

MOTHER RUSSIA

AN ELUSIVE PRIZE

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Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky 's 1812 overture should be a constant reminder of what happens to those who have designs on Mother Russia. After defeating Tsarist armies in closely fought battles, Napoleon reached Moscow. Instead of surrendering, the Russians burned it down! Napoleon achieved no victory.

This Patriotic War of 1812 began on June 24 when Napoleon's *Grande Armée* crossed the Neman River. The official political excuse for the war was the elimination of the Russian threat to Poland.

Napoleon even named the campaign the Second Polish War to curry favor with the Poles and provide a political pretense for his actions. So, you see, Napoleon, too, carried a false flag in his knapsack. Politicians everywhere have no qualms about lying to cloak their true motives; they are all cut from the same cloth.

Now Americans and their Western allies want to save Ukraine from those same Russians. Don't you believe it. Ukrainians have been living with and beside Russians since the 9th century. Not only have they survived, they've maintained their identity very well. What the West really wants is something else, something else indeed!.

In the Middle Ages, the Kievan Rus' became the center of East Slavic culture. It gave birth to both Russia and the Ukraine. But by the 13th century, the geographical part of Eastern Europe called Ukraine was divided and ruled by a variety of Western nations. A Ukrainian Cossack republic emerged during the 17th century, but otherwise the Ukraine remained divided until the Soviet Union consolidated it into a Soviet Republic in the 20th century,. It only became an independent nation in 1991.

To illustrate how confused things in Eastern Europe got, my parents emigrated separately from there in the decade that preceded The Great War. They called themselves Ukrainians; they spoke Ukrainian; they carried on Ukrainian traditions; they regularly attended an Eastern Rite

Orthodox church. Two more Ukrainian people could not have been found. But! Neither of them ever lived in a country named Ukraine. Thousands of Ukrainians were just like them. Моя Україна (my Ukraine) was a mythical place.

Zbigniew Brzezinski's well known Polish family hailed from Brzeżany in Galicia in the Tarnopol region of Poland (now Ukraine). Zbigniew, along with his parents, emigrated to Canada from Galicia, the very region my parents emigrated from. But for the generational difference, they and the Brzezinskis could have been neighbors. Poles and Ukrainians living side by side! But my parents never called themselves Polish even though they were governed by Poland.

So when Arseniy Yatsenyuk says, "This is our land, Our fathers and grandfathers have spilled their blood for this land, and we won't budge a single centimeter from Ukrainian land," he's blowing smoke. Much of the spilt blood was Russian.

The Ukrainians did not and could not have defeated the Germans in WWII. As a matter of fact, many fought on the side of Germany. So you see, the situation in Ukraine is very complicated, which makes the current events there very complicated too. Only fools and politicians describe them in simple terms.

There is about as much unity in Ukraine as there is in The American Republican Party. Dissent is rampant. To say that Ukrainians want this or that is pure nonsense. The country is home to 44.6 million people, 77% of whom are ethnic Ukrainians, 17% are ethnic Russians, and 6% are descendents of various other nationalities—Belarusians, Tatars, Romanians, Lithuanians, Poles, and others. And the Ukrainian opposition that caused President Viktor Yanukovich to flee consists of various groups that are by no means of one mind.

The pro-Russian Eastern Ukrainians can demonstrate just as easily as the anti-Russian Western Ukrainians did. An Egyptian scenario might very well ensue. A street revolution, an election, an unhappy losing opposition, more demonstrations, and finally a military intervention may be the ultimate result. Or Ukraine may be dismembered as it has been so many times in history. That is not what many of those who demonstrated in Kiev want.

"We want to change the system, not just the president," says Vitaliy Vygupaev, an auto mechanic and protest leader. "When we choose the president and change the system, we'll leave."

But that may not be possible. Ukraine has a problem it shares with many countries including the United States. Its Constitution allows the political system to become corrupted. That system is what created the problems and it is not likely to change.

Faulty economic policy, unwillingness to reform, and endemic corruption have destabilized the country. The currency, the hryvnia, was fixed at 8:1 to the dollar; now it trades at about ten. The government recently issued short-term debt at interest rates as high as 15%; its bonds have done poorly, and many investors are worried that Ukraine will soon default. Ukrainians hoping for a bailout will be shocked by the austerity any bailout will require. The European Union will treat the Ukrainians exactly as the Greeks were treated. Ukrainians may even have to begin singing Porgy and Bess' nobody knows our sorrow.

Not only will they yield the pound of flesh demanded by any bailout, they will shed the blood spilt in its taking. The resolution of this economic problem will take many years. The Western concern is the repayment of Ukraine's sovereign debt, and to insure that, the EU must control Ukraine's economy as it controls the economies of Greece, Portugal, Italy, and Spain.

That's the economic problem, and except for Russia's owning some of Ukraine's sovereign debt, Russia has nothing to do with it. The Western world's political dispute with Russia is something else.

The West, especially Western Europe, has had its eye on Russia at least since the 1700s when it was invaded by Charles XII of Sweden. The invasion began with Charles' crossing of the Vistula on January 1, 1708 and effectively ended with the Swedish defeat in the Battle of Poltava on July 8, 1709 though Charles continued to pose a military threat to Russia for several years while under the protection of the Ottoman Turks. There, Charles persuaded Sultan Ahmed III to declare war on Russia. Backed by a Turkish army, Charles led the Turks into the Russo-Turkish War (1710–1711), but before he could engage in battle, Peter the Great bribed the Turks into ending the war. Charles' ambitions to conquer Russia were over.

As noted earlier, Napoleon invaded Russia in 1812. The Russian revolution brought the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics into existence in November 1917. The West intervened with a multi-national military force, an incipient NATO, in 1918. The stated goals were to help the Czechoslovakian Legions, secure supplies in Russian ports, and re-establish the Eastern front. But after winning the war in Western Europe, the allied powers militarily supported the anti-revolutionary forces hoping to reinstall Nicholas II to Russia's autocratic throne. The great defenders of democracy fought for an autocrat! Somehow or other, that doesn't sound right. The word 'democracy' does not go well with the word 'autocrat.' The Bolsheviks claimed correctly that their enemies were backed by Western capitalists.

A lack of public support and a deteriorating situation compelled the allies to withdraw in 1920. Mother Russia again had defeated a foreign

invasion. The flags flown were proven to be false by the passage of time. The Western allies continued to fight on the side of the Tsarist forces for two years after the Great War ended and the Czechoslovakian Legions had withdrawn.

Then in June, 1941, German forces invaded the Soviet Union. Until the fall of 1942, the German army consistently prevailed. Europe had been conquered. The Germans reached Stalingrad. It proved to be the war's turning point. The Battle of Stalingrad lasted six months, from August 23, 1942 to February 2, 1943 when the German 6th army surrendered.

From then on, the Soviet army remained on the offensive, liberating most of the Ukraine, and virtually all of Russia and eastern Belorussia during 1943. In the battle of Kursk in 1943, the Germans were badly beaten again. The Soviets then liberated the rest of Belorussia and the Ukraine, most of the Baltic states, and eastern Poland. The war was effectively over. Another Western attempt to conquer Russia had failed. Had it not been for the Russians, the French and English would today be singing "*Deutschland uber alles*."

Yet the West's persistence is unreal. Not having learned that those who dismiss history are doomed to repeat it, the West marches on. Immediately after the end of the Second World War, the United States began a strategy of global containment, extending military and financial aid to the countries of Western Europe, supporting the anti-Communist side in the Greek Civil War, and creating NATO.

Although by the 1970s, both sides expressed a desire to create more friendly relations, the United States organized, trained, and armed the American Mujahideen in Afghanistan to combat the Russians and the Russian backed Communist government. This was just one of many proxy wars fought between the two nations beginning with Korea. Western antagonism never ceased during this period. Although not explicitly American wars, they were fought mainly by Americans.

The American Mujahideen succeeded in expelling the Russians from Afghanistan, but the proxy wars fought in Korea, Vietnam, Iraq, and in Afghanistan when the Mujahideen turned on their American benefactors were largely failures. In the 1980s, the United States increased diplomatic, military, and economic pressures.

The USSR was suffering from economic stagnation. Mikhail Gorbachev introduced liberalizing reforms. In 1989, revolutions peacefully overthrew all of the Communist regimes of Central and Eastern Europe. The Communist Party of the Soviet Union itself was banned. This in turn led to the formal dissolution of the USSR in December 1991. It seemed that the West had won. But Mother Russia still existed, and the West still persisted. The European Union launched what it calls "an initiative" concerning its relationship with the post-Soviet states of Eastern Europe

called the Eastern Partnership on May 7, 2009. The EU claims the Partnership is intended to provide a venue for discussions of trade, economic strategy, travel agreements, and other issues between the EU and its eastern neighbors.

Since the Eastern Partnership was inaugurated, however, critical academic research has become available. Findings note both conceptual and physical problems. Firstly, the EU has scanty ideas about what it is trying to promote. The conceptions of 'shared values,' 'collective norms,' and 'joint ownership' are too imprecise to convey any real intentions. Secondly, the EU seems to favor a 'top-down' approach which is clearly inconsistent with the idea of voluntary partnership and explicitly limits the input of the partnering states which clearly means that anything agreed to will favor the EU. To the EU, the six Post-Soviet states have "strategic importance." That phrase usually has military implications.

The EU draft states, "Shared values including democracy, the rule of law, and respect for human rights will be at its core, as well as the principles of market economy, sustainable development, and good governance." Apart from values, the declaration says the EU has an "interest in developing an increasingly close relationship with its Eastern partners. . . ." But the inclusion of Belarus in the partnership raises the question of whether values or geopolitics are paramount. EU diplomats agree that the country's authoritarian president, Alexander Lukashenko, has done little to merit inclusion but the EU fears that Russia will strengthen its grip Belarus if it is left out. So it is really Russia's grip that the EU is concerned about.

When Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich decided not to sign an agreement with the EU, demonstrations broke out in Kiev that ultimately forced him to flee. Within days, Russia took control of the Crimea. Russia had to do something to protect its political control over its only warm water naval base located at Sevastopol.

The Crimea itself was ceded to the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic only on February 19, 1954 as a "symbolic gesture" to commentate the 300th anniversary of Ukraine's becoming a part of the Russian Empire. President Obama called Russia's action a 'provocation' and threatened consequences and costs.

But just think a moment about the word 'provocation.' If someone is dumping trash on my neighbor's property, I would be justified in being provoked. But a person living five miles across town would not. Washington is half a world East of the Crimea; Russia neighbors it. What justification has someone in Washington or even in the EU for being provoked? The real provocation was the EU's Eastern Partnership and its overtures to Ukraine. Russia's action stopped the EU from cooking the stew.

This more than three hundred years of animosity the West has had for Russia is hard to find any justification for. Except for some minor border wars, Russia has never attacked a Western nation. Western Civilization, however, has always been belligerent. Certainly since, and perhaps before, Alexander the Great, Western nations have been empire mad. Rome, England, France, Spain, Portugal, the Netherlands, Italy, Austria, Sweden, and Germany have all sought empires.

The history of Western Civilization is a history of war. This empire madness has not made life better for ordinary people. Not ever! No English commoner gained much from the empire on which the sun never set. And one by one, those empires expired. Western nations control less of the world's territory today than they did in 1939. To set out to conquer an empire is to chase a chimera!

This anti-Russianism has all the characteristics of a racial prejudice. It is just like anti-Semitism. The entire Jewish race was absurdly and collectively condemned for the death of Christ. Not even a similar fiction exists to justify anti-Russianism. Anti-Semitism is a product of Western Civilization; it is a Western European concept; it resulted in the slaughter of some six million Jews. Will Mr. Cameron and Mrs. Merkel be happy to see anti-Russianism result in the slaughter of six million Russians? It's certainly possible.

UN member states number 193. The Vatican and Palestine have observer status. The United States has deployed troops in more than 150 of them. Russia has deployed troops in three or four of its border states. Russia has one warm water naval base. The United States has several, one of which is in Diego Garcia. Why in Diego Garcia? Diego Garcia is in the middle of the Indian Ocean! The United States Navy operates a Naval Support Facility, a large naval ship and submarine support base, a military air base, a communications and space-tracking facility, and an anchorage for pre-positioned military supplies for regional operations aboard Military Sealift Command ships.

Between 1968 and 1973, the native Chagossians were forcibly resettled by the British government to Mauritius and the Seychelles to allow the United States to establish the base. Today, the exiled Chagossians are still trying to return, claiming that the forced expulsion was illegal. Does anyone really believe that the base exists for some benign purpose? Is anyone really that dumb? Claiming that Russia is out to rule the world is merely a case of pots calling the kettle black.

No one knows what the outcome of this current international imbroglio will be. I doubt that anyone wants to start another war. But if not now, someday someone will call the West's bluff, the result of which no one can predict.

Killing is not the way to make friends and influence people. Providing for their needs is. Things would be different if Western Civilization had become Shangri-La. But it hasn't! For a few, it has provided 'the good life,' for most, it has provided little. But poor people are eternally hopeful.

The peoples of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine are easily seduced by Western powers that offer bread and promises of butter. But these peoples need to look at Greece, Italy, Portugal, and Spain. When they do, they will see that the European Union has provided little bread for the peoples of these member countries.

The financiers and merchants of the West care nothing for people or nations. Jefferson knew it when he said that merchants have no country. The Western nations don't care how Ukrainians fare. They don't care how their own peoples fare.

The United States, the world's richest nation, cannot house, feed, or medicate its homeless, unemployed, or sick. Why does anyone believe that it will house, feed, and medicate Ukrainians? Chimeras can't be roasted on a spit! The West wants only Ukrainian flesh, blood, and wealth. You don't believe it? Well remember this: the Elgin Marbles, sculpted in Greece to be hung on the Parthenon, are now to be found in the British Museum.

Balzac is credited with saying, "Behind every great fortune lies a great crime." The Western world does make great fortunes for a very few. Western Civilization a very great crime! We are all guilty for endorsing it.