

'KATEHON' - TOWARDS A POST-LIBERAL RUSSIA

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INTRODUCTION

In deciding on the 'special military operation' in Ukraine, the Russian government must have known that it was renouncing one of the lines of possible future development that was still just about open to it - the collaboration with Europe, and particularly with Germany, that was implicit in the Nord Stream 2 project. Nothing in politics is ever totally predictable and there is still a possibility that Germany will change its mind. The opening of Nord Stream 2 and resolution of the problems of Nord Stream 1 (problems imposed as a result of the US/EU/UK/Canada sanctions régime) would at a stroke resolve the problems of gas supply that are likely to weigh so heavily in Winter. But Germany is faced with a choice that is now very stark between an orientation towards Russia or an orientation towards the US - the possibility of balancing the two is not available to it (and 'Europe' still has no existence as a political unity). Germany could theoretically reckon that an alliance with Russia has more to offer than alliance with the US but it also has the problem of the new 'hinterland' - the territory that used to make up the Austro-Hungarian Empire - that has opened up since the fall of the Soviet Union. With the exception of Hungary this whole area is viscerally anti-Russian.

So we can for the moment assume that Russia must seek its destiny elsewhere than in the West and, by the same token, in the adoption of so-called 'Western values.' But what might be the alternative? In this article I want to look at the website 'Katehon' which is proposing a more or less coherent political philosophy which it regards as consistent with a specifically Russian spiritual and intellectual tradition. I'm not in a position to say how important or influential Katehon actually is in Russia, but one thing can be said with certainty - with the intervention in Ukraine and consequent proxy war with Europe, the Katehon writers arguing for an Eastward, 'Eurasian' turn in Russian foreign policy, as well as for a religiously - Russian Orthodox - based political philosophy feel at present that they have the ball at their feet.

This is how they themselves define their project (machine translation):

'The Center aims to develop a worldview, political, diplomatic, economic and military strategy for Russia of the future, based on the principles of greatness, deep civilizational sovereignty, a revived identity and all-encompassing social justice.'

'The figure of Katechon in political philosophy and theological ideas is the intersection point of the main themes of human history: religion and politics, spirit and power, ideas and matter, internal and external, time and its end. Katechon is the one who keeps humanity from the death of extinction, absorption into chaos and a whirlwind of irreversible catastrophes. This is the task of the Church, religion and faith; this is the highest goal of the state and power, this is the vocation of the Empire, which combines the spirit and power.'

'It is this figure, both in the Christian context and in the field of political science, that is the main semantic moment: the legitimacy of the political system, the criteria of justice and the source of law are associated with it.'

At least that is how they define it in the Russian language website. The version on the English language website is a little different:

'We, at Katehon, view the world as being a global space in which there will always be permanent and distinct civilizations or "civilizational spheres." These polylogue spheres of influence are not going to disappear in the near or even distant future, nor should they. We follow the realist school of international relations with its varying forms - e.g. defensive, offensive, neo, hyper - and so we are obliged to recognize the great diversity of values, traditions, interests and visions which exist among all of the world's distinct civilizations. In particular, we are engaged in studying the following "great spaces" which comprise the majority of all world civilizations - North America, South (or Latin) America, Europe, Russia-Eurasia, China, India, the Islamic world, Africa, and the Pacific. We consider all of the preceding global-regional "poles" to be different civilizational entities, all

possessing certain commonalities and yet also differences which should neither be ignored nor denied. This demands a new multipolar approach to studying each civilization and the many subtle distinctions that exist within them.

'We, at Katehon, understand our mission to be one that seeks to assist in the creation and defense of a secure, democratic and just international system, free from hegemony, violence, terrorism, persecution, slavery and extremism of any kind.'

The Russian language statement is signed by Konstantin Valerievich Malofeev; Alexander Gelievich Dugin; Sergey Yurievich Glazyev; Leonid Petrovich Reshetnikov; Andrey Arkadievich Klimov; Zurab Mikhailovich Chavchavadze.

The same names, with the exception of Dugin and the addition of Alexandr Makarov, appear on the English language site.

In a 'Special Report' by the US State Department on 'Pillars of Russia's Disinformation and Propaganda Ecosystem' (August 2020) Katehon is described as 'Konstantin Malofeyev's mouthpiece.' The Report goes on to say:

'Often referred to as the "Orthodox oligarch," [he made his fortune as an investment fund manager - PB] Malofeyev runs one of Russia's largest private foundations, the St. Basil the Great Charitable Foundation. He is also the deputy head of the World Russia People's Council, an international organization led by the Russian Patriarch Kirill. Malofeyev is also the head of the "pro-Putin monarchist society" the Double-Headed Eagle; and serves on the Advisory Board of the Safe Internet League, a state-linked organization ostensibly dedicated to "fighting dangerous Web content" but accused by independent Russian media of "frequently blacklisting socio-political content."

It goes on to give a brief account of the other names listed on the English language site:

'Sergey Glazyev, President Vladimir Putin's former economic advisor and currently a Minister in charge of Integration and Macroeconomics at the Eurasian Economic Commission. Glazyev is under U.S. sanctions related to Russia's hostile actions in Ukraine.

'Andrey Klimov, Deputy Chair of the Russian Federation Council Committee on Foreign Affairs and Head of the Council's Interim Committee for the Defense of State Sovereignty and the Prevention of Interference in the Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation.

'Leonid Reshetnikov, a retired Lieutenant-General of the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR), where he led the Analysis and Information Department. Until 2017, Reshetnikov was the head of the Russian Institute for Strategic Studies (RISS), a Moscow-based think-tank that used to be a part of the SVR [Foreign Intelligence Service - PB] and now conducts research for the Kremlin. According to press reports, RISS research has included plans for Russian interference in the 2016 U.S. presidential elections and proposals for the Bulgarian Socialist Party to "plant fake news and promote exaggerated polling data" in advance of that country's presidential elections the same year. In 2016, RISS and Katehon co-authored a report allegedly analyzing U.S. ideology.

'Alexander Makarov, a retired Lieutenant General of the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB).'

Chavchavadze goes unmentioned. He is a Georgian Prince, direct descendant of Ilia Chavchavadze (1837-1907), described in his Wikipedia entry as 'a Georgian public figure, journalist, publisher, writer and poet who spearheaded the revival of Georgian nationalism during the second half of the 19th century and ensured the survival of the Georgian language, literature, and culture during the last decades of Tsarist rule.' In 1987 Ilia Chavchavadze was recognised as a saint by the 'Apostolic Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Georgia' for his efforts to free the church from control by the Russian Holy Synod. The independence of the Georgian Orthodox Church (which is actually one of the oldest Christian churches) was finally recognised by the Russian Orthodox Church on 31 October 1943 on the orders of Stalin.

Richard Sakwa, Professor of Russian and European politics in the University of Kent, in his book *The Putin Paradox* gives the following brief account of the main influences on Russian policy making:

'the economic liberals shape macroeconomic policy, the neo-traditionalists the cultural sphere, the security agencies foreign policy (although not unchallenged) and the Eurasianists Eastern policy ...'

On the Katechon website Malofeev represents the 'neo-traditionalists' in their more Orthodox monarchist orientation, Dugin and Glazyev are leading figures in the Eurasian movement, Reshetnikov and Makarov represent the powerful security, 'silovki' bloc. Glazyev is also a leading figure among the economists proposing an alternative to economic liberalism. A frequent contributor to the site is Alexandr Prokhanov who represents the 'neo-traditionalists' in their more pro-Soviet orientation. Thus all the tendencies are represented except of course the liberals whose position has been seriously undermined by the Ukrainian war and consequent sanctions imposed by the West. One assumes that the elements represented in Katechon will be only too happy to take their place.

WHAT IS A KATECHON?

The Russian language Katechon website features three subject headings that do not appear on the English version - 'Empire', 'Katechon theory' and 'Zemsky Sobor.'

'Katechon theory' is mainly concerned with discussing the meaning of the term 'Katechon'. It is a Greek word meaning 'the one who restrains' and it is found in the second epistle of St Paul to the Thessalonians (Ch.2, vv 1-12):

'Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our assembling to meet him, we beg you, brethren, not to be quickly shaken in mind or excited, either by spirit or by word, or by letter purporting to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. Let no one deceive you in any way; for that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God. Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you this? And you know what is restraining him now so that he may be revealed in his time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, and the Lord Jesus will slay him with the breath of his mouth and destroy him by his appearing and his coming. The coming of the lawless one by the activity of Satan will be with all power and with pretended signs and wonders, and with all wicked deception for those who are to perish, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. Therefore God sends upon them a strong delusion, to make them believe what is false, so that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.'

The website provides a little anthology of interpretations of this passage from various church fathers - Tertullian, Jerome, Hippolyte of Rome, Theodoret of Cyr, Augustine of Hippo, Irenaeus of Lyon, and John Chrysostom. These, incidentally, are all, with the exception of Irenaeus (born perhaps in Smyrna and writing in Greek), Theodoret and John, Western - Latin - writers, albeit from the period before the Great Schism, and none of them, with the exception of Irenaeus and John, are recognised as Saints by the Orthodox Church.

Tertullian, Jerome, and John interpret the katechon as the Roman Empire, despite the fact that the Emperor at the time of St Paul was Nero. Hippolyte gives it as the 'fourth beast' in the Book of Daniel (Dan 7: 7-8), also widely regarded as symbolic of the Roman Empire. Theodoret interprets it as the grace of God. Augustine is non-committal but gives the Roman power as a probable interpretation. Irenaeus so far as I can see doesn't address the question. John interprets it as the Roman Empire:

'Some say that this is the grace of the Holy Spirit, while others say that it is the Roman state; I agree more with these latter. Why? Because if (the apostle) wanted to speak about the Spirit, he would not express himself vaguely about it, but (would say) definitely that now the grace of the Holy Spirit, i.e. (extraordinary) gifts, prevents him from appearing ... But since (the apostle) says this about the Roman state, it is understandable why he only hints at this and speaks covertly for the time being. He did not want to incur excessive hostility and useless danger. Indeed, if he had said that the Roman state would collapse in a short time, then he would immediately be wiped off

the face of the earth as a rebel ... when the existence of the Roman state ceases, then he (Antichrist) will come. And rightly so, because as long as this state is feared, no one will soon submit (to Antichrist); but after it is destroyed, anarchy will set in, and he will strive to steal all - both human and divine - power. Just as before that the kingdoms were destroyed, namely: the Median - by the Babylonians, the Babylonian - by the Persians, the Persian - by the Macedonians, the Macedonian - by the Romans, so this last will be destroyed by Antichrist, and he himself will be defeated by Christ and will no longer rule.'

The relevance of this to the current situation of Russia may be hinted at in a Christmas greeting from Konstantin Malofeev:

'Merry Christmas, dear friends!

2021 years ago in a cave near Bethlehem in the family of Joseph from Nazareth the Divine Infant Jesus Christ was born. Saint Joseph the Betrothed and the Virgin Mary traveled to Joseph's hometown of Bethlehem to participate in the census. This census was announced by the Great Emperor Caesar Augustus throughout the Roman Empire. And so the Savior of the World, the Lord Jesus Christ, became a subject of the Empire in his earthly life.

The Epiphany sanctified the Augustan Empire and made it the Catechon, the force that keeps the world from evil. Therefore, the Roman Empire will exist until the Second Coming. The first two Romes, Old and New, Constantinople, fell. Moscow is the Third Rome, and there will never be a fourth.

Therefore, for our Orthodox and Monarchist Society "Tsargrad" Christmas is a celebration of the founding of our Faith. Faith in the Kingdom of Heaven and hopes for the revival of the Kingdom of the world - Katechon, the Empire of the Third Rome, in which Christ Himself was born.'

THE KATECHON AND CARL SCHMITT

The concept of the katechon as the force charged with restraining a collapse into anarchy was revived in the twentieth century by the German political and legal theorist Carl Schmitt who regarded it, in his book *The Nomos of the Earth*, published in 1950, as the only possible means of reconciling Christian belief in an imminent collapse into anarchy and irruption of the Antichrist with the continued existence of a powerful Christian Empire - in his case thinking principally of the Holy Roman Empire (thanks to John Minahane for providing me with a translation of the relevant parts of the *Nomos*). The Katechon website has an article by an American legal theorist, M.Blake Wilson [associate professor in the Department of Criminal Justice at California State University, Stanislaus] under the title: "Counterrevolutionary Polemics: Katechon and Crisis in de Maistre, Donoso, and Schmitt," (originally published in the *Philosophical Journal of Conflict and Violence*, Vol. III, Issue 2/2019, December. The original is accessible on the internet). His starting point is the idea most commonly associated with Schmitt, the famous first sentence of his *Political Theology*: 'Sovereign is he who decides on the exception.' Wilson suggests three things that the three counter-revolutionaries, the Spanish Juan Donoso Cortes, the French Joseph de Maistre and the German Schmitt have in common:

first, the counterrevolutionary constitution and its role as katechon of revolutionary violence; second, the philosophy of the decision and the sovereign's identity as the katechon personified; and third, bourgeois romanticism's katechonic failure to engage in meaningful political action.

It is actually only Schmitt who uses the word 'katechon':

In Schmitt's view, the katechon, while still retaining its theological/eschatological roots, becomes a secularized and historical concept whereby political entities (persons, empires, and institutions) can be understood as restrainers against revolution, chaos, and disorder, which are the political precursors of liberalism and socialism ...

'The theorists fear that a revolutionary crack in the state's façade will let in the Antichrist and its dark chaos. Liberalism's weak state, as well as socialism's strong state but weak society, also lets in the darkness. Together, the theories argue, the strong state and its religion restrain the Antichrist and return order: religion asserts internal control through guilt, hell, and perdition, while political organizations exert external control through constitutional law (at its most benign) and tyranny (at its most repressive).

'For Donoso, sin and evil are the result of disorder, and it is heresy to subordinate the religious to the political and the political to the economic. Politics, rather, must be subordinated to theology ... Because man's dark nature justifies his domination, myth, religion, and political compromise are better methods to relocate and secure order. The church as katechon saves the world from chaos whereas philosophy's endless discussion cannot ... For Donoso, dictatorship is the apogee of politics, and the fall of religion is directly proportional to the rise of politics, which he characterizes as repression and tyranny.'

He ascribes to Donoso the idea that Liberty, Equality, Fraternity should be seen as theological categories - 'the revolutionary dogmas of liberty, equality, and fraternity come not from "the Republic, but from Calvary."'. We are all equal before God but 'When concepts such as equality are secularized, they lose their religious foundation and violence ensues.' All the writers are opposed to the idea of a written constitution which is an obstacle to the evolution, the history, of a people and which stands above the sovereign, interfering with the sovereign right to decide the exception. Much admiration is expressed, especially by Donoso, for the unwritten British constitution and the dictatorial nature of the power it gives Parliament: "The English constitution is the only in the world (so wise are the English) in which dictatorship is not an exception in the law. It is in the common law. This matter is clear. The Parliament has dictatorial power on all occasions and at all times whenever it decides to exercise it." Most interesting however, from our present point of view is Schmitt's critique of romanticism (in his book *Political Romanticism*, published in 1919):

'Schmitt echoes the Catholic de Maistre when he writes that "law, constitutions, and language are products of human society." Society produces the nation, but nations have boundaries. The epitome of universalist romantic politics is the antithesis of this idea: without boundaries, "the unlimited community is essentially a revolutionary god that eliminates all social and political barriers and proclaims the general brotherhood of humanity as a whole." Accordingly, Schmitt writes, "Any relationship to a legal or moral judgment would be incongruous here, and every norm would seem to be an antiromantic tyranny. A legal or a moral decision would be senseless and it would inevitably destroy romanticism. This is why the romantic is not in a position to deliberately take sides and make a decision.'

ORDER AND CHAOS, LAND AND SEA

The right of the sovereign to decide the exception implies the existence of a norm. Where there is no norm there can be no exception. This connects with the theme of an essay by Schmitt published in the 'Empire' section of the website - the contradiction between the land, subject to ordered division, and the sea, which is without limits.

According to Schmitt, it is no accident that England which, in the sixteenth century, detached itself from Europe and adopted a whole hearted commitment to the sea, was also, in the eighteenth century the pioneer country of the industrial revolution. The sea has no limits and the advance of technology has no limits. He draws a sharp contrast between a ship and a house:

'The island ceased to be a separately located fragment of the Land and turned into a Ship anchored near the continent ... The ship is the basis of the marine existence of people, just as the House is the basis of their land existence. Ship and House are not antitheses in the sense of static polarity; they represent different responses to different challenges of history. Both the Ship and the House are created with the help of technical means, but their main difference is that the Ship is an absolutely artificial, technical vehicle based on the total domination of man over nature. The sea is a kind of natural environment, sharply different from the land. The sea is more aloof and hostile. According to the biblical story, man received his habitat precisely through the separation of the Earth from the Sea. The sea remained fraught with danger and evil. Here we refer readers to the commentaries on the first chapter of the Book of Genesis. in the third volume of "Church Dogmatics" by Karl Barth. Let us only emphasize that in order to overcome the ancient religious horror of the Sea, mankind had to make a significant effort. The technical effort made to overcome this is essentially different from any other technical effort. A man who dares to embark on a sea voyage - the word "pirate" originally meant one who is capable of such a risk - should, according to the poet, [have] "triple armor on his chest" (aes triplex circa pectus). Man's overcoming of the

inertial resistance of nature, which is the essence of cultural or civilizing activity, differs sharply in the case of shipbuilding and the development of the Sea and in the case of breeding livestock and building dwellings on the Land ...

'The terrestrial existence, of which the House is the center, has a completely different relation to technology than the marine existence, of which the Ship is the center. The absolutization of technical progress, the identification of any progress exclusively with technical progress, in short, what is meant by the expression "liberated technical impulse", "liberated technology" - all this could originate, grow and develop only on the basis of marine existence, in the climate of marine existence ... the island of England accepted the challenge of the opening of the world ocean and brought to its logical conclusion the transition to a purely marine existence, it gave a historical answer to the question posed by the era of great geographical discoveries. At the same time, this was both a prerequisite for the industrial revolution and the beginning of an era whose problems we all experience today.'

This gives him a framework for understanding the October revolution:

'Marxism was adopted by the elite of Russian professional revolutionaries, who managed to make a revolution in the Russian Empire in 1917 and transfer the double superstructure to the conditions of their agrarian country. In all this, it was by no means about the practical implementation of pure teaching and about the logical implementation of the objective laws of historical development. It was about the fact that an industrially backward agrarian country felt the need to arm itself with modern industrial technology, since otherwise it would be provided with the role of prey for other more developed industrialized large powers. Thus, Marxism turned from an ideological superstructure of the second stage of the industrial revolution into a practical tool for overcoming the industrial and technical insecurity of a vast country, as well as for removing the old elite, which clearly could not cope with the historical task'

A footnote, almost certainly written by Alexander Dugin, expresses approval:

'One of the most original and correct explanations of the October Revolution, complementing its interpretation, typical of the National Bolsheviks (both German and Russian) and Eurasians, according to which it was a purely national and geopolitical transformation aimed at strengthening the positions of the Land and organization of a New Order in Eurasia, more effective and consistent than the New Order created in Central Europe by Mussolini and Hitler.'

Dugin has written extensively elsewhere about the 'National Bolsheviks' and 'Eurasianists' who emerged particularly in the 1920s among the Russian emigration arguing that the great achievement of the Bolsheviks had been to save the Russian state (and, ultimately, empire) from the disintegration that threatened it after the February revolution. Mention has been made earlier of the French counter-revolutionary theorist Joseph de Maistre (who, as it happens, lived in Russia for fourteen years, from 1803 to 1817. One of his most important books is called *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*.) In his *Considérations sur la France*, published in 1797, he argues that the Jacobins had saved the French state from the disintegration that threatened it after the French revolution of 1789 and the disastrous policies adopted by the Girondins. It could only be done by terror and in de Maistre's view it was a grace of God that the terror was executed by the revolutionaries, otherwise it would have had to be done by a restored monarchy, much less well-adapted psychologically for the job.

DUGIN ON PUTIN

So the Katechon defends what is solid and bounded - Empire, land, traditional morality, 'freedom for ...' - from what is nebulous and limitless - Romanticism, the sea, LGBTQ+ rights, 'freedom from ...'

In another article in the 'Empire' section of the Katechon website - *Neutralisation and its limits: the political system of modern Russia*, published in March 2021, Dugin gives a fairly coherent account of the practical political aims of the project. He begins with a positive assessment of the current political arrangements:

'From the point of view of formal logic, in the current situation, the configuration of power in Russia as a whole is quite good. There is a strong leader, there is a well-functioning centralized management structure that resists entropy, separatism and decay. There is complete control established by Putin over the main strategically important industries, formalized either legally or on the basis of internal system agreements that are strictly observed. It would never occur to anyone today - unlike in the 90s - to question this and challenge the system itself.'

'From the standpoint of statehood at the current historical stage, such a power structure is optimal. The level of centralization and concentration of power in the hands of the ruler is sufficient to maintain sovereignty, and this is already a lot.'

Russia, in other words, has, at least temporarily, the character of a monarchy:

'We know how the State Duma depends on Putin, how all parties depend on Putin. They exist only because of his consent that they exist. They exist, they are present in parliament and they are headed by those who are headed, only because Putin agrees with this or even wants this. Even when criticizing Putin, they do it in strict agreement with him. Therefore, of course, subjectivity here is minimal. And it is in the current conditions, in my opinion, fine. This contributes to risk neutralization.'

'As for the government, here again a transcendental power is at work, turning the entire government, including the prime minister, into purely technical executors. Putin personally directs strategic issues, international politics, defense, and in many respects the economy. And the people who are responsible for this in the government, only carry out his instructions.'

Referring to the three powers that are normally talked about in Western constitutional theory - legal, executive and judicial:

'Therefore, in the Russian Leviathan there are simply no three powers that could build a model of interaction with each other. There is one power, spreading into three channels. And for the current Russian reality, this is optimal.'

But this concentration of power is only the first stage of what Dugin believes should be a two stage process. Putin's achievement has been remarkable but his success is entirely dependent on his own personality. He has not established an order that could succeed him. His system lacks a solid intellectual and moral foundation.

DUGIN ON SURKOV ON PUTIN

Following the murder of Dugin's daughter, an article in *Russia Today* ('Western media's favorite Russian philosopher: Who is Aleksandr Dugin, whose daughter was killed in a Moscow car bombing?' 21st August 2022) complained that:

'Dugin has been dubbed 'Putin's brain' and 'Putin's Rasputin' by the anglophone press for his supposed influence on the worldview of President Vladimir Putin and the country's ruling elite. Foreign Policy magazine included him in its 2014 'Global Thinkers' list "for masterminding Russia's expansionist ideology."

'However, the reality is that he's not influential in the Kremlin. Nor is he even a mainstream figure in Moscow. Instead, he's become a totem for ultra-nationalist campaigners, most of whom believe President Vladimir Putin is too moderate in his foreign policy.'

'Thus, Dugin has become a curious anomaly: famous in the West, but a fringe figure at home.'

This is probably more or less right. But on the Katehon website Dugin finds himself in quite distinguished and influential company. And he writes better than any of the others (with the possible exception of Glazyev). His particular eccentricity, apart from his interest in esoteric 'traditionalist' philosophy, is that his sphere of intellectual influences is largely Western orientated - René Guénon, Martin Heidegger, Carl Schmitt, but also the contemporary 'new right' philosophers, Alain de Benoist and Claudio Mutti. He has a most unconventional, from a Russian Conservative point of view, interest in 'post-modernist' thinkers such as Gilles Deleuze and Toni Negri, seeing them as usefully pushing liberalism to the point of a total collapse of western society.

He doesn't claim any particular influence on Putin but in this article he does refer to conversations he had with Vladislav Surkov, one of Putin's closest advisers in the early years of the century, apparently responsible for the 'macho' image Putin adopted at that time. In 2019 Surkov published an essay ('Putin's long state', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 02/11/2019) in which he argued that Russia now had, in 'Putinism', 'an organically formed model of the political system that will be an effective means of survival and exaltation of the Russian nation for the next few years, but also decades, and most likely for the entire coming century.'

In part, the essay resembles what we have just read from Dugin, praising Putin for reversing the process of disintegration which had occurred in the 1990s: 'Having collapsed from the level of the USSR to the level of the Russian Federation, Russia stopped collapsing, began to recover and returned to its natural and only possible state of a great, growing and gathering land of a community of peoples.' He argues that one of the distinguishing marks of the Russian system is its 'honesty'. The pattern in the West is a liberal facade covering over a 'deep state' - 'The term means a rigid, absolutely undemocratic network organization of the real power of law enforcement agencies, hidden behind external, flaunted democratic institutions. A mechanism that in practice operates through violence, bribery and manipulation and hidden deep under the surface of civil society, in words (hypocritically or innocently) condemning manipulation, bribery and violence.' In Russia however the functions fulfilled by the deep state operate quite openly:

'Our state is not divided into deep and external, it is built as a whole, with all its parts and manifestations outward. The most brutal constructions of its power frame go straight along the facade, not covered by any architectural excesses. The bureaucracy, even when it is cunning, does not do it too carefully, as if proceeding from the fact that "everyone understands everything anyway."

'The high internal tension associated with the retention of vast heterogeneous spaces, and the constant presence in the thick of the geopolitical struggle make the military-police functions of the state the most important and decisive. They are traditionally not hidden, but on the contrary, they are shown, since Russia has never been ruled by merchants (almost never, the exceptions are a few months in 1917 and a few years in the 1990s), who consider military affairs to be lower than trade, and the liberals accompanying the merchants, whose doctrine is being built on the denial of everything at least a little "police". There was no one to drape the truth with illusions, bashfully pushing into the background and hiding deeper the immanent property of any state - to be an instrument of defense and attack.

'There is no deep state in Russia, it is all in sight, but there is a deep people.'

It is the 'deep people' that constitutes an obstacle to the machinations of the elite - 'With its gigantic supermass, the deep people create an irresistible force of cultural gravity, which connects the nation and pulls (presses down) to the earth (to the native land) the elite, from time to time trying to soar cosmopolitanly.' The essence of 'Putinism' is its capacity to hear the people:

'In the new system, all institutions are subordinated to the main task - confidential communication and interaction between the supreme ruler and citizens. Various branches of power converge to the personality of the leader, being considered a value not in themselves, but only to the extent that they provide a connection with him. In addition to them, informal methods of communication work bypassing formal structures and elite groups. And when stupidity, backwardness or corruption interfere with the lines of communication with the people, vigorous measures are taken to restore hearing.'

How does Dugin disagree with this? In his reply: 'It's time for a Super-Putin' (geopolitika.ru, 16th Feb, 2019) he agrees that 'Putin saved Russia, hovering over the abyss, returned it to history. It is excellent.' but continues: 'none of his successes have reached the point of irreversibility.'

'The modern political regime in Russia that has developed under Putin is a compromise. Compromise between all poles and the forces of the state and society. It is stable only because of Putin himself, who is a compromise – between patriotism and liberalism in the economy, between Eurasianism and Europeanism in international politics, between conservatism and progressivism in the sphere of ideas and values, between people and elites, between sovereignty and globalization, between 90s and non-90s (that is, "something else"). But this compromise is valid while Putin is

there. It is intuitive and authoritarian, based on the manual control and constant adjustment of the course by Putin himself. It is not reflected in either the strategy or a project, it does not rely either on society as a whole or on the elites.'

Indeed 'with all the criticism of the 90s, Putin left the main elements of the existing system intact. Constitution, elites, parliamentary parties, government structure, education and information system. On the whole, they remained the same, only by swearing to another ruler. They adjusted to Putin's personal patriotism, to his style, but were not systematically transformed into some intelligible and clearly stated idea.'

As for listening to the 'deep people':

'The people, society in a broad sense, is a generally organic carrier of two main values: patriotism + social justice. The elite is on the exact opposite position: cosmopolitanism (Westernism) + freedom of large private capital. In the 90s, power as a whole was anti-people. Putin changed this formula somewhat by adopting patriotism, which the masses liked, but retaining liberalism in the economy, which was acceptable to the elites. Therefore, the people accepted Putin for patriotism, which was in short supply in the 90s, but retained their dislike for the elites and clearly regretted more and more about the complete absence of social justice in Putin's regime.'

In the essay on 'Neutralisation' Dugin asks of Putin:

'can he move on? After all, this requires a completely different strategy, a different style of power and, finally, a different political system. The compromise of implicit monarchism behind the façade of simulation democracy with many liberal compromises and combined with an unprincipled, immoral elite and a complete lack of social justice in society has been exhausted ...

'Maybe this is not Putin's task. But since in modern conditions he - and only he - possesses all the complete - transcendent! - power, then who, besides him? The rest were successfully neutralized.

'This is a very subtle point. And God forbid that we [fail to? - PB] survive this most difficult and turning point in our history.

'We need a new beginning of Russian statehood. Leviathan must be enlightened by the idea, must acquire a new ruling one - this time a moral one, that is, a truly aristocratic one! - the elite must become not a despotic mechanism of coercion and enslavement, but an instrument of the people themselves, freely and sovereignly making their dramatic and heroic path through history.'

Incidentally it shows a rather surprising insensitivity to biblical symbolism to call Russia, as the great land power, by the name of the great sea beast, 'Leviathan'. Doubtless he has in mind Hobbes's Leviathan but Hobbes of course was English ... Maybe he has in mind Andrey Zvyagintsev's film of the same name in which the enormous rotting body of a whale serves as a symbol for the director's view of Putin's Russia..

ZEMSKY SOBOR

It is in the theoretical part of the Katehon website - Theory, Zemsky Sobor, Empire - that we would expect to find concrete ideas for this new development beyond what has been achieved by Putin. I've already commented on the 'katehon'. The 'Zemsky Sobor' - assembly of the land - was an institution established by Ivan IV ('the Terrible') and subsequently suppressed by Peter I ('the Great'). According to various accounts on the Katehon website it differed from the various councils of the boyars in that the peasantry was represented. It purported to represent the whole people though the introductory account 'About Zemsky Sobor' does introduce the important qualification 'except serfs'. The nineteenth century slavophile, Ivan Sergeevich Aksakov (Katehon, 7th November 2020), rejects with indignation the suggestion that it bore any resemblance to the French Constituent Assembly of 1789:

'It was above all a free act of autocratic power, its prerogative, which naturally followed from the very essence of tsarist autocracy. The Russian tsar is not "the first aristocrat of aristocrats", as in England; not the "first nobleman", as the French kings called themselves at the time (le premier gentilhomme du pays), but the first man of the Russian land, vested, for the good of the land, with the supreme state power. No class concept is associated with it; he is a representative of the universality of the zemstvo and the state. His interests are the interests of the whole people, and

the stronger his power, the more it guarantees the masses of the people - the poor, orphans, defenseless - from the predominance of the rich, noble, endowed with all sorts of advantages (including "higher culture"), social classes closer to the throne.'

It had no legislative power and was simply the means by which the Tsar could hear the voice of the people. It was unthinkable that the pre-petrine Tsar would see it as a subversive force:

'They would only open their eyes wide and ask in the most simple-hearted way: "But how can one rule otherwise? Will power decrease from advice? Power will not decrease, but light and truth will arrive, - and light and truth will arrive, so it will be to the king in honor, glory and a greater fortress. This is what our simple-minded kings would say; this was their point of view on their relationship to the land and the people - a point of view canceled by Peter I and replaced by him with the point of view of German absolutism or a police, all-encompassing state mechanism.'

When the Russian monarchy collapsed after the reign of Ivan, resulting in the Polish invasion and the destruction of Moscow, it was restored by a 'Zemsky Sobor' which, out of a rather dizzying array of possible candidates, chose Mikhail Romanov, whose successors would continue to Nicholas II (and included of course the much reviled Peter). It may be some equivalent of the 1613 Zemsky Sobor that the Katehon writers have in mind to establish the succession to Vladimir Putin and more importantly to his system of government. According to Dugin:

'Surkov and in his person the ruling elite begins to introduce the project of "eternal Putinism", that is, turning the status quo into an endless repetition of the same thing, in a kind of "Groundhog Day". But it will not be a compromise, but a simulacrum of compromise, not Putin's lively and sincere patriotism, albeit inconsistent and unsystematic, but his cyborg imitation. The new "Putin", apparently, in the spirit of the advanced technologies with which the Russian government is raving, is supposed to be printed on a 3D printer.'

But Katehon is vague as to how the new Zemsky Sobor will perform its task. The closest I have found is in an article by Arkady Minakov, Professor in the Voronezh State University and Director of The Center for the Study of Conservatism ('Zemshchina', Katehon, 6th January 2021). He concludes what is still mainly a historical account both of the sixteenth/seventeenth century Sobors and the nineteenth century zemstvos:

'Is it possible now the revival of the zemshchina? In fact, this is a question about the possibility of returning Russian civilization to its deepest foundations. It is impossible to stop it, and sooner or later a return to the traditional zemstvo system will become inevitable. The experience of history shows that the initial unit of local self-government (community) should not exceed 2-3 thousand people. Only in such a limited "zemstvo space", where everyone knows everyone, will election work be relatively effective.

'Moreover, the election system in a large country should be phased: universal direct, secret and equal voting will remain only at the level of primary zemstvo associations, and then the zemstvo bodies will build themselves to the top, i.e. community (volost) vowels [sic, machine translation - PB] will elect district (county), district (county) - provincial, provincial - Zemsky Sobor. Of course, all living and competent forces of the country should be represented in these bodies - from church parishes to professional corporations'

It may be noted that this is very similar to the proposals of Alexander Solzhenitsyn who seems to be completely forgotten in these circles, perhaps because he wanted Russia to take a rest from the great historical adventures beloved of Katehon. But he too believed that democracy in the sense of direct elections in which everyone participates, should only operate in small communities where everyone could know everyone. He greatly admired the local community politics he encountered both in Switzerland and North America, arguing that the first task for Russia was to restore the viability of small rural communities.

EMPIRE

Despite their enthusiasm for the war in Ukraine the Katehon writers don't give the impression of wanting an expansionist Russian empire. It is more a matter of redefining Russia. No longer a 'Russian federation' but a 'Russian Empire.' The difference is that a federation is a purely secular

political structure put together as a matter of practical convenience whereas an 'Empire' has a sacred character. In an essay - From Archeomodern to Empire (Katehon, 8th August 2022) Dugin says that:

'European Modern - at least since Montesquieu, and in England even earlier - has long set itself the goal of depriving the authorities of any hint of sacredness . The separation of powers and the constant rotation of the ruling class serve exactly this - the dispersal of the highest center of decision-making among different and regularly changing their composition of the ruling instances. Of course, such a democracy did not achieve its goals in the West itself, stopping the dispersion of power at the level of the oligarchic class, within which a rotation takes place, from time to time including "new blood" - but only those who are ready to play by the rules of the existing elite.' [apologies for the machine translation but I think the sense is clear enough]

In Russia the ruling elite attempted something similar but it didn't work because of the deeply ingrained instinct of the Russian people to see government as a sacred function:

'Until 1917, such sacralization was based on the theory of Katekhon, the Retainer, borrowed from the Byzantine Empire and transferred to Russia (Moscow-Third Rome) at the end of the 15th century. But even after 1917, having changed, this tradition did not disappear anywhere, but spread to the new communist rulers - the "red monarchs", which led to an almost "religious" cult of Lenin and the glorification of Stalin's personality.

'For all his weakness and dependence on the oligarchs, even Yeltsin was something of a "liberal tsar." And with the advent of Putin and by virtue of his really decisive patriotic reforms and - let's note, completely against his will - the autocratic principle unfolded in full force . The people want only Putin and no one else, and for this they are ready to change the Constitution and everything else. Putin is the Supreme Ruler, the savior of Russia. This is how the archaic core perceives it.'

As a result he complains that Russia is now suffering from 'a disease, a kind of social schizophrenia:

'One and the same society realizes itself in a diametrically opposite way. Outwardly and from above it is a modern Western-style liberal democracy, from within and from below it is a world power with the will to revive the Empire, with a sacred Supreme Ruler at the head, with traditional values and with a conservative psychology that rejects "progressive" Western attitudes (LGBT+, ultrafeminism etc.) as perversions.'

But how can the character of the sacred be restored not just *de facto* in the instincts of the Russian people (if we accept Dugin's thesis) but also *de jure*? Obviously the Church has a role to play and the Empire section of the website includes an article on the 'Symphony' - equality of powers between Church and State that was supposed to reign in Constantinople and in pre-petrine Russia (in fact the power of Emperor and Tsar in both cases was overwhelmingly preponderant). It is often pointed out that only a small proportion of nominally Orthodox Russians actually go regularly to Church (they do all tend to turn up at Easter) so Dugin makes a point of saying that anyone who defines him or her self as Orthodox is Orthodox as far as he is concerned whether they go to church or not.

Dugin outlines several paths towards the establishment of a sacred Empire in his article 'Empire and Practice' (18th May 2022). He begins by insisting that it requires a miracle:

'Every Empire has a supernatural origin. If this is not a miracle from God, then this is the "black miracle" of the devil. People are not able to create an Empire. It is always something sacred. No miracle - no Empire.'

He then outlines several more 'practical' paths:

(2) Development of a political theology within the church. Here he draws particular attention to the glorification of the 'Holy Royal Martyrs' - Nicholas II and his family, initially within the emigré Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia but subsequently adopted by the Moscow Patriarchate: 'no other normative teaching on the political theology of Orthodoxy was created in the MP ROC itself during the Soviet period (and could not be after the failure of the Renovationists). Therefore, the Orthodox monarchy is the only normative model of Russian Orthodox Christianity. Noisy and stubborn "church liberals" do not count, they are only "foreign agents".' The reference to the

'Renovationists' is interesting. Dugin almost seems to hint that their attempt in the 1920s to reconcile Orthodoxy and Soviet Communism could have worked, or at least established a 'normative teaching on the political theology of Orthodoxy.' Dugin, incidentally, claims to be an 'Old Believer'. What else could he be?

(4) Restoration of a dynasty. 'Here, the Kirillovich line has the most grounds, no matter how they are treated today in Russia.' [The monarchist website <https://tsarnicholas.org> rules the Kirillovichs out on the grounds of collaboration with Hitler. Apparently the Kirillovich heir has recently married, but his wife does not belong to any royal family. According to <https://tsarnicholas.org/> 'In January 2019, the RU_ROYALTY blog reported that Grand Duchess Maria Vladimirovna, had made a formal request to the Head of the Russian Orthodox Church His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, to change the law of the succession to the Russian throne, according to which the children of a representative of the dynasty who entered into an unequal marriage would be deprived of their rights to the throne.' This seems a very unlikely path to the re-establishment of a sacred monarchy but it would be interesting to know what Malofeev thinks.]

5. *An empire can be created as real military successes and expansion of the zone of control. Then the inner power becomes evident. The very gathering of Russian lands - relying both on military force and on the economy, diplomacy and culture, strengthens the imperial potential.* [So maybe I'm wrong in suggesting that the Katehon writers 'don't give the impression of wanting an expansionist Russian empire.' - PB]

6. *The empire can live at the level of the people's will. In this case, the Empire is not established from the top down, but will be demanded by the people - from the bottom up. This is the zemstvo scenario. The Zemsky Sobor makes a historic decision for the Empire to exist and restores the monarchy. The modern cult of Stalin, widespread among the people, from a sociological point of view, is nothing but a form of "monarchism from below", a request for the Tsar.*

(7) As in the case of Julius Caesar in Rome, the original 'Tsar', a decision on the part of a strong ruler.

He concludes: 'If the Empire is our goal (and if it is not a goal, then we are lost), we now know what to pray for, what to fight for and what to do.' If I've understood rightly the reason Russia is lost if it doesn't become a sacred Empire is that the only alternative is some form of liberalism which can only be destructive because it cannot give the Russian people the faith that is needed to hold together the enormous territory that they occupy. This of course is all at a fairly abstract, generalised level. Perhaps in a future article I will descend more to particulars, the particular shape of 'Russia' and its population(s).