

The Truer Calling

Russia, America and The Cultural Alternative to Violence

An Open Letter to President Joseph Biden, President Vladimir Putin, Alexander Dugin, Alexander Bovdunov, the People of the United States, Russia, and the World

In Memory of Darya Dugina, Leo Tolstoy, Mohandas Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr, and Henry David Thoreau

by R. Leland Lehrman

Summary: Most well-informed and non-aligned members of the international community recognize the Russian right to self-defense in the long-standing struggle over Ukraine. Many also recognize the long-standing nature of the operation to surround Russia with NATO members and privatize her national legacy in Western hands.

It has been clear for some time that ever since the end of the Soviet Union, an organized attempt to secure preferential access to Russia's legendary natural resources and geopolitically advantageous landmass has dominated Western engagement with Russia. That said, since the time of Thoreau, Gandhi and King, the necessity of non-violent activism and the futility of the "military solution" have been self-evident.



Non-violence supersedes the other self-evident principles of the American Declaration of Independence as moral guidance for human political relations. The successes of Gandhi and King - incomplete though they may be - have demonstrated that the early offerings of non-violent leaders like Jesus and Ashoka can be effective as well as morally satisfying.

As an American I know I must address myself first to my own country and our allies with this message. Many others have struggled before me to do just that without success. However, for reasons which find their roots in the Russian soul as well as her geostrategic position, Russia may have a special opportunity now to reconsider her reliance on military responses to the indignities she suffers. Instead she would perhaps be wiser to have faith in the universal attractiveness of her soul qualities, her spiritual courage, her cultural legacy and potential, and a peaceful willingness to share her abundant natural resources in mutually beneficial trading relations.

Leading with these attributes in an international cultural campaign to rehabilitate the image and reality of Russia in the world today will deprive Western militants of their key strategic advantage. The suggestibility of the European mind has long been known to be vulnerable to crusading propaganda, the just war doctrine, and its modernized humanitarian intervention rhetoric.

A Russia clearly committed to leadership in the world of spiritual culture, religious freedom, scientific freedom, artistic excellence and equitable access to natural resources could be a leadership model widely embraced by the culturally bereft masses of the world today. The trump card of Western military propaganda: adequate material with which to portray Russian actions as offensive rather than defensive, would become unavailable. The world could offer Russia - without reservation - what she has always so richly deserved: love and respect for her indomitable soul, her poetic majesty, and her heartfelt will to share the goodness of life with family and community.

Background:

The tragic war in Eurasia and the assassination of the Russian intellectual Darya Dugina have brought the relationship of philosophy and politics once more to the forefront of international consideration. The international intelligentsia, provoked by the global spiritual and political health crisis, has begun to reevaluate modern polarities. Many are finding that the truest pole in the world today is between corrupted governance of all types, and the good people of all lands.

The healing of humanity may take some time still, but it is possible to see a vision of it now. We have made certain achievements in the last two millenia, one of which is the renunciation of violence as a legitimate means to serve justice. Since the time of Thoreau - and even more since the Sixties and the rise of Martin Luther King, Jr, American intellectuals and activists have increasingly wanted to realize the dream of non-violence in both justice and foreign policy. Popular support for non-violence on the "left" was once nearly universal, especially during the war in Vietnam. Since then, the reengineering of American foreign policy around "humanitarian intervention" has crippled the left's non-violent efforts. On the other hand, libertarian trends on the right have not taken deep enough root to pacify Republican and conservative notions of defense and the national interest.

The American political establishment's romance with violence is deeply connected to the heroic depiction of violent revolution in the founding of the nation and the defeat of slavery. Preying upon and twisting the ancient and dangerous arguments in favor of the so-called just war, an imperialism without boundaries has taken root in the United States, working its way into macrocosmic and microcosmic space. Orbital satellites operate a global war machine while a universal medical dictatorship threatens free societies based on the theory of a microscopic enemy. Subverted by special interests, overcome by hubris, and seduced by the mirage of itself as a "sole superpower," the likelihood of American powerbrokers to cede military superiority to the

non-violent approach to foreign and judicial policy has ebbed since the 1960s. An appeal to the American political establishment on the subject of non-violence is today unlikely to find fertile soil.

But non-violence is in fact an essential American calling, embodied by many of the founders, the Quakers, and many of the first religious organizations on this continent. Having fled Europe in response to centuries of unending power struggles and violence, Quakers were leading voices in both the anti-slavery and the women's right's movements in America and Europe. That said, I also direct my words today to the Russian people. Russia's recent willingness to mobilize into military action betrays the soul of her people: agrarian, artistic, soulful, heartfelt, and generous. No one doubts Russia's ability to defend herself in a fight. Along with Afghanistan, Russia is known as a graveyard of empires. But in this case, she has raised her fist prior to showing the world her more beautiful qualities. Just as no one approves violence against a beautiful, good and innocent woman, no one would support a war against a Russia dedicated to truth, beauty and goodness.

The thought of one particular man is important in this regard, which is why I especially direct these words to him. Russian political philosopher and adviser to the General Staff Alexander Dugin is Russia's geostrategist. Having made a study of formal British imperial geostrategic thinking as a young man, Dugin's entire adult life has been preoccupied with preparing a **Russian** geostrategy that is authentic to her people while at the same time responsive to modern values. Formerly unknown outside a small group of international conservatives, Dugin was a voice crying in the wilderness until the Russian General Staff found him. In his work they discovered an explanation for the national disaster that befell Russia when the Soviet Union was dismantled and Russian state-owned businesses were auctioned off to the West in an unfair process largely run by unscrupulous Western financiers. It was this process that Vladimir Putin interrupted, and it appears that Putin's perennial unwillingness to play ball with those

forces has finally led to the proxy war between Russia and Ukraine-NATO.

The unnecessary fight between Russia and the West reminds me of the very problematic matter of Russia's alliance with China, especially in light of Michael Senger's recent book: *Snake Oil, How Xi Jinping Shut Down the World*.¹ Citizens of Russia and the United States might want to reevaluate our bitter feud, normalize friendly trading relations, and together reconsider our cozy relationship with China. Chinese lack of commitment to basic human rights such as freedom of thought and religion is a truly significant problem for humanity. Western and Russian failures on the same issues are dramatic, but Chinese official policy under Xi Jinping **explicitly denies** what since the Declaration of Independence of 1776 have otherwise been considered universal human rights by a growing majority of free-thinking and religious human beings. It is this type of conversation that I would like to have with Alexander Dugin and the Russian people.

I have never met Alexander Dugin, nor interacted with him in any way. But I get the sense from reading his words and listening to his talks that despite criticism of his nationalism, we have in Dugin a Russian willing to listen to the heartfelt argument. Alongside him in the photograph at the beginning of this letter, you will find Alexander Bovdunov, another Russian intellectual whose published writings suggest that he too is interested in the truth of things, and that a well-reasoned and sensitive argument may make an impression that might lead to possibilities not previously imagined.

I cite Leo Tolstoy and Mohandas Gandhi above because their friendship and collaboration is well-known to historians, and might remind Russia of her legacy of interest in the evolution of the Russian soul and story. And here we are especially interested in the story of her peace and happiness – an interest common to all artists and political philosophers – and especially to Russian writers before the Revolution.

1 <https://michaelsenger.substack.com/p/the-importance-of-snake-oil-how-xi>

After all, **War and Peace** is the subject of Tolstoy's greatest known work, and the conclusion of his epic **Anna Karenina** is that a life of rural simplicity is preferable to that of impulsive violence.

Three documents form the foundation of my discussion, the study of which will naturally lead interested readers to understand on their own the logic of my effort to reach Mssrs. Dugin and Bovdunov, as well as our national leaders with this open letter. The first is an address by the Austrian idealistic philosopher Rudolf Steiner to the people of Germany and the Civilized World.² The second is Alexander Dugin's recent remarks in English on the "multipolarity" logic of Russian action in Ukraine.³ The third is Alexander Bovdunov's article regarding the "Great Manipulator."⁴ The Great Manipulator is a name he gives to advocates of scientistic authoritarianism that have internalized under the names of sociology, psychology and public relations what were formerly considered magical governance strategies.

Bovdunov concludes his critique of Western public servants and their citizens by stating:

"For the Great Manipulator to exercise...power, it is crucial...that society consists of people not involved in common, unifying causes. Rather, the individual is involved with uncoordinated, selfish, and self-centred groups. Instead of hierarchy, there is but a network; instead of direct submission, there is control; and instead of a common cause, there is selfishness and an abandonment of any striving towards the divine, replaced by naked sensuality or indifference."

Bovdunov's thought accurately portrays deep concerns felt in Russia and the world today, namely that the West offers only atomized consumerism as a kind of cultural prostitution, with a dogmatic scientism crushing all other ideals. This scientism now seeks to rule

2 [Appendix I. An Appeal to the German Nation and to the Civilized World - GA 24. The Renewal of the Social Organism \(1985\) - Rudolf Steiner Archive](#)

3 <https://www.geopolitika.ru/en/directives/alexander-dugin-speaking-ukraine-conflict>

4 <https://fund-balance.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/NewDawnSpecialIssueV12N3.pdf> pp 24 and subsequent.

over an emptying cultural life as surely as the Catholic Church once did. Not surprisingly, the two institutions - The Science and The Church - are now allied in an embrace of global medical dictatorship by mandatory injection and lockdown.

Dugin's interest in a multipolar world that honors and does not seek to eclipse the richness of the world's cultural traditions is well-known. Linked by family history and inclination to both the KGB and the Old Believers of the Orthodox Christian tradition, Dugin's thought is a remarkable synthesis of the last two hundred years of Russian cultural life. Unfortunately, he did not embrace the non-violent tradition with Tolstoy, and in his recent address to the world, he pivots from an understandable complaint regarding the brutality of Western ignorance and hostility to Russia and Russian values to an acceptance of the necessity for war without even considering the alternatives. As I listened to him, I could not help but remember the fateful words Rudolf Steiner spoke to the German nation after its defeat in World War I. Failing to stand for a clearly defined cultural mission of real consequence and benefit to the world Germany had been obliterated, and would not be reborn. Russia and America face the same issue. Without clearly articulated and earnestly pursued cultural missions, all nations risk being swept away before humanity's indomitable desire for the good life.

Steiner's address is worth reading carefully. Endorsed by hundreds of contemporary intellectuals including the brilliant novelist and psychologist Hermann Hesse, Steiner's words present a useful alternative to the Russian and American situation today. Commenting on the ruins of German culture in 1919, Steiner clearly described Germany's problem: the rest of the world was not clear on what Germany's contribution to the human interest really was. Therefore, they were unmoved by her violent overthrow and collapse.

Here's how he put it:

"Germany believed herself secure for time without end in her empire, which was founded half a century ago. In August 1914 she thought the war she was faced with would prove her invincible. Today all she can do is look upon its ruins. Such an experience calls for self-reflection. For such an experience proved that an opinion held for fifty years, and especially the ideas that had prevailed during the war, had been a tragic error. Where can the reasons for this fateful error be found?...

A goal could have been defined had there been enough sensitivity to the growing needs of the new generation. Thus the empire found itself in the larger world arena without an essential direction or goal to justify its existence. The debacle of the war revealed this truth in an unfortunate way...other nations saw nothing to suggest that Germany had a historic world mission that ought not to be swept away. Her failure to manifest such a mission, according to those with real insight, was the underlying cause of Germany's ultimate breakdown."

Russia, and the United States, find ourselves in a similar position today, with the average human being in the West unclear about what the Russian contribution to humanity really is, and therefore willing to attack Russia without understanding her. In turn, Russia and a large portion of the non-aligned world consider the United States to be the Great Satan who must be destroyed.

With this open letter I seek to open dialogue between the philosophers, artists and citizens of both nations in a spirit of good will. We have much to talk about to avert the tragedy of the ongoing war and so redirect our energies towards peaceful outcomes.

--

About the author:

Leland Lehrman is a human being, a writer, and an American Citizen living in upstate New York with his family in a community interested in love, health, freedom, goodwill and spiritual openness.