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Russian Christian Democracy from a Regional Perspective: the Case of St Petersburg

ROANNE THOMAS EDWARDS

This article outlines the evolution of organised Christian Democracy in St Petersburg. The St Petersburg *Khristiansko-demokratichesky soyuz* (Christian Democratic Union, CDU), the main group in question, is, with nearly 200 active members and four representatives in the City Council, currently the strongest and most politicised Christian Democratic organisation in the city. I will discuss the principal factors, apart from the particularly devastating process of secularisation since 1917, which have contributed to, and hindered, the CDU's growth in various stages of its development. With the aim of discovering the specificity of St Petersburg Christian Democracy, I will also consider the origins of the CDU leaders' and activists' perceptions, which have contributed to an identity linked intrinsically to the old capital and, it seems, to the view that regional interests are to have priority over the structural and ideological cohesion of the Russian Christian Democratic movement.

As the article shows, the experience of the St Petersburg Christian Democrats is not unique in the city. Like the history of the St Petersburg democratic movement, it raises the question of whether any long-term, unified party on an all-Russian level is possible as long as Moscow remains the centre of Russia's political life.

Although the fruit of collective action and cooperation, the political development of Christian Democracy in St Petersburg was to a large extent instigated by Orthodox believer and former political prisoner Vitali Savitsky. As co-founder of the informal organisation *Chelovek* (Human Being) in May 1987, Savitsky played a major role in defining the club's general orientation and, in particular, in distinguishing its aims from the relatively narrower goals of the human rights movement. The club's broad humanitarian outlook was not unlike that of the *Leningradsky klub 'Perestroika'* (Leningrad *Perestroika* Club): *Chelovek* was to concentrate its efforts not only on civil and political rights, but also on economic, cultural and social rights since, in the words of Savitsky, 'a new period is beginning when all rights must be dealt with'. However, unlike the Communist reformers of the *Perestroika* Club, the majority of *Chelovek* activists supported neither Gorbachev nor *perestroika*. In firm opposition to the CPSU and to the idea of working within a reformed Soviet state, *Chelovek* preferred to concentrate the bulk of its activities on one of the domains it considered to be most neglected by the Soviet State: charity. The result was the founding, in April 1988, of the *Leningrad* charity group.

Co-chaired by Savitsky and the well-known writer Daniel Granin, *Leningrad* aimed to arouse greater public and state support for what had already been since mid-1987 a concerted effort by Christian activists to provide moral and material help to isolated old people, invalids and orphaned children. This involved such activities as the setting

up of groups of young people to visit orphanages, the 'Invalids and Culture' pro-
gramme, which included visits for invalids and the old to museums and theatres, and
public rallies to campaign for better living conditions for the disabled. In early 1988,
one of the more significant achievements of the group's activists was their success in
persuading local authorities to allow them to set up charity groups in three of the city's
hospitals. The importance of this decision—unprecedented since the Revolution—was
that it bypassed the Law on Religious Associations of 1929, according to which
religious organisations were forbidden to carry out charity work.

However, despite the initial headway made by the *Leningrad* group, its activities
were soon to be severely limited. In March 1988 the publication in the journal
Sovetskaya Rossiya of the Nina Andreyeva letter—interpreted by many political
activists as a call for the return of the Stalinist order—was swiftly followed by a
clampdown on informal political activity throughout the country. In Leningrad,
which harboured a particularly reactionary party leadership, the event even impelled
the independent political circles of the moderate left to take heightened precautions
on entry into their clubs and formally to abolish their 'party groups'.[1] The organi-
sations most severely affected by this new wave of repression were those which,
overtly or tacitly, rejected the 'within-system' dissent is which the left so cautiously
contained itself.[2] While *Chelovek* was not set on confrontation with the authorities,
it did nevertheless maintain links with *Demokratichesky soyuz* (Democratic Union) a
radical organisation whose leaders voiced their rejection of the Soviet state and its
policies in frequent illegal public demonstrations. Moreover, unlike the *Perestroika*
Club, which profited from the tense political climate to initiate discreet plans for a
Soyuz demokraticheskikh sil (Union of Democratic Forces), Savitsky was one of the
first political figures openly to criticise the letter of Andreyeva in a public gathering.
The response of the local authorities was similar to their treatment of many other
informal groups at this time: the promotion of a parallel, officially recognised
organisation—an official *Obshchestvo miloserdiya* (Mercy Society) whose aim was
compete with, and hinder the work of, its unofficial counterpart.[3] According to
former *Chelovek* activists, the reactionary measures of their city's party bosses were
so stringent that even the Theological Academy could offer *Leningrad* only
temporary assistance in the form of the brief loan of an office and car for its charitable
work. As a result, *Chelovek* was forced to scale down its activities significantly.

The Emergence of a Christian Democratic Bloc

During the spring and summer of 1989, the political environment in Russia's northern
city became highly conducive to the rapid growth of a mass democratic movement.
This was due in large part to the dramatic defeat of the city's leading *apparatchiki* in
the March elections, a defeat which served to legitimise the ideals of the democratic
movement in the eyes of the public. In June, the *Leningradsky narodny front*
(Leningrad Popular Front) managed to register 6000 members at its Founding Con-
gress. It also claimed the support of 53 independent organisations in the city,
including a small faction of the 100-member *Demokratichesky soyuz*.[4] The neo-
Stalinist and conservative nationalist camps also found space to prosper. They
included a variety of organisations: the Patriots, *Pamyat'* and *Ob"yedinenny front
trudyashchikhsya* (United Workers' Front)—'an organised Stalinist opposition which
endeavoured to base itself in the working class'.[5] The fact that many of these
organisations adhered to the substantially larger umbrella organisation *Otechestvo*
(Fatherland)—a national front which acted as a counterbalance to the Leningrad

Narodny front—seemed to point to an effort by the city's embattled *apparatchiki* to create an organised parallel structure to counterbalance the democratic movement. The result was development of a particularly pronounced polarisation of political forces on the eve of the March 1990 elections.

It was in this environment of heightened and confrontational political activity that four new organisations surfaced to form in Leningrad the *Sovet khristianskoi obshchestvennosti* (Council of Christian Society): the *Khristiansko-demokratichesky soyuz* of Vitali Savitsky, which interested itself mainly in the political aspects of Christian Democracy; the *Obshchestvo 'otkrytoye khristianstvo'* (Open Christianity Society), a philosophical discussion club; the *Soyuz khristianskogo prosveshcheniya* (Society for Christian Education) engaged in religious education and catechism by means of organised seminars; and finally *Svobodnaya Rossiya* (Free Russia), a 'national-democratic' society founded by Yuli Rybakov, a former dissident and the current human rights spokesman in the St Petersburg City Council. The originality of *Svobodnaya Rossiya* was that, apart from being highly politicised (a large number of its 20 or so activists were former members of the *Demokratichesky soyuz*) it saw its main goal as being to unite liberal nationalists and democrats 'on the basis of moderate centrist positions' since, as Rybakov argued, 'these forces which appear to be in conflict in actual fact have much in common'.[6] Despite their slightly different orientations, all four groups shared a desire to develop a programme based on the principles of Christian Democracy. In particular, this meant the reintegration of Russia into Christian civilisation and culture and the establishment of a multi-party democracy in much the same way as was done in Germany and Italy after the Second World War.

The Spectre of Moscow

The way in which the new bloc functioned, and in particular its perceptions of political reality, are highly indicative of the unique political climate of Leningrad. First, a suspicion of organisations which originated in Moscow—the 'centre'—established in a number of Leningrad's independent organisations an inherent distaste for 'leaders', for authority derived from personal power (the attraction to a prominent personality) and for tightly knit or centralised organisations. In fact the internal structure of these organisations, among them the *Sovet khristianskoi obshchestvennosti*, was based on a conscious rejection of the principles of democratic centralism, as practised by the largely discredited CPSU. As a result, organisations which adhered to the *Sovet* acted in a highly flexible and loosely coordinated fashion, helping new members to find their niche in whichever of the four groups was best suited to their abilities and aspirations. Given the lack of prominent public personalities in these groups, the bloc experienced few serious internal conflicts and little factional strife. Thus there developed a small but significant nucleus of Christian Democrats with a particularly heightened sense of solidarity and awareness of their city's historical and social specificity.

Not surprisingly, the attitudes of the Leningrad Christian Democrats were to prove less favourable to the establishment of good relations with most of their Moscow counterparts. When on 4–5 August 1989 the *Khristiansko-demokratichesky soyuz Rossii* (Christian Democratic Union of Russia, CDUR) was founded by leading activists from both cities, it was less an alliance of complicity than one of tactics. Clearly both sides realised the urgent need to cooperate in order to gain public support and numerical strength before the March 1990 All-Union elections. However, the

fragility of the CDUR was evident from the start. In the eyes of the Leningrad activists, it was the question of organisation which sparked the flames of controversy: should the CDUR be organised as a 'pyramidal' structure with a hierarchy and a single leader in the person of Muscovite Aleksandr Ogorodnikov? Or should it be based on decentralised, collective leadership? The Leningrad organisations believed that the latter would prevent the appearance of democratic centralism, which already plagued a number of Russia's independent organisations. The CDUR's leaders' incapacity to resolve such issues was aggravated by poor communications between Russian Christian Democrats, and by a lack of finances which might have helped the Union to purchase technical equipment from the West. Moreover, the equipment which was donated by western organisations such as the Christian Democratic International and the Belgian and German Christian Democratic Parties went principally to Moscow activists, who were often reluctant to distribute it to their provincial counterparts. These problems together dealt a fatal blow both to the cohesion of the Union and to its public credibility on the eve of the 1990 elections. Indeed, not a single deputy was elected under the banner of the CDUR, neither to the Moscow and Leningrad City Councils nor to the Russian Parliament.

A Lack of Pragmatism or a Biased Political Opportunity Structure?

While intra-organisational conflict and a lack of resources may explain in part the weakening of the Russian Christian Democratic movement following the establishment of the CDUR, several external factors contributed to placing the Christian Democrats at a disadvantage before the elections. The first problem was the timing of the alliance's formation. Only one year before, in August 1988, the Leningrad *Narodny front* too refused to cooperate with its Moscow counterpart on the basis of differing conceptions of organisation and the fear of resurgent democratic centralist tendencies in the capital.[7] Yet the fact that *Narodny front* activists had come to an early recognition of their preference for a regional route to social movement building allowed them ample time both to attract new members and to devise an effective electoral strategy, based to a large degree on a playing-up of their city's social and cultural status and the determination of the party *apparat* to destroy it. When the CDUR fell apart in December 1989, the Leningrad *Khristiansko-demokratichesky soyuz*–already the strongest Christian Democratic organisation in the city–had less than four months to devise an electoral strategy and build up its organisation. Given the unlikelihood of attaining these goals, it is arguable that the Leningrad groups had, apart from running independently, only one viable option: to adhere to the broad democratic bloc *Demokraticheskiye vybory-90* (Democratic Elections-90) which, according to St Petersburg sociologist Leonid Kesel'man, was to be by far the most successful in getting its candidates publicly known and elected.[8] This option would have obliged the Christian Democrats to adopt, in place of their anti-communist stance, a rhetoric based on opposition both to the *apparat* and to Russian nationalism, the nuances of which went undistinguished at the time of the electoral campaign. The fact that the majority of Christian Democrats did not choose this route meant that they were indirectly classed, in the publicity of the *Narodny front* and *Demokraticheskiye vybory-90*, with the conservative nationalist camp. Such publicity drew much of its strength from the traditional 'who is not for us is against us' slogan, which invited the city's population to choose between the democrats and 'the other'–the *apparat*, the mafia, and the nationalists *in toto*.[9]

Another factor which decisively placed the Christian Democrats at a disadvantage

during the period 1989–90 was the political opportunity structure, which favoured the development of the Marxist and non-Marxist Left.[10] When the Leningrad *Narodny front* was founded in June 1989, the local authorities had clearly demonstrated a willingness to negotiate with leading activists in the democratic movement. In fact, 'the relationship between the authorities and the movement became a mechanism for its development'.[11] Of particular importance was the fashion by which the mass media contributed to establishing the Front's image as that of a unified and publicly legitimate organisation. Although the Front was denied official registration, its first Congress nevertheless received wide and enthusiastic press coverage. Also, according to one Front leader, Nikolai Kornev, even when the Front's leadership was on the brink of factional warfare, the official press refrained entirely from reporting its divisions.[12] Finally, thanks in part to the firmly pro-democratic orientation adopted by a number of local radio and television programmes by autumn 1989, the democratic movement came to be associated by the general public with political opposition. 'This brought a significant number of sympathisers to the movement, that is, people prepared to support it during the election campaign.'[13]

In contrast to the democratic movement, the Christian Democratic organisations were for the most part kept by the media in a state of obscurity. While they too sought the cooperation of the authorities, particularly as regards their charity and human rights activities, their rallies and demonstrations—most of them unsanctioned—were still regularly disbanded by the local militia. Moreover, the frequent arrest of their organisers did little to attract new members to their movement. This was particularly so in light of the new Decree on Meetings and Demonstrations promulgated in July 1988 by the Supreme Soviet which, in leaving ambiguous the meaning of such words as 'rallies' and 'street processions', allowed the Ministry of the Interior troops to interpret them as they wished.[14] When the official press did report on the state of the Christian Democrats, it was mainly to emphasise the conflict-ridden nature of the movement as a whole, its leaders' incapacity to reconcile their differences, and rumours that the Moscow Christian Democrats had already split into numerous factions. The result was, as Savitsky confirms,

> a negative image of our St Petersburg party as well. It was difficult to understand who we were and who we represented. It was for this reason that we announced after the 1990 elections that we represented only ourselves, and would not take part in any blocs. We decided that we would make agreements only with those organisations whose positions appealed to us.

Regional Alliance-Building within two All-Russian Coalitions

The Russian Christian Democratic Movement

When the Christian Democratic movement atomised on the eve of the March 1990 elections, a number of Christian Democratic leaders stood as candidates independent of any party or organisation. While this strategy did not bring immediate results in Leningrad, in Moscow three Christian Democratic leaders—Viktor Aksyuchits and the priests Vyacheslav Polosin and Gleb Yakunin—did get elected to the Russian Parliament. Their election was, as later events would show, a substantial victory for the Christian Democratic movement. It not only paved the way for the concrete reform of church–state relations, but also inspired fresh initiatives by Christian political activists for the reunification of their movement. In April 1990 a new block—the *Rossiiskoye khristiansko-demokraticheskoye dvizheniye* (Russian

Christian Democratic Movement, RCDM)—was founded under the auspices of the three newly elected deputies.

The political programme of the RCDM is to a certain extent a reiteration of the leitmotifs of European Christian Democracy: opposition to communism and emphasis on the freedom of the individual in relation to the state; Christian principles as the basis of political life; support for a social market economy; and a strong belief in national self-determination. As the programme states: 'Any accusations directed at other nations are unacceptable, as is any manifestation of national egoism.'[15] In addition, the preface of the programme outlines a number of specifically Orthodox traditions as the bases of the Movement's spirituality. Among those mentioned is the notion of *bogochelovechestvo* (Godmanhood)[16] – the belief that man can and should strive to attain a point of union between himself and God—and the idea that *sobornost'*—a sense of community—should guide our individual and social lives.[17] The RCDM programme also asserts that a 'renewed Christian commune [*obshchina*] can give Russia new strength in the restoration of its historical heritage and the forging of its future.' This faith in the peasant commune has its origins in the work of such Slavophile thinkers as Aleksei Khomyakov, who believed that Russia's greatness lay in the decentralised, democratic, rural institutions such as the *veche* and the *mir*.

While the programme does not define in any detail the role of Orthodox traditions in the development of Christian Democracy in Russia, the idea that such traditions, and in particular currents of 19th-century Slavophile thought, should closely guide the RCDM has met with a certain opposition from the St Petersburg CDU. In fact, Savitsky argues that it is precisely the predominance in the RCDM of 'traditional Russian philosophy and enlightened patriotism' which has led the St Petersburg CDU to distinguish itself as a 'Westernising' tendency within the movement. In this regard the St Petersburg CDU looks to the post-war economic development of West Germany as a model for Russia. In particular, Savitsky espouses policies similar to those outlined in the 1949 Düsseldorf Principles, which reflect elements of western neo-conservatism: a market economy with self-regulating prices in which few restrictions would be imposed on industry save a system of simplified taxation and regulations to prevent the formation of monopolies. While it has been pointed out that the West German economy is by and large similar to those of other advanced capitalist societies, what seems to appeal particularly to the CDU is the word 'social' in West Germany's conception of its economy. Although the RCDM programme clearly alludes to Russia's ancient institutions of local government and the need for their revival, Savitsky believes that the majority of RCDM activists support 'a centralised state based on the Russian nation'—presumably with Moscow as the eternal 'centre'. Savitsky perceives these divisions as being chiefly regional, though he concedes that the 'westernisers', at a conference in St Petersburg in summer 1991, did manage to elicit the support of several Moscow groups, including Moscow's Christian Democratic Union. These perceptions would clearly be disputed by certain Muscovite activists, but are important to an understanding of the political atmosphere in the old capital. For example, it is precisely such perceptions that have led Savitsky and his fellow activists to compare the particularities of the St Petersburg CDU with those of the Bavarian Christian Social Union (CSU) after the Second World War. In Germany at this time 'Christian Democracy was . . . an ideological patchwork, if only because it was basing itself not only on formerly divergent political tendencies but also on different regional political traditions.'[18] One of the most serious sources of ideological conflict within the German CDU–CSU was the Bavarian CSU's rejection of the 'centralist unity-state' in favour of federalism. Like the stance of the St Petersburg

CDU, the position of the Bavarians, as well as that of certain Southern German leaders of the CDU, was intrinsically linked to 'a strong sense of regional identity'.[19]

As happened with the Leningrad *Narodny front*, the regional identifications of the city's CDU have provided the basis for transforming perceptions into concrete political and economic activity. In fact, the St Petersburg CDU has made substantial efforts to nurture relationships of solidarity with its Christian Democratic counterparts in the Baltic states. It has also enthusiastically supported the project, instigated by St Petersburg's mayor Anatoli Sobchak, to create a 'Baltic bloc'.[20] The underlying aim of the bloc would be that St Petersburg and its region, by becoming a free economic zone, would be able to establish locally coordinated and highly privileged economic, political and cultural relations with its neighbours, including the Baltic states, Finland, Denmark, Sweden, Poland and Germany. In addition, the CDU began campaigning as early as July 1990 for the renaming of Leningrad as St Petersburg. However, in order for this change to be made, over 50 per cent of the population of the city and *oblast'* had to vote for it in a referendum. Not long before the referendum was to occur, the CDU managed to get Metropolitan Ioann to announce his support for the measure—'an important and influential move' according to CDU activists interviewed. Within a few days of the vote, Patriarch Aleksi also spoke in favour of the change. The result of the referendum constituted an important achievement for Leningrad's Christian political activists: 54.85 per cent of the city's population voted in favour of the renaming.[21]

By the end of summer 1991 two distinct regional groupings had formed within the RCDM: the North-West section, grouping Christian Democrats in St Petersburg, Kaliningrad, Pskov, Murmansk and other northern cities; and the Centre-East section, comprising the cities between Moscow and the Urals.

The Democratic Russia Movement

When interviewed in October 1991, Savitsky indicated that the CDU planned to engage in another even more ambitious project of alliance-building. The organisations in question—most of them from St Petersburg—are among those which adhere to the umbrella movement *Demokraticheskaya Rossiya* (Democratic Russia).[23] When the latter was formally founded in October 1990, the CDU refrained from entering, principally because *Demokraticheskaya Rossiya* harboured a number of parties and organisations whose leaders were formally Communists. However, at the fourth Congress of *Demokraticheskaya Rossiya*, held in February 1991, the CDU changed its mind and entered the movement. As Savitsky pointed out, this decision was 'a big event for the CDU'. In August 1991, due in large part to the events surrounding the attempted 'coup', the CDU's leading activists substantially modified their attitude towards their former enemy. Savitsky confirmed:

> So now we take part in *Demokraticheskaya Rossiya*. Things particularly changed after the August events when we realised that everyone was on the same side of the barricade. The situation was reversed: many so-called 'anti-communists' were afraid to speak out, while many 'communists' went out to confront the tanks. Now our relations with *Demokraticheskaya Rossiya* are beginning to normalise, even though it is difficult for our rank-and-file members to cooperate. For we have many people who were imprisoned or confined to psychiatric hospitals. Whereas our leaders can find a common language—as we are all solving political problems—it is very difficult for our members to communicate with those of *Demokraticheskaya Rossiya*.

By summer 1991, *Demokraticheskaya Rossiya* had divided into two blocs with a strong regional orientation: *Svoboda i dostoinstvo* (Freedom and Dignity), whose most prominent member organisation is still the *Svobodnaya demokraticheskaya partiya Rossii* (Democratic Party of Russia) led by Moscow deputy Nikolai Travkin. It was at this time that the St Petersburg CDU had begun to consider forming a tactical (People's Accord), which derived its strength chiefly from the *Demokraticheskaya partiya Rossii*(Democratic Party of Russia) led by Moscow deputy Nikolai Travkin. It was at this time that the St Petersburg CDU had begun to consider forming a tactical alliance with the party of Sal'ye. While the latter is well known for her populist pro-Yel'tsin stance, her support for a market economy and her interest in the Russian national question[23] she is none the less a former communist and was once a leader of the Leningrad *Narodny front*. The fact that the CDU has been considering an alliance with the FDPR clearly indicates that St Petersburg's Christian Democrats might now be willing to adopt the political flexibility typical of the main European Christian Democratic parties.

Savitsky mentioned that the possible compromise with the FDPR would have one simple aim: to counterbalance the *Narodnoye soglasiye* bloc which, he argued, had been attracting to its ranks the more conservative-oriented Christian Democrats. Since then, the major parties of the *Narodnoye soglasiye* bloc—including that of Travkin—have left *Demokraticheskaya Rossiya*. However, in an environment in which perceptions seem to dominate the political arena—especially in relation to Russia's two major cities—it is clear that an alliance between Christian Democrats and the party which includes some of St Petersburg's most prominent 'democratic' activists would have an additional appeal. It must be remembered that the St Petersburg CDU is particularly sensitive about being associated with conservative Russian nationalism. Thus an alliance between the CDU and the FDPR would mean essentially that the former could maintain its image of a 'Westernising' organisation, while at the same time identifying with the FDPR's secondary interest in the revival of Russian national culture. In this respect, tactical interests would in fact merge with a certain measure of ideological complicity.

The St Petersburg Christian Democratic Union and the Church

Undoubtedly the most sensitive issue for the St Petersburg CDU is its relationship with the official Russian Orthodox Church. While a good relationship with the church is clearly a priority for the CDU, its leading activists remain uncertain as to the reaction local church authorities will have to their ever-growing activity in the political sphere. According to Savitsky, this uncertainty is a result of the attitude of the official church to the CDU during the spring 1990 election campaign. He says that at this time, church representatives 'told believers not to vote for candidates linked with the CDU, and used KGB information on our members to discredit them'. The fact that the church stopped speaking against the CDU in summer 1991 has, however, given its leaders new hope for a constructive dialogue with church leaders. Such hopes are not without foundation. In an interview conducted in October 1991, Father Mikhail from St Petersburg's Prince Vladimir Cathedral expressed his belief that the CDU has a 'positive role' to play in the city's cultural and spiritual revival. The church's role in the renaming of St Petersburg seems to confirm this new attitude, as does its apparent acceptance of the new Law on Freedom of Conscience, which came into effect in October 1990.

The CDU has also initiated its own ecumenical movement. In September 1991 it

organised a conference grouping a number of the St Petersburg region's religious communities. Among those that sent representatives were the Catholics, the Mormons, the Seventh Day Adventists and the Free Russian Orthodox Church. Not surprisingly, one of the central themes of the conference was the question of arousing support for the city's Christian political activists before the next elections.

Conclusion

In February 1992 Savitsky, Yakunin and Moscow Christian Democratic deputy Valeri Borshchev decided to make a clean break with the RCDM and form yet another organisation: *Rossiisky khristiansko-demokratichesky soyuz* (Russian Christian Democratic Union, RCDU). In an interview in March 1992, Borshchev, reflecting the view of Savitsky, confirmed that the RCDM has been progressively peopled by *derzhavniki*, which in this case refers to supporters either of the restoration of the former Soviet Union or of an authoritarian role for Moscow *vis-à-vis* Russia's autonomous republics. Yet the foundation of the RCDU fits in with the pattern of leadership struggle characteristic of the Russian Christian Democratic movement since autumn 1989. According to Borshchev, the present culprit is Viktor Aksyuchits. Between 8 and 10 February 1992 Aksyuchits participated in the organisation of a 'Congress of Civic and Patriotic Forces' in Moscow, which proposed that the Russian empire be recreated, and essentially sought to set up an opposition to the reform plans of the Yel'tsin government.[24]

The sharp divisions and–as recent events have once again shown–highly precarious trans-regional alliances within the Russian Christian Democratic movement clearly pose a threat to its effectiveness as a political force and raise a number of questions. In particular, we might wonder to what degree the tendency of Russian Christian Democratic organisations to fracture is a characteristic of Christian Democratic parties in general, or one connected specifically with Russia's post-totalitarian environment. It could equally be attributable to the historical legacy of Russian *krugovshchina*–the tradition of factionalism which has undoubtedly contributed to the rupture of the main political organisations and parties in Russia during the Gorbachev era.[25] Without minimising the importance of the Russian context, we may consider one principal reason for the prevalence of divisions within the main European and Latin American Christian Democratic parties. As Michael Fleet writes, 'Christian Democratic thought has failed to give the movement an adequate ideological foundation... neither of the sources from which it is drawn, i.e. contemporary papal encyclicals and Catholic social philosophy, provide such a base...' Without an authoritative sociological perspective with which to mediate basic values, Christian Democrats have turned to other sources. These may be neo-Marxism, democratic elitism or neo-conservative economics.[26]

Given the Russian Christian Democratic movement's lack of both cohesion and a clearly defined vision of how its central values might best be put into practice, it is questionable whether Orthodoxy is any more capable of providing the necessary 'sociological perspective' which might clearly reinforce and distinguish the position of Christian Democrats in the political spectrum.[27] Indeed, Orthodoxy's capacity to provide this seems highly worthy of exploration. Without such a perspective, it is arguable that the Russian Christian Democrats' identification with Orthodox traditions on the one hand, and with various strands of Western European Christian Democratic thought on the other, will not be sufficient–as in the case of the St Petersburg CDU and other North-Western groups–to prevent regional concerns from filling the vacuum.

Notes and References

This paper is based in part on interviews conducted in St Petersburg between September 1989 and October 1991; those interviewed were leading political activists from 12 unofficial socio-political organisations, from the radical left to the extreme right. Particularly relevant are three interviews from late September and early October 1991 with Vitali Savitsky, the leader of the St Petersburg Christian Democratic Union. I have also worked extensively with members of the Commission for the Study of Social Movements at the St Petersburg Sociological Institute, from where I obtained the necessary documents and statistical information for my research.

1   The existence of 'party groups' within informal clubs—in particular those with a high percentage of CPSU members—is confirmed in unpublished documents of the Leningrad *Perestroika* Club. Essentially, 'party groups' were designed to assist the central and local party leadership, by means of letters and advice, in the reform of the CPSU. They were abolished after the Andreyeva affair mainly because their members, expecting a conservative clampdown by the local party leadership, did not want to subject themselves to the pressures of the party *apparat*. The latter, according to the 1986 party rules, was responsible for checking up on lower organisations linked to the party in order to ensure the fulfilment of party decisions.

2   'Within-system' dissent, as opposed to 'system-rejective' dissent, aims at effecting changes *in* the system, rather than *of* the system. See Rudolf L. Tökés, *Dissent in the USSR* (Baltimore, MD, 1975), p.17.

3   Savitsky's testimony is not unique. In a document entitled 'Materialy pervogo foruma demokraticheskoi obshchestvennosti Leningrada', dated March 1989, we find similar accounts of the formation of official organisations parallel to those of the democratic movement.

4   Yelena Zdravomyslova, 'Mobilisation of resources in the democratic movement: the case of Leningrad 1987–1990', unpublished paper presented to the author in September 1991. Zdravomyslova is a member of the Commission for the Study of Social Movements at the St Petersburg Sociological Institute.

5   Boris Kagarlitsky, *Farewell Perestroika* (London, 1990), p. 172.

6   Interview with Yuli Rybakov, June 1990.

7   This split occurred at the Inter-Regional Conference of Initiative Groups from Popular Fronts and Other Democratic Movements, held in Leningrad on 26–28 August 1988.Leningrad *Narodny front* activist Andrei Alekseyev compiled a report of the conference entitled *Otvet vsem, kto menya ob etom rassprashivayet.*

8   Andrei Alekseyev, *Sobytiya 4 i 18 marta v sotsiologicheskom izmerenii*, report dated 26 March 1990.

9   For example, *Vse na miting protesta*, a tract publicising a democratic demonstration to be held on 6 December 1989. The tract exhorts the inhabitants of Leningrad to choose between the party-state bureaucracy and its interests or the democratic movement. Significantly, there is no third option.

10   The term 'political opportunity structure', as applied to social movements, was developed during the 1970s and early 1980s by the creators of resource mobilisation theory. It is best described as 'the changes in resources, group organisation and opportunities for collective action', on which depend the formation and mobilisation of movements. See J. Craig Jenkins, *Annual Review of Sociology*, no. 9 (1983), pp. 527–53.

11   Zdravomyslova, *op. cit.*

12   Interview with Nikolai Kornev, September 1991.

13   Zdravomyslova, *op. cit.*

14   The new decree, as St Petersburg sociologists have pointed out, also hindered the attraction of new participants into the democratic movement. However, the fact remained that participation in the demonstrations of such organisations as the Leningrad *Narodny front* or the *Memorial* Society carried a relatively small risk of arrest in comparison with involvement in the demonstrations of the CDU. Throughout the history of the Leningrad *Narodny front*, only Marina Sal'ye, its most radical leader, was held by the militia; this was

for a few hours in December 1989 'because of her participation in the procession ... to honour the memory of Andrei Sakharov': *Novosti Leningradskogo narodnogo fronta* (26 December 1989).

[15] *Osnovnyye polozheniya politicheskoi programmy Rossiiskogo khristiansko-demokraticheskogo dvizheniya.*

[16] 'Godmanhood' has been a common theme among Russian religious thinkers from Vladimir Solov'yev onwards. See N. O. Lossky, *A History of Russian Philosophy* (London, 1952).

[17] '*Sobornost* means a combination of unity and freedom of many persons on the basis of common love for God and for all absolute values', Lossky, *op. cit.*, p. 407.

[18] G. Pridham, *Christian Democracy in West Germany* (London, 1977), p. 23.

[19] Pridham, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

[20] See 'Internatsional'ny baltiisky front', *Nevsky kur'yer*, no. 9 (27 May 1990).

[21] Interview with Savitsky, September 1991.

[22] According to its Statutes (*Ustav*), 'the Democratic Russia movement is a mass socio-political organisation of parties, social organisations, movements and individuals who have associated on a voluntary basis ... The goal of the movement is to coordinate activities in the aim of uniting democratic forces in society in order to carry out progressive radical socio-economic reforms in Russia.'

[23] Since as early as December 1989, Marina Sal'ye has taken an outspoken interest in the Russian national question. Her article 'Pochemu demokraticheskoye dvizheniye stesnyayetsya natsional'noi idei', published in the Lithuanian journal *Ekho Kaunasa*, no. 26 (20 December 1989), sparked much controversy and even derision among her fellow activists in the Leningrad *Narodny front*. The central idea of her article is that, since the Revolution, the Russian people have been inculcated with a 'mentality of domination'. Although, Sal'ye writes, this mentality has allowed Russia to exploit and dominate other nationalities, it has also devalued Russian culture by presenting Russia as an autocratic governing force, rather than as a nation with traditions. As a result, the idea of Russian nationality has been monopolised by ultra-nationalist groups such as *Pamyat'*, which have transformed it into fascism. Sal'ye urged the democratic movement to oppose this process by identifying itself with national values such as the preservation of Russian language and culture. It is also interesting that Sal'ye, in January 1990, began publishing her own democratic newspaper *Nabat*, in which an entire page was regularly devoted to religious affairs in Leningrad. An interest in religion has continued in her new newspaper, *Svobodnaya demokraticheskaya partiya Rossii*, which first came out in autumn 1990.

[24] The Conference was also organised by the Russian Constitutional Democrats. Aleksandr Rutskoi, the Russian vice-president, addressed the Conference, although his party did not participate in it. See *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Report*, vol. 1 no. 8 (21 February 1992).

[25] Examples of such ruptures are numerous. Before the March 1990 elections the leadership bodies of both the Moscow *Narodny front* and the Leningrad *Narodny front* had become so factionalised that neither Front was effectively reanimated thereafter (the Fronts were, in fact, visibly 'united' for less than one year from the date of their formal inception). Furthermore, in June 1990 in Moscow, at the founding conference of the *Demokraticheskaya partiya Rossii*, a split occurred between M. Sal'ye and N. Travkin, which incited the former to found her own party in Leningrad (see the autumn 1990 edition of the newspaper *Svobodnaya demokraticheskaya partiya Rossii* for a discussion of the split from the viewpoint of Sal'ye). Apparently even the *Demokraticheskaya Rossiya* movement is not immune to factional strife. In June 1991, *Moscow News* commentator Oleg Vite wrote of it: 'Irreconcilable differences on secondary issues have been paralysing all constructive activity' (*Moscow News*, no. 24 (16–23 June 1991).

[26] Michael Fleet, *The Rise and Fall of Chilean Christian Democracy* (Princeton, NJ, 1985), pp. 226–7.

[27] Fleet defines 'sociological perspective' as 'an understanding of social forces and processes, how they function, how they can be countered, accelerated, or otherwise affected, and with what consequences' (*op. cit.*, p. 226).