

A Whistle Without an Engine

St. Petersburg correspondent Roman Bessonov looks at the June 16-17 summit of the European Union, from a Russian viewpoint.

There was a sad story, told in the Soviet Union in the time of Mikhail Gorbachov in the 1980s. Asked why the train of Communism had come to a halt, the engineer replied, “Because all of the engine’s steam was spent on the whistle.”

The whistling around Europe’s integration into a confederation of states with a common financial, legislative, and defense system, has definitely absorbed a lot of spending—not only to maintain a huge bureaucratic apparatus, but even just for propaganda. On the eve of Poland’s entry into the European Union, the PR people used “agitation trains,” just like in 1920s Soviet Russia.

The Communist whistle, however, shook the world for more than seven decades, attracting many people on the basis of a simple but convincing understanding of the world, which mobilized enormous energies in a way that amazed the Western community of that time: the notion that quite different peoples were faced with a common task, which was presented as a common good, and the basis for benefits to their common posterity. Along with this ideological basis of the U.S.S.R.’s creation in December 1922, came programs of industrialization and universal education, which served as an engine that allowed the Soviet Union to live through the ferocious brutality of its own leaders, and then the Nazi invasion. The whistle worked for two generations, providing a physical basis for survival that is still in use today amid the ruins of the Soviet Union.

The enthusiasm fanned by the European Union’s blue velvet banners around May Day 2004, when new member countries from Eastern Europe joined the EU, was also supposed to serve as a kind of engine. But the spark from this unification has been insufficient to melt the desperate hearts of the broad population in those ex-Soviet satellite countries.

‘Paradise’ and ‘Parasites’

By the time their nations made their long-awaited entry into the community of privileged states, huge layers of the East European population had already been alienated from the benefits they were supposed to enjoy. The freedom to travel, for many of them, encountered unexpected obstacles, while the freedom to engage in private business, associated in their minds with democracy, was undermined by licensing restrictions. The new character of their eastern borders—which now became the border between the EU and Russia—

deprived the Poles, Hungarians, and the others of vast traditional markets for their goods, while the markets of the West were in no hurry to open up to East European products. The very fact that they have joined not an industrial, but a post-industrial society, where windmills have replaced engines, was difficult to grasp right away. Still, months after the official entry, this recognition dawned on them, as mounting everyday problems unveiled the picture of a whistle without an engine, like the Cheshire cat’s smile when the cat is gone.

The results of voting for the European Parliament, months after the new members’ much-heralded entry into the European family, were a more than serious warning to the newcomers and the EU’s founding members alike. In Poland, where the ruling party, generally trusted by the population only three years earlier, collected only 9% support, the alarm bell tolled the loudest. But the Eurobureaucracy was deaf to this clear warning.

A second bell was the debate around financial benefits for the new EU members, which split the would-be confederation before it could acquire its common budget and common legislation. This warning, too, was ignored, though it would still then have been possible to stop and raise the question with a semblance of sincerity: What is Europe? What are the immediate motives for us to unify; what are the common goals of our near future; what are the values we are able to present to our peoples, the continent and the world, what we share and what we reject, what we need; and how will these needs fit with the interests and values of the rest of the world?

Those questions were as important for the heartland of old Europe, as for its underdeveloped periphery. If the core and the edges were to have proceeded with a common idea of improvements for the entire community, understood from the standpoint of its historical religious and cultural heritage, that could have worked, producing qualitative changes in neighboring regions and in the minds of their populations, who have still other religious and cultural backgrounds.

This did not happen. Such ideas were ignored, while interests were too diverse, especially within the socially fragmented post-Comecon countries, which, during 13 years of waiting at the gates of the promised European paradise, had experienced the same kind of social stratification, cultural disappointment, and criminalization of the economy that struck the former U.S.S.R. during the 1990s. The effects were



European Council

The European Union summit meeting on June 16-17. A number of Russian experts, concerned about the fate of Europe, expressed their honest opinion that the summit had better be postponed—but the Eurobureaucracy didn't listen, and the result was a disaster.

magnified by constant mass-media brainwashing of especially the younger generation, which was supposed to absorb and to implement the best universal values of the desired democratic community—but was fed a Coca-Cola surrogate instead.

In old Russia, a popular saying described someone's careless attitude toward his own future: "A Russian *muzhik* (peasant) won't cross himself until a fried rooster pecks him." The "fried rooster" stood for a fire in the village—too terrible a disaster to be mentioned by name, according to superstition. Today's culture, in which political campaigns are run with marketing techniques from commercial advertising and the heavy-brainwashing rock-music scene, or feature imported innovations like the notion that a candidate's sexual preference may serve as his electoral platform, is a culture without even superstition, never mind faith. It is a culture infected by the devastating mental diseases of consumerism and the rock-drug-sex counterculture, promoted through the Congress for Cultural Freedom and related entities, which brings nothing but misfortune as it spreads.

Subconsciously, this well-packaged consumerism's lack of a common goal or confidence in an underlying set of values was evident to some of the European elites. Thus, for the past decade, the political establishment in Europe went looking for an enemy image to use as a surrogate unifying force. This subconscious self-protective effort doomed the bureaucracy at the moment when it had to convince the people of the

necessary rules for their common existence.

These elites had failed to notice their own transformation. Two decades ago, the anti-immigrant remarks of Jean-Marie Le Pen in France sounded like an affront to morality. Today, a Eurobureaucrat, interviewed by Russian TV Channel 1, does not even bother to hide his contempt, as he talks about those lazy and poor neighbors, whom the original proprietors of the EU have invited to live at their place, and now have to pay for. For the Russian listener, this official made the EU sound something like a communal apartment in Petrograd in the 1920s, when gangs of newcomers would be let into a large flat, previously occupied by well-to-do people, and would embarrass them with their misbehavior and criminal impulses.

The remark sounded especially arrogant, considering the fact that these notorious "new neighbors," the parasites, were so assiduously courted to join the European paradise, by the selfsame bureaucracy, not to mention the EU summit of June 16-17 of this year, when the newcomers exhibited far greater responsibility for unified Europe than did the ever-so-respectable older owners.

A Reconstruction of Waterloo

Russia's ORT TV ironically combined its review of the EU summit, with a report from a reenactment of the Battle of Waterloo on its 190th anniversary. This irony by the state-owned channel obviously alluded to the failed political ambitions of French President Jacques Chirac, before the French "No" vote of May 29, to become "the winner of the European Constitution," and hence the informal leader of Europe as a whole.

In his efforts to establish himself as a central and indispensable figure for European unification, Chirac had made a series of advertising gestures, including a summit of three European leaders, plus Russia's Vladimir Putin. That event, interpreted by political experts as a demonstration of force in the face of haughty Washington, did not bring any palpable results.

Mr. Chirac's friendly gestures toward Russia were perceived in the Kremlin with a certain naiveté, which faded away when the French political and business community embraced Ukraine's "democratic revolutionary" Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko—a person still wanted by Russian law enforcement in connection with financial swindles surrounding a Ukrainian contract with the Russian Defense Ministry, back when Tymoshenko and now-President Victor Yushchenko were Deputy Prime Minister and Prime Minister, respectively, in the regime of then-President Leonid Kuchma.

The meeting between top figures from Gas de France and Tymoshenko was interpreted in Moscow as an anti-Russian intrigue, and an assault on relations between Russia and Germany, would-be co-founders of a trilateral natural-gas consortium, discussed among President Putin, Chancellor Ger-

hard Schröder, and Kuchma, at St. Petersburg's 300th anniversary gala back in 2003. These long-developed economic-diplomatic efforts appeared to be destroyed in a single day, by the party—France—that was supposedly establishing itself as the motor of European unity. An accompanying Romantic chorus of propaganda from Kiev boosted the notion that Ukraine will soon be exporting oil to Russia.

In Tbilisi, Georgia, meanwhile, the outcome of sensitive negotiations over when Russian troops based in Georgia must quit Georgian territory, as pledged in principle in 1999, appeared to depend chiefly on a French woman: Salome Zurbishvili (Zourabichvili), the French diplomat of Georgian extraction, plucked by “democratic revolutionary” President Michael Saakashvili to become the Foreign Minister of Georgia. Just days before the unfortunate Eurosummit, a number of Georgian parliamentarians raised the question: How can a Georgian state official receive one salary in Tbilisi and another in Paris, as they put it, under the alter ego of a ranking European diplomat?

These unfriendly gestures by Paris, painfully affecting Russian diplomacy, went almost unnoticed by the public. The broader Russia audience was much more impressed by two other episodes in Russian-European diplomacy this year. First came the dissatisfaction of the EU bureaucracy with Russia's decision to repay its Paris Club debts ahead of schedule. The Russian public was amazed to find out that this dissatisfaction was based on the desire of European financiers to continue to extract profits from trading the Russian bonds!

Almost immediately after the episode of the debt, which was broadly covered in the Russian media, came the unveiling of the EU-approved program of cooperation with Russia in four spheres, identified as *road maps*. In any more-or-less educated Russian's mind, this term is associated with U.S. political manipulations in the Middle East. An average Russian educated person asked himself: “Is my country going to be treated like unrecognized Palestine? Is the border of the expanded Europe the same as the wall, by which Ariel Sharon arbitrarily cuts Arab districts into parts? Is the U.S. policy in Ukraine, Georgia, and Central Asia, unanimously approved by European institutions, part of this new iron-curtain construction effort?”

Beyond this semantic misunderstanding, the doubt emerging in the mind of a Russian educated person towards the policymakers of the EU ran deeper: does this community of nations have any kind of language except the language of double standards we hear from George Bush's Washington? If not, what is the basis of the relations our country should develop with unified Europe? What is the meaning of this unification for us, except the re-implementation of Iron Curtain-era plans for our isolation and containment, a modern continuation of Churchill's 1946 Fulton, Missouri speech, treating us as nothing but trouble or a disease? If they are treating us in this way, do we really need these relations?

Hopscotch

On the eve of its most decisive meeting of the year, the Eurobureaucracy managed to undermine its relations not only with Russia, but also with China, this time on the subject of textile exports. The duties imposed by the EU were interpreted by China as discrimination against its status as a WTO member. Removing, in return, export duties on textiles, China must have seriously upset the Brussels *nomenklatura*, which hardly expected such arrogance from a country commonly regarded as a cheap producer and thus an outsourcing destination for European companies.

In a recent interview, Vladimir Putin complained of difficulties in Russia's dialogue with Europe, resulting from the “too frequent” rotation of the EU leadership, and, therefore, the absence of continuity in policy. From the standpoint of Beijing, where long-term industrial projects are still included in five-year plans, this problem must appear even more troublesome. Yet continuity is not a matter of personalities, but rather of what idea is put at the base of the supposed European confederation of states and economies. A vacuum of ideas is easily filled by anti-ideas. A vacuum of policies based on common values for the supposedly unified community, is filled by the dogmas of formal democracy, formal human rights, formal anti-terrorism which never touches real terrorist masterminds, and formal anti-money-laundering which is never supposed to affect the major global shadow economy networks. And the cultural vacuum in the very cradle of literature, music, and art, is filled by soap-opera and rock-drug surrogates, intoxicating the generations for whose sake the issue of a unified Europe was raised.

On the very eve of the summit, the traditional Summer economic forum held in Russia's St. Petersburg was attended by the leader of exactly one European country: Macedonia. Other European political influentials did not find it expedient to visit Russia on the eve of a summit that would focus on key issues of finance and law. Nonetheless, just days before the event, the presence of Moscow on the map of Eurasia was noticed by the next occupant of the EU chair, Britain.

Working to make sure that, under his supervision, Europe will not be reindustrialized, Tony Blair, on a short visit to Moscow, and in more detailed (and less pleasant) discussions in Berlin, raised global warming as the central point of today's agenda. Replying to a Russian journalist's skeptical question, Blair made clear that his major concern was China—which has got too many people, and therefore needs too much energy. Though no calculation of the corresponding number of windmills was provided by Blair, a number of Russian experts, concerned about the fate of Europe, expressed their honest opinion that the EU summit had better be postponed.

The cunning Blair, by that time, already cancelled any moves toward an EU constitutional referendum in Britain, thus finding himself in better political shape than the unfortunate Chirac. Moscow intellectuals and experts in the subcom-

munity of Russian sympathizers of Europe, in dozens of articles, warned that the summit would turn into a disaster. But the Eurobureaucracy would hardly pay attention to some opinion from the unrespectable Eastern wilderness.

A Clockwork Despair

The Waterloo week contained one more event, one very painful to a particular bidder for a place in Euro-“paradise,” namely Ukraine. Despite recent demonstrations of consideration for private-property owners and despite President Yushchenko’s earlier indications that the state should be no more

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than a doorkeeper for foreign investors, the EU did not designate Ukraine as a market economy. This misfortune was accompanied in Britain by the *Financial Times*’ scathing denunciation of corruption in Ukraine, while the BBC echoed that Ukraine just “stinks.”

An outside observer, carefully reading the *Financial Times*’ diatribe, would discern amid the pathos over Ukraine’s future, that what really stinks are the ambitions of some private foreign interests, who would like to take over Ukraine’s (comparatively modest) oil industry as cheaply as possible. The German media’s campaign about Ukrainian organized crime, freely flowing across European borders due to alleged carelessness by Germany’s Green Party Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer, stinks even more, since it is addressed to broad layers of the population, who are obsessed with the

problem of immigrants, including those from Ukraine, who are allegedly stealing the bread and compromising the personal security of citizens of respectable countries (as opposed to dirty Ukraine).

The new Ukrainian government is desperately trying to prove to the population—whose mistrust may rebound not with a protest vote, but with a really bloody riot—that their rule is better than the oft-maligned “criminal dictatorship” of their predecessors. When estimates came out that the Ukrainian economy would grow by no more than 4% this year, even by generally accepted non-productive criteria, government propaganda specialists hurried to concoct research, showing that the previous two years’ 11% growth was a “criminal dictatorial” forgery. The same propagandists also had to explain why oil prices are not declining, but steadily rising. The explanation is at hand: a conspiracy by Russian oil producers.

When the vicious Russian oligarchs were called on the carpet by Tymoshenko, however, where Ukraine’s “iron lady” demanded that they freeze gasoline prices, or face review of the transactions under which they acquired privatized companies in Ukraine, protests unexpectedly came from the Ukrainian “democratic revolution’s” recent ardent supporters. This time, the counsellors from respectable Old Europe, as well as the United States, demanded that Tymoshenko adhere to classical free-market price-formation, and not interfere.

Ukraine’s new leadership, caught between free-market dogmas and its own obligations to its people, which are closely associated with anticipated benefits from the West, is desperately seeking a solution to satisfy all sides, including Russia—especially insofar as public opinion includes the east Ukrainian Russian-speaking regions. If you chase two rabbits, you’ll catch none, says a Russian proverb. This is what has happened to Ukraine in the sensitive sphere of the natural-gas trade, which was the major reason for Tymoshenko’s flirt with Paris.

A week before the European summit, the Russian government raised the issue that a large portion of the Russian gas transported across Ukraine has never reached its purchasers in Western Europe. Kiev accepted blame, interrogating some responsible figures and again trying to refer to the former “autocratic” establishment, providing a sophisticated explanation that the gas has not actually evaporated, but cannot physically be delivered anywhere, as it is kept as “buffer gas” in Ukraine’s huge, Soviet-built underground storage chambers. This explanation not being accepted, rumors spread during June that Russia would switch to world market prices on its gas deliveries to Ukraine, beginning July 1. Under these circumstances, Kiev’s “orange” (“democratic revolutionary”) political leadership, ironically, turned for succor to the not quite democratic, but very rich in natural gas, country of Turkmenistan. Here too, however, Yushchenko was reminded in Ashgabat of Ukraine’s record of mismanagement,

as Turkmenistan officials brought up the fact that during the hot days of last year's Ukrainian regime-change, a portion of its payments for gas from Turkmenistan vanished into somebody's campaign coffers, never reaching Ashgabat.

These economic scandals were immediately exploited by top U.S. and British corporations, which expressed interest in the gas-transport networks. Royal Dutch Shell representatives, attending a World Economic Forum roundtable meeting in Kiev, resumed their bid for the pipelines, previously rejected by Kuchma because of the miserably low price offered. Today's threat of insolvency and resulting public unrest may force Kiev to make far more humiliating compromises.

The Ephemera

The self-styled teachers of emerging "democracies," including particularly the EU's ardent "expansion commissioner" Günther Verheugen, appeared to be—surprisingly for the Moscow pro-European intellectuals—the most active enthusiasts of the EU Constitution at a moment when modest considerations of common sense, shyly raised by Luxembourg's Prime Minister Jean-Claude Juncker, suggested that haste in the expansion strategy may only undermine both the integrity of Europe as such, and its international authority. This haste was especially irrational on the backdrop of the French and Dutch "No" votes, and other EU members' postponement of national referenda on the Euroconstitution. The fanatics of expansion, however, clung to principle.

There is a Russian saying, that haste is useful only for catching flies. The battle between Blair and Chirac over agro-industrial benefits—certainly very important for their two nations and beyond, but at the summit serving only to create a snafu—occupied most of the agenda, leaving no room for any productive solution. The whole debate turned a petty bargain of interest for a single day, with no consideration, no responsibility, and no care for the common future.

Such one-day thinking is very convenient, the way *Drosophila* flies are useful for making genetic observations. You don't even need sophisticated traps; these creatures fall in of their own accord.

The Eurobureaucracy, with all of its experience in intrigues, stumbled upon a primitive divide-and-conquer game. In several days of buzzing, it did manage to catch one single fly. That was the accord on criticism against Iran—yet another vitally necessary political and economic partner for Europe, with which relations have now been sacrificed. For what reason? Jean-Claude Juncker, coming out to the public to confirm what was already understood—a comprehensive failure—reminded them with a sardonic smile that the Europeans now needed to travel to Washington and report on their political achievements.

The sentence on the failed community of one-day interest, the bureaucracy that betrays the population, and the society that allows such a bureaucracy to operate, was pronounced in a new book, *Values in a Time of Upheaval*, by Pope Benedict



wind-energie.de

A windmill near the Bremen Steelworks in Germany. It has been hard for the Eastern Europeans to grasp the fact that, in joining the European Union, they have joined "not an industrial, but a post-industrial society, where windmills have replaced engines," due to the preponderant influence of "green" ideology in the West.

XVI, even before the oblique smile of Jean-Claude Juncker announced the most serious European failure of the new century. The Pope, as a universally educated European who hails from Germany, the country that is supposed to serve as the EU's driving force, showed the same kind of courage as the poet Heinrich Heine did two centuries ago: "*Ein Fluch dem falschen Vaterlande, wo nur gedeihen Schmach and Schande*—"* Unlike Heine, the Pope will unlikely be suspected of lacking patriotism, since the very idea of patriotism has been buried so deep.

The Pope's judgments on his native culture may not be heard by the public in its present frame of mind, at the deepest point of Europe's degeneration. But they will resurface, like Heine's verses, at the next turn of history, when the unique mission and historical commitment of Europe will finally be formulated anew, and the continent's future, finally, finds itself at the disposal of better hands and better souls—not necessarily through a perfect formal democratic procedure.

* A curse on a false Fatherland, where only shame and disgrace thrive—