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CIVIL SOCIETY AND ORTHODOX CHRISTIANITY[*]

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INTRODUCTION

Following Charles Taylor, one may distinguish between two main traditions of understanding civil society in the West.[1] What he calls the L-stream is a theoretical tradition, with John Locke as a paradigmatic figure, that envisions civil society as a pre-political ethical community that delegates certain limited powers to the minimal state. By contrast, the M-stream, taking its name from Charles Montesquieu, sees civil society as a set of associations, or the association, that mediates relations between an individual and the strong state and defends the former from the encroachments of the latter. Let us first sum up and sharpen this distinction proposed by Taylor so that it could serve as an analytical tool for our further exposition.

According to Taylor, the L-stream comprises many other thinkers of the Anglo-American liberal tradition. The central component of reflection on civil society in this tradition comes from Locke's conception of the state of nature rather than from his exposition on "civil society" as such, since he frequently used this term interchangeably with "political society" or "the state", following the usage of his epoch. For L-stream thinkers, it is important that the state of nature in Locke already possesses many features that will be ascribed to "civil society" by his followers, when they redefine the term in the eighteenth century, in such books as Adam Ferguson's "Essay on the History of Civil Society," Adam Smith's "Theory of Moral Sentiments" or Tom Paine's "On the Rights of Man."

In contrast to the pessimistic conceptions of the state of nature, as for example presented by Thomas Hobbes, Locke's theory stresses the peaceful and rich character of human existence in a pre-political condition. People can develop industry, trade, culture and the arts already in the state of nature, and they choose to unite into a political state largely for

[1] Charles Taylor, "Modes of Civil Society" Public Culture vol. 3:1, Fall 1990. Later this article was reprinted in his Philosophical Arguments (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

the reason of some trifle inconveniences of this condition. As a consequence, the state has a fiduciary character: it is entrusted with carrying out the minimal function of eliminating these few inconveniences of human coexistence. If the state expands its powers beyond those functions that were entrusted to it and unjustifiably penetrates the pre-political spheres of life of the community that had founded it, then this trust is revoked and the state "is dissolved," in the famous term of Locke.

Introducing the term "civil society" in its modern understanding, Ferguson and Smith also base themselves on this Lockean vision of peaceful and multi-faceted pre-political life of the community. First, they oppose "civil society" to a "military society" as a non-belligerent community that prefers to use civil rather than military means in attaining its aims and clearly values peaceful trade over armed conquest. Second, in their conception civil society is opposed to barbaric society that does not know fine manners and is ignorant of the industrial and cultural achievements of contemporary civilization. In short, civil society is the one that partakes in the fruits of civilization. Civilized manners, civil rather than military methods of solving a few existing disputes, and a common pride in the achievements of civilization tie people into a community that exists according to laws of civil life outside of the political sphere. The minimal political state emerges only when this civil society calls it to life.

By contrast with this vision of the L-stream, the implicit starting point of the M-stream is the pre-existence of a strong centralized state. Montesquieu, Benjamin Constant and Alexis de Tocqueville centered their concerns on the problem of defending individual liberties against the despotic leanings of the modern state. Accordingly, suggests Taylor, the core concept of the M-stream is *corps intermediaires* that mediate the relations between the individual and the state. For example, Montesquieu envisions traditional privileges of the aristocracy and the clergy, of recognized liberties of cities, guilds and corporations as these "mediating bodies" that curtail the despotism of European monarchies. Indeed, the functioning of justice, collection of taxes, even the formation of armies were frequently delegated to the powerful aristocratic families, provincial assemblies and parliaments, city corporations and municipalities. Thus, the crown was divested of some of its powers by these bodies, the members of which the king frequently could not nominate. Therefore, relative independence and ancient privileges of these mediating bodies served as a bulwark against the despotism of centralized power.

Tocqueville who lived already after the elimination of many of these intermediary corporate institutions in the wake of the French Revolution, acutely perceived the threat to individual liberties coming from the side of the centralized state. He thus proposes that the function of defense of individual liberties, that is, the role played by the old *corps intermediaires*, may be assigned to the new associations of free citizens. Apart from defending the individual from the encroachments of the state, these associations are also to become a kind of school of freedom where citizens would learn the civic virtues necessary

for the preservation of liberties in an age of what he calls the threat of a democratic despotism.[1]

Hegel finally supplies the first formulation of the opposition of the civil society and the state as such, when he synthesizes the L- and M-streams in his conception. In his understanding, civil society is just a stage in the unfolding of the ethical Idea, a lamentable condition where private interests prevail, and the contradictions of which are finally resolved only with the appearance of the universal state that pursues the general interest. Still, the "corporations" that form part of Hegel's vision of the civil society are pictured rather positively, and may remind the reader of *corps intermediaires*. This ambivalence of Hegel's theory is very important to stress since Antonio Gramsci, whom one might include among renowned thinkers of the M-stream also, revives attention to Hegel's corporations in the twentieth century. Curiously, he does so within the Marxist tradition of aspiring for the annihilation of the difference between the civil society and the state. Marx himself, of course, considers the presence of association-like corporations in Hegelian theory a residue of the feudal past and thus reduces civil society to economic life as the main sphere of realization of private interest.[2]

The vision of civil life inherent among the M-stream thinkers, who represent civil society as a set of independent associations that mediate relations between the individual and the state, came to dominate contemporary Russian debates on civil society also. Historically, this may be explained by the fact that the most popular version of the civil society thesis came to Russia in the 1980s through the East European interpretations, particularly by means of interesting attempts to interpret the experience of the Polish "Solidarity" movement through the lens of Gramscian analysis.[3] The clash of the authoritarian state of the Soviet type and the semi- or quasi-independent associations of what was called "civil society" in Eastern Europe at that time seemed to be the fundamental political dynamic of the epoch. Accordingly, creating and maintaining similar free associations still seems to be the decisive guarantee of the consolidation of the democratic regime in contemporary Russia. However, careful consideration of the religious roots of different conceptions of civil society suggests that this is not the only and, perhaps, not the main avenue of its consolidation and development in Russia.

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[1] See the best short exposition of this argument in Jeff Weintraub, "Democracy and the Market: A Marriage of Inconvenience" in M. Latus Nugent, ed., <u>From Leninism to Freedom. The Challenges of Democratization</u> (Boulder, Co.: Westview Press, 1992), pp. 57-61.

[2] Jean Cohen and Andrew Arato, <u>Civil Society and Political Theory</u> (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1992), p. 115.

[3] See an interesting discussion of limitations on a Gramscian reinterpretation of the Polish experience in Z. A. Pelczynski "Solidarity and 'The Rebirth of Civil Society' " in John Keane, ed., <u>Civil Society and the State</u> (London: Verso, 1988)

RELIGIOUS BACKGROUNDS OF CIVIL SOCIETY CONCEPTIONS

Adam Seligman has recently pointed to the implicit religious background of the "classic" understanding of civil society as an ethical pre-political community (what Taylor would call the L-stream): it is a Protestant vision of ethical life within a religious community, characterized by "natural benevolence" and minimal coercion.[1] Seligman's study of such early theorists of civil society in the Anglo-American tradition as Locke's disciple Lord Shaftesbury, Smith, Ferguson and Hutcheson has revealed that all of them base themselves to a certain extent on the idea of something like an innate human capacity for benevolence and mutual sympathy that ensures the existence of peaceful and civilized life. This optimistic perception of human nature seemed strange, if not ridiculous, already to David Hume, and Hume's sneer at this perception of an innate goodness is perhaps still taken as well-founded by many contemporary readers. However, as Seligman has suggested, this shared perception of human benevolence was not a product of some historical naiveté, but was rather a consequence of Lockean representation of the state of nature in accordance with the basic precepts of Calvinist theology.

The state of nature in Locke is not a hypothetical construct or a description of some really existing society or some stage of its development, rather it is part of the common and unquestioned Calvinist world-view. Seligman relies here on the famous thesis of John Dunn, who has indicated this Calvinist background of Locke's thought: "The state of nature, then, is a jural condition and the law which covers it is the theologically based law of nature... That is to say: men confront each other in their shared status as creatures of God without intrinsic authority over each other and without the right to restrict the (natural) law-abiding behavior of others. But though it is a state of liberty it is not a state of license; though apolitical it is not amoral."[2] Predominantly peaceful life in the state of nature is explained by the fact that an attack on the life or property of a fellow Christian is interfering with God's providence and thus is impossible for a good Protestant.

Having described these transcendental roots of the vision of civil society as a rich, peaceful and civilized pre-political coexistence, Seligman then points out some elements in the way of life of early Protestant communities in America that corresponded to that vision. If one simplifies and radicalizes his account, one may claim that the life of the first Protestant congregations could serve as an empirical referent for the state of nature in Locke's conception, so that in this case later English and Scottish ideas about natural benevolence of a human being in a civil society were not far off the mark. Indeed, in a tight Puritan congregation of the New World attacking a fellow lay saint was almost inconceivable.

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[1] Adam Seligman, The Idea of Civil Society (New York: Free Press, 1992), p. 10.
[2] John Dunn, The Political Thought of John Locke: An Historical Account of the Argument of the "Two Treatises of Government" (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), p.106.

Furthermore, many New England settlers could possibly agree with a proposition that secular political power was created as if following the Lockean doctrine, as a body of government arising from the life of a pre-political religious community. Thus, one of the founders of the Massachusetts Bay colony John Winthrop wrote in 1637: "Whereas the way of God hath always been to gather his churches out of the world: now the world, or civil state, must be raised out of the churches."[1]

Seligman's convincing hypothesis on the religious roots of the "classic" theory of civil society -- of the L-stream, in Taylor's designation, or what one might also call the Anglo-American, or the Calvinist, tradition of thinking on civil society -- may be extended to comprise the M-stream as well. This theoretical tradition may be accordingly re-described as offering the Franco-Italian, South European, or -- more generally -- a Catholic vision of civil society. Here we find a different perception of the ethical foundations of social life: for example, in contrast to the Protestant congregations of the New World, Catholic congregations of France, Italy and Spain always encountered a problem of facing more or less strong secular powers. In theory, Catholic theology decreed this problem solved in Pope Gelasius's doctrine of the two swords: the Church took care of the matters of salvation, while secular power sustained law and order in this world. However, in practice, when their interests clashed in this world, the Catholic Church could act as a supreme association that defended its members against the encroachments of the secular state. One may suggest that theorists belonging to the M-stream based their conceptions of civil society to a greater or lesser extent on this vision of the ethical role of the Christian congregation in this world.

Of course, Catholic Church is not the sole example of *corps intermediaires* in Montesquieu or Tocqueville; still, both grant it a rather central position in their descriptions of the intermediary bodies of the Ancien Regime. For instance, in his famous consideration of the principle of monarchy, Montesquieu first mentions aristocracy as the most "natural" of the *pouvoirs secondaires,* but then immediately switches to a consideration of common issues in the jurisdiction of the aristocracy and the clergy, which surprisingly ends with the thesis on the decisive role of the Church as the last barrier against absolutism: "Though the ecclesiastic power is so dangerous in a republic, yet it is extremely proper in a monarchy, especially of the absolute kind. What would become of Spain and Portugal since the subversion of their laws, were it not for this only barrier against the torrent of arbitrary power?"[2] Also, he repeatedly notes that in despotic regimes no defense is available to the individual but religion which may oppose the will of the sovereign.[3]

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[1] Winthrop quoted in Seligman, The Idea of Civil Society, p. 72.

[2] Montesquieu, The Spirit of Laws, A Compendium of the First English Edition, David Wallace Carrithers, ed. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1977), book 2 chapter 4, p. 113.

[3] See The Spirit of Laws, book 2 chapter 4, p. 115: "hence it is that religion has generally so much influence in those [despotic] countries, because it forms a kind of permanent

In his discussion of the role of the intermediary bodies before the French Revolution, Tocqueville dedicates to a consideration of the clergy as much space as he assigns to all other three mentioned *corps* together (aristocracy, bourgeoisie and independent courts). The clergy was "...one of the most independent bodies in the land and the only one to enjoy a freedom none dared call in question."[1] On the verge of the revolution the provinces have lost their liberties, the cities kept only a shadow of their previous ones, a dozen aristocrats could not get together to discuss some important questions without prior permission from the king, while, Tocqueville writes, the French church preserved its periodic assemblies.[2] In the new democratic age Tocqueville also asserts the place for associations, similar to church congregations. For example, enumerating the spheres of activity with which the *corps intermediaires* that disappeared after the French revolution had been traditionally concerned, but are now taken care by the centralized state, Tocqueville names charity, education and religion itself, that is, spheres traditionally entrusted to the Catholic Church.[3] Consequently, he thought that entrusting these spheres to the new civic associations, i.e. modern equivalents of obsolete *corps intermediaires*, would help thwart the new threat of democratic despotism.

At first sight, the internal hierarchy of the Catholic Church seems hardly compatible with the principles of functioning of the free citizens' associations. But, as Tocqueville stressed in *L'Ancien Regime*, one of the factors that contributed to the preservation of the spirit of liberty among the Catholic clergy was a system of internal checks on the power of a bishop, which was duly respected: the Church did not prepare its members for political slavery.[4]. Also, Tocqueville's conception may have had another implicit empirical referent rather than a centralized Catholic hierarchy -- religious confraternities that played a very important role in Catholicism. For example, looking at the bustling associational life of America, and conceiving of American associations as a model for potential re-creation of the French *corps secondaires*, but on a more democratic basis, he gave -- in one startling excerpt -- a most extensive list of associational activities: "Americans combine to give fêtes, found seminaries, build churches, distribute books and send missionaries to the antipodes. Hospitals, prisons and schools take shape in that way." Save for perhaps the prison, this

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depositary; and if this cannot be said of religion, it may be of the customs that are respected instead of laws"; book 3 chapter 10, p. 125: "there is one thing that may be opposed to the prince's will [in despotic Persia]; namely religion."

[1] Alexis de Tocqueville, <u>The Old Regime and the French Revolution</u>, trans. Stuart Gilbert (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1955), p. 111.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Alexis de Tocqueville, <u>Democracy in America</u>, trans. George Lawrence (New York: Anchor Books, 1969), pp. 680-681.

[4] Tocqueville, <u>The Old Regime</u>, p. 111: ""Within the Church the powers of the high ecclesiastical authority had well-recognized limits; even the lowest orders of the hierarchy had effective means of defending themselves against would-be tyrannical superiors. Thus they had not been tamed by all-powerful bishops to a habit of blind obedience, which as a result they might have practiced likewise toward the temporal power."

description of American civil associations stresses activities that in a different cultural setting properly pertained to a Catholic confraternity.[1]

Robert Putnam has recently stressed the connection of these associations of laymen with the formation of the civic tradition in Northern Italy.[2] In theory, the Pope's authority in matters of salvation was never put into question, but starting from Renaissance, religious feelings and aspirations were frequently channeled through these semi-secular brotherhoods. Indeed, in Northern and Central Italy no less than 80 confraternities were founded in the thirteenth century, 202 in the fourteenth, and 218 in the fifteenth.[3] Usually, parishioners of a certain local church would join a confraternity to perform pious works and devotional exercises together. The list of their activities is reminiscent of the American civil associations described by Tocqueville. Confraternities prepared and conducted religious festivals, staged periodical pious processions, sang hymns, and engaged in charity. Members of confraternities visited others who fell ill, and attended their funerals. Starting from the

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[1] Ibid., p. 513. Tocqueville mentions "religious, moral, serious, futile, very general, and very limited, immensely large and very minute" associations right before the quoted passage, and cites associations that would like to "proclaim some truth, or propagate some feeling by the encouragement of the great example" immediately after it. These words also support the claim for religious roots of associational life, since all examples come from spheres of some higher religious or moral concern. He also eliminates in this excerpt, first, political and, second, industrial and commercial associations from consideration; hence only religious and moral are left.

However, claiming that Tocqueville viewed American associations solely on the model of the religious confraternity is unwarranted. Although the quoted excerpt gives some grounds for this radical claim, others may easily disprove it. For example, in another famous description (ibid., vol 1, part 2, chapter 4, p. 189), he gives the following examples of civil associations: an assembly to eliminate the object blocking the road; an association "to make festivities grander and more orderly," and finally, moral associations. Thus, it seems more appropriate to speak of the special role of moral and intellectual associations (closely linked to a religious model) in Tocqueville's vision of civil life, or about contradictory evidence.

Whether commercial corporations and political associations (bodies of local self-government, such as townships and counties, or juries, and political parties) should be included into Tocquevillean "civil society" strictly defined is subject for discussion. Of course, their role is very important since political associations, for instance, defend citizens "against the encroachments of royal power" or "despotic action of the majority" (ibid., p. 513). It would seem logical to suggest that those associations rather than "intellectual and moral associations" are the closest candidates to replacing the *corps secondaires* in terms of defense of the individual. However, moral associations are the closest to replacing the "powerful private persons" of the past as sources of public emulation and of the spread of moral ideas. Hence "the latter are as necessary as the former to the American people; perhaps more so." (ibid., pp. 515-516). In any case, too much of Tocqueville's discussion of civil associations depend on examples of quasi-religious activities, a fact not to be ignored.

[2] Robert Putnam, <u>Making Democracy Work. Civic Traditions in Modern Italy</u> (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 127.

[3] Peter Burke, <u>Culture and Society in Renaissance Italy</u> (New York: Scribner's, 1972), p. 215.

fifteenth century, however, works of charity became targeted not only to the membership of confraternity: members visited prisoners, collected dowry for the poor brides, founded hospitals and asylums. In the opinion of contemporary historians, this testified to the formation of a new understanding of faith as a "social Christianity."[1]

Putnam has traced the development of these quasi-religious associations until the twentieth century, which may put Tocqueville's conception of civil society into an interesting context. In the nineteenth century many Catholic associations were abolished, while creating new ones was prohibited in both France and Italy. However, confraternities and mutual help societies, similar to them in structure and aims, formed the foundation for future civic associations. In Italy, for example, the place of prohibited pious confraternities was taken in the end of the nineteenth century by other associations of parishioners -- groups of "social Catholicism," which soon became the core of the Popular Party. Simultaneously, "chambers of labor" gave rise to the Socialist Party, and, according to a widespread opinion, the subsequent competition between the white (Catholics) and red (Communists) traditions defined the character of political life in Italy in the twentieth century. Still, according to Putnam, this red-and-white picture should not obscure the fact that both mass parties had common sociological roots in the ancient traditions of collective solidarity and horizontal collaboration.[2] Another claim may be equally plausible: the common sociological roots that Putnam mentions were in fact linked to an implicit Catholic model of a civic association.

Perhaps Gramsci was aware of this commonality as no one else. His conception of civil society, a direct heir to the Hegelian synthesis, also has some typically Italian origins. According to Cohen and Arato, for example, his idea of gaining hegemony in the civil society in order to curtail the power of "political society" (this term is most frequently used by Gramsci to designate the apparatus of violence, i.e., the state) came, among other reasons, from successful resistance of the Catholic Church to the assault of the liberal state on the traditional bonds of Italian society.[3] Gramsci wished to repeat this success of the Church, which in the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth century managed to maintain its cultural hegemony through the system of all-penetrating church functions, festivals in

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[1] Ibid., p. 216. Historians also note the prominent role of the confraternities in financing the development of Renaissance art. They collected money for paintings and statues for the churches under their patronage, placing orders with such masters as Leonardo and Carpaccio. Brothers also ordered new hymns and compositions of Church music. (For one of the recent descriptions, see Noel O'Regan, Institutional Patronage in Post–Tridentine Rome (London, 1995))

Some confraternities were based on a common membership in a guild rather than in a parish. Hence, confraternities may be considered an epiphenomenon of a growth of civic virtue rather than its driving force, in a manner that Putnam usually describes them. I would like to stress what Putnam usually omits from consideration: a religious background of much of associational activity in what is usually taken to be a secular republican tradition.

[2] Putnam, Making Democracy Work, p.142.

[3] Cohen and Arato, Civil Society and Political Theory, p.144.

neighborhoods, church education and church press, and thus thwarted liberalism from becoming a dominant ideology in Italy. Similarly, if the Communist party could gain hegemony in the associations of civil society, it would gradually eliminate the domination of the capitalist state. In the authoritative opinion of Norberto Bobbio, "Gramsci translates another great historical antithesis, between the Church (broadly speaking, the modern church is the [Communist] party) and the state into the antithesis between civil society and political society."[1]

A Catholic vision of the civil society may be also found in the works of the Polish "Solidarity" authors who used Gramscian concepts to describe their opposition to the repressive state. Jadwiga Staniszkis has suggested that behind the high rhetoric of Kuron and Michnik was a simple idea of resistance to the state imposed from abroad.[2] Solidarity spoke about the conflict between the civil society and the state, while in practice it followed the example of the Catholic church -- a most serious stronghold of Polish national liberation in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and the only real bulwark of resistance after the imposition of the Communist rule. Thus, together with Staniszkis one may say that the rhetoric of civil society just covered the reality of the struggle for national liberation. But another interpretation is possible also: a vision of civil society that was formed by the "Solidarity" authors was primarily conditioned by the Catholic roots of Polish culture.

Let us sum up some provisional results of this exposition. Anglo-American theories civil society rest on the vision of ethical life in a Protestant congregation,[3] while Franco-Italian conceptions are closely linked to the vision of the ethical role of a Catholic congregation in this world. But if these theories were formulated against the background of their corresponding religious visions of the ethically founded life, then, perhaps, other

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[1] Norberto Bobbio, "Gramsci and the Concept of Civil Society" in Keane, ed., <u>Civil Society and the State,</u> p. 95. Looking ahead, one cannot fail to notice that Gramsci is a thinker in a Marxist tradition, and thus envisages the withering away of the state once the Party captures counter-hegemony, which is closer to the Orthodox rather than to the Catholic vision. Perhaps, even the Catholic tradition in the face of a weak state -- as was the case of Italy following Risorgimento -- gets tempted by the original, "orthodox" project of the Church and tries to squeeze out the state from social life altogether, having converted all the social arena into -- to use another Gramscian term -- a "well-ordered society" consisting of peaceful associations of citizen producers.

[2] Jadwiga Staniszkis, <u>Poland's Self-Limiting Revolution</u> (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984).

[3] I equate here Protestantism and Calvinism to make the argument more succinct. Lutheranism, however, poses special problems: its radical religious individualism, on the one hand, and advocated obedience to secular authority, on the other, are perhaps best captured in Hegel's synthesis that depicts clashing individual interests subsumed in the universal state. For an argument that considers Lutheran roots of a Scandinavian understanding of civil society see Henrik Stenius, "The Good Life is Life of Conformity: The Impact of Lutheran Tradition on Nordic Political Culture," paper presented at the Conference on Civil Society in Northern Europe, SSEES, University of London, September 1996.

religious traditions with differing background perceptions may offer their own visions of civil life as well.[1] Thus, Orthodox Christianity may harbor its own vision of ethical life of a Christian congregation, functionally equivalent to those that underlie the Catholic and Protestant conceptions, but contributing to a very specific conception of civil society, different from the ones outlined above.

DOSTOEVSKY ON THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

Ivan Karamazov first appears in the Dostoevsky novel in an episode of discussion of the fate of ecclesiastical courts that may seem either strange or archaic to a contemporary reader. But this discussion was very important at the time of the novel's appearance when the Russian reformers intended to clearly segregate the jurisdiction of the church and secular courts, and to rationalize the procedures of both. In the novel, Ivan has just published an article, rejecting a liberal opinion that all the secular affairs still remaining under the church court jurisdiction (as was the case of some matters pertaining to marriage and divorce, for example) should be transferred to secular courts, and proposed that instead the scope of affairs under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction should be radically expanded. In Ivan's opinion, the church court should come to regulate all aspects of secular life, so that a merciful authority of the Church would substitute for the bloody state punishment allocated by secular courts. If this happened, states Karamazov, the Christian Church would finally fulfill its mission in this world. He says:

> When the pagan Roman Empire desired to become Christian, ...it included the Church but remained a pagan State in very many of its departments... The Christian Church entering into the State could, of course, ...pursue no other aims than those which have been ordained and revealed by God Himself, and among them that of drawing the whole world, and therefore the ancient pagan State itself, into the Church. In that way... every earthly State should be, in the end, completely transformed into the Church and should become nothing else but a Church, rejecting every purpose incongruous with the aims of the Church... If

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[1] This argument should not be understood as introducing some type of "religious determinism." I am just assembling some facts that would reveal a coherent background setting, following a lead proposed by Seligman. Two methodological points are in order here. First, those other sources of civil society in the West that are frequently invoked -- such as independent cities and guilds, republicanism, civic rather than religious virtue, and the like -- are paid little attention here in order to highlight a different common denominator for cross-cultural comparison. Second, showing what presuppositions (and/or practices) constituted the shared background against which different conceptions of civil society were formulated is not akin to causal analysis. Religious perceptions of ethical life constrain the limits of what is thinkable or sayable in the theories of civil society to be drawn in a given religious tradition, though they do not define ot cause what will be said about civil society in this tradition.

everything became the Church, the Church would exclude all the criminal and disobedient, and would not cut off their heads.[1]

Ivan stresses that the Church should in no way take over the state functions of repression of crime and sustaining political life (Dostoevsky, as many other Orthodox authors of that time, ascribed this yearning to Catholicism). In his project, the Church would not punish, it would not become the state: rather, all social relations would be recast in accord with the New Testament. The elder Zossima, who participates in the conversation, supports Ivan:

> If anything does preserve society, even in our time, and does regenerate and transform the criminal, it is only the law of Christ speaking in his conscience. ..[I]f the jurisdiction of the Church were introduced in practice in its full force, that is, if the whole of the society were changed into the Church, not only the judgment of the Church would have influence on the reformation of the criminal such as it never has now, but possibly also the crimes themselves would be incredibly diminished. And there can be no doubt that the Church would look upon the criminal and the crime of the future in many cases quite differently and would succeed in restoring the excluded, in restraining those who plan evil, and in regenerating the fallen.[2]

Father Paissy, present at the conversation, sums up the shared prophecy: "...the Church is not to be transformed into the State. That is Rome and its dream. That is the third temptation of the devil. On the contrary, the State is transformed into the Church, will ascend and become a Church over the whole world -- which is... the glorious destiny ordained for the Orthodox Church. This star will arise in the east!"[3]

Obviously, this vision of the ethical mission of the Christian congregation[4] is very different from the ones already discussed. This vision does not imply an autonomous pre-political congregation that later creates the minimal state, as in Calvinist conceptions, neither is it based on the vision of the congregation which has to coexist with the powerful secular state, as in Catholic conceptions. Rather, the Christian congregation attempts to supplant the state altogether. From the point of view of the characters in the Dostoevsky novel, this Orthodox vision still reflects the true, "right" (the meaning of "orthos" in Greek) project of

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[1] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, <u>The Brothers Karamazov</u>, trans. Constance Garnett (New York: Modern Library, 1960), pp. 61, 63.

[2] Ibid., p. 65.

[3] Ibid., p. 66.

[4] I use the term "congregation" here in a broad Weberian sense of "an association dedicated to exclusively religious purposes." (G. Roth and C. Wittich, eds., <u>Economy and Society</u>, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1978), vol. 1, p. 454.) Of course, this ignores his distinction between incompletely and fully congregational religions, and may also seem inappropriate to the Orthodox clergy who would claim that the term *kongregatsiia* pertains to Protestantism only.

the Christian church: not to coexist with the violent state as a necessary evil (a point on which both Catholics and Protestants seem to agree), but to strive with the radical denial of this evil through the deification of man (a famous Orthodox *theosis*)[1] and through the reconstruction of the world on church principles.

Let us tentatively call this project of the conversion of the world into the Church and of supplanting the state "the project of Dostoevsky," keeping in mind that the space of this article does not allow us to consider to what extent the words of the characters in the novel corresponded to the views of Dostoevsky himself, whether the early Christian communities really strove to supplant the state, what was or could be an opinion of the guardians of the official dogmatic theology of the Russian Orthodox Church on Dostoevsky's pronouncements, and so on. What is important is that Dostoevsky articulated a vision of ethical life shared by many of his contemporaries who thought that this project captured the essence of the Russian Idea. For example, Semyon Frank also wrote: "The highest mission of the human life is... to let the beneficial spiritual forces pervade the human nature to a fuller extent and saturate it up to the end, and, consequently, to let the 'world' dissolve in the church without residue."[2]

Many Russian authors stressed the non-violent foundations of Church life. Standard Church apologetics affirmed, for example, that Russia did not have an Inquisition in the strict sense of the word, since the Orthodox Church never practiced bloody retribution.[3] Of course, princes could execute the heretics in accordance with the code of Justinian, following their wish to eschew the corruption of the mores and the disturbance of law and order, but this act of the secular arm did not belong to the church affairs. The Church jurisdiction proper did not exceed the words of Jesus (Matthew XVIII: 15-17):

> ...if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.

In other words, the Church influence in principle could be reduced to three correctional practices: to denounce the sin, to admonish into righteousness, and -- if the sinner does not listen to admonitions -- to excommunicate. Almost all Russian pre-revolutionary

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[1] See e.g., Timothy Ware, The Orthodox Church, revised edition (London: Penguin, 1993), p. 231, on this category of Orthodox theology.

[2] Semyon Frank, Dukhovnye osnovy obschestva. Vvedenie v sotsial'nuiu filosofiiu [Spiritual Foundations of Society. Introduction to Social Philosophy], contemporary re-edition (Moscow: Respublika, 1992), p. 97.

[3] N. I. Barsov, Sushchestvovala li v Rossii inkvisitsiia? [Did Inquisition Exist in Russia?] (St. Petersburg, 1892), p. 6.

introductions to canon law cited this standard description of the three central practices of the Church discipline.

We are now in a position to outline what kind of civil society corresponds to this Orthodox vision of the ethical mission of the Christian congregationor, at least, to the "Dostoevsky project." First, the Orthodox version of civil society may be seen as advocating non-militaristic and civilized life (as it appears in the Protestant conceptions). Second, it may defend the individuals from the state encroachments on their liberties and educate them in virtue (as in Catholic conceptions). However, and this is its main feature, the Orthodox version of civil society would strive to completely supplant the secular state and its use of the means of violence by bringing church means of influence to regulate all terrains of human life.

SOVIET COLLECTIVES AS ORTHODOX CONGREGATIONS

Paradoxically, the Russian Revolution may have tried implementing the Dostoevsky project into reality. Nikolai Berdiaev was perhaps the first to forcefully state this thesis, expressed, however, in semi-mystical formulations that annoy so many contemporary readers who are used to the language of positivist science: Soviet Communism won and consolidated so easily because it fed on the deep religious energy of the Russian people. An atheist facade should not deceive an astute observer, implied Berdiaev: it only covered the essentially religious mechanisms at work in the Russian revolution.[1]

However, the change brought about by the Russian revolution did not mean only the seizure of state power or the subsequent predominance of the "religious asceticism turned inside out," in the apt characterization of Berdiaev. I would like to suggest that one of the most fundamental changes elicited in the everyday life of millions of Soviet citizens concerned the radical transformation of the structure of a small contact group. A group of workers on a given factory shop floor, a group of colleagues in a given Soviet office, a group of servicemen in a given army regiment, a group of inmates in a given cell, even a group of Soviet people on vacation in a given resort hotel -- all were supposed to be transformed to become a "collective."

This word is used in contemporary common Russian parlance to designate any contact group. However, in the beginning of the century the term "collective" in Russian applied not to any human group as such but only to those that were structured in a very specific way, with Soviet social psychology stressing this important difference until the very end of its existence. Only after all major types of contact groups were transformed to become collectives, groups that were structured not as collectives became almost unnoticeable, and

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[1] Nikolai Berdiaev, <u>Istoki i Smysl Russkogo Kommunizma</u> [The Origins and Meaning of Russian Communism] (Paris: YMCA, 1955).

the term "group" almost became synonymous with the term "collective."[1] Furthermore, by the end of the Brezhnev era a pyramid of Soviet collectives formed the skeleton of the Soviet society, with each individual belonging to this or that official collective. Only a small amount of external violence was needed to maintain the assigned system of ties between these collectives and to punish the deviants who chose or happened not to fit into them. That is, after a huge amount of violence was applied in the initial creation of the new system of collectivized life, a radically reduced amount of it was needed to maintain the stable functioning of the system. The secret of this stability and a restricted use of physical violence in normal Soviet life consisted in the fact that each Soviet collective functioned as a quasi-religious congregation, employing the principles of the New Testament to maintain the powerful system of the circular social control within each collective.

Anton Makarenko described the stages for the introduction of this circular control in his numerous works on the construction of the collective.[2] The first stage in collective-building involves the imposition of a collective goal for a group of more or less randomly assembled individuals and an introduction of collective responsibility for attaining this goal. The second stage is a stage of formation of the core of the group called the *aktiv* that would first fulfill the tasks of the in-group surveillance and regulation of the behavior of its members in accordance with group goals and norms. The *aktiv* disciplines those who are the reason for failing to attain the group goals. At the third stage of the collective-building, the *aktiv* itself should be subjected to the same norms so that the group becomes self-regulating. Circular horizontal surveillance unites all; each suffers from it as a victim but willingly imposes its demands on others.

The immediate roots for Makarenko's pedagogy lie perhaps in various doctrines of progressive education of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and in his personal experience of military discipline, but the wide spread of his methods for constructing a collective and their easy adoption in so many different Soviet milieux -- in schools, factories, sports teams, army regiments and prison cells, to name but a few -- point to the fact that the advocated methods captured something fundamentally important for Russian life. Many would say that Makarenko's techniques concisely summed up the principles of organization of the Russian peasant land commune after 1861. Not denying the validity of this familiar thesis, I would like to also stress another parallel: the Russian Church used similar methods in organizing a model Christian congregation. This assertion may sound strange for those who are used to seeing the Soviet collective and the Orthodox congregation as two

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[1] See a detailed account of the history of the concept of "the collective" in Oleg Kharkhordin, <u>The Collective and the Individual in Soviet Russia: A Study of Background Practices</u> (forthcoming at the University of California Press, 1999)

[2] A thorough treatment of Makarenko's methods may be found in James Bowen, <u>Soviet Education. Anton Makarenko and the Years of Experiment</u> (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1962).

essentially different and opposed phenomena. However, from the perspective of a sociology of everyday life, that is, in analyzing their habitual functioning and the practices they employ, one finds that the structures of these two seemingly opposed phenomena coincide in a spectacular way.

Let us consider the cenobite statute of St. Joseph Volotskii that was written in the beginning of the sixteenth century and then taken as a model statute for many Russian monasteries. Circular surveillance presented as brotherly help forms the background for efficient implementation of the statute's precepts: "As St. Ephraim says, it is appropriate to us, brethren [to act as follows] -- the strong should raise the infirm, the industrious should console the exhausted, the vigilant should rouse those falling asleep, the orderly should punish the disorderly, the reverend will teach the outrageous, the abstinent should remonstrate the non-hesitant [to sin], the healthy should compassionate the sick -- and holding ourselves in such manner, teaching good to one another, we will unanimously defeat our enemy, and glorify our God.[1]

In order to transform the cloister into a "single body," Joseph proposes to create the corps of special brothers that he calls "bigger" [*bol'shie* or *preimushchie*] brothers. This disciplinary core of the monastery is recruited from those "who are first in virtue and reason, willing and able to help the abbot in his care for pious order." This monastery *aktiv* fulfills all the immense work of enforcing collective discipline. For example, during the liturgy bigger brothers stand in different parts of the temple, and, if needs be, "reprimand with humility." In the refectory they seat themselves so as to break impious conversations, discipline those who are late and those who steal food. One of the bigger brothers makes an hourly walk on the territory of the monastery, searching for the idle and assigning them work. The bigger brothers also police the monastery at night, capturing those who try to leave without abbot's permission. They check material possessions of monks in their cells, allowing not more than two shirts, trousers, mantillas, and so on. They search for the drunk and destroy the potion, accompany visitors on the monastery's territory, women and boys in particular, so that the devil would not tempt the brethren, and so on.[2]

A transgressor is disciplined in accordance with the evangelical writings: at first, the brothers "humbly denounce" a sinner in private; if he does not listen to them, they denounce him in the face of the monastic community; if he is still resilient, then the abbot expels him from the cloister. This outcome, however, is an ultimate threat seldom invoked in

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[1] St. Joseph (Volotskii), "Dukhovnaia Gramota prepodobnogo Iosifa" [The Spiritual Statute of St. Joseph] in <u>Velikie Chetii Minei</u>, September 1-13, (St. Petersburg, 1868)), column 576. The Statute was not reprinted during Soviet days; see, however, the detailed discussion of its shorter and longer versions in Ia. S. Lur'e, "Iosif Volotskii kak publitsist i obschestvennyi deiatel' " [St. Joseph as a Moralist and Public Figure] in <u>Poslaniia Iosifa Volotskogo</u> [The Epistles of Joseph Volotskii] (Moscow-Leningrad, 1959), especially pp. 56-64.
[2]Ibid., columns 588-607.

practice. The preferred disciplinary means advocated by the Church is mutual corrective surveillance: "...let the sinner fear you more than he fears the abbot. If he fears only the teacher he may sin again soon; if he fears many fathers and many lips, he will shrivel in many ways."[1]

Of course, this list of disciplinary arrangements is not so different from those advocated by many other, both Eastern and Western, monastery statutes. What is important, though, is that the principles of setting up a pious cloister became a feature of the everyday life of almost each Soviet citizen after small contact groups were restructured as the collectives. Joseph's rhetoric allow an insight into the secret of the Soviet regime: the power of the collective is not the power of one Big Brother; rather, it is the tyranny of a whole multitude of sanctimonious "bigger brothers." The great achievement of Makarenko was a certain democratization of this power: in his children labor colonies, and later in Soviet schools, factories and offices, each could become a "bigger brother" from time to time, and could always help the cause of discipline by word and deed. The Soviet system was based not so much on the hierarchical surveillance and despotism of the boss as on the humiliating peer surveillance and on the tyranny of righteous admonition, presented as friendly help.

One can thus define the Soviet collective as a small human group restructured on the model of a virtuous Christian congregation. All the terrifying aspects of the horizontal disciplining of the individual are shared by both this congregation and the collective. Paradoxically, this proximity also means that the life of the collective reminds one of elements of the visions of civil society as contained in different religious traditions of its conceptualization. First, the collective does not inflict violence on its members, all of its measures are of the admonitory-educative type. That is, instead on uncivilized brutality civil methods are employed, which reminds of the Protestant vision of civil life. Second, the spread of the system of collectives -- i.e. a transformation of each contact group into the collective -- decreases the need for state violence to control the deviant behavior. This corresponds to the Orthodox project as proposed by Dostoevsky's characters. Third, the collective defends its members from the arbitrary rule of supreme rulers or immediate bosses, a condition that is reminiscent of the Catholic conceptions of civil life.

It is rather curious to consider the third aspect of the Soviet collective's activities in a more detailed way, because this is important for the following discussion of the fate of civil society in post-Soviet Russia. Of course, the collective could hardly defend its members against the encroachments of the KGB, but in many everyday situations it could counterbalance the powers of the centralized state. This statement would be hardly novel for those who still remember, for example, how the comrades' courts were transformed in the 1970s and 80s from being part of the system of Communist training into a ritualized ordeal of individual public penance that supplied cheap means of escaping more serious charges; how

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[1] Ibid., column 574.

"public defense" during a trial or "taking on mutual guarantee" [*vziatie na poruki*] after it by the representatives of the work collective could save the accused from the term in the corrective institution, and so on.

The collective could also curtail the tyranny of immediate bosses. Alexander Zinoviev -- at his best in his early descriptions of the mundane realities of Soviet life that are drastically superior in power of analysis and insight over his latter-day polemicizing and biased rhetoric -- was first to notice an interesting function of hierarchical violence that mediated relations between the upper and lower level cells in the pyramid of Soviet collectives. Gosplan and the state punitive bodies that united all Soviet collectives into a single system, embodied the constant threat of vertical violence and thus could curtail the arbitrary rule of the *aktiv* of each collective. Periodic inspections from the top made the leadership of a given collective support and maintain its outward image of the community of equal builders of Communism. The rank and file members of the collective could use these inspections to thwart the boss and the *aktiv* who -- in the absence of such inspections -- were likely to transform the collective into a group where the powerful openly oppressed and brutalized the weak. Zinoviev calls the final stage to which the collective may devolve "a closed shop" [*chastnaia lavochka*] or a gang, a *mafia*: "The mafia becomes the sovereign ruler and rules according to its own communal laws, virtually ignoring the limitations imposed by formal laws."[1]

Still, these two functions of the Soviet collective -- maintaining civil means of interaction and defending an individual against the encroachments of immediate bosses or the state punitive bodies -- do not make it worth calling it the most important element of civil society in Russia. The collective was unfree in two fundamental aspects: first, official collectives were created by regime decision rather than spontaneously; second, inside the collective individual freedom was almost non-existent, and the individual was hardly ever defended from the terror of collective denunciation. This unfreedom prohibits us from taking the collective as an element of civil society, even if it corresponds to the realization of religious projects of developing ethical life in many respects. Notwithstanding which conception of civil society -- Catholic, Protestant or Orthodox -- one espouses, contemporary reflections on civil society make sense only as part of the discourse on freedom. Theories of civil society implicitly rely on visions of ethical life inherent in each religion, but they are not to be reduced to these visions. Indeed, these visions simply constitute the background (usually unreflected) for the discourse on individual freedom, and thus cannot force us to adopt those of its corollaries that constrain individual liberties.

For example, Tocqueville could not directly import in his conception of democratic liberty those elements of monarchical liberty that were pointed out by Montesquieu -- *corps*

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[1] Alexander Zinoviev, <u>The Reality of Communism</u>, trans. Charles Janson (London: Gollancz, 1984), p. 200.

intermediaires that curtailed the power of the centralized state -- because they did not guarantee individual liberties and thus were not suitable for the democratic age. He instead found the acceptable analog of these *corps* in the free associations of American citizens that played the role of "intermediate powers" in the new democratic society, but also supported individual liberties. Similarly, one may look for the post-Soviet equivalent of the Soviet collectives that would fulfill their main functions, but would also ensure the freedom of the individual. Luckily, one need not spend time in long searches: even the old Soviet regime witnessed the origination of groups, similar to the collective in their structure, but formed spontaneously and not practicing the terror of collective denunciation. These were non-official groups of friends, or, as I shall call them in the remaining exposition, "friendly networks."

Ksenia Kasianova has dubbed these non-official networks of friends "diffuse groups." Basing herself on Kingsley Davis's analysis of stratification, she has proposed distinguishing between diffuse and concrete types of interaction. If concrete interaction is the one concerned with instrumental gains for an actor who pursues it, then a person enters diffuse interaction not because his or her partners may be useful in attaining this person's goals, but because of some deep interest in the personalities of these partners. One may say that this classification restates the familiar Kantian opposition of treating another human being as a means or as an aim in itself.

A diffuse group forms itself over an extended period of time, in the course of many mutual perspicuous tests, and has a certain degree of reticence. Having been formed, it has two main features. First, a member of a diffuse group allows it to interfere in his or her personal affairs, even "to form himself as a persona," according to Kasianova, because this friendly network guarantees the unquestioned support and defense of the individual: "No social welfare system, never and nowhere, could guarantee a man such confidence and freedom as that given by the support of a group of a diffuse type."[1] Second, the diffuse group is tolerant toward individuals constituting it, and ensures authentic communication without any need to dissimulate, serving as the arena for the formation of the image of a given individual self: "In this group a man can be himself: playing a role or impersonating some intended other is simply impossible. Consequently, only one variant of behavior is possible -- they should accept you as you are, such as you have become to this very moment, with your drawbacks, sins, and weaknesses."[2]

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[1] Ksenia Kasianova, O russkom natsional'nom kharaktere [On Russian National Character] (Moscow, 1994), p. 254.

[2] Ibid. Here one may suspect a certain contradiction: how one may be oneself when the group forms your persona? Perhaps, the answer lies in a very Russian mechanism of self-formation (partly captured, however, by Erving Goffman also): I know who I am only as a result of a relevant group judgment on my self, without this judgment "being oneself" is impossible since one does not know who one is without appropriate peer review. On the mechanism of

Therefore, a friendly network functions similarly to Makarenko's collectives, because it employs all the same evangelical methods of influencing people, but differs from it in that it does not enserf its members (entering the network and abandoning it are free) and is not an institutionalized social unit, collectively responsible for achieving the unit goals imposed from the outside. Collective surveillance in this case does not result in periodic assemblies to discuss who is to blame (for the loss or punishment imposed on the group as a whole), which constitute the rhythm of work of any official collective and which unleash the terror of group denunciation of an individual.

CIVIL SOCIETY IN CONTEMPORARY RUSSIA

Contemporary Russian society comprises a rather complicated set of transformed elements of the Soviet society and new bodies. First, old Soviet collectives are either destroyed or have devolved into a condition that I shall designate, for lack of a better term, as "the post-collective": ties that kept the small contact group functioning as the collective are radically loosened. Frequently, the goal of group activity, heretofore imposed by the bodies of state governance, has to be now set up by the group itself, and the collective-building mechanisms have been reoriented to pursuing a new group goal -- survival of the collective as such.[1] There are ample grounds to suspect, however, that in the absence of hierarchical surveillance over the *aktiv* -- if Zinoviev's hypothesis still holds -- collectives devolve into "closed shops." The *aktiv* from the old days finds it more profitable to directly manipulate the opinion of their colleagues or bully them into compliance, perhaps even to seek recourse to primitive violence, than to support the fiction of the collective as a group of equal colleagues. The first stages of privatization may have simply helped to legalize this overt violence of the strong.

Second, many new groups that have emerged in a business sphere -- for example, groups of employees of new commercial firms, banks and so on -- do not even care to present themselves as collectives, openly proclaiming the individualistic principles of their formation and functioning. The regular Friday tea or cocktail parties, set up according to the recommendations of human relations consultants in order to create some kind of team spirit, do not hide a fact obvious to everybody involved -- someone is an owner or a boss and someone is just a hired employee.

Third, the Gosplan and the bodies of state repression that mediated relations between the Soviet collectives, have been either dissolved or have been gradually losing this function.

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self-revelation in public review, and its religious roots, see Kharkhordin, <u>The Collective and the Individual in Soviet Russia</u>.

[1] On the stated managers' priority to help the collective survive see Oleg Kharkhordin, Theodore P. Gerber, "Russian Directors' Business Ethic: A Study of Industrial Enterprises in St. Petersburg, 1993", <u>Europe-Asia Studies</u>, November 1994.

A need of coordinating business relations between small groups of post-Soviet society has been met by the phenomenal proliferation of businesses providing protection and security services.[1] Protection services are now provided by a whole spectrum of suppliers starting from the transformed or privatized parts of the old Soviet repressive apparatus to new semi- and fully criminal structures. It is becoming increasingly difficult to draw a borderline separating these "public" and "private" suppliers of protection, given a constant turnover of businessmen in governmental positions, and the outflow of former government officials, together with cliques of cronies following them, into lucrative private businesses.

Fourth, friendly networks that formerly existed as if on the obverse side of the social, have emerged into the open. On the one hand, they have become an obvious part of post-Soviet business world and of what some observers call clan politics. Although networks of patron-client relations seem to be more important for the formation of political cliques and the establishment of business ties in contemporary Russia, one may suspect that friendly networks also play a role in their formation. At least, some friends' networks, transformed and institutionalized to a certain extent in assigning related government or business positions, lie at the core of many power groups.[2] On the other hand, those friendly networks that withstood the temptations of jointly pursuing wealth or power, and thus have eschewed the fate of testing their cohesion under those pressures, seem to retain the functions they inherited from the old days. They provide the most fundamental means of social welfare and defense for the individual, and ensure the maintenance of the arenas of existentially important communication contributing to the personality formation among their members.

Overviewing this terrain of diverse groupings and ties, one notes two curious features. On the one hand, the post-collectives and the recently emerged business groups are tied into a post-Soviet society by means of private and public protection providers that use the threat of physical violence to maintain predictable behavior of civil bodies. The weak state calls into existence a whole plethora of entities that use violent non-civil methods to ensure the smooth functioning of businesses. On the other hand, all of these bodies, civil and militant, are penetrated by the networks of friendly concern, mutual help and non-violent influence. The central problem of contemporary Russian civil society thus may consist in transforming the relations of uncivil violence according to the principles of friendly networks.

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[1] Federico Varese applied Diego Gambetta's analysis of the Sicilian Mafia to the emergence of protection businesses in the Russian case. See Varese,"The Transition to the Market and Corruption in Post-Socialist Russia," <u>Political Studies</u>, 1997, vol. 45: 3; and "Is Sicily the Future of Russia - Private Protection and the Rise of the Russian Mafia," <u>Archives Europeennes De Sociologie</u>, 1994, vol. 35:2. Among Russian authors, Vadim Volkov has the best take on this topic, see his "The Diffusion and the Reconstruction of the Russian State, 1997-2001," paper for the Interdisciplinary seminar of the European University at St. Petersburg, April 1997.

[2] Consider networks associated with people around Chubais, and to a lesser extent, Nemtsov.

Building a civil society in Russia is perhaps directly linked to introducing civil -- meaning non-militant and non-violent -- means of tying post-collectives and new business groups into a single society. Of course, creation of free associations that would mediate relations between the individual and the state -- a project of building civil society that is now usually taken as the only possible-- is also very important and necessary. But in the country that has witnessed the collapse of the monopoly of state violence -- that is, where the "state" is the name assigned to the powerful provider of protection services (and not the most powerful, once you are outside of Moscow) -- defense of the individual against the encroachments of this entity can hardly be central to the task of ensuring individual liberties. If the "state" is just a linguistic marker attached to a firm for production of violence that has its office in the Kremlin, and by tradition, chooses to pretend to represent the rest of the country in international negotiations, then the relations between the individual and this "state" is not that much different from relations between the individual and other firms manufacturing violence. Defending oneself from uncivil means of interaction as such, rather than defending oneself from the "state" as one of the providers of such means, is the task that a post-Soviet citizen encounters on the daily basis.

Concentration of attention on the creation of free citizens' associations that (potentially) oppose the state and educate the citizenry is, as I have tried to show in this article, a result of the theoretical vogue on Catholic conceptions of civil society. The Russian state, however, is severely limited in its capacity to attain its goals; its traditional competencies, especially in the realm of production of protection services, are diffused among many firms and corporations. This diffusion of violence has attained menacing proportions. Therefore, in order to make a Catholic model of civil society make sense in these conditions, one has to first re-create the absent monopoly of legitimate violence, a task pursued by many in the current Russian government. This task is formidable, and may seem even unattainable if one takes into consideration one of the trends of international development of recent years exemplified by such cases as Lebanon, Yugoslavia, and Afghanistan.

Besides, Russia is paradoxically close to the realization of the Dostoevsky project, a project of building civil society on the Orthodox model. That is, instead of revitalizing the agonizing state, one may help finish the transformation of a vast contemporary terrain of uncivil life according to evangelical principles. Indeed, Russia has a very weak state and uncivil society, which employs military rather than civil methods in solving the problem of its integration. And instead of trying to re-concentrate violence -- that is now diffused among many actors -- in the single hands once again, one may counteract this diffusion of violence by the diffusion of a civil way of life. To play on Kasianova's terms, the main task of creating civil society in Russia would then be a reconstruction of the bodies of diffuse violence on the principles of diffuse communication.

PROBLEMS

In closing, one should mention that this conception of civil society based on the Orthodox Christian tradition has two serious drawbacks. On the one hand, it seems to be highly idealistic; on the other, its realization harbors many dangers. However, one may try eliminating both of these disadvantages.

Let us start from the first one. A proposal to transform "bandit" methods of social integration according to the principles practiced in friendly networks will not seem as unrealistic, if one reminds oneself about a troubling partial coincidence between the ideologies of St. Joseph's brethren and contemporary Russian criminal "brotherhood"; it is not for nothing that the self-designation of Russian gangsters is *bratva* rather then *la famiglia*, as is the case of the Sicilian mafia. One may also recollect that one of the central problems that concerned Kasianova in her studies of diffuse groups was the emergence of *avtoritet*, a Russian word for both "moral authority" and "an informal leader of a criminal world."[1] Zinoviev's hypothesis about an unavoidable devolution of the collective into "a gang" or "a mafia group" in the conditions of decreasing hierarchical surveillance also points to some proximity of the evangelical practices and the main mechanisms of group formation in the criminal community.

Problems of small group development and interaction between them have been neglected after a virtual collapse of the Soviet "science of the collective" in the late 1980s. Hence it is very hard to evaluate the prominence of the parallels suggested; this is a subject for future research. One thing is obvious, however: sermons on brotherly love in front of gangsters is the shortest route to discrediting the Orthodox project of building civil society, of transforming centers of diffuse violence according to peaceful and civil principles. One would need stern but attractive political and economic mechanisms that would steer the former virtuosos of violence in the direction of employing civil means of interaction.

A second drawback of the Orthodox vision of civil society concerns the danger inherent in the practical implementation of this vision. This threat was first formulated by Frank whom I have already cited. In his opinion, the transformation of the world on church principles, but carried out by worldly means, can only lead to the debasement of the church, its entrapment in worldliness and mundanity, rather than to a deification of the world. Frank asserted that the total dissolution of the world in the church would only happen "beyond the empirical being of man"; any attempts to dissolve the world in the church by this-worldly means leads to all the atrocities inherent in the projects of building the Holy Commonwealth on earth. Thus, the transfiguration of the world into the church should be carried out by holy rather than worldly means, by mysterious Divine Providence rather than by rational human

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[1] Kasianova, O russkom natsional'nom kharaktere, pp. 264, 327.

projects of transforming the world. Before this holy transfiguration happens, a principal irreconcilable duality of the world and the church should be maintained, wrote Frank; a border between the two realms passes through each human heart.[1]

Translating this emotional warning of Frank into the language of contemporary social sciences, we may get the following: an individual heart should be transfigured on the basis of transcendental rather than this-worldly yearnings; civil principles of life should spread and take root not as a result of rational plans of eradicating diffuse violence, but as a result of the mysterious descent of a deep intense personal faith in them on each human being. While this condition is not achieved, a radical duality of the repressive-violent methods, espoused by the state-like organizations, and the mores of Orthodox civil society should be carefully observed and supported.

But what is faith from the standpoint of studies of everyday life? As sociologists are prone to mention, common people -- that is, with religious virtuosos aside -- tend to believe into what is profitable to believe.[2] Of course, everyday observance of certain moral or religious norms, advantageous for the individual in question, may be suddenly highlighted by an acute and extraordinary experience, in the result of which this individual will obstinately insist that s/he really believes now, a sign that some may take as indicating "real internal belief."[3] Until this happens, however, until strong transcendental faith in the unconditional observance of the principles of civilized and civil life does not descend on each individual soul, we may be satisfied by the uncomplicated external observance of the rules of this civil life. An attainment of individual faith in the unconditional ideal of civil life by each citizen may be a goal, hardly achievable in this world, but we may gradually broaden the terrain of peaceful civil and civilized existence where this descent of faith may happen, while also in the meantime cautiously maintaining the duality between the shrinking state and expanding civil society.

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[1] Frank, Dukhovnye Osnovy, pp. 97-98.

[2] See e.g. Pierre Bourdieu, "Genesis and Structure of the Religious Field" in C. Calhoun, ed., Comparative Social Research, vol. 13 (Greenwich, CT: JAI Press, 1991), p. 15.

[3] Compare Michel de Certeau, The Practice of Everyday Life, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984), p. 178: "As a first approximation, I define 'belief' ... as a subject's investment in a proposition, the *act* of saying it and considering it as true -- in other words, a 'modality' of assertion and not its content."