

“THE MAIN THING IS PERCEPTION”: MEETING WITH SWISS AMBASSADOR TO RUSSIA YVES ROSSIER

In December 2018, at the Swiss Embassy in Moscow Mr. Yves Rossier, Ambassador of the Swiss Confederation to the Russian Federation, met with the chief editor of the journal “Philosophical Letters. Russian and European Dialogue” Vladimir K. Kantor. On February 13, 2019, at the invitation of V. K. Kantor, Mr. Rossier spoke at the HSE within the framework of the seminar “West and East: Universalism of Culture” of the International Laboratory for the Study of Russian and European Intellectual Dialogue. The working language of the meeting was English. We publish the English text and its Russian translation done by Alexander Begrambekov. The text is given in compliance with the norms of writing. The discussion presented here is not complete but the main points are fully reflected.

Vladimir Kantor:

Let me introduce the Ambassador of the Swiss Confederation in Russia Mr. Rossier. Our laboratory has always been extremely interested in contacts with serious European politician, scientists and researchers. Mr. Rossier is one of those who, to our great pleasure, accepted our invitation. And now we are happy to greet Mr. Rossier at HSE.



The opening of the meeting.
Greeting by Vladimir Kantor



Yves Rossier and Vladimir Kantor
at the Swiss Embassy

Ivan Prostakov:

It is a great pleasure to welcome the Ambassador Yves Rossier at HSE University once again. His educational experience is very rich and very useful for this meeting. I suppose the main topic will be not namely on political issues, political concerns of Russia and the European Union because actually Europe is not only the European Union and there is a big difference between countries in Europe.

Yesterday by chance I attended some ceremony at the European Union office in Moscow. It was the ceremony for our Russian students, including students of HSE too. There were articles on the relations between Europe and Russia.

One of the questions was “How many people consider Russia as a European country?”. Only approximately 10 students from 100 students present there raised their hands. I had also a very interesting experience in France. I worked in France, in Paris some years ago. I also was a lecturer. I held a lecture on relations between the European Union and Russia and I started off with the same question. I had in front of me approximately 60 students and only 5 raised their hands. I suppose in fact that we have a lot of things to understand, to discuss and I hope also that our present meeting will help us to understand better each other and work together. We need it. Thank you.

Mr. Rossier:

Perception is always very important. It's more important than reality. Perception means how do I see something, somebody or a country or how do I see myself. How do we see ourselves, how do we see the others, and there is always an interaction between how do we see ourselves and how do we see the others. It was the first point. Secondly, I have a personal opinion and I am with those five students that Ivan Prostakov mentioned. Due to my previous job I traveled half of the world. Now I've been two years in Russia. And I've been everywhere: in Dagestan, Norilsk, Tynda, Severobaikalsk, Kabardino-Balkar, Ingushetia, Grozny, Rostov. I've been in many places. However, I didn't feel like in a foreign country.

Of course, there are differences between Russia and my country, but there are as well differences between my country and Sweden, or between my country and Portugal. The differences, in my perception, are not bigger than between my country and Portugal,



Speech by Vice Rector
of the Higher School of Economics Ivan Prostakov

but they are much bigger between my country and China, or Pakistan, or Ethiopia, or Somalia, or Argentina. This is my point of view — we can discuss it and I will come to it later. The way Russia is perceived in the rest of Europe (I mean the rest of Europe, as Russia is in Europe) is the current situation. It has not always been like that — it has always changed. The perception of Russia in the rest of Europe has been constantly changing through the ages. Sometimes even in Western Europe, Russia was perceived as similar, very close in 1815, and between 1905 and 1917, or during the ages of Catherine the Second.

And sometimes Russia was perceived completely different: after the October revolution or under Nicolas the First, and it was perceived as close again under Alexander the Second. It has constantly changed and today maybe many people think it is completely different and in 20 years it might be different as well. What matters is what changes our perception. For example, Peter the Great was typical, what we call in French, “despote éclairé” or enlightened autocrat. When he came to power he was perceived by the majority in Western Europe as one of them. You will say it’s all about the elite. Of course, it’s the elite. Anyway, the farmers in my country couldn’t read or write, they did not know what Russia was, but they did not know anything about Greece or Portugal either. So, we are talking about people who are doing politics. That was the moment, when Russia was powerful and aggressively expanding its territory. The perception of closeness had nothing to do with the foreign policy of Russia. Although in the past, attacks towards Russia were mostly coming from the West: with the Polish, with the

Swedes, with the Lithuanians and etc., Russia was perceived as one of us. In the period of Nicholas I, Russia's foreign policy was rather peaceful in the South-East European region, but Russia was perceived again completely different. Another example: in the year of 1815, Russia was everywhere in Europe. Alexander the First was in Vienna, the Russian army was in my country, they were in Paris. They went to bars they didn't have much time so they said "Bistro". That is why we call some restaurants in French "a bistro". It was the moment when those enlightened autocrats wanted to reestablish power in Europe so they all thought the same. Metternich thought the same as Alexander the First did. So again, though the Russian army was everywhere in Europe, Russia was perceived as a very close country.

The situation changed between 1820 and 1830. But what changes have happened? It was the period of the liberal revolutions in Europe. Suddenly, the idea, that the best form of a state was an autocrat with reason, an enlightened person who wanted to work for his country, fell down. In the beginning the liberal revolution didn't succeed in Western Europe but the people in power in Western Europe used the help of Russian army to crush the regime. And then all of a sudden Russia was perceived as the enemy of the liberal revolutions and that was not because of something that had happened in Russia.

My second example is about 1905 and 1917. You do not imagine how popular Russia was in the rest of Europe in that period. Everybody was translating great Russian literature, everybody was going to Russian opera, Russian restaurants were opened everywhere, everybody was investing in Russia, everybody was exporting to Russia.

I come from a small country. Today there are 700 Swiss living in Russia. In 1910, there were 2,000 Swiss teachers and there were tens of thousands of the Swiss in Russia doing other jobs. So, that period of 1905-1917 was the period of closeness, extreme closeness again. Everybody saw the tide going in the same direction and Russia was extremely popular. Not because something had changed in Europe, but something had changed in Russia this time. So, we see that the perception is always influenced by what happens in your country and by what happens in the countries of the others.

To me, the catastrophe was in 1917. Jean-Baptiste Duroselle, a French historian, says that it was the time when Russia was kicked out of Europe because it has chosen a path completely different from the other countries. It is not completely true. What happened in Russia in 1917 can be disputed and discussed for hours, but the first factor was the terrible First World War. Millions of soldiers died for nothing. It was an industrialized war: with cannons, first tanks, with poisonous gases. So, the dream of constant progress towards more social liberties, more prosperity and a better control level, the idea, that progress depended on the country going in the right direction, died in 1917-1919 because of the First World War. When 100,000 people die on the battlefield for 200 meters of mud during two hours, there is no progress, it is just nonsense. That had influence on the Arts as well. Suddenly reality was destroyed and you only had abstract

arts like Dadaism and so on, which was nonsense and absurd. And then, you faced two ideologies of Nazism and Bolshevism that were coming out of the First World War.

They have something in common. They think that there can be progress in history but not through a slow evolution but through a fight to the death between opposed factions. As for the Nazis, it had to kill all its enemies to make a better world for the German people. When it invaded the territories of Eastern Europe, they thought that those people were animals, not humans and had to be enslaved or eliminated. As for the Bolsheviks, it was exactly the same thing. The Civil War was a war to death: there were the enemies of the people, the enemies of the people had to be killed because they were not part of the people. So, that was a sort of Darwinian ideology according to which the stronger survives and makes the progress. That was the child of the First World War. So even that evolution in Russia was not so different because there was the same approach, on a different way, in Nazi Germany. But, what matters is that in 1917, there was the cut.

Switzerland was poorer than Russia in 1905. We were extremely poor in the nineteenth century. We were one of the poorest countries in Europe, so from 1905 to 1915 tens of thousands of the Swiss emigrated to Russia and not only to Russia, but to America, Canada, Argentina as well, because we had nothing. So, many went to Russia on those days and today 100 years later in Russia there are only 700 Swiss and that is because of 1917. That made a cut between contacts exchange, between all those contacts that had always taken place before, if you take the intellectual debate Malinovsky wrote about, or what Pushkin wrote in the 19th century, and other people in the rest of Europe too.

So, there was a strong separation, with no people exchange and, of course, official propaganda which made the partition even stricter. At the end of the year 1945, at the end of the Second World War in Western Europe, for a short period of time — maybe six months up to one year — Russia was very popular again because they helped to beat German Nazis. And then Stalin saw the same danger as with the Decembrists because Russian soldiers were everywhere in Europe and he knew when they come back, they would tell what they saw, like the Decembrists did after 1815. At that moment the Soviet Union launched a terrible propaganda against the rest of Europe: “There are enemies, they want to destroy the Soviet Union, and there is no collaboration.” I would say after the coup in Czechoslovakia in 1948, then the perception suddenly changed again: It was not Russia; it was the Soviet Union, a very big country, lots of tanks, very nasty, without public liberties. And then it was again perceived as an edge. It changes all the time, so I don't think, the perception you can hear today, will be the same in 20 years. Do not think they are right, make your own opinion and make your own perception, that is what matters.

My second point is the question that Professor Kantor was asking me “How do we see Russia today?” It is very difficult to tell you. I can tell you how I see Russia but it is only my opinion, so I don't think it is very important. I would say when I watch your



Yves Rossier

television, I, having the information about my country and the neighboring countries, don't understand what I see. I have the impression that in Western Europe according to some television programs or television shows "all men are gays, all women are prostitutes" and this is very strange. Because if all men are gays, I don't see how prostitutes can earn any money. And "everybody hates Russia" — I have never met anybody who hates Russia, especially now. When I am very often in Switzerland or in a neighboring country, what I hear from people is, firstly, a curiosity because Russia is far away, it is not a country like France where you can go for the weekend. They want to know "How is it? How are the people? Are they friendly? How is nature there? Do the people still read books? How is the food?" What I feel is not at all hostility. I would not say if it wasn't true, but it is more a curiosity due to these 70 years without contacts or with very limited ones. Now it is better, now there are more people going to Russia or from Russia, going to the rest of Europe but it takes time to change the perception. Secondly, I would say, it is curiosity at the political level. Russia is usually a projection of what you want. If I talk to a conservative politician, he will tell me "Russia is wonderful because good traditional values are still living there". Why does he like that? Because that is what he likes. It is the same with many countries. If you ask somebody in Switzerland, how you see America, depending on his own values, he will answer "it's the land of freedom", if you were a socialist, you would say "now it's the land of ferocious capitalism".

You are always identified with your own projections. Don't take that too seriously. I can give you one example about a deputy in Switzerland, a Member of Parliament from a very right-wing party that doesn't like the Muslims. I was talking to him about

Russia and he said, “You know, we should have Vladimir Putin in Switzerland” When I asked him why he thinks so, he said that “If we had Putin in Switzerland, there would be no Muslims in Switzerland”. Then I told him that there are 15 percent of Muslims in Russia and they are Russian citizens, he looked at me and said, “Come on, you are joking, right?” He didn’t believe me. That is a complete ignorance and just a projection which has nothing to do with Russia. I could have explained to him about Tatarstan, and North Caucasus and all that, but it would have been just a waste of time, as he was interested in his own political dreams. So, if you speak to a European and if he tells you “I like Russia”, do not be happy, just wait and ask why he likes it, and then listen to what he will say. If somebody tells you “I don’t like Russia”, do not hate him, ask, “Why don’t you like Russia” and then you might see something which is not about what you think. Again, we are talking about perceptions, above all there is critique. It is true, there is critique at the political level and this critique is directed at the way Russia is governed, but these critiques are addressed to the state, the presidential Administration, Human Rights and their realization and so on. But you have lots of critiques against President Trump as well. So a critique against a government or what a government does is not a critique against a country or its people. Maybe some people do not make difference when they make critiques, so tell them to be careful about what they are talking about. Is it about the government? Okay, you can criticize the government. I criticize my own government, not when I am an ambassador, but when I am a citizen in my country. But when I criticize my government, it doesn’t make me hate my country, so do not confuse the critique against the way a country is governed.

Do not ask yourself how the others see you, ask yourself how you see yourself. “How do you see Russia and what do you want to make out of your country?”, that is important. What your country becomes, it is you who decide but not foreign powers or hostile powers or CIA or whatever. It’s about you and if you read the intellectual history of Russia, there has been a constant question and this is a very European constant question: Who are we? Are we like the others? What do we have in common? Only Europeans think this way. In China, you do not have that. In India, you do not have that. In Pakistan, you do not have that. That is why for me Russia is just a European country with differences like every European country. I would say the main debate was between people like Chaadaev on one side and Uvarov on the other. And even that should be limited to an absolute opposition because you do not have the choice between imitating somebody or doing your own fate. There is a middle way, there have always been exchanges between countries, people, nations, civilizations and so on. We all learn from each other and it does not mean that we imitate. It is not “we are children and the others are our professors”. We learn from all these exchanges. The Swiss Constitution of 1848 was basically a copy of the American Constitution but that was not because we were stupid, but because we thought that it was a very interesting way of governing a

federal country. I do not feel bad because we copied the Americans in their constitution, and the Turks copied Swiss civil code. I do not think the Turks feel bad because they copied the Swiss civil code just for one reason: because some people wanted the French civil code in Turkey, other people wanted the German civil code and they were fighting. So instead of fighting they said okay, we will not take the French code, we will not take the German one, we will take the Swiss civil code because it was okay and it worked as well.

In that period there were people like Nekrasov or like Herzen as well. They refused that conflict between imitating others or following your own fate. Every nation in Europe has its own identity. It does not mean we cannot share it and walk together. We have to live in it. I think, Dostoyevsky said it very well: you have to bring these things together. And Russia has something to bring in Europe like any other European country. And that is exactly what makes me sad now because of this confrontation period. It is not the moment when Russia can give something to Europe, what it could do and otherwise. So, what is it to be European, when the Professor Kantor asks “Do you feel European?” Firstly, you should think what it means to be European. For the Professor, being European means culture. Culture is a very broad concept so it is impossible to disagree but we have to say what there is in this culture for us today. I think the European culture is firstly the heritage of the past. It is our Christian past with its primacy of the person because if every individual is wanted and created by God and has a personal relationship with God, it means this person is very important and you have therefore a straight line between Christianity and human rights. And here to the basis of culture I would add a political culture. We have a common background, it is in the European Convention of Human Rights which every European country signed. Russia signed it too. To me, that makes Russia a European country and here we stop. If I’m telling myself as a Swiss or as a Russian or as whatever “I am not European”, then I should ask myself “What am I?” When I meet Russians who tell me, “No, we are not Europeans”, I ask, “What are you?” Then I hear, “we have Asian values” and then I ask “what is an Asian value?” I mean an Asian value must be a value that you find in Pakistan, in Thailand, in Japan, in China, and in India. I don’t think you will find one who knows what an Asian value means. That is the danger, if you do not feel European, being a European country. If you or me are not European, what are we?.

We should recognize the things we have in common. In traditional Europe, there has always been the diversity and variety of centers of power. It was not the case in China. It was always the case with Europe. And this diversity is part of this continent and in this diversity, these countries have always found a way to do things together and it goes down to a very deep culture.

In high school, we read Russian authors, like we read German authors, like we read Shakespeare and so on. I know people like those from their books in real life. I know

people like Chichikov, I know people like Bazarov, I even know a few Smerdyakovs in the Swiss Foreign Ministry. You see, it is closeness that matters. It does not mean we will not disagree, it does not mean we will not strongly disagree on many things, but Europe has never been something that should be based on one soul and unique identity. Some people tried it, like Adolf Hitler, but I don't think it is the same. That was an anti-European project. I would make a personal comment. After these two years in Russia, I thought about the question of the professor Kantor. I would say three things that matter and have big consequences today.

The first is the isolation of the Soviet Union. I told you, tens of thousands of Swiss were living in Russia in 1910 and today they are 700. We lost time because we lost 70 years of exchanges. So, we need time to catch up.

Second, it is slavery. Slavery was abolished late in Russia and this makes a big difference. You may tell me that slavery was everywhere in Europe. It is true, slavery was basic, essential in Rome and Rome is our ancestor of the state. It is true but there are two differences. First, the freedom of farmers came much earlier in Central and Western Europe than in Russia. In Russia, it was only in the time of Alexander the Second. It doesn't mean that European farmers were happy. They were poor, they died of hunger, they were uneducated but they were people. Second, it is the abolition of slavery. Slavery in France was only abroad, in the colonies, so slaves were not French. The difference between the slavery for the Portuguese, for the Spaniards, for the French was that for them slaves were other people. Whereas these farmers, if they had been Russians, would have been slaves. Actually, the other people, people in North Caucasus, the Poles usually were not slaves. But many of the Russians were slaves.

The USA abolished slavery very late. The slavery there was not abroad, like for the French, Spaniards or for the Portuguese. It was in the USA but slaves were black. Again, they were out of the national community. The very strange thing in Russia is that slavery staid so long and this applied to Russian Orthodox people. These slaves went to the church, they spoke the same language, they did not come from far away.

The third important point and then I would like to open the discussion it is what happened in the western part of Russia or of the Soviet Union between 1917 and 1945. During that period, you had 50 million people killed not by earthquakes, but killed by men. That is the biggest massacre in human history. 50 million people died of violent death. You had deaths in the First World war, Civil war, famines of the 20s, Stalin purges and then the Nazis and then the Second World War. Here you add all the ones that died in the Gulag and those Chechens, Ingush and other Caucasus people that were evacuated and so on. 50 million people and that is terrible. It is not the only place where it happened but it is the first time it happened in human history. Then, there came China. There was a lot of death as well it is true but that was after. Now concerning Europe, the difference between the cruelty of the Nazi regime and the regime of Stalin



Yves Rossier at the Embassy

is that the Nazi regime first lasted only 12 years, not so long. Second, the Nazi didn't kill many Germans. Most of the Jews of Germany could get away because they saw it was coming but the Jews of Poland, of Corfu, of Hungary, of White Russia, of Lithuania had no chance. The Nazi regime was taking care of sparing their own citizens, even the extermination camps were not made on German territory. Sobibor, Treblinka, Auschwitz — they were all built outside of Germany. The mass killings of the Nazi regime were all committed mostly against foreigners or people perceived as different, like Jews. They were Polish, Russians, prisoners of war, Ukrainians

and so on, and outside of the country. Whereas the Stalin terror was killing Russian or Soviet citizens. Soviet power was killing Soviet citizens. The father ate his own children.

Even in Ukraine when I talk to my Ukrainian friends and they tell me, "Look what the Russians did to us with the famine" I have to tell them that the Communist Party of the Ukrainian Socialist Republic was implementing those measures and the young activists, that were going to farms taking grain from farmers, were Ukrainians too. That makes it much more difficult. Because if you are German, you can say "I am sorry", you can go to the Poles, to Israel, to Russia or the French and say "I am sorry" and so on. Whereas, if your own people kill your own people, how do you say "you are sorry"? To whom do you talk to? I have a Russian friend, she has got two grandfathers, like everybody. One of her grandfathers was an NKVD agent and he killed probably 2,000 people with a shot in a neck and her other grandfather spent 17 years in Magadan. And, this friend asked me: "Who am I? Should I say "I'm sorry" for one grandfather, or should I say "I want justice" for the other grandfather?". The Germans do not have that problem. And I think these three elements would matter much for me if I were Russian.

But again, never forget, the way you are perceived by the others depends on you. Secondly, the way, you are perceived by the others, does not matter. What matters is how you perceive yourselves. Thirdly, your country is your problem. Nobody will, nor can, take care of the destiny of your own country. What Russia will be in 50 years will

be your job, the job of the people that are of your age and that are like you. It is in your hands and you have to decide. And do not worry about what the others say, just do the right thing.

Q&A session

Ivan Prostakov:

Thank you so much, I learned maybe a few but very important things that will change my own perception of Russian and European history. We are going to open the discussion and question and answer session. I'd like to ask you only one thing about the perception of Russia in Europe today. Is it a kind of continuation of the previous perception during last 70 years if you say that there are only a few Swiss in Russia now? Is it true that today's Russia is perceived as a continuation of the Soviet Union?

Mr. Rossier:

No, definitely not, because there was this perception of the Soviet Union and it ended with Gorbachev. Russia was perceived completely different, everybody wanted to go to Russia, it was easy to travel, and then Russia was perceived very positively. I am sure Gorbachev would have been elected as president in many European countries. Actually, the end of the Soviet Union, if you compare it with the end of Yugoslavia or the end of the British Empire in India, or of the French Empire in Algeria, was a masterpiece of a peaceful change. It is incredible. Usually, when there is an Empire collapse, lots of people die. The perception of Russia that I remember: I was 28, we were reading papers, everybody was going back to classics, you would read Tolstoy, my brother was an art director so he decided to put all Chekov pieces in his theater and so on.

I think what changed again is that Russia changed as well but what changed in Europe is that the interest was first directed to Russia at that moment and then, with the fall of the Iron Curtain, the interests shifted to the old European countries that were forgotten since the Second World War, so the interest went from Russia to Poland, to Hungary, to Czechoslovakia and so on. I think what happened is that we lost the sight of Russia. When you had the Soviet Union so close, with the Warsaw Pact (the Soviet Union was in Berlin) and when suddenly these Eastern European countries moved west, Russia suddenly has become far away. I think what happened was distance. It was not for intellectuals but for politicians. And I remember, I was already in government then, nobody had a Russian policy, everybody had a policy towards Poland, towards Turkey, towards Bulgaria. Towards Russia, it was complicated, very messy, very difficult to understand. In that time interest was lost, but as the continuation of the Soviet Union, certainly not. The Soviet Union was a break with Russia between the Revolution of 1905 and the end of 1970s.



Informal communication of the Ambassador and the audience

Ilya Pavlov:

Maybe you know that main interest of Professor Kantor's laboratory lies on Russian philosophy. You say the Russian literature and opera are popular in Europe. And what about Russian philosophy? Do Europeans know any Russian philosophers like Soloviev, Berdyaev?

Mr. Rossier:

Philosophers are usually not popular. Not everybody reads them. I mean, I like Kant a lot, but if I ask people in Switzerland "do you know who is Kant?" — I imagine that they have never heard of him. It's not a best-seller. Not everybody knows Kant and not everybody knows Berdyaev.

I think the Russian philosophical tradition started a bit later. It started in the 19th century, right? We had big ages of liberal philosophy that ended up with Kant, who died in 1804 and then we had the romantics, the Marxists, the National traditions. Russia followed another way. I haven't read lots of them, I've read Herzen and Berdyaev of course and they are taught at philosophy departments and Slavistics departments. They are not very famous, well-known, less than Russian writers, but they are not less known than other philosophers among the people dealing with philosophy. They are mostly 19th-century philosophers. Soviet philosophers are not very well known or read. They are not being taken too seriously. The Russian thinkers of the 20th century are mostly people of emigration. These people went out and started to teach in universities in Western Europe, in America.

(Another question)

What do you think about de Gaulle's project of United States of Europe: From Atlantic to the Ural?

Mr. Rossier:

It was not a project; it was only a phrase, only a construction. The only political construction going on today in Europe is the European Union. There is nothing else and the European Union will not dissolve into something bigger.

On the European continent, you have two ways of dealing with the fact that there is the European Union — either you become a member of it and then you solve the problem or you spend all your time on thinking of your relationship with the European Union. That is what we do in Switzerland and that is what the British are discovering now. So, there is nothing else and it will never be anything else.

The Europeans have a way, it is a method. It is not a state, it is not an international organization, it is just a method. It is a method by which states decide to take decisions together. I think it is very strange to Russia. They always see two circles in the European Union — Brussels, where soulless technocrats work, and then the capitals: Berlin, Paris, Rome, and so on. But they miss the most important thing. You have three circles in the European Union: Brussels institutions, the Member States, and the third most important circle which is the Member States in the institution. They decide on the Council of Ministers, the biggest and the most powerful institution in the European Union. It is made out of the twenty-eight or maybe twenty-seven ministers: agriculture, foreign policy and whatever. This is the particularity of this method and it is in constant movement, so they will never be something bigger in which the European Union will dissolve. So, either you are a member of it or you stay out. The first reason, why the European Union was founded, was to avoid wars between its members because there were two civil wars in Europe and the first and the second world wars. By pooling sovereignty together, you make sure there will never be a war.

However today there is something else. The two big powers now are the USA and China. European countries, if they are alone, will not exist anymore. The British are discovering it, they are going out of the European Union, they say, we will make big agreements with the Chinese. So, you have a choice: either you pool your strengths together or you become irrelevant. For me, if Russia and the other countries of Europe pool together, we would be the first power in the world. Russia is alone between China and the European Union. It is true Russia has nuclear missiles, it has oil and gas but its participation, its proportion of world trade is a few percent. When the Russians tell me they don't need Europe, they can deal with China, I always tell them to think about it. China is the second most powerful economy. Whereas in the European context, Russia is one of the biggest and probably the biggest with Germany, so where are you stronger? Together, as Dostoyevsky said, we bring to them what we have and take in exchange what we have in common, this would make everybody strong. The fact, that Russia and the rest of Europe are in bad terms now and there is no cooperation or any plan, makes everybody weaker but I would say it makes probably Russia weaker than the rest of the European countries. But everybody loses.