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Saint Petersburg - Yalta Report

By

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It is November 11, 2007 and we have returned from our trip through Russia and the Ukraine. My graduate student in our WMU Sociology Department and Russian interpreter, Katya Vasetsky-Chamberlin, and I started from Detroit late on November 3, 2007. Her husband Steve Chamberlin took us to the Detroit airport in my car. On the way we had a small explosion in the air conditioner. It could have ruined the whole trip. But we fixed it.

Katya and I flew in a Lufthansa airbus to Frankfurt a. M. The Lufthansa had from its very beginning the best weather service, which was even the envy of the German air force. Thus, our flight to Frankfurt was rather smooth, and without too many disturbances. Unfortunately, there was not enough time to visit my family in Frankfurt. We may do that in April, on the way to Dubrovnik, in Croatia, at the international course on The Future of Religion in the IUC, April 28 - May 3, 2008. Thus, Katya and I flew right away on to Saint Petersburg in Russia also in a Lufthansa airbus. The Lufthansa is everywhere! Where is Boeing? We flew up the Baltic Sea to the highest peak of the Gulf of Finland across Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. We left Novgorod to the east, where the Crusaders had attacked after they had searched for the empty grave in Jerusalem, and had killed many Arabs and Jews on the way, and had established a kingdom, and finally had been beaten in the devastated Holy Land, through being cut off from the Sea of Galilee and dehydrated in the desert, by Saladin. Now they were drowned in the lakes near Novgorod by Alexander, after they had devastated all the villages and towns along the road, as Napoleon and Hitler would do later on. It would definitely have been better for the Crusaders, if they had stayed at home peacefully. Maybe thus they could have avoided the later heresy trial through the Holy Inquisition, because of a suspected relapse into Zoroastrianism, or more specifically Mithraism, and their later annihilation. But I think there are two or three knights still left in the Deutsch-Herren-Orden Monastery in Frankfurt. I had so far made it only to Rostock, Denmark, and Sweden. There was already snow on the ground everywhere in the Baltic states. Our plane had to be de-iced. Hitler flew the same way in 1944 to visit General Mannerheim near Helsinki, to get him into the war against Russia. He failed. But there is a tape left about the whole episode, which has just surfaced.

When we approached Saint Petersburg, where the lights were on already, I remembered that the German Northern Army had beleaguered the city for several years, and that thousands of citizens had been killed by the new Crusaders against Bolshevist atheism through artillery shelling and stuka attacks, and mostly through a terrible starvation, until a road opened up across the frozen Lake Ladoga, and food could be brought in at night. All the German army reports came back to me about the surrounding battles of Tallinn, Narva, Tartu, Pecov, Velikie Luki, and of course Novgorod. The brave city of Leningrad never fell, as Novgorod had never fallen,
Katya's Uncle and Aunt picked us up from the Saint Petersburg airport and drove us to my Hotel Aster. Russia is becoming prosperous under President Putin, as he curbs in wild capitalism. Uncle and Aunt were retired after a good life with much hard work. They were tremendously happy to see Katya, and me too, of course. Russians are friendly and warm-hearted people, and when they love somebody they really mean it – as long as they are not attacked. Uncle and Aunt were too young, to have remembered the Great Patriotic War and the German attack against Leningrad from their own personal experience.

Next day, Katya's good Uncle gave us a ride in his car through the great city of Saint Petersburg, formerly Leningrad. I took many pictures. Saint Petersburg is a mixture of Amsterdam and Paris. It is a wonderful city. Unfortunately, we drove into a one-way street and were caught by the police, and had to pay for a ticket. I also lost my camera in the excitement. Katya thinks, the camera may have disappeared during the airport searches. We shall never know. Whoever has it now, may enjoy the wonderful pictures I had taken. in Saint Petersburg.

We saw the Winter Palace, where Lenin started his revolution in the night from October 24-25, 1917, after Alexander Kerenskij’s February revolution had failed. Lenin's huge statues are still standing everywhere waiting for the next revolution, after the third counter-revolution of 1989 has exhausted itself. There are still many names of places streets, and metrostations, which remember the October Revolution: the Place of the Revolution, the Place of Iljitsch, Lenin-Allee, Proletarskaja, Komsomolskaja, Marxistskaja, etc. At the Winter Palace Lenin declared all the feudal and bourgeois buildings to be the property of the people, who had built them after all. Then, of course, came the horrible peace treaty of Brest-Litovsk, which the Germans dictated, and which then was revenged by the so called Versailles Dictate, which had much to do not only with World War I, but also, and much more so, with World War II. Hitler’s war was a war of retaliation against the West, Jus Talionis, and of colonial thievery and robbery toward the East. The V in the V I and the V II - which devastated London, and which were produced by Porsche with Hungarian–Jewish slave labor from the Concentration Camp of Auschwitz, by the same Porsche, who was the friend of Hitler and of Henry Ford, and who was the inventor of the Volkswagen, and many types of race cars, and of always new models of tanks for the Eastern Front up to the impossible Mouse, and who was a technical genius without sense for the difference between good and evil - stood for the English word vengeance. How triumphantly Hitler had danced around the railroad car in the forest of Compieign: according to Wagner’s Rienzi, the Medieval people’s tribune, whom he had seen 40 times in the opera houses of Vienna and elsewhere, and whom he tried to imitate in the modern political and historical reality. It could not go well!! Then came still all the victories on the Balkan and in Russia. But then came the final catastrophes of Stalingrad, Kursk, and Berlin. Sometimes world history is indeed world-judgment! Thus, Hitler said to his secretaries in his last hours in the Berlin Führer Bunker: Fate wanted it that way!!!

However, when we went through the Frankfurt airport, the native Frankfurters, who assisted us very nicely, spoke still lovingly of their Adolf, and remembered still in detail the flak artillery 10 5 and the Me 109, which had tried to defend the city in vain against the British and American so called saturation - and terror -bombers, who destroyed 80 percent of it. But the Frankfurt natives, who still speak the dialect, and can, still remember Adolf, become fewer and fewer, and the so-called foreigners become more and more. Most of the taxis outside the Frankfurt airport are driven by Pakistanis, and Iranians, and most of all by Turks, who have done this work for 30 or more years already, and who speak German well, and their children even better. They are all Muslims and do not believe that September 11, 2001 was the work of
Muslims, but rather of the CIA. The Turks are longing for a Turkish Chancellor in Berlin. Once the so called foreigners came to the rich German Federal Republic from the Near East and from Eastern Europe, having been attracted by powerful German capital, and now with massive outsourcing of jobs to Africa, India, or China, and a consequently shrinking of the labor market, have become a burden and a social and political liability and problem. Even many still religious Frankfurters have forgotten the Abrahamic community and solidarity, and the Sermon on the Mount, and the Golden Rule, and have moved to the Right, and want the Islamic foreigners to go home. The Frankfurt natives are observing regretfully and sadly, that everything in Germany has gone the opposite way from the one, which their Adolf had once led them, democracy or not, and they are longing for the good old times, when there was law and order, and when there was Volksgemeinschaft, i.e. people’s solidarity, and when there were no foreigners yet, except in the forced labor camps around the city, and of course outside the beloved home land.

In the afternoon, Professor Leo Semashko, leader of the global Peace and Harmony Movement, took us from my Hotel Aster to the University of Saint Petersburg. I gave two lectures at the University. One lecture was on "The Critical Theory of Religion: New Models." The other paper was on the "Critical Theory of Religion: The Golden Rule.” The critical theory of society of the Frankfurt School had been banned as revisionist during the Soviet period. Katya did an excellent job in translating my papers. Professors and students were very interested. The students were well dressed and happy. However, the third generation remembers little of the pain and suffering of their grandparents. There were good questions by students and faculty alike, Older professors still had a tendency toward scientific atheism, falling back behind Immanuel Kant, which Marx never did. Atheists are people, who had lived through such horrible circumstances, that they could no longer trust in the God of their fathers, and therefore denied his existence. They could not solve the theodicy problem, theoretically or practically. Their atheism was a practical, not a scientific matter. In Auschwitz Rabbis put God on trial and after three days found him guilty, and some of them never went back to pray again, and 80% of the population of Israel ceased praying, But some of the Rabbis did go back and prayed again. Some of the older professors in the University of Saint Petersburg had already in the Soviet period become agnostics: they’re sociological or other scientific methodologies could not transcend the boundaries of the world of appearances. Neither atheists nor agnostics wanted to risk a Kierkegardian leap of faith, and return to the Orthodoxy of their grandfathers. We discussed the possibility, that Marx and Lenin may have had something to do with Baruch Spinoza’s modern pantheism. When I asked our Russian friends, if they were afraid of a new encirclement by the West, they answered quietly and self-confidently, that Russia was a very large country, and that thus it was hard to encircle: there was much more behind the Ural! In the evening we celebrated our great success with Professor Leo Semashko and his dear wife Lucy in a nice restaurant near my Hotel Aster. Leo told us all about his tetra sociology, which he traced back to Marx and which he had developed and taught already in the Soviet time. Leo was convinced, that Lenin’s Great Socialist October Revolution of 1917 in Petrograd, and what followed, had been a great mistake and a tragedy, and that now history took its normal course again. I received from Leo’s wife Lucy a wonderful book about Saint Petersburg.

On Wednesday, we flew with the Ukrainian Airline to Kiev and then to Simferopol. The taxi driver, who drove me from Hotel Aster to the apartment of Katya’s relatives, and then both of us the long way to the Saint Petersburg airport, and then a few days later back again in the middle of cold winter nights, was a wonderful story teller. He told us most hilarious and humorous taxi - life-stories, one after the other, and thereby made Katya very happy. We
expressed our hope to the very poetical Saint Petersburg taxi driver, that he would publish his wonderful stories some day for the enjoyment of a larger public. If we had asked our taxi driver, what 1917 meant for him today, he would probably have answered as others of his profession did, that the revolution was still present as in the past so now in every family, in the fate of every family: the dead of the Gulag were much worse off, than the dead of the Second World War—because the latter defended their homeland, and knew what they were dying for. Nevertheless, it is possible, that - if the third counter-revolution continues - the intelligent Lenin may have to make room for the last, most incapable, and incompetent Czar Nikolaj II, and that Lenin’s body may be taken out of the Mausoleum in Moscow and may be re-buried in one of the city’s cemeteries in January 2008, in remembrance of the day of his death, after the Czar’s body had already been re-buried in the tomb of the Romanovs in the Saint Petersburg Peter and Paul Fortress, and after the Orthodox Church had canonized him as a martyr in 2000. The Orthodox Church completely forgot the atrocities the Czar had committed, when he was beating down and repressing successfully for the time being the Revolution of 1905, of course only, in order to be swallowed up by the next revolutionary wave, 12 years later, in 1917. *Sic transit Gloria mundi!!!* Revolutions cannot be stopped by counter-revolutions, be it through atrocities or through money, at least not in the long run. Also President Putin is merely a transition figure, which may soon resign, in order to join his friend, the Social-Democratic Ex-Chancellor Gerhard Schröder of the German Federal Republic in the private gas-business. The taxi drivers and others are convinced, that as Lenin’s revolution of 1917 had been paid for by German money, the present orange counter-revolutions in Georgia of 2003, in the Ukraine of 2004, and in Kirgistan of 2005 were analogically financed by American money. The question arose continually for us in Russia as well as in the Ukraine, what the proletariat, or what in Western Europe is now called the precariat, from its precarious life style, -the workers, taxi drivers, farmers -, will do after the magic of the victorious counter-revolution of 1989 will lose its power and its money, and after the splendor of the capitalistic commodity -production, - exchange and-fetishism has worn thinner: will the workers, and farmers, and taxi drivers be happy through consoling themselves by misunderstanding themselves as middle class in antagonistic civil society under neo-con or neo-lib control, like in America, or will they continue to remember Lenin and his October Revolution, if also in a demythologized form, and the great Patriotic War, and the victory over European fascism. Much depends for future world history on what ever they will think and do.

Not only was our flight with the Ukrainian Airline and later on back with the Russian Aeroflot very save, but we also found most friendly assistance at every airport, as in the USA, and in Germany, so also in Russia and in the Ukraine. In the Ukraine even a doctor assisted us, which was more than we needed. That assistance was a wonderful sign of humanity in the midst of all the high technology of the continually growing airports!!

When we flew across the huge European territory of the Russian Federation and the Ukraine, I could not help myself to remember the 3 million so called fascist soldiers from all parts of Central, Western, Northern and Southern Europe, who not even seventy years ago devastated the land and the villages and the cities below and killed 27 million so called communists and 6 million Jews. I thought of the Muslim Tartars, who were allied with Hitler, and therefore later on were punished by Stalin through resettlement. I thought of the Christians, e. g. the Mennonites and others, who bravely following the Sermon on the Mount did not want to bear and use arms against other human beings, and who therefore were driven out by red fascism into exile, or were sent into labor camps, in order to build cities behind the Ural, which had only numbers up to the counter-revolution of 1989. Others were simply murdered. When seven years
earlier, I flew into Kiev, it was the Sunday on which the city remembered the arrival of the SS in the city 50 years earlier. On this Sunday, 180 Jews were shot in the city, simply because of their race. Later on 36,000 Jews were killed in a quarry near Kiev. This was before the insecticide Cyclon B, which had been invented by Fritz Haber, the father of the gas-war, and which had been produced a mass by IG Farben, was used in the German work- and death- camps. Already in the 1920s, long before the fascist armies arrived, a pogrom killed many Jews in the Ukraine, simply because of their faith. When the German troops came to Kiev in October 1941, and fought their way against heavy Russian resistance across the Dnepr on their way to the Volga, and to Stalin grad, and into their disaster, the river seemed to consist of human blood rather than of water.

On our flight from Saint Petersburg through Kiev to Simferopol, I remembered Bertolt Brecht’s very ironical piece Schweyk in the Second World War, in which the Bohemian soldier Schweyk met a German Army Chaplain, who was with his altar-wagon on his way to Stalingrad in the cold winter of 1943, and who, already being drunk, ordered him to deprive the poor farmers in the next village of even more wotka, and who got stuck in the snow, and who, therefore, cursed his employers, the Nazis, into hell, because they had not given him a sufficient amount of gasoline. Unfortunately, Brecht was right: there was much, not good, but rather very bad religion involved in the fascist attack against atheistic bolshevism. For Hitler Christianity had been the bolshevism in the Roman Empire and had destroyed it. The present bolshevism, which he fought at the Eastern front with his three million men from all Western and Central and Southern and Northern European countries and all his army chaplains, was the secularization of Christianity and as such would destroy humanity, if it was not annihilated, which he tried to do, in order to rescue the human species. What for Hitler Christianity and bolshevism had in common, was the most malignant and destructive virus of human equality. There had to be, according to the aristocratic principle of nature predators and prey, or the human species would go under and the earth would move around the sun without it, as it had been the case seven million years ago. The army chaplains were not seen as Christians, in spite of the fact that they carried not only the swastika but also the cross on their uniforms, but rather as mere moral officers, who had to motivate the troops in their heroic life and death struggle against atheistic bolshevism. After the victorious end of the war the army chaplains would be treated like the 150,000 half Jews or honorary Arians, who served in the German army sometimes even in very high positions and also at the Eastern front according to their meritorious behavior toward the Reich.

On our flight to Simferopol I remembered one non-fictional, real Army Chaplain, who was so fanatic in his struggle against atheistic Bolshevism, that in a tank battle at the Southern Russian front, he did not even notice, that his feet were freezing off. He also, bound by the Empire Concordat, once stood by quietly, when thousands of Russian children were machine-gunned down, and he could only say the Rosary. He finally, because he could not walk very well any longer, was sent to Paris, where he served as Chaplain in an infamous SS - prison, where he daily obediently accompanied mostly innocent people going to their execution. Even the SS still had chaplains. Instead of resigning from the priesthood at the end of the war, as the former Army Chaplain had rightly intended to do, he allowed himself to be promoted, and educated young theologians, and finally became a Bishop in the German Federal Republic, and preached and wrote much about love for many years, without having changed his hostile attitude toward socialists, not to speak of communists, in the spirit of the Papal Syllabus and Vatican I. Today, December 2, 2007, the born-again and government-conform Fox News tells us, in its usual fair, balanced and unafraid way, after Vietnam, Afghanistan and Iraq, after Lebanon, and Palestine,
after Chenya, and after Rwanda, Sudan, and Dafur, and after Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay, that atrocities are simply committed by some unstable characters, or that they are merely a part of war, and come along with the territory. That never was, is, or will be a psychological, moral, ethical, legal, or religious excuse, justification, or legitimating for atrocities. While good religion should be promoted, bad religion must be forgotten as fast as possible.

Our friend and driver Igor picked us up in Simferopol, Ukraine. Also Zhenia Leontyeva’s Mother was there. Zhenia had been our former translator in Yalta, and is now my graduate student, who lives in my House of Shalom with free room and board like so many other students from the USA and from many other countries before, and is doing her Ph. D. in sociology at Western Michigan University. Zhenia’s Grand Father, who is Jewish, was deported into a German concentration camp, when he was only 15 years old, There medical experiments were performed on him. When he came home again two years later, he had gray hairs. Igor was a prominent soldier in the Russian army. He is doing rather well in the travel business around the growing airport of Simferopol. He just bought himself a better used car, which we enjoyed very much. But Igor cannot and does not want to give up his socialist-humanist longings, and still hopes for better times. Igor drove us to Yalta, where we arrived after a two-hour mountain trip and stayed again in our old and very good Hotel Orianda.

The seventh international course in Yalta on Religion and Civil Society: Identity Crisis and New Challenges of Post-Secular Society was once more a great success. Professors and students were present not only from the Ukraine, and from the Russian Federation, but also from behind the Ural, and from Central Asia. A representative of the Ukrainian Cultural Ministry was present, who wanted to receive information from us specialists in Comparative Religion, Psychology, Sociology, Political Science, Philosophy and Theology for policy purposes. There are many tensions in the religious sphere, which the state would like to mitigate through wise policies, while at the same time staying neutral. Also the Orthodox Church was represented through a priest and theologian. Father Nicolay belonged to the Patriarchy of Moscow: the Third Rome! There are tensions between the Patriarch of Moscow and the Archbishop of Kiev. Maybe the Archbishop would like to become independent and a Patriarch of the Ukraine in his own right. There are also tensions among all religious groups concerning church property, which had been confiscated by the Soviet state, but which has been given free after the victorious third counter-revolution of 1989. Tensions exist between the Crimean Tartar Muslims, who followed Hitler, and the Kiev Muslims, who stayed with Stalin. Thus, we spoke much about the neutral liberal or socialist state, the separation of religious faith and secular rationality, and of church and state, the consequent privatization of religion, the difference between good and bad religion, the theodicy problem, etc. Members of all three Abrahamic religions were present Fears were expressed about a possible partition of the Ukraine between the coal-rich, highly industrialized East, which is Orthodox and inclined toward the Russian Federation, and the West, which is Orthodox as well as United and Roman Catholic and tends toward the European Union. An inclusion of the Ukraine, or a large part of it, into the European Union and the NATO, would equal to a quasi-encirclement of the Russian Federation, and thus could elicit and provoke fears in Moscow similar to those, which the Germans had in the 19th and 20th centuries, and which found there realization in two two-front wars. There was not only the battle of Stalingrad, now Wolgograd, but also the tank battle of Kursk, which - if it had been successful- had reached east of and thus behind Moscow.

Besides directing the international course together with a Russian Professor, who had once been my student, Tatiana Tsenyushkina, I gave two papers: one on The Critical Theory of
Religion: The Lex Talionis, and the other on The Jesus Revolution, the Judas Kiss, and the Empires. I prefer the name critical theory of religion over theology, because I think it would be good to have a moratorium for several decades concerning the name of Theos, because of its blasphemous abuse by the bad religion of the Crusaders not only of Jerusalem and Novgorod in the Middle Ages, but particularly also of Saint Petersburg and Moscow and Stalingrad in the 20th century, and of Iraq and Afghanistan in the 21st century. Once more Katya did an excellent translation job for two languages - Russian and Ukrainian. Katya also gave her own excellent sociology paper. I wished, of course, that I could have taken more students like Katya from Western Michigan University on my trip. But my finances were not sufficient for other students.

We had good and passionate discussions in our international discourse in Yalta among members from different Eastern and Western civilizations. I had a particular intense discussion with the Orthodox priest, Father Nickolay, and Dr. Gabrielyan, Chair of the Political Science Department of the University of Simferopol, where I had spoken three years earlier: an Armenian and an excellent pedagogue and political scientist. While Father Nicolay presented the great Orthodox patristic theology, I engaged in the critique of the ambiguity of any religious tradition as such. While Dr. Gabrielyan, emphasized the fear-factor in all social and political life; I stressed the enlightenment as the attempt, to free people from their fears, and to make them into masters of their fate. We all agreed on the desirability of both, the continuation of good religion – the longing that the present national and international injustices are to be overcome – as well as of the enlightenment project, no matter if we were religiously committed or not. My papers were taken very well. The Professors wanted the papers to be published in Russian and Ukrainian as fast as possible. Our discourse came to its most friendly, harmonious and peaceful conclusion with a delicious Ukrainian meal and wonderful religious as well as secular presentations by a young, very ecumenical Orthodox choir.

Our international course in Yalta as well as in Dubrovnik rests on the presupposition, that there will be no peace among nations without peace among the world religions; and that there will be no peace among the religions without discourse among them; and that there can be no discourse among them without their knowledge about each others' interpretation of reality and orientation of action. The purpose of our international courses in Yalta and Dubrovnik is to increase this mutual knowledge, and thus to contribute to peace among the religions, the nations, and the civilizations. Also the results of this seventh course will appear in a book for a broader public,

The University of Simferopol expressed interest in a contract with Western Michigan University. We have such contract already with the University of Sevastopol. This city had been destroyed to a large extend by German artillery, like Odessa. The representative of the University of Sevastopol expressed its wish, that Western Michigan University would send the necessary papers to Simferopol. I promised to discuss the issue with Western Michigan University.

The Professors of the University of Simferopol and Kiev invited me to stay for vacations in Yalta - a wonderful city - for a whole summer talking with just one beloved person. What a wonderful idea, but also what a strange idea of a vacation! My friends have no idea, that I have done only working vacations for 30 years, and would not like to have it otherwise.

On Friday night, Igor drove us back to Simferopol. On the way we stayed in the mountains in a wonderful hunting lodge and had an excellent Russian meal. Germans are coming to these lodges in large numbers during summer on their peaceful pilgrimages through the Ukraine. Sometimes they may visit Hitler’s former headquarter near Kiev during the Operation Barbarossa, South. When we arrived in our Hotel in Simferopol, Zhenia’s Mother received us
again, and we spent some time together talking about Kalamazoo and Zhenia's life and her very successful work in WMU's Sociology Department.

Early in the morning we left in a Russian Aeroflot plane from Simferopol to Moscow. We landed on the airfield east of Moscow, which the German Center Army had reached late in November 1941, precisely 66 years earlier, when suddenly a horrible winter weather set in, Hundreds of German tanks and airplanes were destroyed by ice and snow. Hitler arrived in Moscow six weeks late, because of the Balkan war, which he had to fight for his model and friend Benito Mussolini, who had got stuck there on the way to Greece. At this time, Hitler could have reached an armistice with Stalin, who was ready to leave Moscow, but Communism was the archenemy of National Socialism, and he wanted to have the whole territory up to the Volga for colonization.

Our plane had once more to be de-iced in Moscow. That gave us time, to reflect on the successful and prosperous Presidency of Mr. Putin. We remembered, that Putin had replaced since 2005 November 7, the day on which traditionally the great socialist October Revolution had been celebrated, through November 4, as the day on which from now on the Russian Federation will remember Moscow’s liberation from the Catholic Poles, who in 1612 kept the Kremlin occupied. President Putin, was fully aware, that through the liberation from Polish occupation the decades of dynastic, social, and national crisis and confusion –smuta- had come to an end, and the rebirth of a strong Russian central state could begin, The analogy to President Putin’s own efforts is only too obvious, to ground newly the Russian state authority after the social chaos of the last years of President Jelzin. Putin’s rearrangement of the national places of remembrance does not move or excite the Russian public too much, In any case, President Putin’s attempt, to give back to his country the self-consciousness of a great nation after the chaos of the 1990s, orientates itself in terms of World War II, in the consequence of which not only the USA, but also Russia became a super-power. The new textbook, which President Putin demands for the history courses in all Russian schools is supposed to mediate and communicate a new pride in the national history and in the national solidarity, which not at last feed upon the consciousness, that the Russian Federation finds itself in the possession of important raw materials, which are very much traded on the world market, and that it correspondingly engages in a dynamic foreign policy. Putin’s history textbook is also to teach the Russian students, that the entrance into the club of democratic nations means, that part of the national sovereignty has to be given up in favor of the USA.

From Putin’s rather blooming Moscow, we flew on to Saint Petersburg. Katya's Uncle picked us up again from the airport and took us through an unbelievable traffic to the Hotel Aster. In the middle of the night we started our flight back with Lufthansa to Frankfurt and to Detroit. In Frankfurt we had to land through a horrible dark and cold rainstorm. My hometown has done this to me already many times before. I could see the Main River only a few minutes before the landing, so deep the clouds were hanging. After we had left Yalta a terrible storm sank seven ships in the Black Sea, A horrible storm raged in the North Sea against Bremen, and Hamburg, and Southern England. We somehow sneaked safely through all the storms. The crossing of the Atlantic was very smooth, Steve picked us up in Detroit. and on the way home we celebrated our return with a good American meal. We had not slept several nights, and we had to start teaching next morning again. But we are tough people. Katya comes from Russia. I was trained to go into Russia. So we both were well trained, and all went well!

I would like to express the heartfelt gratitude of all members of the seventh international course on Religion and Civil Society: Identity Crisis and New Challenges of Post-Secular Society
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