

Russian Legacy

Russian Past, Inherited and
Constructed

Russia: the Country which is Different

- Assumption of difference prevails (since times immemorial)
- Supposed grounds for difference: Orthodox religion, Russian soul, Socialist system, "developed (mature) socialism"
- "Real" grounds for difference: statist tradition, social structures, institutions, ideological heritage

The Impact of History: Tradition

- The Central role of the state, weak society
- Separation from the West until 18th century, syndrome of the belated state
- Tradition of cultural and political opposition towards the West
- Tradition of assuming Russian singularity
- Statism, systemic and ideological

The Impact of History: The Soviet Heritage

- Economic ruin of the late Soviet State
- Dismemberment of the Soviet State and the Soviet Empire along Soviet inner borders
- Collapse of constructed Soviet-centered world-view
- Collapse of the "quoted value" of past achievements, based on future expectations

Constructing a New History

- Soviet period is recognized as historical aberration
- Return of the "glorious pre-1917 past"
- History in new light: who was guilty for 1917?
- Resurrection of slavophil, national bolshevik and Eurasian ideological currents

Stage for the Creation of New History

- Economic ruin of the people
- The discontents of shock therapy
- The association of "democrats" with theft, blasphemy and flagellation
- The rebirth of pre-1917 intellectual world in Russia (reprints etc.)
- The birth of "political history" and "culturology" in universities

The Dilemma of the Stalinist Past

- Stalin as the creator of "real socialism"
- Stalin, the ultimate terrorist
- Stalin, the organizer of Victory
- The difficulty to give unanimous verdict on the Stalinist epoch
- Political importance of the surviving consequences of the Stalinist epoch (Baltic countries, annexations, mentality)

Return of the Imperial Mentality

- Background: economic recovery in the 2000's, military recovery
- Putin's partial rehabilitation of the Stalinist period. New textbooks
- Symbolic level: mix of pre-1917 and communist symbols
- Accent on the military. Parades, memorial days

The Popular Mind

- Distrust of the West and unpopularity of democracy
- Belief in the singularity of Russian history
- Popularity of Putin (and Medvedev).
Unpopularity of Yeltsin
- Popularity of strongmen in Russian history
(Alexander Nevsky, Petr Stolypin and Stalin in the "Imia Rossiia" –project)
- Pride in new Russia

Repercussions of the Past

- Ideological freaks near the commanding heights of politics: Alexander Dugin
- Tendency to produce newspeak and quasi-totalitarian organizations (Sovereign democracy, Institutes for democracy, "anti-extremist" Nashi troops)
- *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* by administrative fiat: the law on misinterpretations of history

How does the new history look like?

- Still early to tell?
- Official level: turn to authoritarianism, guidelines and sanctions
- Scholarly level: independent research goes on
- Textbooks: towards regimentation?
- Popular level: great story of great nation gains popularity. Glorious past before and after 1917
- Stalin figures among the foremost heroes of the nation

New Historical Conscience and Its Consequences

- General acceptance of Russia's "non-western nature" and "specific historical road"
- Readiness to accept specific norms for Russian past and present
- National pride turns the masses against the "defamators of Russia"
- Outright charlatans have considerable popularity (Fomenko and the "New Methodology", Lev Gumilev, A. Dugin)
- Quasi-historical patriotic publications have great popularity