

A Moscow Phase Shift: Youth Are the Future

by Jonathan Tennenbaum

My visit to Moscow on May 13-20 confirmed for me the signal contained in President Putin's State of the Federation message of May 10, that Russia is indeed going through an important political and cultural phase change, with strategic implications for the world as a whole. Russia is reacting to the international crisis, and to the insanity of the dying Cheney-Bush Administration, in a manner that is distinctly Russian, but which—not accidentally!—echoes the mass organizing process led by LaRouche and his movement, for a revival of the Franklin Roosevelt tradition in the United States.

As I quickly learned, Putin's own direct quoting of Roosevelt, and other features of his address, so markedly different from his previous ones, raised enormous interest inside the country and gave rise to a great deal of speculation about what the future might bring. The present system of nominally "democratic" political parties, mostly artificial creations of the Boris Yeltsin period (the 1990s), with little real basis in the country, is now nearly entirely discredited.

Some people read Putin's speech in part as a signal that he, despite declarations to the contrary, might seek an extra, third term in office—one that would take the form of a "crisis Presidency" under conditions of economic emergency. Putin's reference to Roosevelt would launch a process of preparing the population and institutions for such a course of events.

Others were quick to point out that, although Putin appears to have signaled the intention to effect a "Rooseveltian" turn in economic policy, he has taken no visible steps, so far, to make corresponding changes in his government. The government is still dominated by "liberal reformers" such as Economics Minister German Gref and Finance Minister Alexei Kudrin, whose economic policies are exactly the opposite of those implied by Putin's speech. Such contradictions are nothing new, of course, and reflect a situation, in which the President's maneuvering room is still limited. Among



Aerospace engineer A.N. Tupolev (1888-1972) was the head of the Tupolev Design Bureau, which produced more than 100 designs. His innovations led the Soviet industry in the development of long-range, high-speed flight. Shown is the Tupolev ANT-20, the largest airplane of the 1930s. With the Tupolev generation of Great Constructors dying out, Russia is now threatened with a "plunge into mediocrity."

other things, he is operating in the environment of intense power struggles within and around the Kremlin Administration, connected with the influence of the so-called oligarchs and international financial groups associated with them. Putin holds his cards very close to his chest, keeping both friend and foe guessing at what his full intentions really are.

State Interventions

Speculation and contradictions aside, though, Putin's Rooseveltian declaration does correlate with growing momentum in the direction of state interventions into the economy. These have already drawn howls of pain from liberal commentators.

One area of strategic significance is the nuclear energy sector, in which (as I was informed by relevant Russian experts) major new projects are not only planned, but are already receiving very substantial financial resources. These include the construction, in Russia, of a new generation of nuclear breeder reactors, and continued promotion of nuclear reactor exports.

Recent moves to consolidate the aircraft and aerospace industries into a national consortium, fall into the same category. Alongside Putin's much-commented playing of the oil-gas "energy card," there are significant developments in the area of strategic minerals, including the identification of four "super-rich" metal deposits, mostly in the remote North of the country, with the potential to multiply the total world reserves of key strategic metals. Given their size, and their location in areas that presently have little or no infrastructure, these deposits belong to the category referred to in Soviet times as "city-generating"—meaning that their exploitation

would necessitate and give rise to new cities and to very large infrastructure projects on a national scale. In this context, new attention is being given in Russia, to LaRouche's proposal for the "Eurasian Land-Bridge" system of transcontinental infrastructure corridors, and to his conception of the "Noösphere Economy."

Focus on the Younger Generation

A most notable feature of Putin's speech was his call for reversing the demographic decline of Russia, and, by implication, upgrading the importance of the younger generation for the future of the country. This intersects a significant and sometimes very heated debate about the future of education, growing resistance against the ongoing liberal "deconstruction" of the highly-developed educational system inherited from the Soviet period, and attempts to reverse that trend and to recover the capabilities that made the So-

viet Union a scientific superpower.

Such attempts are having to come to grips with the paradox, that, despite the extraordinary scientific and technological accomplishments of the Soviet era, the system of education, research, and development was extremely rigid, hierarchical, and in many ways spectacularly wasteful. Particularly from the 1970s on, the higher educational institutions of the Soviet Union tended to produce narrowly focussed specialists—people who were highly skilled in their specific professional "niches," but were unable to function independently in a broader social and economic context. Thus, the accomplishments of the Soviet era depended on the leadership of a relatively small number of brilliant individuals, exemplified by great scientists such as Vladimir Vernadsky, and by the so-called General Constructors at the USSR's legendary design bureaus (Korolyov, Tupolev, Antonov, Rubin, et al.). In many cases, as typified by Lyndon LaRouche's friend, the late Pobisk Kuznetsov, such people were virtual dissidents, relative to the Communist Party "establishment" of the USSR, and in nearly every case they worked in military-related areas.

Now, with most individuals of that type either already gone, or dying out, Russia is threatened with a plunge into mediocrity. A particularly acute challenge, in view of the "atomization" of Russian society and of its professional class in particular, is how to generate the kind of coherent deliberative process among people, which is key to the success of any major scientific, industrial, and social undertaking, without having to resort to the dictatorial methods of the past. Everyone recognizes that the key to the solution lies in the younger generation, and in a breakthrough in education.



EIRNS/Helga Zepp-LaRouche

Lyndon LaRouche with students at the Moscow Academy of Finance and Law, where he spoke in April 2004. The solution to the current Russian situation is a breakthrough in education, Tennebaum says.

Students Involved in Planning

Indicative of the search for a new approach to this problem was a three-day workshop, held under the auspices of the Education Department of the City of Moscow, the Directorate of Education of the Northwest Region of Moscow, and the Scientific Research Institute on Innovative Strategies for the Development of General Education, in which I had the opportunity to take an active part. The task of the workshop, was to elaborate a special experimental program, for involving high-school-age youth directly in the work of conceiving and planning new, high-technology industries to be built up in the Moscow region. Notably, the organizers of the program stipulated that the projects, to be proposed and worked out by the youth in cooperation with expert groups of scientists and entrepreneurs, must be based on the industrial application of new scientific breakthroughs.

The workshop, led by the noted Moscow pedagogue and methodologist Nina Gromyko, brought together about 50 teachers, scientists, entrepreneurs, representatives of the Moscow city and regional governments, leaders of educational organizations, and high-school-age students. One of the concrete results was the planning of a Youth Exposition, to be held in March 2007, which will include expert jury selection and presentation of the best projects. The main fields of concentration for the projects will be in the domains of nuclear energy and hydrogen-based technologies, the creation of new industry for microelectronics, and advanced technologies for the large-scale recycling of materials.

I was greatly impressed by the very sharp young people who attended the workshop, coming from a network of experimental schools set up by the City of Moscow under Mayor

Yuri Luzhkov. Among them were students from a newly created School of General Constructors, whose purpose is to train young people in the quality of project-oriented leadership thinking that characterized the great General Constructors of the Soviet period. With their independence and “sky-is-the-limit” optimism, these young people reminded me very much of the members of the LaRouche Youth Movement. After my own presentation to the workshop on key areas for scientific and technological revolutions in the coming decades, I was swamped with questions on everything under the sun, and not least of all about LaRouche, whose name is nearly a household word in Russia.

One of the high points of the workshop, for me, was a new video film, targetted to Russian youth, and presenting an exciting perspective for the development of Russia’s vast territory through revolutionary technologies. For example: a novel high-speed transport system running on suspended cables; revolutionary aircraft designs such as the ekranoplane and

the famous “flying saucer of Saratov”; and new methods for super-rapid construction of houses and other infrastructure for the settlement of remote areas of the country. The film highlighted Russia’s future role as the center of world flows of goods, showing a transport corridor map very similar to the extended version of the Eurasian Land-Bridge, with lines running from Europe to China and India, and through northern Siberia over the Bering Strait into North America.



EIRNS/Christopher Lewis

Moscow pedagogue Nina Gromyko, who organized the three-day youth workshop that Tennenbaum attended. The participants included students from a new School of General Constructors, set up to train young people in the project-oriented leadership thinking that characterized the great General Constructors of the Soviet period.