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**RESSENTIMENT AS A BASIS FOR RUSSIAN NATIONALISM IN THE  
TIMES OF PERESTROIKA**

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## **Declaration of Originality**

I declare that this Thesis is my own work and has not been published in part or in whole elsewhere. All used literature and other sources are attributed and properly cited in references.

Bratislava, 31. 7. 2012

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## Abstrakt

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*Ressentiment*, koncept, ktorého myšlienku vykreslil Kierkegaard, do podrobna rozvinul Nietzsche a zaujímavo doplnil Scheler, nezvyčajným spôsobom spája pojmy 'hodnota' a 'túžba'. Ponúka spôsobom, akým sa na ne pozrieť, odlišný od ich každodenného používania. Cieľom tejto bakalárskej práce je preskúmať *ressentiment* a následne ho aplikovať pri analýze ruskej spoločnosti v čase perestrojky. Táto práca sa taktiež zaoberá ruským nacionalizmom a jeho koreňmi v ruskom vedomí a skúma stopy *resentiment*-u prítomné v ňom tak ako aj v myšlienkach vybraných ruských autorov, ktorý sa vyjadrovali k priebehu a cieľom perestrojky.

## Abstract

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*Ressentiment*, a concept intimated by Kierkegaard, fully elaborated by Nietzsche and further developed by Scheler, links 'value' and 'desire' in a very compelling way. It offers a way to understand them as separate as well as linked in a way different from the commonsensical use of these words. The goal of this Thesis is, first, examine *ressentiment* and, then, to attempt to apply it in the process of analysis of Russian society in the times of perestroika. It looks in greater detail at Russian nationalism and its roots in Russian conscience and examines the traits of *ressentiment* present there as well as in thought of select Russian authors who voiced their opinion about the course and goals of perestroika.

## Table of Contents

Declaration of Originality.....	iii
Abstrakt.....	iv
Abstract.....	v
Table of Contents.....	vi
1. General Introduction.....	7
2. Ressentiment as a Philosophical Concept.....	14
3. Russian Nationalism and Its Specifics.....	20
4. Pre-Perestroika Milestones.....	35
5. Voices of Perestroika.....	43
6. Ressentiment in Perestroika.....	48
List of References.....	56

## 1. General Introduction

Any attempt to grasp the spirit of a nation is a challenging, mind-bending task and would undoubtedly be a long-term project. Moreover, it is questionable whether such an inquiry would not turn out to be in vain. The same applies to Russia – even to make an effort to come to a partial understanding of any aspect of what is today the Russian Federation is more than a Bachelor's thesis can possibly achieve.

Therefore, at the very beginning of this work, there is a statement to be made. This is not an attempt to catch the essence of the chimerical “Russian soul”. Rather, it is an attempt to test whether it is possible as well as to what extent and in what way a theoretical concept can, in retrospect, be applied to an empire at the point of its disintegration. The goal is to see whether and how such a concept can highlight and pinpoint aspects of moods, motivations and internal processes present within a society or a nation at times that are, without a doubt, historical milestones. In 1991, with Gorbachev's resignation and declaration of the breakdown of the USSR, a crucially significant period was definitely over, not only for Russia itself as well as for the overall geopolitical situation and balance of power but, not less importantly, for all the states that were a direct part of the USSR and its satellites.

Gorbachev was in a difficult position. His proclaimed goal was to “promote a steady process of reform, avoiding, on the other hand, radical demands for a multi-party system and private ownership, and, on the other hand, conservative advocacy of a ‘firm hand’ in government,” (Unknown, in Glasnost – Freedom from Censorship) He was pressured from two sides and by definition, it is almost impossible to find a compromise between conservative ideals and ideals of perestroika. Still, to get anywhere, he did not want to make none of these sides angry. He knew he needed the support of intelligentsia in order to pass democratic reforms. ‘Glasnost’ saw publicly expressed political view and cultural dissent, i.e. magazine Ogonek, but as easily to foresee – neither conservatives nor liberals were satisfied with compromises. “Conservatives criticized perestroika, and many radicals wanted democracy as opposed to more democratization.” (Unknown, in Glasnost – Freedom from Censorship) Gorbachev leashed back – in 1989, he started applying censorship again, perestroika was not going the way wanted and expected.

It is not only interesting to observe how Gorbachev responded to the pressure within Russian society, it is also interesting to look at the “communication” of the two superpowers of the Cold War. A significant phenomenon of perestroika was ‘telemosti’ (‘TV-bridges’) between the US and the USSR. The 1st ‘telemost’ took place in 1982, in the era of Brezhnev. However, these broadcastings gained importance in 1985, 1986, in the era of Gorbachev. They were broadcasted from Seattle or Boston and Leningrad. Both countries avoided the capitals not to stir up atmosphere of mutual hostility so characteristic of the Cold War. (Pozner, 2010) ‘Telemosti’ were discussions in between Americans and Russians on various topics. The topics were chosen so that they would be as interesting as possible to a high number of people, no touchy subjects. Of course, there was a certain amount of censorship. These broadcasts were not live, which kept the possibility of any scandal at a minimum – or, it was cut in case of the talks being too boring. The people who participated were supposed to be randomly selected from streets – of course, the Russians controlled this, too. Still, ‘telemosti’ showed willingness from both sides to mutual dialogue, to change the image of the other country in the eyes of the other one – or if not any of these, they were enough of a signal of change of political atmosphere. Also, it was thought it was great that such a thing was technically possible. From both sides, it was sort of praise of technological advancement at the same time – broadcasts through satellite. (Pozner, 2010)

*Ressentiment* - a concept intimated by Kierkegaard in *Two Ages* - fully elaborated by Nietzsche in *Genealogy of Morals*, and, from a psychological and sociological perspective conceived by Scheler in his work *Ressentiment* - is the basic concept upon which this work centers. In addition, the unique features of Russian nationalism are exemplified and a critical examination of Soviet Russia is included in order to include crucial details concerning the historical, political and social background. Then, select Russian authors who entered the discussion about perestroika are supposed to serve as evidence for manifestation of *ressentiment*. Fully demonstrating, this thesis would take a lengthy work. Therefore, the present work restricts itself to making a prima facie case that *ressentiment* was one crucial aspect of the spirit of perestroika.

In broad terms, *ressentiment* occurs as a result of multitude of processes at the beginning of which there is inability to achieve goals and/or satisfy desires. When individuals or groups internalize a worldview, or better said an emotional and moral attitude towards themselves, others and the world, as a consequence of which the way they perceive and



understand the value order is disarranged. It develops most likely when one group is dominated by another one. The group which is dominated is neither able to satisfy their needs and desires nor does it come up with mechanisms to vent their emotions or plot strategies to escape this situation, or it arises when one is unable to cope with injury, harm, offense and their own incapability in a beneficial and productive way. In this case, one might find an external “enemy” or dive into criticism of something not aimed at changing the situation, but just for the purpose of complaining. (Scheler, 1915, p. 29) Scheler claims that despite this disarrayed order of values, the valid and right order always stays in the back of one’s mind (1915, p. 36), therefore the sense of discontentment is always present (1915, p. 47). Nietzsche’s point of view is slightly different. The new value order feels right for the man of *ressentiment*, he fully embraces the values he created. Through them, he regains (sense of) power again. He does not care whether the order of values is valid or right, but he is troubled by values of the master – they remind him of his own inadequacy. However, Nietzsche does think that the man of *ressentiment* is sick. (Nietzsche, 1887, 93) *Ressentiment* is always a reaction to what is outside, to something external. (Nietzsche, 1887, p.36) Eventually, according to Scheler, *ressentiment* works against the ones who have been affected by it, since it becomes a permanent feature of their character to an extent it makes them unable to exercise their skills, use their abilities and let their potential grow to the fullest. As Scheler (1915, p. 48) puts it, “The man of *ressentiment* cannot justify or even understand his own existence and sense of life in terms of positive values such as power, health, beauty, freedom and independence.” For Nietzsche, *ressentiment* signalizes creative strength and potential to a high degree. (However, it must be admitted, that *ressentiment* in Nietzsche’s time for him, lost this creative strength and potential. It has become the source of deadening and leveling. [Nietzsche, 1887, p. 54])

The primary reason why *ressentiment* is such an interesting concept is that it draws attention to what might be the mechanism within a societal hierarchy, when domination and subordination are present, however, not from the point of view of an idealistic rational perspective. On the contrary, it stresses what the case is when emotions and values play a role, or as Scheler puts it, it touches on the relation between “value consciousness and desire”. (1915, p. 34) The concept of *ressentiment* highlights the way in which subtle processes might have tremendous effects on people as individuals as well as societies, whether they are positive or negative, and it lays out the possible ways of what they lead to. For Nietzsche,

*ressentiment* is only praiseworthy when it gives birth to new values. Did this happen in Russia during perestroika?

Scheler (1915, p.29) points out to something, which might be extremely relevant to investigation of whether and how *ressentiment* is applicable to Russian society. “In the development of the labor movement, the conviction that the very existence and fate of the proletariat ‘cries for revenge’ also became a mighty dynamic factor.” If this statement is to be accepted without questioning, then it must be recognized that Marxism-Leninism in its fundamentals has a part that is “very *ressentiment*”. In addition to this, the examination of *ressentiment* in the case of Russian society in perestroika becomes more demanding. It must be introspected in a two-fold way. To notice the *ressentiment* in the society - i.e. the class struggle as outlined by Marxism-Leninism, with which the political rhetoric of the perestroika writers is infused with - is the first way. This area, of course, includes a range of manifestations of *ressentiment* which are not in any way connected to the ideology as such. The second way is to look at *ressentiment* outside society as expressed in the attitudes and relations of Russia towards other countries in the world, the US especially.

A fitting example to illustrate the goal of this work is the lyrics of two songs born in the times of perestroika. The 1<sup>st</sup> song is by the group ‘Deti’ (‘Children’) called ‘Tri akkorda’ (‘Three chords’) and the 2<sup>nd</sup> song is by the poet Nautilus Pompilius and is called ‘Goodbye, America!’. The 1st one was recorded in 1989 and released in 1990, the second one dates back to 1990.

‘Deti’ – ‘Tri akkorda’

“Wow, right now, we'll show all

Why and what for

Down with - Beatleses, Ellingtons, Mozarts

We must all look boldly

the truth in the eyes

Mozarts – many of them, and truth – is one

The three-headed dragon is not sleeping.

Rock, jazz and classical music – that’s him.

But we came to rescue everybody from grave

Our armor - the three whales  
More exactly- three heroes  
Our glorious three chords

Here is the first one  
And the second one  
And the third one  
Three chords

And who will come with the fourth one  
God forbid  
Will die because of the same chord  
So let it be that for us they become  
Like Lenin, Engels and Marx  
Our glorious three chords

Who does not agree with me?  
Three chords, how great!  
Three chords, how great!

Everybody is dancing!"

Taking not only the lyrics, but also the rendering of the song by the artists and the music itself, it seems to be an ironical and satirical celebration of being Russian. (J. Malíček, personal communication, 21. 06. 2012) This irony is extremely stylized and the way the group presents the song is full of affectation. Affectation plays quite a crucial role, since it enables distance - it allows looking at oneself from a remote spot. (J. Malíček, personal communication, 21.06.2012) In example, the words “Mozarts – many of them, and truth – is one” in a way acknowledge greatness of composers like Mozart, but at the same time downplay it by saying that Russia is looking for truth, which would be of a far greater importance. Reference to the “three chords” is an allusion to both to the magic number ‘three’ used in Russian national folk tales as well as to official everyday Soviet propaganda – “Three sources and three basic parts of Marxism” (“Tri istochniki i tri sostavnye chasti marksizma”). (D. Kotsubinsky, personal communication, 15.6.2012) It is very confrontational in its relation with the West. It juxtaposes the highest cultural achievements, that Russia could be envious

of, with what Russia has – three chords. It is a satirical celebration of primitivism that is in certain aspects present in Russia. (D. Kotsubinsky, personal communication, 15.6.2012) In a way, it admits a tragic experience (Soviet Russia) and all the negative things included in it, but, at the same time it acknowledges that this experience is important, since it is *our* experience – “Lenin, Engels and Marx, *our* glorious three chords”. There is also one more meaning attached since for the young intelligentsia, which grew up listening to rock’n’roll music of the 70’s and classical music, the lyrics of this song are expressing the contempt for the pop-music of the Soviet era. “Tri blatnye akkorda” (“three muddy/rotting chords” in old Russian church language) is a phrase referring to three chords on which all the “criminal” songs were built on. In these songs, a criminal used to be depicted as a romantic character. (Kotsubinsky, personal communication, 15.6.2012) Konstantin Boyadin (2009) in his internet blog remarks that “these risky jokes” at that time for Russians were “medicine for the completely absurd époque, not a way of protest”. Therefore, making fun of oneself was simply a necessity, a way to exaggerate the situation, but not to give it a different meaning. In this way one could come into terms with it more easily. This song can be read and interpreted in two ways. Firstly, it is ironical towards oneself. It makes fun of “untouchable” topics. Secondly, it is a call to take oneself (Russia as a country) seriously. In this manner, it might be a praise of Russia’s negative experience being of a world-wide importance, in the style of Chaadaev. (see Chapter Three)

“Nautilus Pompilius“ - „Goodbye, America!“

“When all songs that I do not know  
Will cease  
In the tart air will  
My last paper steamer shout  
  
Goodbye, America, oh-oh  
Where I have never been to  
Goodbye forever  
Take the banjo and play me for the moment of parting  
  
I have grown out of worn-out jeans

Your cunning jeans  
We have been taught for so long  
To love your forbidden fruit

Goodbye, America, oh-oh  
Where I will never go to  
If I will hear a song  
I will remember forever“

The meaning of the song “Goodbye America!” develops along two lines – also in this case, there are two possible approaches to its interpretation. First, it radiates an immense portion of nostalgia. It is nostalgic about a picture of America that is for Russians during communism represented by jeans, chewing gum, rock’n’roll and freedom. (D. Kotsubinsky, personal communication, 15.6.2012) With perestroika, this particular image of the US is gone, now a different, a more realistic one is about to come. What is prohibited is always exclusive in a way. There is a sense of melancholy connected with the artifacts and image of America that was released out of hiding. The second way how to read the lyrics is more pro-Russian. Russia has “grown out of worn-out jeans”. Jeans are an important symbol themselves. However, these jeans are not only worn-out, but Russia has also grown out of them – which means they do not need them anymore, they are not important, they have moved someplace else. This song is optimistic about the possibility of the chances perestroika gives – “If I will hear a song I will remember forever”. There is a chance that there will be something of their own that will be great, sufficient and awesome. At the same time, they are not yet sure whether that will happen. At this point, though, there is tons of positive envy. In times of perestroika, Russians hoped that they would be able to achieve their own mode of life which would include freedom and material well-being, possibly, consumerist society. They wished for their own model of what America had achieved. However, later on, this envy became negative, when they realized they just could not copy this ideal and at the same time, not being an equal partner/enemy on the stage of world politics– and they began to blame the ones they could not copy well for their bad luck. (D. Kotsubinsky, personal communication, 15.6.2012) This is the America which won the Cold War and a partner with whom Russia is not able to compete anymore. This is the America that made Russian *ressentiment* stronger. However, this statement at this point is a forerun.

## **2. *Ressentiment* as a Philosophical Concept**

Kierkegaard never uses the word '*ressentiment*' itself - the expression which is partially equivalent to it is *leveling*. Even though leveling and *ressentiment* do have common traits, the context in which Nietzsche and Kierkegaard speak about them and the points they make are quite different. Therefore, they cannot just simply be freely interchanged. Both Kierkegaard and Nietzsche begin with an earlier period in which self-worth depends on action. In the later period, self-worth does not depend on action anymore. In Nietzsche's account, one is stopped from acting by an external factor (which is only later internalized, the slave enslaves himself "spiritually"), while for Kierkegaard the actor themselves is the reason why action is not possible. Both *ressentiment* and *leveling* are mechanisms, and at the same time mindsets, which replace sense of self-worth. However, Nietzsche's *ressentiment* is a reaction to an earlier period, while for Kierkegaard the connection of this kind - between two periods - does not exist. Scheler adapts version of *ressentiment* which is based on Nietzsche's understanding. He does not pay much attention to its origins, but he develops in great detail its emotional structure and precisely demarcates the concept as such. What is interesting is that the solution he offers - religious values- is almost identical with Kierkegaard's concept of inwardness. In short, for Scheler, it is Nietzsche's diagnosis combined with Kierkegaard's solution. For the above mentioned reasons, it is methodologically correct to keep these three accounts separate. Eventually, when applying these theoretical accounts to situation in Russia in perestroika, it is Nietzsche's and Scheler's understanding that might be to a certain extent allowed to intermingle without causing damage to any of those.

### **Kierkegaard**

A proper departure point for discussion of how Kierkegaard lays out the concept of *leveling* in his work *Two Ages: The Age of Revolution and the Present Age, A Literary Review* seems to be to state what appears to be the most crucial point he makes - reflection as a tool of leveling. The base line of Kierkegaard's work is juxtaposition of two ages, the passionate age

and the reflective age. The goal is not to analyze any historical, social or economic conditions and compare them with present situation. Rather, it appears that the goal is to describe two distinct mindsets. Some of the criteria paid attention to are: inclination towards action versus inclination towards thinking and intending, individual subjectivity versus ambiguity of the public and the source of motivation to action of individuals and groups as well.

In Kierkegaard's point of view, "The present age is essentially a sensible, reflecting age, devoid of passion, flaring up in superficial, short-lived enthusiasm and prudentially relaxing in indolence." (1846, p. 68) "Sensible" hints that in the reflective age, there is plenty of information and knowledge available. In any situation anyone can come up with dozens of possible solutions and reasons why this or that one is the most appropriate one. What is lacking, in contrast to the passionate age, is passion in sense of determination and ability to make decisions; or as Kierkegaard puts it, "...decision is the little magic word that existence respects." (1846, p.66) People constantly consider various options, but this does not move them into any particular direction. Instead, it leaves them in the state of lingering considerations. Kierkegaard offers an interesting proposal for what superficiality is, it is "...the annulled passionate distinction between hiddenness and revelation." (1846, p. 102) In the reflective age, people are much more likely to get excited when somebody comes with a specific proposal, when somebody is able to inflict dedication and exaltation on them. This momentary mood peak, though, lasts for a very short time, since people are inclined to slide down back to the passionless state.

A crucial addition in order to understand Kierkegaard's thought in connection to *leveling* is his concept of inwardness. In the context of his writing, it falls under a much larger realm of his religious thought and theory of subjectivity. For the purpose of this work, the most relevant point is that only when embracing and embodying the quality of inwardness one can attain the greatest values in life - for Kierkegaard, the religious values. Faith, for Kierkegaard represents existence and communication, not a doctrine. (A. Krjukov, personal communication, 1. 11. 2011) It is a decision for a way of life and commitment to it. The evidence for this would be self-sacrifice. When one is able to give up something for something else, it means that there is a certain hierarchy of values, one recognizes and can distinguish that some values are worth pursuing and some are not. What is crucial about inwardness is its connection with commitment. When inwardness is missing, people are looking for a kind of substitution of it in places they are not likely to find it in – mostly likely

in reflection. “The individual does not belong to God, to himself, to the beloved, to his art, to his scholarship; no, just as a serf belongs to an estate, so the individual realizes that in every respect he belongs to an abstraction in which reflection subordinates him.” (Kierkegaard, 1846, p. 85) It means that one instead of following a path and choosing a specific set of actions deliberates possibilities while staying in one place.

The agent of *leveling* is the public, which Kierkegaard calls “a monstrous nonentity” (1846, p. 91). However, as hinted above, the process itself starts with the loss of inwardness. Kierkegaard does not in details specify the circumstances and the causes of this loss, the fact it did happen is important. If inwardness is not present, relations among people lose their quality. The “relation of inwardness to each other in the relation” (Kierkegaard, 1846, p. 78) is not possible anymore. What remains is tension and observation of each other. In this process, the participants become even more exhausted – it is the tension which exhausts them. “The negative law is: they cannot do without each other and they cannot stay together; the positive law: they can do without each other and they can stay together, or more positively, they cannot do without each other because of the mutual bond.” (Kierkegaard, 1846, p.78) “They cannot do without each other” because they become mutually dependent since they lack something genuine in themselves and at the same time “they cannot stay together” because they do not have the basis on which to relate to each other. “...: the relations remain, but in a state of abstract non-cessation that prevents the break-down; ...” (Kierkegaard, 1846, p. 80) In this situation, what remains is reflection. Rather than mutual give-and-take, there is mutual tension and consequently envy, which is the “negatively unifying principle” (Kierkegaard, 1846, p.81) in the age of reflection. Envy stifles all that is active and makes it impossible.

The public is nobody. The public is different from a group, from an individual or a community. All of the mentioned are in some way specific. They can be described and characterized in a particular way. Moreover, any real group or community are necessarily cohesive, in order for them to function, loyalty of its members is required. Also, responsibility can be traced down. On the contrary, once confronted with the public, an individual (as a person or a member of a group or community) ceases to be an individual. The public is not willing to do anything; they are simply just the spectators, the judges. They feel themselves in place with observing and criticizing, nevertheless, they let few individuals do everything, comment on it and themselves remain very passive. However, at the same time, they are



jealous of the ones who had the courage to be active and do something. This is the moment when envy starts to play a role. “Envy in the process of establishing itself takes the form of leveling, and whereas a passionate age accelerates raises up and overthrows, elevates and debases, a reflective apathetic age does the opposite, it stifles and impedes, it *levels*.” (Kierkegaard, 1846, p. 84)

Kierkegaard concludes his discussion of the two ages with suggestions on what the possible way out is. He does not consider association as such to be the right solution, since, in the reflective age, inwardness is already not present, and therefore, association would already lack the necessary characteristics. Men of excellence, in reflective age, are without authority since *leveling* has taken place and they are unrecognizable by people, in no way they know where to look for guidance of any sort when they need it. As a consequence, then, the only way out for every individual is to begin to look for inwardness in themselves – and in this case, leveling might play even a positive role, since it does not give anyone the advantage to rely on what is outside. (Kierkegaard, 1846, p. 111)

### Nietzsche

In the First Essay of *Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche traces down the development of *ressentiment* with collision of two groups, the knightly-aristocratic caste and the priestly caste. In the beginning, the only distinction in their characteristics is that the priestly caste has a more sensitive stomach. Yet, this difference does not signify anything more specific than avoidance of certain kinds of food and more thorough hygiene. Later, what seems to be a petty difference leads to greater consequences. The warrior’s life is centered around action, while the priests’ life focuses on contemplation. “There is something unhealthy in such priestly aristocracies and habits ruling in them which turn them away from action and alternate between brooding and emotional explosions...” (Nietzsche, 1887, p. 32) The knights manage to throw their energy at something and get something out of, they express themselves and let go. The priests behave in a radically different way. They are more likely to seclude themselves, to observe, contemplate and consider options. In case of an encounter of these two groups, the priests will be dominated and suppressed. More specifically, Nietzsche refers to a war that occurred between two societies – the Romans and the Jews. The priests were rulers in their homeland, Judea, but became slaves in the Roman Empire. That is how slave

morality originated. In this situation, the priests are not able to achieve what they want and do not find a direct way to ventilate what gnaws them. They will start contemplating, thinking, “brooding” and as a logical consequence, new aspects, moods, possibilities of how situations might work out will start to appear to them. “...with the priests everything becomes essentially more dangerous, not only cures and remedies, but also arrogance, revenge, acuteness, profligacy, love, lust to rule, virtue, disease-...” (Nietzsche, 1887, p.33) The reason all of these become riskier is that in the process of contemplation, feelings accumulate, become more intense, pointier, and start gaining strength and might suddenly and unexpectedly outburst. The situation that is being deliberated upon will be understood from a more complex angle, will appear as multi-layered and various arguments will be more profound. What Nietzsche calls “most spiritual revenge” leading to “slave revolt in morality” will begin, resulting in formation of *ressentiment*.

“The slave revolt in morality begins when *ressentiment* itself becomes creative and gives birth to values: the *ressentiment* of natures that are denied true reaction, that of deeds, and compensate themselves with an imaginary revenge. While every noble morality develops from a triumphant affirmation of itself, slave morality from the outset says No to what is ‘outside’, what is ‘different’, what is ‘not itself’; and *this* No is its creative deed. This inversion of the value-positing eye – this *need* to direct one’s view outward instead of back to oneself – is of the essence of *ressentiment*: in order to exist, slave morality always first needs a hostile external world; it needs, physiologically speaking, external stimuli in order to act at all-its action is fundamentally reaction.” (Nietzsche, 1887, p.37)

The master morality is a morality satisfied with itself. One feels themselves healthy, happy, and full of vigor and adequate self-confidence. There is no need to compare. On the contrary, the slave morality always needs something that is outside, to which it reacts. In this way, it becomes dependent. Nietzsche further explains that master morality might also look at what is outside. (Nietzsche, 1887, p.40) However, in contrast to the slave morality, this “look” serves just as a comparison to it that is in no way constructive and productive in the construction of self. This “look” might include contempt and misunderstanding, but it is always careless and superficial. It is simply just a marking point of what is different and the master morality considers it to be worse from it. Nietzsche draws a connection with Greek nobility. They were well-born, considered themselves to be happy and performing action for them was simply just a part of being happy. The slaves were the ones who were passive, who

did not have the chance for action – they were denied it. Action itself, in a way, is then considered a privilege – it is a space to voice one's desires, needs and have the possibility to pursue them.

“While the noble man lives in trust and openness with himself, the man of resentment is neither upright nor naïve nor honest and straightforward with himself.” (Nietzsche, 1887, p.38) Nietzsche claims that a crucial characteristic for the man of *ressentiment* is cleverness. Cleverness, to a great extent, even becomes a life condition for him, because he simply needs to find his ways around. Being cunning and sneaky becomes a tool for him in coming into terms with his existence and, of course, surviving. What follows is a process of formation of an attitude, the basis of which is that strength becomes undesirable, since it is what originally the man of *ressentiment* had to subordinate to, but then he termed it 'evil' and out of his weakness made up an ideal, the correct way to be. (The master morality is characteristic of the 'good' –'bad' distinction, while the slave morality is characteristic of the 'good' -'evil' distinction. As mentioned above, 'bad' for the master morality means something lower than itself, something undesirable, while 'evil' for the slave morality is what is to be said “No!” to, but at the same time it lays the basis formation formation of self. 'Good' for the master is 'evil' for the slave. The master sees himself as good first and then judges others accordingly. The slave sees the master as 'evil' first and then judges himself, as the opposite of the master, to be 'good'.) “The virtue of quiet, calm resignation...” is what the man of *ressentiment* then turns into a standard of behavior and moreover, they believe that it was their decision it happened, they believe they acted. Nietzsche further claims that the man of *ressentiment* does not only start thinking they are 'better', but that they are 'better off'. In this way *ressentiment* becomes creative, since it changes the order of values. At the end of the First Essay, Nietzsche states what he considers the biggest issue in philosophy – “order of rank among values” (Nietzsche, 1887, p. 56) Nietzsche thinks everything is interpreted according to values. While he does not completely neglect that some accounts that claim to be “objective” really are “objective”, in his opinion, they are not always necessarily that interesting. (Nietzsche, 1886, p.14) In addition to this, all causes cannot be in very case “objectively” determined, therefore, what is important is to figure out why certain causes are privileged to others. (Nietzsche, 1886, p. 30-31)

### Scheler

Feelings of revenge, hatred, malice, envy, the impulse to detract and spite (1915, p. 25) are emotional states which are, according to Scheler, characteristic of *ressentiment*. By themselves, however, they are not sufficient to constitute full-fledged *ressentiment*. Therefore, it is necessary to proceed through a couple of demarcations of what *ressentiment* is not in order to eliminate a false usage of this term. What Scheler and Nietzsche agree on is that *ressentiment* reverses values, which allows it to create a morality, namely, the slave morality. What they depart on is that for Nietzsche, it is Christian morality as the base in which *ressentiment* lies and for Scheler, it is humanitarian love. At the same time, Scheler devotes more attention to the process of its formation and its psychological aspects.

*Ressentiment* is existent when it is a permanent state of mind, when it becomes a frame through which a person or a group of people perceive the world. Its “triggers” are emotions, which are completely natural and within boundaries to be felt by human beings, the only difference is that, at this time, they are initially repressed and cannot be expressed. There is a sense of harm caused by an attack or an injury. One begins to feel an impulse for revenge. Even though revenge is fertile soil for *ressentiment*, it is not *ressentiment* automatically. Revenge is characterized by two factors - action is postponed and there is awareness of what it is for, of the specific deed that is now to be “paid” for. (Scheler, 1915, p. 25) Once revenge is taken, though, the explosive feelings tend to disappear. Possibly, one genuinely forgives and in this case, no revenge needs to take place and no repressed feelings remain an issue.

In case when one keeps wishing for revenge - malice, hatred and spite come dragging along very quickly. Another accompanying occurrence is impulse to detract. It is more general, it is not so closely tied to any specific person, group or object –simply a tendency. Impulse to detract seeks something that manifests greatness of any kind and instead of acknowledging it, highlights imperfections and shortcomings in order to undermine its value. Someone who has this trait unconsciously selects from wide array of life experiences the ones which are possible to be dealt with in this way. (Scheler, 1915, p. 26)

Originally, there was impulse for revenge. It was aimed at someone specific or something concrete. Later on, a person or a group might become vindictive to such an extent

that their attention is shifted to objects and people who have less and less in common - they might even share just one vaguely related characteristic. (Scheler, 1915, p.27) There is tendency to look for events which might support and confirm this inclination for vindictiveness and justify it; one then looks for “injurious intentions” in states that are perfectly innocent. Touchiness, Scheler stresses, is a great sign of a vengeful person. (1915, p.27) Always, a vengeful person will situate themselves in a position in which they can fight for their inner sense of being right, it will act as a plaster for their damaged personal value.

*Ressentiment* is formed out of all these affects “only if there occurs neither a moral self-conquest (such as genuine forgiveness in the case of revenge) nor an act or some other adequate expression of emotion (such as verbal abuse or shaking one’s fist), and if this restraint is caused by a pronounced awareness of impotence.” (Scheler, 1915, p. 26) Scheler defines three situations in which it is most likely to arise. The first, it is when one group is dominated by other group and the dominated group has to obey. The second, it is transmitted by psychological contagion. The third occurs when an impulse is suppressed violently and it changes personality in a negative way.

*Ressentiment* gains on its strength when any sort of impotence comes to play a role. The already mentioned mechanisms are present, but on top of that, the *ressentiment* subject is looking to replace their sense of inferiority by sense of equality, or, even better, superiority. At this point, resignation would be a sign of admitting that there are values which one cannot attain – that does not happen in this case. (Scheler, 1915, p. 35) What takes place is devaluation - of both the object that is able to attain the values and the values themselves. As a consequence, the object as well as the values become liable to the impulse to detract. The values seem completely unworthy pursuing. This is how value illusions and delusions gain their full strength. The relevance of this aspect is that it draws attention to “the question is of the fundamental value consciousness and desire”. (Scheler, 1915, p.34)

“The negativistic statement relieves the tension between desire and impotence and reduces our depression. Our desire now seems *unmotivated*; it weakens and the tension decreases. Thus our vital energy and feeling of power rises by several degrees, though on an illusory basis.” (Scheler, 1915, p.46) Having done nothing, the man of *ressentiment* now “feels better”. The values are not worth pursuing, the ones pursuing them got it all wrong and one feels themselves to be ok. They persuaded themselves about it. However, Scheler notes

that despite these arguments one generates, one perceives their world to have “a peculiar structure of emotional distress.” (Scheler, 1915, p. 47) This happens even though the values might be disarranged. Their original order stays in the back of one’s mind and one feels tension – there is dissonance between the original order of values and generated order. One is anxious, there is a blockage of energy. At this point, one feels themselves to be lost. There are no values to aspire to, there is nothing into which invest time and energy and one is not able to admit for themselves they got something wrong. Being inactive and justifying it through mechanisms of *ressentiment* does not suffice to make one feel good about themselves in a positive, constructive way. Scheler describes what he sees as the last stage of *ressentiment*. “Final stage of *ressentiment*: the man of *ressentiment* cannot justify or even understand his own existence and sense of life in terms of positive values such as power, health, beauty, freedom, and independence.” (Scheler, 1915, p. 48) This is when existential envy comes in. It is a stage in which one is envious of somebody else’s very existence, their very character and their very nature. In addition, this person might be falsely considered to be the one to blame for unhappiness, degradation and misfortune of the man of *ressentiment*. This is the strongest *ressentiment* possible. (Scheler, 1915, p. 30)

Having established the specifics of *ressentiment*, the mechanisms of it as experienced on societal level are to be paid attention to. First of all, *ressentiment* is most likely to manifest itself on societal level when there is dissonance between the status of a group and its real possibilities and power. The status might be traditional, political or constitutional. (Scheler, 1915, p. 28) Having in mind what was already said, it is not difficult to say why. People are formally told that there are certain rights and privileges that are guaranteed for them, while when it comes to it, they are not able to exercise them – either because of being dominated by another group or simply because of their own impotence. As Scheler puts it, “*Ressentiment* must therefore be strongest in a society like ours, where approximately equal rights (political and otherwise) or formal social equality, publicly recognized, go hand in hand with wide factual differences in power, property, and education.” (Scheler, 1915, p.28) It actually is the structure of society that upholds and supports *ressentiment*, *ressentiment* might be even determined and given by it. Scheler hints this is very dangerous, since people, the, have tendency to perceive this as destiny, since it is given by social order and hierarchy, therefore formally established. It makes *ressentiment* much stronger.

### **Preliminary Application of Kierkegaard's, Nietzsche's and Scheler's Thoughts**

As already stated above, the basic common trait of the accounts of leveling and *ressentiment* provided by Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and Scheler is action not being possible. A logical consequence of non-acting is inability (and impossibility) to achieve goals and satisfy desires. All three thinkers, then, describe a worldview that becomes internalized as a result of this inability. This worldview always has specific moral and emotional aspects which, for the most part, fall within larger content of value order and its possible disarrangement. They all pay great attention to this aspect. Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and Scheler delineate three various accounts of coping mechanisms, emotional states, ways of understanding of the self as well as creative potential entailed in and characteristic for *ressentiment*. The purpose of this section is to pinpoint criteria for evaluation of the Russian case later on for three somehow interconnected, but separate and distinct accounts of *ressentiment*.

#### A. Kierkegaard

Kierkegaard describes two periods, the passionate and the reflective age. The first one has something that is missing in the second one – inwardness. (However, inwardness that is lacking in the reflective age, which is again to be attained, is not qualitatively different from inwardness in the passionate age.) Inwardness is closely tied with commitment and self-sacrifice. When one embraces the quality of inwardness, they are able to make decisions which are based on their subjective understanding of themselves and the world, as opposed to outside criteria – for Kierkegaard, the public. Having inwardness, one is not swept by the masses, but able to understand themselves as an individual. The crucial distinction between the passionate and the reflective age is that in the first one, there is more action and in the second one, there is more thinking. However, it does not mean that deliberation and reflection are obstacles to action automatically. What is interesting to note is that action and making decisions do not necessarily refer to movement in the physical sense of the world – it could be purely a matter of attitude. Therefore, the first issue to consider, is whether there was more action or deliberation in perestroika. Moreover, was a decision in the Kierkegaardian sense of the word made? Would Kierkegaard consider the times of perestroika to be passionate or reflective?

If perestroika was to be regarded as having traits of the reflective age, one of Kierkegaard's arguments supporting this claim would be that perestroika was a „momentary mood peak“. Then, it would be a time period of temporary exaltation of masses as a result of somebody came up with a plan, which “sounded good”, reasonable and attractive. Russian population would, in this case, be thought to get excited for a certain period, but soon to slide back to indolence and passivity, reflection and various considerations. Perestroika would then be an occurrence, which could not be considered to bring long-term results and a profound change in society. This is not to say that profound changes did not occur during perestroika. The question is whether they occurred *because of* perestroika.

One aspect of the Kierkegaardian account that makes the analysis of Russian society in the times of perestroika a little more complicated is that Kierkegaard himself thought that “the problem of meaning and value is in no way going to be solved by social order in the future”. (A. Krjukov, personal communication, 1.11.2011) He thought that it is religion exclusively which offers a way of necessary introspection. If this statement is to be taken strictly, then, the discussion gains importance in a different realm – religious thought and individual conscience. Therefore, it makes it difficult to see how exactly perestroika or any other socially-wide alternative could restore inwardness, since it seems to be more of an individualistic issue. On the other hand, Kierkegaard himself provides an analysis on the level of society – society, which is different in the reflective and the passionate age and it is precisely inwardness that determines the difference. Still, it is difficult pinpoint the specifics of it when applied, since Kierkegaard does not delineate the steps of the processes really thoroughly. In the opinion of Kierkegaard, one is allowed to go against society and is justified to give their personal preference to inwardness, since that is a reliable criterion and after all, more important. In short, if an individual embraces inwardness, but where inwardness leads them is not in accordance with the path society has chosen, the individual should stick to inwardness as a guiding mechanism. (This is a point he would disagree on with Scheler. Scheler thinks it that a religious person does need to be in accord with religious order of a society – his political views are in favor of Christian democracy.)

Once inwardness is missing, then, the basis on which two people relate to each other is not their substance –as something unique, authentic, original about themselves- but envy. The quality of relations is lost. (There is a parallel to be seen with Nietzsche's observation that the slave morality is dependent and relies on what is outside.) Instead of relating to each other on



the basis of something positive, they relate to each other on the base of something negative. That is when *leveling* takes place. The question here is whether it is possible to extrapolate this relation also on relations of various groups within society or societies among each other. In this case, it could be said that unless Russia finds inwardness for itself and does not stop comparing itself to other states, it cannot get rid of *leveling*. The main questions would be, then, whether envy was present in Russian society during perestroika and how to find inwardness. However, Kierkegaard does not really precisely say whether at all and how it is possible to find inwardness for a country. Can a country as a whole attempt to regain it?

## B. Nietzsche

If to apply Nietzsche's account of *ressentiment* to Russian society in the times of perestroika, it is first and foremost necessary to figure out who was dominated by whom - if any domination occurred. For Nietzsche, *ressentiment* happens only as a result of interaction of two groups while one is denied action because of agency of the other one. If both groups are left on their own, they are their own rulers in their own space and there is no reason for any *ressentiment* to arise. There is only the master morality. However, if the priestly and knightly-aristocratic caste clash and the priestly caste is reduced to slavery, *ressentiment* is a tool for the priestly caste to regain power. This is how the slave morality is established and where it originates from. Since the priests cannot act, they contemplate. Contemplation leads them to seeing the situation in a more complex way. (In the initial stages of formation of *ressentiment*, the master morality is very easily distinguished by action, while the slave morality is characteristic of words – which only later might bring visible results, “actions”. However, “acting” does not necessary mean that one does not have *ressentiment*.) Contemplation also enables the feelings of the priests to get sharper and stronger since they accumulate without possibility of being released. The slave, literally, hates the master. (Nietzsche, 1886, p.33) His attempt to regain power might be not as much conscious as reflective. (Nietzsche, 1886, p.46) The combination of these two factors leads to “slave revolt in morality”. This revolt is a reaction to something what is outside. Precisely this “what is outside” denies them the privilege of acting out and towards “what is outside” is directed their revenge and hate. (As already mentioned, it only later gets internalized and the priests become “spiritually enslaved”.) As a result, a completely new conception of values is born. For analysis of perestroika, it is necessary to ask what the ratio of action and contemplation was,

but at the same time, it is even more crucial to ask whether it could be said that a new set of values was born.

From Nietzsche's point of view, another crucial question to bring up is whether the possible *ressentiment* that could be found in the Russian society in the times of perestroika was able to give Russians sense of power and self-worth. If all the other factors were present - if Russians were denied action by outside circumstances, if there was contemplation and explosion of negative and vengeful feelings, if there was a new concept of values - but the mentioned objective was not met, full-fledged *ressentiment* is not encountered. How did Russians feel about themselves, their nation and country during perestroika? Did they feel good about themselves? Powerful? Or maybe not so good? If Nietzsche was to give the answer, for him - by definition, in any nowadays modern society - the slave morality is definitely victorious. The master morality can exist only in a limited way, aspects of it can become parts of the slave morality - but it is subordinate to the slave morality. (However, the master and the slave morality both keep their distinct face, there is no mixing of the two - they do not qualitatively change.)

There are few other details that might be helpful in the process of analysis. The man of *ressentiment* becomes more profound. There is large amount of time spent in contemplation, it deepens him, he is not superficial. At the same time, he is not straightforward and upright with himself. He lies to himself in order not to admit and become aware of the worth of values the group that dominates him carries and embodies. In this way, he proves to be very cunning, since he is able to persuade himself that he is 'better off'. He thinks his situation is "for real" better than the situation of the group that is able to pursue the positive values. If he realizes he is weaker in any way, he makes himself think that being weaker is 'better' for this and that reason. Or, as Nietzsche puts it, "his unwillingness to revenge is called inability to revenge". From this perspective it is important to decide and understand how Russians understand value, which values they see as desirable, undesirable, 'good' and 'bad', 'good' and 'evil'.

### C. Scheler

When analyzing the Russian society from the perspective of the account of Scheler, it is important to notice whether Russians could express their emotions, if action was possible and they did not act or whether they were kept from action. This is crucial because, for

Scheler, *ressentiment* is the strongest when restraint is combined with impotence. He sees three possible sources of it – emotional contagion, domination or violent suppression of negative feelings which permanently change personality. What was the possible source of it in the Russian case? Another crucial criterion would be the need for revenge, which is defined by two factors – action is postponed, reaction cannot take place immediately, and there must be awareness of what it is for, the specific deed to be repaid. The following stages of *ressentiment* carry other characteristics to possibly observe on Russian society in the times of perestroika: impulse to detract, general touchiness, vengeful feelings directed towards what is general rather than what is specific (some common features are sufficient to cause a negative reaction of the man of *ressentiment* as opposed to a very unique, concrete aspects or an individual person) and the need of putting oneself into injurious position. “Putting oneself into an injurious position” does not necessarily mean that any specific harm was done recently. One has just internalized framework of thinking with this component and, now, they are more prone to interpretations of the world in this way. It becomes a permanent feature of their character –one starts considering themselves a victim in day-to-day situations. One hopes to heighten their damaged sense of self-worth with constant justifications. From there follows another feature characteristic of *ressentiment* - the need to bring oneself to the same level as the other, or even to a higher positions (which is oftentimes done through constant justifications of one’s attitude, deeds, character). Were any of these present in perestroika?

For Scheler, moreover, if there is resignation, it is an evidence that one recognizes certain value order and admits that one is simply not able to achieve certain goals – otherwise, it is value illusions and delusions that serve the purpose of lessening the tension between what one cannot achieve and what one desires to achieve, these value illusions and delusions bring relief. Instead of one saying to themselves that professional sports is great, but one simply does not have the constitution for it, one says to themselves that sports is for dumb people anyways, therefore they will neither aspire for that nor admit that it is great, but just not for them. The emotions which play the major role are envy, stiffness and general anxiety – they result into existential envy, being jealous of who the other person is in their very nature. What is interesting is that according to Scheler, secret *ressentiment* is hidden in every negation and criticism. (Scheler, 1915, p. 41)

Scheler contributes with a few interesting observations about *ressentiment* on societal level. He claims that structure of society is the most profound source of *ressentiment*, which is

even truer in cases in which there is dissonance between formal status and real power. When one thinks there are certain things they are capable of or society formally gives them this promise, whereas in reality, they sense they do not have the power or abilities to do it, that is a safe indicator of *ressentiment*.

#### D. Thematic Comparison of Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and Scheler

In terms of the primary cause of *ressentiment*, for Nietzsche, it is the status of a group that leads towards mechanisms which are to increase their power. In the end, though, slave morality becomes the establishment for the whole society – still, people react to it differently, some people are more likely to embrace it than others. (Nietzsche, 1886, p. 54) For Scheler, it seems certain kind of personalities or groups are more likely to compensate in a way that leads to *ressentiment*. A similarity to Nietzsche's understanding is that the priestly caste based on certain physiological and psychological type. Scheler (1915, p. 36) also mentions hereditary factors and social structure that play a huge role. "Hereditary factors" refer to historical and cultural background kept alive in society throughout generations. There might be various attitudes, emotions and knowledge present which might provide a fertile ground for *ressentiment*. "Social structure" refers to various hierarchies and divisions in society.

When examining *ressentiment* from the aspect of emotions accompanying it, for Kierkegaard, a certain anxiety when making a decision is always present and necessary, since an individual realizes the responsibility for their own actions – anxiety is the expression of it. However, still, envy present in the process of leveling represents a blockage of vital energies – people are envious of the ones who decided to act. This envy they feel does not permit them to do anything on their own, they are paralyzed. For Scheler, anxiety is a manifestation that the true order of values was overridden with a different set of values and the individual finds themselves in dissonance. Envy occurs when the need for vengeance shifts from a specific object to general sphere. Anxiety and envy are, as consequence, negative occurrences. For Nietzsche, these emotions are present in the process of comparison (slaves want to live the master life) but they are not fully acknowledged. Feelings for him are double-folded, on one hand, they are a blockage of vital energies as for Kierkegaard, on the other hand, they are creative. For Nietzsche, feelings naturally connect to will. "...the sensation of the state 'away from which', the sensation of the state 'towards which,' the sensations of this 'from' and 'towards' themselves, and then also an accompanying muscular sensation, ... Therefore, just

as sensations (and indeed many kinds of sensations) are to be recognized as ingredients of will, so, secondly, should thinking also: “in every act of the will there is a ruling thought – let us not imagine it possible to sever this thought from the “willing” as if any will would then remain over!” (Nietzsche, 1886, p.25)

In terms of result of *ressentiment*, for Kierkegaard – it is *leveling* – when authorities go unacknowledged, in society, there is only stiffness, passivity, observation and envy. For Nietzsche, the final stage is the herd man – a state, in which it becomes impossible for great men to exist, greatness simply becomes impossible to attain. For Scheler, it is existential envy - it means that one is jealous of who the other person is in their very essence. It signifies a complete neglecting of oneself as a unique individual. The opposite situation would be self-worth, self-confidence and general satisfaction with oneself. The question, then, is how to deal with differences among people, impotence, unfulfilled desires and subordinate positions. *Ressentiment*, though, seems not be the suitable answer. When *ressentiment* forms fully, desires seem unmotivated since there are no values to aspire to and no ambitions to fulfill. From a certain point of view, *ressentiment* is a very suitable cure for complex of inferiority – still, undesirable.

### **3. The Specifics of Russian Nationalism**

“Nationalism is primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and national unit should be congruent.” (Gellner, 1983, p.1) When this idea is present in society, it causes sentiment which might result into movement fueled by it. Once there is an attitude of mutual cohesion based on an affiliation to a nation, then this feeling might create an essence of argumentation in sphere of politics and lead to specific action. Rights, exception, exclusions, privileges might be requested based on requirement of retaining the conjunction of political and national unit. All depends on whether nationalist sentiment is fulfilled or violated. Violation of it means that a political unit is not successful in inclusion of all members of a nation in it, or it might be successful in it but also include greater number of foreigners than acceptable, or members of one national group might be located in more than one political unit and in this case, none of them can turn nationalist sentiment into a political principle because there is too much diffusion. According to Gellner, (1983, p.1) the most strongly felt violation of this sentiment is when political leadership is not representative of the national group. Speaking of nationalism, there is one distinction to be made. In popular usage, it is ethnic and civil nationalism that often get mixed up and are used interchangeably. Ethnic nationalism refers to a sentiment based on affiliation to a group of people sharing the same ethnic background, while civic nationalism relies on acknowledged and voluntary adherence to a set of specific values and loyalty to a country regardless of ethnicity. In case of Russia, ethnic nationalism is encountered.

According to Kotsubinsky, in Russia, the division between “us” and “them”, characteristic of nationalism, is more profound, since it has also been an integral part of national conscience and state ideology throughout history. (2007, p.402) In his work, Russian nationalism is explored within framework of All-Russian National League (“Vserossijskoj Nacionalnij Sojuz”). It was a political party that existed in between 1907 – 1917. The line of thought which developed as the ideology of this party illustrates well what is unique about nationalism rooted in Russia.

All-Russian National League had two specific goals. First, they wanted the Russian government to be always able to protect Russian nation from the pressure and subjugation of

foreigners. (At that time, it was Poles and Jews that were perceived as a threat. Overall, Russians, ‘great Russians’, composed more or less only 45 % of the population. 20 % were Ukrainians, ‘small Russians,’ and Belorussians, while the rest were foreigners.) This attitude of suspicion towards foreigners was supported from the underlying assumption that the foreigners residing in Russia would always want to pursue their national interests as opposed to them peacefully living and accepting the values of Russia. (In the case of Ukrainians, this assumption was to a certain extent confirmed by Ukrainian intelligence trying to prove to ‘small Russians’ that they were Ukrainians in fact.) Secondly, their target was to implement reforms so that Russia would be able to stop being dependent economically and culturally on foreigners, protect itself from disintegration and possibly from loss of the Western regions. (Kotsubinsky, 2007, p.421) So, on one hand, they wanted to modernize Russia based on liberal and constitutional principles, taking example from Europe, (Kotsubinsky, 2007, p. 462) and, on the other hand, they wanted to guarantee the political supremacy of ‘great Russians’.

There was a contradiction in the attitude of the League in terms of the relation to the Russian state. It consisted in polemics about autocracy and constitutional mode of government. (Kotsubinsky, 2007, p. 435) The fact they saw autocracy as necessary for Russia stemmed out of two reasons. The 1<sup>st</sup> one was that Russians had always been regarded (by themselves, too) as ones who were not able to govern themselves. The 2<sup>nd</sup> one was that Russia is a multi-ethnic country with a wide social spectrum and the presumption would be it is not possible to vindicate Russian national interests without autocratic leadership. They were against any form of federation - the political aim was to keep Russia centralist. (Kotsubinsky, 2007, p. 464) At the same time, their understanding of ‘nation’ was based on a European democratic model – it was the idea of self-governance rooted in liberal-constitutional principles. (Kotsubinsky, personal communication, 11.07.2012) They saw this as the only way to be able to level with other European nations. Still, they were aware that any form of constitutional governance could tear the empire from inside – nationalists wanted to compete not only with foreigners outside Russia, but also with foreigners inside Russia, since they perceived them as a threat. This serves as evidence for the absolute absence of civic nationalism.

It is also very interesting to look at the contradictory viewpoints of the League on the Russian nation. Here, again, two tendencies clashed. On one hand, they felt the need to model

Russia after a Western pattern and on the other hand, the self-definition of Russian national ascendance was also present. Russian nationalists needed to prove that Russia is not dependent on Europe, that is can develop by itself, on its own. There were three main ideas that clashed. First, there is a claim that Russia develops based on the same principles as any other Western nation. Second, there is a claim that Russia is completely different from all other Western nations, cannot be compared with them and has its own principles unique to it. Third, there is no such a thing as Russian nation, because Russia is such a vast country and there are so many types of a Russian in it. (Kotsubinsky, 2007, p. 466)

Attempts can be made to define Russian nationalism based on unique characteristics of its people. However, this also leads to a problem – since it is based on comparison to foreigners living in Russia or other European nations. Another possibility is to define its uniqueness based on strong government and the fact that Russia is an influential empire. Still, Kotsubinsky agrees with the opinion of Pavel Ivanovich Kovalevskij, which is that national consciousness is too low and people do not acknowledge their own dignity. From there it follows that people cannot adequately appreciate each other as well as the value of private property. (Kotsubinsky, 2007, p. 448) There is lack of citizenship, which then leads to anarchic forms of social organization and aversion to any form of order. (Kotsubinsky, 2007, p.448)

The ideologues of the League were looking for reasons why the Russian nation is not able to stand up to its potential. They subscribed it to lack of will characteristic of Slavic nations, namely their inability to work and skill of standing up for themselves. (Kotsubinsky, 2007, p. 453) Besides this argument, they also helped themselves with historical arguments trying. These would be (1) Russia finding itself under the domination of the Mongols, which then influenced the Russian character; (2) constant outside threat, which is determined by the geography of Russia – there are no natural barriers to protect the Russian territory; (3) long-lasting serfdom, which would be the cause of apathy, lack of ambition, no understanding of private property and alcoholism; (4) influence of foreigners; (5) great territory. (Kotsubinsky, 2007, p. 456) They thought that in order to become wealthy and successful, a country needs concentration of powers and them being accumulated from history, which in case of Russia would be not possible because of the colorfulness of the country, vastness and absent general unity.



The League hoped for some sort of national uprising. There was hope that all these facts might have been a cause for Russia not being so great, but that those things belong to the past – a kind of “historical abracadabra” - and now, Russia should “wake up” using its great Slavic qualities, not the bad ones. Since they were aware of the fact that the political and citizenship values were lacking, there was the necessity of the government to protect Russians, so they could step by step “rise”. (Kotsubinsky, 2007, p. 458)

The idea of Russian supremacy as presented in the ideology of the League could never get across, clearly, one of the reasons being the obvious disagreement with it by the large number of foreigners residing in Russia. The League never got any real political influence, it never presented a coherent political strategy, because its ideology was too contradictory. Not getting real power, but plotting strategies, justifications and deliberations – that by itself looks like a sufficient indicator of *ressentiment*.

In addition to the account of nationalism presented through the ideology and opinions of All-Russian National League, the picture of Russian nationalism would not be even close to sufficient without the thoughts of Petr Yakovlevich Chadaev and Aleksey Stepanovich Khomjakov. Chadaev (1829 – 1830) speaks of the Russian experience as unique in the negative sense - greatness of Russia is to consist in its inferiority. Russia, in his eyes, is the “champion in the competition of losers”. (Kotsubinsky, personal communication, 15.7.2012) Chadaev claims that Russia is completely isolated from other countries in the world. It never developed together with or alongside other nations and it does not belong anywhere. For him, some order is necessary for a nation to develop. What Russians lack are even the most basic customs and routine. The basic knowledge about society and life is, supposedly, just a theory in Russia. He does not speak about morals and philosophy, but organization of everyday life. He speaks of, so to say, day-to-day experience of Russian people. This day-to-day experience, according to him, needs to get advanced at least to a certain degree so that “soul and reason get comfortable”. Society needs some basic rules about everyday life and some great achievements of arts – these are the things on which it can start its growth according to him. Chadaev thinks Russia does not have any of that. Russians do not understand and cannot live with the idea of privacy. They are not able to perceive themselves as individuals, they always have to live in awareness of a connection to something greater. They cannot draw a line between what is communal and what is individual. Therefore, they would also have problems embracing responsibilities tied to that – feeling responsibility for “one’s day” and being aware

it makes an impact. Everyday customs and routine, knowledge about society and sense of order drag along with that. (Kotsubinsky, personal communication, 15.7.2012) “Things that in other nations seems to be simply a matter of custom and instinct, those things we have to pound into our head with a hammer.” Chadaev further claims that Russia just tries to adopt thoughts that come from somewhere else, but since these thoughts do not have the necessary background in Russia to get really established – Russia “grows but does not grow up”. Moreover, it can just replace one set of thought with another and it does not make much difference. In Russia, there is certain awareness of duty, justice, law and order lacking, which does not allow children born into this environment to get support from it and embrace these values. Russia has courage, but it does not have depth, according to him. He says that after being freed from the rule of the Mongols, instead of attaining more freedom Russia fell into an even more severe form of serfdom. Would the negativistic attitude of Chadaev have any common traits with *ressentiment*? To neglect one’s value means not to have value. Since Russians do neglect their value, it means they cannot actualize their potential on their own.

Khomjakov opposes the view of Chadaev and sees positives in aspects Chadaev interprets in a negative light. Chadaev calls the situation of Russia “isolation”, Khomjakov says that Russia is the connection of East and West and it unites the best of both. He thinks that truth is discovered and embraced once and for all, therefore there is no need for it to develop and grow in the way Chadaev wants it to happen. For Khomjakov, Russia has discovered this truth. What will always keep Russia afloat is the “ancient Russian element” and modesty of Russian people it entails. He claims that if Russia did not live from the strong impressions and knowledge of its past, it would not exist anymore, but fall subordinate unto somebody else’s rule. He says there are plenty of valuable and profound thinkers in Russia. According to him, all advancement of European nations and their beliefs were a cover for something else in case that all that is supposed to matter is material well-being. He thinks that religion does not ask people what are the conditions of their life. Therefore, Russia should in no case worry about lagging a bit behind in terms of its wealth and richness of its people. Compared with Khomjakov, would Chadaev’s account would just be just slightly more depressive? Well, probably not. While Khomjakov’s account is only outward looking, Chadaev’s account is at least self-critical – an example of a deeper form of *ressentiment*, something Nietzsche would appreciate.

#### 4. Pre-Perestroika Milestones

To set a firm background for the discussion of *ressentiment* and its specific manifestations during perestroika, let's first briefly touch on its display in the ideology of Marxism-Leninism. As a material for that, a lecture of Issak Izrailevich Minc "The Great October and Societal Progress of Humanity" is used. It was never presented, it was only printed and served as a basis of Brezhnev's speech, which he made in 1977 for the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Revolution.

The 1<sup>st</sup> trait of *ressentiment* can be found in all the daringly self-assured statements about the world-wide influence and importance of the Great October Socialist Revolution and its outcome - Soviet Russia. Allegedly, Russia has given the world a great gift, since it put into practice a societal arrangement and ideology devoid of all forms of exploitation. The author claims that Lenin made all steps necessary for joint ownership to work, which is to be considered a great success in the economic realm. In experience, socialism failed. Therefore, the need to justify it exists. It is executed through lying to oneself, which gives "the concept" a second chance. *Ressentiment* is already present. In addition to this, this justification is also a proof of the need of being always right. Furthermore, Minc claims Soviet Russia was successful at removal of all inequality within society. At the same time, Russia has become equal and possible even superior to all other nations on the world stage. For Minc, the only difference is that Soviet Russia has avoided capitalism, which should be in a way evidence for its cleverness. The fact that socialism in Soviet Russia did not begin to work properly immediately was because of the war and imperialism. In terms of *ressentiment*, the need to level with other actors as a result of self-perceived lack of self-worth is evident, the urge to come up mechanisms to 'elevate' oneself from one's feeling of inferiority in order to become equal to others is easy to detect. In addition to that, the projection of the blame for malfunctioning of the socialist mode of production in the beginnings of its application to imperialism and war is an apparent feature of *ressentiment*. Instead of admitting that socialism simply did not function, regardless of any outside or inside circumstances that Russia found itself in, it tries to find something to blame it on – the always present dependency on what is "outside". Minc also notes that when other countries in the future will want to take the same path, they should not copy the path of Russia, since this form of government will have

probably been creative of better, more mature forms that are to be taken up. In his point of view, socialism and peace are two terms that cannot exist without each other. Through international cooperation in Europe the USSR is supposed to guarantee security and peace. Here, the need to draw a picture of one's importance for others and determine one's role is palpable. It, again, has to do with the need to justify one's self-worth and the urge to make oneself important, for themselves - through manifesting and establishing this importance on relation with an external actor. These are the main features of *ressentiment* present in the official rhetoric of the Soviet Regime.

### **The Pessimism of Amalrik**

In 1969, Andrey Amalrik published an essay with quite a provocative title, "Will the Soviet Union Survive until 1984?". The analytical prophesies of this Soviet dissident caught a lot of attention and caused polemical reactions at the time of its publication home and abroad, were re-published after the breakdown of the Soviet Union in Russia and today, still, they are a source of a profound insight into political and social conditions then. It is a very complex and comprehensive overview of many topics later addressed during perestroika and also helps to understand extended whereabouts of the communist regime.

Amalrik notes that the period of 1952 - 1957 did not only observe great movement top-down, but also movement in the classes of society which did not participate directly in the higher power game. The beginnings of this movement are traced to the cultural opposition. Its goal was not to protest against the established regime itself, but against its culture, which the regime, of course, perceived as its essential part. The opposition published essays and articles, organized meetings and exhibitions, a lot of youth joined and journals were printed out. This resulted in the creation of samizdat, which embodied two clashing tendencies present in society. On one hand, it was the pressure of society to obtain more socio-political information. On the other hand, it was the wish of government to always "prepare" the information before consumed by society - samizdat was a way of protest against this. The government opposed more strongly to the samizdat than to the cultural opposition. This movement laid grounds for another movement - the democratic one. It had three essential characteristics. First, it did not

have a tightly-set organizational structure; second, it had a specific goal and a specific way to achieve it; third, it wants to work legally and within “glasnost” (“publicity”).

Amalrik further mentions three positive ideologies, which developed as more than simply a negative refusal of the regime. They were original Marxism-Leninism, Russian Christianity and liberalism. The distinction between positive and negative ideology is that a positive one suggests what to do, it offers a constructive plan of how to address certain issues present in society, while a negative one forms as a reaction to the present regime- it only filters the negative attitude and criticism. It is very easy to guess what these three ideologies stand for. Original Marxism-Leninism wants to build socialist society in Russia, rid of the experience that Russia had already had with it at that point and start with it anew, in the correct mode and in the right way. Christian ideology sees as the most important factor Christian morality and the specific role of Russia among the Slavic nations as presented by the slavyanofils. (‘Slavyanofism’ profiled in the middle of 19<sup>th</sup> century in Russia as a philosophical and literary stream proclaiming the uniqueness of Russia and its distinct typology from the Western nations.) This version of liberalism wants to build the society on the basis of democratic values as seen in West, but preserve joint ownership. The main issue with all of these ideologies is that they are not enough specified. Moreover, none of them allows for expression of the negative relation towards the regime as felt by the Russian populace at that time. From a certain perspective, it is good, since they are positive ideologies and that is desirable. Still, they fail to embody the negativistic inclinations within the society. The opposition to the regime, the democratic movement, then, might develop based as a mixture of these three half-cooked ideologies or be based upon what they have in common. What they have in common would be the rule of law and respect for basic human rights. (This is important to note and remember for distinction of what ideologies played a role during perestroika.)

A substantial part of Amalrik’s essay is devoted to class analysis of Russian society of the Soviet era. It is interesting since his point of view clashes with the Marxist-Leninist idea of class. Marx thought that the middle class embodied mediocrity (Marx, 1844, p. 63) and “abbreviated” the issues of classes to the class struggle of two of them, while Amalrik thinks the middle class is crucial and important. Of course, Amalrik and Marx stood on the opposite side of the river. Majority of the democratic movement is composed by academics and middle class. He considers this unfortunate, since academics are the ones willing to discuss anything,

but they are not so likely to go out there in the street. There is a parallel to Kierkegaard's distinction of the two ages, the reflective and passionate age as well as Nietzsche's discussion of action versus thinking with the master and the slave morality. The 2<sup>nd</sup> largest group presented in the democratic movement is middle class. ('Middle class' can be interchanged with the term 'intelligentsia', but Amalrik rather uses the term 'middle class' since it is free of other connotation in the Russian context, unlike the term 'intelligentsia'.) Members of middle class are capable of executing intellectual work. This group is a class of specialists. For them, democratic values are the ones most important. They require pragmatic and intellectual freedom as well as rule of law since this is what is crucial not only for the preparation for their jobs (education) but also for their execution. These artists, scientists, government workers, teachers and others are necessarily in favor of progress and complex development of state. By themselves, they are able to estimate their place in society properly and by the same token, their value for society. However, there are a couple of substantial reasons why it will be difficult for the success of the democratic movement to rely on this class. In Russia, long-term subjugation of the most active and independent members of the society has taken place - middle class is not an exception. Middle class is a group within which the attitude of self-perceived lack of strength to achieve anything is most likely to be present. Government workers tend to be very passive, since their work is composed of following given commands. A government worker has no responsibility, he might do things which he would never do on his own – but he still feels like he did something good, fulfilled a service. Amalrik uses this example since according to him, in Russia, everybody has psychology of a government worker. The regime tries to be present in every area of life. It attempts to intrude life of a writer to the same extent as life of a kolkhoz worker. Middle class is not an exception and as a consequence, it will rather accept the regime than go through the difficult process of changing it. On one hand, sense of dissatisfaction might be present. On the other hand, everyday life of everyone is to a smaller or greater extent lived with this forced connection to something greater. This awareness of something greater happens to be formative of identity. Therefore, going against the regime brings even greater sense of discomfort, since it feels like directly going against oneself. At the same time, it is very tricky – it feels like there is no one to blame, which might bring a great sense of discomfort and dissatisfaction.

An intriguing curiosity is encountered. Since the regime itself has already undergone so many changes, the people working in the state bureaucracy grew accustomed to change and they became very obedient in the process of executing it. They are easy to be guided. In a

way, change becomes a habit. Therefore, they can keep the regime functioning and constantly nourish it with the process of changes, but they cannot really 'change' it – convert to a different mode, re-build it from the grounds. This is great for the regime, it is exactly what it aims at - it wants to keep itself in place. Changes are parts of its status quo, they are in its very nature. Amalrik notes something very interesting. At this point (1969) regime was in the 'defense mode', it did not want to 'attack'. What he means is that the regime rather than being aggressive and imposing order on society, it would allow for small changes and concessions. That would be its strategy for survival. What he means is that the regime was not so strong anymore. Allowing for small transformations would be its survival strategy.

In addition to the problem of middle class, bureaucratic apparatus and self-defense of the regime, there is the issue of the rule of law. According to Amalrik, the Soviet model embodies two contradictory tendencies – the formal need to confirm the regime by laws and the praxis of distribution of state order through the form of silent approval. Through formally non-approved instructions, all the clerks know exactly what to do despite the fact such a proceeding might not be included in the constitution or, in a more extreme case, go directly against it. The Soviet regime showed inclination to sign international agreements, pro forma, in order to camouflage the absence of the rule of law. The reasons why it would be in any case extremely difficult to establish the rule of law in Russia is that government is set up and works in a way that is in opposition to the rule of law and people do not really understand what rule of law is in practical life. It has been like that for a long time. There is also class egoism of workers who would do anything to stop what might threaten their practical activities and the rule of law is in contradiction with the class order. Neither workers nor elites need and desire the rule of law. Elites don't want law to be a hindrance for them to do what they want, workers do not care for concepts and keeping them in everyday life as long as there is work and wages guaranteed for them, by any means. In fact, middle class is the only one who really needs the rule of law. Therefore, the position of regime is that it needs to be constantly breaking the law and establish its position by 'non-formal instructions'. An example of this would be public processes against the ones who have trespassed against the regime, which is what is supposed to send the message. At the same time, it needs to at least partially keep the laws to retain some sense of stability and structure. However, it cannot keep them completely, since that would be steps in favor of middle class, which needs them. Middle class needs the rule of law, because they are the professionals – they need it to get

education, keep working. The regime wants everything but to give the middle class either real power or sense of power.

Amalrik points out a very interesting occurrence, which he calls “ideology of reformism”. It refers to the wishful thinking of many in Russia who believe that step by step the unfavorable conditions will get better and that by small changes and reforms Russian stagnant society will turn into dynamic and liberal one. Amalrik considers this point of view a naïve one. He thinks that Russian society still has so little freedom that true liberalization is impossible. Moreover, the problem is in the process itself – its nature is highly suspicious and very unlikely could ever lead to success. No radical reforms have yet occurred - no radical reforms are likely to occur. The possibility would be if constant pressure from people would transform the regime step-by-step, but for that, people would have to have a plan and follow it. However, the regime itself does not want to be reformed, the fact it is easier and possible to reform means that the regime is getting older and weaker. In practice, there would have to be somebody strong enough to reform the regime properly, with excellence. Since -neither the regime nor the people are strong enough - what it ends up being about is centering attention to the “outside”, possibly looking for examples, criticizing or just being envious or having something happen, since neither autocracy nor democracy seem to be workable solutions. (“Old” regimes might often be well-established regimes, but the condition of that would be that they cannot be based solely on pressure towards its people, since as soon as this pressure would for any reason stumble, the regime loses its basis and starts to fall apart. At the same time, if Russians embody the Slavic quality of subservience, it is simply not possible to do it otherwise, since it would be not in their nature to pressure the system, they would want the system to pressure them instead.) Of course, all depends on the regime itself, too. It can willingly take on changes or resist them.

For majority of society, though, it is not the regime that gets blamed – they do not figure that things could look differently. Rather, it is some intermediary parts – like administration of a factory – that are to blame the responsibility for things not working out well. Amalrik terms this as “passive” dissatisfaction. In connection to the discussion of middle class, Amalrik thinks that the regime reforms itself only as fast as middle class reforms itself. It is the class capable of constructive action and strength in contrast to the explosive lower classes. (Intelligentsia considered themselves to be the middle class together with ‘lower bureaucrats’. The elites were considered ‘higher bureaucrats’. Economically,



intelligentsia was worse off than the town proletariat but better off than the village proletariat.)

Russians have issues with self-governance and personal freedom and responsibilities tied to that. Amalrik says that a Russian man will see a danger in that – somebody else could gain more than himself, or gain something on his injury. One of the problems is that there is no such a thing as appreciation of personality in Russia, one could appreciate government, strength, power – but not individuality and personality as such. Personal is perceived as an opposite of public, and it is perceived negatively. Russians imagine their establishment as just because it is strong and vice versa. If applying Nietzsche's thought on this situation, it could be said that Russians, as people, embrace the slave morality towards their rule, the state – the master morality.

The process of proletarianization gave birth to a peculiar class, a class of people who are neither workers nor farmers. They also have a double psychology – on one hand, they feel themselves to be owners of their estate, on the other hand they feel parts of a gigantic big enterprise. Also, in towns, there is a big class of people who have moved to towns from villages – who feel themselves lost in these towns, both scared and at the same time aggressive.

Amalrik claims that interests of Russians can be explained in two points – they look for material well-being and they have a very strong instinct for self-protection. There is no other basis for any ideology. Christian morality does not exercise such a strong influence anymore, and what was supposed to come in its place – the class morality – basically means following wishes of the government. The last possibility in this case would be “great-russian nationalism” with its expansive tendencies. (Nationalism would be the last-resort strategy for a positive ideology for Russia – besides material well-being and self-defense instincts are not sufficient. Amalrik claims, though, this is very problematic, too.) In this case, to have imperialists as an enemy is not sufficient. The best enemy would be foreigners living in the country. However, that is very dangerous for a country in which multiple nationalities reside – it could disturb and distress the country from inside. Then, what remains in the end for people, is to believe in their strength of their own government which scares other nations, but its citizens are aware of the strength of their own government – it works for them. Also, it nicely ties to what was said before – the Russian tendency for obedience. (They cannot direct their

expansive tendencies outside because of lack of strength – therefore, they are looking at where to direct them – foreigners living in Russia.)

## 5. Voices of Perestroika

In the times of perestroika, we can speak about three leading ideologies. The first one is „democratic socialism“ – its basic idea is to return to Lenin’s principles. This stream of thought has in itself parts of both original Marxism-Leninism and liberalism that Amalrik referred to. The second one is “Soviet Conservatism”, which is basically neostalinism. The third one is “Russian nationalism”, which at that point put stress on orthodox religion, monarchism and anti-Semitism. They wanted to go back to Russia that was lost in 1917. (Kotsubinsky, personal communication, 24. 7. 2012)

The goal of perestroika was to reform socialism. The question is how. Amalrik’s attitude towards this would be clear – he would coin any attempt to reform as ‘naïve reformism’. All answers to this question could be given along the 3 ideological lines mentioned above. Moreover, all of them are heavily infused with Marxist-Leninist terminology. Any piece of writing that originated in the period of perestroika will in one way or another touch the problem of the economy (over whether to favor planned or market economy) and it will also concern the interpretation of history (historical policies and figures of Soviet Russia after 1917). Thus, the majority of the suggestions, to a smaller or greater extent, rely on an example from the past, namely, from Lenin’s New Economic Policy of the 20’s. The “myth of Lenin’s socialism” expresses the belief that strategic planning combined with flexible command is the path perestroika should choose. If put this way, socialism as ideology and as a way of societal arrangement is cleansed and ready for another use, since the generations that lived under Stalin and Soviet Russia until perestroika lived under a misshapen version of socialism. According to Nikita Nikolaevich Moiseev, Lenin’s New Economic Policy was a genius invention and it was unfortunate that Stalin rejected it. However, it does not mean that it could not be used right now. (1988) Economy is complicated and therefore, “goal – plan –mechanism of realization” (Moiseev, 1988) is absolutely necessary for it to work.

Leonid Mihajlovich Batkin attempts to clarify Lenin’s intentions with the NEP. The goal was not to exert a plan on society, restrain it and limit its creative possibilities. Rather,

the party was to look at real possibilities of economy and, based on them, support the self-movement of the new society. (Batkin, 1988) In Lenin's words, he describes that the state can move only towards "supposed" socialism, which was never yet realized – only in that way the state can become the tool of the society, not vice versa. Batkin presents a view that the soviet system will exist for sure, keeping the one-party mechanism. Even when it might be radically democratized, having market economy included, but still under the guidance of the party. (Batkin, 1988)

Grigorij Grigorevich Vodolazov (1988) claims that it is in the very nature of Marxist dialectic for proletariat revolutions to keep going back and address issues that seem to have been already addressed. It is in their contradictory nature. It is normal that these revolutions constantly criticize themselves. The problem was, however, that the possibilities that perestroikas offered in the past were not sufficiently used, all the objective criteria were not sufficiently taken into an account. Therefore now, when all the objective criteria are to be taken into account – perestroika is to be successful.

A. Bobin blames the malfunctioning of socialism on Stalin, since he put the imperial interests of Russia ahead of the interests of its citizens, of socialism. He does not refuse to call Stalin a powerful historical figure; however, he hesitates to call Stalin a powerful socialist figure. (Bobin, 1988) At the same time he perceives, that Russia is behind the leading countries of the world by 50 – 100 years – he feels the need to bridge this distance. The way to do it, again, would be to take into account real possibilities of man and state and round out productive relations according to democratic principles. (Bobin, 1988)

The words of one of the prominent actors of perestroika, Aleksandr Nikolaevich Yakovlev, go along very similar lines. "There is no alternative to perestroika...Principles of perestroika are distinctively determined: more democracy, more socialism. Perestroika today – a social practice..." (1988) According to him, the enemy of perestroika is the layer of customs, habits of thought that relate to the past – specifically, he refers to the mode of administrative-bureaucratic methods of command, with which personal interests are tied. Therefore, great attention needs to be paid to which tendencies of perestroika actually work for it, and which ones work against it. The goal is to "endeavor to detect substance of historical processes, to mark off what is objective and subjective, necessary from accidental,

what really served the concern of socialism from what brought it harm – in our own eyes and in the eyes of the whole world.” (Yakovlev, 1988)

What is interesting is that in the times of perestroika, the word patriotism carried an absolutely positive meaning with itself. Yakovlev speaks of patriotism of socialist transformation, a patriot is someone who is willing to work for the good of the country. With it is connected the wish to bring new and true light to questions of the past, so that the ones who suffered under the regime of the past are not neglected and unrecognized. Of course, this is regarding the personality of Stalin.

### **Andreeva**

In opposition to the above presented views stands the stance of Nina Andreeva “Ne Mogu Postupatsya Principami” (“I cannot resign on the principles”) published in press in 1988. She looks suspiciously at the way glasnost enabled opened discussion; she thinks it might lead to misunderstanding of crucial terms, debasement of values which have been long maintained in society in a positive way and, as a consequence, confusion of young generation resulting in nihilism. As she clarifies in the opening lines of her article, she is a teacher at Technological Institute in Leningrad, understands the environment of the university and sees the atmosphere among students and the questions they are asking. Therefore, she decided to voice her opinion publicly.

First and foremost, she believes it is crucial to vindicate the good name of the bearer of the regime, especially Stalin. She claims that his personality cannot be reduced to abstract moralization and he needs to be acknowledged for the fact that he navigated the country through complicated and bad times. One of the sources of national pride should be the result of the WW2, Russia as “a great power, its place and role in the stormy and changing world” (Andreeva). One has to judge history by specific historical results, since one can never see the exact historical coincidences in retrospect.

Nina Andreeva thinks that good values were pursued in education of the youth in the era of communism. These were almost ascetic personal modesty and readiness to serve the country. She compares this with pragmatic worldview which entails business making, money

spending, foreign influence and pop culture. In addition to this, in her opinion, the discussion going on in perestroika is not only political, ideological and moral, but also social. She claims that the ones who felt themselves unjustly rid of material well-being in 1917 are now planning to put revenge on the society and pursue their interests anew. Could the inclination to find an internal enemy be an element of *ressentiment*?

Andreeva declares her outrage at statement of one of her students that class struggle and the leading role of the proletariat are outdated terms. She also despises statements by her fellow academic that relations of two states are rid of any indication of class struggle. Whether to admit the leading role of the proletariat and the party in perestroika or not is one of the main issues that comes up for Andreeva when discussing perestroika overall.

Adapting thoughts of Aleksandr Andreevich Prohanov, Andreeva delineates his (her also) understanding of ideological movement present in perestroika. It is either a model of “leftist-liberal socialism of the intelligentsia” or “smallholder socialism”. The first group speaks about value of personality, democracy, technocratic visions, capitalist values and modernization in the cultural area. She blames them for their attempts to change the history of socialism, to only see its mistakes and to not acknowledge its achievements. What is also characteristic of their worldview is “nationalism-free internationalism”. The reason this is an unwelcomed occurrence for Andreeva is that it lowers patriotism in a country, national pride and national dignity, all of which are important. Whereas for the leftist-liberal socialism of the intelligentsia, this occurrence is desirable because, for this ideology, nationalism-free internationalism is the necessary precondition for nations “melting” into an international community.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> groups, the “smallholder” socialists, want to go back to Russia as it was before socialism. They think that all the values that had been slowly built up in Russia, were distraught in socialism. They want to fight against corruption, alcoholism, want to solve ecological problems, advocate historical monuments, fight against mass culture and consumer society. (It is interesting, since it is “smallholder” socialism because of which Marx thought that socialism was possible in Russia, since its form already occurred in peasant communities. [Marx, 1848])

What the Russian nationalists have to say in terms of happenings of perestroika does not entail a lot of subtlety. Their ideas were best represented in the magazine 'Pamjat' ('Memory'). For Russian nationalists, there were two enemies - communism and Zionists. They thought that Zionists were a world-wide threat. They were thought to be the reason why the world is in state of unrest – they were constantly draftings plans how to take over the world. Therefore, they were to be closely to be paid attention to and fought against. (Vasilev)

## 6. *Ressentiment* in Perestroika

One of the objections that are likely to be taken up towards the analysis in this section is accusation of extrapolation and lack of principles of social science. The answer to that is that the way the argument is built in this thesis never claimed to embrace the quality of 'scientific' in the everyday sense of the word. This is philosophical thought of three distinct, renowned thinkers and an attempt to apply their teaching concerning society to a society - within the framework of their philosophy.

To sum up, one of the reasons '*ressentiment*' is such a thrilling concept is that it offers new tools of analysis and a new point of view for understanding, plainly said, why we want certain things and what are our reasons for that. To put in a more sophisticated way, it links value consciousness and desire. (Scheler, 1915, p.34) Therefore, this will also be the central theme of the following chapter. What were leading writers during perestroika claiming Russians wanted? What were the justifications for these desires and goal?

### A. Kierkegaard: "Is There Inwardness?"

One interesting question to ask of Kierkegaard is whether it matters what the passionate age looked like. The proposed answer is not. Rather, his goal would be to inspire. His hope would be that the men of excellence would remember passion, realize they miss it, recognize it and would start making decisions and acting in fashion Kierkegaard would be satisfied with. If this state was to be evoked with some help of nostalgia for something that never existed, Kierkegaard probably would not mind. Looking at perestroika from this point of view, something very similar happened. It was the myth of the NEP that was to inspire movement in society. It is not a bad strategy to refer to something great to make people inspired. However, Kierkegaard's goal with this would be to regain the quality of inwardness. What is the quality to be regained when the object to aspire to is economic policy and the historical figure of Lenin? Well, adherents of original Marxism would argue otherwise, but Kierkegaard's answer is clear – no social order is ever a suitable answer in quest for meaning and value.



If it is to be said that the adherents of more liberal thinking were looking to transpose respect of values like dignity, private property and personal freedom to Russia, it could be asked, where they got their inspiration from. The West? If so, what was their motive? Maybe envy? If Kierkegaard's analysis of relations among people could be applied to relation of the US and the USSR, this "negatively unifying principle" could never possibly lead to gaining of substance to build inwardness, it could only contribute to more leveling.

Kierkegaard would probably enjoy the line of thinking of Khomjakov, they could bond over the religious values and the fact, that as long as one embraces inwardness within, it does not matter what is surrounding him. The material condition of a nation – not an issue at all. The same for Kierkegaard – the highest values can be reached through subjectivity. However, Khomjakov has it that truth is discovered once and for all. Kierkegaard would strongly disagree on this point. Religion for him means communication and commitment, but it does not mean that all is set for one.

As mentioned above, it is difficult to determine the relation between inwardness and society. Even though Kierkegaard executes his analysis on societal level, it is highly doubtful that society as a whole is his target audience. But, in connection to this, perestroika did, indeed, seem to be a "momentary mood peak", there were simply too many expectations from perestroika, combined with too much deliberation. There was a lot of pressure for changes from too many and immense diffusion of attention to too many issues. Perestroika wanted to reform socialism; the USSR disintegrated. It seems that a "decision" was made for Russia before Russia made a "decision" in the Kierkegaardian sense for itself. Who was the actor of that decision? History? Fate? Or circumstances beyond anyone's control and/or comprehension? Nietzsche would probably refer to "amor fati" and smile.

#### B. Nietzsche: "Who is 'Evil'?"

For Nietzsche, *ressentiment* is either pathetic or praiseworthy. It is pathetic when it does not succeed in regaining power, it is praiseworthy when it re-evaluates values and succeeds in attaining power again. Regardless of this, *ressentiment* is always a diagnosis since men of *ressentiment* cannot ever attain self-worth in the proper sense. They will always derive it based on comparison, which almost means not at all. An indicator of praiseworthy *ressentiment* would be when it aims at effective change. It means power is increased, there is

creativity. *Ressentiment* makes people more profound, more interesting. (Nietzsche, 1887, p.33) This would be in line with Nietzsche's "ultimate value" – serving life. (Nietzsche, 1887, p. 19) Characteristic of pathetic *ressentiment* are complaints and criticism, but status quo staying in place. Possibly, *ressentiment* might have provided some impetus for Russians to get through perestroika, but it might be suggested that manic phase did not last for long.

One of the indicators of *ressentiment* for Nietzsche is whether injury is experienced as destiny. As soon as one considers themselves to be a victim of some wrong-doing, or a victim of some outside forces, and - either accepts it but never forgives or does not accept it but is not able to do something about it – that would be what could be termed *ressentiment*. Is there any distinction between this and what Nietzsche would call "amor fati", "love of destiny"? "They submitted to punishment as one submits to an illness or to a misfortune or to death, with that stout-hearted fatalism without rebellion through which the Russians, for example, still have an advantage over us Westerners." (Nietzsche, 1887, p.83) The crucial distinction here would be to determine whether Russians face what happens to them with "stout-hearted fatalism" and accept it, or whether they perceive themselves caught up in the whirl of life, subordinate and weak to act, accumulating feelings of vengeance. There certainly is a difference between "love of fate" and just being fatalistic. For example, according to the opinion of Kotsubinsky (personal communication, 15.6.2012), Russians are prisoners of their own state, victim of the authoritarian attitude of it towards themselves. There is all those opinions saying that Russians cannot govern themselves, therefore, this kind of rule would be a necessity. Amalrik's description of bureaucrats would be supportive of the view of Kotsubinsky on this issue. However, Kotsubinsky develops this thought a little further – he thinks that slavyanofism and communism were inventions of the Russian people to overcome the Russian state. This offers an interesting analysis. If this was *ressentiment*, would it be pathetic or praiseworthy? Is this Russians getting further and further enslaved or are they exhibiting creativity with communism and slavyanofism through which they are regaining power? Was perestroika a result of the rule not being strong enough to hold its citizens in tension, but willingly taking changes on itself, or an evidence for Russian "stout-hearted fatalism"?

Maybe, it could be tentatively concluded that Russians embrace the slave morality in relation to the US, but the actor which stopped them from action would not be the US, but their own state. What do the Russians think they are dominated by? It cannot really be the

Americans. (On this point, some conservative Americans would disagree – they would say that it was the US, since the policies of Reagan and Thatcher aimed at destroying the USSR.) If it cannot be the Americans, it must be the Russian state. However, they cannot be jealous of the Russian state – therefore, they are jealous of the US. The cause and the emotional reaction towards it get split. In connection to this it is interesting to note that the relation towards the US constantly changes based on what the current state of affairs at home. It is the directly proportional ratio -the more promising affairs at home look, the better the relation to the external world and vice versa. (Moreover, democracy in place is enough of a sign that slave morality is victorious over master morality, both psychologically as well as intellectually. (Nietzsche, 1887, p.30) Therefore, it is not so crucial to say whether it was *ressentiment* directed towards Russian state or outside Russia.)

There is a stream of opinions which claim that anti-americanism is directly a part of Russian nationalism, regardless of what the current situation is with the relation of these two empires. (This is not a contradiction to what was said in the previous paragraph.) This might work as a purpose of distraction of attention of people to what is outside rather than internal problems. It would be in a perfect accordance with what Nietzsche would think. After all, it is apparent that all these Russian thinkers – they think about Russia themselves – all these “myths”, opinions, reasons for why Russia cannot act out its potential, theory about great Slavic qualities, do not come from the outside. These “myths” originate within Russia, they were created as a part of Russian self-awareness. Anti-americanism, still, is something on which people might very easily unite. The place to unite on used to be anti-communism, now that option is gone. In the 60’s, there could be no more fairy tales about communism, therefore, there were fairy-tales about the US. Nowadays, anti-americanism is an important part of rhetoric. A country, that used to be in Russian consciousness an ideal country, and then almost become an equal partner nowadays in certain context again becomes an object of aggressive rhetoric. It depends, case to case, to what extent. It is difficult to say whether anti-americanism is simply just not a tool of politicians and intellectuals to redirect attention of the public.

According to Andreeva, the danger was that perestroika would destroy all the worthwhile values existent in Russian society. She was afraid of social corrosion – damage of morals, traditions and mentality. Did that happen? Was there a new set of values that was created in the Nietzschean sense? According to Pozner, the prevalent opinion about

Americans nowadays is that they have no culture, they are not spiritual, they are superficial. According to him, what happened to Russia since perestroika is an unfinished process of modernization, in which people took on contemporary mode of behavior, technology and so on, but they did not embrace all their qualities, their way of life – which is what got them where they are now. What is the goal Russia should aspire to is “capitalism with Russian specifics”, which will take them much shorter time to achieve since they do not have to invent the bicycle anew and repeat the mistakes which were made.

Amalrik presents an interesting opinion which is a nice addition and at the same time a nice semi-contradiction. He says that the USA, during the Cold War, was the only power that could come close to the power of Russia. At the same time, he asks how and whether is it possible for these two to be equal partners in the good sense of the world – or maybe at least counter-balance. The US always was a pragmatic and an idealist country who praised its own strength and vastness, but Russia was always a country without faith, without tradition, without culture and without skill of doing anything. He says that the basic theme of Russia was always its own weakness and alienation of itself – an example would be Russian literature. How does this work in connection to “capitalism with Russian specifics”? A crucial point in discussion of the possibility of Nietzschean *ressentiment* in Russia is whether Russians think they are not only ‘better’, but also ‘better off’ than Americans. This line of thought would be most evidently presented with thinkers like Khomjakov, religious thought and – Russian literature, which is praised foremost for its reflectiveness and profoundness. Still, for any of this to be successful, Russia would have to access itself of its own terms, not based on and derived from comparison.

#### D. Scheler: “What about Vengeance?”

The thought of Scheler is helpful in the process of analysis majorly because he pays attention to details. In example, he notes that “competitive urge”(Scheler, is very characteristic of *ressentiment*. A notorious slogan of the times of Chrushev, “We will catch up with and get ahead of America!” (“Dogonim i peregonim Ameriku!”) would be a clear evidence for this. (Also, “capitalism with Russian specifics mentioned above.) The US became the country to look up to in the beginning of the Cold War, before that, it would be Germany, France or England. (D. Kotsubinsky, personal communication, 20.6.2012) Throughout communism, the US was an ideal country, the place of fulfilled dreams and at the

same time the object of negativistic political propaganda. In perestroika, there was certain hope that Russia could level with the US, even a hint of hope that it would be able to do it in its own, authentic way. It seems that Russian “understood value properly”, in Schelerian terms. However, at the same, as time progressed, Russia realized that it eventually lost its power – since after the end of the Cold War, it was not able to stand up to the US as an equal partner. (D. Kotsubinsky, personal communication, 20.6.2012) And statements about Americans in fashion similar to “white-teethed optimists of rotting capitalism” could potentially gain strength again.

If to answer the question whether Russians were kept from action and this combined with their impotence to act, or they just did not act – it could be suggested, they just did not act, but there was sense of self-perceived impotence. Americans did not really keep them from action, as a superpower in the Cold War more or less equal to the US in terms of influence, the behavior of the US and the USSR is oftentimes strikingly similar. Nobody prevents Russian from having a dream country – it is their self-image they have that might be the cause. The question is whether this self-image is based on legit and true impotence, or it is just general laziness combined with possible wrong approach. It seems that Russians in the period of perestroika did not feel sense of “impotence (pronounced awareness of inability accompanied by intense depression), fear, anxiety and intimidation”? (Scheler, 1915, p.42). There was too much energy and spirit, too much haste and talk. It seems, though, there were bits of that beforehand as well as afterwards.

According to Pjontkovskij, the greatest complex of inferiority comes from the middle class elite, since their ambitions remained unfulfilled in the post-soviet era. He says this has a negative impact on psychological climate in society, that it supports xenophobia and isolationism. At the same time, complex of inferiority might be more a problem of political elites than common people. Kotsubinsky has a different point of view, according to him, perestroika buried all the classes except bureaucrats. If this was true, perestroika then was to dissolve tons of *ressentiment* present in Russian society, but, the problem might be that any democratic set-up might even heighten *ressentiment* – since formal equality promises equal right, but that does not automatically bring equal results. “*Ressentiment* must therefore be strongest in a society like ours, where approximately equal rights (political and otherwise) or formal social equality, publicly recognized, go hand in hand with wide factual differences in power, property, and education.” It is precisely this dissonance that is likely to happen when

*ressentiment* is present. One does not acknowledge that people have different qualities, skills and abilities, therefore, when formally approved equal status, one gets uncomfortable when still sensing difference in society. According to Scheler, this status might be traditional, political or constitutional – it does not really matter where it comes from.

To sum up Schelerian thought regarding perestroika, there was no resignation on any values which could be an evidence for Russia admitting some of its weaknesses and at the same time would leave it with space to come up with its original path using its strengths. Russians trying to figure out the reason why they could not stand up to their potential in past – that is already a certain sign of weakness, looking for a justification and a cause. Even if there was any real power, the energy would be consumed by constant deliberations. If Scheler defines three sources of *ressentiment* – emotional contagion, domination and violent suppression of negative feelings- it seems that Russia is a great example for all three of these. Does Russia have any real power? Of course it does, but the League at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century already neither believed that it does nor could they get any political influence in their own country. Certainly, there was slight hope for actualization of potential in perestroika, but has it lasted?

Radzichovskij claims that „The feeling of national degradation deepens complexes, which are turned to the outside world“. There was hope in perestroika, but what if the hope was cover-up for loss of possibility of realizing imperial ambitions of Russia? Amalrik suggested that it would be much better for the USSR to not subordinate Eastern Europe, but to leave these states neutral. Instead of securing a secure layer from them for itself, it tried to rule them with pressure –and as soon as this pressure gets weaker, it would not be able to keep them in association with itself. There was the rule of the USSR getting weaker, the regime did not want to reform itself but it made concessions and there was no strength of the people to reform it in a great way, and there were vanishing imperial ambitions of the USSR. There are myths. There are myths about the US, there are myths about the NEP and there is no one to blame. Blaming the US brings anxiety, since that is where we want to go and blaming ourselves does not work, since that makes us feel uncomfortable. In this situation, myths about flourishing might be harmful.

In the words of Yeltsin: „issue of primary importance is the spiritual, national and economic rebirth of Russia, which has been for long decades an appendage of the center and which in many respects, has lost its independence“ *Ressentiment?*

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