

**Alexander Zapesotsky**

**MODERN TRANSFORMATIONS  
OF THE RUSSIAN SOCIETY  
AND STATE**

**Lecture at Carleton University – the Institute of European,  
Russian and Eurasian Studies (EURUS)  
Ottawa, Canada. September 24, 2013**



**Carleton**  
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In the lecture given at Carleton University (Ottawa, Canada) on September 24, 2013, Dr. A. Zapesotsky, the corresponding member of the Russian Academy of Science and rector of the St. Petersburg University of Humanities and Social Sciences (St. Petersburg, Russia) analyzes social and cultural transformations that have occurred over the last 20 years in Russia and other post-Soviet countries. Dr. Zapesotsky discusses the various ways of transition from socialism to capitalism realized in Eastern Europe and Russia.

Special emphasis is placed on the experience of China where gradual transformations started with the economy, yet the ideology persisted during these transitions. For several decades, such a strategy has created a social layer of entrepreneurs who are the moving force of economic progress today. On the other hand, the Russian national elite made a number of crucial mistakes in the 1990s. They copied western experience blindly without taking into account the national mentality, cultural traditions and history of the country. As a result, Russia again has to define further strategies of development in economy, ideology and culture.

For the general public.

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## Introductory word

Ladies and Gentlemen, Colleagues, good morning. Today I have the pleasure of introducing our speaker, Professor Alexander S. Zapesotsky, Rector of the St. Petersburg Trade Union's University of Humanities. Before I list his many academic positions and achievements, let me tell you that I personally visited this University and students told me that they do not worry about finding a job as their diploma will give them a solid pass to good jobs; I can only say that I was a bit envious as such opinions are the best complement to this University and its Rector.

Professor Zapesotsky holds many academic regalia so let me list only a few key ones. He is a member of the prestigious Russian Academy of Science and Russian Academy of Education; he is a member of the Chair of the Expert Council of the Russian Duma (Parliament) on labor and social policy, deputy Chair of the St. Petersburg Council of Universities and Chair of the Executive Committee of the Congress of St. Petersburg Intelligentsia. He has been heading his University since 1991 while simultaneously continuing researching and actively publishing in academic journals and national and regional press. His impressive publication list includes books, textbooks, edited collective volumes and scholarly articles on education, communication, culture and social policy. So, in short, ladies and gentlemen, we host today at Carleton a prominent scholar, educator, well known public speaker and activist.

We are most grateful to Professor Zapesotsky for coming today to Carleton and sharing his views on modern Russian transformation. I can assure you that he is one of those few people who can talk about that topic with competence based on his own personal experience as an academic, activist and manager. He is one of those who are not the object of social and political change but he actively shapes the reality of contemporary Russia. So you have in front of you a theoretician and practitioner that makes his views particularly valuable.

I shall also mention that you are in a Russia-friendly place in our Institute; for years we are not only doing research in Russia ( in collaboration with many of our CIS based colleagues and larger in the Eastern Europe and EU),

but we are also active in building academic and cultural bridges between Canada and Russia. We host not only scholars but also an official delegations and officials and trying our best in making our countries as close and friendly as they fully deserve. Ladies and gentleman let me give the floor now to Professor Zapesotsky.

**Piotr Dutkiewicz,**  
*Director of the Centre for Governance  
and Public Management at Carleton University (Ottawa, Canada),  
PhD, Professor*

## **Modern Transformations of the Russian Society and State**

Firstly I would like to thank the Executive of the University, as well as Professor Dutkiewicz for the opportunity to speak to you today. For me, this is a very special moment; I'm very happy to be here, and I haven't been in Canada for twenty years. And I'm extremely happy to be here.

Your university has a brilliant academic track record. And I just wanted to add that Professor Dutkiewicz is well known in Russia, he is seen as one of the leading experts on the processes underway in Russia today. I'm particularly happy to be here and to express my opinion on where Russia is today and where it is heading.

I want you to understand the prepositions that I take as a scientist, as academics do not necessarily take run-of-the-mill approaches. 22 years ago I started working as a rector, and at the time I was acquainted with all of the people who are leading Russia today. But as a rector, I can say that I also know the country from the grass roots. So I have personal and real experience in the economic sphere, in science and in education, which in fact is a good perspective on everything that is happening around me. Besides, there are a lot of various university departments that are studying what exactly is happening in our country today. These are departments of philosophy, history, sociology, economy, law, etc. And as member of two of the academies of sciences, I have direct access to much of the research that is being done by my colleagues. So I believe that I have an integrated view on what is happening in the country.

So what is happening in Russia? I'd like to share on that topic with you today. I consider what is happening in Russia today can only be called a tragedy. You might find it a little bit pessimistic, but I say this openly because it's my true opinion.

I believe that Russia chose a most inappropriate method to move from socialism to capitalism. I think it's interesting – one of the biggest problems that I see today, one of the most widespread questions that

are asked of me by my students and others, is: why Putin can't do this, this and this, and therefore can't take charge of the situation; why is he unable to take charge of the situation in the country today? Why can't Putin deal with corruption, for instance? To put an end to it? It would seem very simple – you just put everybody who has anything to do with corruption in prison, and then the new life will begin.

Or why can't Putin improve the education system in Russia? Why is the situation with the education only getting worse? I can give you a very interesting example. Under Putin's leadership, throughout the years of his leadership in Russia, the amount of investment into education has grown from 7 to 10 fold (according to different methods of calculation). But the level of education, the quality of education is plummeting catastrophically.

It would seem that Russia has created all of the infrastructure and conditions for business to flourish. But I think that I will now give you an example that will surprise you. Anybody in Russia today can register as a self-employed person, and will pay the government 6 percent of any income that is put into the business account. That's it. The rest of the money that self-employed person will have is completely for yourself. But if I'm an employed worker, and I'm standing at my work-place, and I'm working with a drill, whatever I'm doing, I have to pay 13 percent of my pay to the government. And of every one thousand dollars that is paid to me, the employer must pay 400 dollars to the government. But if I am, as I said, a self-employed person, then I will only pay 6 percent. But there is a limitation on amount I can pay 6 percent on, and that is two million dollars a year. If my income is higher, I will have to pay 13 percent from the sum that exceeds the limitation. It may seem lovely, it seems like this is a perfect place in which to develop entrepreneurship. But in Russia today, the fact is, that small and medium business are in fact hardly developing at all. And the growth rate in production is pretty well zero. So there are actually two sources of government revenue then: one is customs and tariffs that are collected when goods are brought into Russia, and the other is sales of oil and gas and other mineral resources.

So why can't Putin change what is going wrong? The question to follow is: which is the stronger, the personality or the system? Today what we see is that the system is stronger than the personality, than

the person. This is not always the case, as you know times of the great upheaval, during the revolution, the person, the personality become stronger often. But once the system has taken shape, once it has gathered momentum, once it has the necessary people on board, then the system becomes stronger than the personality.

It's interesting to know that in the world there're several models of this transfer of power from socialism to capitalism. One is the Eastern European countries model. Eastern Germany, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania are among them. I don't want to insult anybody, but what I'm about to say, is that they squandered their national sovereignty when they became members of the European Union. They took on all the standards of the European Union in absolutely every sphere. And I honestly think that they paid a very high price for this. They became victims of the occupation voluntarily, without being imposed by military force. For instance, when I speak to journalists, say, from Latvia, and I ask them how the things are going, they say that everything is absolutely fantastic, wonderful. We have freedom of the press, we can write whatever we want in our media, and our dream that dates back to the Soviet times has come to past, which is true freedom. But there is a small problem: there is almost nobody to read the newspapers. Because anyone who could actually read the newspapers have all gone to get jobs in England. So now we have a country of elderly with all younger people gone. When I go Bulgaria, I see that there are some peculiar economic transformations underway. For instance, you might be a Bulgarian who has a small hotel, but the electrical supply is provided by the company from Austria. And all of the major industries have been amalgamated by the major western players in the market, Western European players. So the cost of joining the EU was loss of youth, the youthful workforce, and the loss of national control over their own economy. Eventually this will result in the loss of the national culture as well.

When I look at Belarus, what I see is that they have not even started the transition to capitalism, they still are living in socialism. What's happening in Georgia is a very interesting example of the transition to capitalism. They resolved many problems in their original way, the ones that we have not been able to resolve here in Russia, but they also have some very specific problems that are specific to them alone.

think that Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan have had an extremely interesting experience of transitioning to capitalism. And I believe their model is far more successful than what's happening in Russia. I think that the Ukraine right now is going through an immense tragedy. The Ukraine has obviously headed for the European Union, but the Ukraine has its own culture, and I think that there will be a lot of suffering when it comes to a cultural clash between the Ukraine and the Western European culture. For the Baltic countries, I think, it was easier for them to adapt to the European system, because they have a common religion and they had socialism under the Soviet system for about half the time that Ukraine and Russia did.

What we're thinking today in Russia is that the Chinese way would be the most adoptable to Russia. But we missed that time when we could behave the way that China did, since the transition to capitalism China began in 1972. And later on, when the events occurred in Tiananmen square, Gorbachev received proposals from his assistance, his counselors said that he should have a very close eye on China and what being done in China. In the USSR there were many serious experts at that time who said that China was doing a right thing and what Zhou Enlai was doing was exactly the thing that Russia needed to do. The Chinese didn't reform the ideological domain, they left things almost as they were in that sphere. What they started changing things was economic transformations. And they were very careful about how they approached transforming the system. They began by developing the small business, they didn't lay hands on government corporations, they didn't lay hands on raw materials industries – they left big industries alone. What they did, was they took account of changes in Hungary and Poland – they created cooperatives, they created small businesses, small farms, sole proprietorships. So what they did was in parallel they grew a capitalist economy, a capitalist sector in parallel with the government sector, side by side. But what they did, they did extremely cautiously, and they went little step by little step, and each time they saw that something wasn't working they would make a change to make sure they were heading in the right direction. But what they managed to do was create a social layer of entrepreneurs who knew how to build a business.

Russia did not want to dissolve into the European Union as Estonia or Bulgaria had. And it was impossible for many reasons.



For one thing, the popular psyche, the culture of the people wouldn't allow for it. On the other side, the national elite wanted to rule the country themselves and to enrich themselves impetuously. But the elite showed to be extremely specific: it was completely unqualified to lead a country. And we didn't have that stratum of business people who knew how to run businesses. Nevertheless, Boris Yeltsin set the course for instant transition to capitalism for Russia. It was impossible in reality, but in fact, major steps were made to achieve that transition. As a result, most of the population did not want to transition to capitalism. But there was another part of the population that was extremely happy to transition to capitalism, and it eagerly did so. So today we have a bicultural society, we have two cultures within. One is the Soviet Union culture, which includes those who lived one time in the Soviet Union, which in numbers is actually a majority of the Russian population. The other, the smaller part is the one that appropriated the state-owned assets. And of course, these are young people who have grown up in a new time, in a new system, and who think and see things in a different way, but many things they cannot see at all as a result of a lack of experience.

To a degree, the cultural distance has occurred in Georgia, in Ukraine, and the other countries transitioning to capitalism.

I think in order to understand what happens in different countries, it's actually quite useful to use a Marxist approach. If you look at how the social-economic systems are built in different countries, then you end up with a certain spectrum of approaches. On the left of that spectrum, the basis is the idea that the government should regulate everything and that there's no need for anyone else to regulate but the government. And the market is completely irrelevant. In that kind of the society the interests of the individual are really insignificant. The interests of the society and the interests of the government are always more important than that of the individual. The person is seen to be a social being, one that should live in the interests of the society, in the interests of the state. If you go then to swing to the right wing of the spectrum, then you see it's the market that is the most important aspect, and that the role of the state is minimized. Under that approach the role of the individual is the most important. The interests of the society are secondary, and the individual, or the person, is an economic entity.

But what is the reality that occurs? If you look at the developed countries today, you will not see the left views or the right views embodied in a pure form. In each society, the left ideas struggle with the right ideas, and eventually the idea of convergence is the winner. If you look at where the United States is heading, where Western Europe is heading, or where China is heading, it turns out they are heading to the same spot. But they are coming from different direction to this one spot. China, for instance, is coming to that point from socialism, whereas the United States and Western Europe are coming to that point from capitalism. Today the United States have very strong government regulation of public and economic life although they do take care of their national traditions, which have taken 300 years to take shape. With few exceptions (such as the North Korea or Cuba), all countries are trying to take the best that capitalism has to offer and the best that socialism has to offer. However, when the best has been chosen, then each of these countries operates on the basis of their cultural traditions, their own popular psyche, their own heritage. Those countries that are able to integrate the idea of convergence with their own cultural identities, they are the ones that are most successful. These are Japan, South Korea, Hong Kong, Singapore, and now China.

What Russia did in the beginning of the 1990's was to swing instantly from the left end of that spectrum of social-economic formations to the extreme right end of that spectrum. To figure that, if you look at the extreme left of that spectrum, than it would be communism under Pol Pot in Cambodia. Perhaps, the military socialism of Stalin is a little closer to the middle. And now in the phase of just a few years Russia has headed off to the very farthest possible right, where right away it is automatically assumed that the person, that the individual is an economic entity, and that the market regulates everything and all. This ideology was taken on in all of its totality by our government twenty years ago.

In Soviet times, for the Marxists it was important to understand whether it was most important to be or it was important to be aware, to be conscious. So the question that is of the most important practical significance is whether or not ideology is stronger, or whether or not the economic approach is the strongest. When revolution changes occur, a country is then entering into a new cycle, and it is the ideology that takes precedence. Then the question is: how does the national elite choose an

ideology, how do they choose an idea that will lead the country into the next cycle. It turns out that the national elite are very capable of making some very serious ideological errors. This was exactly what happened in the early nineties when very serious errors in ideology were made by our national elite.

It seems worthy to note that in China there are several research institutes that specialize in Russian developments of the past twenty years. What they are doing is studying our mistakes so they don't repeat them in China. Actually there was a presentation that took place in our university few years ago and it impressed me greatly. It was made by Lee Tzen Tze, the Chinese scholar. What he said was that while making use of Western experiences, it is important to stick to the centre of the road, not to deviate to the left or to the right. He was saying, which was the essential idea of his presentation, that the Soviet Union made a huge mistake in not allowing that some experience of the West, its achievements were useful. When Lenin carried out the revolution, in fact, the country was in no way ready to build communism, but it could not even start to build socialism at that point. So it was important to pay attention to what exactly was needed to be used, taken and applied from capitalism. On the contrary, after 1991, Russia decided that everything that the West had to offer needed to be automatically taken on by Russia. And this was a terrible mistake, and the damage is immeasurable. Lee Tzen Tze mentioned the remarkable Chinese saying that mandarin oranges do not grow to the North of the Yangtze River. Meaning that whatever you do, don't automatically copy other people's recipes. You can plant mandarin oranges, if you wish, to the west of the Yangtze River, however to the south of the river mandarin oranges will be big, and they will be tasty, but if you plant the tree to the north of river, then the oranges will be tiny and they will be bitter. It follows out of different conditions, different soils.

So now this idea that money is prime and the most important and everything that matters, this is what is causing our society to fall apart.

For instance, not long ago, the police force in Russia, the militia, underwent big reforms. They changed their name, stopped to be called "militia" and started to be called "the police". Indeed, before the reform, the militia did quite a good job in a specific way. They used to actually catch bad guys, but then they took money from them and let them go.

Because the militia understood for the twenty years that preceded all of this, that money was all that mattered. And then D.M. Medvedev said that we would reform the militia and we would only retain the honest police. So they reevaluated all of the militia. However, according to some leakage in the media, in order to get a positive evaluation and to remain a general, for instance, in St. Petersburg, you actually had to pay between one and two million dollars. Moreover, the generals allegedly took the money from the criminal element and said that we will pay off the debt. So that's how we reform.

You have to understand that this is a huge revolution of consciousness that was performed in Russia during the last 20 years. And this revolution was made with the help of television. If you talk on an official level with the executives of the TV channels, they will claim that the television is a mirror of life. But they know that this is not a truth, because the TV programmes we have seen in the past few years, they integrated into a new model of life, a new way of life and a new way of behaving in society. And again, the main idea is that money is all; it's the most important thing. But we have to say that this philosophy which is being imposed upon the population is meeting with a great deal of resistance on the part of the population. But they continue to try to sell this philosophy.

On this way I think that this is a good time to stop presenting to you and have a discussion with questions and answers.

## Answering questions

**Question.** *You mentioned that small businesses are not flourishing. Does it have something to do with, maybe, organized crime wanting to get into businesses, offering their “protection”?*

**Answer.** Twenty five years ago I was actually the head of the small company and assistant professor at the university. And my own business was extremely successful. In fact, I became a wealthy man. But I abandoned the business when bandits came in from the street and they tried to take over my company. They said they wanted control over the money and I could pay them for protection. And at that moment I was offered the rectorship by the trade unions, and I said okay good, yes. But what has happened since then? Bandits have stopped putting pressure like that coming to see businesses. Because the police took over their position, the position of the bandits! But then the police stopped coming to the businesses because they were taken over by officials. So if you want to be successful in business now, you have to have good links with the officials. Of course, you could start your business if you want, nobody will shoot you out as it was the case in 1990s, but what will happen is you’ll be asked if you want to have electricity for your office, you’ll have to officially pay for that, and also pay 10 times more off the record. Or, the person who acts as a state department officer would offer to close their eyes on everything if paid for the service. But if the businessman doesn’t want to give bribes, he’s going to have huge problems even if he’s very honest in his business. And unfortunately, this is actually penetrating all areas, it happens everywhere through the communities.

I’ve been a rector for 22 years. Well, I’ll tell you from my own point of view what has changed in Russia. 15 years ago, in the course of auditing of the university, the officials said, Mr Zapesotsky, our recommendation is to change this and this, please, make use of this recommendation. It was a positive instruction that helped me definitely to improve performance. But now when the Ministry comes to audit the institute, my assistants give me advice on what I’m supposed to do. So the first thing is to take the head of the audit commission to

the restaurant for dinner. And then it would also be good if I gave this person some money. And then our university will be happy and all will be well. I don't do that and quite often I have problems. So the thing is, you have to agree with the system and insert yourself into this system, or you won't be doing business. Which means that economic pursuance becomes very monotone, very one-sided. So all of the production in the country is based on excavating raw materials. The revenues from the raw materials sector partially go to the government budget, and the government pays this money to the people working in the government sector. It works, even though not quite well, as long as the oil prices are high. But when the oil prices fall, then the problems start. So a big reserve fund has been created in Russia just in case the oil prices fall. But if you ask me what products St. Petersburg produces, I wouldn't tell you.

– Toyota. (*remark from the hall*)

– Yes, Toyota, Ford, cigarettes Philip Morris. But I have to say that in the Soviet times St. Petersburg was actually in hi-tech sector. We had a huge machine-building industry, etc.

**Question.** *You mention the role of TV in the Russian society. But current surveys show that now 25–30 percent of Russians use the Internet on everyday basis. It actually helped to create a phenomenon of Alexei Navalny, a Russian opposition leader, who actually built his platform of support based in the Internet. My question is what do you think about Navalny and his future position, and if Vladimir Putin is going to run for the forth term of his presidency in Russia?*

**Answer.** Vladimir Putin, as far as I understand, does not want to have a forth term, he didn't even want to have a third term, he is rather tired. But I think he will go for a forth term because he will not be given other choice. It's possible that he will do the fifth and the sixth term. I believe what happened was that six months before the election Putin was told that if he resigned, the United States was taking over Russia, that the country would be destroyed, you must run for the presidency, otherwise everything will be gone.

As for the Internet and Mr. Navalny, the Internet has a huge significance, there's no way to underestimate the significance of the Internet. And sure, Navalny's popularity is due to the Internet. I don't know if there's a word to cover this in English, but I think that in Russian I would say that Navalny has a very murky personality. Because it is not less than the Internet, Navalny owes his popularity to the authorities. And what I think is that there're some very spoiled, rotten leaders that are now being offered to the public in Russia. And you saw what happened in Bolotnaya square after the parliamentary elections. People actually wanted to see an end to many of the things that are happening in Russia, and they came out to demonstrate. Honestly, I don't know a single person in Russia who didn't want an end to what was happening in Russia at that moment. And then, on Bolotnaya square stage, everybody saw Ksenia Sobchak, Udaltsov, Kasianov, Nemtsov, and people stopped in their tracks. People said we don't want to follow these kind of leaders. But there weren't any other kinds of leaders to see. I think if those who are in power today want to keep hold of the controls, they have to create leaders that can be leaders like this. And then there'll be no successful protests in the country. And the officials will retain power. I consider Navalny to be exactly the type of such fake leaders.

I believe that the influence of television is actually undervalued, because the research is drawing particular attention to what is happening in the political news only. But I think more important than the news is what's happening in the entertainment segment on TV. If you look into the Soviet times, it was the family, the school and higher school system that performed the main educational function. Now the youth are being brought up by television mainly. The entertainment programmes in particular; the television has at its disposal a mechanism of invisible knowledge. This is like when a cat plays with a mouse, the cat is showing the kitten how to behave. Television possesses the same kind of mechanism. When we watch how people behave on TV, this imposes a strong impact on us. As a result, the mass behavior and value systems are entrenching themselves through television.

Currently you can see that the concepts of good and evil are being passed off, the relationship to other people, the attitude towards parents and towards knowledge is changing. Our education system is falling

apart not because the teachers are teaching in a worse way, but because the students' motivation is changing. Television is cultivating contempt to work, the cult of easy success even through deception being a part of propaganda on TV. Really, it's a complete revision of existing values and morals. I believe that in the Soviet times we were a country of Christian values. The communists simply put the Communist Party in the place of the Church. The ten commandments of the Church were also the commandments of the Communist Party. You had to be honest, you had to work properly, you were not to commit adultery. Actually, the communists considered Christ to be a decent man, only that his role was replaced by the role of Secretary General of the Communist Party. As far as I remember, Gennady Zyuganov even said that Christ was the first communist in the history of humankind. Now all of these values are being ignored.

**Question.** *I work as an analyst in the Ministry of Natural Resources. Would Russia continue to use energy supplies as a political tool to influence the European Union, the West, and Ukraine?*

**Answer.** In any conflict situation, there are at least two sides, two different view points attached to. I think that Vladimir Putin's position is quite honest and quite opened. I'm absolutely certain that he is a very honest and very upstanding citizen.

I remember talking to Victor Chernomyrdin who was a prime-minister of Russia then, back to 1995 approximately. Chernomyrdin became a prime-minister after having worked many years in the oil-and-gas industry. As a prime-minister, he met with several rectors of St.Petersburg universities, there were much less people in the room than are here today, and we had a very candid discussion that day. And he said that he was astonished, saying "we don't understand why Ukraine is behaving this way towards Russia. We give everything to them pretty much free, and we give it to them on credit basically. And that credit has added up to build four billion dollars" (an extremely large amount of money for 1995. – A.Z.). We behave with them the way we would with our brothers. But they're looking to the West, they're flirting with the West, they're acting contrary to our common interests". I don't think that he was deceiving us when he said this.



The leadership of Russia is discussing this situation nowadays the following way: we have these resources, but we're a poor country, our people are not living well. Why should we sell these resources cheaper to Ukraine than we do to the West? If they want to be in the Western camp, that's their right. But in that case they'll have to pay "western" prices. If they're together with us, in one single economic space, then we can explain to people, to the nation why we give Ukraine the yearly gas price the same that we charge inside Russia. Vladimir Putin's point of view is very simple: Ukraine has to choose whose camp they're going to be in. If they're with the West, then we'll apply the same approaches that we do with the West. If they're with us, then we'll behave with them as if they are our relatives.

But I think this choice is very difficult for Ukraine. If I was a citizen of Ukraine, I'm not sure I would choose to collaborate with Russia, because this would imply a lot of negative points. Though I would rather choose Russia and not the EU.

Anyway, Vladimir Putin has done nothing whatsoever under the table with respect to Ukraine. He's not investing in any secret work against the interests of Europe in an effort to bring Ukraine into the Russia camp. But there're more than a thousand foundations and funds in the Ukraine representing the United States and the European Union. These funds are extremely active in creating public awareness, and they're working with the mass media primarily. The West is bribing the Ukrainian elite and is influencing people with propaganda. So if we talk about "political weapons", I don't think that gas is being used as a political weapon, although the case can be interpreted that way.

But I also think that we have to keep in mind the historical experience that Russia has. Russia was a unique empire. This was an empire that always sent funds into the outer areas, it always supported its outlying regions. And I think the reason that the Soviet Union collapsed so easily was that the decision was made by the people in power at the time, it was a decisive moment when they said "why we don't just cut off all those appendages, and then we'll be rich because we don't have to feed them anymore. We have immense resources, and that allows us to live – wonderful!" What Russia has done now is putting pipelines through the Baltic Sea bypassing Ukraine, with the same strategy being used in the Black Sea. And Russia says to Ukraine: "If you don't want it, then don't

buy it. And we'll trade directly with Europe". This is a forced position, it has some drawbacks to Russia, but that's the position that has been taken right now.

**Question.** *You mentioned education in Russia. As far as you are a member of two academies, it would be interesting to know what you think about the current reform of the Russian Academy of Sciences.*

**Answer.** I think it's a national catastrophe. And I'm really sorry they were able to convince Vladimir Putin to go this route. The thing is, that right now there has been a huge change in the quality of national elite, it took a turn for the worst. Before, it used to be the leaders and functionaries of the Communist Party. There was also the arts and culture elite, and, of course, also scientists, scholars and professionals in different spheres – engineers, professors, etc. In the Yeltsin period, there was a huge confusion between all strata of the society, and the place of the elite was finally occupied by riffraff of any kind. As a result, several outright swindlers, like Berezovsky, Gusinsky and Khodorkovsky, took power. When Putin came to power, he changed places two strata of the national "elite". Because when he came to power, major business was on top, and the officials were underneath. For instance, when in Israel, Gusinsky and Khodorkovsky gave interviews, they said that "we had bought Russia, Russia is in our pockets". They said that openly. So now that Putin is in power, the officials are on the top and big business is a little bit below them. This position is also shared by mass-media "bosses", but, of course, they are a little bit lower. The scientists and the scholars, they do not make up a national elite now. However, instead of the true scientists and scholars, there're people in the ruling strata that we know as pseudo scientists, pseudo scholars. They are not scientists, nor scholars, but they have created structures that support the national elite. From the outside, it looks like scientific activity.

So what's happening now is that the officials set the task, the pseudo science develops these tasks, "packages" it ideologically, hands it over to the media that promotes it. This is called "to perform reforms". And then these reforms fail. So then the officials start scratching their heads, and they say to the pseudo scientists, well, it failed, so you have to come up with something new. Together they come up with the new

reform, the pseudo scientists develop the new schedule, pass it on to the media. “The reforms” are being realized, it just gets worse and worse. So actually performing reforms has become a big business, and immense investment goes into this. Now there are two pseudo-science centres in Moscow, whose joint budget is approximately three billion dollars. To compare, the whole Russian Academy of Sciences has all tolled two billion. But the Academy has a complicated and expensive technical base to maintain, and all of these they keep running at a cost of their budget of two billion dollars. Whereas, as I mentioned, the pseudo science centres have three billion dollars a year, and all they do is produce paper.

But the problem with the Academy of Sciences is that it is a huge threat to the existence of pseudo science, because the true scientists and scholars keep saying “Our country goes the wrong way. Then we have to stop this outrage, to turn around and go in the different direction”. So this is why the Academy of Sciences is under attack. We are being told we don’t need real science, it’s just a segment of Stalin’s imagination and heritage. So, the Academies of Sciences will be destroyed, of course, which will be the next tragedy after the collapse of the Soviet Union. You can bring in the new equipment in the factory and replace the old one, but you will not be able to rehabilitate the system of science and the universities – at least, you won’t be able to do it very fast, in several years. And the universities also are undergoing horrendous reforms right now.

**Question.** *I’m Alexei, a student of Carleton University. How can you evaluate the situation over inter-ethnic issues right now, where the mistakes have been made, and do you make a link with the loss of values that you spoke about before?*

**Question.** *Timur Sharapov, a student of Carleton University. My question also relates to national self-identification. How do you evaluate rapprochement of Russian Orthodox Church and the state – possibly as an attempt to consolidate Russian identity and to strengthen moral principles? What is your feeling about what the final result will be?*

**Answer.** First of all, let’s say that the whole world is suffering from the issues of national identity. There is a trend that is clearly seen now,

and it's based on globalization. Globalization is neither positive nor negative; it's simply a normal path of world development. And what matters is how humanity can deal with its negative effects. It turns out that the West has not been ready to deal with the issues of national identity.

What's happening in Germany or in France speaks to the fact that the West is not prepared to deal competently with resolving national issues. There are some reasons why multiculturalism in Europe failed. Besides, what is happening both in Europe and Russia now is what in Canada was called "the revolution of the cradle". What happens is that a certain ethnic group within a country will have a higher birth rate and "through the cradle", per say, they increase the strength of their population, and then they say to the other ethnos, "we now have to change the basic cultural values that have been presently existing". Canada has its own specific unique history, and I think it's pretty clear how and why these trends are happening in Canada. But in Europe, when the Turks are coming to Germany and don't want to accept German culture, or the Arabs in France, they don't want to accept the French culture, what happens is that these two cultures co-exist, but I believe that the model of co-existence is a very dangerous one.

In Russia, before the Soviet Union, during the Tzarist times, there was a different experience of assimilation. So in Tzarist times it was said to the migrants, "you're all part of the Russian culture, but you can exercise any religious believes that you wish, you can live your way of life". That means that each person can become the part of two cultures simultaneously, to live in ethnic culture and to constitute in full the overall culture of the country.

However, when the Soviet Union fell apart, Russia was not ready to deal with the newly aggravated ethnic issue. The leaders believed that if people have been given freedom, all problems will disappear by themselves. And even today the government has no idea what to do with the conflicts when they arise. They're trying to deal with certain excesses that occur in the process of interaction between the Russian language population and the different ethnic groups that are coming from the outline areas. But this is not going well.

The situation is exacerbated by the fact that the Russian culture no longer seems as attractive. For instance, in Dagestan now, terrorist attacks

follow one after the other. But against whom these terrorist attacks are perpetrated? Most often, against government officials that are seemed to be corrupt. There are terrorists attacks against the occults – those who are seemed to be the palm readers, wizards and other. And also there've been some attacks on those who sell alcohol.

Caucasians watch television stations from Moscow and they say, “We do not need to have what we've seen on the TV from Moscow. We don't want to be like that, like Russians”. This is a very serious problem.

There was also a question about the Orthodox Church. Of course, strengthening of cooperation between the state and the Church, this is linked to loss of values, because both Tzarist Russia and the Soviet Unions were bearers of high cultural standards based on morality. My generation was brought up as atheists. But the modern youth, in their majority, they also have not chosen the Church. When I became a rector 22 years ago, what did I see in my university? I saw the whole civil society fallen apart. There were no Trade Unions in the university, no communist party, no young communists alliance, and there's no student council. I said to the students, “You have to create some kind of self-organizing body”, but they refused to: “If you're not going to pay us, then why should we bother? We do not care about civil interests”. It wasn't clear how to work with the young people. And there're students from different parts of Russia – you can imagine the size of Russia – I have students from Sakhalin Island, for example. They are 17 years old. And they will not see their parents for a whole year. And there was no Skype those days. What is the student supposed to do when he or she runs into difficulty? How can they resolve their problems, whom are they going to talk to? That's why we opened an Orthodox Chapel at the university. We hoped that the Church would work with the students and would talk to them about the things that they were bothered by, and they would talk about morality. Because these are issues of morality – when you talk about how to build relationships with your friends, how to behave with a girl, or even how to behave with your professors – all these are moral issues. To much regret, our expectations were not met. So I had to find the other ways to act.

Let us look at Vladimir Putin. Who can he join forces with in order to help the country, what organizations that are out there that he could

actually work with? He has nobody to rely on right now, except the Church and Trade Unions. Because when he came to power, Yeltsin had already been at work for ten years, destroying foundations on which the civil society could have flourished. Yet indeed, the Church is a truthful public organization that has not lost its set of values and its real designation. If only the Church could teach our young people something, they're not going to teach anything wrong. And if I have any claims for the Church, there's only one: it can not adapt to working with the young people nowadays.

Thank you for your attention, I wish you all the best.