

## Yaroslava PULINOVICH

### Refugees

The right to relocate is an inalienable human right. The earth belongs to everyone. However, every right comes with obligations and responsibilities. People must decide whether to stay in their mother countries and make life better there, or give their strength to the prosperity of another country, a country they have chosen. In the latter situation, the laws of the country should become their laws. The word refugee is a political term, and granting asylum is a political act. What interests me, however, is the human element. How do people from different cultures get along with each other? Where do you find the strength to trust? How do you preserve your individuality without resorting to aggression? How do you assimilate different ways of life? As long as humanity persists, it will have to resolve these questions.

As we know, one of the most complicated things of all is getting along with our neighbors. For my country, the twentieth century was the century of emigration. People ran from czarist Russia, from Soviet Russia, from post-Soviet Russia, and they run from the Russia of today. Currently, however, the issue of immigration to Russia, as well as international relations in general, has become equally pressing. People from the former Soviet republics, where the quality of life is lower, are streaming into Russia. Russian society has a very negative view of immigrants and, because of this, turns a blind eye to some of the actions of its own citizens. As a nation, we are only beginning to learn how to coexist in new international relations.

At the present time, millions of immigrants from the countries of the former Soviet Union—such as Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and others—live in Russia. As a rule, these are people without an education, who possess few professional qualifications. Additionally, there are people who, for various economic or political reasons, were forced to leave their country, but these people frequently don't make a home in Russia either. Securing a job is very difficult for non-Russian citizens, and the jobs that people do find are often low-paying or entry-level work.

Because of this influx of people from the former Soviet republics, however, there is a conviction among local populations in Russia that immigrants are taking their work because they are willing to do it for less money. This is honestly not true. In practice, Russians don't accept these sorts of jobs, even if they are offered higher payment than immigrants. Additionally, many are bothered by the fact that immigrants very actively look for wives in Russia in order to stay in the country. Many Russian men feel threatened by this.

People from Ukraine and Belarus, however, are excepted from these views. Russians don't count them as migrants or "others," and immigrants from these countries find work and assimilate much faster than people with Eastern roots.

There is also the issue of people migrating from the Russian Caucasus region, namely, Dagestan and Chechnya. Formally, these regions are a part of Russia and their inhabitants are Russian citizens. However, an overwhelming number of Russians consider the inhabitants of these regions hostile. They are, for them, "others." The wars in these regions were not without repercussions, and it should be noted that ethnic Russians in Chechnya are not especially beloved either.

The current liberal community is also convinced that, in the event of any social disturbances in Chechnya, the region will be supported by the Russian authorities because, at the present time, almost 100% of the population in the region supports the existing Chechen regional (pro-Moscow) government. I cannot verify this, but it seems to be true.

In conclusion, I would like to say that, unfortunately, we are still in a deadlock. The government does very little to help immigrants assimilate into Russian culture, leading to aggression and alienation, which, in turn, leads to the citizens of Russia failing to understand immigrants. I hope that this situation is only temporary.

Translated from the Russian by Alex Niemi

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