

P.P. Tolochko¹

WE ARE TO AWAIT WHAT WE'LL DO OURSELVES²

The world is contradictory right from the outset. Its main driving force is interests. Man's, society's, state's. As a rule, they do not coincide. Most often national interests are not in accordance with international interests. And even in case when this or that state is a member of a united community, European, Eurasian or some other. There are leaders in all those unions who are at a higher level of economic development and have considerably bigger military potential and resources. It is them who determine the conceptual meaning of unions – political, economic, military, etc.

They are also the main beneficiaries in these unions, which is not always taken resignedly and without a murmur by the other members. Some start thinking about the expedience of their participation in such unions and some leave them. Like the UK, the people of which voted for the exit of their country from the European Union. Similar processes are characteristic of the Eurasian community as well, the members of which, including potential, are constantly worried as to how not to become strongly dependent on Russia, the unquestionable integration leader in the post-Soviet area. It is more noticeable in the relations of Russia and Byelorussia unable to achieve reasonable price parity in case of energy as well as customs transparency at the external border.

And no matter the ideal declarations or agreements at the root of such unions, they are incapable to provide universal justice in them. Not common interests but national interests are always the priority. As the saying goes, everyone is out for himself and blood is thicker than water.

There are immeasurably bigger contradictions between separate economic or military and political unions. An illustrative example is relations in the European Union with the USA at the head, and Eurasian community with Russia at the head. These contradictions are old, coming at least from the time of the Soviet Union. They were given rise to, as Western politicians and statesmen assured us, by organic rejection of the socialist system, Soviet state system by them. It seemed that if that principal irritant disappeared, the way to mutual understanding of the West and the East would be open. The reality did not meet the expectations. More than 25 years have passed since the collapse of the socialist system with the Soviet Union at the head, the dear to the old Europe's and the USA's hearts capitalism returned to Russia, but the attitude of the West to Russia did not

change principally in the least. It may have become even tougher, which is certified by strengthening and expanding of the Euro-Atlantic alliance – NATO. Now, its forces and military bases are already in immediate vicinity to the Russian borders.

And still fairly recently, after liquidation of the Warsaw Pact military alliance, it seemed to many people that the same fate would befall NATO. It has become an anachronism in the new environment, coming from the time of the Cold War between the West and the Soviet Union. The expectations turned out to be futile. Only the East said goodbye to the Cold War and its attributes, the West stayed in it, brotherly embracing. Thus, it confirmed that its confrontation with Russia did not depend on the state system. It is deeper, including confrontation of civilizations brought about by traditional contradictions of the Roman Catholic world and the Orthodox world. In the new times, when the religious factor stopped playing the decisive role in the European political life, this is more a historical stereotype but it turned out to be surprisingly tenacious.

Similar contradictions exist in other civilization communities. There is no peace under the "Islamic olives." Sunnis and Shiites traditionally fight each other. In the new times, this constantly glowing conflict was heated by brutal intervention of Western civilizators into the traditional Muslim life. As a result, the world got a terrorist organization of the Islamic State, tormenting the people of the Near East and North Africa. It also got millions of refugees rushing to Europe and creating a real threat to its internal stability.

Are there hopes for the world's becoming more peaceful in future? One would like to hope for that. But proceeding from the fact that this future, at least the near future, is being already created today, and to a considerable extent by politicians from the past, it's hardly realistic to think that it will be principally different from the present. It won't be bad if we managed to at least stop plunging the world into a Cold War, which took place during the whole presidency of Barack Hussein Obama in the USA.

Some signs of that are really appearing. They can be seen in particular in the new Western political leaders. The newly elected President of the USA Donald Trump said many times during his election campaign that he hoped for mutual understanding with the President of Russia Vladimir Putin. Especially that refers to efforts in fighting world terrorism. And he is not enthusiastic about the sanctions policy of the West either, which is mutually destructive, and NATO. He told in his interview to representatives of German and British periodicals four days before his inauguration that NATO was really an anachronism in the present environment and required reformation. Certainly, the reality is not always adequate to intentions but taking into account D. Trump's business pragmatism, one can hope that he was sincere in his declarations.

Encouraging signals are coming from France as well. It looks like the implicitly obeying B. Obama's will President F. Hollande will be replaced by a more independent politician. The chances of a well-known statesman, Socialist François Fillon look better. In the opinion of a former President of France Sarkozy, supporting Fillon as a candidate,

¹ Member of the Presidium of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, Honorary Director of the Institute of Archeology of the NAS of Ukraine, academician of the NAS of Ukraine, foreign member of the RAS, Dr. Sc. (History), Professor. Author of more than 500 scientific publications, including 25 books: "Ancient Kiev", "Ancient Rus", "Ancient Russian Feudal City", "Historical Portraits", "Russian Chronicles and Chroniclers of the 10th–13th Centuries", "Vladimir the Saint – Yaroslav the Wise", "From Rus to Ukraine", "The Ancient Russian People, Imaginary or Real", "Power in Ancient Rus in the 10th–13th Centuries", "Ukrainians in Russia", "The Origins of Russian Land", etc. Member of the Academy of Europe (London), corresponding member of the Central German Archaeological Institute. Laureate of the State Prize of the Ukrainian SSR in the Field of Science and Technology, State Prize of Ukraine, the Grushevsky Prize of the NAS of Ukraine, Makarievskaya Prize and Alexander Nevsky Prize (Russia). Awarded the 3rd–5th Class Orders of Prince Yaroslav the Wise, "the Badge of Honor" (Ukraine), the Order of Friendship and the Order of the Badge of Honor (Russia). Honorary Doctor of SPbUHSS.

² This simple truth was clearly worded by D.S. Likhachov // D.S. Likhachov – Meeting at the University. St. Petersburg: SPbUHSS, 2007.

such a choice would not be the worst for the Kremlin. But certainly for Europe as well, which cannot expect anything good from continuation of the irreconcilable confrontation with Russia. It is possible to play one's way into an open conflict. In the opinion of F. Fillon, lifting sanctions should become the first step in establishing relations by the West and Russia. Marine Le Pen, a right-wing politician, leader of the National Front, known for her loyalty to Russia, conducts her election campaign taking a similar attitude.

There is less optimism for the leader's change in Germany, though taking into account the leading role of this state in the European Community as well as the fact that Angela Merkel, the Chancellor of Germany, was the most consistent adept of B. Obama's confrontational international policy, her leaving could be very desirable. First of all, for Europe but also for Germany, tired of millions of migrants from the Near East and the North of Africa, kindly invited by A. Merkel. It's difficult to say if it is possible to find anyone in the present politicum of Germany, capable to challenge Merkel, but it is absolutely evident that in order to win another Chancellor's prize she will have to change her rhetoric and probably the real politics as well. Especially in relation to migrants. If it does not happen, the chaos of the Near East flowing to Germany, approved by Merkel, will turn out to be fateful for both.

Certain changes in the rhetoric of high-ranking state officials are also taking place in the UK, the anti-Russian policy of which is traditional. Boris Johnson, the UK Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, unexpectedly said that probably there was already enough demonizing Russia after his visit to the USA and consultations with President D. Trump's team.

Figuratively speaking, pigeons easing tension have really started appearing on the global political sky. Certainly, not by themselves but under the influence of the public opinion. People are tired of endless heightening of tensions, wars going on in the Near East, Afghanistan, in the North of Africa, they are tired of civil conflicts detonated by these wars. They are also tired of the West's obsession to bring freedom and democracy to other people. They want to live in the traditional for them world, stable and predictable.

All that gives some hope for the better future. Unfortunately, only some. "Pigeons" appear, but "hawks" have not disappeared. American ones in the person of the leaving his office President B. Obama and his administration managed to do so many hostile to Russia things in the last months in power that there could be enough of them for decades in case of others. In this respect, we can mention Russia's unambiguous appraisal as an enemy of the USA threatening the US interests. Here are feverish expansion and prolongation of economic and political sanctions. Demonstrative deporting of 35 Russian diplomats from the USA as well as quick dispatch to Poland of American troops numbering 3.5 thousand soldiers with 80 battle tanks and armored vehicles are in the same line of anti-Russian actions.

Only God knows why Poland needs this force. It seems that no one intends to attack it. Russia said that officially and not once. It's surely not to be expected from the Ukraine or Byelorussia. And nevertheless, the Poles met foreign saviors with enthusiasm as it was shown on TV, probably thinking that now they will feel safe as the troops are as dependable as the Rock of Gibraltar. Certainly that's not so. In case, God forbid, of a large-scale military conflict

of the West and Russia, it is exactly because of these American defenders that Poland will not escape. Russia will inevitably have to react to this provocation and others similar to it by aiming in response at the NATO and American military bases in the states in Central and Eastern Europe. Should we prove that aggravating military tension would not make life in the region more peaceful?

In contrast to the countries of Western Europe where the voices of common sense are becoming better and better heard, calling not to bring confrontation with Russia to the boiling point, the states which in the past were a part of the Soviet Union or the Socialist community, do not hide their antagonism to Russia. They are acting in accordance with a well-known Ukrainian proverb: it's not the serfs that bully people most but their clerks. They can be understood to some extent. Each of them has its scores to settle with Russia as the successor of the Soviet Union with which they connect not the best pages of their history. They try not to remember that it was exactly the Soviet Union as Russia before it that saved them from the Nazis and other invaders and not once at the expense of lives of hundreds of thousands of their sons. It seems that even Bulgarian "brothers" forgot about that, they who owe their identity and statehood to Russia but inevitably, they find themselves united with its enemies at critical historical moments.

But we should live not in the past but in the present and the future. Vindictiveness is the lot of the weak. And it cannot bring anything good. It's a pity that the present political elite of the said countries cannot or does not want to understand that, and their allies – instructors in the USA and Brussels go along with the spread by it horror stories about Russia's aggressive intentions. However, they may not believe that but they carefully nurture this geopolitical loyalty and their young allies' confrontation with Moscow. The Baltic states, Poland, Bulgaria, the Ukraine and others get financial and military help as well as constant political support for that.

Before the 2017 New Year, US Senate Republicans John McCain and Lindsey Graham visited the Ukraine and the Baltic states, where they assured the authorities that there was still serious support in the US Congress for providing them military help. Militant Senators were presented high state awards in the Ukraine – the Order of Liberty and the Order of Prince Yaroslav the Wise. As President P. Poroshenko said, "for their personal contribution to strengthening of relations between the Ukraine and the USA." On January 16, 2017, Vice-President of the USA J. Biden visited the Ukraine when there were four days left till the end of his term of office. He had said once that he met and spoke over the phone with the President of the Ukraine more often than with his wife. And this time he assured the Kiev authorities in firm support by the USA of the Ukraine's struggle for independence and inviolability of its territory. However, as well-informed analytics think, the purpose of this visit was mostly to thank P. Poroshenko for assisting business interest of J. Biden Jr. in the Ukraine.

All those feverish actions of President B. Obama's leaving administration were directed to two addresses. Certainly, they are against Russia. But at the same time they are against President D. Trump as well. In order to complicate his life, not to allow or at least make maximally difficult normalization of relations with Russia. Petty predecessors created numerous unthinkable obstructions on

that way, besides, they enlisted support of their legislative authorities. Certainly, Democratic authorities but Republican as well. It's not accidental that members of the new President's team – future Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, holder of the Russian Order of Friendship as well as Secretary of Defense James Mattis, who were confirmed by the Congress and the Senate – had to say that Russia threatened the US interests and was the main enemy of the USA. Certainly, they were mostly politesse declarations meant to bring about a favorable attitude of the Senators to them, but caution and looking back at the Congress and the Senate will definitely accompany their practical activities as well. President D. Trump will have to take into account the opinion of legislative authorities as well in order not to subject himself to the threat of impeachment.

European colleagues of American Conservatives will oppose improvement of American-Russian relations no less. Especially in the post-Soviet states and states from the former Socialist community. And certainly not so much because of a Russian threat, the mythicalness of which, we should think, they understand, as because of their fear to lose help of the rich West, which they regularly get in the environment of rivalry between the USA, NATO states and Russia. The Polish Minister of Internal Affairs Witold Waszczykowski said about that honestly enough. "One should not criticize anyone wanting to improve relations with Russia," he said. "We are neighbors of Russia and we also want that. Our message to the Americans is: we like it, but only not at our expense."

Certainly, they will say the same in other countries getting financial and military help from the USA and EU. There is no doubt that there is more slyness than sincerity in the Polish Minister's words. He cannot fail to understand that it is that "Polish account," including American military brigade with 3.5 thousand men and 80 battle tanks and armored vehicles by the borders of Russia, which is the real obstacle on the way to improvement of the international situation. There are similar "accounts" in the Baltic states, Bulgaria, Romania, the Ukraine. And while they are generously paid by the USA and EU, there is no hope for normal good-neighborly relations of the said countries with Russia.

Distinct signs of sanity were demonstrated in Robert Merry's article "Stop Poking the Bear" of December 24, 2016, Merry is the political editor of *The National Interest* (USA). It is assumed that he just retold Henry Kissinger's (an old advocate of lessening tensions) plan for normalizing relations between the USA and Russia, worked out for President D. Trump. The author thinks that there is a signal for the world in it to "change shoes" quickly. Tomorrow the USA and Russia will stop being enemies and those, who fail to understand it, may regret it.

Certainly all hopes for the future are connected with the USA and Russia stopping to be enemies as they were at the time of B. Obama's administration. It seems that it is not realistic to suppose that they'll become friends. Such relations do not exist in case of great powers. But it is enough for the world for two powers not to be at odds with each other. Everyone on the Earth will feel more peaceful after that.