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CRIME AND RELIGIOUS CONCERNS IN RUSSIA

Abstract

In Russia, during Soviet times, atheism was the official rule. In Marxist-Leninist atheism, religion was opium of the people and false consciousness. This ideological tendency was highly criticized by Western observers. In post-Communist Russia, religion is a relevant part of the national self-perception.

As his precursor, Fyodor Dostoyevsky credits Miguel de Cervantes, who wrote from jail about wisdom and insanity. Mikhail Bakhtin gloried the 'polyphonic' qualities of Dostoyevsky's books, which expanded the narrative to include many protagonists, bearing contradictory perspectives rather than a single authorial outlook. Differentiating from Dante's Inferno, in Dostoyevsky reason and madness, goodness and evilness are not clearly opposed. This is modernity, discovered and described in Russia and in the US at same time.

At the dawn of Western realism, there is the awareness around our bodies, our illnesses, and our limitations. There's a saying attributed to Hippocrates that extreme remedies are appropriate for extreme diseases. Machiavelli made the classical suggestion for those facing crucial political problems: "One never seeks to avoid one trouble without running into another; prudence consists in knowing how to distinguish the character of troubles, and for choice to take the lesser evil".

Key words: Crime, sociology, Russia, Italy, democracy.

1. RELIGION AND POLITICS IN RUSSIA

For nine centuries, Constantinople was the gorgeous center of the civilized world. The Fourth Crusade was diverted in 1203 against Constantinople. To historians, the Crusade sack of Constantinople was unparalleled in history. The city was never able to return to its previous splendor. Ottoman Turks conquered Constantinople in 1453. The Western greed sapped Byzantine resolve and it was among the causes of the destruction of its brilliant civilization. The fall of the Byzantine Empire was a watershed¹.

A huge part of Russian thinkers has defended the vision that Russia is *The Third Rome* – the heir to Byzantium’s Christian civilization. Moreover, an enormous part of Russian thinkers is fond of the idea that *orthodox Christianity created Russia*. These currents of thought have seen some revival in recent years.

In Russia during Soviet times atheism was the official rule, enforced without mercy. In Marxist-Leninist atheism, religion was *opium of the people* and *false consciousness*. This ideological tendency was highly criticized by Western observers. In post-Communist Russia, religion is a relevant part of the national self-perception. Even this tendency has been highly criticized by Western observers.

In 2001 Archimandrite Tikhon gave an interview to a Greek newspaper, saying Putin “really is an Orthodox Christian, and not just nominally, but a person who makes confession, takes communion and understands his responsibility before God for the high service entrusted to him and for his immortal soul”. Father Tikhon’s autobiography² became the 2012 bestselling book, beating even the translation of *Fifty Shades of Grey*. A clear victory of devoted spirituality over profane materialism. However, in Western narrative, according to rumors collected by the *Financial Times*, January 25, 2013, Father Tikhon became Putin’s “dukhovnik, or godfather”: a word that hints to mafia for every Western listener.

All human cultures have recognized the extreme relevance of desires. A chief expression of desires is *insatiability*. From Emile Durkheim to Erich Fromm, social scientists have privileged the image of human nature as “a bottomless

1 Luttwak E., *The Grand Strategy of the Byzantine Empire*, Belknap, Harvard, 2011; Simeunović D., Dolnik A., "Security Threats of Violent Islamist Extremism and Terrorism for South East Europe and Beyond", in Cross S., Kentera S., Vukadinovic R., and Craig Nation R. (eds.), *Shaping South East Europe's Security Community for the Twenty-First Century*, Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2013, pp. 87–113.

2 Tikhon Shevkunov, *Everyday Saints and Other Stories*, Pokrov Publications, Dallas, 2012.

pit which exhausts the person in an endless effort to satisfy the need without ever reaching satisfaction". Religions have tried to defuse anarchism and chaos of desires transforming them into rational preferences and choices. Traditional religions and civic religions try to model a public hierarchy of preferences that is connected to institutional restraint. In his sold-out, much-discussed *Bowling Alone* thesis, Robert Putnam, makes a confrontation between solo bowling and regular church attendance. In Putnam's perspective, the United States continues to be (even more than in Tocqueville's time) an astonishingly *churched* society. Barak Obama has underlined the contribution of Reinhold Niebuhr's political realism (nurtured by Christian reflection) to his ethical vision.

2. THEOLOGICAL ISSUES: REALISM AND *INFERNO*

The key concept of realism is that human nature is self-centered and conflictual, motivated in seeking more and more resources, in an environment where resources are limited and desires are unlimited. When applied to international relations, realism poses key concept of a distribution of power referred to as anarchic world system, where the state must emphasize its monopoly of violence³ to ensure citizen security in a dangerous environment. The role of the state is understood in terms of its military capabilities.

Opposed to utopian and ideological thinking, realism has been connected to rationalization, sometime praised as the best figure in the more glorious history. Rationality and realism are connected in many fields, from religion to painting, from military to law, from music to international politics. However realism is not a unique Western specialty. In China, realism can be drawn from the Confucian concept of *da tong*, or the Great Harmony. Known as a *Rockefeller Republican*, distrusted by the Republican right wing, unsentimental practitioner of coldblooded realpolitik⁴, Edward Kissinger appreciated Chinese leaders because

3 About the state as a structure successfully claiming legitimate monopoly on violence over a given territory, see Weber Max, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, Mohr, Tübingen 1922. In order to understand to what degree violence characterized medieval Europe, see Brown W. C., *Violence in Medieval Europe*, Routledge, London, 2010.

4 Howard M., *The World According to Henry: From Metternich to Me*, Foreign Affairs, 73, 1994, pp. 132-40. In this perspective, "the balance-of-power ethos to which Kissinger subscribes represents the middle ground between 'optimistic American ecumenicism' (the basis for many global-disarmament movements) and the 'war culture' of the American Wild West. This ethos was never cynical or amoral, as the post-Cold War generation has tended to assert".

co-dividing the same sort of realism he is famous for himself. His strategic thinking was based on the principle that when the US's vulnerabilities appeared to outweigh its opportunities, by consequence the preservation of the status quo should constitute a necessary step. Other strategists, on the contrary, searched opportunities to encourage democracy at any cost, even where before there had been none. Kissinger's pessimism was frequently confronting an optimism seen as misplaced. He quotes the Chinese reaction to the US protest against the ambush of dissidents at Tiananmen Square in 1989: "They could not understand why the United States took umbrage at an event that had injured no American material interests and for which China claimed no validity outside its own territory"⁵. For his inclination to not make moral judgment on internal business of foreign governments."⁶, Kissinger's realism has been labeled as *cynicism* even if cynicism primary concern is not the value of national survival. Not cynically Kissinger treated Communist China and the Soviet Union as legitimate states; his proposal was to play China off against the Soviet Union.

Although they come from different sides of the party spectrum (Kissinger is a Republican, Brzezinski a Democrat), both are foreign policy realists who believe that the United States must carefully engage with an insecure world. And while they disagree on past and present geopolitical aspects, they agree on a remarkable number of realist principles. Brzezinski said President Bush wars made Americans "more susceptible to demagoguery" and to "a fearful paranoia that the outside world is conspiring through its massive terrorist forces to destroy us"⁷. Zbigniew Brzezinski is very competent as regards realism and the necessity of avoiding a Pandora box: he inspired the first secret president Carter directive, on July 3, 1979, in order to support the Mujahideen in Afghanistan (the Soviet intervention

⁵ Kissinger H., *On China*, Penguin Press, New York, 2012.

⁶ "The American democratic experiment is unique in human history not because we are God's chosen people to lead the world, nor because we are always a force for good in the world, but because of our refusal to acknowledge the deeply racist and imperial roots of our democratic project. We are exceptional because of our denial of the antidemocratic foundation stones of American democracy. No other democratic nation revels so blatantly in such self-deceptive innocence, such self-paralyzing reluctance to confront the night-side of its own history. This sentimental flight from history—or adolescent escape from painful truths about ourselves—means that even as we grow old, grow big, and grow powerful, we have yet to grow up". West C., *Democracy Matters: Winning the Fight Against Imperialism*, Penguin Books, New York, 2004, p. 21.

⁷ Brzezinski Z., B. Scowcroft, D. Ignatius, *America and the World. Conversations on the Future of American Foreign Policy*, Basic Books, New York, 2008.

occurred later, in December 1979). The initial idea was to draw the URSS into war, in order to hasten the weakening of its power and its capacity to control Eastern Europe. The goal was kept, but the related consequences are crystal clear, in terms of Muslim ideology, militancy, pride, self-confidence, visibility, and unavoidable strange bedfellows.

Notwithstanding many differences, both Kissinger and Brzezinski have been indicated as protagonists of sinister conspiracies. Some extremist psychiatric tendencies believe that everyone suffered his specific paranoia, less or more dangerous, evident, conscious, professional or amateurish, and so on. In the paranoid mind, a good enemy is better than a good friend. In any case, the mafia stereotype is perfect to fulfill the necessity to externalize and personalize political anxiety, fear and devils. Sometimes, a just mission against the Devils is as it should be and American exceptionalism is missionary. Kissinger says that it is not always clear if, in the missionary tendency, there is preeminent the alternative of sending people to hell or the alternative of speaking with the people in the hell where they are.

Part of realism is undoubtedly the capacity to comprehend motivations and actions different from ours. The Western Canon says that we must understand even people who stay in the *Inferno*. Even in the *Inferno* there are reasons. Even in the *Inferno* there are human beings, with eternal desire, love, necessity, shame, and friendship. There are Devils in the *Inferno*, but Western tradition is proud of its infinite pacts with the Devil, or negotiations. Rotten compromises are to be avoided come what may. But the spirit of compromise has been always well valued and prescribed⁸.

As his precursor, Fyodor Dostoyevsky credits Miguel de Cervantes, who wrote from jail about wisdom and insanity. Mikhail Bakhtin gloried the 'polyphonic' qualities of Dostoyevsky's books, which expanded the narrative to include many protagonists, bearing contradictory perspectives rather than a single authorial outlook. Differentiating from Dante's *Inferno*, in Dostoyevsky reason and madness, goodness and evilness are not clearly opposed. This is modernity, discovered and described in Russia and in the US at same time. Henry James treats murder seriously, but unsolved. This is the last *Turn of the Screw*, in the self-perception of human consciousness: there are few clues and many contradictions: every narrative is distorted by desirers and passions; reality has no intrinsic and solid meaning:

8 Margalit A., *On Compromise and Rotten Compromises*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 2010; Sidoti F., *Il crimine all'italiana. Una tradizione realista, garantista, mite*, Guerini, Milano, 2000.

it takes different forms, elusive and uncontrollable. Even in a personal account (a diary) there are many possible interpretations. It is a classic narrative cliché, but is renewed with reference to ghosts. The key point of the story told by Henry James is the human inability to be sure not only of the interpretations of others, but of our own interpretations and perceptions. Obviously, the authorial list could be infinite, including Western and Eastern authors: the best is claimed to be Akira Kurosawa: his *Rashomon* made its entrance onto the world stage, in 1951, as one of the masterpieces in human chronicle, helping the initial enthusiastic acceptance in Italian culture. After people such as Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Henry James, and Akira Kurosawa, every modern narrator (except some mafia writers) is conscious about the existence of unavoidable conflicting interpretations, each based on its specific facts and truths, reasons and passions.

3. A GREAT ENGLISH IDEA: ADAPTATION

It is very easy to find glories in the many splendored history of English experiences. Some indicated an Ariadne's thread: the refusal of considering reason as the master of human life, while considering that reason is very important, but is "the slave of the passions" (Hume).

We can find that same Ariadne's thread in a beautiful cultural labyrinth. When (founding the Republican tradition), Harrington wrote the best commentary of Machiavelli, he was not a formalistic rationalist. When John Stuart Mill celebrated the eccentric, he was not a formalistic rationalist. When Adam Smith celebrated the entrepreneurial spirits, he was not a formalistic rationalist. Ariadne shows us a path which is different from the rationalistic and the formalistic path which was dominant in other national traditions. In a stereotyped sentence: Englishmen are not Germans, who greatly love forms and rules, rationality and order, purity and cleanliness. Frenchmen and Germans loved reason as a God (so they did in the *Philosophie des Lumières* and in the French revolution of 1789), while Englishmen mostly distanced from continental Enlightenment (Hume) and continental revolutionaries (Burke).

In the original Darwinian pages, evolution has no rational purpose. And adaptation has little to do with progress, but with survival. There is, for example, nothing in the theory of evolution that says that things are getting better, only that species have found more adequate ways to adapt to their environment. While evolution, change,

and progress are confused, especially when we start making cross-disciplinary analogies, we must keep separate. Adaptation in a dangerous environment is very different from adaptation in an environment which is “rich in land and poor on population”. In a dangerous environment, the survival of the best fit is not the survival of the best. In order to fit in a dangerous environment you can be forced not to be the good, the bright and the brave.

How this translates to intellectual trends and the question of whether it has any application to historical dilemmas, as some observers tried to state, have rarely been considered a necessary implication of initially scheduled premises.

In the first chapter of *On the Origin of Species*, Darwin writes that while natural selection is at work everywhere and always, “we see nothing of these slow changes in progress, until the hand of time has marked the lapse of ages”. But in human experience, frequently we can see great institutional changes in real time, evolution in the flesh of history. Watching historical evolution in action, we can judge also if leaders, policies, and nations *fit*, to use Darwin’s famous word. Even individuals have to fit, and sometimes escape is the only solution; for instance, banditry is “a form of self-help to escape it in particular circumstances” (Hobsbawm).

Following Darwin, adaptation is the clue to the evolutionary process: to a greater or lesser extent, all living things must adjust to circumstances⁹. The degree of flexibility varies to many extents among individuals and societies. Language reflects the differences. The human animal lives only in a well-defined habitat, and cannot survive if its needs are not met. *Adaptation* is the evolutionary process whereby an organism becomes better able to live in its habitat. While *Adaptedness* is the state of being adapted: the degree to which an organism is able to live and reproduce in a given set of habitats.

In front of the mafias, there are intentional failures or forbearance to discover a fault or wrongdoing. There are many forms of adaptation in an environment characterized by mafia control of territory: voluntary oversight; passive consent or active complicity. Very common is a guilty assent to wrongdoing, not involving actual participation in, but knowledge of, and failure to prevent or oppose it. Some

⁹ North Douglass Cecil, Wallis John Joseph, Weingast Barry R., *Violence and Social Orders: A Conceptual Framework for Interpreting Recorded Human History*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2009.

time connivance means a kind of “secret cooperation in wrongdoing”. Frequently, survival is at any cost¹⁰.

In Edward Luttwak analysis, the Sicilian mafia is above all a local environmental adaptation. Even John Dickie uses some evolutionary phrases about Italy’s unique *criminal ecosystem* and the brotherhoods that have evolved within it. Evolutionistic approach is absolutely different from cultural relativism, but in one point they overlap: where we must understand a primitive society in its own terms, through its own rules, and without imposing the scheme of our own culture. Since each society has to find its way of regulating and dealing with its specific ecosystem.

In some relevant aspects, the Sicilian mafia is a product of its geography and history: Italy has a very vast territorial and cultural diversity, a complicated process of national unification, state building, democratisation and modernisation. In other aspects, the Italian criminal system is also characterised by a fierce political struggle that has dramatically divided the country, accentuating and exacerbating the problems derived from its geographical and social legacy. A complex mixture of past problems and present dangers has placed confrontations which at times were won and at times were lost.

From 1946 to 1989, in a Europe divided by the Iron Curtain, Italy was the frontier country where the cold war was bitterly fought, both because of the presence of the Pope and because of the presence of the strongest Communist party in the world outside the URSS.

It should be too long the description of Sicilian exceptionalism and adaptation. It is enough to say that for centuries Sicily has been practically and ideologically outside the Christian West, apart from patterns that grew out of the Carolingian Empire and on the Pope-Emperor diarchy. Sicily was another world. Once upon a time, the Mediterranean was the centre of the world, and then Sicily was at the centre of the Mediterranean, birthplace of Archimedes and Euclid, reference point to Plato and Aeschylus, homeland for the first human attempts in democracy and rule of law. When the Mediterranean became a Muslim lake, Palermo took in the archetypal courts of Byzantium, Jerusalem, Athens, Rome, and Damascus, speaking in many languages: Greek, Latin, Arab, Norman, Beudiskaz, and Hebrew. After, the axis of history changed again and the Atlantic became the center of the world: Sicily tumbled down at the borders of the West, geographically and institutionally

10 Chambliss W. J., *On the take. From Petty Crooks to Presidents*, II ed., Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1988.

distant from the skeleton of modern Europe, going from Manchester to the Rhine. The Sicilian insertion in European modernity has been exceptional. But all the Mediterranean countries experimented in their way exceptional adaptation. In Sardinia, the other great island beside Sicily, in the capital city, Cagliari, within the *Torre dell'Aquila*, near the sea, there are visible some cannon balls stuck in the wall in memory of the bombardments that hit the tower from English fire in 1708, Spanish in 1717 and French in 1793. And so on.

4. CRIME IN RUSSIA

After Gorbachev's perestroika, the importation of the Western democratic model in Russia also resulted in the importation of the Western democratic model of crime. Of course, in Russia a specific history¹¹ and a specific model of crime already existed, different from many other events in Europe and in Asia. Following many scholars, in the failed alignment of Russia and former communist countries towards the democratic experiences of Western industrial society, the previous national experience was decisive, the weight of which has been overwhelming, as is shown by the events related to the development of crime organized¹². But abnormal aspects of crime in Russia definitely lead to a reflection on the intertwined incidence of many causes, with specific priorities.

The roots of current Russian criminality derive partially from Soviet times. On the contrary, the distinctive nature of the modern Russian underworld lie in the feudal past of the country and in sudden collapse of the Soviet order.

In Russia, there are outlaw peasant bands at the beginning of the 17th century. From this point of view, Russian history is very similar to European history, where criminal bands existed everywhere, from England to Germany, but step by step disappeared in 18th century, following the processes of national formation and the conquering of "the monopoly of violence" by the central state. In 300-plus years, the Westphalian European States gradually eliminated the private violence of ancient organized crime, which previously had been openly and institutionally used, for instance in the 16th and 17th centuries, during the anti Spanish wars.

11 Carrère d'Encausse H., *La Russie inachevée*, Fayard, Paris, 2000; V. Strada, *Europe. La Russia come frontiera*, Marsilio, Padova, 2014.

12 Mateiko A.J., *'Truncated' Society: the Eastern European Cases*, in "Crime, Law and Social Change", 18, 1992, pp. 277-301

The extensive use of pirates by the English (or, better, *corsairs*: pirates with a “letter of marque and reprisal”: a government license authorizing a person, known as a *privateer*, to depredate Spanish vessels) has been heavily underlined by distinguished Nazi scholars¹³. That use of pirates did not easily end: in April 16, 1856, yet the Paris Declaration Respecting Maritime Law was issued to eliminate privateering and to formulate precise rules. Even on English mainland territory, in Sussex, in the Seventeenth century, organized crime groups were powerful and active, in a general situation characterized by bribery, political corruption, patronage and nepotism, armed robberies, private pillage of public revenues. This situation was narrated not as a “Mafia state”, but as the beginning of the best Western liberal and democratic tradition, because: “No one bribes, where he can bully”¹⁴.

Differently from other European countries, in Russia as in Southern Italy, the process of State monopolization of violence was highly incomplete. As pointed out by illustrious scholars¹⁵, in a society where land and all who labored on it were in the hands of a feudal ownership, survival resistance and criminal activity were nearly indistinguishable. Networks of peasant solidarity used systematic plunder as much open uprising. Popular rebellion continued and mixed with political rebellion, which plagued all Europe.

After contradictory and uncertain attempts of Westernization, Stalin Russia closed a long history of widespread illegality (frequently “defensive”). In Kissinger’s view, Stalin had no serious global ambitions: his main concern was a cautious internal stability. Stalin was an old-fashioned *realpolitiker* and he expected his adversaries to be playing the same game. In Stalin’s Russia, ordinary misdeed does not disappear but was substantially reduced and changed in essence. Anticommunist observers describe the Soviet illegality as a direct subsidiary of the Communist system. They have also pointed out the close continuity between the apparatus of the Soviet Communist Party and post-Soviet mafia organizations¹⁶. The final Brezhnev

13 Schmidt, K. *Land und Meer. Eine weltgeschichtliche Betrachtung*, Reclam, Leipzig, 1942.

14 Namier L., *England in the Age of American Revolution*, Oxford U. P., Oxford 1972; Gammone M., *Corruption in classical European criminology, 1876-1914*, International Forum on Crime and Criminal Law in the Global Era, Beijing, 2013.

15 Hobsbawm E., "Social Bandits: Reply", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 14, 4, 1972, pp. 503-505.

16 Handelman S., *Comrade Criminal. Russia's New Mafiya*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1995

years were full of charges, frequently used in internal leadership contrasts. In that context, the allegations against S. R. Rashidov (first secretary of the Uzbek Communist Party until 1983, when committed suicide) are relevant, concerning the Great Cotton Scandal, which culminated in 1986 denunciation regarding the culpability of almost the entire Uzbek party and government direction. In a massive clean-out of arrests, executions, and suicides, the expression “Uzbek mafia” was widespread used¹⁷. Brezhnev’s own son-in-law was implicated and most of Galina Brezhneva’s friends were arrested, frequently under corruption charges.

Organized crime in Brezhnev’s days searched the direct patronage of Communist Party leaders. Corruption and bribes were frequent in Central Asia clan loyalties, in the Caucasian countries and on the Black Sea: areas away from Moscow. That kind of crime was in some ways normal and institutionalized, and it was not worrying as in the Western concerns related to “fear of crime”. In communist years, the description of criminal activities as “an endangered species” and “a relic of capitalism” was a classic topic of Soviet propaganda, perfectly symmetrical to anti-Soviet propaganda. Western analysts tended instead to emphasize the massive presence of lawful offense, which according to some estimates were higher in percentage than those that were made in the same years in the United States¹⁸. On a whole, illegality was already existing, but it was another world, compared to the following collapse.

Over the years, various allegations of complicity or condescension were made against virtually all the top leaders of the different ruling groups; first against Ligachev, but later also against Gorbachev and finally Yeltsin, who in 1989 argued that corruption and organized crime were “penetrated everywhere, right in the top echelons of the CPSU”. From that point of view, the confrontation between Russia and Italy has been frequent: when Yeltsin spoke to the Russian national conference on crime, in February 1993, he said in his speech: “The world considers Russia a powerful bulwark of mafia. We are surpassing countries such as Italy which have always been at the forefront”. The word mafia became the scapegoat of leader’s incapacity to find the right way out of the mess¹⁹.

17 Vaksberg A., *The Soviet Mafia: A Shoking Expose of Organized Crime in the USSR*, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1991.

18 Connor W. D., *Deviance in Soviet Society*, Col. Un. Press, New York, 1972; Zeldes I., *The Problem of Crime in the Urss*, Thomas, Springfield, 1982.

19 Gammone M., Sidoti F., *Giovanni Falcone e la scuola siciliana della giustizia*, in S. Costantino, C. Giurintano, F.M. Lo Verde (a cura di), *Lecture e riletture sulla Sicilia e sul Meridione*,

Scholarly, who emphasized the similarities often ended in saying that the common trait between the Italian and Russian histories was the dominant role of public intervention, which of course has been present in Italy to a lesser extent compared to the Soviet Union, but significantly higher compared to other Western countries. The main argument was: public intervention in itself can be an opportunity for extortion and corruption; in some areas the state must respond to a demand that the market is not able to meet, but in other areas public intervention, in addition to not be necessary, can become direct or indirect cause for the flourishing of a type of a crime which in specific contexts becomes easily mafia. Especially the direct control and management of the economy, they say, leads the corruption at the heart of the institutions²⁰. This reasoning had a general meaning, even more relevant when applied to the case of a planned economy that capillary dealt in both production and distribution of goods.

Criminal organizations have grown enormously, not only for reasons intrinsic to the history of Russian and Soviet bureaucratism, but due to a system degeneration, born after the death of Stalin and which reached its apogee during the final Brezhnev years, when even within the Soviet society (as in Western countries) a popular request for rights, consumption and freedom grew impetuously²¹. Faced with new and reckless social pressing, the Brezhnev system was only capable of expressing a grueling run of the top leaders to new levels of consumption while the rest of society turned to black market, which gave the floodgates to a massive and widespread corruption. Gorbachev tried a different answer, based on a fervent hope in democratization, understood in the most utopian rhetoric²². In our field, it is enough to remember that in 1986, thanks to a super-democratic project of humanization of the penal system, about half of the prisons were closed granting

FrancoAngeli, Milano 2015.

20 Revel J.-F., *Le regain démocratique*, Fayard, Paris, 1992.

21 Aron A., *Dix-huit leçons sur la société industrielle*, Alcan, Paris, 1962, p. 50: "socialism and capitalism are two versions of the same kind of industrial society ... the Soviet and capitalist societies are only two species of the same genus, or two versions of the same social type, namely, the industrial society in progress". The theory that socialism and capitalism were, or could be, over time, increasingly alike in economic and social terms, in condensed in "convergence theory", which was popular in the 1950s and 1960s, in some the best social thinkers of that time, both on the right and on the left: Rostow, Sorokin, Tinbergen, Parsons, and Daniel Bell.

22 Daniel J., Afanasiev A., *Cette grande luer à l'Est*, Maren Sell, Paris 1989; G. Vacca, *Pensare il mondo nuovo*, Edizioni San Paolo, Milano, 1994.

freedom to about 700,000 inmates, who soon joined the ranks of small and medium delinquency²³.

After the advent of perestroika, the traditional illegal networks underwent a radical transformation. They became powerful, thanks to a growing demand for drugs and the enormous strengthening of illegal activities, enhanced by the black market, which had completely transformed the foundations of Soviet society. A large black market, “the living blood in a dead organism”, was already bourgeoning in the planned economy. Many people, acculturated to black market trade, transferred in the new open economy the black market’s rules and habits: how to turn a blind eye, how to grant favors, how to corrupt politicians, and how to bribe public officials. They were ready only for that kind of market – and they were almost the only existing entrepreneurs. It was possible to build immense fortune. Small groups of insiders “privatized” the State’s richest assets.

Right and wrong, legal and illegal mixed. The fallen oh the old Soviet discipline permitted alternatives which were absolutely new, even compared to other existing parallel structures of the Soviet period. The spread of drug demand quickly aroused the birth of an economy specialized in different areas of production and marketing of psychotropic substances: cultivation, trafficking, distribution²⁴. Drug production and dealing were not unknown in the Communist times, but they were very limited. When the Soviet system fell apart, suddenly Russia became at once a great user country, a speedy transit country and a primatist producer country. As the example of hashish may show, Russia became suddenly the biggest producer in the world.

After the fall of the Berlin Wall, the articulation of criminal activities has been profoundly transformed, even in comparison to a heavy and deep-rooted historical heritage. In the Seventies, until the early Eighties, there were significant increases in crime. Stabilization and containment, painstakingly achieved, were later overwhelmed by perestroika and especially from its increasingly anarchic involution. The extraordinary growth of criminal activities must therefore be largely attributed to the perverse effects of the Gorbaciov policies. Taking into

23 Schwartzberg N. M., *Le crime organisé en URSS: une menace pour la perestroika*, La Documentation française, Paris, 1990

24 Lee W. R., *Dynamics of the Soviet Illicit Drug Market*, in "Crime, Law and Social Change", 3, 17, 1992, pp. 177-233

account the criminogenic factors deadly triggered, some scholars predicted that crime would continue to increase until 1995 and then stabilize again²⁵.

5. PERESTROIKA

Amongst the opponents of Gorbaciov, it has always been widely believed that the Russian social tragedy was not only the product of Breznevism, but also of perestroika. For example, at the end of the Eighties, in one of the most difficult areas of the Soviet sphere of influence, Vladimir Brovikov, Soviet ambassador in Poland, stated that it was only a fad to condemn decades of Communist management. In his opinion, an honest comparison should not have been done between the emergency then existing and the results of previous stagnation, but with the results of the perestroika, which in his opinion was the major cause of the troubles: perestroika had dragged the Breznevian stagnation into a vortex of repeated crisis and on the brink of an abyss. Following observers hostile to Gorbachovism, the fundamental issues existing on the domestic front were exacerbated by perestroika: the nationalistic tensions, scarcity of food and goods, the illegality, the distrust of public institutions. The worsening of these problems challenged the stability of the Soviet Union in several respects and started a spiral that screwed into the final collapse²⁶.

It has often been claimed that the weight of the Soviet empire was unsustainable, and that the USSR would have collapsed anyway for this main reason. Many problems existed before perestroika, but it is also true that after the perestroika every concern was greatly aggravated to the point of becoming overwhelming. Since the beginning of Gorbachev's management, economy and the endemic problems of Soviet society entered a new phase, and after a while they arrived at the melting point. To some extent, the lack of preparation and the errors have been recognized by the same Gorbachev group; in this sense we can intend a famous phrase uttered by Gorbachev and then repeated many times by other leading collaborators: "we realized how little we knew our country"²⁷. Above all, they thought possible an unrealistically rapid process of democratization that instead would take different forms, more caution, and more time. One example frequently

25 Daskov G. V., *Quantitative and Qualitative Changes in Crime in the USSR*, in "British Journal of Criminology", 32, 1992, pp. 160-166.

26 Cfr. A. Antonov (A. Fallico), *Leninskij prospekt*, OLMA, Moscow, 2008.

27 Chiesa G., Medvedev R., *La rivoluzione di Gorbaciov*, Garzanti, Milano, 1989.

cited to indicate the wishful thinking of the reformers is the program of the 1986 total prohibition of the use of alcohol: it is believed that in the years in which it was adopted it gave a huge boost to the growth of the black market and, consequently, future organized crime.

Gorbachev, his collaborators, and his generation, were marked by condemnation of Stalinism. But they did not limit themselves to updating that condemnation with a fight against the nomenklatura: they staked the whole system, defined as non-socialist. The Gorbachev reformers hoped to build a true form of socialism, amended, liberalized and reformed²⁸. Stalinism had not only brought the socialization of agrarian property and means of production, but the nationalization of the entire economy and a total monopoly of power in the hands of the party. Stalin also experienced a World War victory. After Stalin, several reforming tendencies have appeared; among these, Khrushchevism was son of the maximum expansion of the Soviet system. Gorbachovism was instead son of stagnation; in a sense, Gorbachovism started from where Khrushchevism had stopped, but radicalized and exasperated it, trying in every way to make it irreversible. An important sociological consequence was the sudden advent of a caricature of an ideal free market society, in a country that had neither an important history nor the important institutions of a free market society, and who was then fatally led to interpret freedom and democracy as the availability of consumerism and a free-for-all. Even other Eastern European countries, with the exception of Czechoslovakia, before becoming communist had been governed by paternalistic, fascist, autocratic political systems. All the Soviet countries arrived totally unprepared to democracy, both from the ideological and institutional point of view, and also from the economic and organizational point of view. The Soviet Union disintegration took place in the name of the expectations of the “Do it now”. To some extent, the subsequent disillusionment was a forced landing.

The perestroika had promoted a reversal similar to that reform which in 1861 put an end to serfdom and buried the Tsarist Middle Ages. But perestroika miserly failed. Gorbachev group, in part, suffered defeat in the Cold War, in part decided and promoted a classical “strategic retreat”, because they thought that the USSR was no longer able to bear the costs of an empire competitive with the American one. From this point of view, the Soviets had not understood that even the United

28 Cfr. Shmelev N., Popov V., *The Turning Point: Revitalizing the Soviet Economy*, Doubleday, New York, 1989.

States were paying dearly for the cost of the Cold War, for example becoming a country strongly influenced by foreign capital and strongly impoverished in his middle class. Victims of the rhetoric of the *Great Communicator*, the Soviets had evaluated especially artificial aspects of the policies proposed by the Reagan administration, threats such as Star Wars or realities such as the reduction in inflation from 13.5 per cent in 1980 to 4.3 of 1984. While Star Wars were a bluff²⁹ and inflation was cured basically by the deindustrialization of the country. The war in Afghanistan, the Chernobyl nuclear disaster and the landing of Mathias Rust on Vasilevsky Descent, next to Red Square, were seen as epiphanies that embodied the technological, political, economic, military, and moral bankruptcy of the Soviet Union.

On a conceptual misinformation³⁰, a development model was rejected which, despite various oscillations, for seventy years had had a controversial, but consistent bottom line (heavy industrialization and compression of consumption), to choose instead another development model, which resulted in a massive demand for goods and liberty, material prosperity and political rights. Suddenly, that social demand, compressed for decades, manifested itself in all Russian institutional branches and in huge sizes: a never-ending search for more³¹. An appropriate response would have employ adequate financial means and would have rest on a very intense international cooperation. The catastrophe of legitimating a huge demand for democratization in the technical impossibility to satisfy it, has been one of the key components of the spectacular growth of the Soviet illegality: between 1986 and 1992, crime in Russia had not small increases: it actually doubled, with peaks particularly clear with regard to the most serious crimes. Between 1986 and 1992, the armed robberies (which formed in 1992 only 7.1 per cent of all recorded crimes) quintupled³². In a general breakdown of public institutions, the armed robberies

29 Graham Wilson J., *The Triumph of Improvisation: Gorbachev's Adaptability, Reagan's Engagement, and the End of the Cold War*, Cornell U. P., 2014; Adelman K., *Reagan at Reykjavik. Forty-Eight Hours That Ended the Cold War*, HarperCollins, 2014.

30 Brzezinski Z., "Ten Years after the Soviet Breakup: The Primacy of History and Culture", *Journal of Democracy*, 12, 2001, pp. 20-26.

31 On the American side, see: Bacevich A. J., *The Limits of power. The End of American Exceptionalism*, Metropolitan Books/ Henry Holt & Company, 2011.

32 Cfr. Kangaspunta, K. (ed.), *Profiles of Criminal Justice Systems in Europe and North America*, European Institute for Crime Prevention and Control, Helsinki 1995, pp. 299-300; Nikiforov A. S., *Organized Crime in the West and in the Former USSR: An Attempted Comparison*, in "International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology", 37, 1, 1993, pp. 13-14.

paved the way to a new kind of organized crime, extraneous to previous Russian history.

In the aftermath of a devastating institutional decay, as crime grew frighteningly, so many phenomena of social disintegration grew, see for instance the steep fall in the birth rate and the dramatic reduction in the average length of life. The leaders of perestroika had imagined a spill from stagnation through a program of Westernization, but this was not the only possible way, as evidenced by the different outcome of the Chinese road to a burgeoning economy. The Chinese Communist Party spoke out strongly against perestroika, accused of destabilizing the communist countries of Eastern Europe and being the instigator of the positions taken by Zhao Ziyang, ousted as secretary of the party just because it was considered an imitator of Gorbachev both in methods and goals.

In December 1988, Gorbachev presented to the UN saying: "The whole world is democratizing". Chinese reformers rejected Westernization, while the Russian reformers believed that the speedy adoption of the formal aspects of the Western system would be enough to give birth to democracy, which is instead something more complex than a set of procedures or a passionate claim for human rights³³.

From this point of view, the positions of some previous illustrious opponents of communism are quite significant. The most illustrious of all, Solzhenitsyn, after many polemic years gave a sentence without hope on Russian democratization; Zinoviev, who was a scathing critic of communism, came to the conclusion that Breznevism was altogether "the best of all possible worlds"³⁴.

Instead, in reference to our themes, an authoritative observer as few others, the director of the FBI, argued that an extraordinary difference was not then existing between Russia and the US. He argued that crime is the common enemy of all civilized nations and, to be perfectly honest, he had to recognize that many criminal problems in the United States were roughly equally bad, or even worse than in Russia. For example, he indicated the number of victims of shocking murders in Moscow in 1994: about 1700 people. Truly a very high number. In comparison, data indicated roughly 1,600 murders in New York in the same period, and this also was a very high number. In discussing crime, he said the two nations had

³³ Touraine A., *Qu'est-ce que la démocratie*, Fayard, Paris, 1994.

³⁴ Berman A. (ed.), *Solzhenitsyn at Harvard. The Address, Twelve Early Responses, and Six Later Reflections*, Ethics and Public Policy Center, Washington D. C. 1980.

much more in common than admitted by simplistic observers in the first place³⁵. Previously, in February 26, 1994, he had underlined that organized crime in Russia bared disturbing similarities to Chicago's crime in the 1920s and 1930s--violent but fractionalized, a danger to itself as much as to the rest of society, and with a potential for much more.

6. IN FAVOR OF WORLD STABILITY

Russia has been a reference point in theoretical dissertation regarding "disaster capitalism"³⁶, which has an illustrious precedent in Joseph Schumpeter, who saw "creative destruction" as a healthy process by which new technologies and new products made old ones obsolete. Obviously Schumpeter had nothing to do with ordinary Dr. Strangelove-like figures who abound in academia and think tanks. Naomi Klein explained a general viewpoint which holds that the best time to introduce new institutional policies is in the aftermath of a massive social crisis, such as a terrorist attack, a war, or a natural disaster. It is not very clear if preferred testimonials are Milton Friedman (who appraised the relevance of a neo-liberal shock therapy) or president Dwight D. Eisenhower (who warned people against the self-perpetuating and ever-expanding economic power of military-industrial complex). Many scholars, indeed, think that great institutional change never occurs without a destabilizing crisis of the old system; whether the crisis is natural, induced or merely perceived. Intellectuals, prophets, visionaries, utopians have many fields where they exercise constructive and destructive tendencies, from Harvard to Hollywood, without inflicting lasting and often irreparable damage on those who were confident on them. International relations are a business for old-fashioned realists. Disaster capitalism has created disasters larger than can be handled. No one can afford these disasters alone.

35 Freeh L. J., *U. S. - Russia Business Council Conference*, 30 marzo 1995, in "the Wireless File", March 31, 1995, pp. 10-12; I'm taking large part of present narrative from: Sidoti F., *Istituzioni e criminalità*, Cedam, Milano, 1998, pp. 100-150. To more information and a general overview, see Freeh L. J., *My FBI, Bringing Down the Mafia: Investigating Bill Clinton, and Fighting the War on Terror*, St. Martin's, New York, 2006.

36 Klein N., *The Shock Doctrine. The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*, Metropolitan Books, New York, 2007.

The international community is a frantic global village³⁷, where realistic accounts must have room and dignity. We have seen victories against the mafias and in favor of world stability. The US support has been essential with its structure of experience and assistance. A cooperative United States-Russia relationship is necessary to peace permanence and strength. Relations between the United States and Russia have never been a zero-sum game. Collaboration is vital in an increasingly complicated and interconnected world. As realists advice us, a new cold war between the two countries would arrest general progress on both sides, spread disputes into internal politics of every country, encourage arms race and nuclear proliferation, at a time when global issues such as the environment, energy, social unrest, overpopulation, and climate change impose global collaboration.

The Western economic crisis has been a boon for terrorists and for transnational criminals too. Western views on Russian political system are frequently pessimistic. While an evolutionist approach insists that the transition occurring in Russia is an important progress: a flexible and vibrant challenge. Democracies can help or worsen the transition. My antimafia narrative is about international collaboration, alliance, partnership, mutual friendship, and tacit common values³⁸.

At the dawn of Western realism, there is the awareness around our bodies, our illnesses, and our limitations. There's a saying attributed to Hippocrates that extreme remedies are appropriate for extreme diseases. Machiavelli made the classical suggestion for those facing crucial political problems: "One never seeks to avoid one trouble without running into another; prudence consists in knowing how to distinguish the character of troubles, and for choice to take the lesser evil".

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37 Castells M., *La Era de la Información. Vol. II: El poder de la identidad*, Siglo XXI, Distrito Federal, 2001.

38 Mearsheimer J.J., "Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West's Fault. The Liberal Delusions That Provoked Putin", *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 2014.

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ZLOČIN I RELIGIOZNI PROBLEMI U RUSIJI

Apstrakt

U Rusiji, u vreme Sovjeta, ateizam je bio zvanično pravilo. U marksističko-lenjinističkom ateizmu, religija je bila opijum za narod i lažna svest. Ova ideološka tendencija je bila dosta kritikovana od strane Zapada kao posmatrača. U post-komunističkoj Rusiji, religija je relevantniji deo nacionalne samopercepcije. Čak je i ova tendencija bila dosta kritikovana od strane zapadnjačkih posmatrača.

Za svog prethodnika Fjodor Dostojevski smatra Migel de Servantesa, koji je iz zatvora pisao o mudrosti i ludosti. Mihail Bahtin je slavio 'polifone' kvalitete knjiga Dostojevskog, koji je proširivao svoju naraciju kako bi uključio više protagonista, noseći pre kontradiktorne vidike nego jednu autorsku knjigu. Razlikujući se od Dantevog Pakla, u zdravom razumu i ludosti Dostojevskog, dobrota i zlo nisu jasno suprotstavljene. Ovo je modernost, otkrivena i opisana u Rusiji i Sjedinjenim Američkim Državama u isto vreme.

U rađanju zapadnjačkog realizma postoji svest o onome što okružuje naša tela, naše bolesti, i naša ograničenja. Postoji izreka koja se pripisuje Hipokratu, a koja kaže da su ekstremni lekovi prikladni za ekstremne bolesti. Makijaveli je izneo klasičan predlog za one koji se susreću sa važnim političkim problemima: "Čovek nikada ne pokušava da izbegne jedan problem bez da naleti na drugi; razboritost leži u tome da uočavamo karakter problema, i da umemo da izaberemo manje zlo".

Ključne reči: Zločin, sociologija, Rusija, Italija, demokratija.