a whole – and sets a radical programme to try to prevent, as the Russians say, "the same rakes being trodden on again".

This is not just another book about Russia's history. Some may consider it as political science; others as a manifesto for true Russian democrats. In some ways it is both. But first and foremost I would describe it as a work of practical philosophy. Why? The clue is in the title of the final chapter: "The Moral Choice: Justice or Mercy?"

This shows that the book, too, is a circle – but not a vicious one. By making "mercy" a key element of his plan for the future Russia, Khodorkovsky is underlining what could be the breakthrough moment to take Russia forward to being a genuinely free, democratic and modern state. And it also shows how he can say that, despite spending ten years in Russian prisons, his account with Putin is settled.

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Preface

It was Mark Zakharov's cult film, "To Slay a Dragon", that gave me the title of this book. In the film, the archivist, in justifying his conformist views to his Knight, said, "The only way to get rid of someone else's dragon is to create your own". And that's exactly how we live: first of all, we tolerate for a long time being tormented and oppressed by a foreign dragon (in reality, it's our own, but it's an old one), then we finally rid ourselves of it – and create a new dragon of our own. But after a while this one becomes old and foreign to us. I am absolutely convinced that this vicious circle of Russian history can be broken, and that Russia is fully capable of living with its own mind and its own conscience, and without dragons. But in order to do this, the young knights of the revolution must bear in mind that it's not enough simply to slay the old dragon, even though this in itself is no easy task; it is vital also not to grant power to a *new* dragon, and one that may prove to be even worse than its predecessor. This book is about how this can be achieved in Russia.

As a country we're in a difficult situation. Society already understands that "we cannot go on like this"; but at the same time we're frightened that "things will be worse".

Aside from the president, the powers-that-be fear that there isn't a good way out; but simply hope that "suddenly we'll find a way".

The opposition has an overwhelming desire to sweep away the regime; but has no concept of "what will happen next".

Because of this, I believe that it's essential to explain clearly to the people what we're proposing and what answers we're offering to life's key philosophical questions. People have the right to know what to expect if they stand alongside us, and particularly what are the principles for which it's worth giving up a quiet life and risking their freedom and the safety of those dear to them.

But there is one thing we can say for sure: the time for burying your head in the sand and for turning a blind eye to the most serious social issues – that time has gone.

"We're not interested in politics, we're only concerned about people turning our yard into a dumping ground"; "we're not interested in politics, we just don't like despotism"; "we're not interested in politics, we're just concerned about artistic freedom, corruption, free access to the internet"… Yes, the time for such lovely little cunning phrases has gone. If you're "not interested in politics", then just stand on the sidelines and wait. Maybe they'll be in a good mood and be so kind that they'll give you something; but with the way things are today it's more likely that they'll kick you down and you'll be the last to be carried off.

But if, on the other hand, you really want to stand up for your rights and the rights of others, then that means getting involved in genuine politics. It means making choices, and it means standing up to be counted, with all the risks that this brings.

I occupy a unique place amongst the ranks of the opposition (true, this doesn't exactly make me jump for

joy). I have huge managerial experience, having worked in the government and at the head of a number of the country's largest companies, companies that were of strategic significance to the country, and that were linked to dozens of towns and villages which were solely devoted to these industries. But despite all this, I am deprived of the opportunity to carry out practical organisational work on the ground.

When they kicked me out of the country, the authorities slammed the door shut behind me and turned the key, making it absolutely clear that in the event of my returning I would face the rest of my life in prison.

At the same time, I am one of the very few who has personal experience (we could say, "fortunately, very few", although this experience came with a high price) who has actually told Vladimir Putin to his face exactly what I think about corruption at the highest levels of government. And just a month after doing this I faced criminal charges and ended up being locked up for more than ten years (six in a prison cell and four in a labour camp). Added to which I staged four hunger strikes, including two where I refused to take even liquids; and I carried out all of them – until my demands were met in the case of three of them – as a sign of solidarity.

Ten years. That's almost as much as my friend, Platon Lebedev. It's immeasurably less than my colleague, Alexei Pichugin, who's still in jail. It's easier than the fate that befell another of my colleagues , the lawyer Vasily Alexanyan, who only a year after his release died from a disease for which he was refused treatment while in prison…

I have something to put before these authorities; some things that will be remembered and some things that must never be forgotten.

But this is exactly why I don't want to talk about the past; rather, I suggest that we look to the future.

I don't believe I have the right to juxtapose justice and charity; to forgive or to refuse to forgive those whom I consider should be punished.

I certainly don’t consider myself to be the bearer of the ultimate truth.

Each one of us has his or her own experience, our own scores to settle and our own thoughts on the future. But by virtue of the way in which my mind works I have decided not simply to consider that, well, “it wouldn’t be bad if we were to change those who are in power”. I’ve constructed a practical plan of action as to what to do “after Putin”.

From the way in which I think of time (and I look on time differently after the period I spent in prison) I believe that this regime does not have much time left: no more than five or ten years. How it’s going to end, I don’t know. Probably along with Putin. After all that has happened in Ukraine, I find it very difficult to imagine that he will step down of his own choice and live out however much time God grants him on some paradise island somewhere. He simply won’t be allowed to do that.

One way or another, this regime will meet its end. When it does, there will be so much that will have to be put right! And it has to be done quickly. It would be wonderful if, when this moment arrives, society has already decided who we are and where we’re heading; in which direction our road is leading in this rapidly changing world…

Introduction to the Study of Dragons.
My Path into Politics and What I Hope to Achieve

Politics was never important for me in and of itself. Before I found myself locked up, I was involved in politics only inasmuch as I needed it for business; in other words, simply to achieve those economic goals that were my priority at the time. Then came prison. Prison is hardly the optimum place to discuss politics; but it’s a good place to receive a political education. And this was what I earnestly strove to achieve when I wasn’t occupied with the other tasks that are put upon you when you’re in jail.

At the very end of 2013, Putin took the decision to release me. Even though, as they say, “hope dies last”, I considered the likelihood of such an outcome to my ten years of incarceration as highly unlikely. To this day I

genuinely have no idea what guided Putin's thinking. Probably there was a number of different reasons. There was the forthcoming Winter Olympics in Sochi, which he knew had to pass off in exemplary fashion. Then there was the personal request from the German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, that he hoped would lead to some sort of reciprocal cooperation. And, of course, there was the human emotion of compassion for my dying mother, for whom this would be the last chance to see me.

I was aware of all of these reasons and weighed them up while rapid preparations were being made for my expulsion from Russia. I understood, too, that without Putin's goodwill and wish for this to happen, I would never be set free; and also, that his decision upset a lot of people in his circle. Therefore, even though I honestly warned the FSB officer who came to collect me that I did not intend to hide myself away from people and keep silent, I had absolutely no intention of becoming involved in politics simply to seek personal revenge. As far as I was concerned, my account was settled in my personal relationship with Putin: he had sent me down, thus depriving me and my family of ten years of my life; yet he had also saved my life. Looking back on matters now, it's perfectly clear that had he not acted as he did then, I would have been confined to a life behind bars to the end of my days.

So when I said after my release that I didn't intend to get involved in politics, I was completely sincere. I never had any desire to be involved in politics just to prove something to Putin, and that's still the case. Paradoxically, our personal relationship worked out in such a way that I even owe him something. He could have killed me, but he didn't. He could have left me to rot in jail, but he didn't. I haven't forgotten this. I planned to engage in targeted human rights' and educational activities. It seemed to me that there was sufficient scope to employ my talents and my experience in these fields; and my money could also be very useful. But the more I became involved, the more intensely politics infiltrated into everything I touched. What had happened? What was it that convinced me to turn away from my initial firm resolve not to return to the world of politics?

In order to answer that question, I have to explain what I understand by "political activity", and what my motivation is to engage in it. In the exact and only

possible sense of the word, politics is a struggle for power. Not necessarily power for oneself; it can be a struggle in support of someone else. If the meaning and the aim of political activity is not for power, then it's not politics. It's fake. Or else the person making such a statement is simply not being honest with themselves and those around them.

People fight for power for two reasons. For some, having power is an end in itself. For others, power is an instrument to obtain other aims. Putting it simply, you can divide politicians into pragmatists, who need nothing more than power itself; and ideologues, for whom achieving power is simply the start of a process. These divisions are, of course, relative and not absolute, but it is useful to bear them in mind.

I was never interested in the concept of power as an end in itself; or as an attribute of the alpha-male; or as the possibility to dominate and enjoy one's inflated position in the social hierarchy. I've been at the very top of society; and at the very bottom, too. I have long understood that formal power, there for all to see, is worth very little. And that real power, that's often hidden from public view, bears no relation to the politician's public position. For reasons that will be obvious, I was never interested in using politics as a way to get rich. I was and remained sufficiently wealthy not to have to think about where my daily bread was coming from, and in any case no one can ever earn all the money in the world.

But this wasn't the main point. I've always been very wary – and remain so – of people for whom politics is an end in itself. The problem is that such people have no convictions – nor can they have. Convictions would have made them vulnerable, and made it difficult for them to achieve their goals. In general, other things being equal, it's easier for an unprincipled person to come to power, as they are unencumbered by any considerations. Such a person can at one moment be "in favour of Soviet power", and the next moment against; and in either situation they usually win. When there are too many politicians like this, society tumbles into a long period of crises.

Politicians who have convictions are a different matter, although here, too, nothing is simple. If fanatics come to power who hold ideas loaded with hatred for certain

groups of people, then they become a threat not only to their own society but to mankind as a whole. Nevertheless, the world would remain stubbornly patriarchal if we didn't have people in power who hold convictions that express the desire to change society. So the issue as to whether or not I should be involved in politics always brought me back to the question as to whether or not I held worthy convictions for which it made sense for me to go into politics; in other words, to fight for power. Not for my own benefit, but for the benefit of those forces which my convictions supported.

At the time that I was released from prison I didn't see any particular reason as to why I should become involved in politics in Russia. I held the same general democratic opinions that were supported by hundreds of thousands of other Russians with liberal-minded views. Naturally, I agreed with virtually nothing in the political course that Putin was pursuing, but I wasn't unique in that. I could express my convictions simply by supporting those whose opinions were close to mine, and this is what I did, even when I was in jail. There was absolutely no need for me to get involved in politics to do this. I didn't think that I could add anything substantially new to what others were already saying and doing. However, the situation changed shortly after my release.

Literally two months after I was forced to leave Russia against my will, the country became a very different place. Or, to be more precise, it went back to being what it had been before Mikhail Gorbachev introduced perestroika. It was as if the coup plotters of August 1991 had been resurrected and had finally decided to create an alternative version of history. The unsuccessful attempts to crush the revolution in Ukraine, which were followed by the seizure of Crimea by Russia, and which in turn was accompanied by the igniting of a war in the Donbas: all of these events turned everything in Russia on its head. In the space of just a few months, politically Russia was thrown back decades. The first – and most important – reset had taken place. Putin and his circle wiped away everything that my generation had achieved when we had supported Gorbachev and Yeltsin's attempts to change Russia. This went way beyond my personal conflict with Putin. Now we were talking about a fundamental difference in our views on the fate of Russia, its past, its present and its future. It was this that motivated me to become involved in politics, in a way that I hadn't intended to, neither when I was in prison nor at the time of my release. It led me to a very simple

solution: I had to defend the beliefs and ideals of my generation of revolutionaries. To make it impossible for Russia ever again to give up its future by turning back to its past and falling into the same rut from which, through enormous efforts, we had managed to drag it out at the end of the 1980s.

But how can we do this? For the majority of those who share my views the answer to this question sounded (and continues to sound) fairly straightforward: remove Putin and his clique from power. It sounds tempting, of course; but in reality it's not that simple. We've already managed to get rid of Stalin; yet Stalinism has returned. We disposed of Brezhnev; but have gone back to stagnation. And we buried autocracy; and one hundred years later we're living under an autocratic system.

I have absolutely no doubts that we can get rid of Putin. In any case, sooner or later he'll depart this life: there are no immortal dictators. But Putinism, Stalinism and autocracy will keep returning to Russia again and again all the while that the socio-political and institutional preconditions exist for them. Although it's always easier and more convenient to personalise evil, it's not a question of individuals but of objective preconditions that allow anyone who reaches the pinnacle of power in Russia to become a Putin, a Brezhnev or a Stalin. This works even stronger than the laws of physics. Whether a revolutionary or an innovator or a liberator comes to power, they depart as a dictator, a satrap and someone who throttles freedom, because they've taken over power along with a pathetic cabal of corrupt henchmen. The specific name means nothing, because the reality of life in Russia breaks anyone. A specific example is that it wasn't a case of Putin breaking Russia, but traditional Russia crushing Putin under its own weight. It was this understanding that Russia always seems doomed to repeat its own history that led me to seek a possible solution to this threat.

Gradually I've come to the deep conviction that the existing form of power in Russia simply maintains the traditional system of autocracy, and that without revolutionary change it will be impossible to escape from this autocratic trap. I've come to the conclusion that given Russia's historical traditions and experience of politics, only a parliamentary form of government would be acceptable. Of course, we're talking here about a

proper parliamentary republic, and not the rubber-stamp version that was typical of the Soviet “parliament”.

In Russia, any other form of government, whereby all the executive functions of power are in the hands of the formal head of state, would inevitably sooner or later lead to the re-emergence of an autocratic and totalitarian regime. This would be for the simple reason that the cultural, economic and socio-political restrictions that prevent a state from sliding into the bog of authoritarianism, are simply too under-developed in Russia. Any individual, even the weakest, who found themselves at the top of the pyramid of power, would not be able to stop themselves from being seduced into crushing that pyramid beneath them. This makes it essential to slice the top off this pyramid.

I see my mission as follows: to convince those who share my views and wish to see Russia free – not just for a couple of months or even years, but for decades to come – that this can be achieved. But it will happen only once we have built a genuine federal parliamentary republic in Russia, with a developed system of self-government. It is vital to rid ourselves of a dictator; it is vital to investigate the crimes committed by this regime; it is vital to re-establish even the most basic democratic norms in the country and to bring back justice and the rule of law. And what is even more vital is that this is carried out in such a way that everything that we put back cannot be lost once more. That is possible only by moving to a parliamentary republic.

Building such a republic in Russia is far more complicated than overturning Putin’s regime. It calls for a genuine revolution, one that doesn’t simply scratch the surface of political life, but overturns the very foundations of the traditional Russian way of life. A revolution such as this demands massive efforts and sacrifices, it means taking risks and changing literally everything, from the bottom to the very top. But only such an all-encompassing revolution can provide Russia with the long-term immunity that it needs to rid itself of autocracy and the opportunity to build a new way of life suitable for the modern, post-industrial, global world.

It’s important at this point to explain what I understand by “revolution”. I am absolutely convinced that

revolution in Russia is inevitable and that it's desperately needed. This doesn't alter my extreme dislike of revolutions in principle, nor my deep regret that Russia has gone so far down an historic dead-end that the only possible way out is through a revolution. Any revolution represents a trial for a society, even when it brings with it a wonderful future. At the same time, a revolution does not necessarily mean street battles, storming buildings, seizing post-offices, bridges and the telegraph office. Such events are not indicative of a revolution but of an uprising. Yes, such incidents often accompany a revolution, but they are not essential and, what's more, are not the main component of a revolution.

What I understand by "revolution" is a total reset of the fundamental principles of the life of a society, which completely alters the course of that society's historical development. Whether or not such a reset of the fundamentals is accompanied by social explosions or whether it passes off without so much as a whimper is a secondary question. Most important of all is the result. In my opinion, Russia's move to become a parliamentary republic is only the tip of the iceberg. By "parliamentary republic", I mean the country being run by a government made up of representatives of a coalition of parties that control a parliament chosen by free and fair elections, and which, in turn represents a genuinely wide majority of society. At the foundation of such a republic lie fundamental changes to the most varied aspects of the life of society, the implementation of which is essential in order that the system of parliamentary democracy remains sustainable and stable. The most important of all these changes is the switch to a genuinely federal system where cities are self-governing. Only the cities can provide the political basis for a stable parliamentary republic.

In the case of Russia, a parliamentary republic and federalism are inseparable from each other. In order to drag Russia out of the rut of autocracy and place it firmly on a stable democratic trajectory, there has to be a move to a parliamentary republic. And in order to ensure that this parliamentary republic does not become yet another façade for autocracy, it must be strengthened by a federal system.

This is already a profound revolution: a country that for centuries has been accustomed to regard itself by looking from the top down, must learn to look at itself from the

bottom up. The logic here is simple. There are practically no democratic political traditions in Russia; what there has been is basically anti-democratic. Civil society didn't succeed in establishing itself properly, and today it's been practically wiped out. Even if favourable – close to ideal – conditions were to arise (and I seriously doubt that this is possible), the re-establishment of civil society even to the levels previously achieved would take years. And this is bearing in mind that the previous level of civil society was very basic. At the federal level, just as at the local level, there is no party system. All the existing parties are either fake – created or dominated by the authorities themselves – or they're marginal groups, united around their petty leaders and holding no serious weight among the majority of the population.

In such conditions, from where can a parliamentary system come with the stability needed to be an alternative to autocracy? Where is the necessary strength in such a feeble world? Only in the regions. It is only the regional elites with their local interests, their local self-awareness and with their regional links that have been built up over centuries that have the ability in modern Russia to be the potential subjects – and not objects – of politics. If they were to support a parliamentary republic, it will come about. If they don't, it will simply disappear like yet another historic Russian mirage. A parliamentary republic is possible only if there is a proper federal structure, when local finances and local life in general is governed by those who live in the locality.

Why is the issue of federalism so important for Russia? It's because with its cultural, religious and, of course, economic pluralism, Russia can be a unified state only under the cruellest of dictatorships, which crushes and levels out all local characteristics. Without such a dictatorship it's impossible to bring under a single denominator places such as Moscow and Grozny; Kazan and Magadan; Kaliningrad and Khabarovsk; St Petersburg and Kemerovo. If we wish to have even a hint of democracy in Russia, we must allow for the existence of pluralism; and not simply economic, but political, too. Incidentally, the Russian Empire that is so revered by Putin's followers was politically pluralistic. For centuries the European system of self-governance in Finland existed alongside the khanates of the Middle Ages that ruled Central Asia. Democracy in Russia means pluralism; and in

modern times political pluralism can be achieved only through federalism.

Achieving this, however, is no easy task. Why is it that Russia has always been an overly-centralised state? Because if the centre showed any weakness and handed any significant autonomy over to the regions, petty little tsars would rise up in these regions, each of whom would prove to be greedier and more evil than the tsar in Moscow. So the people would ask Moscow to help defend them from these local satraps and the bandits whom they cultivated around them. And the power of the centre always relied on this. A weak tsar led to strong petty tsars; and a strong tsar meant the petty tsars were weak. How can this vicious circle be broken?

There is a way out. We need to introduce a third element, a force that is independent of these two extremes. This is something that everyone knows very well, because it's the very force that in recent years the Putin regime has been trying above all else to crush. It is local self-government. A regional governor who's taken power into his own hands while the centre was looking the other way, can be stopped by an independent and self-sufficient mayor or head of a local administration. If the local authorities limit the powers of the petty tsar, he or she will be obliged to become a regional constitutional monarch. And if not, the local authorities will instinctively seek the support of Moscow, thus strengthening central government. This will help to even out the system, because it will bring in the checks and balances that are essential for creating a genuine democracy.

The space for an independent judiciary arises only when this triangle of the local authorities, regional governor and central government is developed. By definition, the relationship between the parties cannot be ideal. There will either be constant war between them, or there will have to be an arbiter acceptable to all. It is absolutely impossible for there to be an independent legal system if the need for it is not recognised by the stronger side. Apart from the united local elites, there is no strong side in modern Russia: they've all been squeezed out. The centre, the regions and the local authorities will need rules and an arbiter who can watch over them all. In such a situation, perhaps the idea of a genuine independent judiciary might take root in Russia for the first time.

The arrival of a proper system of justice will mark the start of a gradual massive change in the relationship between the citizen and the state, and will create the conditions for the restoration (or, to be more accurate, building once more from scratch) of civil society in Russia. Progress in this will lead eventually to the final result: freedom, human rights, free and fair elections based on political competition, and stable institutions that support a state governed by the rule of law. But all of this and much more besides will not come all at once. Such an outcome can be achieved only by following a chain of events step by step. And the most important link in this chain, I believe, is the path to a parliamentary republic.

It is specifically this path – and not "the battle with a bloody regime" – that represents my goal, the pursuit of which has drawn me into politics. But the move towards it will not be swift and will require a great deal of patience.

Unfortunately, defining precisely the goal towards which we're heading doesn't guarantee that we'll end up exactly where we want to be. We have to be aware of what lies ahead of us on this path. Clearly, we cannot expect anything good to come from the starting point to where Putin and his friends have brought us. Many of the prerequisites that are essential for the establishment of democracy in Russia simply don't exist. This is often ignored by many very honourable people, who are idealists in the best sense of the word, and who really want things to be better…but in the depths of their souls they realise that things will simply be the same as they always have been. On the one hand, we have a terror machine served by an enormous number of functionaries who won't give up their positions even after Putin goes. And on the other, we have a frightened society that has been oppressed by this terror, has lost its reliable social connections and is accompanied by a quantitatively reduced and qualitatively degraded elite. Obviously, we're not going to be able to clear this ravine in one leap. We cannot avoid a period of transition during which the hangers-on from Putin's old society will try to suppress us, while the growth of a new society will begin. This idea is there for all to see, yet as a rule it's ignored in the general discussion about Russia's future. But from the practical point of view it is the structure of society in this period of transition that's the most pressing issue today.

The point is that any kind of transition in Russia, no matter from where and to where, is like being in a dense forest, in which it's easier to lose oneself forever than it is to escape from it. What's more, no one has yet managed to escape from it in the exact place where they'd planned to. This is why the period of transition has to be regarded very seriously. We can be sure of only one thing: the time available for the post-Putin period will be very limited. It must not last for more than two years, because that's all the time it will take for whatever political force takes Putin's place to gain people's trust. If the transitional, or temporary, government manages to survive for two years, then one of two things will happen. Either it will have to introduce a cruel dictatorship for an unspecified length of time; or it'll be swept away by the people. This is because during the period of transition it will be essential for the government to introduce a whole host of unpopular measures in the most difficult of circumstances. And this is even before we take into account such complicating factors as the resistance of the old ruling clans and the likely fall in the standard of living that accompanies virtually every revolution. A compromise must be reached with society.

Thus, it is essential to construct a reliable institutional framework for democracy in Russia. In my view this means creating a parliamentary republic, as well as a return to federalism and self-government under the rule of law. Paradoxically, the question as to whether or not these long-term political goals are achievable depends on the ability of the temporary government to obtain in the short term enough trust on credit from the majority. Without this they won't be able to carry through effective – albeit in some aspects, unpopular – policies, aimed at defeating the opposition of the old clans and establishing the basis for a new statehood.

If the temporary government succeeds in establishing a strict "new course" then it would be realistic to consider that the long-term goals could be achieved. If, however, it's unable to do this, and it slips into populism by simply carrying out the immediate wishes of the people, then we can forget about such ambitions. People's trust must be lasting, drawn out over a long period. It's not difficult to gain the support of the majority over a short period of time. People grow weary of dictatorial regimes and in certain circumstances it takes just a spark to ignite passive dislike into active

hatred. But such flare-ups quickly die down and the people can swiftly discard their new leaders. This is the weakness of the "Maidan-style" uprisings: the explosion happens easily enough, but the strength of the explosion is insufficient to carry matters through to their conclusion. In order to obtain lasting support, different, systemic decisions are needed, not just taking advantage of anger that's been building up over a long period like social dynamite.

Considering all this, today we can at last make an accurate diagnosis of the 1990s. Surprisingly, this period has now once again become a subject of heated discussion. At that time, attempts to carry out lasting reforms failed. In my opinion this was specifically because the reformers ignored the essential task of enlisting society's solid support. They naively believed that they could carry out changes while ignoring the views of the majority. At best, they assumed that they would remain neutral; in the worst case, they thought they could ride roughshod over any opposition. They chose a course of action that appealed ideologically to a small section of society that shared their radical "westernised" views. The economic beneficiaries of the reforms were also a very mixed – and at the same time tiny – group. The majority of the population not only suffered significant economic hardship from these changes, but the values that the reformers were preaching remained foreign to them. The inevitable outcome of such a situation was that society was alienated from the government and the path it was following. The consequences of this alienation were reflected in the mass support, initially a counter-revolution, for Putin's reactionary political course. If we don't want to repeat this scenario in the future we must not repeat the errors of the 'nineties.

An exceedingly difficult task will present itself from the outset to the temporary government: in a situation where there is a deep economic crisis and a fragmented society that is teetering on the edge of civil confrontation, how can problems be solved that have built up over many decades? How can such a government win the support of society for its actions?

If we put to one side any ideas for "a quick fix" based on the general dislike of the old regime (and experience shows that such dislike doesn't last long), then all that's left is to put into action a "left-wing plan" that would at least satisfy the fundamental economic demands

of the majority of the population. It's essential that the majority believes that the government's actions strategically match their own long-term economic interests. Only then will the people be prepared to back the government in its difficult journey through the period of transition. In other words (and many people still fail to accept this) there's a fairly simple calculation that has to be done that will limit any deep change in Russia: it will have to be carried out along with a "left-wing plan". By "left-wing plan", what I mean is that it must be geared towards the social and economic needs of the people; as opposed to the "right-wing plan" that satisfies the needs of the minority. Had the reformers in the 1990s not ignored the social needs of the majority of the people, it is quite possible that today we would not be trying to solve the problem of Putinism. If those who have set themselves the task of carrying out a political battle with the regime once again ignore the social and economic needs of the majority, they will never achieve their political goals.

Nowadays, everyone understands this. There are now no opposition forces that wouldn't promise the Russian people social benefits and economic well-being along with political freedom and a state governed by the rule of law. Nevertheless, people don't rush to believe such promises. For some, it's because the 1990s are still fresh in their minds; for others, it's because there are few concrete details in such promises, and much of what is said is unrealistic with the current state of the economy.

In order to win enough trust from the majority to carry out far-reaching changes, people shouldn't be given promises of a wonderful life in some far-off future, but guarantees that will work right now. Strange as it may seem, such guarantees exist now, and can be presented to the people by a temporary government in exchange for long-term support of a reformist path. This involves returning to the people what was taken from them in the 1990s: namely benefitting from the extraction of natural resources, known as resource rent, and a fair distribution of property.

Resource rent is the principle source of wealth in Russia, both privately and publicly. Officially, resource rent today is controlled by the state; but in reality, it's controlled by the mafia cabal that's replaced the state. All ideas that are put forward regarding the fate of resource rent come back to one point: whatever force

replaces the Putin regime has to ensure that the distribution of resource rent is done more fairly than it is today. In other words, the people will receive more than they do now. But since the Russian population has grown used to regarding anything related to the state with deep mistrust, they don't believe in this crock of gold at the end of the rainbow, either.

But a completely different approach can be taken, one which excludes the state from its role as the distributor of resource rent among the population. In recent years, everyone has realised that there are two insoluble problems in Russia: pensions; and the unfair distribution of profits from the sale of natural resources. So why not solve one problem with the help of the other? Why not send profits from energy sales (which, in any case, are fixed separately from the rest of the budget) to citizens' individual savings accounts, that could be opened directly in the Treasury? The sum that's needed to pay fair pensions is almost exactly the same as the amount that goes into the budget from the exploitation of resource rent. So locking them together is totally logical. In one fell swoop, the Russian people are able directly to control resource rent, while putting a stop to feeding a gigantic bureaucracy and the mafia that's attached itself to it. This is something that both can and should be done immediately after the temporary government takes over. It would open up a channel of political possibilities while implementing simple changes. This is the most important thing; but there is something else as well.

Clearly, it will be impossible in practice to restore trust between the state and society in the near future, unless the consequences of the unfair privatisation of the 1990s are removed. It's a trauma that set in with the birth of privatisation, and one which will prevent the introduction of any measures to improve the health of the economy. It means that there's no trust in society, not only for the government, but for the very principle of private property. Yet private property lies at the heart of any constitutionally-governed state. Largely thanks to the experience of privatisation in the 'nineties, the majority of the population see private property in Russia as the result of an unfair distribution of state assets. What's more, this is also partly reflected in today's situation, since a significant portion of public wealth is controlled by a small criminal segment that has crushed the state.

There are two reasons why no progress can be made on the path to democratic reform unless this totally parasitic property is wiped out. Firstly, if this property remains in the hands of the collective beneficiaries of the Putin regime it will be used to block any constructive activity attempted by the temporary government. And secondly, unless this property is confiscated it will be impossible to earn society's trust; society won't support any government that leaves this money in the hands of these people.

Therefore, the second essential social measure of the temporary government must be the expropriation of this parasitic capital from the Putin clan. The assets that are seized from them must be passed to public investment funds under the control of parliament. The income from the activity of these funds should be directed towards additional funding for social projects. First and foremost this should be for education and health care. This can be placed in individual savings accounts that will be opened for every citizen. This could be considered as a compensatory measure, as it would go some way to righting the wrongs that were committed by the state under its privatisation programme. So it would be a step towards re-establishing socio-economic justice.

In effect, Russia today lives under a state of emergency. There exists a regime of political terror. Any practical resistance to the authorities is paralysed. However, experience shows that this cannot continue forever. Any closed system ultimately contains within itself the reason for its collapse. Putin's regime will be no exception. And even if right now it's difficult to influence the longevity of this regime, it's entirely possible to affect the pace of the post-regime recovery. This will largely depend upon the speed of reaction by the elites as to what is happening; on how much preparation is done to rethink Russian history; on there being a clear and achievable goal from those seeking change; and, even more importantly, on there being a detailed road-map for change.

The normalisation process after the fall of the regime will be made much simpler and swifter if a provisional consensus can be reached by society on all these points. The lack of such a consensus and especially the lack of an actual plan around which consensus can be reached will have a seriously adverse effect on society's chances of repairing itself. Indeed, it may even make this

impossible. Circumstances may well dictate that for a period of time – and this could be long drawn-out – spiritual and intellectual opposition may prove to be virtually the only form of resistance possible for the majority of those citizens who are opposed to the regime. But "otherworldliness" and the fact that this appears to be something abstract doesn't lessen its historic significance. On the contrary, this is exactly where the frontline of the battle for the future of Russia lies today. Every action begins with a word; and it's vital that this word is the right one and that it hits the target.

In today's Russia there's no place for politics and no motives for engaging in politics. But there will be in the future Russia. And it's the thought of a Russia that confines Putinism to the past that inspires me to take up political activity. That future looks complicated. Putin will leave Russia with a difficult legacy that will mean future progress will not be easy. The path will be sown with the kind of historical traps that Russia has already fallen into on a number of occasions, and it's ended up being stuck in them for decades.

I am convinced that the re-formation of Russia into a parliamentary and genuinely federal republic with strong local self-rule is the fulcrum that can provide the starting point from where we can cast off the curse of autocracy forever. At the same time I'm aware that reaching this starting point can be done in Russia only if we take the "left route". My political goal today is to create a wide consensus in society both for the goal itself and for the methods by which it will be reached.

PART I. HOW DO YOU GET RID OF THE OLD DRAGON?

The vast majority of people live comfortably alongside the dragon until their final day; that being the day when they or their loved ones are killed, arrested or kicked out onto the street from their cosy little comfort zone. Love for the dragon is the natural state of affairs for the man on the street, which immediately becomes the main problem in any transitional period from dictatorship to democracy. It's easier to get rid of the dragon than it is to defeat the ordinary person's devotion to it. For this reason, getting rid of the dragon is not simply a lovely, one-act revolutionary show that ends with happy and joyous fireworks. It's a drama that takes place over many acts, and has a complicated and sometimes tragic

theme. And in each act of this drama, its *actors* must overcome difficult dilemmas, many of which don't have straightforward solutions.

Chapter 1. The Strategy for Victory: Peaceful Protest, or Peaceful Uprising?

What should be the strategy for victory in the battle against despotism? People who lived in the 18th, 19th, or especially the 20th Centuries would find it easy to answer this question. The strategy for victory is revolution.

But what sort of revolution? A violent one, of course. Marx wrote that revolution is the midwife of history. And one of the founding fathers of the USA, Abraham Lincoln, expressed it thus: "Whenever they shall grow weary of the existing government, they can exercise their constitutional right of amending it, or their revolutionary right to dismember or overthrow it."

The right of the American people to rise up against those who have usurped power is enshrined in the United States' Declaration of Independence. Lenin and his supporters regarded revolution as the fundamental source of law and called for the enemies of the revolution to be judged according to their revolutionary legal consciousness.

But in the final quarter of the twentieth century everything became much more complicated. Revolutions, which over the course of 200 years had caused rivers of blood to flow across Europe, became unfashionable. And the collapse of the USSR and of the regimes in Eastern Europe that were linked to the Soviet Union created the illusion that victory over tyrants could be achieved without the use of violence. Perhaps not immediately, but ultimately violence was removed from the strategy of the struggle against despotism as something that was undesirable and even unacceptable. So what then was left in this strategy?

Peaceful protest was seen as the only acceptable and universal strategy for all times and in all situations. The aim was not simply a revolution, but it had to be a velvet revolution, a revolution in kid gloves. From now on protest could not involve violence, even if this violence were to be directed against a tyrant and his henchmen who had drowned the country in blood.

Up to a certain point this strategy of "non-resistance to evil by violence" worked; at least, that was how it seemed from the sidelines. The velvet revolutions developed into colour revolutions (although it would be more accurate to describe them as "flower revolutions": "the Rose Revolution", "the Carnation Revolution" and so on). Colour revolutions became the successful political technology, which led to the careful removal from power of authoritarian regimes without serious bloodshed; at least at the moment when power passed into the hands of the opposition. In the twenty years that passed from the time of the "self-dissolution" of the USSR and the tearing down of the Berlin Wall, the standard set by the colour revolutions became firstly the model for revolution, and then revolutionary dogma. But the consolidation of a dogma leads inevitably to stagnation.

It's necessary here to point out one thing: any revolution, even a velvet one, doesn't take place without violence, or, more often, without the clear and imminent threat of violence, which leads the regime to prefer to seek a compromise. It's this preparedness of ***the regime*** to compromise, and not the desire on the part of the revolutionaries to find a compromise with the regime at any cost, that makes velvet revolutions possible. As a result, such revolutions succeed only when they are up against outdated dictatorships – authoritarian regimes that are run by the children or even the grandchildren of their founders.

Recently there was a revolutionary situation in Belarus. This was a crisis of the new era that the opposition tried at first to solve by the old rules, using the methods of the colour revolutions: coordination, mobilisation, solidarity, psychological pressure and the moral support of the West, occasionally strengthened by a little financial help.

Previously, as a rule, this set of actions had proved sufficient for a dictatorship to capitulate. But in Belarus, things "didn't quite work out that way". The opposition were coordinated, they mobilised, they demonstrated unprecedented solidarity, they brought powerful psychological pressure to bear, and they had the support of the West; but all this came to nought. The regime drowned the opposition in violence, and the support of the West was more than made up for on the other side by the help received from Russia. Increasing attempts to bring people out onto the streets did not

bring the opposition any closer to success, as a result of which general dissatisfaction grew with the outcome of the revolution.

Against this background, both in Belarus itself and beyond, there was inevitably a discussion about the strategy of protest in a situation where regimes fail to give ground, and where there's no possibility of outside intervention (clearly, no one was going to start a nuclear war with Russia for the sake of the Belarussians' freedom).

This gave rise, on the one hand, to doubts as to whether adopting solely peaceful methods for the struggle really is a universal and effective solution in any revolutionary situation. On the other hand, there were concerns that calling for non-peaceful methods could lead to the protest being discredited in the eyes of both the population and the international community. This would lead, in its turn, to inevitable defeat. So opposition arose to both peaceful and non-peaceful protest. In my view, this is a completely false dilemma.

In principle, can there be non-violent protest in a non-democratic state? Under despotism there are no legal boundaries for protest; that's why it's despotism. Any citizen who is genuinely protesting against a dictatorial regime (and not simply taking part in a mock protest as agreed with the authorities) is already breaking the law. If meetings, marches, demonstrations, pickets and other forms of public political activity are forbidden, then a single step outside these with the most peaceful of intentions can turn violent, because it's likely to lead to violence from the authorities. This will provoke resistance, even if it's passive, such as someone being beaten by the police who's protecting their head from the blows of the police truncheons.

So under a dictatorship the types of protest that we automatically call "peaceful" or "non-peaceful" don't differ from each other at all. Any kind of public protest against the usurpation of power has the potential to be non-peaceful, even though the level of violence can be very different, from virtually nothing to something serious.

In some circumstances, the level of violence that is acceptable for the participants may be very low, in

others it could be quite high. But in all cases, the threshold is not zero. If it were, people wouldn't take part in protest actions on principle. When we have dictatorship on one side and genuine protest against it on the other, we're increasing the chances of a violent clash by calling on people to disobey the laws laid down by the dictatorship.

I believe that the question about peaceful or non-peaceful protest overshadows a much more significant question, and leads the discussion off at a tangent. The question is whether in principle we consider that revolutionary violence is legitimate. It's only when we've answered this question that we can proceed to the next one: what is the desirable or non-desirable form that said violence can take? In my opinion, there can be only one answer: yes, revolutionary violence is legitimate.

If we analyse the position of those in favour of "only peaceful protest" then it quickly emerges that more often than not behind the beautiful and peace-loving words lies an attempt to defend the idea of the illegality of revolutionary violence in principle. This is a dangerous delusion. If you regard peaceful protest as meaning that you reject on principle any revolutionary violence (and that is how many people naively see it), then you will be in good company with any dictator. Doing battle with any dictatorship is, therefore, completely impossible.

Throughout the history of mankind, no dictatorship has disappeared without coming under the clear or hidden threat of force. A dictator's never stepped down just because they were tired. If it wasn't violence itself, then it was at least the threat of violence that always played a decisive role in the victory of the revolution. It's another matter that the threat of violence has nearly always been more effective than blatant violence.

This is not simply a question of humanity. If a revolution starts with violence, it will end with it, too. And if a revolution ends in violence, then that will never be the end of it. A violent revolution almost inevitably produces a dictatorship in its wake that sets out to crush any counter-revolution. This must be borne in mind by anyone who – contrary to those who believe only in peaceful protest – calls for a swift transition to a violent struggle.

Nevertheless, as the experience of Belarus showed (and bearing in mind that the Russian experience promises to be even more striking), if the regime is prepared to open fire on its people, then a demonstrative and early refusal by the opposition to use violence as a way of seizing power will be counter-productive. Unless pressure is put on the authorities that there will be direct foreign intervention, restricting protest to simply applying psychological pressure can never bring down a regime that is prepared to go to any limits to stay in power. This is the case even if the protest has the support of the majority of society. For this reason, the concept of peaceful protest as a total and absolute rejection of revolutionary violence is nothing more than dogma. If you turn away completely from violence in principle, then you turn away from revolution.

In reality, not only is revolutionary violence legitimate, but historically it has always and everywhere proved to be a source of the new legitimacy. Revolution and constitution always go hand in hand. Had there been no violent revolutions in the world, constitutional order would never have been established anywhere. This must be borne in mind even when you look back over many centuries.

If the constitutional order collapses, then frequently the only realistic way to restore it has been to return to the use of revolutionary violence. This was why the old constitutions contained the people's revolutionary right to rise up, and devoted so much attention to the people's right to carry arms. Anyone who tried to seize power had to understand that all that they had taken from the people by force, could be taken *back* by the people by force, because a nation that rose up had greater legitimacy than a despotic regime had. These are hard truths. It is the ABC of revolution. And it has to be learnt by heart. If, that is, you wish to be victorious.

However, recognising the legitimacy of revolutionary violence as a means of struggle against a dictatorship does not mean that you're immediately ready in practice to resort to this violence. Recognising the possibility and the legitimacy of using violence in a revolutionary struggle with a dictatorship is a strategic question. Employing or not employing violence in a concrete situation and, if you do choose to employ it, to what extent and in what ways – that's a question of revolutionary tactics, and that can be decided in very different ways.

Often the deliberate refusal to escalate the violence in order to avoid massive casualties is the only correct solution, especially when the majority aren't ready to take action if there's no revolutionary situation in the country. But transforming this decision into a dogma, a conviction that *in any circumstances* your protest must remain peaceful is the same as voluntarily giving in to the dictator and, in effect, giving up any realistic struggle for power. The regime should always be under pressure, aware that if any force is used there will be a counter-force, and that every crime will be punished. Only in such circumstances will those in opposition to the regime have any hope of success.

Nevertheless, peaceful pressure can only rarely be as peaceful as its proponents might wish it to be. Any peaceful protest that isn't backed by some kind of violence can still ignite the authorities and lead them to employ their own forms of violence against it. This can happen for a wide variety of reasons. It may be because of the collapse of the structures of power, because of the depletion of resources (in such a situation a strike can be a very useful show of strength), or for various other reasons. However, there is the danger that if a regime collapses because it's run out of resources, then the ones who gain most on the battlefield will be the looters, be they criminals or mercenaries. In this case, the protest movement will find itself having to use violence against a third party.

One thing alone is clear. The protest cannot be held back from within. If the revolution has a built-in restriction on how fast it can go, it will never get off the ground. Once they've started, the leaders of the protest must always be ready to take the next step. Once you've called people out onto the streets, then you have to accept that by that action you've already made revolutionary violence possible. It's a different matter that as a tactical move you may call upon your supporters temporarily to hold back.

Calling for violence when there's no revolutionary situation is just as much a betrayal of protest as completely refusing to use violence in a revolutionary situation, when this is essential to bring the revolution to an end. The latter would be the same as leaving the movement leaderless and at the demands of fate. As a rule that will lead to the swift defeat of the revolution and even greater violence and casualties, and not for the

sake of the revolution but for the counter-revolution. This is why protest should, of course, always try to remain peaceful; and it will remain so if there is convincing evidence that you are prepared to answer violence with violence if necessary.

Chapter 2. Bringing the Protesters Together: Many Parties or a Single Party?

Everyone knows the well-worn metaphor of the broken arrows. It's been passed down through the ages. A wise leader (or a tsar) first demonstratively shows how easy it is to break a single arrow. He then helplessly throws up his hands after trying to break a whole quiver of such arrows all at once. It's become a hackneyed image; but its basic message remains true. When any kind of protest is united, it's this unity that's the key feature that makes it effective. Few would argue with this; but each person tends to understand in their own way just what that unity actually is. Unity can be demonstrated by a multitude of voices. But sometimes everyone needs to sing with one voice.

This is exactly where the democratic opposition has slipped up in Russia today. When they speak, the leaders of all the supposedly significant protest movements say they are in favour of "unity". Indeed, it would be very odd to hear them declaim that they're against a wide front in the struggle with the dictatorship. Yet many of those who talk about unity, are guided in practice by a different principle, one that was put forward in similar historical circumstances by Lenin: "Before we can unite…we must first of all draw firm and definite lines of demarcation". The danger of this slogan is that in the process of putting all their efforts into demarcation, the ultimate goal of unity slips into the background. This is exactly what we see happening today in Russia.

If we look back at history, we can see that protest movements have succeeded by following various paths. Among these, we can pick out two types of successful revolutions. Some were carried out by close-knit groups of like-minded people, united not only by their similar political views, but who organised themselves on pseudo-military lines. This gave them a structure on which to build the new state after their victory. Other successful revolutions were carried out by a wide coalition of the most varied political forces, linked by only a fragile

political bond. This bond rarely survived the actual revolution.

If we look more closely at this, we realise that very often the tactical tasks of the revolution, such as the seizure and consolidation of power, were carried out more effectively by pseudo-military, conspiratorial organisations (resembling religious sects in their structure), rather than by political parties in the strict sense of that term. But the strategic tasks that the revolutions had before them, notably tasks of a democratic nature, were better solved where a coalition of diverse forces stood at their head, having been brought together by the moment and the circumstances.

Knowing this, you might think that all responsible political forces would try to create a broad coalition. But in practice this doesn't happen. Either coalitions aren't formed or, if they are, they quickly fall apart. Unfortunately, there are strong objective reasons for this. History shows that the more aggressive the dictatorship and the more merciless the regime, the fewer chances there are for a coalition to come together and triumph. This is understandable. The regime recognises that the unity of the opposition forces represents the greatest threat to its existence, and so does everything in its power to prevent the opposition from uniting, including supporting secessionist sentiments among their opponents. If the regime has to choose between "irreconcilable elements" and "the most irreconcilable elements" among the opposition, strangely enough they tend to choose the latter, even though this risks bringing about their own downfall. This has already happened once in Russian history, at the start of the twentieth century.

We must never forget that there is not only a tradition of autocracy in Russia, there is also a tradition of Bolshevism, with sectarianism and schismatics within the revolutionary movement. Each of these traditions is closely linked to the other. In the country's history, Bolshevism has played no less a tragic role than autocracy, which it first destroyed, then reincarnated in a more sophisticated format. For the vast majority of our contemporaries, Bolshevism and Communism are one and the same thing. But this is not the case. It's possible not to be a Communist – even to be an Anti-Communist – and at the same time remain a Bolshevik. What's more, if

Communism in Russia appeared largely by chance, Bolshevism grew out of the very roots of Russian culture.

Bolshevism is a movement which developed out of Russian populism, [through movements such as the *narodniki* – Tr.] and not through liberal ideals. For Bolshevism, as for autocracy, it was the state that was the "social demiurge", not society. But if autocracy aimed to preserve society with the help of the state, Bolshevism wanted to use the state to turn society inside out. The Bolsheviks never needed allies when they were in power; they simply needed power itself. Bolshevism is very tenacious, and can take on the most unexpected forms. It's not only Leninism and Stalinism, but also, for example, it can be Yeltsinism in its most extreme form. Unfortunately, many of the reforms of the 1990s were carried out in the same cavalier, Bolshevik ways as Soviet reforms had been, although at the time this was not so obvious. And today we can see the rise of a neo-Bolshevik mood in the Russian protest movement. This philosophy and ideology is becoming increasingly attractive as the regime becomes ever more restrictive.

Neo-bolshevism's strength lies in its being aimed at literally creating an army of like-minded people who are ready to act harmoniously and in an organised way as the centre commands. Lenin called this "a new type of party". Such an army is much more effective than an amorphous and shaky coalition in solving political issues in conditions of the civil war that the regime is currently waging against its own people. But there's another side to the coin. War creates fertile ground for neo-bolshevism to flourish strongly through violence. That's the environment for neo-bolshevism, which is why – consciously or unconsciously – it's always geared up for war. Neo-bolshevism's response to the civil war that the dictatorship has declared on the people is to launch its own civil war. It puts out a fire by using fire of its own in response.

The Bolshevik tradition in the Russian protest movement presupposes that the unity of the protest should depend on a single party. This means that the nucleus of the protest movement must be ideologically and organisationally homogenous, governed from a single point at the centre by a leader or a group of leaders. The nucleus may be surrounded by hangers-on, but any alliance with them is merely temporary and opportunistic. For neo-bolshevism, betrayal of such allies is the political and

ethical norm. A reliable ally should totally merge into the party, politically and in an organisational sense. The party is not there to represent the interests of society; it's meant to be the driving force between the leadership and the revolutionary class.

Naturally, if we're talking about an armed uprising or a war then organising the protest movement this way is ideal. But the problem in such circumstances is that for the neo-bolsheviks the war becomes an end in itself. If the situation develops relatively peacefully they'll have no chance whatsoever of coming to power. Indeed, they simply cannot *come to power*; they can only *seize power*, when things have broken down to such an extent that all the institutions of the state have ground to a halt. That's why the two principal slogans of neo-bolshevism always have been, and remain, "the worse things are, the better"; and "anyone who is not with us is against us".

Paradoxically, as a radical tendency in the protest movement, neo-bolshevism assists the temporary stabilisation and strengthening of the regime. Thanks to the neo-bolsheviks, the only possible change can come about through a violent coup, carried out at the moment of the regime's final ruin. This happens when there's a total collapse because of war, a huge ecological disaster or some other similar cause. Because neo-bolshevism sees itself as the main beneficiary of such a situation, it stops the protesters from uniting and prevents any handover of power that might take place before such a collapse or in a less violent way. It deliberately supports the regime in the belief that it will eventually bury it. It is because of this support that it's valued by the regime.

In most instances, neo-bolshevism represents a dead-end for the protest movement, since the conditions necessary for its triumph simply don't align. But on those rare occasions when war, or some other catastrophic event brings down the regime, and the neo-bolshevik sects are presented with the opportunity for a successful coup, it invariably ends in a civil war and a new dictatorship, sometimes even more cruel than the one it's replaced. This comes from the very nature of neo-bolshevism, which believes it's essential that only a small section of the population should seize and hold power. Is this the revolution that awaits Russia? Is such a victory over the current regime worth dying for?

An alternative to neo-bolshevism could be a protest coalition: a multi-party, multi-faceted, protest; a collection of various political groups. Of course, a coalition is not the best form of organisation in a war. But the basic principle of a coalition is this: better to unite sooner, than allow the situation to become worse. Uniting the opposition creates the conditions for a change of regime before the moment of complete collapse arrives. The price of the fall of the regime is measured in the number of lives victory will cost. And we cannot be indifferent to what this final price will be.

A coalition is always a compromise. A coalition brings together radical forces, less radical forces and even those who may lean towards cooperating with the regime. Neo-bolshevism is inevitably radical. Yes, it also seeks compromises, but only tactical ones, designed to achieve a particular result and then they'll deal with these "hangers-on". This is why all historical unions that the Bolsheviks have formed have always ended badly for their temporary allies. The principal slogan of a coalition is in direct contrast to that of the neo-bolsheviks: "all who are not against us, are with us". We don't want the result of the revolution to be post-revolutionary ruin, but a post-revolutionary democratic state, governed by the rule of law.

If someone is prepared to make compromises before the revolution, they'll be ready to make them after the revolution, too. But someone who refuses to make compromises ahead of the revolution will be even less likely to agree to them after it, and will become a revolutionary dictator. In time, a revolutionary dictator becomes simply a dictator, and a new revolution will be needed in order to get rid of them. This is the vicious circle that Russia has been living in for more than a hundred years. And if the most radical revolutionaries are not prepared to unite with those who are neither radical nor revolutionaries, then that simply means that the ground will be prepared for an eternal Putin.

Of course, there are different kinds of compromises, too. We need to strike a happy medium between the kind of single party structure that leads to neo-bolshevism, and the sort of multi-party structure that results in a mere talking-shop where nothing is done. There will be times in the revolutionary process where we will need military leaders. But alongside them there must be an organ of power which gives legitimacy to the leaders'

revolutionary authority and that prevents them from rising above the revolution and society.

The creation of a revolutionary coalition is the most important task of the opposition, notwithstanding its unpopularity among the protesters. In reality, a coalition will bring closer the sort of revolution that the majority of the protesters want to create and, most importantly, this will guarantee that the revolution will not end up in a new dictatorship. Compromises will be possible and essential in order to create a coalition. As well as having a radical centre, every successful revolution has to have broad and less radical support around it. That is what links the revolution to the people. Without this, success is impossible to achieve.

Chapter 3. How to Expand the Protest: Underground or In Emigration?

Protest is a subtle and complicated issue.

On the one hand, it’s impossible to create it or artificially encourage it. It arises all by itself and proceeds under its own steam. Protest leaders have to follow this momentum carefully and try not only to move with it, but anticipate each next step, so as always to be in the right place at the right time.

On the other hand, in order to be in a position to do this, it’s essential to be in a state of permanent readiness, by maintaining links with the people and being fuelled by their energy, whilst passing on the right ideas to them. And leaders may have to be in this state of readiness – while being unable to act – for a long time. Years. Maybe even decades. It’s not easy to do, both psychologically and purely technically.

Naturally, the question arises: where should the leaders be while they wait for the protest to gain sufficient strength to launch into its political orbit? This is a difficult question to answer today; and tomorrow it will be even more difficult. We’ve witnessed how, in just a few years, the regime in Russia has gone from being shamefacedly authoritarian to being openly fascist; and then, as if this were not enough, it has blatantly embraced Nazism. I should add that my use of these terms is entirely nominal, because we’re talking here about

something purely Russian, something that's grown out of the country's history; therefore it can be compared only superficially with what we know from Europe's experience of fascism and Nazism. This will have a multitude of consequences, but one of the most important from the practical point of view is that in this new situation the possibilities for legal political activity will be at the very least severely limited, or they may even disappear completely.

It is vital to be aware of this now and adjust our thinking appropriately. Many of the legal and semi-legal institutionalised methods of protest have already disappeared. Those media platforms that could more or less freely criticise the authorities have been shut down. For the Russian secret services, the internet has become the kind of battlefield that short-wave radio was during the Cold War. The regime is trying to drown out "the voices", [one of the principal foreign radio stations that broadcast into the USSR was Voice of America; others included the BBC, Radio Liberty and Deutsche Welle – Tr.] and the people (or, to be more precise, an ever-decreasing active segment of the population) are trying to come up with new ways of obtaining the truth. The opposition is facing the same fate as the dissident movement, forced by repression to the very fringes of society.

There's no single view amongst the opposition as to where and how to carry on the struggle under such conditions (some even tried to avoid looking into the future that's now come to pass). All talk tends to focus on two options: emigration or going underground. There are those who consider that the only way to oppose the regime is to leave the country. Others, though, suggest that the sole way of maintaining the link with the protest movement is to stay in Russia.

As is often the case, both groups are right in their own way. It's essential to fight this neo-totalitarian dictatorship with all available means, both underground and in emigration. So rather than argue about where the real opponents of the regime should sit, we have to think how best to unite the forces of all those who are working for Russia's future, both inside and outside the country. The best place for a member of the opposition is where they can be of maximum help for the cause at any given moment.

We have to begin by looking at modern-day reality. In the era of global electronic control, the possibilities for illegal underground work are greatly restricted, not only compared to what the situation was like in Tsarist Russia, but even compared to the Soviet Union (although at the time it seemed that such possibilities could not be more limited). In order to be hidden from the view of the secret services nowadays, members of the opposition have to demonstrate all the skills of secret service agents. In reality, this is extremely difficult. By its very nature, the underground is a path that only a very few exceptional individuals can follow. You have to have a natural inclination for this sort of life and show no emotion. From the outset you have to be prepared to spend a huge amount of your life in prison, or even to die for the sake of an idea. Talk of having a "wide underground movement" is simply utopian.

So what does this leave? First and foremost a game of cat and mouse with the authorities in the legal sphere. Even in the harshest totalitarian systems, the regime has to leave a few gaps for the legal activity of society. The regime will, of course, try to control this completely from within, but externally it's supposed to appear as the activity of working "social institutions". A classic example of this in Soviet times were the pseudo-social organisations known as the arts' unions (of writers, artists, cinematographers, journalists and so on). Later, during the years of perestroika, some of them did play an active role in pushing forward changes in society. In the broad "game of chess" that the opposition is having to play with this regime – a regime that has finally put a halt to the legacy of Gorbachev and Yeltsin – every such union, every such "cell" that has been created and maintained by the authorities for its own purposes should be regarded as a tiny piece of society that must be taken over. If the opposition doesn't do this, society will remain in the hands of the authorities.

The regime is also constantly looking at the alignment of forces. It could simply ban everything; but the more it bans, the harder it becomes to control the situation. It has to find a balance. So it leaves a few gaps where it considers that the plusses outweigh the minuses. It's those places that the opposition should concentrate on, dashing from one to another. Because all the time some windows will be closing while others will be opening.

Working in conditions of limited legality will impose certain barriers. Clearly, we'll have to learn again the language of Aesop's Fables and choose our words very carefully. Anyone who suggests they are seeking power will be wiped out by the regime, but some possibilities will remain open for those who are "not aiming for power". Therefore it will be essential to limit one's ambitions.

One of the opposition's main tasks will be to entice back those who have been recruited by the state. Those who are extremely intolerant towards those they consider as "loyalists" have to think about this. Today, it is only from abroad that the radical opposition is able to speak out. Yet the oppositionists lump together anyone who doesn't share a radical opinion; anyone who's adapted to the regime or who partially accepts it; or especially anyone who is a part of the regime, albeit not one of the worst. And all of these people are harshly criticised as collaborators. meaning that the only voices that will be heard will be those that are in the grey area. If the opposition wants to continue to be heard it has to learn to speak to those in the grey area.

When it comes to influencing public opinion, no kind of underground work can take the place of what can be done legally. The long struggle of dealing with totalitarianism bears this out. Therefore, striking alliances with those who are undecided is one of the most important conditions for success, as these are the very people who can open up the legal approach, even in the most adverse conditions. What might be meant by "alliances"? Firstly, attracting onto our side those whom the regime still allows to write and to speak. Secondly, laying the foundations for working inside those organisations that the regime has created to give the impression of the existence of a civil society, and forming within them groups of sympathisers. And thirdly, in developing independent work in those areas that the regime finds it difficult to wipe out immediately: the defence of people's rights, social help, charity, educational work, economic initiatives and so on.

What else can the underground do? Undoubtedly, prepare public acts of protest. Not so as to "seize power", but to show the flag and other symbols that will keep the movement alive. Of course, this also includes maintaining in readiness communication and organisational links so that if there is any change in the political situation they can emerge swiftly from underground and become a

normal political organisation. Finally, there is assistance for those who have been arrested and for their families. In this instance we must bear in mind that in present circumstances financing any illegal work from external sources will, in effect, be impossible, fraught as it is with instant disclosure and sanctions. So all local activists and organisations that have managed to survive will have to be self-financing. But this in itself will reduce the number of such organisations.

Nevertheless, if the Russian state continues to develop as we've seen in recent years, sooner or later the opposition will have to acknowledge that the focal point of its political work will have to take place abroad. They have to look at this soberly and start to prepare for it psychologically. Recent experience, including what happened in Belarus, illustrates that the only place that at least the coordinating hub of opposition activity can be based is outside the country. Any attempt to create it internally will be smashed by the regime. It's only abroad that the work of the independent opposition media can be fully rolled out, although the spreading of its content within Russia will be a separate challenge. (But in order to put out reliable information, you also have to create reliable ways of producing it.) It's abroad, too, that projects to teach activists how to prepare for the future Russia will have to be formed. And it's only outside Russia that the necessary financial resources can be organised and that Western public opinion can be influenced.

Trying to operate from abroad, of course, is always a compromise. But the problem is that those who are going to try to live on inside the country will have to make even more of a compromise. I believe that we're going to have to change our usual attitude to political emigration and see flight from the country as something essential, and thus stop dividing the opposition into the categories of "those on the ground" and "those abroad". In this way, emigration can simply be considered as a second front in the struggle against the regime; and if the situation becomes too dreadful, it may even become the main front. There must be clear mutual cooperation between those who are fighting inside the country and those carrying on the struggle from abroad. It's only with such cooperation that the opposition's two fronts can survive and operate.

But those who are operating abroad will have extra problems. The regime will inevitably describe these

political emigrants as spies and saboteurs who are in the pay of foreign secret services. And that's only part of it. They certainly won't have an easy relationship with the governments and secret services of those countries where they try to establish their bases. History has shown that European governments are not exactly thrilled about having opponents of the Russian regime operating on their territories, because it's a headache they could do without. It also creates extra problems in their relations with the Kremlin.

It seems clear that there's going to have to be a division of labour. From a certain point, any open discussion about the model for the new Russia will be possible only somewhere where the dictatorship is not operating. But the spread of free ideas from outside will be difficult. It will be done by those who are courageous enough to carry on the struggle inside the country. We have to be prepared for a significant period of time when the protest will have to be kept on hold before it can be released into the political sphere. It's essential, therefore, that we ensure that during this period our work is well prepared. The more we're able to do now, the less will need to be done later.

Chapter 4. The Point of No Return: the Street or the Commanding Heights?

`At which moment does a revolution become irreversible? Many suggest that it's when you "take control of the streets". But is this so?

"The street" was and remains the principal mantra for the liberally-minded Russian intelligentsia. They see their mission as bringing the mass of the people out onto the streets. But frequently this isn't the best thing to do. More often than not the people act less upon the call to action from the intelligentsia than to hidden hints that come from the authorities. This was the case in Gorbachev's time, when a split in the Central Committee of the Communist Party led to the success of the largest mass meeting ever seen in Russian history. Sometimes, the people will take to the streets themselves, as happened at the start of the last century, when the intelligentsia were left in their wake, barely able to catch up. But it's even more serious when the intelligent leaders of the revolution don't know what to do with these masses of people who've taken to the streets. And the less intelligent ones understand, but prefer not to speak out

about it. That's how it's come about that since Lenin's time no one has been prepared to speak openly about this matter. This is no one's fault. At first, there were serious reasons for keeping quiet about this; later there was simply no need to do so.

Why do political leaders call people out onto the streets? As discussed above, there are two main situations where this happens: for peaceful or non-peaceful protest. In this context we don't need to look at peaceful protest. If there's some hope that the dictatorship will step down under psychological pressure (for example, if the leaders have become decrepit, if there are splits among the elite, or if the regime is afraid that there'll be foreign intervention), then people go out on the streets simply as a demonstration of their strength, and not as a way of overthrowing the regime. In such a situation, the opposition leaders use the mob on the streets as a tool when negotiating with the representatives of the regime to discuss the terms of capitulation. But it's a completely different situation when it's clear that there will be no capitulation, and that the regime is ready to open fire on the people.

When matters have reached such a peak that the most vicious measures might be needed to overthrow the authorities, the call to take to the streets becomes a call for the attack to begin; it's an open call for an uprising. This is an extremely responsible step to take. In such a situation, the leaders must be prepared to take charge of this attack and to follow all the rules of revolutionary and military science. If not, then they have no right to call the people out, because such a move would simply provoke the authorities and senselessly send people under a hail of truncheons and even bullets. If you're going to lead an uprising it's not enough just to want people on the streets. As Lenin wrote – the only person in Russian history to have led a successful revolutionary uprising – organising an uprising is an art and you have to learn how to do it. An uprising has to be prepared in advance. It's not something that's decided on the spur of the moment.

The reason for calling people out onto the streets in a revolutionary situation is to seize the commanding heights. Despite how it may seem in the utopian dreams of the armchair leaders, "the street" is not important in and of itself. It's simply a way of directing unarmed or poorly armed people at a crucial moment and bringing them

together as a critical mass at one or in several places. There needs to a sufficient number of people in order to persuade the regime's local commanders at these previously appointed places not to take retaliatory action.

Over a hundred years ago a revolutionary who went under the pseudonym of Postoronny, or "the Stranger", rapidly dictated to his colleagues in Petrograd his advice on how to organise a revolutionary uprising. Some of his advice is now out of date, but parts of it remain relevant:

"An armed uprising is a ***particular*** form of the political struggle, and one that obeys certain laws. You need to think about them carefully. Karl Marx embossed this truth wonderfully, when he wrote that an armed ***'uprising, like a war, is an art'***.

Marx outlined the main rules of this art thus:

1. Never ***play*** at an uprising; once it's begun it's essential that you know that you must ***carry it to its conclusion***.

2. It is vital that in the right place and at the decisive moment you have ***much greater numbers of forces***. If you do not then an enemy that has prepared and organised better will annihilate the rebels.

3. Once the uprising has begun, you must act with the greatest ***decisiveness***, and most certainly go on ***the attack***. 'Defence means the death of an armed uprising.'

4. You must try to surprise the enemy, seizing the moment when his forces are scattered.

5. You must achieve even small successes ***every day*** (you could say every hour if we're talking about actions in a single city); this way, whatever happens, you'll maintain ***morale***.

Marx summed up the lessons of armed insurrections in all revolutions with the words 'of Danton, the greatest master of revolutionary tactics in the whole of history: courage, courage and once again, courage.'

Relating this to Russia and to October 1917, this means…

With the combined efforts of your three main forces – the navy, and the workers' and military units – this means that without fail and ***whatever it costs in casualties***, we

must seize and hold in the first assault a) the telephone exchange; b) the telegraph office; c) the railway stations; d) the bridges.

We must divide *the most reliable* elements (our 'shock troops' and the *young workers*, along with our best sailors) into small units in order to seize the most important objectives. Also, they must be the ones who *take part* everywhere in all the important operations, such as…forming the units of the very best workers with rifles and bombs to attack and surround the enemy's 'centres' (the cadet schools, the telegraph, the telephone exchange, and so on), operating under the slogan: *we may all die, but we will never give in to the enemy*.

Reading over these lines a hundred years on when you know the outcome, you begin to understand how important it is to acknowledge simple truths. Unfortunately, though, simplicity does not mean that it's easy to assimilate them. Let's try to consider this advice from today's point of view. We can put Marx' thoughts to one side, as these are philosophical ideas that are difficult to apply in every concrete situation. But it's worth looking further into the advice about bridges, the telegraph office, the post office and so on. Of course, times have changed radically. The telegraph has sunk into oblivion; post has become e-mail; and bridges have lost the significance they once had. But this is not the point.

The first thing that remains as relevant today as it was then is that it's essential to maintain the unity of political action, because if the uprising is broken up into individual sectors, each of them can be crushed individually. Lenin needed bridges in order to maintain this unity of action, but what this really means is transport hubs, which must be isolated and immediately brought under control.

Secondly, and even more important, is that the rebels maintain uninterrupted communication. In the modern world this means having control over internet and mobile phone providers, as well as protecting the means of transmitting signals (the control hubs, masts and so on). Without the coordination that this provides, the revolutionary masses quickly become just an ungovernable mob and they'll be smashed to pieces.

Thirdly, it remains vital to control the traditional forms of mass communication: television, radio, newspapers and print. If they can't be taken over, they must at least be neutralised.

Fourthly: it's very important to prevent the regime from carrying out repressions and seizing the leaders from the crowd. In order to prevent this, one of the first things to do is blockade prisons and police stations, and release any comrades who've already been arrested.

Fifthly: the formation of an advance guard of units of well-prepared and, if possible, armed youths remains as important as ever. They should be able at least partially to prevent the security forces from acting and provide cover for the bulk of the people. Similarly, preparing and arming these units both with weapons taken from the security forces and with home-made devices, such as Molotov cocktails and so forth, is also of vital importance.

Revolution is a serious business, and should never be toyed with. If you're not absolutely sure, don't try to overtake history. If you're not prepared to carry things through to the end, don't even leave your room. Don't start up any kind of movement. Just stay where you are. Don't call people out on the streets if you don't know which street to choose and where you need to go – and if you're not prepared to lead from the front. But if you do make that call, don't stop, even when there are casualties. Because if you do, there'll simply be even more casualties and, worst of all, they will have died for nothing. If you feel that you're capable of doing this, then prepare yourself. Being a revolutionary is a profession. And as with any other profession, it doesn't tolerate amateurs. Preparing yourself means also thinking things through to their conclusion and not being afraid of the outcome, which could be far tougher than any of us might want.

Chapter 5. How to Organise the New Order: Constitutional Democracy or Democracy by Decree?

An honest and principled person who is critical of the current regime in Russia is right to ask: what's the problem in moving from a bad authoritarian state to a good democratic one?

Indeed, at first glance everything looks relatively simple. After the democratic forces have triumphed (however this is accomplished), the first step must be to call a Constituent (constitutional) Assembly. Next, a new Constitution must be approved; or, at the very least, the old one must have all of the non-constitutional additions removed. Then free and fair elections must be held to create the democratic authorities' new institutions. This tends to be how everything works. But the reality is somewhat more complicated. We need to look carefully at the details of this plan to be aware of the many practical issues that will arise. And it's much better to consider all this before we arrive at this juncture.

Common sense tells us that even in the most favourable conditions, the three most basic requirements of the new authorities – calling the Constituent Assembly, bringing the Constitution into line with democratic principles and holding free and fair elections – cannot be achieved in a day or even a month. You need at least a year, probably longer. And this is in ideal circumstances; that clearly won't be the case for us.

We have to spend more time looking at these conditions, because they're hugely significant. You don't have to be a prophet to predict that when Putin goes many people will still retain the habit of living as they have under Putin. This means that genuine changes in life in Russia will take place far more slowly than we would wish.

Far too often we underestimate the power of social inertia. People intrinsically hang on to whatever it is that they've grown used to over a number of years. As a result of this, dilapidated organisations keep on working, even though you might have expected them to collapse under the weight of corruption and ineffectiveness. The system shows a miraculous ability to survive against all the odds. But then, when inertia finally takes its toll (and it can't go on for ever), the system collapses drastically and in a way that's difficult to control. The stronger the inertia is and the longer it lasts, the greater will be the risks that need to be overcome in the transitional period.

What can any temporary government expect when it attempts to drag Russia out of its past and prepare it for the future?

1. A sharp rise in poverty due to a worsening budget deficit and limited possibilities for financial flexibility;

2. Increased disintegration and the growth of a mood of separatism;

3. Opposition and sabotage from the old elite, especially from the military and the secret services;

4. Capital flight, directly or tangentially linked to the previous regime;

5. An increase in crime, especially with the redistribution of property;

6. A worsening in the international sphere, since the weakening of the situation inside the country will inevitably lead to greater pressure from outside.

In circumstances that will already be difficult, all of these factors could create "the perfect storm". Whatever good intentions the temporary government may have, it will quickly find itself having to introduce emergency measures. It will have two concurrent agendas, one of top of the other, each interfering with the other. There will be the transformative agenda, aimed at creating the conditions in Russia for stable, constitutional government. And there will be the emergency agenda, that will try to maintain the political gains that have been won, while fighting off opposition from the old society and trying to bring stability to the overall socio-economic and political situation in the country.

Politics is a never-ending process. If this process splits apart, even if just for a few days, not even weeks or months, then chaos will inevitably reign in the gaping chasm this brings. And we're talking here about a period of one or two years. Confusion and anarchy could produce an even worse regime for Russia than Putin's. If we don't think about this in advance, then someone could simply seize the power that's being trodden underfoot. And whether they would then wish to share that power with anyone else is a serious question.

From a practical point of view, the success of the transformation will greatly depend not only on the effectiveness of the Constituent Assembly, but also on the competence of the government that takes over on day one of the revolution, and that will rule the country until a permanent government takes office following free and fair elections. This temporary government must be capable of closing the gap between the start of the

democratic transformation and the point when these democratic changes come into force. Agreeing the goals and the tasks of the temporary government is more important right now than talking about future constitutional innovations. This can be discussed in the Constituent Assembly; but the temporary government won't have time for that.

The phrase "after Putin" is a rather abstract one. "After Putin" could happen when Putin is still alive; or it could come many years after his death. We must not assume that another "Putin" – or an even worse example – would not come to power when Putin goes. And there could be many such examples. Opponents of the Bolshevik regime predicted its demise nearly every year, but it continued for almost 70 years. It's a different matter that it won't go on forever. There will come a time when civil society will be allowed to find its place in the political sphere. That will be the point when the transitional period begins.

To some degree it doesn't matter who makes the first move, or how they do it. It could be someone from the ranks of the successors who, as Gorbachev did, will declare that, "we cannot go on living like this", and will start to gradually loosen the screws on society. It might be a "traitor to their own class", like Yeltsin, who manages to burst through to the highest echelons of power and build "a revolution from above". It's not impossible that it could even be a coalition of democratic forces, that carries out "a revolution from below"; although in a police state such as Russia, that, for now, seems unlikely.

Those are three possible scenarios for Russia, three different fates for her; but whichever it is, the first act of this drama will be the same. Out of apparently nothing a government will arise that will start to dismantle the old system, strictly on the top-down principle, and it will bring those "below" (i.e. civil society) into the political process. This government will not have the legitimacy apparently held by the old authorities, nor will it have the freedom of movement to do as it wishes. Its term in office will be brief, but notwithstanding this it will be faced by the most challenging and important task possible: to make the process of transformation irreversible and to save the country from disaster. Its mission will be accomplished

when it forms a government with a new constitutional majority.

Judging by the experience of both Russia and other countries, history has shown that two years is the limit of trust that the people will give to democratic forces that begin a reform programme. After that, cracks start to appear, which is only to be expected. At that point, power has to be transferred to a newly-elected government (which rarely will have good relations with its predecessor), or the authorities can try to hold onto power with the help of "revolutionary violence", overcoming opposition from the population who will now be even more firmly against the reforms.

The second option is what happens most often; but if that path is taken then the government will likely be forced to bid farewell to any plans it had for democracy and leave them until history's next big event. This is exactly what happened in Russia in 1993, just two years after the overwhelming democratic revolution. Russia received its new Constitution on the back of the tanks which shot up the first parliament of the new Russia. This underlines that, however difficult it might be, it is vital to ensure that the first steps to reform are carried out in those first two years.

So the temporary, democratic government that comes to power after the Putin regime is over will have an historic mission. It will have to re-launch democratic processes in Russia and lay the foundations for a permanent constitutional government; one that is legally elected. The problem, however, is that it will have to carry out this mission in the most extreme circumstances. One of the greatest challenges of a transitional period after any lengthy authoritarian rule is that it is virtually impossible to avoid the economy – and politics in general – going into a nosedive. Thus, another mission for the transitional government (and one that is equally important) is not to allow society to descend into chaos.

We can be almost certain that no temporary government would be able to create the conditions for high standards of democracy. Furthermore, in the initial stages it is highly likely that they would have to abolish the old, ornamental, institutions, such as the State Duma and the Federation Council. A particularly tricky question will be what to do with the courts. Here, contradictions arise

between, firstly, the irremovable and the independent; secondly, the need to carry out a radical purge of the corrupt personnel of the old regime; and, thirdly, between the rights of criminals, suspects and victims. At the same time, the government must maintain a course of democratisation, not allowing for any temporary restrictions to become permanent; ensuring that a Constituent Assembly is called and carries out real work; that a new Constitution is adopted; and that free and fair elections are held.

What sort of government will be needed to make progress along these various paths? In an ideal world, it would be a government of national unity, that included representatives of various political forces and was based on a consensus with civil society. Something along the lines of a "Coordinated Opposition Council" that had been granted power. However, in real life such an ideal is virtually impossible to achieve. Initially, when the movement begins there simply won't be a readily-formed political force in the country that can be relied on and that genuinely reflects civil society. In its place, we have a plethora of political groups whose aims aren't clear and whose legitimacy is dubious. Then even if there were someone who wanted to bring together such a political kaleidoscope as the foundation for a temporary government, nothing would come of it (as we saw with the "coordinated council" that was formed in 2012). Finally, whoever it was that took power at the start would have to be highly motivated in order to invite others to share power. So far, no one in Russia has been magnanimous enough to do that. It would be extraordinary to expect that to happen in the future.

Therefore, it's highly unlikely that a temporary government made up of a coalition of the revolutionary forces could be formed that would represent a significant segment of civil society - however much we might wish for this to happen. It's far more likely that power will lie in the hands of a single political force: it'll be either the reformers from above, or the revolutionaries from below. And neither time, nor a simple desire will be able to break such a force.

In its turn, this will seriously increase the risk that the temporary dictatorship of this revolution will become a long-term project. So what can be done to prevent the process of building a democracy from stalling, and to strengthen it with a constitution?

Common sense suggests that in order to do this you need some kind of balance of forces so as to keep tabs on the work of the temporary government. But where can you find such a balance? Nearly all of the ornamental representative institutions of the old authorities have been discredited or are simply worn out. What's more, when the revolutionary changes begin, their members will on the whole be against the revolution and thus not in a position to give any help at all. And it's likely that given their current state it will be necessary to suspend the State Duma and the Federation Council. But it will be impossible to hold elections quickly for the new representative bodies. This will take months, at least, during which time every day will be precious.

However strange it may seem, it's the present regime that has given us a possible solution. In the rush to guarantee their leader his permanent place in power, among other things they created a quasi-representative body, the State Council, and even gave it legal standing via the Constitution. The purpose of this organisation was to put the brakes on any changes. But if we were to change the personnel there, selecting people according to different principles, this *counter-revolutionary* organisation would become a *revolutionary* one.

In practice, the State Council could be reformed if the temporary government immediately filled it with representatives of civil society and the regions. For the transitional period it could be the political centre that keeps the authorities in check, and it could become the temporary emergency legal body and the controlling organisation of the temporary government. Furthermore, it would allow for a certain constitutional continuity between the old authorities and the new. The State Council could issue temporary decrees that would lay the normative and legal foundation for the work of the government in the period of transition.

The principles on which the State Council will be formed is the subject of a lengthy, separate discussion, that can really be had only when the general outlines of the transition will be known. But there can be no doubt about one thing: if the transition will be carried out strictly, then the only legitimate foundation for the formation of the State Council will be regional representation, since the legitimacy of all the other institutions of power will be in doubt. In this case, the State Council will be

formed by the regional commissioners, probably elected or appointed by the local legal assemblies. It will also be clear that for the State Council to work effectively, it should be a compact governing body, operating on a permanent basis.

Thus, as a tandem of the temporary government and the State Council, the system of governance should operate for a long enough period to call a Constituent Assembly; determine its functions; introduce a new Constitution and electoral laws; and also run free and fair elections for the new institutions as defined by the Constitution. This should take no longer than two years. If not, then Russian history will simply enter yet another round of totalitarianism.

Chapter 6. How to Bring an End to the War: Fight to a Victorious Outcome, Capitulate or Seek a Compromise?

This chapter was written almost a year before Russia unleashed the greatest geopolitical disaster in the last hundred years: the war against Ukraine. It may seem like a paradox, but the chapter hardly needed editing.

The temporary government that will have to dismantle the regime will be faced by a mountain of problems. But it’s already clear that the greatest of these will be to bring an end to the war with Ukraine. In reality, Putin’s regime has also dragged Russia into a war with the West.

The war with Ukraine is simply the tip of the iceberg. Beneath it and at its core is the global confrontation with the West, conducted anywhere the regime can do so. Militarism is the very essence of Putin’s regime. The only way in which it can stabilise itself is to conduct constant wars against imaginary enemies, both internal and external. War is the price to be paid for corruption. This gang of corrupt opportunists who seized and usurped power in Russia at the start of the century cannot hold onto their positions without a war, and they’re now carrying out their final one to try to defend the narrow interests of their clans.

Russia was back in a cold war situation with the West from the moment that Putin delivered his speech at Munich in 2007. And in February 2022 this war became a hot war. For now it’s being waged on the territory of Ukraine. But

let's not deceive ourselves. The assault on Ukraine is simply the first of a number of predetermined goals. This war that the Kremlin desperately needs in order to stabilise and maintain its fascist regime is imperialist, criminal and, of course, unjust. But as well as all the grief and suffering that it's bringing to the Ukrainian people; as well all the grief that it's bringing to the families of the Russian soldiers who are dying and being wounded in this criminal war that no one needs; as well as all this, it's draining Russia of the resources that are essential for its development. This war is destroying the future of Russia itself. The war is the principal obstacle preventing the formation of an alternative strategy for the country's development. Unless this crazy and exhausting war is brought to an end, there is no hope of moving to a constructive, creative and socially-oriented agenda. The problem is that bringing an end to this war is going to be far more difficult than launching it was. So for any temporary government, this will be a very serious challenge in the transitional period. This is also because ending the war in a careless and stupid way is no less dangerous politically than continuing it.

In theory there are only three ways in which the war could be brought to an end: victory; surrender; or some kind of compromise. Trying to win the current war with Ukraine would be a criminal and immoral act. Furthermore, if we understand that the real nature of this war and its ultimate goal is the defeat of the West, then we can see that it's also a utopian ideal. If the regime could not achieve this at the peak of its powers, then it would be even more impossible for the temporary government to achieve this in the conditions of economic downturn and political instability that will follow in the transitional period. So in reality there are just two options that can be considered: unconditional surrender, or a search for more or less acceptable conditions for peace. But the problem is that after all that the Putin regime has done, finding any such conditions will be extremely difficult.

Having unleashed the war, Putin has effectively taken off the table any question about "the Russian world" [the so-called *russky mir* – Tr.]. The whole concept of "the Russian world" is now simply mired in aggression. What's more, Moscow cannot play the role of being at its heart. We have to recognise clearly and decisively the consequences of what has happened, and not hide our heads in the sand like ostriches. Putin has taken Russian culture and Russian civilisation from the global level

and turned it into something merely regional. What may have seemed just like a phase is likely to prove decisive, and history won't revise that opinion. Against this general background, a separate issue is that Russian Orthodoxy has been turned into a regional, even a local, religion, that can have no pretensions about universal moralising or being "the Third Rome". This is the world in which we will be living, and that won't depend on whether Putin is there or not. Even if Putin departs the scene, none of this grandeur will return.

But there are even more serious consequences. Having witnessed Putin's aggression, very many countries – notably nearly all of Russia's immediate neighbours – will reckon that their safety can be guaranteed only by the dismemberment of Russia. The threat of the collapse of Russia is the principal result of Putin's war that the temporary government will have to deal with. And this government is going to have very little time at its disposal. The only way that Russia can be maintained as a single, sovereign state is for the government to be proactive in all directions. The first thing it will have to do is make peace with all sides that have been drawn into this conflict; and then carry out a programme of federalisation. Federalisation is a subject for a separate discussion; but the question of peace has to be discussed here and now.

There's a very simplistic view of this problem that's popular among the liberal opposition. This is merely to cancel everything that Putin's done. So: Putin started the war in Ukraine, therefore we must stop it immediately. Putin put his medium-range missiles on high alert in violation of a treaty: they must be destroyed. Putin built military bases in Africa: so they have to be closed down and the troops sent back to Russia. And so on.

I wrote the first draft of this book before the war. In it, I considered at this point the possibility of making decisions using as an example the problem of Crimea. But the war has changed all that. Today the confrontation has so deeply pierced Russian society, and the propaganda and mobilisation have had such a profound effect upon people's consciousness, that it's now impossible to imagine any gradual, long-drawn-out solutions. In the present, specific case, this makes the situation very straightforward: a genuine change of regime is now possible only in the event of a military defeat. This means that the Crimea problem, just as the wider problem

of ending the war, can be solved only by way of a peace treaty. For now, I find it very difficult to imagine that Ukraine would be prepared to sign such a treaty without it being granted the full restoration of its sovereignty over the territories that were within its internationally-recognised borders in 1991. Of course, anything is possible, but unless Putin's regime suffers a military defeat, it won't be replaced in the near future.

A military defeat would signal the end of the war and one way or another it would resolve the issue of the annexed territories. But the peace treaty itself would not mean that everything would return to the way it was before the war. The division between Russians and Ukrainians and between Russia and Europe is now vast, and no single government is going to be able to heal this rift in the short term. Even less a temporary government that doesn't enjoy great legitimacy or sufficient reserves of time or trust. The inevitable economic and political crisis that will result from a military defeat and the dramatic collapse of the economy will leave the temporary government in a position whereby it will have to solve the many ongoing problems using all the resources at its disposal; or else it will simply collapse, leaving the way clear for radical nationalist groups and other populists. At the same time, the Ukrainian government will have to demand just as firmly the resources to rebuild their country; and there will be no obvious solution for them to choose how to do this. Unfortunately, yet totally justifiably, today we can say with certainty that all the assets that have been seized – some 300 billion dollars, including the foreign assets of Putin's oligarchs – should go to repair the damage caused as a result of the war. But I shall be extremely surprised if this satisfies Ukraine. At the same time, the inhabitants of Tatarstan and the Russian Far East, of Voronezh and the Baikal Region, are hardly likely to vote for increasing their own impoverishment, and not that of Putin's oligarchs.

Someone will say, "let's discuss everything". Okay. Firstly, though, you need time for discussion – and time is going to be in short supply. And secondly, discussing the issues doesn't mean reaching agreement on them. Right now, we don't know what the position of the other side will be. After everything that's happened between Russia and Ukraine under Putin – and, more widely, between Russia and the West – there will not be a great desire on the other side to seek a compromise. It's more likely that Russia will come up against very strong pressure. At

least, this is what the experience of the 1990s tells us. No one proposed a "Marshall Plan" for Russia then, and it's highly unlikely that anyone will suggest one now. This all leads to the idea that the restoration of justice, that may appear to be a logical step, will be of benefit to some, while others will regard it as a shock and an injustice.

Now let's look at the second part of the question of rebuilding: the political one. Is this likely to be popular in Russian society, even in that section of society that is prepared to support the temporary government in its efforts to dismantle the Putin regime? Probably not. Especially if the humanitarian aspects of a swift and unconditional rebuilding become immediately obvious. It seems inevitable that this will lead to a sharp rise in discontent, something that the forces of reaction will quickly try to use to their advantage. If this is so, the temporary government won't last more than a few months. Politics is the art of the possible. Extricating ourselves easily from Putin's war with the West – acknowledging that we were wrong and trying to return everything to the way it was – will, most likely, not be possible.

Many of those who believe in simple solutions refer to the Peace of Brest-Litovsk, that the Bolsheviks signed with Germany when Russia withdrew from the First World War. They suggest that after the regime has been dismantled, Russia should conclude similar agreements with all those against whom Putin has been waging war. But the Peace of Brest-Litovsk is a bad example to choose. The Bolsheviks acted under conditions of an extreme *force-majeure*, when had they taken any other decision they would simply have lost power. And they were ready to break all the terms of the agreement at the first opportunity, which is exactly what they did after just a few months when a revolution took place in Germany. Taking advantage of the confusion this caused, the Moscow government seized back everything they had given away, including wiping out Ukraine's independence that had been accepted on the fringes of the Brest-Litovsk agreements. Had it not been for the revolution in Germany, the Bolsheviks' gamble may have had completely different consequences.

When all things are considered, the only possible scenario will be to move forwards, not backwards. Naturally, it calls for courage to admit one's mistakes

and call a spade a spade, including acknowledging crimes as crimes. Those who have committed these crimes must bear full responsibility for them and accept the consequences. But the way out of this situation must be found in keeping with the new reality as things are now. This is no simple task. In each specific case a balance must be sought between restoring the old justice and the creation of a new injustice; between acknowledging what is essential politically and turning away from what is politically impossible.

Returning to the most pressing problem, that of Crimea and the other occupied territories, then here we have two key moments in my opinion. First of all, we cannot simply ignore the issue and say that we've got rid of Putin but Crimea will be ours nonetheless. If we don't solve this problem, the war will never end. Secondly, for the reasons cited above it's also impossible simply to return Crimea to Ukrainian jurisdiction. Mainly because in practice it will be impossible to avoid violence on the peninsula after it's restored to Ukraine. It'll be necessary to find some complicated solutions involving a gradual restitution with a third country as a guarantor.

Rejecting Putin's legacy does not mean, unfortunately, that we can simply ignore it. The war represents the new reality, and the way out of it must be organised and properly thought through. In doing so, certain important principles must be observed, namely:

1. Old problems can never be solved simply by creating new ones.
2. Separate what is politically *desirable* from what is politically *possible*.
3. Understand clearly where the interests of Putin's regime lie and where Russia's national interests begin, and don't solve the problem of de-Putinisation by damaging Russia's national interests.
4. Approach each point separately, noting the unique difficulties of each one; don't rush to find a universal, standard solution.
5. History has demonstrated that ways of solving many of life's problems simply don't exist yet; they have to be worked out afresh.
6. Time and political will are needed in order to solve many problems.

Chapter 7. How to Defeat an Internal Counter-Revolution: Purge the Old Guard or Try to Correct Them?

Russia has gone through a difficult return to its Soviet past. It's already passed the point of no return. There's no turning back. The chain of events was thus:

- Yeltsin pushed forward Putin as his successor
- Putin gradually took over total power
- There were creeping counter-reforms
- The return (in effect) of state control over the economy, but indirectly – it's less "the state" than "the mafia" (in other words, the situation's worse than in Soviet times).

Taken together, this means that over a quarter of a century after Gorbachev's perestroika, Russia has not only returned to the starting point of his reforms, but in many ways has gone back to a time many decades before this.

This Soviet restoration poses the practical question about the strength of these reactionaries, who are trying to extinguish any kind of reform or revolution and reinstate themselves in power. Putin and his closest circle are representatives of the second and third levels of the Soviet nomenklatura (the highest level have already pretty well disappeared and, in any case, wouldn't be in a position to reinstate themselves to their previous positions). These people from the second and third levels slipped into the background, yet were waiting there, ready to carry out an ambush. When the opportunity arose, they came to the fore and tried to turn back the clock to restore the old ways of ruling, which they remembered well from their youth. Naturally, they did this by adapting to contemporary conditions, which meant first and foremost that they considered it essential to make themselves as rich as possible.

This is not a unique situation, of course. When a temporary government comes to power, forces linked to the old regime never disappear instantaneously from the face of the earth. Some of them will be eased out, but many will remain in place. And they won't just remain in place; they'll stay there with their money, their families, and with the old connections that they've built up along with their economic and social capital. They – or, to be more precise, already *their* second and third level officials –

will also be awaiting the opportunity to establish themselves in position. This is why any new group in power always has to try to avoid being crushed by representatives of the old power. But how they can achieve this? How do they define the borders that are so essential for their political defence? How do they avoid going too far in defending themselves against the old terror without giving rise to a new terror? Where do you draw the line of reasonable sufficiency when it comes to suppressing an internal counter-revolution?

These are the questions that many are struggling with today, not in an abstract sense but precisely when they consider recent experience. When they examine closely the 1990s, people want to understand: what did we miss? What mistakes were made that have allowed the Soviet Union to return? By far the most popular answer is that it's because we didn't instigate a purge of the old guard. When we look at today's political situation you could argue that not carrying out a purge was a mistake. But I wouldn't rush to this conclusion.

In such circumstances, a purge means removing the rights of the old elite. How widely this reaches can vary, both in terms of the people affected and the rights that are taken away from them. If we're talking about Russia, then probably the most wide-ranging purge was carried out by the Bolsheviks after the revolution. They enacted repressive measures against millions of people who fell into the category of the so-called "privileged classes" of the old Russia (the gentry, members of the clergy, army officers, the kulaks and others). A significant percentage of them were repressed in various ways or even killed, while millions of others were denied the right to take part in various activities, professions were closed off to them, their children were deprived of the possibility to be educated and so on.

But this is an extreme example. After the velvet revolutions in Europe, velvet purges became fashionable. They were on a much smaller scale and a lot more gentle in terms of the pressure they put on the old elite. Whole social classes were no longer included among those who were purged. Now it was rather about individuals who directly cooperated with the regime or who occupied specific positions in the hierarchy. These could have been officials (in the first instance, of course, members of the law enforcement bodies or the special services), judges, secret agents and other similar categories. The

lists of these people differed depending on the country, but the general principle was the same: a change from class-based repression to specific professional or political categories.

Naturally, in modern Russia you won't find many people who would want to repeat "the red terror". But in terms of milder restrictions, such as those applied in Eastern Europe or certain countries of the post-Soviet space, there tends to be a different opinion. A significant proportion of the liberally-minded intelligentsia today would welcome such an approach. People look to the past and say, "we didn't do this in the 1990s – and look what happened!" But before answering the question as to whether or not this should be done, it would be sensible to ask whether in principle it would be possible to do this in Russia. And the answer to this question is not as simple as it may seem.

This so-called "mild purge" is principally aimed at breaking the automatic production chain of the nomenklatura – a somewhat closed circle of professional bureaucrats who amazingly manage to reinstate their positions inside any power set-up following a revolution. There are many examples of this; and they all show that – in the countries of the former USSR at least – no purge is going to solve this issue.

Let's start with the Bolsheviks themselves. Already at the beginning of the 1920s, just three years after the revolution and the start of "the red terror", Lenin was complaining to his colleagues that the Bolsheviks had been unable to solve the problem of clearing out the representatives of the old tsarist state apparatus. He moaned that they represented the majority of Soviet state officials; that the new state apparatus was even bigger than the old one had been; and that it was suffering from every kind of bureaucratic illness. To be fair it should be noted that in the end the Bolsheviks did manage to overcome the opposition of the old elites; but this was mainly by terror, rather than measures that could in a narrower sense of the word be described as "a purge".

The most recent experience of purges in Ukraine can also hardly be called encouraging. Firstly, it turned out that efforts to use legal methods for purging were in practice tied in with massive and often insurmountable difficulties. Then, it turned out that once all those

officials who needed to be removed had been purged, the new authorities found that they had no one available to fill key posts. It is this factor that runs through all of the unsuccessful attempts at carrying out purges across the whole post-Soviet space. This is in contrast to the relatively positive experience of this method in the countries of Eastern Europe.

Russia's problem (and, indeed, that of many other post-Soviet states) is that the political class and the cultural layer within it is not very big. As a result, the "substitutes' bench" for filling these posts in any future administration is very small. There simply isn't anywhere we could find a large number of judges, procurators or police, let alone bankers, financial inspectors and so on. And the further you go, the more difficult it is, because the work of the state apparatus becomes ever more complicated, and the tasks allocated to it ever greater. In other words, carrying out purges is all well and good in theory, but it rarely works in practice. It even became an insoluble problem for the Bolsheviks, despite their conviction that any cook would be capable of running the country. It ended up with the cooks becoming the bosses, but under them it was basically the old specialists doing the work. In reality, we need to find a different solution rather than purges.

And there is a solution. It turns out that when placed in the most varied circumstances, the very same people are capable of showing completely different results. The task should be not to change the *people*, but the *system* that defines the limits of their behaviour. This task can be split into two separate areas: removing the "first disciples" from the system; and cutting out unacceptable social and political work practices.

As accumulated experience has shown, trying to suppress the rights of social and professional groups when there are not the people in society who could take their place simply makes the situation even more complicated. One way or another representatives of these groups still manage to worm their way into the new social structure, causing serious moral and political damage to society. A useful method here may be to take a more personalised approach, that would help at least for a time to exclude the more odious characters from the infrastructure. We are, of course, not including here those against whom there is clear evidence to bring legal charges in connection with particularly serious crimes. Such individuals must be

brought before the courts, in accordance with the constitutional guarantees.

We're talking here about people who are not suspected of carrying out particularly dangerous crimes, but who were key figures in facilitating the work of the criminal regime. People such as those who sponsored the regime; who distributed its propaganda; who were in charge of the crucial sections of the apparatus of repression. Bringing them all to justice would be costly, even if it were possible; but to allow them to continue with their political activity would be dangerous. One solution could be to apply specific and targetted sanctions, that are, in any case, fairer than carrying out purges simply based on professional or social grounds. Some sort of "internal Magnitsky Act" could be used, that would allow for the regime's "first disciples" to be excluded from the social infrastructure, albeit for a period of time.

Naturally, though, this is not enough. If you simply exclude the "first disciples", then pretty quickly the second and third disciples will be striving to become the first. Therefore, a ban on the preaching of unacceptable social and political actions should be added to measures designed to combat internal counter-revolution, because such actions are inextricably linked to mass violations of human rights and freedoms. The processes of de-communisation and de-Stalinisation showed specifically the desire to do this. Many consider that these were two possibilities that were missed in the 1990s. This is partly true; but it's not as simple as that.

In the 1990s, it was thought that outlawing the activities of the Communist Party should be the first thing to do under the banner of de-communisation. Yet this was a genuine political force that to this day is still supported by millions of people. Trying to do this inevitably divided society. Exactly the same thing would happen today, and it's unlikely that it would succeed.

The fact is, terror is not an essential element in the basic idea of Communism. It's just one of the possible ways in which it can develop, and one that, unfortunately, became the reality in Russia. Rather than splitting society by just outlawing labels, it's important to strictly suppress attempts to spread and popularise the practices that are hidden behind these labels. When we're talking about Communist ideas, what this means is roughly

the following: preventing attempts to justify the great terror (and terror in general), to preach the violent expropriation of property, and to carry out genocide based on social or national grounds; in other words, everything that went to make up the dark pages of Russian history in the twentieth century. In some senses this is similar to the Chinese approach to de-Maoisation. Without actually attacking the figure of Mao himself (indeed, it's still difficult for them to make an unambiguous assessment of him as a national leader), the Chinese Communist Party had to condemn very severely the extremes of the Maoist terror, including the so-called Cultural Revolution and the twists and turns in the battle against private ownership.

So it's essential to strike a balance. On the one hand, we have to defend the new authorities and not allow for yet another return to the previous regime; but at the same time, we also have to avoid a split in society and a civil war, that would, in any case, lead to the return of the regime, albeit somewhat later. Carrying out a purge is not a dogma but a general idea; and how it's done has to be in accordance with the situation at a given time and place. A purge for its own sake doesn't lead to anything positive, nor does it protect you from a counter-revolution.

Chapter 8. How to Control the Man with a Gun: a Task for the Party or for the Secret Services?

At times of stable development, the work of genuine or even ornamental institutions hides the violent nature of any state. But its true nature never actually goes away. When it comes down to it, even when the state is complicated and multi-functionary it remains a machine for violence. To be more precise, it's a machine for *legitimised* violence, since it's only the legitimacy of the violence that it employs that differentiates the state from just any armed group that enforces its will on those around it by force. But when a time of change replaces that political stability, and when the old way of life collapses but has yet to be replaced by something new, the violent nature of state power comes to the fore.

So an enormous problem faces any temporary government in the very first days of its existence: how do you control "the man with a gun", or, as we're used to saying these days, the *siloviki*? Today, they're wrapped up in an enclosed system, where they all keep a beady eye on each

other, and Putin himself watches them all at once like a hawk. But once Putin goes, the circle will break, and dozens, if not hundreds, of scattered armed and organised groups will be left to their own devices. They might recognise the authority of the temporary government, or they might place themselves on the side of the reactionaries; or they may even try to take power themselves, although this last one is unlikely as there's never been a tradition in Russia of this happening.

If events turn out this way, they will inevitably have a whole host of negative consequences, the most serious of which could be a counter-revolutionary uprising or a slide into civil war with the potential for the state to split apart. Thus, from the first moment it becomes a task of the greatest urgency for the temporary government to encourage the senior and middle-ranking commanders in the power structures to join them. It's no less than a matter of life or death. However well set up the system is of democratic institutions, it would take only the slightest failure for this question to become the most urgent. All we need do is look back to the day in Washington when Trump's supporters stormed the Capitol Building and remember how great were the efforts of both sides in the democratic USA to cooperate with the leadership of the Department of Defence and the Chiefs of the General Staff when they were deciding whether or not to call out the National Guard.

This question of having control over "the man with a gun" was in the background of every change of leader in a totalitarian state such as the USSR, too, with its well-established system of the ideological inheritance of power. The success of the coup against Lavrenty Beria in 1953 was greatly helped by the army remaining loyal to the Party and Soviet leadership represented by Nikita Khrushchev and Georgy Malenkov. Khrushchev's fall from power nine years later was in no small way aided by his being betrayed by the then leadership of the USSR KGB, which supported Leonid Brezhnev, who was already heavily backed by the army. A significant factor that assisted Mikhail Gorbachev when he came to power in 1985 was that he was seen as the protege of the former head of the KGB, Yury Andropov. In his early days this guaranteed the loyalty of the KGB leadership, helped by the neutral position adopted by senior army officers. The refusal of the KGB's Group Alpha to storm the White House in August 1991 was the death knell for the plans of the State Committee for the State of Emergency – the GKChP – to turn back the clock to hardline Communism. One way or

another, any change of power has inevitably involved the question of who controls the men with the guns. You won't find this question widely discussed in text books about democracy, but there isn't a single democracy in the world that would have managed to survive if, in each instance, this matter hadn't been decided beforehand.

In Russia this has happened in accordance with its centuries-old traditions and way of life. As a rule, this involves preventative violence, sometimes very clearly displayed, at others more behind the scenes. In 1953, the conflict reached an intense phase, and Beria and his closest supporters were effectively eliminated with no investigation and no trial. The situation with the GKChP passed off without bloodshed; after being arrested and imprisoned briefly, those who took part in the coup attempt were released and were even given the chance to take part in the new Russia's political life. If the forces are successfully aligned, the issue can be settled by simply replacing the old leadership with a new, more loyal one. But it can be difficult to put in place such an arrangement.

In any case, within a matter of hours of its being in power, the temporary government has to carry out a "vote of confidence" among the ***siloviki***, demanding from them total acknowledgement of the government's legitimacy. If such an acknowledgement is forthcoming, the problem is removed and it allows time for a gradual strengthening of political control over the structures of power. However, should there be any doubt expressed, or, worse still, any opposition, the temporary government has to act harshly, even physically neutralising those who refuse to acknowledge its authority (in the best case, this would be by carrying out arrests; but even this may prove to be difficult). All of this is possible, though, it's all been done before on a number of occasions, and there is no other way of accomplishing this. Either the new authorities show who's boss, or they'll be destroyed; if not immediately, then soon afterwards. Politics is a cruel business, and if you don't acknowledge this then you're simply not telling it as it is. I believe that this is unacceptable, because ruthless honesty must be the basis of the new politics.

So, in the shortest possible period of time the new authorities must bring the power structures under their control. If they are incapable of doing this, then they don't hold power. And there's no point in trying to work

out in advance exactly how to do this: there are no ready-made recipes for it.

But there's another important subject. There's no problem with using force and putting a "man with a gun" in charge. The problem arises with how do you put a stop to that. Who makes the decision about the removal of the old *siloviki* and how this is carried out? Who makes the decision about the appointment of the new *siloviki*? The new leader, who's the head of the temporary government? That would mean that he would be Russia's new dictator. Firstly, because if he's responsible for blood being shed (if it is indeed shed), then there's no way back. And secondly because any new people whom he personally appoints will be beholden to him alone in the future.

We've already seen an example of this happen with Boris Yeltsin in 1993. There was an unsuccessful coup attempt and Yeltsin showed that he could be tough (at least from the point of view of the technology of the struggle for power), not allowing the seat of power to be dragged out from under him and suppressing the uprising of "the people in the White House". As a result, he personally filled all the key governmental posts with those who were beholden to him. It then seemed that he didn't have to do anything else. Having put his own people in all of the ministries of power, he no longer needed to engage in politics and the art of compromising – but without this, genuine politics no longer exists. After 1993 Yeltsin just pretended to play at politics, holding onto power mainly by strong-arm methods. And then he passed on the baton to the one who had managed this best.

How can we avoid this trap? How do we guarantee the success of the revolution without slipping back into the old ways? It seems to me that one of the possible ways of doing this is to delegate decisions to do with sanctions on the *siloviki* to a specially-created structure that is formally separate from the temporary government. Earlier I touched on the question of how a State Council, formed on a mixed regional and party principle, could assume power were there to be a temporary breakdown in the work of the representative and legal authorities. Inside this State Council a military commission could be set up, that would be a special emergency body, temporarily granted the authority to make decisions about the removal and appointment of the leaders of the power structures, as the representative of the temporary government and in the interests of the defence of the new authorities.

Such a division of powers could prove to be a workable and useful idea and would prevent the concentration of too much power in the hands of the head of the temporary government; power that he could, as a result, use not for society's interests but for his own. No revolution passes off without the use of violence in a more or less mild form. But the use of force can rapidly lead society into a new authoritarian cycle. This vicious practice has to be stopped, or else the terror will never end. One way to do this, in my opinion, is that right from the start there should be an agreement that the new authorities will seek to delegate the process of taking decisions about the implementation of repressive measures.

This is the main thing. The details may vary, and exactly what they will be can be agreed upon later. I discussed one option above: decisions should be taken by a special commission of the State Council about the leadership of the power structures on the recommendation of the temporary government. The State Council is a temporary organisation, but one from which should come the complete constitutional division of power. But if no measures are taken to achieve this, all that will come of it will be violence and terror under new slogans.

Chapter 9. How to Create a Civil Service: Employ Our Own Weak Staff or the Best from Abroad?

There is one reform that should be started immediately: administrative reform. It might seem that in the transitional period the temporary government will have many other urgent tasks to tackle. But if you're going to deal with something, you must have the active tools with which to do it. If the government doesn't have on its agenda the creation of a properly functioning state apparatus; if all of its plans will simply sink into a bureaucratic quagmire; then it won't be able to achieve anything.

The quality of the state apparatus of a future government may seem of secondary importance when the future hasn't yet arrived. This may be why today this question lies on the fringes of the public's attention. But it's well known that after any change of government this quickly becomes one of the most important issues - yet by then it's too late to discuss it. What tends to happen is that the new authorities rush to the old state apparatus for help. In order to avoid this, it makes sense to agree on the basic solutions to the question ahead of time.

Few people among the opposition worry about the effectiveness of the state apparatus for the simple reason that their thoughts are dominated by two problems with power in Russia: the lack of democracy, and corruption. Many of them honestly suggest that all you have to do is solve one of these issues and everything else will fall into order behind it. The Russian opposition seems to believe in the old Russian tradition of relying on luck when it comes to the administration of the state: once democracy prevails, corruption will simply disappear, and everything else will follow.

It's not difficult to see where such an idea comes from. In a situation where the main task for the opposition is the battle against an authoritarian regime – and, what's more, one that is degenerating into neo-totalitarianism – it seems only natural that the principal item on the agenda should be democratisation. And to some extent this is true. But something that doesn't seem so important today will become one of the biggest headaches tomorrow, when the temporary government starts to carry out its functions. The new authorities' ability to survive and demonstrate their superiority over the old government will depend also on how they show that they can quickly and effectively construct an efficient state apparatus.

Unfortunately, democratisation in itself doesn't create an effective state apparatus. This depends on the quality of the new bureaucracy. And democratisation can often complicate this issue. Contrary to what many people think, democratisation and improving the efficiency of the state apparatus are not only separate tasks, but ones that can actually interfere with one another. When democratisation takes place rapidly and spontaneously, discipline can slacken, unbalancing the institutions of state. This isn't surprising. But it can be very dangerous as the new government is taking its first steps, if it doesn't move to restore discipline and generally raise the effectiveness of the bureaucratic system. If democracy isn't based on a properly functioning state apparatus, then it will simply discredit the very idea of democracy itself.

Despite what many people think, the unprecedented scope of corruption in Russia doesn't represent an insurmountable barrier to building an efficient, modern civil service. On the contrary, having a properly functioning civil service would be the first step to overcoming corruption in Russia. Of course, it's

impossible to wipe out corruption completely in any country. We can see how widespread it is in the West; and, what's more, how actively the Putin regime makes use of this to further its influence. But it's well within the capabilities of the temporary government to bring down the extreme levels of corruption that we see in Russia today. So corruption shouldn't be presented as an unassailable obstacle or the main problem.

Corruption in Russia today has been artificially created by the current authorities and supported by political means. If it's not encouraged externally then it will genuinely reduce relatively quickly. The point is not that officials are inclined to take bribes, but that instead of battling against this inevitable phenomenon, the current regime relies on exploiting and cultivating corruption. In modern Russia it's simply impossible *not* to take and give bribes, and anyone who doesn't do this becomes doubly dangerous for the authorities. Corruption oils the wheels of Putin's terror machine. Without it, this sort of state structure is incapable of operating. Remove the political motivation, stop seeding corruption from above as a way of controlling the elite, and you'll see how the infamous and unsurpassable "Russian corruption" rapidly decreases to average world levels. Of course, it won't disappear entirely, just as it hasn't disappeared in America or in Europe, despite all the achievements of Western civilisation. But it will become a controlled evil, rather than an instrument of coercion. I've noticed that if corruption consumes more than two per cent of a state budget, it becomes a threat to the very existence of that state. In such a case it's not corruption itself that you have to fight, but the system of control that has made it so huge, because if it's not stimulated in this way then it simply can't grow all by itself.

I can point to my own experience at YUKOS. When our team joined the company every level of management was eaten up by corruption. This was because it was planted at the very top. When the company passed into the hands of a private owner who wasn't interested in stealing from himself, the natural motivation to spread corruption disappeared. A different matter was the technology, which was pretty basic. Each employee was given a proposition that it was hard to refuse: either you stop stealing and earn a decent salary; or you're out, and in the worst cases legal action may be taken. If this isn't just a game, but the real political line, everything is solved very quickly. It took us less than two years. This is why

I don’t see corruption as an insurmountable challenge. But on the other hand, solving it doesn’t deal with the issue of competent management. An idiot who isn’t corrupt but is lazy can sometimes be more dangerous than a bright spark who’s corrupt.

From the very first days it will be essential to start creating the state structures as an independent task, unconnected with the work of building democracy or the battle against corruption. But in Russia there’s an extra, complicating cultural factor in trying to achieve this. The deep-rooted tradition of seeing any official just as a lazy thief, and one whose work could be done by anyone at all. What makes it worse is that not only is this impression widespread among the general population, but it’s shared also by a significant part of the educated urban population and the democratically-inclined intelligentsia. This is a real impediment when it comes to considering the work of the state apparatus as something serious.

This attitude to officials found its most grotesque form in the well-known Bolshevik view that any cook would and should run the state. Just a couple of years after the revolution, though, Lenin was complaining that the government had had to recall to its service a large number of officials who had earlier been dismissed. Each had to be watched over by a commissar. On a rather smaller scale, this happened again at the start of the 1990s. Thanks to the results of Gorbachev’s and Yeltsin’s perestroika, a large part of the Soviet nomenklatura found themselves a place inside the new authorities. This was inevitable. You can’t just pluck managers out of thin air, or create them from scratch. When no others are available, you have to use those that you have, however unpleasant this may be.

This constant negative attitude to officialdom in Russia came about because for centuries managing people wasn’t seen as an art or a profession. And yet it’s one of the most complicated areas of professional activity. It needs lengthy and complicated training, and very serious qualifications and skills that come only with long experience. The philosopher, Max Weber, considered the training of an effective official to be one of the most complicated tasks there is, and one that costs society a great deal. He suggested that modern officialdom in Europe came about as a by-product of the development of capitalism, with its difficult cultural management.

Overcoming Russian traditions in this area and the creation of a professional and modern state service should be seen by the temporary government as the starting point for working out the general approach to the formation of a civil service in the new Russia.

To pause briefly on the most general principles that should guide the temporary government in resolving this issue, I would underline four points:

1. Change the relationship to government service and officialdom as a social class. Contempt for bureaucracy (that's understandable and easy to explain, and which even becomes hatred), should be replaced by a constructive and respectful approach. Officials and any state employees should be seen by society as people who are carrying out an essential role. If this isn't the case, then the other side of the same coin is impossible to fulfil: people should be able to make demands of the officials.

2. Separate state service from politics. State service should be professional and apolitical. Politicians come and go, but this shouldn't affect the civil service. The civil service should operate according to its own internal statutes and follow its own internal code of conduct, in accordance with which a career path should depend entirely on professional qualities, and not whether someone supports one political opinion or another. Officials should be chosen to serve predominantly on the basis of the results of open competition, and should be selected for promotion thanks to their achievements, also decided predominantly on the basis of competition. In brief, a civil service has to be created virtually from nothing in Russia, and as a separate institution of authority, capable of working with any political leadership.

3. Management and commercial (service) activity should be divided. The experience of successful civil services around the world shows that the more functions that the state outsources to commercial and non-commercial organisations, the more effectively the bureaucracy works. The ultimate aim of this is as much as possible to free up state employees from serving the population, so that they can concentrate on carrying out regulatory and control functions. It's a big problem for the state that when it comes to management it holds a monopoly, detached from market forces. Therefore, everywhere possible market forces should be brought to bear on the state, so that the laws of competition apply there, too.

4. The regulatory and the control functions should be divided. This is a fairly straightforward idea, meaning that the people who make the rules are not the ones responsible for overseeing their implementation. These functions should be split between two separate institutions. This is the extension of the constitutional principle of the division of powers at the administrative level: at no level should any significant power lie in the hands of one person. As a spin-off, this is also a

much more effective battle against corruption than are criminal measures.

Of course, I've listed only the most basic ideas for administrative reform, which is one of the most important tasks for any government that wants to build the new Russia. This reform cannot be put off. If there's an effectively operating state apparatus, with carefully delineated functions and strict discipline, this will create the conditions for success in all other areas. However, there is one "technical" problem which will hinder its creation: personnel. And, as we know, it's the personnel who decide everything.

It's impossible to build a new system of management without the right staff. But for various reasons all the available personnel always turn out to be unsuitable. Some are clever, cunning, well trained – but unable to work in a new way and aren't prepared to learn new methods. Others are so set in their old ways that no talents they may have can possibly compensate for their deceitful mentality. There's always been a shortage of personnel in Russia. It was always difficult to find a smart worker for any position, especially for state service. And as for finding a smart worker who's prepared to operate within the confines of a system that doesn't even exist yet – it's virtually impossible.

There's yet another awkward area: new managerial technology. If we don't introduce this, we'll never change the system. For now, the whole system of management remains totally archaic. An official's work involves carrying out registrations; deciding whether or not to issue permits; and also allocating everything that needs to be allocated. Any thinking person could fulfil these tasks if they turned their hand to it. In principle, they could all be done by a tsarist-era clerk from the old Moscow order. They'd just need some computer training. Given that state functions haven't changed fundamentally since that time it's unlikely that they'd have a problem. But if we were to carry out the administrative reforms I outlined above, then the functions of the state apparatus would change radically. For this we need a particular type of professional that simply doesn't exist in Russia – and never has done.

In the first instance we're talking here about people who can arrange interaction between the regulatory authorities, state supervision bodies and the commercial

sector, and who are prepared to take upon themselves the implementation of a significant amount of the state's tasks. This is how the modern world works. I have in mind here especially various public-private partnerships. It's impossible to imagine a modern state that doesn't have these now. But without highly qualified specialists who already have serious experience of this, it's impossible to set this up in Russia.

Where are we going to find these highly qualified specialists for state service? This is a dilemma that we've come across before. We could employ our own people, and try to train them on the job. Or, if we could overcome our phobia, we could open the way to state service for foreigners who already have advanced experience of such work. If we take a sober look at Russian history we will see that all of the key, fateful reforms have been solved this way. The pride and joy of the present regime, the Russian army, was created by foreign specialists at the time of Peter the Great. They were also the ones in the age of industrialisation who created the industries that today provide the army with its weaponry. At crucial moments the Russian government didn't hold back from taking foreigners into its service when this was needed. And more often than not this approach justified itself.

The conclusion is simple: we have to follow both paths. We have to train our own people where we can and as thoroughly as we can; but while they're training we mustn't be too afraid or embarrassed to hire foreigners. If we wish quickly to change the quality of the civil service in Russia, we have to open the door to foreign specialists. Of course, we must put in place sensible safeguards, but I can see no other solution today, especially in those areas where there's virtually no home-grown experience. In any case, we're not talking about huge numbers of people. I believe that we would need between 3,000 and 5,000 specialists in the central structures, and half that number in the regions. But we mustn't repeat the mistakes made under Gorbachev and Yeltsin. We have to invite genuinely the best professional managers and not "the boys from Chicago". We have to hire the most progressive managers from international corporations and government structures all over the world, those who have practical, not just theoretical experience of management. We must give them the chance to work for us and teach those who'll be working alongside them. I suggest that this will take about five years, ten at the most.

If we want quality, we have to be prepared to pay for it – both our own people and the foreigners. We must offer sufficiently high salaries, so that we can demand what we want from them, including total honesty. We'll have to pay the foreigners more. But Russia is a sufficiently wealthy country that we can afford to employ in our service not simply the best from among 140 million, but the best from a few billion, selecting them on an individual basis. This, incidentally, takes great skill, and we shall also have to seek the assistance of true professionals to take part in the search. I have my own experience which I'm prepared to share. When I had to turn YUKOS into a leading international company, the foreigners whom I invited to join us were paid more than I was. Then, of course, I recouped the costs when it came to paying dividends. But that was much later. At first, we had a great deal to learn. And we paid well for this knowledge. There is no alternative.

To sum up, I repeat again that a comprehensive administrative reform of the civil service is an issue that brooks no delay. It must be a priority for whatever government comes after the Putin regime. The aim of this reform (that incidentally was one that Putin himself called a priority, and was one of his first total failures) is to turn an archaic, semi-Soviet, semi-feudal state structure into a modern system of management. In essence, Russia has to start from scratch to create a civil service independent of both politics and business. And in order to get it right, we need once again to do what we've done many times before in our history and invite into the Russian state service foreigners who have the necessary knowledge and experience. Incidentally, this will be easier for us to do than it was for our ancestors. The Putin regime has forced tens of thousands of talented people out of the country. These people have gained invaluable experience in Western corporations, and in the right circumstances can return to their Motherland.

Chapter 10. What's Meant by "a Turn to the Left": a Welfare State or a Socialist State?

I've had a great deal of time to think about mistakes – both the ones I've made and other peoples'. But it didn't take me long to find the greatest of them. Back in 2004, when I was contemplating how it was that we – and I personally – had ended up where we were, I wrote the first version of "A Turn to the Left". At that time, this title may have seemed a little odd. You may think that a

man who had been able to make use of all the advantages that the market economy gave to enterprising people would have been just the person to write about a turn to the right (in the economic sense). But long before my row with Putin's regime crossed over to its open and acute phase, I had understood clearly that for Russia, with its history, its mentality and its traditions, a right-leaning, liberal policy would lead it into a complete dead-end. I still hold to this view today, fifteen years after that first article saw the light of day.

However, with hindsight much appears different from how it was, and so this calls for a fresh appraisal of the situation. Now I have a pretty good idea of what this left turn should begin with in Russia. So what's changed? First of all, a pseudo-left wing political course has emerged from the Kremlin, something that clearly didn't exist before. This copies, yet mocks, a left-wing agenda. How should we describe Putin's regime? Left-wing? Or right-wing? I'm sure that the vast majority of people would say that Putin has a left-wing agenda. The state sector is developing; he fights against independent businesses; he's created a complicated system of social rights and privileges; and so on. But in actual fact, it's completely the other way round. Putin is actually continuing the traditions of the 1990s, and is following a radically right-wing political course. That's why the need for a turn to the left has only increased in recent years.

In order to delve deeper into this question, we have to define what is "right" and what is "left". And in today's world that's no easy task. Everywhere, not just in Russia, we see right-wing politicians acting like parasites of a left-wing agenda. A textbook example is Trump with his eccentric rhetoric. The borders between right and left are blurred; all definitions have been lost. In order to try to bring some clarity to this question, in my opinion, we have to concentrate on the main issue, and not get lost in the minutiae. And I believe that the main issue is social inequality. If a political course ultimately leads to the growth of social inequality, it's a right-wing programme, however much they dress it up in left-wing rhetoric. But if it leads to a reduction in social inequality, it's left-wing.

Let's examine Putin's social and economic policies from this point of view. Putin came to power on an anti-oligarch agenda, that theoretically was and remains one

of the cornerstones of Kremlin mythology. But in reality the political course he's followed not only hasn't narrowed the gap between the rich and the poor, but has increased social inequality to levels never witnessed before. Putin has placed a huge amount of economic and political power in the hands of a very narrow stratum, made up of the higher, largely power bureaucracy and the criminal and semi-criminal "asset holders" who serve their interests. In place of the inequality that naturally arises because of a market economy, and that modern societies have more or less learnt to manage, Putinism has used the power it holds to create such inequality that an impenetrable wall has been built between the rich and the poor.

At every turn in Putin's Russia, the rich have got richer and the poor have got poorer quicker than happened in Russia in the 1990s. But thanks to the growth in energy prices that resulted in a general rise in the standard of living, this process went unnoticed – up to a certain point. There was a lot of money around, and so the poor received a little "compensation". However, for every rouble in social handouts that the president talks about with great ceremony in his annual address to the nation, there's a dollar that goes into the pockets of Putin's elite. As a result, the distance between the richest and the poorest strata of Russian society has been rapidly increasing. This process no longer goes unnoticed, because the regime has run out of money for the social sector. In the last few years in Russia we've seen the growth not only of relative poverty, but of absolute poverty. So over the course of 20 years Putin has been carrying out a radically right-wing policy, which can be seen objectively by the increasing stratification of society. I believe that this will lead to a dead-end, and represents a threat to national security, as ultimately this will bring the country to a social conflict faster than any imaginary "foreign agents".

As well as the increasing rift between the incomes of the rich and the poor, that's already in danger of causing an explosion, the whole system of distributing wealth in society is warped. Raiding businesses is the very essence of the system that Putin has created, and is one of the basic sources of inequality. The government's direct interference gives rise to a latent (but no less widespread) redistribution of wealth in favour of those who demonstrate loyalty to the regime. This increases not only the degradation of the economic institutions, but also the moral principles of society. Any immoral

behaviour in this system, be it lying, betrayal, denunciations and so on, is encouraged and financially advantageous.

The main thing that should be understood about social inequality in the Putin era, is that at its foundation lie non-economic factors. It's artificially created inequality that's supported by political violence. Consequently, the only way to fight this inequality is to eliminate the political factors that give rise to it. So all of the propaganda efforts that the Kremlin puts into this battle against poverty can be seen simply as a vicious insult. The main precondition for an effective battle against poverty in Russia is to remove the regime that has created and increased this poverty by its very existence. The regime has acted like an enormous pump, sucking the money out of the pockets of millions of its citizens and dumping it into the pockets of Putin's millionaires.

How has this pump been constructed? How come this is what's hoovering up the country's wealth? The answer is pretty obvious: the regime exists and enriches itself mainly because there's no control over the way it exploits resource rent. It divides up the profits from the sale of raw materials – oil, gas, metals and timber – in a completely arbitrary fashion, doing simply as it wishes and acting in the interests of a narrow circle of people. I believe that in order for Russia to be a state that provides for its people, it's vital that society be given back control over its resource rent – that is, over the rent profits from the extraction and exploitation of the country's natural resources. This is provided for in the constitution, but doesn't exist in reality.

The idea of giving back to society control over resource rent isn't new. Communists write and talk about this a great deal. The question is, do we genuinely give this control to society, or do we return it once again to the state? If we return it to the state, then once again control will be handed simply to another small group of people; just a different group this time. And even though the Communists' idea that everything should once again be nationalised would be a fairer solution than what we have today, it would lead to be another historical dead-end for Russia. A return to the USSR would inevitably lead once again to a bureaucratised, static and inefficient economy, which is what destroyed the Soviet Union. This is inevitable with any gigantic state monopoly,

especially in a country where the corporate culture is so undeveloped, where the officials are poorly educated and economically illiterate, and where, what's more, there's a centuries-old tradition of corruption and sabotage.

But this is not the only issue. The principal drawback in what the Communists are proposing of marching into the future by way of the past is the insoluble political bureaucratic equation: the more resources that are concentrated in the hands of the state, the greater is the state's role in their redistribution. And the greater the state's role in their redistribution, then the greater the quantity of resource rent society has to leave to the mercy of the huge redistribution system. This means that both from the point of view of society itself, and of each individual citizen, this whole reverse nationalisation makes no sense at all. The lion's share of resource rent will be spread across the state's huge power structure; another part of it will be wasted because of the inefficiency of the state monopoly; and the crumbs that are left will go to the people, and, what's more, in return for their giving up on their rights as citizens. The question as to who will actually head up this machine for theft and deception – whether it would be Putin's followers or Zyuganov's followers or someone else – bears no significance for Russia's fate.

How can we break this vicious circle and tear the rents from Russia's natural wealth out of the hands of the criminal bureaucrats? I believe there is a solution, and it's a fairly obvious one. It's a different matter that it's not much use to those who are currently in power, nor those who hope to take over power. The ones who would benefit are those in today's Russia who are deprived of proper political representation, and whose voice, therefore, is never heard. I think that the only possible solution to the problem of what to do with resource rents in Russia is to lock them into the social needs of the population. This would cut out the state's role as the middle-man in their redistribution.

And such a possibility genuinely exists in Russia.

If we roughly compare the recoverable profits that Putin's regime receives today from resource rents with the amount that the government should be paying for pensions but cannot cover, then the sums are virtually the same. On the payments' side we can also add in

spending on medical insurance, that the government also isn't able to meet, and which it therefore is constantly cutting back. So if this is the case, wouldn't it be simpler to cut out all the intermediate stages and direct the windfall profits from resource rents – in the main, those from raw materials, notably oil and gas – straight to people's pension and health savings' accounts? When the need arose, either when they reached pensionable age or were ill, people would receive the necessary funds. What's more, this would be proper sums of money, not simply the crumbs that prevent them from dying of starvation.

Technically, this wouldn't be difficult to arrange. Already today, the windfall profits from the sale of raw materials are marked out, and come into the state coffers in a separate line from the companies that receive resource rent, so it wouldn't be difficult to distinguish them (it would simply be a question of the inefficiency of Putin's managers). Today they're simply merged into the overall budget flow, and the government disposes of them as it wishes, spending them on crazy Kremlin projects or simply stealing them. But each month they should be divided equally into the savings' accounts of every citizen of the country.

These savings' accounts, pension and health, should be opened the moment a person is born, and last until they die. This would be a genuine privilege of Russian citizenship, and not an imaginary symbol of belonging to a great country. We have to create a situation where being a citizen of Russia would mean they you lived with dignity into your old age, and not just have the privilege of dying to protect "Rottenburg's palaces" in a series of endless and pointless wars entered into by the regime. Today, resource rent drops into a black hole, where it's redistributed in the most outrageous fashion to the beneficiaries of Putin's regime. We must make this black hole transparent, so that every citizen can see and understand what's happening with the national property that's been handed down by our ancestors.

The sums of money that would be saved in these accounts would be very significant. All around the world pension funds are important investment vehicles, and I don't see why Russia should be an exception. I suggest that surplus amounts could be held temporarily on the Russian Financial Index (a consolidated packet of Russian shares, traded on the stock market), which would in turn support

Russian production. In this way a safety cushion would be created, that would genuinely help to turn Russia away from being a socialist state, where the country's wealth of raw materials belong to the bureaucrats, into a proper welfare state, where resource rent belongs to the people, and comes under the direct control of society.

I'd like to repeat what exactly I see as the difference between the model of a socialist state – with no prospects for the future – and a welfare state. By this I mean not simply what is written in the Constitution, but what in actual fact is the only suitable way for the economic system in Russia today to develop. In a socialist state, production and distribution are in the hands of an inefficient monopoly, that does everything in the interests of a bureaucratic clan. In a welfare state, however, the state doesn't take production nor distribution under its control, thus encouraging competition in all areas. The state's responsibility lies simply in setting the rules in order to lessen social inequality.

On the surface, some of these suggestions reflect the slogans of the left opposition to Putin's regime, and also to those spouted by the Russian Communists. These also call for the re-establishment of social control over resource rent; but, as I mentioned earlier, they propose doing this in the same way as the Bolsheviks carried out nationalisation, and putting control over resources into the hands of the state. Whilst I agree with the left insofar as it is essential to re-establish social control over natural resources, I cannot agree with the way in which they want to do it. As I see it, this wouldn't even level out inequality, but simply turn it from an economic method into one dominated by the nomenklatura and their clans.

Unlike a socialist state, a welfare state doesn't try to make everyone equal in order then to work out who are more equal than others. The aim of a welfare state is to give everyone an equal chance of development and success. Had I written this text 15 or 20 years ago, I would probably have put a full stop after that. But given the experience that I've gained today, I'll put a comma. Equal opportunities to succeed should be given to all those who are ready to use them. But those who cannot do this, or just don't want to, should be given minimal guarantees. Without this humanitarian component, no welfare state can exist, especially in Russia.

To summarise briefly, let me explain why I believe we need a left turn at the current stage of development of Russian statehood. We need it in order to remove the political factors that are leading to an explosive growth in social inequality, and start to follow a consistent path aimed at reducing this inequality. Naturally, I consider the most important thing that we need to do is to get rid of Putin's system, with its "raiding by the *siloviki*". This allows for the redistribution by non-economic means of national wealth among groups of people who are loyal to the regime, leading to it being concentrated in the hands of a small clique who are running the state.

Once this first condition has been swiftly carried out, the temporary government should resolve the question of establishing social control over resource rent. As I wrote above, I see the most sensible and efficient way of doing this as being the creation of life-long insurance savings' accounts for the people, into which the windfall profits from raw materials should be paid in various amounts. Deciding this issue will be just as important as was the question of property that took place during the social revolution in Russia at the start of the twentieth century. But this time it must really be solved in the interests of the whole nation, and not just its "leaders". This is the only thing that will give the temporary government the genuine support of the people as a whole, and create that political "safety cushion", that will allow it to carry out all of the long overdue economic and political reforms.

Chapter 11. How Do We Achieve Economic Justice: Nationalisation or Honest Privatisation?

The total restoration of social justice is impossible without the restoration of economic justice. In the widest sense of the term, economic justice is the most important part of social justice. And in the narrower sense, it signifies equality, not so much in the distribution of national wealth, so much as in having access to the basic means of production. In other words, it's economic justice that gives people a more even chance of becoming rich.

The logic here is simple: those who hold the basic instruments for the production of wealth, inevitably have a massive advantage when it comes to their distribution.

And this can't be balanced out by any corrective measures such as taxes or subsidies and so on.

Therefore, the question of property – who should hold the basic means of production of national wealth, and on what basis – always had, has, and will always have the greatest significance for society. Whatever government takes over from Putin's regime simply cannot ignore this.

There's no need to explain that the privatisation process that began in Russia in the 1990s and in reality is still going on, led to the destruction of economic justice. In an instant it created a deep inequality for different strata of society in terms of access to the basic means of production. It proved very difficult to get rid of this. This is not only an objective factor that any future government has to face up to (as does the current one), but also it's a challenge that it must tackle.

I should add from my own observations that for various post-Soviet generations privatisation was, and clearly remains, a serious psychological trauma that has left a deep scar on society's consciousness. So in any crisis, the question as to who owns the bulk of Russia's national wealth and why it's in the hands of these people will always rise to the surface. And it will always be impossible to avoid answering this question – and so it should be.

Looking back with the advantage of hindsight at what happened more than a quarter of a century ago, I consider that the privatisation of the Soviet economy – or, to be more accurate, the removal of state control – was an inevitable and justifiable action. But I suggest that the way in which it was carried out was unacceptable for society; unfair economically; and dangerous for the economic and historical development of the country.

The post-Soviet privatisation *de facto* presented a very narrow circle of people with a great advantage by having access to assets. For a variety of reasons these people found themselves in a winning position: administrative resources were available to them; they had access to funds; their education; their age; and so on. On the other hand, the broad mass of the people had no possibility of taking part in the distribution of these assets. The man in the street was reduced to being a temporary holder of a voucher, that he either sold off to

speculators at a low rate that didn't reflect its genuine economic value, or who lost out on any value entirely by leaving it to his grandchildren as a memento of the era. Individual investments in the shares of investment funds were simply a myth, that was shattered by the economic crisis of 1998.

The successful privatisations that took place in Eastern Europe demonstrate that there was an alternative to the method that was chosen in Russia. But the decision taken in Russia was less a mistake than it was a conscious ideological choice. The government made its number one priority solving a political issue, not a social or an economic one. The aim was to pull the rug out from under the feet of the Communists, who were supported by the so-called "red directors", by rapidly creating a new "class of owners".

I think we can say that the Russian government of the time deliberately chose this method of privatisation, because it was the one that best met its priorities. At that time it hardly bothered anyone that as a result of this, economic justice was thrown out of the window and, as a result, social justice, too. Similarly, no one cared that this created the conditions for the rise of a crime-ridden economy and a mafia state. All of these "fruits" ripened about 15 years later, notably after Putin came to power.

Long before Putin, the authorities skilfully conducted the privatisation process, using it as an instrument to strengthen their influence over society. And *a priori*, the privatisation of strategically important facilities was a subject for political bargaining, something the government used to solve its own issues, that were frequently a long way from economic ones. Loans-for-shares auctions were no exception to this, that became a bargaining chip in the 1996 presidential election campaign.

As someone who was directly engaged in this game with the government as a representative of business, I had understood by the beginning of this century that the country had entered a social and political dead-end. It was vital to get out of this by putting right the results of this spontaneous privatisation. I began to speak out, saying that it was essential to take urgent and

extraordinary steps in order to re-establish economic justice.

Soon after Putin came to power I suggested to the leadership of the country that we should look again at the issue of privatisation; in the first instance, of course, that of the loans-for-shares auctions. I suggested that the problem could be solved by bringing in a one-off tax for the main beneficiaries of the privatisation process. This could be done by way of contributions to a special fund for economic development, that would have been measured in tens of billions of dollars.

Unfortunately, not only was my initiative not supported, but it became one of the factors that led to my arrest. Later I and others realised that Putin's regime had no intention of changing the results of privatisation; on the contrary, they planned to use them specifically for their own ends. This strengthened my sense of foreboding, and ultimately led me to the conclusions that I laid out in my article "A Turn to the Left", that I wrote when I was in prison.

In the more than 15 years that have passed since the publication of "A Turn to the Left", the situation in Russia has radically changed; and what began as a political error has ended up being a full-blown political and socio-economic disaster. Clearly, the measures that I suggested at the start of the century are totally inadequate today. Tough and serious decisions need to be taken, and political will and courage are needed to make them happen.

Twenty years of Putin in power show that the main beneficiary of the privatisation process that was launched at the start of the 1990s has been Putin himself. Once he came to power, he and a narrow group of people close to him – some of whom were directly linked to the criminal underworld – privatised not individual facilities or even the economy: they privatised the state itself. They turned the state into a weapon for their personal enrichment and for their own common use.

Today "the state" in the strict meaning of the word has ceased to exist in Russia. It's become an enormous private militarised corporation, solving the problems of its principal shareholders. The whole world now knows

about Yevgeny Prigozhin's Private Military Company known as the Wagner Group, and that it represents a miniature version of the whole of the Putin state. The state in Russia doesn't defend the national interests, but simply serves the interests of the clan that rules it.

From the first days of its existence, this corporation in the guise of a state busied itself with what it regarded as the most important task: the redistribution of property to its main shareholders. This process, that's been going on for just over 20 years, has brought us to the point where Russia's fundamental national wealth is now under the control of a very small group of people; probably just a few hundred families. These people represent the backbone of Putin's infamous vertical of power.

In a matter of years, Russia became the country with the highest concentration of capital. But this capital was tied in with power; if someone lost their access to power, then they inevitably lost their economic influence, too. So every business group that was close to the authorities in Russia became vertically integrated into the whole power structure, especially into the block of the power ministries. It worked the other way round, too. Every area of bureaucracy built up under itself its own business infrastructure. For Putin's regime, money became simply a function of power.

At the same time, we can speak with confidence about the collective ownership of the ruling clan over the property it controls. Russia's economy today is run along the principle of the thieves' "collective fund". It doesn't matter who's registered as the actual owner; what matters is who it's "understood" to belong to. A perfect illustration of this is the story of the ill-fated palace at Gelendzhik. It was felt necessary to pass ownership from one member of Putin's circle to another; but everyone knows that it doesn't belong to any of them.

Putin and his team conducted an extra, secret, privatisation in Russia, by carrying out a secondary seizure of assets in their favour. They achieved this in two ways. First of all, Putin "re-recruited" the vast majority of the old "boyars" – the leaders of the former elite. These were the main shareholders of the financial and industrial groups that emerged in the 1990s. Putin turned them into nothing more than mere asset holders,

dependent on his authority. Either they would carry out his orders, or they would lose their property. Next, Putin created a new "nobility" out of his servants; people such as Igor Sechin, Alexey Miller, the Rotenbergs or the Kovalchuks. They were given direct control over part of the state's assets, as well as the assets seized from obstinate "boyars".

In time, the difference between "boyars" and "nobility" virtually disappeared, and those titles now have a merely decorative meaning. Nowadays, nearly everyone who has a large fortune in Russia is fully and directly beholden to the ruling political clan, is an integral part of it, and *de facto* merely the holder of property that actually belongs to the clan as a whole.

This mafia-type property structure is completely incompatible with any pretence at building any kind of normal state system in Russia, at the basis of which should lie the principle of justice. It prevents the construction of any such system, and would destroy the efforts of any government, even if these efforts were completely sincere.

The longer this goes on, the more this parasitic system of collective ownership of property by the ruling clan is turning into an unbearable weight on society. This carbuncle that's preventing the country's development has to be removed, in the interests of Russian society and in the interests of Russia's future. Many people understand this now. It's discussed in kitchens, and in the smoking rooms of universities. It's the obvious political imperative of our time, even if for now it's hidden from view.

As soon as society wakes up, the first thing the people will demand from any temporary government is that they destroy the property held by this criminal gang that's running the Russian state. And whether it wants to or not, the government will be obliged to do this. But how can it be accomplished without repeating the mistakes of those who carried out the privatisations of the 'nineties? After all, maybe they wanted things to turn out better?

The most widely-discussed and perhaps seemingly most obvious way to proceed is nationalisation. It might appear to be the easiest solution: take it all back and hand it over to the state. But where will that lead us as

a result? We'll just go back to where we were: the USSR in the middle of the last century (and that's the best case analysis). Once again we'll have a huge, immovable economy, run by a sluggish bunch of officials, who'll try to squeeze as many privileges out of the system as they can.

After nationalisation, these officials will once again become nomenklatura oligarchs, even if strictly speaking they don't own the property that they're controlling. This can end only one way: in exactly the same sort of crisis that finished off the Soviet Union.

There are better solutions that simply haven't been tried. Russia doesn't need nationalisation, but a new, honest and fair, privatisation. The temporary government's task lies in creating a platform for such a privatisation to take place.

Under the new regime, all of the property currently held by this criminal gang that calls itself "the authorities" in Russia must be expropriated. I can see no alternative to this tough decision. The basis of this expropriation and its boundaries will have to be carefully worked out in the future, but they will be extensive. All of this property should be placed temporarily in a fund under social control.

All "escheated" property must also be placed there – enterprises that are controlled by clans dependent on the state that in reality have been bankrupt for a long time, but have been kept afloat only by direct and indirect grants from the state budget. By my reckoning, today both categories together account for up to half of the total national wealth; a significant sum.

The most difficult task, though, is not the seizure of these assets, but how to deal with them efficiently. I suggest that all of this confiscated property should not be handed directly to the state, where it will be managed by officials, but put into independent mutual funds under the direct control of society. We don't need many of these funds, around ten or so. Some of them could be organised on the basis of certain industries. The principal criterion should be economic expediency. Every citizen of the country who reaches adulthood would become a shareholder in these funds.

Creating nationwide mutual funds from these confiscated assets is an emergency and temporary measure. It's a one-off action to re-establish economic justice. Therefore, it's the current population who should benefit most from this. Every citizen should receive their share of these funds, along the lines of the voucher system. But they won't be allowed to cash in their share immediately. A moratorium will have to be enforced to prevent expropriation and to stabilise both the situation and, consequently, the value of the shares. It is vital not to allow a repeat of what happened 30 years ago.

After a certain period of time the moratorium will be lifted and people will have the opportunity to sell off their shares, receiving equal and fair compensation. Those who don't live long enough to see this day should have the right to pass on their shares as inheritance. This will maintain for them, too, the principle of justice. Selling shares during the moratorium period could be allowed in exceptional circumstances and under conditions provided for by a special law (for example, were there to be a *force majeure*).

Before the moratorium is lifted, these funds should work as normal commercial enterprises, the aim of which is to make a profit. Profits received should be reinvested in the fund. But part of it may be used as extra social insurance for the shareholders. Which events would be covered by insurance and the amount that should be paid if they occurred would be decided by law each year, depending also on the financial condition of the fund. Most likely this would cover expenses such as expensive medical treatment, for which today the state and society collect money according to the principle of "every little helps"; although somehow funds are always found for palaces and missiles.

The management structure of the funds should be on two levels. Each fund should have a supervisory board, whose members would be appointed directly by parliament. The responsibilities of the supervisory board would be limited. They would appoint a management company and take decisions on the acquisition or disposal of fixed assets. At some stage the sale of assets would become a valuable source of income for the fund, but this could happen only once normal economic conditions are in place.

All of the day-to-day management of the fund would be concentrated in the hands of the management company, which would have been selected following a tender, carried out in line with a special law. The management company would have just one goal: the efficient management of the company and the maximisation of profits, from where the shareholders would be paid dividends. When necessary, they should also prepare the fund's property for a future privatisation – a normal, economically-based, transparent privatisation, approved by society.

It would be unwise and inadvisable for the funds swiftly to sell off the expropriated assets, since the sale of property during the crisis conditions of the transition period would inevitably happen only at inadequately low prices. We all witnessed this in the 1990s. Therefore, the property of the share funds should be frozen, and leaving them with compensation would be allowed only in exceptional cases and in extreme circumstances. In the future, and not before five or ten years, a new, honest, privatisation of these assets could take place, one that could be acknowledged as rational. This should finally bring an end to the long-drawn-out argument about the fate of the privatisation of the 'nineties.

The task of the temporary government would be to give back to society direct control over national wealth, and destroy the parasitical property of the criminal gangs. If it's unable to cope with this task, then it's unlikely to win the trust of society for everything else.

PART II: HOW DO WE AVOID CREATING A NEW DRAGON?

The dragon isn't actually a malicious person but a symbol for the state. It's the type of state where its three heads – the legislative, the executive and the judicial – are firmly attached to the one fat, corrupt body of the mighty bureaucratic machine. And thanks to the unity of its heads, it can walk all over a fragmented society. In order to establish society's control over the state, it's essential, on the one hand, to unite society around the idea of citizenship (in other words, create civil society); and on the other hand, to tear all three of these powerful heads from the bureaucratic body and force them to live separately. This is no easy task. Because over the many centuries of Russian autocracy, these three heads have become such a part of this absolutist body that neither they themselves nor anyone around them can imagine how they can be made independent of each other.

One reason why there's a transitional period, therefore, is to learn how to do this. And if we don't do this, then it won't be a transitional period, but simply an operation to transplant the dragon's heads. The dragon will survive, and after a short period of rehabilitation will once again return to its former ways. In order to prevent this from happening, society must take upon itself the responsibility for solving the most difficult problems that Russian history has set it.

Chapter 12. The Choice of Civilisation: An Empire or a Nation State?

For the past 500 years, from the time of Tsar Ivan the Terrible, Russia has been an empire; that is, a country that's made up of various parts that differ from each other in culture and in their socio-political make-up, and are brought together not so much by a desire to live together but simply by armed force.

All the generations that are alive today and dozens of generations who came before them have known nothing but empire, and couldn't even imagine any other type of political system. And when the empire was weak, it usually led to turmoil, destruction and civil war, which all brought greater troubles than all the problems of the empire taken together.

Each time, the turmoil ended with the creation of new, more ambitious and more aggressive empires. The Romanov Empire took the place of Rurik's Tsardom of Muscovy; and the Romanovs, in their turn, were replaced by the Bolsheviks. Between each of these periods there was a terrifying civil war. People in Russia have grown used to living in an empire. They trust it, and they see it as saving society from destruction and disorder.

What's more, they don't believe in themselves. They don't believe that they can live without "a tsar" (it doesn't matter whether he's called the Emperor, the General Secretary, or the President) with his iron fist, with his police, his army and his officials. They don't believe the promises of those who call for freedom and democracy, because on a genetic level they remember that the alternative to empire is turmoil, destruction and chaos.

But while Russia was building and destroying empires, building even more powerful empires and destroying them again, the world around it was radically changing. As a way of governing people, empires were disappearing. In their place came the concept of the nation state: that is, countries where a single culture dominates (the language, the literature, and daily customs), and people wish to live according to one set of laws and on one territory (I'll say more later about the ideas of multi-culturalism that have arisen – not entirely successfully – in recent years).

Suddenly Russia was left as the only empire on the planet; a kind of Middle Ages "Last of the Mohicans".

Today, Russia is surrounded by peoples whose lives are arranged according to completely different principles than empire; and not only do they not perish, they flourish. Although these nation states have plenty of their own problems, the gap between them and "the last empire" is growing apace, in terms of economic and technological progress, in their levels of education and healthcare, and simply in their peoples' longevity and quality of life. With each day that passes the chasm grows wider, and the day's not far off when the gap will become disastrous, unbridgeable for one or even two generations.

In the near future, those who have been born and live on what has become "the edge of Russian civilisation", and who are responsible for the country's future, are facing an epoch-changing choice between living in an empire or in a nation state. They will have to answer the following question: do they wish to maintain traditions, and therefore try at any cost to re-build their crumbling empire; or are they prepared to ditch their traditions, kick the empire onto the rubbish heap of history, and attempt to build their own nation state in its place?

This truly is Hamlet's question. The choice is between the old world, that may be imperfect and sentenced to death, but one where they're familiar with every last detail; and a seductive, unknown world, that promises much – yet at the same time is frightening. The problem for the current generations in Russia is not that they don't like the actual choice (which is only natural; no one likes having to choose between death or change), but that they don't have the opportunity to put it off and

pass the responsibility for the fate of our Russian civilisation onto the shoulders of their children and grandchildren.

Russia is at the crossroads of civilisation. The choice between an empire and a nation state is a fundamental choice of civilisation. It opens the way for answers to dozens of other questions. These may be less global in scope, but they're also complicated issues that are facing Russian society in the early years of the twenty-first century. If this choice is not made now – or if the wrong choice is made – then there will be no choice for their children and grandchildren to make.

My choice for Russia is that of the nation state; a choice for the future, not the past.

The Russia of my dreams is an association of people of different ethnic backgrounds who are brought together by an internal civilizational unity, for whom what they have in common is more important than their differences; and not an empire, kept together by a steel ring of militarised bureaucracy, like an old cracked barrel. I don't deny that the Russia of our children could still exist in the creaking shell of an empire. But if we want our *grandchildren* to see Russia, then we need to create something else: a state based on a genuine (and not an imaginary) desire for people to live together inside a space where there are shared values of language, culture, law and politics.

I reject nostalgia for the empire, be it open or dressed up in a pseudo-democratic and pseudo-liberal way. The creation of a Russian nation state is the greatest historical task that Russians and the other peoples who live in the country have been insistently but inconsistently debating for centuries, and one that has to be solved once and for all by the generations that are alive today. We are now in such an historical framework that this decision can no longer be put off: it's now or never. Either we do it, or no one will.

Russia needs something more than an empire, where the people are kept down by forces that are outside the needs of society – the army, the police and the bureaucracy, that help to give the appearance of order on its territory.

The stronger an empire is, the more all-encompassing it is, and the more uniform its political space. But the weaker it is, the more exceptions there are to the overall rules: so there's one rule for Moscow, something else for Chechnya, a third for Crimea, and so forth. The unity of the empire is an illusion, and it's only symbolically embodied in the figure of its leading figure, inevitably producing the impression of being someone sacred: "there is Putin, therefore there is Russia", and so on.

In place of the symbolic unity of the "political nationhood", represented by proxy by the irremovable "national leader", the nation should be genuinely united, not needing a "senior policeman-tsar" for indivisible control over his "subjects". The unity of a political (civil) nation doesn't come from outside but from within, and not with the help of an army of officials, police and soldiers, but through direct political links that arise in a society that's free of dictatorship.

The unity of a political nation, as opposed to the unity of "political nationhood" is elementary: it is not created by the state – *the nation* creates *the state*. That is why a state created *by* the nation, as opposed to a state that *controls* the nation, becomes a genuine constitutional entity. For such a state to emerge, you need a consensus – the agreement of the majority on the fundamental values and principles of the social structure. The person who agrees to accept the basic principles of the constitution as their own, and who's prepared to defend them if necessary even by taking up arms, becomes a citizen; and a people that is made up of such citizens becomes a nation.

The peoples of Russia are creating a Russian nation – but they haven't got there yet. The USSR endeavoured to create something new in history: the Soviet people. However, since this project was a part of the totalitarian Communist project that rejected the fundamental constitutional norms necessary for creating a nation, it failed. People simply refused to consider the principles of Communist totalitarianism as their own.

Today, we have to solve this issue again, but within the framework of the constitution, and not through terror.

A nation state can emerge only as a result of the free self-determination of the peoples of Russia. People must be given a genuine possibility to make a conscious decision, based on all the information available, and not false information, as happened in 1993, nor the insulting views put forward later. They have to decide whether they are ready to live in a united state according to the principles laid down by the general constitution, or whether they want to continue to make their own history, with all of the benefits and hardships this brings. This is a serious test and brings great political stress, but there's no way round it. You can't build castles on sand.

So in order to create a nation state in Russia, three historically important steps must be made:

- A clear rejection of the concept of empire and the creation of conditions for a free choice for the peoples of Russia;
- The passing of a genuine act for the establishment of the new Russia. This was what the Constituent Assembly was prevented from doing a hundred years ago, because it was dissolved by the Bolsheviks. Perhaps a new Constituent Assembly will have to be created for this, that can use the current Constitution, parts of which have been suppressed;
- Carrying out radical constitutional and legal reforms, so as to create the political and legal infrastructure of the Russian nation state.

The nation state is the state of all the peoples of Russia who declare that it is their desire and their will to become its co-founders. It will have nothing in common with a state that is based on privilege given by blood or belief. However, it cannot ignore the simple fact that the political space out of which it has grown was formed by the active participation of the Russian people and is based on their culture.

Being too embarrassed to acknowledge this historical fact is as mistaken and unacceptable as would be trying to drag some kind of political advantage out of it, and create privileges for the "titular nation" that wouldn't be legal.

For almost half a century Europe has tried to solve this question under the banner of "multiculturalism". This played an important role in the struggle against xenophobia and the general relaxation of morals. But as events have shown in recent years, notably the crisis

over immigration, multiculturalism isn't a panacea. Because too frequently it ignores the objective situation that modern societies don't develop in a cultural vacuum, but within certain cultural traditions that have developed through history. These traditions, that are the basis for all the other elements of culture, deserve to be treated with respect. Therefore, it's important for Russia to include in the philosophy of multiculturalism the principle of cultural integration, to provide for harmonious relations between different ethnic groups and beliefs, on the basis of their being flexibly included into the general space of Russian culture.

The ability to speak the Russian language freely and a knowledge of the basic facts of Russian history and culture should be compulsory in order to receive Russian citizenship. Also, there has to be an awareness of basic economic, political and legal knowledge, as well as a readiness to accept the fundamental legal norms and traditions of Russian society.

These demands in no way infringe upon the dignity and interests of the other peoples of Russia, each of whom will be granted guarantees and conditions for the unhindered development of the language and ethnic culture of their forefathers, as well as their own self-government at the local level.

One of the most important functions of school – and, indeed, the whole system of education – is to teach people how to be citizens. And I mean "citizens", not simply the obedient subjects of yet another autocrat. The nation state is as far away from the empire with its devotion to a superior ruler who secures his place by stick and carrot, as it is from the Cossack communities of freemen, the so-called "failed state", where everyone set their own rules. The first task of the nation state is to guarantee order and the safety of the individual at a higher level than is the case in the empire, where behind the façade of legality lies despotism, often motivated by corruption.

In a genuine nation state, the citizen is proud to identify themselves first and foremost with their country, and only after that with their ethnicity, place of birth, home territory and their work.

I spent a month in a prison cell with Colonel Vladimir Kvachkov, a military intelligence officer and veteran of the war in Afghanistan, who became known throughout the country after being accused of the attempted assassination of Anatoly Chubais and even of organising a military coup.

We're people from different worlds and with different opinions; we are, let's say, fierce opponents (to put it mildly). But when we discussed the question as to why our authorities and our society are afraid of our own special forces – *spetsnaz* – while the Americans aren't afraid of theirs, he summed it up in a way that I still remember 15 years later:

"The American special forces' soldier sees himself first and foremost as a citizen of the USA, and only then as being in the special forces. This is natural. If something happens to him, then he'll be protected as an American citizen. The Russian, though, is convinced that the opposite will happen. If something happens to you, don't expect any help from the state. The best you can hope for is that your friends and fellow soldiers will come to your aid. So our officers are special forces' soldiers first, and citizens only after that, while for the Americans it's the other way round."

The Russia of my dreams will be re-established by citizens who want to organise their lives together. People for whom the national interest is more important than that of their estate, their corporation or their tribe. People who understand that it's better to be together than being apart.

Chapter 13. The Geopolitical Choice: To Be a Superpower or To Consider the National Interests?

If you travel beyond the Moscow Ring Road, you quickly find yourself in a different country. If Moscow can rival any modern European capital in terms of its public services, then outside it there lies a different Russia; a Russia where 120 million people live, that looks like a picture from a post-war film about Europe – poverty-stricken and destroyed. It's difficult to believe that you're looking at a country that was the victor in the most terrifying and bloody war in the history of mankind.

How did we arrive at this? Why, 30 years after our "victory" over Communism; after 20 years of an unchanged new "elite" running the country, who have "cool heads and clean hands"; after years of an unbroken and completely unimaginable glut of oil, the price of which was three times higher than the average Soviet and early Russian price: why does this country lie in ruins? After all, Germany was defeated in the War, yet despite being occupied by the "frightening" Americans, by 1965 West Germany had a higher standard of living than most of Europe, and its industry had pretty well returned to the position it had had previously. Why did the Russian provinces, that hadn't been occupied by anyone, not begin to live better?

There are many reasons for this. There's the inability to manage; theft is everywhere; the ubiquitous monopoly; and as well as all that, there's been a serious mistake in the choice of political priorities, making the most important of them the messianic plan to re-establish Russia as "a superpower".

This new striving for superpower status didn't appear out of nowhere. Determined to use any means possible to prevent the geopolitical transition of Ukraine, Russia's ruling clan opened up new "mineral deposits", ones that were much more profitable than oil or gas, under the title of "Russia's greatness". Since then, it seems that the authorities have been mining this inexhaustible "fuel" in Russia in industrial amounts. It's proved to be the ideal ingredient for the engine of Russia's authoritarian power.

In 2014 Russia swapped one social agreement for another. To the old agreement of "stability in place of freedom", that had been the case in Russia since 2003, the Kremlin made a significant addition: "greatness in place of justice and prosperity". So the new social agreement runs as follows: "greatness and stability in place of freedom, justice and prosperity". Russia's greatness now justifies all of the regime's villainy: despotism, corruption, cultural degradation and backwardness. All of this has to be tolerated in exchange for the possibility to attack Ukraine with impunity; to shit on "the American bastards" in Syria and Libya; and to place "our" private armies all over Africa and even, it's rumoured, in Venezuela.

Why did Russian society agree to this deal so easily? It seems that people were ready for such a turn of events, and were even impatiently waiting for it. It's indicative that after Crimea was "returned" the majority of those living in Russia experienced genuine euphoria. This joy was genuine, not just imaginary. But it happened not only because people considered that the taking back of Crimea restored historical justice, but also because people had grown tired of defeats, and longed for "victories". It seemed to them not that *Crimea* had been returned, but that *Russia* had been; the Russia that they'd known before. This sense that strength had been restored was more important for many than the seizure of Crimea, something which up until that point hardly anyone had thought about. If they had, it was simply as a place to go for their holidays, although in any case if they had the opportunity many now preferred to go to Egypt or Turkey.

There's nothing surprising in this reaction. For centuries Russia had been an empire, and its subjects were brought up in the tradition of empire. To this day, the majority of people find it hard to imagine that there could be any alternative to the imperial way of thinking. This is not only a Russian problem. Other former empires have encountered similar challenges, and continue to do so. (A clear illustration of this are the events in Britain in recent years around Brexit.) But in today's Russia, which had not long before experienced the collapse of the USSR, these processes proved even more destructive than anywhere else.

The birth of the new post-Soviet world occurred painfully, and was accompanied by great difficulties, both for society and for the state itself. The inevitable challenges that a transition period brings were compounded by the negative influence of the huge number of strategic and tactical errors made by the leaders of the new Russia. As a result, the economy drastically collapsed and the institutions of state failed, which in turn led to all aspects of life – society's and the state's – falling into criminal hands. At that time, the country not only lost a sizeable part of its territory, but also stopped playing any significant role in world affairs. It was as if it went from being centre stage to sitting in the stalls.

The central government's defeat in the military campaign in Chechnya and the fiasco of Russia's foreign policy in the Balkans turned into two very powerful stimuli evoking

imperial nostalgia. Society regarded each of these events as a national humiliation. This led to the emergence of a "Versailles syndrome" in society – the sense that was felt in Germany after the defeat in the First World War. Instead of seeing itself as a country that could be justifiably proud of achieving a major revolution that had overthrown Communism throughout Europe, Russia mistakenly saw itself as the country that had lost the Cold War.

There were two possible ways to emerge from this post-imperial crisis, that in itself wasn't unique. It could either spend all its resources on a parody, creating the illusion of strength and an apparent re-birth, whilst simply pushing into the background the ruins of the old society; or it could go through a deep spiritual, socio-economic and political transformation and once again become strong.

The Germans tried both paths. They went down the first one after the First World War, and it led to a national disaster. They tried the other one after the Second World War, and it led to the re-birth of the nation. The first path was directly linked to the past. It was the path of revanchism and militarism, the violent reawakening of worn-out historical processes. The second was linked to the future. It was a way of re-assessing matters and searching for new solutions.

Unfortunately, in Russia it was not the constructive, but the *re-constructive* scenario that was played out. At the start of the twenty-first century the ruling clan tied society to the first path, the revanchist one, and started to push "the elixir of greatness". The superpower drug worked. For some years society wandered round in a state of endless psychosis, revelling in their imaginary superiority over other peoples and a sense of might that didn't actually exist (especially after seeing Putin's famous cartoons about the power of Russian weapons). However, tiredness has already sunk in, along with an awareness that Russia has begun to pay for it, and in the future will be paying an exorbitant price.

The Kremlin doesn't want to achieve Russia's greatness by developing its manufacturing potential, or by the glory of its education and science, or by revitalising its culture. All it wants to do to make Russia great again is to employ brutal military might and nuclear blackmail. It

shows its level of sophistication and inventiveness by waging a "Scythian war" without rules, what's become known as "hybrid war". To do this, it mercilessly uses the military-technical potential that it inherited from the USSR, that might last another 20 or 30 years; in other words, to the end of the lives of today's Russian rulers. They couldn't care less about what comes after them. But this should be of concern to society and that part of the elite who are capable of looking over the horizon of their own greed and vanity.

Criticism of this newly announced, post-Soviet militarism comes either from a generally humanistic position – pacifism – or from the point of view that these Kremlin ambitions are impractical – utopian – and that Russia can't wage war on the whole of humanity and will simply end up killing itself, as the USSR did.

This is both true (in the long-term view) and untrue (in the short- to mid-term view). Generally, Russia's military adventures are not costing it a great deal. I can show with figures that for now these military provocations (with the exception of Ukraine) were not particularly burdensome for Russia. For example, its "investment" in Syria has been fairly modest by Russian standards. The sums put into Venezuela are manageable. And the African "experiments" are low-budget outlays. The attack on Ukraine, of course, was not merely a crime, but also a massive mistake.

Russia can just about allow itself these costs without destroying the foundations of its economy, especially all the while oil revenues are growing. It's another matter, though, that this third world war game that the ruling clan is trying to involve Russia in is dangerous not from the point of view of running costs, but because it excludes Russia from the ability to take its place in the twenty-first century economy, and dooms it to a slow, civilised death in an historic technological and social dead-end.

Western countries have excluded us from the global division of labour because we're not regarded as an equal ally or a safe partner. In the technology market, China, which is steaming ahead, doesn't need us as a competitor. On our own, of course, we can't put out even the bare minimum of the technology we need. There are simply too few of us!

In this sense, superpower status is a dangerous myth, and trying to pursue it contradicts the genuine interests of the nation that's trying to come together. But, I repeat, in the near future these problems won't threaten the stability of the regime.

The principal question is not one of cost, but of sense. There was an old Soviet joke: "Someone asked Armenian Radio: 'Could they build socialism in America?' Armenian Radio replied: 'Well, they could, but why would they?'" It's the same with the Kremlin's war. Could Russia tactically overcome the West, make itself totally isolated from external influences through autarky (like North Korea) and still extend its control over its neighbouring territories? Well, let's say it could; but why would it? We should look not at what would happen if the Kremlin's scheming fails, but what would happen should it succeed. That's where the real disaster would be, because in this logic the Kremlin's victory would mean the defeat of Russia, and vice versa.

So the Kremlin's aim is to demarcate zones of influence with the West (and then with China) so that it can spread its political and military control over certain territories, having put up a new iron curtain. But here's a question: why does a country that has the largest territory in the world (most of it uninhabited) and that's facing a demographic crisis, need new land under its control? After all, controlling a place means that you have to take responsibility for it and spend resources on it, both material and human. Maybe Russia needs more useful mineral resources? But Russia can hardly cope with what it has already. Maybe Russia needs markets for its production of high-tech equipment? But Russia cannot make such equipment (even military equipment) without the cooperation of the same Western world that it wants to shut itself off from with a new iron curtain. And using military means to bring about such isolation excludes any such cooperation, anyway. So why is it doing this? What's the secret?

At first glance, the answer is as follows: Russia is ruled by people with an archaic mentality, people who are mentally stuck not just in the last century but the one before that. They have a primitive, peasant-like understanding of the purpose of politics, that rests, like the Russian peasant's view of the world, on the back of "three whales".

Firstly, there's the view that any relations with the outside world represents a zero-sum game: there's always "us" and "them", and if "they" win something then "we" must have lost by the same amount, and vice-versa. There are no shades of colour in this game, there's only black and white. A compromise is just a tactical trap. Alliances just mean military cunning. And in general Russia has just two allies: its army and its navy.

Secondly, there's the view that holding territory is what's most important of all. That this represents the basis of strength, wealth and influence. The bigger the territory held, the better. The aim of any politician must be to expand their territory. In the confines of this political philosophy, losing any territory is a tragedy, whilst gaining it is an undoubted positive step. As in the past, they judge the historical significance of any ruler by the amount of territory they've gained or lost.

Thirdly, in the view of the Kremlin strategists the whole world is divided up into distinct spheres of influence. A sphere of influence is rather like an extension of your territory. It's a space where, even in a limited way, your sovereignty can be extended. It's essential that your foreign and domestic policy is aimed at extending your sphere of influence. All of the functions of the state should be geared towards achieving this.

In the post-modern world, such traditional views have undergone a significant re-think. But this news has not yet reached the Kremlin.

All of the main players in modern politics and business are already operating according to different rules. At the basis of the new rules is not the theory of the zero-sum game, but the "win-win" strategy, the so-called "Nash equilibrium". This is the theory that in complicated systems no one side in the relationship can work out a successful strategy if the other sides don't agree to change their strategies. In other words, in the modern world no one can achieve overall success on their own when playing against others. On the contrary, it's only when you've learnt to cooperate, agreed the rules with everyone else, and you've consented to fulfil them yourself, that you can improve your position. The modern world represents competition within previously agreed borders that are in the interests of all the players.

Anyone who wants to play without these rules is thrown out of the game.

Furthermore, in the twenty-first century, with modern digital technology, the seizure of territory is certainly not guaranteed to be an advantage. This extra territory could turn out to be a definite disadvantage, and become a burden. The expense of maintaining order in an occupied territory, as well as keeping daily life going, and paying for social and other infrastructure could well outweigh any benefit gained.

For some time technologies have been available that allow "an economic harvest" to be gathered from "foreign fields" without needing to use military force to seize them. The size, number and high level of education of the population has become a much more important indicator of economic and political strength, and bears witness to a country's great potential. But Russia's strategists have a real problem with this. Russia is not simply losing numbers of people, but it's suffering an intellectual decline as the best brains in the country are being forced out. And the more war games the country plays, the more intensive this process will become.

In the post-modern world there are no longer clearly defined dividing lines, and, consequently, no straightforward spheres of influence. One and the same territory can fall within the sphere of influence of a number of different countries, at the same time having an influence on each of them. Everything is relative; and everything's fluid. There's a constant battle and constant competition going on in these grey areas. What tends to happen is that if someone tries to establish their single control over such an area they end up losing all influence over it.

The clearest example of such a losing strategy is Russia's policy towards Ukraine since 2014. Despite having a huge historical advantage, Russia refused to compete with the West for influence over Ukraine and, by its actions, has turned it into a hostile state for decades to come, if not forever. Ukraine is now a zone of alienation between Russia and Europe.

Does this all mean that the principal driving factor of the Kremlin's policy is stupidity? Only partly. Greed plays an even bigger role. In reality, the ruling class

in Russia doesn't want to fight. Over the 20 years they've been in power their representatives have integrated themselves into European life in a way that's never been done before. They've sent their children, their wives and their mistresses to Europe; they've acquired real estate and bank accounts; they've become the favourite clients of European bankers and generous patrons of European politicians. Dozens of university campuses throughout Europe bear their names. They own fashionable galleries and shops. They don't shy away from innovation, especially when it's a long way from Russia's borders. Yes, they don't want Russia to be free; but they're more than ready to make use of other countries' freedom (and security) in the West. That's the whole point.

Possibly to an even greater extent than events in Ukraine, the Magnitsky Act became a trigger point for the Kremlin's crusade against the West. The so-called "war against the West" carried out in the name of Russia was a war of the ruling class for its privileges and, above all, the right to spend its money in the West. That was in its own way a kind of primitive blackmail. Russia didn't attempt to conquer the West (the Kremlin does understand the limits of its capabilities), but just wanted the West to accept its conditions. The principal one was, don't poke your nose into our business, don't pay attention to what's going on here with human rights and corruption, leave us to amuse ourselves with our imperial ambitions within the boundaries of the zone of influence that was established by the USSR, and just get on enjoying your comfortable European lives. Now everything's changed. Putin's dragged Russia into a war that's put the Russian ruling class back in its usual place in the international community for many years to come. Now their place is the same as that of the elites of North Korea, Iran and other such marginal countries. That's the mistake; or rather, it's the result of Putin's evolution from being a thief to being a fanatic. The interests of the elite have also been thrown overboard.

So how does this match Russia's national interests? The answer is: not at all. How can we understand what those interests are? Let's ask ourselves this question: what do we want to do, bomb Voronezh or restore Voronezh? If we want it bombed, then we don't need anything and we can go ahead and fight the West. Ah, but if we want to restore it, to make it not like Stalingrad in 1943, but along the lines of Montreal, then there's a lot we have to do; and all of it is hindered by our confrontation with the West.

We need new technology; massive investment; know-how and skilful management; qualitatively new education and healthcare; normal competition. Without all of this, we have no hope of emerging from this stagnation. All of this can be achieved only through integration into the global economy; and integration and war simply don't go together.

Many critics of the current regime go to the other extreme, suggesting that the idea of "Russia's national interests" is simply an illusion; you can't even shake on it. But Russia genuinely does have national interests, and these need to be protected. They do not, though, have anything in common with the narrow, clan interests of "the group of thugs from Leningrad", who seized power in Russia and have implemented total militarisation of the country. The real national interest for Russia is its fastest possible integration into the global economic system and the restructuring of its political and economic life in such a way that the country can take up a worthy place in this system.

Everything that helps us achieve this goal is in keeping with Russia's national interests. Everything that hinders the achievement of this goal, or puts off the overdue transformation needed, goes against those interests. The pursuit of imaginary greatness is insulting to Russia's genuine greatness; there is something to be proud of, not just the atom bomb.

The Kremlin and its henchmen want to isolate Russia from the West, while at the same time adopting a Western lifestyle for themselves. So for this they want the country to have the status of a military superpower. But Russia's national interests are diametrically opposed to this. We need to remove the country's isolation, whilst on the other hand isolating all those who use the threat of war to maintain their feudal privileges, including the right to steal money from the country with impunity, and spend it in the West. They want Russia to be closed off, so that they can steal and cheat forever. We want Russia to be open, so that this can never happen again.

Chapter 14. The Historical Choice:

Muscovy or Gardarika (which has nothing to do with Gaidar)[1]?

Will Russia will be an empire or a nation state? Will the focus be on building a practical way of life, or will people try to create yet another utopia of universal proportions? Whatever the situation is, a crucial question for future generations will be about the centralisation of power in Russia. Should the Russian political system remain strictly centralised, with most (if not all) authority based on the single point of the federal government in Moscow? Or should the system be de-centralised (even artificially)? And, even if it takes huge efforts, should a number of places across the country be empowered to make various political decisions, depending on their level of competence?

Either variant is possible within the liberal and democratic model. Simply turning away from the authoritarian system doesn't remove the question. In both theory and practice a democratic state can be strongly centralised – Britain and France are examples of this – or it can be largely de-centralised, such as in the USA and Germany. We shall have to choose which would suit Russia best, taking into consideration our cultural heritage, and the particulars of the new, unique historic tasks that will lie before us. This is neither a simple nor an obvious choice, not least because it goes against a deeply-rooted political tradition.

Matters are made more complicated because centralism is the sacred cow of the Russian political mentality. Attacking this would be fraught with risks. In each of the three previous incarnations of its civilisation – Muscovy, the Empire and the USSR – Russia was a hyper-centralised state. The tradition was laid down by Muscovy; strengthened by Peter the Great's Empire; and taken to the extreme by the Communist empire. And neither in the 1990s, nor in the first decade of the twenty-first century did anything change significantly. So for the past 500 years of history, the movement has been only towards greater centralisation, and never the other way. You could say that, despite the many changes of era, Russia is still Muscovy.

Paradoxically, centralism as a political principle is so deep-rooted in the mass consciousness that the idea unites both the supporters and the opponents of the current Russian regime. Among the latter group, there are fanatics who believe in concentrating power in the hands of a national government in Moscow just as much as do the apologists for the regime. Even though the motives for

each of these political forces are completely different, they each relate to the idea of de-centralisation with the same scepticism and suspicion.

For the clan that rules Russia, this is a question of the type of control that they can exert over the situation, a matter of maintaining the political and economic status quo. For them, hyper-centralisation is a tool for suppressing any challenges that threaten the established political order, or for dealing with local grievances. Naturally, for them, centralism is the main means of maintaining the stability of the regime. They are totally dependent on the centralised apparatus for repression and propaganda carrying out its work effectively. It's also the way in which they maintain control over the resources that are essential for keeping this apparatus going.

For the opposition, centralism is a guaranteed way of defending citizens from the despotism of the local elites, whom they see as strongholds of reaction. The results of an experiment to introduce the idea of local self-government that was carried out by the young Tsar Ivan IV (later to be known as "the Terrible") have still not been wiped from the historical memory. In the regions, power was seized from the governor by the strong "shouting men", whose despotism was even crueller than people were used to from the tsar's governor. As a result, the experiment had to be stopped in its initial phase.

Perhaps this is why many of the brains behind Russian liberalism support centralism, because they feel that de-centralising power in Russia would inevitably lead to incidents like the one in Kushchovskaya in 2010, when local gangsters killed 12 people. They fear that this could create a kind of confederacy of such lawless principalities, each run by criminal gangs. They believe that the only thing that could prevent this disastrous situation would be to give the dominant role to a "progressive" central authority, that would be controlled by "the correct" political forces; that is, the victorious westernised liberals.

Therefore, just like the reactionaries, certain Russian liberals speak out in favour of maintaining strict centralisation. Their principal area of disagreement is simply over who should control this united centre, and what signals the centre should send out to the regions. Those loyal to the regime believe that the centralised

power should guarantee stability and prevent change; while this group of liberals and democrats think that the centre should ensure that necessary reforms are moved from the top down throughout the country.

It would be possible to consider the arguments from these liberals in favour of centralism wholly convincing, were it not for one thing: in a huge country like Russia, sooner or later centralism will inevitably lead to authoritarianism.

While there is a high degree of centralisation of power, it's impossible to maintain for a long period a workable model of democracy in the country. However liberal the centralised power of the victorious "progressive forces" started out, it would quickly cease to be so and would simply become authoritarian.

There's an obvious reason as to why the hyper-centralisation that's been preserved in Russia ends up as a model of authoritarianism. Centralism presupposes the necessity for the constant redistribution of resources within a huge country (otherwise there'd be no material base). This means that enormous financial flows have to be serviced, and a massive bureaucratic structure is needed for this. And this, in turn, hangs over a society that doesn't have the means to control it, nor ways of defending itself against it.

The chain is simple: centralisation – redistribution of resources – a huge structure to service this – pressure on civil society.

In other words (and this is very important), in Russian conditions centralisation inevitably breeds autocracy, and vice-versa.

Whatever innovative ideas the "revolutionary centrists" might have had when they came to power in Russia, they've already slipped into (and will continue to slide into) the same well-worn historical rut: imposing change from above – creating a powerful structure of centralised power – the necessity to focus resources on servicing this structure – turning this structure into a power that lords it over society – the formation of an authoritarian (at best) regime – the need for a new revolution.

So how do you break out of this vicious circle, and how do you get away from the authoritarian nature of this centralised power without becoming the hostage of the local criminal gangs?

The answer seems pretty obvious. You strengthen society's control over power; decentralise power, giving balance and the division of powers; you allow for a strong opposition that is guaranteed a place in maintaining control over the authorities; and you have independent media.

But how do you achieve all this in a country where, for the last 500 years at least, there has been virtually no such political experience?

The decentralisation of the political system is perhaps the single most important political task facing the coalition of forces that in practice, not in theory, is trying to bring about the democratisation of Russia.

This is an extremely difficult task. It's impossible to leap across this chasm in one bound and land immediately in a "decentralised paradise". Too many archaic layers have formed in the Russian political system. It's too difficult to bring them all down to a single common denominator; and there's a great risk that in chasing after this ideal you lose sight of reality and end up disappearing into the chasm. At the same time, though, you can't avoid making the jump. Because sooner or later all of these archaisms will tear the country apart at the seams.

So we have to immediately attack on two fronts: prepare the ground for a tectonic shift, while taking temporary, compromise measures. These may be imperfect, but they'll still go some way to solving the problem.

What can serve as a template for this new system? Strange as it may seem, the answer can be found in Russia's distant past, even further back than the usual point from which Russian statehood is measured: the Tsardom of Moscow.

Today, the united forces of reaction are pushing us into the past, and they see their ideal in the state that was

created by the princes of Moscow. But our history didn't begin with the victory over the Tatars and the creation of Muscovy that followed this. There was another Rus' before this. It was a country of self-governing and totally independent towns: Gardarika (as the Vikings who came from the north called it in their epic tales of the time). And even though these towns have been lost in the endless boundaries of Russian civilisation, it's Gardarika that we need today in place of Muscovy as a fundamentally different state structure; an alternative to the harshness of centralisation.

Towns have always been the cornerstone for the development of European civilisation, and to this day they remain the principal places for the growth of the new global civilisation. But now we're talking not just about towns, but about metropolises – huge cities where millions of people live in close proximity to each other. As the fundamentally new way of social organisation, it's these metropolises that have become the engines of global technological, economic and even cultural change.

Strategically, even in the medium term historical perspective, Muscovy, with its single dominating centre for taking political decisions, should be transformed into a metropolis of political multi-centrism. Ideally, the basis of the state structure in Russia should be a political union of metropolises. This would greatly broaden the political class, taking it beyond the Moscow Ring Road.

The fundamental difference between the modern world and that of centuries past is that now there are far fewer centres of development. Development is now focussed on huge metropolises, where there's a sufficient concentration of people and infrastructure. A metropolis is a place where people live in relatively close proximity to each other, and where you can reach the centre in less than an hour. The surrounding area then becomes the territory for servicing these centres of growth. In Russia, the emphasis should be placed on developing into a metropolis any city with a population of three to five million people, bringing it up to 15 to 20 million.

This is less of a technical question than a political one. How many of these centres do we need, and how many can we allow ourselves? This is the essence of proper strategic

planning (if, of course, we want to control the direction in which we are heading and not merely go with the flow of time).

In my opinion, there should be no more than 20 such centres in Russia. We simply don't have a large enough population for more than that. In the future these metropolises will become territorial centres, the capitals of a new structural organisation. We might call them "lands".

We're talking about new economic and political entities. These will be the building blocks of the new Russia, constructed from the bottom up, and not from the top down, as has been the practice up until now. This new network of "lands" will eventually replace the existing system of *oblasts* and republics.

I am convinced that in any case at some point in our historical development we will have to change today's territorial and state delineation of Russia, that has its roots partly in the country's ancient history, and partly through spontaneous decisions and passing interests.

It may well be that we have to change the territorial division of *guberniyas* and *oblasts*, that we've known for nearly 300 years. These divisions arose randomly during endless Russian colonial expansion. They underpin uneven development, and strengthen the peaceful coexistence between the rich regions (each of which could become a separate European state), and the poorer areas, that survive only thanks to grants from the centre and are totally unprepared for an independent existence, not just economically but in the wider cultural meaning of the word.

Nowhere in the world are all regions set up on an equal footing. There's always a contrast between the leaders and the outsiders. But everything's relative. You won't last long if you try to harness to the same cart the mighty "steed" of a modern post-industrial nation state with a nervous "donkey" from a tribe. The levelling up of different regions is essential politically: raising the status of the outsiders to that of the leaders. Improving the most backward regions that are not currently able to fulfil the political functions of a subject of the Federation (and, indeed, are not even classed as "subjects"), is a very difficult but essential task.

But you can't do this on the spur of the moment. First, you have to develop the metropolises as potential administrative political and economic centres so that they can carry out their new role. We have to begin by creating a proper, quality university, that will set the level of the future metropolis. And this will take a long time.

So what can we do now? If we simply rely on the possible growth of the metropolises, we may never live to see the bright new future. The project for the deep restructuring of Russia's territorial state system could take decades, if not longer. And if throughout these years the power structure remains as centralised as it is now, then there'll be no possibility of breaking out of the prison of authoritarianism and backwardness that Russia currently finds itself in. This means that at the same time as the new system is being rolled out, we have to have a time frame to reform the existing system.

How should we approach the current reality? History has known two main ways of effectively decentralising power: self-rule and federalism. Neither of these have been studied in depth in Russia. Even though they're both mentioned in the Constitution, they've never been put into practice, and so they remain there as mere false decorations of the political system. We can merely guess at how genuine self-rule and real federalism would work in Russia.

Russia has never really been a genuine federal state. The idea of the federation was simply a political formula to legitimise the limited autonomy of the colonies in their relation to the metropolis. The model of a federation has never worked in Russia, and no one can even be sure that it would work here. It was effective in the USSR only so much as it fitted the false federal model of Soviet power that protected the tough centralised machinery of the power of the Party (the real deep state), where there was no place for genuine federalism.

Self-rule has fairly deep roots in Russia, and in the pre-Soviet period it played an important supporting role in rural areas at the lower levels of governance of the empire. From the mid-nineteenth century, more complicated methods of self-rule began to develop, such as the *zemstvo*. But in the Soviet period all self-rule was wiped out, and the tradition was lost. Nothing of its

kind has been created in the post-Soviet period. So any moves towards self-rule will have to start from scratch.

Nevertheless, we do have something that could be used as a starting point, and something that could be used for careful political refinement. I see the advanced development of local self-rule as the key condition that would make it difficult to slide into the well-worn rut of authoritarianism. Developing federalism would be an extra supporting factor. This is because it would be relatively easy to build public control over the structures of power, and a democratic tradition could be created on this basis.

The basic essentials for developing local self-rule should be granting it a protected budget – and competence. The concept of "joint (or mixed) competence" is a sly one. It's a grey area, where the centre always wins. Self-rule, of course, means there must be responsibility. This a closed circle of political technology: a clearly defined area of competence, its own revenue base and management by elected, responsible people, who answer to the electorate for the results. The electorate themselves then carry the responsibility for their own mistakes, and can't blame them on a higher level.

Clearly, like the people, the regions are not all the same, and in a massive country like Russia nothing will be achieved if there isn't a redistribution of resources. But this must be done transparently, by a united fund for the regional development, and not secretively through the murky articles of the overall federal budget. So the question of transparency has to be decided separately.

Access to subsidies has to be fair and to stimulate local development. Subsidies must not be used for political trade-off, nor as a means of paying for "voting the right way".

As local self-rule develops, it will help change the rotten stick of the authorities into a pyramid, with self-rule as the foundation of this pyramid. This means that the whole system will be turned upside down. People must learn to solve problems at the level where they happen. No democracy in the world exists without this foundation. The rules are simple: it's your competence, your budget, your elected representatives.

At the top of the pyramid we have the central authorities. In practice, they should be secondary to the local authorities, complementary to their work, and not the other way round. The central authorities are not there to solve the problems of the local authorities, but to establish the rules of the game and make sure they are rigorously observed. If not, then the foundations of the system will begin to crack, and the same criminal gangs will take over once again.

Furthermore, the central authorities are there to solve national issues. To ensure they can do this, they must have their own protected competence and sufficient resources, including a central budget. They have to be strong enough to ensure that "on the ground" the rules and order are kept; but they have to be sufficiently kept in check so that they aren't tempted to "privatise the localities" and devour the competency of the local authorities.

But here an extra problem arises. If the central authorities are too weak, they won't be able to hold the country together. But if they're too strong, then they'll overpower the local authorities and undermine them.

In order to regulate the power of the central authorities, and to ensure that they cannot break the established order by *de facto* seizing power from the local authorities, an artificially-created extra, horizontal, barrier has to be set up from within. This is to guarantee the separation of powers. This extra regulator built-in to the central authorities is federalism. In such an enormous country as Russia, it is essential to make sure that the balance between the centre and the regions is maintained.

Unfortunately, the very meaning of the word "federalism" is today besmirched by many years of Soviet propaganda.

Federalism is a specific way of organising state power, where along with the vertical division (the classic division of powers), there is an additional horizontal division, the so-called "constitutional deal". This makes it possible for the two levels of state power to operate on one territory and, according to the established rules, for each to have full autonomy in one or more areas of competence.

The federalism that I'm talking about here has nothing in common with today's false federalism. In the future, it will be an integral part of the metropolises that will be the centres of the new subjects of the state. But we need to start by changing the relationship within the boundaries of the existing territorial divisions of the state.

In the future, the metropolises will become the capitals of the "lands", and will be granted all the necessary administrative and political attributes of local capitals, as well as the judicial system, the military districts and so on. The lands will have their own jurisdictions within the powers granted to them. It's possible today more or less to predict what the list of the lands and their capitals will be, by looking at how individual regions are developing. They can already be prepared for their new role, including by purposely and systematically strengthening the existing subjects of the Federation.

Only an all-encompassing system will be able to survive in Russia, with a strong central government, a metropolis as a regional centre and strong local self-government. If one or other of the links in this chain collapses, or if the system flattens out and stops being all-encompassing, then it will inevitably return to the traditional authoritarianism, or run the risk of the state disintegrating into tiny pieces. The foundation of all three elements must be self-rule. And this must be defended by each region holding its own budget and being responsible for its own work.

The old model of Russia's management is Muscovy, a country of a single city-state. But for Russia to become a modern state, the new model has to be Gardarika, a country of multiple cities that take power into their own hands. Gardarika versus Muscovy. Ultimately, this is the argument upon which the fate of Russia will depend.

1 Gardarika comes from the Old Norse words "gard" for city and "riki" for land, signifying a nation of many cities that take power into their own hands. It has nothing to do with Yegor Gaidar, who was the first post-Soviet Russian Prime Minister, responsible for freeing prices, which led to hyper-inflation.

Chapter 15. The Political Choice: Democracy? Or a Return to the Terror of the Oprichnina?

If we stop to think about it, why do we need democracy? Why do we need this system of power based on regular general elections and the division of the branches of power? Why is it necessary in general? And why specifically in Russia?

The answer is far from clear. Or, to be more precise, it's far from clear for everyone. The liberally-minded Russian opposition tends to believe that everyone understands that democracy is a good thing; and those that don't understand this are just pretending they don't. But this is a serious delusion.

Even in the most liberal of circles, you come across fierce anti-democrats who are convinced that democracy is merely for the chosen ones. And in the non-liberal sphere, where opponents of democracy dominate, not everyone speaks out on this topic, many preferring to remain silent. So the question as to whether Russia really should become a democratic state remains an open one.

The simplest thing to do would be to stamp "demo-scepticism" on this stagnation or lack of culture; but it's much more complicated than that.

First of all, there are quite a few highly-educated intellectuals among the opponents of democracy; they're not all just people who've been duped by the regime.

Secondly, there are plenty of genuine problems in the way modern democracy works, and these have discredited it in the eyes of people who have a wide variety of political views.

Thirdly (and perhaps most importantly), Russia has only a tiny experience of democracy, whereas at the other end of the scale its experience of authoritarian rule is huge; inertia has instilled into many people much more trust in this system.

And we have to remember that Russia is an atypical dictatorship. Russian authoritarianism is unique in its own way, and has never demonstrated any ability to modernise. Throughout its evolution, the Russian political system has formulated its own original answer to the challenges of history, which can be summed up as a

permanent *oprichnina*. This system is not as primitive as many might think it is.

The essence of the *oprichnina* is the division of power into an external and an internal state, where the internal controls the external and is a hidden political force.

First established by Ivan the Terrible, the *oprichnina* has gone through multiple transformations. At different times this internal state has been called by different names (such as "the court"; "the Communist Party"; or the "'Lake' cooperative"). But in essence it has remined as it always was: while the regular state has existed, this *oprichnina* has been a network of informal power above all the usual laws and institutions, and one that hasn't been identified by any laws. It's the power of the superiors, standing above the law and living by their own privileges. It's a specific kind of Russian "eternal Middle Ages". It changes and constantly adapts to new circumstances, but never, ever, disappears.

The image of some magical force of this "Middle Ages" has become an integral part of the people's historic memory, and people remember that any attempt to escape from this paradigm has ended with some kind of "time of troubles".

This image doesn't need to be helped by propaganda. It's the first association that springs into the mass Russian political consciousness. So the renewed enthusiasm for Stalinism that many talk about today shouldn't be regarded simplistically as just people being brainwashed by television. It has deep roots, not to mention that a significant element of the population retains sympathy for Stalin, and his methods for running the country survived even during the "riot of democracy". Of course, this part of society didn't always behave as aggressively and as shamelessly as they do today, but they haven't changed their principles in the slightest.

At the base of this enduring sympathy is a belief in the effectiveness of Stalin's way of ruling, especially when it was necessary to quickly mobilise limited resources so as to achieve a specific result.

A significant part of Russian society is convinced that Stalinism has great potential for modernisation, and this

is a reality that cannot be ignored. Well before Putin appeared on the scene, there was talk in Russia about Stalin and even Ivan the Terrible as being efficient managers, but no one really paid any attention to it, dismissing it as nonsense. Wrongly, as it turns out. Here we need proper arguments, not emotions. For now there's been more of the latter than the former.

The substantive objections that the liberal part of society puts forward against Stalinism and in favour of democracy are largely based on two principles, the ethical and the economic. The ethical principle talks of "the price paid" – the millions of lives lost to win Stalin's "victory". The economic principle maintains that half a century later the country broke up, and a significant reason was that we had clearly fallen behind democratic countries in our economic development.

The Stalinists usually fend off the ethical argument by saying that democracy has also not always been whiter than white, that democratic revolutions frequently were accompanied by masses of victims. And to the economic argument they answer that the fatal lag in the economy took place in the post-Stalin period.

Some people may feel that the Stalinists are right, and that the potential of the totalitarian society for modernisation was truly unlimited. But this impression swiftly disappears when you take into account the long historical perspective.

It doesn't actually appear as if Peter I and Stalin each reached great heights in the economy once they had the country under their control. But towards the end of their lives, just one or two generations after they began their reforms (between 20 to 40 years), stagnation set in that it was impossible to resist. And the roots of this stagnation clearly lay in "the period of great victories". Ultimately, it could be seen that these "victories", as consequences of the revolution, turned out to be the reasons for the backwardness of the system. Thanks to the authoritarian nature of Russia's modernisation, the country developed from revolution to revolution, along the lines of "one step forward, two steps back". And as the centuries passed, the upheavals, like a pendulum, swung back and forth ever stronger. There's no point in making the usual comparison between authoritarian modernisation now with the way it was done in centuries

past; we need to compare how effective authoritarian and non-authoritarian modernisation has been over long periods of time.

In places where democracy ruled, development happened much more evenly, with fewer swings of the historical pendulum. And over long periods of time this gave society a massive head start. The people's patience wasn't exhausted under the yoke of autocracy, nor did it explode into a bloody civil war, nor turn into appalling apathy witnessing the endless rule of gerontocratic leaders. One set of politicians just peacefully took the place of another, one political course was exchanged for another, and society merely tacked against the wind of the various hardships that life brought.

Again and again, Russia has been put in the position of trying to catch up, as a result of all the sacrifices that were placed upon the altar of authoritarian modernisation. This is where Russia is now once more. With a long historical perspective, if we look far into the distance instead of simply looking under our feet, we can see that for Russia there is no alternative to democracy. Otherwise, sooner or later another swing of the pendulum of revolution will simply destroy Russia as a state. And a massive swing of this pendulum can be avoided only with the help of democracy. But the question is, what sort of democracy does our country need, and how can we build it with the minimum of cost?

This task has to be solved on two levels at once. Firstly, Russia has to construct a democratic foundation; to do what was done long ago in Western Europe. But just catching up with the West isn't enough. We have to take into account the new challenges that have arisen. Modern Western democracy is experiencing serious difficulties and is now seeking the answers to these problems. There's no point in our first creating the democracy of the nineteenth century (which is what everyone is trying to do) and then trying to re-shape it for today.

The classic form of democracy no longer works anywhere. It's time has passed. In the information age, the methods of political mobilisation that were invented in the middle of the nineteenth century are both pointless and useless. Every day we see how the old system of political parties is stagnating and is no longer capable of fulfilling its function. In Russia we must immediately

build democracy for the twenty-first century, leaping at one go over two steps and proving correct the words of the Evangelist, that those who are last can become the ones who are first.

What does "creating a democratic foundation" mean in Russia? There are hundreds of definitions of democracy in the world and dozens of different theories. I don't intend to put forward a principally new version, nor will I just repeat certain banalities. One way or another, the type of society that'll be considered as democratic will be the one where *society* has the last word when it comes to taking political decisions; the whole of society, including its minorities. Not just a part of society, that for some particular reason has the right to vote, such as by material wealth, education, ethnicity and so on, but the whole adult and capable population of the country.

In this sense I shall always be suspicious of democracy in countries where there are too many people who are not treated as citizens, whatever the historical background to this might be.

Let me just point out right away that I'm not talking here about *restoring* democracy, but about the creation of a social structure that Russia will have for the first time in its history. The right of society to have the decisive voice has never been known here, not in the most liberal, long-gone days (including the short period between the February and Bolshevik Revolutions in 1917 – let's not confuse anarchy with democracy as a means of organisation), nor in the more turbulent times of recent years, such as the 'nineties.

It is essential that there are no vivid examples of political repression, but this is not of itself a sufficient sign of democracy.

At the end of 1993, after the armed conflict with the supporters of the Supreme Soviet, the Russian political system was deliberately constructed in such a way as to remove the figure of the President from the separation of powers. This was declared – but never happened in practice. In this sense, the Constitution of post-Communist Russia hardly changed from the constitutional laws of the autocratic empire. As a result, this led to the total degradation of statehood in Russia: power

became concentrated in the hands of the President and his circle, which led to the establishment of a neo-totalitarian regime.

So the fundamental question for the creation of democracy in Russia is, how do we bring the supreme authority into a system where there is the division of powers, lock it into a method of checks and balances, place the deep state under the control of society, and at the same time do away with its "sacred" significance? This is a purely institutional task, which can – and must be – solved by constitutional and legal ways within the confines of general political reform.

Perhaps in current circumstances the best way to solve this is by switching to parliamentary democracy. Whatever happens, Russia's political institutions (whatever names they go by) must not be allowed to rise above other political branches of power and gain an authority that is not equal to that of the other branches. This is the only way in which the golden share of democracy can remain in society's hands, and won't be seized by gangs close to the supreme leader.

But even if in practice Russia were able to carry out such deep institutional reform, would this make the country a successful and democratic state?

The answer isn't simple. Democratic? Yes. Successful? No. The reason for this ambiguity lies in the systemic challenges and failures that democracy faces everywhere today; not just in Russia, but around the world, including in the West, democracy's *alma mater*. First of all, the electoral mechanisms, which are based on the work of "party machines", have disappeared. In the developed informational society, political parties have ceased to be the only or even the main instruments for politically motivating the population.

Nowadays, small, mobile groups of activists have become the way of doing this. They may not have strong representation among the mass of the population, but with sufficient resources they are capable of quickly establishing contact with people through modern media, and guiding them in the direction that they want.

This means that the possible sources for providing resources in today's world are widely differentiated, and it is difficult to establish control even in societies with reliable democratic traditions and stable state institutions.

The meaning of these changes in a functioning democracy is ambiguous. On the one hand, they make the political system more dynamic, adaptive and (naturally) more open. But on the other hand they open up wide possibilities for manipulating public opinion, creating an unhealthy populism and in this way they destroy the very essence of the electoral process. For now it's not clear how to teach democracy to work in principally new conditions. One thing is very clear: if the best we can do in Russia is simply to build "yesterday's democracy", then, despite all the efforts and sacrifices made, it won't work and the whole project will collapse even before it's started. And the very idea of democracy will be even more discredited.

This means that all Russia can do is simply try to be not only a democracy, but the most advanced democratic society possible, using the newest political technologies to make this happen. One of the problems is that we don't really have anywhere to observe how others have done this. We are doomed once again to become a country of social and political invention. Yet again! And this isn't because we would want it to be so. It's simply that other countries have time on their side; they can use the political capital they already have, but we can't do that in Russia. We are as we are, which means that we have to build a democratic system virtually from scratch, in a completely new way, taking into account our fears and our risks, trusting to our own intuition rather than basing it on the experience of others. Certain liberal, westernised, Russians don't appreciate this. They put too much hope in the approaches that have been developed in Europe.

In addition to the "mandatory programme" of democracy, which boils down primarily to the competent implementation of "institutional reforms", needed to destroy the Russian system of autocracy by the division of powers, Russia is facing a huge democratic "arbitrary programme", the success of which will depend to a certain extent on how well it's carried out. This programme will not be simple. The level of difficulty of the democratic

system should be suitable for the level of difficulty of modern society.

I'll allow myself a comparison. The same principle operates in both a small trading enterprise and a gigantic international corporation. The shareholders make the main decisions based on the majority of votes. But the manner of determining the rights of the majority differs in each firm. A gigantic multi-profile corporation can't operate in the same way that a small shop does. It has in place a multitude of special mechanisms to guard against most mistakes (in practice, the most common ones). These are mechanisms that guarantee the rights of the majority, but prevent them from halting the work of the enterprise and abusing these rights.

The same is true in a state. Democracy is a very complicated system, perhaps even more complicated then authoritarianism, and one that is always tailor-made for a particular country at a particular moment in time.

Creating such a system for a huge, territorially and culturally diverse country like Russia, with its huge differences in nature and climate, is not easy. This gives rise to the idea that we must experiment with different parliamentary systems, allow asymmetry, and to take as many decisions as possible to the lowest level; decentralise everything that can be decentralised. We have to start from the idea that there's never been a genuine, classic party system in Russia, and there never will be. Therefore, we'll build the electoral mechanism around something else – something that's now replacing traditional parties.

We have to prepare for all of this now, opening up the discussion on the political format of the future Russian democracy, and not leaving the search for a solution until later; because there won't be time "later". And this shouldn't be just empty incantations about the benefits of democracy, nor idle chatter about its general principles.

This must be a discussion about the details, involving specialists and as wide a group of interested parties as possible. After all, the authoritarian devil hides in the democratic detail. This is what we saw in the "very best"

Constitution in 1993. We mustn't allow ourselves to repeat that mistake.

Chapter 16. The Economic Choice: Monopoly or Competition?

You have only to mention the word "monopoly", and even more so, "competition", and all those who aren't connected in any way to economics or business immediately lose interest, and sigh, "there you go again!" A natural monopoly, unnatural privileges… "How much more are you going to bang on about it?! Everyone knows that monopoly is bad and competition is good." But it turns out there's a reason for this. Monopoly and competition don't refer to the economy. Well, to be more precise, they do, of course, refer to the economy, but only slightly. More significantly they refer to a lifestyle and a way of thinking. In essence, we're talking here about two different ways of looking at the whole social structure. So it's about politics, the society and also ideology.

There's a law that links the various areas of social activity. It runs, if there's a monopoly in the economy, then sooner or later you'll have authoritarianism in politics, paternalism in social relations and some sort of totalitarianism in ideology. This happens because monopoly and all of the social and political conditions related to it are the result of certain dominating socio-cultural factors. This is particularly characteristic of Russian society. We can take away the prospect of monopoly only if we manage to change these dominating factors; otherwise we'll simply swop one monopoly for another.

Monopoly and competition do not sit at opposite ends of the spectrum. They are not totally opposed to each other, as many simply assume. At the same time, they are doomed to be in permanent opposition to each other. But you can never completely remove monopoly, nor competition. Each is really just a way of combatting chaos. They are ways of organising social space. One has some good points; so does the other.

For example, let's take the state's monopoly over legalised violence. Nowadays, this is the generally recognised legal norm, but this has not always been the case. But judging by the expanding number of private

armies such as the “Wagner Group”, from a historical perspective, who knows?

In a practical sense, there are two ways of fighting chaos. There’s the tough way – clamping down on it with the help of the hierarchy of power (the vertical way) – and there’s the softer way: using “the rules of the road” to find a solution.

So competition shouldn’t be confused with “a war of all against all”. Organised competition, like monopoly, is called upon to struggle against this war, but using different methods.

To a certain extent, monopolies are always natural. The consolidation of capital and the associated increase in production are caused primarily by the need to increase labour productivity. In any case, until recently, labour productivity increased as the business grew larger. This is due to a number of reasons, not least because within a large enterprise it’s easier to form work patterns and implement a system of control that allows you to correct the mistakes of the workers. Of course, such factors as the concentration of resources and the stress tolerance related to this are also significant.

Even the most progressive start-ups regard the true mark of success of what they’ve created as being bought by a transnational giant. But at the same time, from the point of view of the development of a monopoly, labour productivity begins to fall away, because there are fewer incentives to perfect the production process. Why change it if it’s not broken? As a result, sooner or later any giant company becomes less efficient.

So expanding a business is positive when it’s done in a controlled way; but negative if it becomes uncontrolled. The easiest way to establish control over a monopoly is to develop competition; in other words, to put big businesses in competition with each other, providing this is kept within the boundaries of the established rules. The responsibility for this, as the arbiter, lies with the state.

The approaches to this question are generally well-known and universal. Once a monopoly controls more than 30 per cent of the market, it should be placed under observation

to ensure against abuse of the system. If it goes over 60 per cent of the market, measures have to be taken to reduce the profitability of the monopoly, by stimulating other producers of goods and services. This is rather like a constant battle against buildings icing over: you have constantly to break off the largest icicles.

Monopolisation in markets is similar to fighting herpes: you can never defeat it, but you can keep it under control if you have political and economic immunity that operates effectively. But unlike herpes, growth is not an illness but natural evolution, and this has to be utilised.

The ways in which this is done can vary. It doesn't have to be the straight-down-the-line approach of Europe or the USA. For example, South Korea is the home of the Samsung Corporation, a monopoly company. The government keeps tabs on it. It sets Samsung rigid guidelines, such as that no less than 60 per cent of its production should go for export. Should these conditions not be met, the company faces serious sanctions. You could call it competition replacement therapy. This is a very different approach, but it solves the question of control over a monopoly.

The situation changes drastically when a private monopoly becomes a state one, and turns into a state corporation. In this case, neither market forces, nor replacement therapy will work, and any competition will be destroyed by the administration.

No private enterprise can possibly compete with the consolidated power of the state, when the state is both owner and controller. If anyone doesn't know how this works, they should study carefully the garbage and construction businesses of the Russian Prosecutor General. There can be no question of one official being able to effectively control another official (and by default, all the leaders of state corporations are *ipso facto* the most powerful officials). Everyone witnessed how even the slightest hint of such control can finish in Russia with the example of the "Ulyukaev affair". Alexey Ulyukaev ended up in the meat-grinder, where they make "Sechin's sausages".

In Russia, the idea of monopoly has deep historic roots, which is why it has so many supporters. Nearly all

industry was founded on the state's initiative, with the participation of the state and under the state's control (even if that initiative was corruptly motivated by the future owner). Monopoly was the main instrument for the industrialisation of the state. And after the Bolshevik revolution it became its sole instrument for industrialisation. The principle of the monopoly was taken to absurd lengths, far further than it had ever been taken before in any large global economy. In the end, this monopoly was what killed off the USSR, because it made its economy inefficient and uncompetitive.

After the collapse of the USSR, Russia significantly freed itself from the grip of the monopoly. But this was only for a very short period, and it wasn't able to organise proper competition. The economic and political institutions couldn't cope with the enormous challenges of the time. As a result, society went into a tailspin, that resulted in exactly the kind of war of all against all that monopoly and competition are supposed to defend against. At the start of this century, the strategic mistake was made to re-start the monopoly, instead of continuing to re-build the field of competition. But this turned out to be a very particular monopoly, the like of which Russia had never experienced.

In this authoritarian regime, that's corrupt from top to bottom, and that's bereft of any ideology (in place of which they use some sort of rusty paper-clips), monopoly has become the only way in which the clans can get rich, by sucking up to power. The regime uses monopolies to reward the clans for their political loyalty. So monopolies have become the most convertible currency of post-Communist Russia. Using power instead of money is a way of distributing the monopolies. It started with oil and gas extraction, then spread to road tolls, and then to anything and everything. Now, according to the latest pronouncements, it's even spread to toilets. It's not surprising that this vital sector of the economy went to the family of the former Prosecutor General, Yury Chaika; after all, it's right up his street.

To be fair, it should be pointed out that even before this there were few preconditions in Russia for the successful development of competition. So creating the conditions now for competition would be a tricky task for any government, including the one to which it will fall to build the new Russia, once the present regime evaporates into nothing. Such preconditions usually

include a readiness to cooperate, a broad base of trust, and other attributes of a bourgeois society; everything that's included in Max Weber's code of Protestant ethics. Unfortunately, no such ethical code has emerged in Russia.

Despite the common perception that Russians have a collectivist mind from birth, even researchers with diametrically opposed views on the fate of Russia have pointed out a pathological individualism (what the philosopher Ivan Ilin called "federalism") is characteristic of Russian people.

The most severe measures have been employed in order to crush this eternally excessive Russian individualism, including the ubiquitous use of monopolies. To a great extent, over time monopolies in Russia have become a historically determined way of survival due to the notable suppression of initiative. The well-known, violent, Russian concept of *sobornost'* [a term without parallel in other languages, but described as "a spiritual community of many people living together" – Tr.], was merely a reaction to the inability "gently" to wipe out individualism with the aid of general rules. But historically even this method has had its limits: after a while it simply stops working.

As a way of dealing with chaos, competition is now preferred to monopoly almost everywhere. But in Russia, with its difficult cultural heritage, competition simply failed to develop sufficiently to be able to carry out what it's meant to do. At every turn it came up against an authoritarian leader who tried to solve problems that arose by using a monopoly. And the result? It was totally ineffective and cost huge sums of money.

Peter the Great created centralised industry that was almost totally dependent on the state. The Bolsheviks carried this tendency to a logical conclusion, leaving standing only a state-planned economy. It's not worth dwelling on the cost of this, nor the result. It was always a crude, harsh and uneconomic way of doing things, but it carried on working for centuries.

Why doesn't this work now? Because when you have a society with a developed system of information, monopoly as the basic way of regulating the social sphere is outdated.

When all societal relationships have become much more complicated, and their success depends more and more on the actions of a solitary individual or small groups, it becomes virtually impossible to support the dynamic development of society by way of a monopoly. Russia has no choice but to move from a monopoly economy to a competitive economy. But doing this is no easy task.

The advantages of competition may not be very obvious, although it's abundantly clear that competition beats monopoly. The experience of economic development in nearly all large economic systems shows this: USA, Russia, China. The death of the Soviet system is in many ways on the consciences of those who failed to recognise in time the fatal flaws of the monopoly. I would even dare to suggest that had the Soviet system evolved along the lines proposed by Alexander Shelepin and Alexei Kosygin, rather than that of Leonid Brezhnev and Mikhail Suslov, and had Kosygin's reforms been carried out in full, then the end of the USSR might have been different.

But it's less a question of what's abundantly clear from experience, rather than the basic principle. Competition is simply a more efficient way of running any area of society. It's very potential outweighs monopoly. Competition is an individual's game, organised according to general and strictly observed rules. It encompasses both sides of the coin: there's the players' freedom of action, and their freedom to choose the direction in which they move, whilst at the same time having previously agreed rules that no individual can change or simply ignore. In other words, the main thing about competition is its rules which, by observing them, give each player a wide freedom of choice.

In monopoly, on the other hand, the main thing is orders. Under monopoly, only one player is free: the person who establishes both the rules and the direction of travel. It's specifically because it encompasses the two elements – order and freedom of choice – that competition is more efficient than monopoly. Psychologically, it's competition and not monopoly that suits man's natural instincts more closely.

From this understanding of competition, it follows that its key features are the drawing up and then the observation of the rules. There can be no competition if "some are more equal than others". But this isn't enough.

There has to be equal and fair access to the process of creating the rules, because if they give someone an advantage then competition turns into the opposite of what it's supposed to be: it becomes a hidden monopoly and leads to chaos. So genuine competition is possible only when there's a developed civil society and a state governed by the rule of law. These things go together, rather like a "set menu". If there is no constitutional state governed by the rule of law watching over the economy, then it will be impossible to build an economy based on the principles of competition.

And this is where we come to the most important point. There are countries like South Korea where a monopolistic private company that is under the control of a constitutional state works efficiently. There are countries like Switzerland or Norway, where state corporations controlled by a democratic state work very efficiently (just look at the Swiss railway system). But there are no countries where a state or a private monopoly that is controlled by an authoritarian and corrupt state works efficiently. A combination that starts out like this nearly always ends up like Venezuela.

Corrupt and unchanging authorities (a political monopoly) plus an economic monopoly is guaranteed to be a disaster.

Such a combination is destructive. These multifarious clan groups rip the very fabric of the state to shreds in trying to grab one of these monopolies for themselves. Igor Sechin came along and grabbed Rosneft. The Rotenberg brothers came along and got the Platon company to make money out of transport. And so it goes on, right down to the bottom, where you end up with situations like what happened in Kushchovskaya. All of these monopolies came about thanks to the corruption of the authorities, and they can't exist without it. A whole vicious circle of corruption grows up, of "power - monopoly - power", and this can be broken only by a revolution. This will go on forever, until an alternative model of political competition is presented that brings competition to these economic and social monopolies. And that, in turn, brings about political competition.

Chapter 17. The Social Choice: a Turn to the Left or a Turn to the Right?

There are few things more deeply rooted in contemporary politics than the division between "the left" and "the right". Yet at the same time it's one of the most blurred distinctions. Nowadays anyone can call themselves "left" or "right" as the mood takes them. The left and right agendas have become indistinguishable. The extreme right-winger, Donald Trump, came to power with a programme built on left-wing, populist stereotypes.

At one time Putin seized the left-wing "anti-oligarch" agenda from the Communists, then carried out a harsh right-wing policy in favour of the bureaucrats and the new oligarchs. It's become extremely difficult in today's politics to determine exactly who is who.

A great deal of water has flowed under the bridge since it was possible to determine the left and the right depending on where people sat in the French parliament. "Leftism" and "rightism" were defined differently then.

Usually, those who were labelled "left-wingers" were the zealous supporters of state-owned property, the fanatics of "big government" and the regulated economy and the champions of high taxes for the "haves" and massive advantages for the "have-nots". At the other end of the scale, people usually called themselves "right-wingers" if they were supporters of the free market, adherents of "small government", preferred to give out fishing rods instead of fish, and were convinced that when Jesus Christ fed the five thousand he could have got by with three loaves instead of five, so as not to increase the national debt.

Keeping to my task here, I'll confine myself to a working understanding of left and right, even if it's incomplete. It seems to me that at the basis of the division into left and right lies the attitude to equality. Typical for left-wing politics is the desire to strengthen equality and eradicate inequality. In right-wing politics there is the inherent acknowledgement of inequality, **but above all an attempt to stimulate economic activity specifically through inequality.**

I accept that these are the extremes. Between them there are many mixed areas: we might call them "left-right" or "right-left". But the heart of the matter is somewhere in here.

Neither in society as a whole, nor in the expert community is there a united approach to the question of equality (let's not confuse this with equal rights). Therefore, there can't be a united approach to left or right wing politics. Rather like fashion, the attitude to inequality experiences seasonal changes. When, like now, the level of genuine inequality in the world starts to increase, the level of concern about it increases, too. A whole host of studies appear that highlight the appalling economic, social and political consequences of inequality. And as a result, left-wing ideology becomes more popular.

When levelling out begins to triumph everywhere, and thus economic growth falls and the poverty that was the cause of the battle for this levelling out becomes excessive, another wave of studies appears, no less than the previous one, illustrating the dangers of equality and the usefulness of inequality. Consequently, right-wing views gain more adherents.

From this we can draw the very straightforward conclusion that there is no absolute, definitive truth in either left-wing or right-wing ideologies. They are like the movements into the wind of a sailing boat. In order to sail forwards you have to tack, now going a little to the right, now a little to the left. This in turn illustrates that the change from a course to right or left is a cyclical process, and generally the natural thing to do. This shows that the art of politics lies in seizing the moment at which point it's right to switch from the left to the right and vice-versa.

The peculiarity of the historical period we're now in is that the moment has arrived for such a change of tack. But due to the complexity of economics and politics, and the way in which they've become multidimensional, it's become very difficult to determine which way we need to change – from the right to the left, or from the left to the right. At times of such uncertainty, temporary leaders appear, with vague ideological profiles; people such as Trump, Boris Johnson, Matteo Salvini, or Vladimir Putin. At one moment they seem left-wing, at the next, right-wing. No one can be absolutely sure in which direction their political course is heading. Quite possibly this is their aim, because they want to appeal to as broad a section of the public as possible (and so far they've succeeded in this). But they can't go on like this forever. At any given moment politicians will appear on the scene with a clear programme.

Who's standing on the threshold today and knocking on the door of global politics? The left or the right? The answer to this question is not as obvious as it might seem. At first glance it looks as if Europe – and not only Europe – is waiting for a long-expected victory for the so-called far right forces. We have Marie Le Pen in France; the *Alternative fur Deutschland* (the Alternative for Germany, the AfD); the *Lega Nord* (Northern League) in Italy, and others. It's clear that the new-found "Russian Tsar" decided to use these forces to build a "Holy Alliance" to defend traditional European values. But I think there's a serious question as to what extent these forces that have positioned themselves as being on the right are actually dedicated to right-wing ideas. Most of these parties of the right hold a hidden left-wing agenda up their sleeve. The reason that they've had some success in the game of political poker is that the genuine left has temporarily dropped out of the race, having got lost in the mess of migration policy, thus leaving their original place open for the right.

What is it that's so confusing the traditional left and even forcing them to huddle together, giving up their place on the pedestal to the right, who are promoting leftist ideas? The answer lies on the surface. The traditional left-wing programme turned out to be smeared with a migration agenda that had been superimposed on top of it. This is all rooted in the split at the traditional base of left-wing ideas and the separation from the base of the "new poor" and the "uninvited poor".

The "new poor" are those who are "relatively poor"; that is, although their standard of living is incomparably higher than genuinely poor people in the past, they nevertheless consider themselves poor compared to the growing wealth of the "new rich", which gives them a sense of poverty.

The "uninvited poor" are genuinely poor people, mainly immigrants, who are temporarily and illegally employed, and who are not protected by the law. There are huge numbers of such people in the developed economies of the world.

So the problem for the left with their traditional agenda is that their social base is disappearing before their very eyes. The poor are rapidly turning into the "new poor", and are ready to fight on two fronts: both against

the "new rich" and the "uninvited poor". And since (as is well known) the fiercest competition always erupts on your own doorstep, the war against the "uninvited" occupies the minds of the new poor even more than the war against the rich.

All of this was brilliantly demonstrated by the "Jeremy Corbyn case" in Britain. Even the Labour Party's ultra-radical programme could not conquer the topic of Brexit in the eyes of their traditional electorate, which led to the failure of the Party (along with the Conservatives) in the election for the European Parliament.

The right poured into this gap. Seizing the pseudo-left's programme as a weapon, they took advantage of the confusion of the traditional left, who were undecided on the issue of immigration, and achieved significant success. There are reasons to believe, however, that this success could be temporary. This is certainly not because the ideas of the left have some special sacred power. It's just that now the left agenda is once again in demand. After a few decades dominated by the policies of the right, there's been a sharp growth in inequality and social stratification. The next long cycle will be dedicated to the battle against *inequality*, not the other way round. This will be followed by something else, and someone will raise the banner of this "just cause", whatever it may be. But here and now in the West we can most likely expect a global "turn to the left", which I've been talking about in various formats for the last fifteen years.

This is the general background picture. So what about Russia? How does all this reflect on the country's prospects? As always, Russia is also taken up by this trend, but here it's rather more confused, because where the left and the right align there's not so much a dislike of immigrants as there is, firstly, a nostalgia for socialism, that's confused with the idea of a welfare state; and secondly, some real remnants of socialism, that are burnt into the class nature of Russian society.

Society holds that the USSR represented a country in which there was no inequality. This is so; but also, not so. If you look at the overall figures, then they show that the difference between an ordinary worker and a member of the Politburo wasn't so great, particularly if you compare it to today's situation. But in relative

terms, the differences in the strata of Soviet society were enormous and constantly grew. For ideological reasons, this growth was hidden by a lack of conspicuous consumption or publicity, and wasn't apparent right up until the last moment. But when Communism died, the situation got out of hand, and Russia looked like a country with one of the highest levels of inequality. **But it's wrong to say that inequality arose in the 'nineties. Because it was handled badly, the issue of inequality came into the open only in the 'nineties and destroyed the truce that then existed in society.**

In the twenty-first century, Russia has been shown to be a country with one of the highest inequality indices in the world (similar to the USA). The gap in earnings and the standard of living of the different strata of society became even more unacceptable when compared to the long-established Soviet habit where people thought of themselves as equal – outwardly, at least. This meant that at the start of the century it was virtually impossible for right-wing ideas to be promoted in any democratic way in Russia. Against the background of the increasingly sharp stratification of society and with nostalgia for the Soviet past clearly growing, any idea that justified the further stratification of society directly or indirectly would simply have been rejected.

People were presented with a difficult choice: accept either the ideas of the right, under which banner the post-Soviet economic reforms were carried out, including the return of the right to private property; or go for the introduction of democracy, which was the purpose of the political reforms. At that particular moment of Russia's historical development, the ideas of the right and democracy couldn't be linked together.

It was at that point, finding ourselves in a position where we could re-think many of the old stereotypes, and unexpectedly realising that we were able to look at things from a different point of view, that I suggested to the reformers and the democrats – basically, all those who were ready to look to the future rather than the past, and who could see Russia as a contemporary, modernised state – to make an unambiguous choice in favour of democracy, and to change the banner. My point was that society would no longer accept the ideas of the right (even though the idea hadn't been discredited in Russia, and the work that was worth doing under this banner was

far from completed), and that this had led me to call for "the turn to the left".

In proposing to make this significant change of direction, I did not, however, become a supporter of Communist or left-wing ideas. I had in mind something different. I understood that the stratification of society had reached dangerous levels, which wouldn't be considered acceptable. In a country like Russia, adhering to purely libertarian views when carrying out reforms was seen as utopian. The government could no longer be simply a bystander, and would have to take economic and political measures to try to level out the emerging social imbalance. This meant eventually that we would have to part from the dream of seeing "the small state" in Russia, and would have to learn how to govern and control a normal state in a normal way.

Unfortunately, many of those to whom I addressed my plea didn't listen. Then, for reasons beyond my control, I was unable to participate actively in this discussion, and could merely observe from the sidelines. The backbone of the forces that were resisting the creeping authoritarianism and neo-totalitarianism refused to compromise with the regime. They were brave, sometimes desperate, people, who continued the ideological and political struggle for human rights, against despotism and in favour of democratic values. These people held onto their right-wing, even libertarian, positions, speaking out for the free market, the advantages of capitalism, and the joys of the "small state". Maybe this was justified, but in that situation it was hardly appropriate or practical.

The situation worsened, because in the absence of any genuine left-leaning ideas in Russia all that remained were fully left-wing or pseudo-left ideas. The ideological and political space was full of actors who played on the older generation's Soviet nostalgia, and pushed left-wing ideas to have a calming effect on society. Not surprisingly, among the fair-minded critical thinkers who made up civil society there developed a suspicion of the very term "left-wing". They began to reject everything that was associated with the left, seeing it as simply archaic Soviet thinking. As a result of this, that space was left empty.

As we all know, nature abhors a vacuum, and the ideas of the left were bought by the most unexpected "buyer": the right-wing regime. If those to whom I addressed my thoughts didn't listen to me, in the Kremlin they understood only too well the value of left-wing ideas. Of course, I'd suggested that these ideas should be linked to a democratic agenda, but in the Kremlin they seized the programme of the left and instead used it as a means of suffocating democracy and creating post-Soviet authoritarianism. Under the cover of popular slogans about doing battle with the oligarchs, the Kremlin began to spin a false left-wing programme, pretending it was aimed at closing the gap between the rich and the poor, promising to develop wide-ranging social programmes, and advertising their model as that of a welfare state. The height of this populism came in 2007-2008, when they began actively to push the idea of national programmes for healthcare, education, culture and so on.

At first, this undemocratic "turn to the left" began to show very promising political possibilities. Against a background of bountiful profits from the sale of raw materials at very high prices, and with the impression of having stable relations with the West (that made it possible to attract even more credit and investment), they managed to divert significant resources to the social sector, thus raising the standard of living of a reasonable part of the population to near pre-crisis levels, and in some instances even beating Soviet standards. This led to strong support in society for the regime, and led to the well-known pact with the population of "bread in exchange for democracy", as a result of which the closed authoritarian system began to be formed.

However, Putin's social paradise didn't last long. These policies didn't lead to any kind of new equality. True, compared to the 1990s the incomes and standard of living of the majority of the population rose significantly. But the income of the main beneficiaries of Putin's policies – the new bureaucrats and the semi-criminal businesses that attached themselves to the Kremlin – rose even more, by almost astronomical amounts. Social stratification not only didn't go down, but grew noticeably. A new class of oligarchs appeared, Putin's, made up of his *oprichniki*, and the incomes of the majority of the old layer of super-rich also grew. What was happening in Moscow at the national level was repeated many times over in the provinces, where the gap between social groups also widened in the same way. An amazing picture appeared. In

carrying out verbally a left-wing programme, the regime actually managed to create an even greater division in society, and the growth of inequality in all areas. What's more, this was done in the most primitive, almost feudal, way.

All the while there wasn't just a lot of money around but an *awful lot* of money, the regime didn't hear any complaints about their pseudo-left agenda. Surplus profits made it possible to buy off the masses painlessly, hardly affecting the rate at which those around the Kremlin were lining their pockets. But such a "lightness of being" corrupts. Increasingly, socialist ideas became mixed in with nationalist and even militaristic ideas. And as is well known, socialism and nationalism can often be a dangerous mix. Specifically, from the very beginning this turn towards nationalist social programmes was accompanied by the ideas outlined in Putin's Munich speech of 2007. This beginning then saw the seizure in 2008 of two regions from Georgia, South Ossetia and Abkhazia, and as "Putin's socialism" reached the peak of its flowering and the well-being of the post-Soviet people was at its height, in 2014 the war against Ukraine was started. Suddenly things ground to a halt. In conditions of war there was no longer enough money to keep supporting the social illusion.

What happened to Putin's welfare state when the era of hybrid wars began? In short, it drowned.

First of all, after the financial crisis of 2008 the international situation changed and the price of raw materials started to fall.

Secondly, preparation for war and the establishment of a supposedly autonomous military-industrial complex (even one created just for show) is an expensive business, and, what's more, in a corrupt state it's an inadmissible luxury even for the strongest budget.

Next, being denied long-term access to global credit markets and trade restrictions because of the imposition of sanctions, is no laughing matter, no matter what they might say on Russian TV's Channel One. It seems that only those who make the Iskander missiles might find this funny. Everyone else in Russia cried.

Lastly, the most progressive and economically productive part of society began to leave the country *en masse*: taking out their money and physically departing. Each of us has but one life; and not everyone wants to spend it in an encampment with thugs. A very basic thing happened: incomes fell, and expenses grew sharply. The pie was no longer big enough to feed everyone, and the state had to choose at whose expense they could continue to "raise the country up from its knees".

So where should a democratically-minded citizen stand on all this? Should they support the right or the left? In fact, the question itself is now wrong. As mentioned above, in the contemporary world the juxtaposition of left and right movements or left and right ideas is insignificant and relative at best. This is especially the case in Russia. Both left and right are now merely tactical moves, not long-term political strategies as they used to be. There is no "left-wing Putin" or "right-wing Trump". Now it's all a myth and opportunistic. And, of course, the left and the right in Russia are not at all the same as they are in Europe.

What's the classic agenda of the right in Europe? It's the possibility to earn as much as possible and not share it with others, in the first place via taxes that are paid to the state. Therefore both the state and taxes should be small. Another indicator of the right's agenda is its relationship to over-consumption. Almost everywhere in Europe this is frowned upon, and, in any case, it's kept within cultural and fiscal boundaries. From this point of view, the Russian government is, in fact, right-wing, because it's declared a classic right-wing agenda by directly and bluntly having a unique flat tax rate and by the state and society encouraging over-consumption beyond any measure.

We need to speak separately about over-consumption, and its link with the popular topic of anti-corruption. Society doesn't mind whatever kind of palaces our officials of the state build. Russia isn't the birthplace of elephants but of special storage facilities for fur coats. And there has to be a surfeit of everything: an Arab scale; African quality; and an elaborate Asian style. And all of it with the pretension to be another Versailles! There are few countries on this planet with such demonstrative over-consumption. And it doesn't matter whether you've done this with stolen money or your own.

What's important here is that in any normal society this would be considered vulgar. But in Russia, it's decent. Our society – in contrast to the West – reacts perfectly calmly both to a flat tax rate and to barbaric over-consumption. People might not like it, but there's no class hatred. What's more, many people will react far more harshly to the slightest privilege displayed by a neighbour than they will to the luxury of an unknown wealthy person. An iron-studded neighbour's door will anger them more than the forged metal fence around Igor Sechin's dacha. Let me explain.

The answer is not obvious. It's more thanks to history and philosophy than politics. When it comes to consumption, Russia retains a rudimentary class structure and, accordingly, a scale of social claims. Therefore, Russians' claims on the authorities when it comes to social policy are still restricted by class.

People don't ask for much; but they'll never give up the little they have. They hold tightly to the status quo and their modest social benefits, and do not wish to lose them even when these benefits are merely of a symbolic, practical significance. The privileges of the upper layers of society bother people much less than many think they do.

At first glance, the story with pension reform is completely irrational. People were very upset by the raising of the pensionable age, even though in a practical sense this move by the government would affect most of them only in the distant future. But this was less of a practical issue than something that upset the balance: it mattered less that their future was being taken away than that psychologically this was an important privilege for the lower levels of society.

In contrast to the West, most Russians recognise class boundaries, and don't try to break them (an individual might jump over them, that's fine; but don't break them). But this notwithstanding, they demand that the quality of life within those class boundaries be maintained and even improved. And if there's any small lowering of standards, however insignificant in might seem in the grand scheme of things, they will react with howls of protest. The question as to whether it's possible to break these class barriers in the near future, let alone whether it needs to be done, remains an open one. This question is

certainly not at the forefront of people's minds, because for it to be so there would have to be a genuine revolution in their consciousness.

The class nature of Russian society hinders the development of a genuine left-wing programme in the country. Apart from the nationalisation of the economy, what's a typical left-wing agenda in Europe? It means a progressive rate of income tax. But there can't even be any discussion of this in Russia. People simply don't understand how making things worse for one level of society can improve the situation for their own level. They just don't see any connection. The 13 per cent tax rate in Russia is simply not considered to be a subject for serious discussion. So in Russia there's no structured left-wing agenda. It would have to be created, bearing in mind the specifics of the class system.

A properly built social policy is a powerful lever for overturning the pyramid of power. Why is this so important? Putin isn't a mixed politician; he's a radical right-winger. The left is simply a false cloak he puts on. As he imitates the technologies of fascist-type leaders, rather like Solaris he changes his mask to suit the situation. Since 2003 he's been covering up his course with left-wing slogans. But like all of those in his regime who promote a left-wing programme, it's just for show. There's actually nothing new in this. Just as there's no self-rule and no genuine federalism, Putin has no genuine left agenda. He will, though, continue to use the left-wing mask in the future as the situation demands, as his regime becomes ever more decrepit.

Given all this, the situation will only continue to go downhill. Matters will go from bad to worse, since in the global division of labour there's no place for Russia in the industrial production sphere. That particular conveyor isn't ours; and, in any case, it's already taken. Only highly-qualified labour could save us, but unfortunately we're lowering the prestige of education and cutting off the funding for it. The class nature of society keeps growing. Our children don't see the value of higher education, and consequently they'll have nowhere to go when they grow up. It's programmed mass impoverishment.

It’s quite possible that there’s a subconscious political element here: it’s easier to manage a poor society. Poor people’s expectations are lower.

In this way, too, Putin is ensuring that the class system will remain for decades to come. The model is being laid down that means that the majority of the population will be unable to break through to the top because of a lack of qualifications. You can’t evolve out of such a system. You can only smash it.

The regime can be and has to be caught out on this. The democratic movement should put forward a genuine left-wing tactical programme in opposition to the regime’s leftist show. Not an abstract European programme (that wouldn’t work in Russia), but one designed for the reality of the Russian class system. What does a tactical left-wing programme for contemporary Russian conditions look like? It’s nothing supernatural. It’s a combination of two things. A consistent battle against over-consumption and strict guarantees of conservation; and where possible, raising specialised measures of social support for the broad mass of the population.

It seems that it’s impossible to fight against over-consumption in Russia, because there’s no clearly expressed demand for this from society, despite the opposition’s clear anti-corruption campaign. People express their indignation, but this simply borders on philistine curiosity and doesn’t develop into the need for political action. As a result, everything runs into the sand.

There is, though, one small but significant detail. People are ready to accept over-consumption by the fathers, but they’re not prepared to recognise the children’s rights to it. The legitimacy of inheriting large fortunes in Russia, be they in the families of oligarchs or the dynasties of officials remains an open question. Tolerating the class system doesn’t pass on to the next generation. So there’s a window of opportunity for an evolutionary solution to this problem, through the introduction of expropriation taxes for the inheritance of super-large fortunes.

As for social guarantees for wide swathes of the population, Russia is doomed to remain a welfare state where rudiments of Soviet socialism will be around for a

long time. Experiments that the regime falls into in a panic from time to time, such as monetising benefits or raising the pensionable age, are unacceptable politically in Russia.

The democratic movement will gain mass support only if they're able to take a firm and unequivocal position on this question. All financial and fiscal questions have to be solved by increasing the pace of growth of the economy, lowering the cost of corruption and introducing an inheritance tax; but not at the expense of the reserve for benefit payments, which must be left untouched.

To sum up, at the current time the tactical left-wing agenda of the democratic movement could be presented in two parts. On the one hand, phasing out over-consumption through a basic confiscatory tax on the inheritance of overly large fortunes. And on the other, guaranteeing to maintain (and even gradually increase) basic social benefits, primarily in healthcare, education and social security.

Over the last few years, the falseness of the regime's social policy has been exposed for all to see. The left-wing programme has become a series of ritual excuses. Whilst they've continued occasionally to speak of their "national projects", in reality the government has waged an actual war with its own population for the "optimisation" of social spending. Almost a third of educational and medical establishments have gone under the knife. They've even stabbed to death the sacred cow of the socialist past: the low pensionable age. And child benefit has all but faded to nothing because of the devaluation of the rouble, becoming just another miserly routine benefit, and so on.

But another sacred cow has survived: the windfall profits of the ruling clan, that have successfully passed through all the de-offshorisation, the capital increasing both when the funds were taken out of the country, and when they were brought back in. The height of cynicism was the massive redemption by the state of illiquid assets at inflated prices from well-fed entrepreneurs and granting budgetary compensation to those affected by sanctions.

This latter looks particularly disgusting against the background of "the parmesan war": the counter-sanctions that "bombed Voronezh", by removing from the middle class

their access to quality food products. In this way, and in conditions of a crisis and an undeclared war against the West, the regime managed to realise in practice a typical right-wing agenda: making the poor suffer to compensate the rich. It was less a question of "Crimea is ours" than "Crimea has been taken at our expense".

If these tendencies continue (and there's no reason to suppose that they'll change radically) then the subject of "the turn to the left" will become as relevant as it was 15 years ago. Social division will grow at triple the pace, now not only at the expense of the "new rich", but also at the expense of the recently-created "new poor", whose well-being has fallen dramatically as a result of crisis optimisation brought about by the undeclared war. And the subjects of poverty, social inequality and the unjust distribution of resource rent will return to the top of the political agenda. But the regime that's sunk into a war to try to gather in the slivers of empire will no longer have the ability to take hold of this agenda.

We can assume that the resistance movement will again face the same dilemma as it had at the start of the century: should we make a "turn to the left" and take the democratic path, or choose the ideas of the right and face yet more political isolation?

In conditions of rapidly increasing inequality, when left-wing ideas are gaining ever more adherents in society, reckoning on coming to power by democratic means on the back of a right-wing and ultra-right-wing programme, that's frequently libertarian, that acclaims the joys of the "small state" and the potential of the free market – this is all an absurd utopia. Acting in this way, that part of civil society that's most ready to take on the fight risks disappearing forever from the political stage, and passing not just into the stalls but to the upper circle. The stage will be taken over by comedians and speculators.

Once again today we are facing the same conditions as there were when I wrote "The Turn to the Left". For the opposition it would be an inexcusable luxury to pass up this chance to return to the world of live politics, instead of playing games on Facebook.

If a democratic coalition with a left-wing agenda is unable to come together, then the chances that there'll

be a peaceful transition of power by democratic means aren't great. The regime will continue to hang by a thread until that thread is cut by a revolution from below, and on the wave of that revolution new Bolsheviks will come to power. If this is the case, there's a real risk that Russian history will slide into yet another downward spiral, and as a result Russia will disappear from current world history.

Chapter 18. The Intellectual Choice: Freedom of Speech or Openness that's Shackled?

Whenever the conversation in Russia turns to discussing the political regime, those who try somehow to classify it inevitably end up with cognitive dissonance. On the one hand, the regime appears undoubtedly authoritarian, repressive and even totalitarian. Those in power are irremovable; the opposition has no chance whatsoever of winning through elections that are merely a formality; any citizen can fall foul of police thuggery at any moment, even if they're not involved in politics in any way; but if they are involved in politics then they've even more chance of being beaten.

It used to be possible to write about all this relatively directly and openly online, and even in certain mass media that was reasonably easy to access. The authorities could be criticised, you could carry out independent investigations, dig the dirt on senior government dignitaries and so on. And basically, they got away with it, although there were individual cases where certain outstanding journalists lost their lives. But such things happen in other countries, too; in recent years, for example, this has occurred in Slovakia, Bulgaria and Malta.

It should be noted that until recently, you could express your opinion in Putin's Russia more easily than you could in the USSR, even in the most liberal times. Ekho Moskvy Radio, Novaya Gazeta newspaper, the "Rain" [*Dozhd'*] television channel, a comparatively open Internet and much, much more would have been simply unimaginable in the Soviet Union. You could have been locked up for a long time even for dreaming about such a thing. This is why many people spoke and wrote about Russia as if it were a reasonably free country; at least as a country where there was freedom of speech. Was that justified?

The problem is that freedom of speech in the literal meaning of the words is the highest legal and constitutional principle that the government must adhere to. This freedom is guaranteed by the full force of civil society, and is built into the policy of the state. But there is no such freedom in modern Russia. In its place there is a space, the borders of which are strictly defined by the state, with whose permission, and under whose watchful gaze a native called "Glasnost" is permitted to exist. This old museum piece lives on a reservation allotted to it on the edge of a police state. It's there to amuse gawkers from the capital or visiting tourists.

Life in the reservation depends entirely on the will of the state: it could shut it off entirely at any moment, but for some unknown reason of its own it hasn't done this. Apparently, the danger of closing the reservation (with the fuss that this would cause, the need to distract the gawkers with something else, etcetera) for now is considered more dangerous than the threat this openness might bring to the regime. The situation didn't just happen in an instant but built up historically under the influence of a multitude of factors that were varied and at times contradictory. In order to understand how to get out of this situation and, more importantly, where it might lead, it's essential to give a brief description of how it evolved.

In the Soviet Union, society was just about as closed as it could be in real life. This closed nature of society gave unique possibilities for state propaganda, which helped the regime to control people's consciousness, and thus the behaviour of the majority. Herein lies one of the main differences between a totalitarian regime and an authoritarian one. The former relies not only on police repression, but also on the active programming of people's consciousness and their behaviour with the help of an all-powerful propaganda machine. The present regime doesn't have anything like this, and I don't think it will ever succeed in creating it.

From the mid-fifties, when the era of "the great terror" had passed, the main responsibility for maintaining the stability of the Soviet system lay with the state's propaganda machine. The repressive structures assisted in this, by weeding out those who, for one reason or another, were immune to the propaganda. But such people were relatively few, and so the state's repressive machinery

didn’t have to be kept permanently active. It was working behind the scenes, only occasionally removing those who “thought in a strange way”. Most of the dirty work was done by the “masters of the Party word”.

The state’s propaganda machine was unprecedented in its power and operated at every level of society. Because of this, the population was kept from any true information about what was happening in the country and in the world. It was this that naturally formed the principal front line of the struggle against the regime both inside the USSR and from outside. What annoyed the vast majority of people most in the final years of Soviet power wasn’t the organs of repression, it wasn’t the militia or the KGB, with whom the overwhelming majority of the population had no direct contact, it was actually the Party propagandists, who’d been telling the nation tales that simply didn’t fit in with their own everyday experiences.

We didn’t have to wait long to see the logical conclusion to such a situation. When Mikhail Gorbachev came to power, effectively the main demand from those at the top and those at the bottom of society was to know the truth. In answer to this political demand, voiced loudly and clearly, the leadership under Gorbachev came up with the slogan of glasnost, openness. Of course, glasnost was a purely Soviet euphemism, reflecting a vague and mythologized view of the Soviet party elite about the related ideas of such liberal values as freedom of speech, freedom of the press, open discussion and so on. It was indeed an extremely inconsistent, limited and internally contradictory ideological concept. But at the same time it’s important to understand that it was the most fundamental, the very first, and the harshest example of perestroika. It was the pinnacle on which everything else was then hung.

Psychologically, from the outset glasnost was seen as the principal achievement of Gorbachev’s revolution, and that opinion remains to this day. It was seen as a focussed response to Soviet totalitarianism, as witnessed by the last generations of the Soviet period. That was why, when the regime began its attack on democracy, and all of the achievements of the revolution brought about by Gorbachev and Boris Yeltsin were thrown out, glasnost was seen as the last unsinkable bastion of “Communist liberalism”.

For many people, this has created the illusion that some sort of freedom of speech has survived in Russia. In reality, the situation has been much more complicated. Even before the war began there was no freedom of speech in Russia. But the authoritarian, and to some extent even neo-totalitarian, regime partially learnt to co-exist with the remains of Gorbachev's glasnost, which even brought it some benefits.

Of course the start of the war and the regime's switching to all-out mobilisation could not but affect this area of life. All of the influential independent and semi-independent media, journalists and bloggers came under unprecedented pressure, as a result of which they had either to stop working, leave the country or go over to the service of the regime.

However, this is the final stage of the development of a dictatorship. We have to understand that we cannot allow this to evolve.

In order to correctly build a strategy to democratise Russian society in the future, it's essential that we understand the secret of the strange and sometimes unnatural coexistence of the two mutually exclusive beginnings of the life of society: the birth of the truth and the birth of the lie.

The basis of this phenomenon is the regime's ability to hold the commanding heights of information. It all began when the basic channels of information were taken over by the state and people and structures affiliated to it. The significant moment in this process was the destruction of the old NTV television channel, and the establishment of full control over Channel One by the Presidential Administration. At this point, Channel One became a public broadcasting organisation in name only. Today, the information market in Russia is one of the biggest monopolies.

What's more, the state directly or indirectly controls not only the pro-government media, but even the bulk of the media that is meant to be on the side of the opposition.

The state's expansion in this area wasn't just restricted to the classic media. The growth of the Internet saw the

state's agents move in there, too. A vital border was crossed here when they seized control of the largest social media site in Russia, *VKontaktye*. Along with this, massive budgetary funds are pumped into various Internet projects through numerous intermediary contractors. Despite the widespread view that much of the Russian part of the Internet opposes the regime, the state is actually the dominant player here, too.

What's even more important, though, is not the *quantity* of channels but the *quality*. It's not which part of the information sphere belong to the state that really matters, but how it uses it. As a result of the endless efforts the Kremlin has put in over many years, it now dominates the flow of information. Its very aggressive method of pushing out a constant flood of information is like a permanent information war.

This dominant information flow is generated from the Kremlin, and its driving force is the network of obscure Kremlin agents who run specific information resources, often many different ones at once. This is an extremely complicated system, that includes a diverse and decentralised network of think tanks – analytical factories churning out a flow of ideas. It has its own numerous and mostly outsourced production facilities, its own "stars" and its own "cannon fodder". This system is much more fine-tuned and sophisticated than the coercive repressive bloc, which is not surprising; until recently, it played a key role in stabilizing the regime.

It was this powerful state-controlled information flow that allowed the regime to keep a weak and limited alternative information stream nearby on the reservation, the noise of which was almost inaudible to the masses, since it was drowned out by the roar of the main flow. At the same time, while allowing glasnost to play around in the information sandpit, the regime kept strict control over the doses of information it permitted in the "market-place", verifying how much was allowed as if it were using a chemist's scales. This means that it has to have indirect control over the opposition media, and this control has been steadily increasing. Any attempt to break out of the "sandpit" led to rows and the opposition being roughly forced back into line.

But any complicated system is rather brittle. What works on small scale protests starts to shudder and crash on

large ones. With ever increasing political loads on the system, it becomes more and more difficult to generate the flow they need. What's more, the interference created by alternative information currents that are confined to the reservation, is becoming more obvious and more dangerous for the system. As a result, they've had to amend the system and make the dominant flow full-on. This signified the end of the era of truncated, post-modern glasnost and a return to the full and simple Soviet method.

By its very nature, glasnost is very vulnerable. It's a secondary device and is derived from the authorities themselves. Starting in 1999 – that is, throughout the whole period of post-Communist reaction – we've been witnessing the regime's attack on glasnost by limiting the space available to it, both directly and indirectly. All the time there was a genuine threat of a complete clampdown on glasnost, and when the regime decided to carry this out, no one and nothing could stop it. It's another matter that this brings unpleasant and irreversible consequences not only for society, but also for the regime itself. It will not only slow it down, but it'll hasten its end.

Well, you might say, to hell with them, let them screw things down as mush as they want! But the important thing is not just when the regime will collapse, but what will take its place. This is why, of course, the defence of any kind of glasnost has a huge significance for the democratic movement.

No matter how illusory truth shut up in a reservation may be, it's better than a lie that's wandering around freely. We must fight for every word of truth; we must do battle against any attempt by the regime to get rid of glasnost once and for all; we have to do all we possibly can to help journalists and publications that heroically continue to stand up to totalitarianism, even if now most of them are doing this from abroad. But this shouldn't be our strategic goal. We shouldn't be aiming to fully restore glasnost, but to create rock-solid constitutional guarantees of freedom of speech.

We need a qualitatively improved leap forward in our policy of openness. I must emphasise that simply turning the clock back now to the time of Vladimir Yakovlev's *Kommersant* newspaper, or Igor Malashenko's NTV

television channel is no longer enough. What suited the young, post-Soviet society wouldn't suit a society that has gained great and varied experience in fighting for democracy. Even if we were to ignore what Putin has sliced off it, Gorbachev's version of glasnost is no longer the ideal that we should be striving for.

We have to go further, to a fully free and open information market, regulated by very precise laws. Only such a market, where there is genuine competition, can guarantee that the right to freedom of speech will be ensured.

Of course, a free market environment would solve some problems and at the same time create new ones that society would then have to find the answers to. But this doesn't change my choice of the strategic direction we must move in: competition and the market should provide society with genuine openness.

It stands to reason that only a properly functioning democratic political system can provide freedom of speech. This means there would have to be genuine separation of powers, a properly functioning justice system and so on, and, most importantly, society's readiness to protect this freedom using armed force if necessary. If freedom of speech is political currency, then it has to be guarded by the whole democratic infrastructure of society. But alongside all of these general guarantees, there are specific measures, including institutional ones, without which there can be no freedom of speech.

Among these specific measures there are economic and political ones. Each of these help to achieve the single main aim: not only to prevent the state from limiting freedom of speech, but also to remove the possibility that the state could begin another such predominant information flow, thanks to which the regime manages to manipulate the population with the help of lies, notwithstanding the "islands of freedom" that would be built into the system. The democratic movement must use the experience of post-Communist neo-totalitarianism to ensure that this mistake is not repeated.

I'll start with the economic measures.

However paradoxical this may seem, the main problem for the Russian press is not censorship, but poverty. The main challenges in the battle for freedom in the last two decades were not fought on the political front, as many think, but on the economic front. There has never been truly economically independent media in post-Communist Russia. Up until the default of 1998 the media retained some freedom of maneouvre – they had the freedom of choice as to "who they depended on", and therein lay their specific freedom. From then on, the process began of the state completely taking over the media, and around 2006 to 2008 it became the sole donor, directly or indirectly. It was at that point that the fiercest and most frightening blows were rained down on the freedom of the press and, consequently, freedom of speech, and they've never been able to recover from this.

Furthermore, in order to give independent media systemic and transparent support and to help them out of difficulty, the government made use of the situation and carried out a large-scale, indirect nationalisation of the independent media by taking the place of the previous owners – often by way of raiding seizures and criminal methods. "Production" was "balanced" between various state-owned companies and financial and industrial groups affiliated with the regime. In time, the state (as the owner or sponsor) took indirect control over all the more or less significant information resources. The picture looks even more depressing when you turn from the giants of the media market to the provincial press, which was already in a dire state.

At first sight, an ideal solution to the problem might appear to be to create normal market conditions for the media, both the traditional media and online, where the state would take on the role of impartial arbiter and regulator. But unfortunately, global practice shows that nowadays this doesn't work anywhere. Increasingly the media is either a subsidized ancillary business, or else exists on sponsorship funds, made on the basis of a variety of motives, including political ones.

Very few countries get by without having the media subsidised by the state; but it'll be a long time before Russia can be counted in their number. Therefore, it's important for us to see how exactly subsidising the media from budgetary funds is organised and how exactly the management of mass media subsidised from budgetary funds is organised. By answering these two questions in

sequence, we will largely solve the problem of neutralising the totalitarian claims of the state to form the dominant information flow described above.

If it's the unavoidable that the media needs to be subsidised from the national budget, then we must ensure that this is transparent, and that neither individual officials nor their corporations benefit from these subsidies. Or, to put it more simply, that they couldn't demand a lot of small services for every "vitamin fed (to the press)". All that the state does in the field of information must be done in the interests of society and under society's control, and not in the interests of the bureaucracy and controlled by the bureaucrats.

Budget funds that are dedicated to support the media must be above board, politically neutral, and allocated on a competitive basis with the participation of the public. Any secret funding of media projects by the state (such as the infamous "troll factories") must be forbidden by law, and we have to put an end to the era of spending on "specialised journalism" coming out of government funds.

If we manage to stabilise the information market and create the conditions for the rise of a variety of free media sources that can exist either on their own resources (in other words, to be independent financially), or to have government support that's transparent and controlled by society, then we can focus on the second side of the problem: ensuring political guarantees of the independence of the media. If we don't, in addition to the state making a slave of the media, it'll directly invade the information space, actively abusing its position and its resources, perhaps less financially than administratively.

If we think about it, we have a limited number of tools at our disposal to do battle against state propaganda without limiting freedom of speech in Russia. In reality, the state plays a dual role in the media market: as a regulator that sets the rules of the game, and as a player itself. What we want from the state as a regulator is obvious: ensuring a fair competitive environment and guaranteeing freedom of speech for everyone. But what do we want from the state as a player? This is a rather more difficult one to answer. As the founder of various elements of the media, the state automatically has a great opportunity to influence their policies. But the

state is a particular type of owner. In theory, we are the owners, because the state is spending not its own money, but every citizen’s money. So what should happen?

Countries with a developed democratic system found the answer to this a long time ago. Information resources that have been created by the state or with the state’s help are entrusted to be managed by representatives of civil society. Trusts or social bodies are in charge of state television and other information sources affiliated to the state. These are directly made up of representatives of civil society. By law, the state cannot influence their membership, and in practice such a possibility is completely ruled out. The procedure for creating these bodies is carried out as transparently as possible, which ensures that their composition is independent of the authorities and respected by society. Any violations, conspiracy or pressure being applied is considered to be a criminal act. The activities of these institutions are regulated by special statutes (rules), which exclude the possibility of legally turning these resources into tools for manipulating public opinion in the interests of certain groups or individuals.

And the last point; last, that is, in order, but not in terms of its significance. Freedom of speech and openness were, and remain, the most important measurement of democracy: they are the cloth that binds society together. Protecting them from attack by any kind of watchdog, whoever that might be, is the most important task of the democratic movement. But freedom of speech can also be subtly used by those whose goal is the destruction of all freedom. It’s very tempting not to allow them this freedom.

The subtlety of freedom of speech lies in the fact that in this battle it’s easier than anywhere else to throw the baby out with the bathwater. It’s possible to organise such a fight against state propaganda or some other evil that people won’t consider it sufficient, and instead of appalling propaganda, you’ll see even more appalling counter-propaganda. However awful it may seem, we have to admit that any word has the right to be free. We have to be careful with any attempt to limit what can and what cannot be said, written, shown, or broadcast. If you want to ban any single word at all, it could soon turn out to your great surprise that you’ve forbidden the use of a whole dictionary.

My personal position on this is that if there's any doubt at all, then rather like the principle that the law is on the side of the accused, we should come down in favour of freedom of speech. It's better that someone should be allowed to say something disgusting than someone should be denied the opportunity to learn something important and essential. The priority that freedom should come before any restrictive measures is the main principle that should be adhered to so as not to stray from the course.

I remain convinced that, for example, the incredibly boring ***Mein Kampf***, full as it is of hatred for mankind, and the fake ***Protocols of the Elders of Zion***, just like the secret clauses to the agreement between Hitler and Stalin, should be available to anyone who's interested in reading them, and should not become some sort of secret knowledge.

It can be very difficult to carry this out in practice, even psychologically. But we have to learn this and other than simply banning it, find alternative methods of suppressing the appearance of extremism in all its manifestations.

We have to learn to live in a world where we exist alongside things that we find unacceptable. The most important thing is that that world is genuinely stable and comfortable.

Chapter 19. The Constitutional Choice: a Parliamentary Republic or a Presidential One?

Arguments about whether there should be a presidential or a parliamentary republic in Russia continually flare up and die down in the country's political discussions. From a purely utilitarian point of view, this doesn't seem out of place, and rather reminds one about dividing up the skin of a bear that isn't dead yet. A lot of people say, "let's first work out the democratic contents that we can dress up in an acceptable political format, then we'll talk". That's all well and good, but there's one small problem: the political content has grown up alongside the political format. In fact, it's grown up with it so strongly that if we don't get rid of the political format around it then we won't be able to fill it with any other content.

So the question of how Russia's political format will look in the future is neither speculative nor premature. The answer to this is a kind of political litmus test, illustrating a serious intention to break the Russian tradition of autocracy and the preparedness to carry this through to the end, and not simply swop one type of autocracy for another, and even less, one tsar for another. This is not a question of the constitutional structure, but of political philosophy, and thus it is a deeply ideological question. Perhaps this is why it has to be settled before anything else can be.

Indeed, the constitutional and legal significance of the political format in Russia has been somewhat exaggerated. In all seriousness, you can't simply argue that a parliamentary republic is more democratic than a presidential one or vice-versa. Across the world experience shows that within both presidential and parliamentary models an acceptable format can be created for free representation of the people with a built-in and effective separation of powers. At the same time, any political format can be cut down to fit any authoritarian or even totalitarian system. It's worth reminding ourselves that, formally, the USSR was a parliamentary republic. It's more important to integrate all executive power, including the president, into a system of the division and balance of power. So what's the issue here?

The issue is Russia's specific situation – the peculiarities of its political history, culture and traditions. People frequently talk automatically about Russia as a presidential republic. That is, to say the least, a massive exaggeration. Not only is Russia not presidential (despite it having a president), but in the exact meaning of the term it's not even a republic. Over the last hundred years, no ruler of the Russian state has come to power through free and fair and definitely democratic elections. (Even Boris Yeltsin's victory in June 1991 was achieved thanks to regional elections within the Soviet empire.)

The history of twentieth century Russia is rather like the history of Rome in the era of the "soldier emperors" – in most cases, the irremovable dictators either ruled the country until their death, or were overthrown by a coup. Sometimes these went together. In the same way, autocracy was and is to this day the only natural political format for Russia. To be more precise, it's the format and the contents all at the same time. And, as the

first “red tsar”, Lenin, wrote, this is an objective fact, handed down to us through the generations. How we react to this fact is the main question for the future of Russia and the main political watershed.

The question is this: are we prepared ruthlessly to break this long-established Russian tradition of autocracy, or, despite all of the democratic slogans, in the depths of our souls do we wish still to search for a good tsar who will grant Russia freedom – however paradoxical that may seem? If we choose a presidential model, then there is far more likelihood in the future that the autocratic instincts will rise to the surface of Russia’s political culture once again and give the authorities much greater scope to move away from democratic methods than would a parliamentary model.

This is the main – indeed, the single – reason why I consider that a parliamentary republic is the preferred option for the Russia of my dreams. We have messed around too much by experimenting with personalised models of power, which is why today we need to boldly cut right to the bone. However many times we’ve played with the Lego bricks of the Russian political system, we’ve always ended up with the same result. It’s like the old joke about the worker stealing all sorts of spare parts from the factory. Whenever he got them home and started putting them together, he always ended up with a Kalashnikov rifle. Similarly, however many presidents of Russia you try to put together from various constitutional bits and pieces, you’ll always end up with a tsar.

Even though a presidential republic is usually considered to be the opposite of a parliamentary republic, considering the very many formats that you can find of both presidential and parliamentary systems, understanding the subtle differences between them is not so easy. The key question ultimately is the depth of the separation of powers and the exact way in which this is laid out. There’s an extra dimension provided for the separation of powers in a parliamentary republic: the division of power within the executive branch of government, into the head of state and the head of the executive.

So in a parliamentary republic we have this extra dimension of democracy. And the division of the executive

can be very varied. The head of state can be a completely nominal figure (such as the British King, as in other constitutional monarchies); or they can play a specific political role as an arbiter (like in modern Italy); or they can carry out an important and even decisive role in power (as in France, which is a very specific type of presidential-parliamentary republic). There are no general rules or set standards in this issue.

The choice of a specific type of parliamentary republic is the key question in creating a reliable constitutional structure. To a large extent, forming an efficient model demonstrates great skill in constitutional creativity. All the successful working models of democracy have come about as a result of a creative instinct and a deep understanding of the peculiarities of a national culture.

The reality is that societies show much more clearly defined individuality than do individuals. Nevertheless, there are certain principles that can be used in any circumstances to create models that work.

One of the basic principles for building a parliamentary republic is that there's a relationship between parliament and the government. Whatever different types of parliamentary republic there might be, one factor is always a constant: both the chairman of the government and the whole government are beholden to parliament, which appoints them and can get rid of them.

Why is this important in Russia specifically? Because parliament's shares will immediately rise on the political market. The same shares that until today have been classified as worthless on the Russian institutional exchange. They were bought up only by "bears", playing for a fall. If parliament becomes the only body that can appoint and fire the government, then the hour of the "bull" will come to Russia. And at that point not only will parliament's shares rise, but all those of the democratic cluster linked to it.

If parliament occupies the central institutional place in Russia's political system, then the value of a member's seat will also rise, leading to the same across the whole electoral procedure.

This would also mean that holding elections for candidates based solely on their personal appeal, as usually happens with Russia's presidential election, will become much more difficult. Along with this, the value of regional representation in both houses will also rise sharply, because the quantity and quality will be directly related to satisfying the daily needs of the local population. In other words, the system of federal relations will have true significance, instead of the current situation, whereby in the strictly centralised, unitary state it's a mere bauble. In its turn, this will pull up with it the compensatory development of local self-government, with the aim of not allowing Russia to return to feudalism and the appearance of individual principalities.

So the switch to a parliamentary republic is the key element that can pull along with it the whole chain of democratic events.

Naturally, the change to a system of parliamentary democracy from autocracy and the strongly centralised personal system of government that's existed in Russia for centuries, will be a political shock. But it's an unavoidable and essential shock.

The move to a parliamentary republic is the only real possibility to relieve the political system in Russia, and this is why – and for no other reason – this demonstrates its superiority over a presidential republic.

"That's all well and good," the opponents of a parliamentary republic usually reply, "but do we have the right to carry out such experiments in Russia? It's a massive country with a very specific way of life, and people are used to the idea that power is personalised. People won't understand or value your well-intentioned plans, they will neither be able to take advantage of this parliamentary democracy, nor would they want to, and the whole thing will collapse into anarchy and chaos. Added to this, Russia is still an empire, a huge melting pot, in which representatives of the most varied nationalities and confessions are mixed together, and they've never been citizens of a nation state. If you take out the figure of the ruler who's the very personification of power (however they're called), the country will break into pieces!"

How do you answer that one? These are not risks that have been simply dreamt up. They exist. The problem is that they don't grow any less when we switch from one personal regime to another. If we don't alter the way Russian statehood develops, then every subsequent regime, however much it promises, will in a few years or even months inevitably become an autocracy. And each autocracy will be worse than the previous one; we can have no doubt about that. And in the end what happens is exactly what the opponents of parliamentary democracy are afraid of: the country will fall apart. But by then there'll be no hope of saving it and it'll be forever. At least a parliamentary republic would give us the chance to fight.

All of this comes down not so much to a practical political choice so much as an ideological one. Do you think that an attempt to break the personalised model of governance in Russia creates unacceptable risks? If you do, then you're absolutely right.

But then a question arises. What are your essential disagreements with the pro-government forces that hold similar positions? Of course, in order to save Russia, they propose preserving "cave absolutism", while you hope to rule for a long time with the help of "enlightened absolutism". But 500 years of Russian absolutism have taught us that "the grey ones" are always followed by "the black ones".

The personal model is like a political drug for Russia. No one denies that the country firmly adopted this a long time ago, way before Putin came along. Coming off such a drug could break society; and it's not impossible that the process could even lead to life-threatening situations. But does this mean that we should therefore simply accept this political dependency and not try to turn away from the needle of autocracy?

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At this point in my first draft I had written a number of paragraphs that I later had to delete. I wrote them long before "Tereshkova's amendment" was added to the Constitution. I admit that I wrongly assumed that there would be a rather higher intellectual level among the people (or person) who were examining the options for such a change; but I'm ready to reassess the talents of my opponents.

The authorities chose to go down the most primitive, direct and blunt route.

Rather than reforming the Constitution, we saw its destruction, so that Putin could continue in the post of president. The result of this has been war, which has sparked the discussion again, with renewed vigour. Russia has two models of sustainable development: the static equilibrium model (autocracy), and the dynamic balance model (the federal one). Of course, Russia is under no obligation to develop. The alternative to sustainable development is stagnation and collapse. However, I believe that the stagnation and collapse of Russia that, understandably, those who are fighting against Russian aggression might wish for, could cause a drastic imbalance in the system of international relations, and create in the heart of Eurasia a group of aggressive and poorly-run (even out of control) bankrupt states armed with nuclear weapons. The genuine and desired choice for reliable players on the international stage is not one between the collapse of Russia or its continued existence, but one between the autocratic (static) and parliamentary (dynamic) models of its sustainable development.

Another version of autocracy seems to be the simplest solution for many, including opponents of the Putin regime; but in reality this is a very unreliable option. A regime that is static and stable thanks to tough centralisation and where the authorities have unlimited power sooner or later will lead to trouble in society. Such a system will be able to extinguish this only by creating distractions in the outside world. Even without this, war is a fundamental component of autocracy, upon which everything else is constructed. And autocratic regimes, including the Bolshevik one, are unstable in the long term (their apparent stability is only relative). They are built on the constant search for a consensus among the elite through democratic centralism. This has a significant vulnerability: as the number of participants in the process increases, the number of connections between them increases geometrically. And the single point – the head of the system – who should take the final decisions becomes no longer capable of acknowledging or taking into account all of these various opinions. As a way of solving this problem, the centre turns to unification – totalitarianism – which once again sets in motion a whole complex of historical problems.

In any mid-term perspective, Russia's system of autocracy has a clearly defined militaristic profile. This is almost completely independent of the ideology it starts out with or the personality of the national leader. As the system matures, the ideology takes on a radically nationalistic appearance and the leader becomes a military ruler. If the West were to prefer an autocratic (static) civilisation for Russia, it would be choosing an inevitable recurrence of the crisis with the unavoidable consequence of aggression directed against the West itself. Each subsequent crisis would be greater than the previous one, and overcoming it would lead to the threat of sliding into an uncontrollable nuclear conflict. We'd be falling into an absurd endless historic downward spiral, where each subsequent version of Russia was worse than its predecessor.

The alternative to an autocratic, static, civilisation could be dynamic, federal, parliamentary stability. What I am proposing would create a dynamic political balance between a limited number of subjects of the new federation (up to 20), with the central authorities playing the role of arbiter and director. The difference between the autocratic and federal models for stabilisation lies in the mechanism for solving conflicts. In the autocratic model, all internal conflicts would be dealt with by the central authorities crushing them using illegal political violence, and the more this is detached from society, the more effective it would be. On the other hand, in the federal model all internal conflicts would be decided by a constant search for innumerable temporary compromises within the confines of a specially-created legal and political framework. In this instance, the central authorities could *de facto* be even stronger than in autocracy; but this strength would be demonstrated by the authorities' ability to control the framework, not control the players within the framework.

The problem with the federal model is that it's complicated and fluid. It's a model of constant conflict that's laid in the foundation of the political system as part of its terms of reference. There's just one advantage of the federal system over the autocratic one: internal disturbances don't accumulate, but are constantly resolved swiftly within the permanent struggle of the elites. As a result, there's no need for external aggression as the only possible solution for the long-term stability of the system. However, to ensure that the uninterrupted resolution of the disagreements that are continuously emerging among the elite are not put down by

the fear of repression, the mechanism of a rigid super-presidential republic with a shift in the balance of power towards a non-executive central government is not suitable. If this were so, there will always be the temptation to return to freezing conflicts "according to concepts" and stabilizing the system in the habitual way. All it would take would be for there to be one strong ruler and the system would inevitably slip back into the old rut. I believe that the federal system can work exclusively in the format of a parliamentary republic; in other words, as a federal parliamentary republic. The parliamentary system of government answers two demands in the best possible way: it allows you quickly to resolve regional conflicts among the elite, and doesn't allow the system easily to slip back into the old rut.

The depth of the West's understanding of Russia's problems, and the West's position on this, will play a huge role in the success or failure of the project for a new Russia. The West must choose between an instinctive, superficial approach, and a rational, considered one. Instinctively it's easier for the West either to dream of the collapse of Russia (giving no thought to the consequent global risks that would bring), or to try to establish an autocracy with which it can have good relations (not taking into account the inevitability that these good relations would inevitably turn sour).

The instinctive reaction is convenient because it doesn't rely on any participation on the part of the West. It gives Russia the opportunity to continue to stew in its own juice. The rational approach demands efforts from the West, similar to those that the USA took after the Second World War to assist the rebuilding of the political process in Europe. In other words, it means the West being engaged both politically and ideologically. In this the West must also avoid the temptation in the transitional period to split Russia up into separate parts, thus weakening the central authorities' ability to act as a political arbiter.

Turning Russia into a stable federation is a long-term historical project, and in the first place it's in the West's interests. This is not a duty to Russia, but a rational decision, that would make the world order safer and more predictable for a significant period in the future.

Chapter 20. The Legal Choice: the Dictatorship of the Law or a State Based on the Rule of Law?

If you were to carry out an opinion poll and ask passers-by on the street what they think a state governed by the rule of law is, the vast majority would answer: "it's a state where people obey the law". This is close to the truth, but it's not true! If it were so, the ideal example of a state governed by the rule of law would be the Third Reich. Whatever else, that was a state where the laws were obeyed, and the commandant of a concentration camp who was caught taking a bribe could easily end up as an inmate, although there were cases where corrupt officials were simply transferred to other duties. Anyway, it's not so much the observance of the law, as it is the nature of the laws themselves.

A state governed by the rule of law is a state where the laws are observed according to certain criteria. What are these criteria? And why is this so important?

From time immemorial, those in power have clothed their will in the form of laws, and demanded that the population obeyed these laws; the people had to bow to the will of the authorities. This is the kind of archaic understanding of what is "lawful" that still dominates in Russia. With their class approach to what was "just", Lenin and the Bolsheviks didn't drift far from this archaic understanding. "The dictatorship of the law", that they so love to talk about in the Kremlin, is the dictatorship of the unbridled wild will of one clan that has usurped power and has had unchallenged control over the Kremlin for more than two decades.

The law and the dictatorship that the Kremlin praises so highly exists for one reason only: to try to give an apparent legitimacy to naked despotism. One of the most unpleasant consequences of such a situation is the inability of the system to adapt to any constructive evolution. Violence simply leads to more violence. And hoping that unjust laws will over time develop naturally into just laws is simply a utopian dream.

Specifically, one of the main reasons why mankind has sought a way of escaping from unjust laws is the desire to avoid revolution as the only way to achieve changes in society.

All of those who have genuinely thought deeply about revolution have understood that it's a difficult but unavoidable price that society has to pay to history in order to achieve progress. This price became unavoidable specifically because the laws that were in operation were designed in such a way as to prevent any change, in practice or in theory.

It's from here that the attitude has developed that revolution is a necessary evil. Loving a revolution and wishing for it to happen is as foreign to our nature as it would be to wish pain on ourselves and those around us. (There are, of course, those who do like this and receive pleasure from becoming involved in the chaos of revolution.) But in a hopeless situation, the majority of the population will see revolution simply as a lesser evil.

If life under the old regime becomes intolerable, if all of the internal contradictions associated with this regime are brought together in one unbreakable mess, if all the legal routes point simply to a continuation of this despotism, then inevitably thoughts turn to the sword that can cut the Gordian Knot. This is so inevitable that it isn't worth devoting a great deal of attention to it.

A revolution happening in Russia is simply a question of when and where. A little less obvious is the question of what it will look like. But what is certainly worth considering is what measures should be taken that could help Russia in the long run to tear itself out of its historical vicious circle, where a revolution begins after every shock. The only way to do this is to move from having unjust laws to having just laws.

There seems to be an easy answer to every question: we have to make the laws constitutional. But this is too simple.

Firstly, purely formally all of the current laws appear on the surface to be in line with the Constitution. You won't find it written in the preamble or the text of any law, even the most disgraceful, that it was passed in opposition to the spirit or letter of the Constitution.

Secondly, what the spirit of the Constitution is, is something that everyone in Russia understands in their own way; and sometimes this is rather unique.

Finally, only judges can have an opinion about the constitutionality of laws in Russia…and we all know who the judges are in Russia. In the overwhelming majority of cases, the unconstitutionality of laws is covered over by law enforcement practice; but the paradox is that the practice itself has long ago become part of the law. This is indirectly confirmed by the decisions of the Constitutional Court, which is often forced to speak out about laws in the specific way that they're given by law enforcement practice. So trying to change this practice without changing the laws just won't work.

So simple solutions don't work. We have to dig much deeper, until we get to those factors that make laws just, and not rely on the Constitution, which is useless for this task. Strictly speaking, there are two such circumstances: laws become legal due to a certain procedure for their adoption, and due to their compliance with certain principles.

Separately, each of these conditions is insufficient. Both the procedure and the contents are important here. In short, a law can be considered just if it's passed by the only legitimate legal body: a genuine parliament that's truly independent from other branches of government, and has been elected according to a democratic electoral law.

The reason for this is clear. A just law should be an expression of the consolidated will of the whole of civil society, and not that of the will of a single ruler, nor of a clan or class group that has seized power. It's this consolidated will that legitimises the obligatory nature of laws, and is the basis for the authorities to demand its strict observance by all.

Parliament is the melting pot in which the political will of civil society becomes the text of the law.

If we look more closely at the work of parliament, we see that as well as the consolidation of the political will of various sections of civil society, each of which has its own specific interests, it also has another function.

Parliament brings together the simple view with the qualified – expert – view, on any question that's become a topic of discussion in society.

This is why it's so important that parliament is independent both from the executive and from the society that's elected it (for the period of its term, of course, and not permanently).

In parliament the political will of the ordinary voter is passed through the sieve of expert analysis. And the other way round: the opinions of the leading experts are subjected to the scrutiny of the highest political expertise.

It is vital to maintain this balance. What we've seen in the past few years is that the expert opinion that the government has called upon has overruled the view of civil society. As a result, laws have simply stopped operating, or are just not accepted by society.

Incidentally, the dictatorship of society would lead to the same result, but from the opposite side: this would lead to the breakdown of politics.

The procedure for passing just laws is extremely complicated, which is why it's so important. There are an awful lot of minute details involved in it, many of which seem to be dry and formal; yet none of them can be neglected. This system has built up over centuries, even thousands of years, and has absorbed international political experience. And it's particular for every culture and for every specific historic situation.

Russia will have to carefully comprehend and master this experience of parliamentaryism. And not just so as to blindly imitate or simplify it, but in order to develop a suitable system on the basis of this experience. When it operates normally it will allow for the adoption of just laws.

It's essential to add that even the best format cannot alter the need for the correct content. Even the optimum parliament, which represents the political will of civil society and where there's the perfect balance of social and expert opinion, is no guarantee that its laws will be

just (although without the parliament they certainly won't be just). These laws must meet certain criteria; that is, they should be built on certain principles that are based neither on time nor territory.

These principles are literally political axioms, that are accepted *a priori* by liberal democracy, like a faith.

Paradoxically, it doesn't matter whether they're written in the Constitution, carved in granite, or exist merely in the minds of citizens. There are countries that don't have a written constitution but in which these principles are closely adhered to. Yet there are other countries that have detailed constitutions and have these principles written down for every eventuality of life, yet none of them are kept. What matters is not what's written or where it's written, but what people consider to be vital.

In my view, one of these basic principles is the idea of freedom. This isn't surprising. After all, in its own way the law is a measure of freedom. This concept of the law developed as a result of the marriage of the traditions of Western antiquity (from the Greeks and the Romans), and from Christianity. We can extend this to say that herein lies the basis of Europeanism and the modern age.

If we consider our ability to accept such a concept of the law and of just laws we can judge whether Russia is ready to be a European country. All other indicators are less relevant or indicative.

In order to understand whether a particular law is just or not, it must be examined under this political microscope. And whatever formal relationship or coincidence of language there may be with any other law, this is not proof of whether or not a law is just. It's especially important to stress this, bearing in mind the Kremlin's habit of pointing to international practice and covering up its despotism by the decisions of the Constitutional Court, which it's made impotent.

Indeed, laws are passed about gatherings, about extremism, about showing disrespect to the authorities or about mass unrest, on pre-trial agreements with the investigators, on summary proceedings in criminal cases and so forth. We

constantly hear how in Russia everything's the same "over there" as it is "here"; it's even far better "here".

Yes, if we're talking about the way laws are drawn up then we have a lot in common. But here's the rub: the same way of doing things works differently in different political situations and produces different results. This proves just one thing: comparing the way systems work doesn't work. We have to look more closely at the details.

In each and every case we have to consider the actual economic and socio-political situation, and ask whether a particular law defends the rights and freedoms of the individual or not.

And it's not as easy to do this as many seem to think. The principle of freedom is often contrary to other principles and values that are guaranteed by the Constitution. For example, freedom of procession and assembly clearly restrict the rights of those who have no intention of processing or assembling and who just want to have a quiet and tasty meal in a cafe on the same boulevard. This is a genuine contradiction. So what can we do?

We could decide in favour of those who are taking part in the procession, who are clearly in the minority; or we could rule in favour of those who want to relax in a normal manner; they're clearly the majority. The Russian authorities decide this in a contradictory fashion, of course, to their own advantage, but in doing so support the majority, who always want to eat. Thus the laws on gatherings in Russia are really just like those in Europe; but in reality they operate in the mythical land of Asiope.

This is because a conflict shouldn't be decided in favour simply of the majority or the minority, but in favour of freedom as a stand-alone value. In this particular case, the question should be decided in such a way that the freedom of political action is defended.

It is only a law that has this as its basis that can be considered just.

It’s interesting to note that in the years that Putin’s been in power, Russia has undoubtedly distanced itself from Europe and moved closer to Asiope. Some adherents of the dictatorship of the law have even gone so far as to propose revising the hierarchy of the branches of legislation that have been generally accepted since Soviet times, arguing that at the top of the pyramid we should have not constitutional, but criminal law. This, of course, is another loyalist stupidity, but at the same time it is very indicative.

These are the people who say “the law” and mean “autocracy”. And when they talk about “autocracy” they have in mind “the law”.

Why have I spent so much time on this apparently abstract and deeply philosophical question? Because it’s fundamental. There are certain things that you don’t need to prove to anyone. Among those who are opposed to the regime there is agreement that the current law enforcement and judicial system are anti-constitutional and in need of deep revolutionary change. There have been many suggestions as to how this could be done, and most of them aren’t meaningless and are very useful.

Multi-page, detailed reports and brilliant short essays have been written that are full of specific suggestions and complete reform projects. The general outlines are clear. The competence of jury trials should be expanded; the independence of the courts strengthened; the FSB should be transformed from a “second government” into a body focused on combating terrorism and espionage; in general the special services should be disaggregated and diversified; there should be a radical change in the role of the prosecutor’s office; and much more besides. But all of these suggestions will be useless unless the main revolution takes place: inside people’s heads. Nothing will change if people don’t understand the essence of what the concept of just laws really is.

Any structure can be shortened, any mechanism can be perverted, any guarantee can be circumvented if there’s no agreement on the main principle: the criterion by which the success or failure of reforms is judged. And here there is just one criterion: freedom. It is the priority of freedom that overturns the unjust law and accepts the just law; and overturns the dictatorship of the law, that’s dangerous for society (and acts merely as

a fig leaf for a new autocracy), and makes the state governed by the rule of law.

Chapter 21. The Moral Choice: Justice or Mercy?

Max Weber once noted that if you scratch the most rational theory you'll find that it's based on some totally irrational idea that we accept on faith. This idea brings together everything that we regard as completely rational and logical.

It's also the case that at the root of any political programme lies some kind of moral imperative that we vote for not with our minds but with our hearts. This voting with the heart is more important than voting using your intellect. In most cases, logical mistakes can be corrected; but moral errors are usually fatal.

It's generally accepted that the fundamental moral imperative in politics is justice. Society reacts angrily to any violation of the balance of justice, and if the pendulum swings too far then the balance may be restored by means of a revolution. Yet if you ask the average person what's the essence of justice, very few can give you an answer. However, ask someone whether they think that Russia is today run "fairly", then the vast majority – including many supporters of the regime – will answer with a categorical "no".

In a nutshell, this is the regime's main problem. On the moral level, it's rejected by the majority of those who usually ignore politics. The restoration of justice can be delayed, but it can't be avoided. Sooner or later, this secret political lever will start to operate and turn the next page of history.

You'd think that there would be nothing simpler then bringing morality back into politics: all you have to do is restore justice. But when you look closely at justice, nothing is as simple as it might have seemed.

First of all, each person has their own idea of what justice means, and it's very difficult to find a definition of what everyone would consider as "justice". Secondly, and more importantly, the price of restoring the balance of justice frequently seems exorbitant. We

must never forget that the Bolshevik Revolution took place on the crest of a wave of a search by the Russian people for justice, and its sworn aim was specifically the creation of the most just society in the world. But what it ended up as was in an even more unjust society, that lasted for decades.

So the search for justice must itself be done in a balanced way. We have to find a balance for the balance, so as not to turn history into an hour glass, using a revolution to turn it over from time to time. Every time that we have the intention to "destroy the world to its foundations by violence, then build our new world", we are simply – like in the joke quoted above – "making our own Kalashnikov rifle", that we use over and over again to destroy both Russian civil society and the green shoots of a state governed by the rule of law.

So that we don't repeat this, we must put spontaneous searches for justice inside a framework. I think that this framework can be constructed in only one way: by combining it with a moral principle that's even deeper and more universal than justice.

For me, this principle is mercy.

Mercy is the ability to empathise and to forgive; it's the second level of justice. If we measure politics and the law by justice, then we use mercy to measure justice itself, by not allowing it to turn into its opposite.

The irony of history is that most promises to build a more just world usually end up with the building of a "just" concentration camp. Justice for some quickly turns dialectically into harsh injustice for others. Each time, the restoration of justice becomes an expensive project, and those seeking it end up paying for it, as do subsequent generations.

If we want to avoid repeating this history, we have to acknowledge that naked justice and naked truth are never as attractive as we might wish them to be. It's only when we apply mercy that we have the opportunity to turn our clever solutions into wise ones. These may seem to be mere words. They are not. They are an attempt to put forward an alternative point of reference for considering

and solving the most important practical questions of our political life.

What direct consequences could there be in the discussion on Russia's future if we place justice, proven by mercy, at the forefront? There are quite a few.

Firstly, the clear division between "us" and "them" disappears. "We are the holy ones, they are the fiends from hell." If we understand not only ourselves but others, too, we cannot draw such a line.

We have all, to some extent or another, been responsible for what has happened "with our Motherland and ourselves". Some because they have taken part in events, others because they've failed to take part in events. No one is completely right, and no one is completely guilty. There is no "Great Wall of China" in the issue of responsibility between the beneficiaries of the regime and its victims.

From the point of view of revolutionary justice there are two camps: we've been made to suffer, now it's your turn. From the point of view of mercy, there is one society, one nation, one people. Yes, they're sick. They're suffering from low morale and cultural degradation. But to a greater or lesser degree this affects everyone. There are very few nowadays who can put themselves in the position of being the one without sin who can cast the first stone.

Secondly – and this follows on from the first point – before we can demand change from others we have to be prepared to change ourselves. Each of us has inside us some poison that we have to squeeze out of ourselves.

If society's energy is all focussed solely on searching for and punishing "the guilty", while we ourselves remain unchanged, then nothing good will come out of this battle for justice. It's only if we're prepared to be more honest with ourselves and more tolerant towards those who are different from us, that we can avoid falling into yet another social extremism, simply replacing one lot of satraps and thieves with another lot.

A third point, developing this idea further, history shows that forgiveness can sometimes be cheaper than punishment. If given free rein, the natural and just desire for revenge turns into an all-engulfing fire, destroying not only those on whom we seek revenge, but ourselves, too. Revenge, including social and political revenge, should never become the dominant idea in society, its all-consuming passion. If it does, you will never escape trouble. When we're blaming and scourging the regime, which is considered an essential element of cleaning it out, we must nevertheless remember that forgiveness is more important than punishment, and that everyone has the right to repentance. You'll never build a new society on bitterness and revenge.

Fourthly, we have to distinguish between the "first disciples" and those who "lived like everyone else". Their role has not been identical, and thus their fate should be different. For a quarter of a century a corrupting, amoral matrix has been developing in society's behaviour. In this matrix, good and evil, black and white, have swopped places. Tens of millions of people were drawn into this matrix and lived according to its rules. Many of these were totally unaware that they were participating in the crimes of the regime; many did, but acted not on their own initiative.

However, there were "first disciples"; those who created and nurtured this matrix. They corrupted the nation, developed the mafia state, and became its main beneficiaries. There should be a different approach to them.

Finally: we must be aware that although remaking society is harder than shooting those responsible, remaking is what we must do, convincing people to live differently, playing by the new rules.

We can't bring down from the Moon a different race and swop those we have for "ideal citizens". Nearly all of our officials are corrupt; not because they were born to be such monsters, but because in the matrix that developed there was no other way to operate. If you didn't steal, you wouldn't survive. And we can't simply sack all of our officials in one day. The ranks of those who could do their work are very thin. If anyone were to try to do this the country would become ungovernable in an instant.

Incidentally, Lenin understood this very quickly, when within 18 months Communist Russia collapsed into ruin and starvation. Even if we could sack all the officials and put in their places new and fresh people, we would very quickly see that these new people would rob the people worse than their former "masters". We've seen this in Russia more than once. Our task has to be not to sack and ostracise, but to show people how to work in a different way. And that's much more difficult.

This all encourages me to give my thoughts on two of the most important topics in the social discussion in recent years: purges and revolution.

Purges. There is a partially justified view that the compromises of the revolution carried out by Mikhail Gorbachev and Boris Yeltsin, especially as regards the ban on the activities of the Communist Party and the purge of members of the USSR KGB, played a significant role in the history of post-Communist Russia and led us to where we are now. This seems entirely plausible, considering the role that former members of the KGB played at the start of the twenty-first century in decisively restoring the Soviet regime, and the opportunistic role that the self-appointed heirs of the Communist Party are playing today, rolling back the years to "Orthodox Stalinism" and the "populism of the Black Hundreds".

Is there a lesson to be learnt from this for the future? When the regime collapses (and sooner or later it will collapse; it's just a question of time), should we bring down a sword of punishment on all law enforcement officers, judges, prosecutors and so on? Should we finally ban the Communists, and at the same time remove the right to work in government service from members of United Russia, A Just Russia, followers of the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia, and the activists of the All-Russian National Front?

It looks tempting. But maybe a warning sign is that when they did something similar in Ukraine and Georgia it didn't really help.

- For the reasons given above ("you can't shoot them all"), there'd be no one left to do the work;

- There’s no guarantee that those who take their places would be much better;

- Many of those who work in the power structures these days carry out their roles honestly and, at great risk to their lives, fight against terrorism and criminals.

It’s true that our judges are all corrupt and bought out by lawlessness. But perhaps it’s not so much the fault of the judges as of those who’ve interfered with their work? If we remove the Kremlin gang, if you conduct a serious debrief, if you give professional people the chance to be both people and professionals… No, of course it’s much better to start afresh, with a new page; but where are we going to find this new page? Yes, and millions of our fellow citizens are not just dust…of course, you could just wipe them away and lo! There’s Stalin’s pockmarked mug staring back at you from the mirror…

I’m against a total purge. It’s never really been completely successful anywhere. The Bolsheviks went further with this than anyone else. They effectively carried out a purge using the meat-grinder of the great terror in 1937, but they still didn’t achieve what they’d set out to do.

As a rule, approaching everything with one and the same template rarely produces a good result. Of course, we have to conduct a thorough and large-scale investigation of the crimes of the regime and identify the key beneficiaries of the mafia state, the real culprits of the escalation of repression and despotism. These people must be judged and punished publicly and under due legal process (with all legal guarantees being observed; those very guarantees that they denied others), even if society then decides to grant them amnesty.

As for those who are less responsible for what the regime has done, they can be dealt with using conditional measures.

A different matter is the “institutional purge”, that should be carried out as strictly and consistently as possible. The point is not that KGB officers weren’t purged, but that the KGB itself was set up as a totally repressive institution that carried out the role of a second (sometimes the first) government. Such a purge is not a witch hunt, but a ruthless thinning out of a dense forest, which turns people into witches and goblins.

Things usually happen the other way round with us. In the battle for justice we seem ready to shoot the wild bird, but not touch the reservation that produced it. The solution, that has to be real, long-term, and not just temporary, is not one of settling scores, nor about purges, but in profound institutional reforms. We won't get by without purges, but they should be carried out with the same degree of mercy that will lessen the desire to seek revenge.

Revolution. Everything is leading to the idea that yet another revolution in Russia is inevitable. The regime is stuck in a rut of repression, from which it wouldn't be easy to extract itself even if it wanted to; and it has no desire to do this. It has just one desire: to hold onto power at any price. The key word here is "any". This sense of an impending revolution is gradually creeping into every layer of society, affecting even those who are loyal to the regime and have gained the most from it. What can we say about those who've chosen the path of professional revolutionaries…

The authorities have done so much to turn revolution into a scarecrow that they're now reaping the opposite reaction. For many people, a revolution – and the bigger, the better – appears to be the most desirable and most positive solution to the growing crisis.

Is the revolution as good as our imagination makes it out to be? Far from it. A revolution always has its very dark, hidden side. It's counter-intuitive for a person to want a revolution, because it'll be a huge shock for the whole of society. But it's too late to think of that now. Now, it's as necessary as a scalpel is to a surgeon. Given the understanding and the historical necessity we have, and the experience behind us possessed by few nations of the world, we have to do everything in our power to ensure that the revolution does not become the end in itself. We mustn't put an end to despotism and violence by organising a festival of violence and despotism.

Revolutions costs society too much for them to become instruments for settling scores or re-allocating resources. While admiring the revolutions that have taken place in the post-Soviet space, we must remember that their medium-term results turned out to be far from the expectations of those who inspired and created them.

We must never lose sight of the main aim of the revolution: to make society more humane, more tolerant and more free. As well as the political and economic results it brings, the revolution should usher in added moral value, which is why it can't be handed over to the mercy of cynics and political strategists.

The revolution can be for the whole people, who, having passed through it, will be morally cleansed and freed. Despite the cost, such a revolution is good for society. Or the revolution can be for a revolutionary party. It carries out the revolution in the name of the people but in reality it's in its own interests. Such a revolution is worthless – except for the party functionaries.

A revolution isn't needed to destroy the old order. You don't need to be very clever to work that out. A revolution is needed in order to build something new in place of the old order, something based on equal measures of justice and mercy.

If a new order doesn't arise out of this, then the revolution will have failed. Today, in the heat of the struggle, we're often too focused on the negative side of the revolution, on the need to demolish a regime that's hated by many. This is understandable, especially now that this regime has switched to a policy of open mass repression. But if we fail to switch the centre of gravity onto the positive side of the revolution, onto our ideals, onto our dreams about a fair society and state, then we will devalue any victory over the regime and end up even further away from our goal than we were before.

The passion of the fight, the desire to take revenge, the desire to see the ghouls at least nailed to a pillory: all these are understandable and largely justified. This regime has provoked in its opponents feelings of hatred and rejection. But if, as we look into the future, we're ruled by these emotions alone, then we won't go far. Ultimately, the one who wins will be the one who can rise above these emotions and give everyone the chance to take part in creating a new, open Russia.

Conclusion (The Dragon in Custody)

The dragon has gone too far in its war against the people, and therefore all of its heads, however many there are,

should remember that they carry personal responsibility for what has happened and that this price will not be forgotten. At the same time, I wish to address myself to those who entered the Russian Colosseum to watch the battle against the dragon, hoping to applaud the heroes from the safety of the stands. When I was sitting in my prison cell I used to read your articles praising the heroes, and I still read them today. I see in them the desire that someone will slay the dragon for you. I see a terrible disappointment when this doesn't happen.

I became interested enough to ask: do you understand that should your wish come true and someone slays the dragon for you, your disappointment will be even greater?

In order to become a professional dragon-slayer a person must themselves either be a dragon at the outset, or else become a dragon in the process. And then their team will be a typical dragon's team, with the same methods and aims.

And if you think that the hero will fight the dragon and that you'll receive the benefits (freedom and democracy, at least), then you're naıve (if, that is, you expect to receive freedom and democracy, and not simply work as a slave). We already went through this with Boris Yeltsin.

Can the dragon be slain? Of course it can. That's not the issue. The main question is: why? And it's much more difficult to answer that than many people realise.

For me and for many of my fellow citizens, the unbroken thousand-year history of Russia is important. The roots of our common European – and now our Euro-Atlantic – civilisation are important.

It's important for me that we're not aliens in this Western world, but among its creators and defenders. Yes, we lost a great deal when we protected Western civilisation from the Tatar-Mongol horde, from the Asian invasion, and as a result we became different people; but in our culture we didn't become Asian. I don't want to say anything against the ancient and wonderful Asian culture, just that it's not ours. We're closer to William Shakespeare and Miguel de Cervantes than to Hafez or Sun Tzu.

The modern world isn't simply globalisation, communication and cooperation. It's also competition on a new, global level, on the level of world civilisation.

Endless wars and contempt for human life have left us with far too little to suggest that we could afford to

start another, new, separate civilisation that was able to compete.

Of course, there's always a place on the fringes of progress, and the modern world is sufficiently humane and aware not to encroach upon this fringe. There are gentle ways to use those who are too weak to take part in real competition.

But I hate the idea that my country might occupy this space! We're European! We helped build and defend this civilisation and have as much right to our place in it as do the French, the Germans, the British, the Australians, the Canadians or the Americans!

For centuries we've walked side by side, shoulder to shoulder with them, and we know that we need them and they need us. We refuse to listen to stupid and greedy people who want to drive us apart for their own selfish ends.

Yes, we can find a lot of events in history that it would have been better had they not happened, but even our troubles and our wars have been shared. To this day we ***remember*** the 50 million people who died in Europe in the Second World War alone, both friends and enemies… But the 50 million who died in China? We ***know*** about them… Do you feel the difference?

The first working title of this book was ***Gardarika: the Country of Cities***. Why? Because Gardarika was a country from those long-off times when Europe was one. And we will be that again; it's our historic destiny. But having our place at the shared table depends on us. It depends on our talent, our brains, our ability to anticipate the future and achieve those specific goals that will make us, our children and our grandchildren happy.

I'm making my contribution to this work. May whoever is capable of it, do more – and better.