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Beyond Borders

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INTRODUCTION

Is it possible to look out over the Ural Mountains and see Appalachia? To find the character of the American West in the vast open space of Siberia? To smell the citrus and feel the warm sun of the Black Sea coast and be struck with a sense of Florida?

This book is based on just such an idea: that we can look beyond our borders and discover fundamental realities about places that transcend differences of culture, language, and politics. Five American and four Russian geographers wrote this book to provide glimpses of understanding about the United States and Russia. Despite the size and power of our two nations and more than seventy years of cold war, we seem to have a meager comprehension of each other, perhaps because each country is so often viewed as a monolith and we emphasize our differences, rather than similarities.

The authors of this book worked together in the hopes of overcoming some misimpressions of the past. Beyond Borders became an experiment - an attempt to compare the United States and Russia by pairing up and analyzing eleven regions. We have therefore taken the rather risky step of suggesting similarities between New England and Novgorod, between Odessa and New Orleans, between Moscow and New York. But perhaps the time has never been more appropriate for such a new approach to geography because so many people seem adrift on the changing world.
map. In an era when established states are breaking up, new alliances are forming, and the very idea of state sovereignty is being transformed, we may begin to question whether all these lines on the map actually mean anything to people. Is there an underlying “real” geography which can provide an anchor?

We believe that our regional scheme is somewhat like the well-trodden paths on our campuses. People have an innate sense of the best routes, even when architects lay out concrete sidewalks to the contrary. In writing our book, we have tried to reveal the long trampled footpaths of real borders and regions, not the paved political boundaries that often have little meaning for the lives and fates of human beings.

While we do not try to minimize the differences between Russia and America, we observed that people in the two countries have many similarities in the way they spread across the continents, adapted to various environments, conquered or absorbed indigenous people, and molded their respective geographies into a set of regions. But how should that set be defined since the delineation of regions is in part dependent on the criteria selected?

We decided to take a particular historic and cultural viewpoint in selecting the eleven region-pairs of Beyond Borders. We began with the realization that the majority groups in both Russian and American society were offspring of European parents whose seed was transplanted into a North and South hearth in each country. But between these two seedbed regions, something new was born: a Core area which was to become all that one could define as uniquely American or Russian. American democracy was as alien to Europe as Russian autocracy, yet for all their differences, these two Core regions were similar in the creation of two novel cultures on the map.

As the new Russian and American societies burst out into the interiors of their respective continents, a series of regions was formed, remarkably similar in their
function and characteristics: the Heartlands of industrial muscle, the food-supplying Breadbaskets, the orphaned no-man's-land Crossroads, the eerie Old Mountains, the Tropical South playgrounds, the arid “Mexistans”, and the vast expanses of Land Ocean that were the American West and Siberia. The waves of conquest and settlement moved east and west respectively and finally met up at the Pacific Edge along a touchstone called Alaska.

Could such an exercise be carried out for any two states on earth? Probably not, because we believe that the United States and Russia are unique in their historic and spatial parallels. Even the geographic changes in what was the USSR have confirmed some of the principles the authors foresaw at the beginning of this project. Many of the republics which made up the USSR never really belonged in Russia as a wider cultural realm, but were more like colonies. At the same time, beneath the arbitrarily drawn boundaries of the republics, there was an underlying but hidden “real” geography which may yet emerge politically into something more than Russia, perhaps a recognition of the term “Rossiya”, loosely translated as “All Russia”. Rossiya includes areas (such as North Kazakhstan) which have large Russia populations and where the cultures and histories of local people were well intertwined with that of Russia. Our scheme in this book, therefore, goes beyond the current political borders to focus on a larger geography - on Rossiya.

At the same time, NAFTA, or the North American Free Trade Agreement, as well as separatist movements in Canada, hint that the North American map itself may not be beyond a redefining of political boundaries in the future. The experiment of Beyond Borders suggests that the printed lines on paper maps shift and reform constantly to reflect realities of human society.

In designing our scheme, the authors found that some geographic entities have no regional analogs. Thus, California is largely excluded from our book. By way of...
apology, the authors can only state with reverence that there is probably no counterpart to California anywhere on the entire globe. While our book emphasizes similarities between the two countries, we should note that the differences between Russian and American outlooks that surfaced during the book writing were much more serious than mere matters of politics or geographic style. If you asked one of our American authors to discuss a region (“what is the Heartland all about”), he began by describing now. If you asked one of the Russian team, “what is the South all about?”, he usually started in the 9th century and eventually worked his way up to modern times. For the Russian authors, the joint work of the two geography teams quite validated Henry Ford’s argument that to Americans, the only history worth a damn is that which we make today. In their view it is the relatively young nature of American society that makes the present the only relevant tense. In turn, the American authors began to appreciate how deeply Russian identity is grounded in time, almost as if Russia lives in the past and the future and cares little about the present. This contrast in the perception of history is only one example of how in attempting to create understanding of counterpart regions in America and Russia, we learned much more about ourselves in each country than we had expected.

But perhaps we should not have been surprised. After all, our idea in writing Beyond Borders was to open up windows to each other’s countries, but the glass that lets us look through to another place often reflects back as well. One of our Russian authors said it best, “you can’t see yourself, without holding up a mirror.”
THE CORE
Wilbur Zelinsky

The final approach to LaGuardia or JFK airports in New York sometimes takes you right over the island of Manhattan. There, just below, are the great skyscrapers, a tight mass of them huddled around Wall Street toward the southern tip. Now all of the vast, intricate harbor is visible with its scores of ships from all over the world. Five monumental bridges crammed with cars, buses, trains, and trucks reach out from the city, and even in broad daylight there may be no problem picking out the bright glare and promise of Times Square. A long rectangle of green appears - Central Park - on two sides girdled by the poshest of hotels and apartment buildings. Off to the east, north, and west, as far as you can look, an endless maze of homes, shops, factories, warehouses, all overlain by loops of broad parkways pulsating with their traffic loads.

If you could look far enough out your plane window, you would see a skyline that stretches far up and down the Atlantic coast from Boston to Washington D.C. You are gazing at the very center of the North American Core. And, insofar as any place is entitled to the claim, this is still the spine, the command post for much of the western world.

THE CORE
Sergei Rogachev

The New Year enters every Russian house with the chime of the Moscow Kremlin's bells. In all time zones of the huge country, watches are set by the clocks of Moscow; the schedules of trains and airplanes are put on Moscow time. From the Spasskiy Tower, the rotating hands of the Kremlin's clock make a circular sweep of benediction all around Russia. The packed cobbles of Red Square resonate with the historic memory that this place represents, and the bustle of a huge city that surrounds it invades only one corner where the country's largest department store is located. But in just a few paces the noises die down, as if calmed down by imperious gesture of the bronze statue of Kuzma Minin (a 17th century organizer of resistance to Polish rule), outstretched over the solemn square. The orgy of colors of the famous St. Basil's dominates the southern side, but fails to create an ambiance for the whole place. Instead, another rhythm prevails: one measured by the regular striking of the chimes and by the ceremonial steps of the honor guard, still replaced hourly at Lenin's tomb.

This is probably the only spot in all of Russia where everything functions in perfect clockwork order, constant and unshakable. For a person from the provinces who arrives in Moscow by trains or airplanes that are chronically behind schedule, who is used to chaos in his workplace and who distrusts the authorities, this is the only place where he may sense the regular heartbeat of Russia. It is only here that he may regain his faith in the state.
MOSCOW

The Core of Russia is a single great urban area, Moscow, and that city dominates a hierarchical structure which permeates both the spatial and societal layout of the country. The outline of Moscow on the distant horizon does not gather up into the pyramid of skyscrapers driven by the land values of a western city, but rather shows a few large buildings that symbolize the singularity of power in the state: the onion domes of cathedrals directing the eye up to heaven, the towers rising out of the Kremlin walls, and the Stalin-era "wedding cake" skyscrapers - all reminders of political and spiritual power on the urban landscape. The highest points of Moscow were pushed up by decree, and the relationship between this urban brain center and the country resonates down the hierarchy.

How the Core Prevailed

For all the Core's apparent centrality today, in the days of Kievan Rus it was strictly peripheral. The Core was not one of the original cradles of the Russian state, but its colonized periphery. Most of the ancient cities of the region were founded by settlers from either northern Novgorodian or southern Kievan mother sources.

The two waves of colonists' movement from the southern and northern cradles of Russia were strongly influenced by an increasingly continental climate to the east. Thus, the arid environment and threats from steppe nomads made the flow of settlers from the Dnieper veer off to the north, along the Oka River. Meanwhile, the eastward movement of people from Novgorod was likewise deflected to the south along the Volga by harsh winters and bare soils. But the wedge of land bounded by the Volga and Oka Rivers seems to be a compromise landscape between northern forest and southern steppe zones. The North creeps into the Core with moraines, swampy lowlands, and lakes that seem to be tiny splatters of the huge lakes of the northwest. Novgorodians

MEGALOPOLIS

New York may indeed be a formidable city, but it alone does not define the American Core; instead, the region is made up of a line of cities often called Megalopolis, running down the northeastern seabord - a geographic expression of concentrated economic and social power. The reasons for the evolution of a linear nerve center, rather than a single dominating city, may be explained at least in part by the nature of power in this country. The skyscrapers commanding the downtowns erupted from the same market forces that drove the competition among the cities of Megalopolis. Eventually an oligarchy of urban areas emerged; but then, would a singular Core have fit a pluralistic society?

The Line Crystallizes

There was little in its physical geography that could have made the dramatic success of the Core inevitable. The fortuitous character of the Core's ascendency becomes clear enough when we realize that 500 years ago, prior to the European invasion, this was decidedly one of North America's backwater areas. A moderately dense array of Native Americans did dwell within the region, but at a level of technology and social organization less advanced than in communities to the southwest and southeast. Initially, the region emerged as a succession of urban and agrarian communities along the North Atlantic littoral between New York Harbor and upper Chesapeake Bay. The early Core was claimed and settled by a variety of European powers and their subjects: several distinct groups from the British Isles, the Dutch, Flemish, Swedes, and Finns. The urban points that originated here at first faced Europe: Philadelphia was the largest city in the original colonies, and served as an export point for food from its hinterland; Baltimore began as a harbor city to ship out tobacco; and when New York was founded by the Dutch in the 1600's, its natural port sites seemed ready made for trade with the
entered the region following this familiar environment. Southern Russia penetrated the Core in the form of large fertile clearings, extremely rewarding for agricultural colonization. The northern and southern flows of colonization, both deflected by unfriendly environments, thus met and ceded near the Core. Ultimately, the two major cultural strands of Russia (transplanted Byzantine and Baltic European influences) blended here into a uniquely “native” Russian style that came to define the face of the country. It was in the Core that northern and southern Slavs blended into Greater Russians.

In the homogeneous environment of the huge Russian plain the ascendancy of a single center may have been inevitable, but Moscow had no special advantage that would determine its rise to power. The history of Moscow as a self-made domineering focus of Russia is reflected in the very asymmetrical shape of the Core. The region extends far to the East while being severely circumscribed in the South, North, and especially the West, the front where it had to fight for its very survival. The asymmetry is especially striking in the west, which took the brunt of frequent invasions from Europe, and where the Core’s expansion was long arrested. As a result, the western boundary of the Core is a mere 40 miles from Moscow, perhaps contributing to Russian xenophobia about the West. While Moscow frequently proclaimed itself to be the heir to the best achievement of humanity with titles such as the Third Rome or First Socialist State, it was still frustrated to discover equal or surpassing achievement on its western frontiers. The feeling of Russian superiority to the West (especially in terms of “spirituality”) is but the reverse side of an inferiority complex about western material achievement.

The region’s southern boundary is marked by a line of cities along the Oka that once formed a protective belt from the nomads. When the early Russian state of Muscovy made its first tentative moves beyond the Oka and into the steppe, the city of Tula became its first outpost, and famous Tula armories (still a major industry) supplied Russia’s southward expansion. Clashes with Islam along the southern interface of the Old World. Washington D.C., with its function of service the now independent country, was a relative newcomer to the line of cities crystallizing along the east coast. But why did this particular region of the country emerge to become so dominant? Although there was a considerable range of geographic conditions and physical resources, none of the latter were so exceptional as to foster regional supremacy. We can invoke climate as one of the factors in the inability of the Core to push south past the Potomac River. In lower latitudes, weather and soil combine to create problems for the traditional Northwest European modes of farming and animal husbandry. Similarly, any substantial northward extension in New York has been pretty well precluded by the shortness of the growing season and particularly by the stoniness of the soil where glaciers once lay.

In terms of prospects for expansion, the American Core has suffered from one major drawback: the formidable Appalachian barrier. On the other hand, the accidents of geological history have furnished the Core with three crucial and easy entry ways from ocean to interior: the Hudson River, open to oceangoing vessels as far north as Albany, and providing fine natural harbors near its mouth in the New York City area and northern New Jersey; the Delaware River and its estuary; and Chesapeake Bay, with its extension into Pennsylvania via the Susquehanna. New York’s Mohawk Valley and the various glacial spillways in Ohio and Indiana made canal building a relatively simple proposition. But the development of harbors, canals, and even the watery highway of the Great Lakes awaited the political and technological events that came to pass later in the Core. Finally, the region enjoyed a physical advantage shared with New England of relative proximity to Europe in terms of both shipping time and costs. In any competition with the Core, the coastal zone to the south was at a distinct disadvantage because of the near absence of decent natural harbors and the greater distances to European ports.
region sustained Russia’s messianic feeling. Muscovites saw the simultaneous decline of Constantinople and the ascent of Moscow as a sign of its predestination to become the Third Rome. Here in the south were forged such elements of national character as the belief that Russia can be a savior and a teacher to other peoples and perform some global mission. This youthful arrogance of a child that outstripped its parents has frequently led Moscow to reject the valuable heritage of its two older “mother cradles”: the Novgorodian tradition of popular self rule or the scholarly conventions of Kiev, and St. Petersburg’s westernism has likewise been irritating.

Threatened from the west and from the south, Moscow sought escape, guidance, and new identity in the only natural direction left: the east, where Moscow always retreated at crucial moments of its history. In the turmoil of the Time of Troubles (1609-1613), when Moscow was overrun by the Poles, the northeastern forests near Kostroma served as a hiding place for the Romanov family who became the new Russian dynasty. The most venerated saint of Russia, Sergei of Radonezh, was born in a small town northeast of Moscow and established there the famous Trinity monastery, a holy place of pilgrimage which remains the buttress of Russian Orthodoxy. From this monastery came the blessings and encouragement for two decisive battles against the Mongols.

Finally, it was Moscow’s eastward expansion into the Volga Basin that turned the Core into the master of a huge country. In the east, Muscovite culture became “the” Russian culture.

Russian to the Core
As if in conscious symbolism, Moscow is located in the center of the triangle formed by the three Novgorods: Novgorod the Great, Russia’s ancient foothold in the North and its old window on western Europe; Novgorod Severskiy, the outpost of ancient Kievan Rus closest to Moscow and the starting point of ancient colonization movement from the Kievan core; and Nizhny Novgorod, Russia’s easternmost outpost from the 13th to the 15th century. But it was the opening up of America that finally pushed the region into the forefront. As the American Midwest began to realize its agricultural productivity, the need for a good passage route into the interior emerged as paramount. Rapid land development along the coast and rising populations generated pressure for settlement of new lands to the west, but first the north-south ranging Appalachian Mountains had to be breached.

The east coast cities of the Core naturally entered into competition for the control of trade routes into the interior. New York already had the advantage of controlling access to the easiest passage in the northern half of the nation, the route along the flat expanse of land due south of Lake Ontario. But it did not emerge as the clear winner until the Erie Canal opened in 1825, creating a waterway from the Great Lakes all the way to New York City. Two decades later, rail connections followed to the burgeoning Chicago, and New York became the largest city in the United States as early as the mid-19th century.

American to the Core
What makes the American Core unique is the fact that from the initial years of European settlement up to the present moment, it has been the arena for meeting, mingling, and fertile hybridization of contrasting peoples and cultures, and at the same time has formed a political setting that encouraged creative use of wealth and power. While both the Northern and Southern hearths of settlement were easily recognizable as transplants of European society, in the Core something quite new and distinctively American emerged. It was in this region, particularly Pennsylvania, that smaller family farms prevailed over larger landholdings.

In terms of its social life, the region brought together peoples from such a large sweep that a spirit of tolerance and liberalism developed, helped in part by the Quaker heritage of the midlands. One of the oldest free Black communities in the United States was founded in Philadelphia, and so many people from abroad were pouring in...
16th centuries, which served as a gateway to the Volga cradle of Islamic world and later became the hinge connecting the fate of central Russia to that of Asia.

Moscow's original rise to power was due to the external support of Mongol rulers on the Volga who used Muscovite princes as their henchmen in the control of Russian principalities. Moscow learned well the Mongol lesson in politics and built its strength through an Oriental mode of totalitarian rule. Many historians argue that the early roots of Russian autocracy, so different from European feudalism, are to be found in the Core's early history as a frontier periphery, where the princes directed the colonization process and enjoyed powers that they did not have in the North or South. Later, the needs of eastward expansion into the Volga basin furthered the militarization of the state and the introduction of universal serfdom. Leaning on the East, the great prince of Moscow became the Tsar ("Caesar"), with absolute unbounded autocratic power that eventually mutated into the powers of the General Secretary of the Communist Party. Many key developments of Russian history occurred along the eastern vector of the Core. In the 19th century, the zone east of Moscow nurtured indigenous Russian capitalism (as opposed to the state-created capitalism of St. Petersburg). The northeastern flank of the Core became the land of textiles and the most industrialized part of Russia, due to the energy and quiet solidity of the Old Believers (who once hid in the forests of the northeast) which made them the famous early industrialists of Moscow. To our day, the Core remains Russia's largest industrial region, accounting for a fifth of industrial output. It is also the most urbanized one, as many industrial villages of the past, such as Ivanovo, have developed into large cities. It was in such industrial cities that not only Russian capitalism but also a very Russian egalitarian response to it were born. In 1905, Ivanovo became the birthplace of the first "soviet" (literally "council") of workers, a uniquely proletarian concept that gave its name to the Soviet Union. Thus the Core has effectively shaped Russian political forms from the 12th century to the present.

through the Core by 1789 that a new word appeared to describe arrivals more precisely: the two-way English word "emigrant" became the Americanized term, "immigrant." As historian Henry Adams noted about Pennsylvania's role in American cultural history: "When one summed up the results of Pennsylvania influences, one inclined to think that Pennsylvania set up the government in 1789, saved it in 1861; created the American system; developed its iron and coal power; and invented its great railways. The Pennsylvania mind was not complex; it reasoned little and never talked; but in practical matters, it was the steadiest of all American types; perhaps the most efficient; certainly the safest."

In its economic life, the Core represented the competition that was to become so characteristic of a capitalist system. In the cities of the region, the profit motive has always been a prime consideration, whether by way of commerce, shipment of goods, manufacturing, services, banking, information management, or even speculation. Other rationales for existence were secondary: only occasionally were the early towns fortified for some military mission, and the development of social and cultural traditions was even something of an afterthought. Furthermore, in keeping with the competitive ethos of capitalism, the leading port cities of the Core have engaged in the fiercest sort of rivalry among themselves (and with such external competitors as New Orleans, Norfolk, Boston, and Montreal) in the struggle to capture the traffic of the rich continental heartland.

By the nineteenth century, the Core was even dominating the speech and literary patterns of what was to be identified as American. A North Midland speech dialect (which is considered "standard American English") developed along the coast and moved inland through the Heartland and on to the American West. One of the first writers to emerge and become identified with a uniquely American literature was a child of the Core: Walt Whitman was born on Long Island, raised in Brooklyn, and
From the 13th century to 1941, Russia answered the vital question “to be or not to be?” in historic battles fought along the perimeter of the Core. While pushing out the boundaries of early Muscovy centrifugally to the limits of the world’s largest state, the region in turn developed a powerful centripetal tendency, gathering power inward to Moscow. Throughout most of Russian history, the awesome machinery of state managed to control even the most remote corners of the country and to extract from them a sort of “tribute”, both in the form of centrally redistributed fiscal and material resources, and by requisitioning the nation’s best brains and strong personalities. The region that “made” the country developed a kind of sacred aura as the epitome of the true and Holy Russia. Even after the imperial capital was moved to St. Petersburg in 1712, the Core preserved its key role, as exemplified by Napoleon’s invasion in 1812 that aimed at the heart of Russia, Moscow. During the Middle Ages, visitors from Europe who clearly saw the unique role of the city called the state itself not after its people (“Russia”) but after its node (“Muscovy”). The notorious centralism of the USSR was not the rule of Russia, but the rule of Moscow’s bureaucracy and its satraps over both Russian and non-Russian provinces. In the Soviet Union, a traditional differentiation was made between people of Moscow (Muscovites) and people outside of Moscow (provincials). Even in post-Soviet Russia, Moscow has retained and even strengthened its sense of separateness and superiority from the rest of the country.

died in 1892 in Camden, New Jersey. His Leaves of Grass, published in the 1850s, marks the beginning of America’s departure from a European literary tradition and represents the brash pride that was beginning to define the nation:

We must march my darling, we must bear the brunt of danger,
We the youthful sinewy races, all the rest on us depend,
Pioneers! O Pioneers!

One would expect to find the capital of a nation located within the historically dominant region of any sensible country, but the path to that choice of site was not smooth for the United States. When the Constitutional Convention met in Philadelphia in 1787, the logical selection for the young republic’s capital city would have been Philadelphia itself or New York City, either of which could then have claimed supremacy in population or wealth. But, as it happened, severe sectional rivalry between North and South scuttled any such possibility. Though commercial power favored the North, Virginia was still the country’s most populous state, and perhaps its most powerful in terms of social and intellectual impact. The District of Columbia, that unprepossessing swampy rural site along the Potomac, became the compromise solution. The precarious borderland position of Washington became all too obvious during the Civil War when it barely escaped serious military assault, and only slowly did the city become the large, imposing place it is today. After the outcome of the Civil War determined that the Core plus New England, not the South, would administer the economic and political business of the nation, it was then too late shift the capital; however, the decision to situate the United Nations’ headquarters in Manhattan is a recognition of the hard geographic realities of our contemporary world. As a result, New York today represents the power elite of the United States, the embodiment of “big government” and a place which is at once exciting and dangerous.
THEME 1: LIFE IN THE URBAN ISLAND

Being the almost monopolistic dispenser of power, the capital city was in many ways a privileged one, enjoying a disproportionate share of budgetary outlays. The State took good care of Moscow's armies of office workers and intellectuals who legitimized and strengthened the regime. Moscow's privileged population enjoyed better housing, an excellent subway system and access to comparatively well-stocked shelves in groceries or imported consumer goods in department stores. In Moscow, business could be done without bribes, and families were fed without resort to the black market. After all, Moscow was also a showpiece for the outside world and the country's own residents, and the city was officially designated as a "model communist city." Sharp witted Russians said the same in different words, quipping that "Socialism ends at the line of Moscow's Beltway."

The many advantages of life in Moscow made it an obvious magnet for migrants. Early on, Moscow based planners realized that to remain a privileged island, the city needed to close its doors to diluting hosts of newcomers. The task was performed by the unique Soviet system of propiska, or residence permit system. Without a local propiska, one cannot get a job or an apartment. Moscow initiated the practice of "closing" the city by denying propiskas to newcomers. Since under the Soviet system the quality-of-life index for any city was directly related to its administrative status, the practice of "closing" cities quickly spread to the 14 mini Moscows of the former Union republic capitals, and then to even smaller administrative centers. The sense of a perfect pyramidal hierarchy permeated the Soviet settlement structure, and upward social mobility became synonymous with moving to ever larger cities, until the final coveted apex, Moscow. A passage through the propiska barriers was possible through elaborate chains of apartment exchanges or by marriage. Marrying a registered resident of Moscow made an out of towner a resident too, and cases of marriages of convenience abound. But a shortcut into the socialist haven lay through blue collar industrial labor.

THEME 1: LIFE IN THE URBAN ARCHIPELAGO

During the past few decades, the Core has spilled its urban character even further outward as modern transport and greater affluence have enabled millions of persons to escape not just into suburbs but also even further into what is termed Exurbia. There, in scattered clustered developments, highway strips, or isolated dwellings, a population which is rural but not farmers by profession lives amidst bucolic surroundings, yet still enjoys many of the amenities of urban existence.

The majority of people in the Core, however, are urban and suburban dwellers, living in an amazing mixture of races, ethnicities, and incomes. Few places can think of challenging New York City when it comes to sheer number and diversity of ethnic groups. Here is a dazzling mosaic of peoples, languages, and cultural traditions, to rival the Tower of Babel. Even in its earliest years under Dutch rule, the city welcomed a mixture of newcomers quite unusual for the period. As time went on, New York became by far the nation's leading port of entry, and a large fraction of those arriving traveled no farther than America's largest city with its exceptional range of economic possibilities. The result has been a place the majority of whose residents are first- or second-generation foreign stock. At the present time, the leading "minorities" if that is an accurate term, are African-Americans and Hispanics, but neither category is uniform in composition. Although the former consists mostly of migrants from the American South and their progeny, Africans, Jamaicans, Haitians, and other West Indians are also well represented, while Cubans, Salvadorans, Dominicans, Brazilians, and other Latin Americans, as well as the numerically dominant Puerto Ricans, are easy enough to find within the Hispanic fold.

Like some other American cities, New York has witnessed ethnic succession over space and time as great numbers of Irish and Germans were followed by Chinese, Italians, Jews, and various East European groups, then more recently by not only Latin Americans, but also by new arrivals from Asia and the Middle East.
employment: the chronically understaffed industrial enterprises had the right to recruit labor elsewhere. After a passage of several years these recruits above the limit, limitchiki, became registered Muscovites. Paradoxically, propiska limitations only accelerated the growth of Moscow. The difficulties of getting into the city gave Muscovites a caste like superiority complex and aristocratic disdain of blue collar work, forcing the enterprises to annually import thousands of limitchiki to man the jobs that Muscovites avoided.

If the higher material standard of living was the major attraction for limitchik types, the city was also a magnet for intellectual aspirants. Over the years Moscow sucked in informational wealth by concentrating libraries, archives, and museum collections from all over the country and creating an environment where research and culture thrive. In the late 1980’s, Moscow concentrated more than one quarter of the Ph.D.s in the USSR and was by far the country’s largest center of higher learning. More importantly, against the low standards in most provincial schools, a Moscow diploma or degree is taken as a sign of quality. The city further enriched its cultural compost by practically monopolizing contacts with the outside world. Until recently, Moscow’s Sheremetyevo Airport was the only entrypoint for international flights, and no other place in the country saw so many foreign visitors. No other city in the USSR was so exposed to “contaminating” influences of the West and so ready to imbibe them. Moscow’s elite culture is strikingly cosmopolitan and liberal.

However, the cosmopolitanism hardly shows in the ethnic structure of Moscow’s population. In 1989, ninety percent of the population called themselves Russian, and ninety-nine percent gave Russian as their mother tongue. Even the largest minorities, Jews, Ukrainians and Tatars, are almost completely Russified in cultural terms. Yet one should not hurry to conclude that Moscow is a purely Russian city. As an “island of socialism” Moscow long functioned as safe haven for those who aspired to good education and careers but were barred from them in the USSR’s non Russian peripheries where too much depends on traditionalistic clan networks, bribes, or

Americans, but also Middle Easterners, East Indians, Thai, Filipinos, Vietnamese, Chinese from a variety of countries, Ethiopians, and still another influx of Russian Jews. Frequently, as the group that had dominated a relatively homogeneous neighborhood moved up the socioeconomic ladder and outward to suburbia, a different set of immigrants would replace them, and later repeat the process - but not always. If neighborhoods that were once heavily Jewish, German, Italian, Hungarian, Czech, or whatever have turned into something else, the large, ever-expanding African-American districts show no signs of yielding to invaders; and Chinatown is becoming more Chinese than ever and bulging outward ever since the liberalization of immigration laws in 1965.

This wild ethnicity is visible - and audible, smellable, and tastable - in restaurants, groceries, and other sidewalk food vendors catering to their own kin or offering exotic specialties to the adventurous gentile. The diversity shows up as well in the churches, synagogues, temples, and mosques with their ethnically exclusive flocks, and in the social clubs, fraternal groups, and special schools, the multifarious foreign-language press and radio and television programs, the festivals, parades, and music pouring out of windows into the streets.

The urban archipelago of the Core does suffer chronically from dilemmas peculiar to the area or relatively extreme versions of general American conditions. The most intense and pervasive problem may be the striking social and economic disparities seen within small areas, sometimes even a single city block. Such jarring discontinuities, the coexistence side by side of ostentatious wealth and privilege on the one hand and destitution and physical decay on the other are not unknown elsewhere in the United States, but they are probably nowhere more visibly intrusive and unavoidable than in the Core.
belonging to the ruling ethnic group. By contrast, the capital was always the most tolerant part of the USSR, rapidly recasting peripheral “refugees” from nationalism or poverty not so much into Russians as into generic “Soviets.” The non Slavic physiognomies and names of many officially “Russian” Muscovites present a picture of the population far more diverse than official statistics would have us believe.

The place where one can best see Moscow’s mixture of peoples is in its stores and streets. Department stores swarm with visitors from the provinces, hunting for fancy gifts. In post-Soviet times, western firms such as Estee Lauder and McDonald’s opened outlets first in Moscow. People from the Caucasus and Central Asia swept the stores for merchandise that was available in their home areas only from under the counter and previously not at a fixed state price. The city’s prohibitively expensive farmer’s markets were primarily occupied by Ukrainians or distinctively Mediterranean Azeris. Yet the area where non Russian presence is most tangible is the criminal world dominated by ethnic mafias, from the Vietnamese one to the especially notorious Chechens from the northern Caucasus. Moscow now houses nightclubs where the young, newly rich class of post-Soviet Russia may meet for one-hundred dollar a glass champagnes. Mafia control of much of speculative trading activity in the capital is breeding strong resentment against all dark skinned southerners collectively dubbed as Caucasians. In such manifestations of racism, the nation’s ultimate city that so disdains its provinces as “rural backwaters” itself demonstrates some parochial ruralism. With a large share of its residents, especially the limitchiki, coming directly from the countryside, Moscow may have been the least urbane of urban giants and was sometimes called the “big village.” Still, Muscovites largely belonged to the Soviet breed of middle class: outwardly loyal to the regime but also well educated and therefore deeply cynical. Ironically, the Core of Russia is a city that is at once both sophisticated and provincial. From the very beginning of European colonization, the cities of the Core embodied the principles of capitalism as purely and singlemindedly as any other group of places in the modern world. The burgeoning, nondonde, unplanned, and uncontrolled suburban belts encircling Core metropolitan regions are models of similar excessences in other regions.

In general, the central sections of virtually every American city founded in the 19th century or earlier have experienced serious economic decline and neglect, despite the rehabilitation of selected neighborhoods. A decline in manufacturing employment and the change to a “postindustrial” economy have exacerbated the gulf between the well-off and the poor in the Core cities. But in no other region of the country has this downward spiral progressed further than in some Core metropolitan areas such as Newark. In fact, New York City, Philadelphia and other Core cities have recently veered dangerously close to bankruptcy and more such episodes are bound to occur in the years ahead.

The vast accumulation of inhabitants and the presence of so many enterprises consuming great quantities of water have led to increasing difficulties in insuring adequate supplies, especially in the eastern portions of the Core, even though it is a relatively well watered part of the world. In the case of a thirsty NYC, some of its principal water sources lie many miles away. When drought occurs, as has happened more than once in recent decades, the situation has been worrisome, raising the prospect of outright disaster.

Declining quality of the natural environment is matched by deterioration in the social structures necessary for the proper functioning of a great metropolitan public schools, transportation lines, government facilities and services. But it may be premature to write the obituary for New York and other cities of the Core: there is every likelihood that...
No other city of the Core can even remotely compare to Moscow in size or importance. The doughnut area that remains if one removes Moscow from the Core region is known as Podmoskovye (literally, "Around and Under Moscow"), an unprecedented placename, the likes of which was never coined for St Petersburg, Kiev, or any other metropolis of Russia. In retrospect it appears that the Core's historic mission was its shielding, nourishing, and raising Moscow, the giant, which in a sense overshadowed the region that nurtured it. Today, the Core is still synonymous with Moscow. The busy activity of its outlying towns is largely part of the capital's metabolism. It is a dominant city indeed, more than twice the size of St. Petersburg or Kiev and ten times that of the Core's second largest city, Nizhny Novgorod. Appropriately enough, in Soviet political parlance Moscow was called simply "The Center," and it has once again emerged in post-Soviet Russia as a focus of power and prestige for the nouveaux riches.

THEME 2: POWER OF THE CORE

The Center perpetuates its power over the country by firmly controlling its communications. In the past, the roads did not so much converge on Moscow as spread out from it, sent out almost as tentacles to bind the nation with a single will. Moscow's transport supremacy is somewhat artificial but completely unchallenged. All roads begin in Moscow in a strictly radial pattern. Frequently the only way to get from one part of the country to another is via Moscow, and every day, the capital sees hundreds of thousands of transit passengers. As a transportation node, Moscow is a transit point for one half of the cargo traffic of the former USSR, and one fifth of its passenger traffic. At the other end of the scale, the strictly hierarchical nature of Soviet society was imprinted in the pattern of the streets of Moscow itself. All major streets and the lines of Moscow's extensive subway system converge in the center although only one major ring line is close to the Kremlin itself. While getting from the outlying areas of the city to downtown center is fast and convenient, that the region will continue to enact its well-established role as a leading member in the ensemble of American regions, even if not necessarily with the same degree of absolute dominance as in the past.

THEME 2: POWER OF THE CORE

The Core includes more territory than just Megalopolis, but Megalopolis in turn so dominates the region as to drain out an established identity for other places in the region. The small area of New Jersey that lies outside the built-up urban area, central Pennsylvania, and the cities of upstate New York are all living in the shadow of Megalopolis, dependent on it and yet resentful of its power and role in the spotlight.

The concentration of people, power, and wealth in the Core has been phenomenal, but what proportion of the American population is in the region? From Connecticut to Washington D.C. 47 million people, or nineteen percent of the United States, are packed into the region, most living in urban concentrations along the coast. For the better part of 200 years, it was residents of this region, along with those in a strongly influential neighboring southern New England, who so largely molded the economic, political, social, and cultural destinies of the entire country.

The case for the Core's supremacy is strong, for example, in the field of communications. New York City has a near monopoly of book publishing; the bulk of important American magazines are edited there or in Philadelphia and other Core metropolises; and the Government Printing Office in Washington is by all odds the world's single greatest generator of printed matter. The United States may not have a full-fledged national newspaper, but The New York Times and Washington Post are plausible facsimiles, while the contents of the nationally distributed USA Today emanate from a Manhattan address. Commercial radio and television stations and networks originated in the Core (as did electric telegraphy and telephones much
tangential movements are difficult. Downtown (logically called “the center” in Russian) dominates daily lives of all Muscovites, not least because it is as privileged in terms of provision of goods and services compared to Moscow as whole, as Moscow is compared to the country. Being close to the center is a great advantage, and the value of housing steadily declines as one moves away from the center. This pattern of housing markets (typical not only for Moscow) was quite the opposite of the western one, mirroring the chain of command structure of center dominated Soviet society and economy.

In a predominantly non-private and non-market economy, Moscow was a general headquarters, the home of ministries that controlled all the branches of the economy. Their central location itself was hardly surprising unless one considers the peculiarity of dozens of Soviet “industrial ministries” that were for all practical purposes corporate headquarters of huge monopolies, and regulated even minute aspects of operations. It was in Moscow, almost 400 miles from the nearest seas, that bureaucrats decided how best to fish in the open oceans. Six hundred miles from the nearest vineyard, guidelines were laid for preparing wines.

Moscow focused the thoughts and hopes of the people in all of the former USSR: in the offices of Moscow’s ministries, many a career was decided, and there is hardly a town in the country that does not have some graduates from Moscow’s institutes of higher learning. With the population mainly consisting of migrants, the city is linked to the rest of the country by networks of family ties, friendships, or personal loyalties. In all of the country, a person aspiring to a promising career had much better chances if he or she had some connections in Moscow. In the entertainment industry, acquiring national fame was only possible by performing on the scenes of Moscow’s theaters, by publishing in its publishing houses, or by exhibiting one’s work in its art galleries.

earlier), and despite severe competition from Los Angeles, corporate control and much programming remain in New York City. The early film industry came into being in the metropolis, but subsequently became the only major mode of communication to escape concentration in the Core.

Thanks to an early start and a convergence of favorable historical and economic circumstances, not too many decades ago, the Core claimed a highly disproportionate share of America’s manufacturing enterprises and industrial output, and was engaged in every imaginable type of production. The major cities of the Core also rank prominently within the retailing and wholesaling sectors of the American economy. Moreover, few places in the world can rival New York City in the range and variety of specialized commodities for sale in their shops and showrooms.

Impressive though the accumulation of transportation, communication, industrial, and commercial resources in the Core may be, the most convincing measures of its preeminence appear in the higher reaches of the economy and of human endeavor. Wherever in the United States or overseas products or services may be physically produced, it is in the Core, notably New York City, that control is exercised, that governing decisions are formulated. There has been little erosion in the long term, top heavy concentration of capital, of banking and other financial services, stock market transactions, major law firms, and the ruling advertising agencies in a handful of districts within a handful of Core cities. Within those same neighborhoods, in a symbiotic relationship, are the offices of most of the major private foundations that dispense support for so much philanthropic, educational, scientific, and artistic activity throughout America and much of the rest of the world.

While the office towers of New York City symbolize economic power, political control emanates from the purposefully low-profile government buildings in the nation’s capital. Perhaps Washington’s situation is the most extraordinary among all the world’s
The provinces reinforce a deeply embedded image of Moscow as a fairy-tale dispenser of both benefits and punishments. Regional bureaucracies outside Moscow have always tried to maintain their own lobbyists in the city. The very word “Moscow” contained a certain magic for a provincial, and in local administrative centers, the words “I am from Moscow” would frequently open the doors of a bureaucrats office closed to the locals. Muscovites visiting remote corners of the country frequently find themselves in an awkward position, as they perceive locals’ ambiguous attitude toward the Core. Bitterly complaining about the problems in their own backyards, the provincials view “the Center” as universal villain, but whose guilt, paradoxically, is neglect of local affairs. The laments are underpinned with the hopes for some redress from the Center. Moscow’s super centralization would frequently force people to come to the city to solve petty problems that could in principle be dealt with locally. From early on, the belief in the “good tsar” sitting in Moscow had been implanted in the Russian psyche, as the capital symbolized not only power but also justice. The populace firmly believed that local authorities did not want to address people’s problems, while the good tsars of Moscow could do so. Thus, Moscow became the last resort of appeals against power abuses back home.

Moscow’s rulers were always concerned with the common good of the country and therefore quite sincerely (and not so wrongly) believed that they knew what a particular region should do better than the self-serving bureaucracies of the region itself. The caring and protecting parental hand of the center was sometimes very heavy, and yet it would be wrong to say that Moscow merely profited at the expense of its children. Preoccupied with its socialist egalitarian concerns, the “Communist City” redistributed national product through all embracing centralized budget so as to preclude the emergence within the country of unfairly privileged “oil emirates” or deprived, depressed areas. If the Core’s success in this self-appointed mission was indecisive it was because of the failure of the grand socialist project itself.

Cities in terms of the sheer accumulation of lobbyists, think tanks, influence peddlers, and other would be manipulators of law, not to mention a world class array of diplomatic missions and international agencies.

Parallel with this astonishing assemblage of economic and, in the broad sense, political resources at so few points within the American Core, there is also an equally intense stockpiling of cultural resources and activities in the same privileged region. Many of the oldest, most prestigious, and most influential of colleges and universities (public and private), such as Princeton, Columbia, and Johns Hopkins, are situated in the Core. Many hundreds of notable museums of every description are established in the region, and the Core also claims an unduly generous share of the nation’s libraries, including literally thousands of specialized ones in addition to such immense collections as those in the New York Public Library or Library of Congress. A good many leading laboratories and Research and Development centers are also here, whether in association with universities or private corporations. When it comes to nearly all the more sophisticated forms of culture and entertainment, no city can think of challenging New York City’s supremacy. It is there, on Broadway and off, that American theater is most concentrated, venturesome, and alive (if also perpetually dying). The city is also the great arbiter and marketplace, the place of ultimate pilgrimage and performance, for practitioners and artists in the world of opera, dance, symphony, and all other categories of art.
The Pulse of Change: Moscow and the Devolution of the USSR

"As is known, all the land begins from the Kremlin."
- Mayakovskiy

In a country which has fallen apart, these words may appear out of place, but they contain an important grain of historic truth and neatly summarize the basics of the region. Any weakening of the universal control center, like the one brought by perestroika, set the provinces drifting apart. Having first lost the satellites in Europe, Moscow then let go the former union republics, and now even Russia itself is cracking at the seams. The demise of the USSR hit Muscovites hard by divesting them of their privileged status, but it barely diminished the powers and vitality of the Core. To our day, Moscow remains an indisputable economic frontrunner as the Core has emerged as a leader in market reforms and a “free” economy.

Beyond Russian boundaries things Soviet are by no means dead. Moscow can feel (with a certain vengeance) that it merely replicated itself in the capitals of the 14 newly independent republics who fully emulate the old Soviet patterns of centralized control within their respective domains. Their politics give ample proof that they imbibed far more of the common all Soviet culture and attitudes than the nationalistic parties would admit. However, none of the new states shows economic viability without massive subsidies from Russia, directed as ever, by Moscow. The regions that hastily scurried away from “The Center” are finding themselves drawn back by strings that are stronger than alleged “Muscovite imperialism.” No less importantly, the lives of people in the former USSR still depend on Moscow, and with the euphoria of local sovereignties wearing off, the Core, stripped of its old coercive powers, may again find itself presiding over some reborn Union.

Moving Ahead: New York City and the Growth of the Sunbelt

Will Megalopolis continue its dominance of American life and the country’s economy? The ever-changing geography of the United States may be witnessing a shift of the core, either to the southern California, or to a dispersed Sunbelt along the southern and western tier.

Various pieces of evidence support this notion: population change, which indicates a movement of the American population center south and westward as the Sunbelt grows and the so-called “Rustbelt” regions decline; political shifts as districts outside of the traditional Core gain political representation at the expense of northeast states; and economic change as the United States loses manufacturing jobs and moves into a post-industrial employment base of service and white-collar occupations. Even popular culture in the U.S. sees more defined by Southern California styles, speech, and preferences these days than by those of Megalopolis.

But the Core cities are not going down without a fight. Revitalization of inner city waterfronts, downtowns, and neighborhoods is beginning with such projects as Baltimore’s Harborplace, New York’s South Street Seaport, and Philadelphia’s Society Hill. High-tech employment, often associated with universities or government functions, have grown in many areas of the Core, notably along the beltway around Washington D.C. But despite the vitality and life that throngs in Megalopolis, economic hard times are creating ever deeper divisions between rich and poor in the region, and the middle class seems to be moving on down the highway. In a period of change and in a society which always looks ahead, the Core may be in for a tough fight.
In the New England autumn, the old graveyard in Massachusetts seems sad and bleak. The oldest of the markers are tumbled down on the eastern hillside, the flagstone cracked with names barely readable in old script. When you walk among the graves, the red maple leaves at your feet rustle in the cold twilight. From the hill, you can look out over North Weymouth to the sea. Earlier, it was a colonial settlement, but then evolved into a blue-collar suburb of Boston. The cemetery itself tells the history: Pilgrim family names now share the earth with Irish and Italian souls, and the simple slate graves of many a Congregationalist lie horizontal and flat beside elaborate and vertical Catholic angels. In the distance, where the Fore River runs into Boston Harbor, the old shipyard and industrial plants still stand; but many are empty now. The newer area of town has more prosperous neighborhoods built with Route 128 high-tech salaries. Perhaps the future lies with the younger families who have moved into the town, drawn by the quaintness of the Cape Cod houses - people with college degrees and employment in Boston. Yet tonight there is something in the autumn beauty which draws out a kind of warning: winter will be here soon, and it will be long and harsh. Meanwhile it is quiet on this lonely hillside. You can almost hear the ghosts of Pilgrims and sea captains, millwrights and farmers, all coming together on the north wind of October. — K. Braden

In late May, the rivers and lakes near Cherepovets are thawing, and the air is filled with the lapping sounds of cold waves, the screams of seagulls, and the whistles of passing ships. Navigation and life are at long last returning to the Russian North. The first thing that strikes the imagination of a tourist peeking from the window of a cruiseship cabin is the solid wall of trees blocking the horizon. Yet along the rivers are still seen quite a few sturdy, two-story log houses or glimpse the gracious silhouette of a wooden church from the 17th century. Here and there are the formidable stone walls and cupolas of a monastery - outposts of orthodoxy and the Russian spirit. Are these images purely idyllic? No, for beyond the stately pines lie thickets of pulp mills and the belching blast furnaces of the city. Even a closer look at the forests themselves reveals they are far from virgin: logging has exploited their treasures and left only thinned-out stands. Navigation lasts a mere three to four months; and in September, when for Muscovites Indian Summer is at its height, the ships have already pulled in for the winter. In a few weeks, waterways will be frozen again and falling snow will hide the northern flank of Russia in a white blanket, frozen stiff and seemingly dead until the next fleeting summer.
THE NATURE OF THE NORTH

For many Russians the image of the North is that of the harsh periphery of Russia, associated with the well-known lines from Lermontov’s poem:

In the North, wilderness stands in solitude,
On the bare peaks is pine.
And in slumber lurching, and with snow
Covering her in a mantle.

All of the North is heavily forested and sparsely populated, and the severity of climate in its eastern part is quite Siberian. In contrast, the weather of the more western parts is moderated by proximity to the Baltic sea and the Atlantic, making the North one of the two early cradles of Russia and its major interface with the western world. Yet even in this more Maritime area, the harsh north climate influenced important departures from what came to be all-Russian patterns, and the standard Russian label for it is “Northwest” - a region of northern nature but western parentage.

The Northwest - Russia’s Window to Europe

During the ninth century, two cultural flows met on the Russian Plain: the northern flow, originating from the young Scandinavian and Baltic countries (made up of German merchants and Viking raiders); and the southern flow of religious influence from the Byzantine Empire. Both flows traveled along the rivers from the Neva to the Dnieper, forming the two apexes of the ancient waterway from the Baltic to Constantinople. The Varangian (Viking) culture of the north was quite different from the Greek at the other end, yet the trade route crackled like an electric current between the opposites, and the two early cradles of the future Russian state were born: the southern one in Kiev and the northern one in Novgorod.

THE NATURE OF THE NORTH

How do Americans define the North? New England has a well-established identity, but does the North end at the borders of Vermont? We delineate “North” here as a region split in two pieces, including not only New England, but also “The Northwoods”: the Upper Great Lakes portions of Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan. Despite the spatial separation, these two chunks of North have much in common to justify their union as a single region; for example, they are often viewed as realms far colder than most of the rest of the nation. While eastern New England does enjoy a climate more modified by the Atlantic, the area still experiences with its Northwoods cousin sub-freezing temperatures which occur during six or more months each year, and forest covered tracts exceed areas where people actively control the use of the land. In addition, the two sections of “North” are united by a cultural heritage which jumped over the barriers of both the Great Lakes and an intervening stretch of southern Canada. But this northern culture originated even further eastward, stretching back across the Atlantic, and the environment of New England helped it become one of the two original culture hearths in the United States.

New England - Europe’s Child Prodigy

On September 16, 1620, the Mayflower set sail from Plymouth, England, and ultimately created a namesake town along the unforgiving coast of the northlands. Settlements in what are now Rhode Island, New Hampshire, and Connecticut followed, extending the Anglo frontier from the Massachusetts cradle and forming a Confederation of New England, largely based on Puritan culture. The name New England is indeed telling; having failed to dominate Old England, the Puritan leaders crossed the ocean in hopes of creating their ideal community on virgin American soil.
proudly shows many relics of its ancient glory including one of only three surviving churches in Russia dating back to the 11th century.

From the beginnings of its history, the North closely resembled Western Europe, which eventually made the region the "odd one out" with respect to the rest of Russia. This departure can be traced all the way from the republican government of medieval Novgorod to St. Petersburg's role as the cradle of Russian revolutions. Due to its advantageous position for trade with Europe, the early Russian state (Novgorod Rus) experienced the emergence of a mercantile city economy. In the cruel climate, where grains frequently had no time to ripen before the first frosts, non-farming occupations (trade and crafts) were far more important. Engaged in riverine trade with places as far afield as Persia, Novgorod was even a member of the medieval Hanseatic League of Baltic city-states. As in the Western cities of that time, artisans were divided into guilds, each concentrated in its own part of the city. The political life of the North was fully dominated by city interests, and even the huge territorial possessions of Novgorod were ruled as colonies to individual districts of the city. Whereas in the rest of Russia, the autocratic rule of the princes was already tightening and the state increasingly emulated oriental despotism, Novgorod hired its "princes" to serve as mercenaries guarding the city's wealth. Ruled by an oligarchy of rich merchants, Novgorod was, at least ostensibly, a republic, where important decisions were taken by popular vote at town meetings. When Novgorod was finally subjugated to Moscow in the 16th century, the first deed of the new rulers was the destruction of the bell that called people for town meetings. For landlocked Russia, the Northwest long remained the only window to the West. When Russia periodically opened to the West and experimented with pro-Western reforms, the North became a primary testing ground. Tsar Peter the Great staged the most significant of such social experiments when in 1712 he moved the seat of the old capital to Moscow in the 16th century, the first deed of the new rulers was the destruction of the bell that called people for town meetings. For landlocked Russia, the Northwest long remained the only window to the West. When Russia periodically opened to the West and experimented with pro-Western reforms, the North became a primary testing ground. Tsar Peter the Great staged the most significant of such social experiments when in 1712 he moved the seat of

The deep initial imprint left by the period of Puritan control persevered in later years, making the early cradle region something of an odd man out with respect to the same country it helped create. The very success of these stubborn people in the cold country on stony ground was very English. In many ways, the culture and institutions of past and present New England are closer to those of Europe than to what became the American norm. Almost from the outset New England was ruled by urban leaders and urban values, and the town came to be the focus of all life. In politics, consensus and oligarchic rule by the "brahman" elite deviated sharply from later mainstream U.S. democracy that evolved in the Core region. In economy, success was based on commercial enterprises, since rocky soils gave few other options. The excellent pine forests that covered large parts of New England were soon tapped to become masts for the British royal Navy and merchant ships, with ship-building, maritime trade, fishing and other sea-bound activities soon developing in the area itself. New England's easterly location made it closest to Europe of all British holdings in North America, and for roughly 150 years, the character of the region's people was influenced by close commercial contacts with Europe.

In fact, it is the distinctive Yankee culture that makes New England (along with the South) the most recognizable of American vernacular regions, and it is habitually defined as the six smaller states in the northeastern corner of the U.S. However, it is only in culture and stubborn self-identity that New England maintains regional integrity today. Because of its metropolitan character and the influx of suburbanites from New York City, most of the state of Connecticut is clearly a part of the Core. In its economy and lifestyle, even Boston is part of Megalopolis, sharply contrasting with sparsely settled parts of Maine or Vermont. And yet, all of New England has more than history in common: this proud cradle of the nation is today largely a bypassed region, the periphery of the national Core.
government from Moscow to newly founded St. Petersburg - a city dumped into the desolate swamps, far from the center of “true” Russia but close to the Europe Peter loved.

A Region of Grievance and Resilience

The eventual relative decline of the Northwest is the typical story of an aging region that was once the foremost pioneering cradle. The Northwest dominated the Russian industrial scene first in Imperial Russia. St. Petersburg was the largest city, and, relying on its advantages as a capital, it ruled the industrial scene of the country. In the mid-19th century Petersburg was larger than Moscow by half and had twice as many industrial workers, but these unique advantages were not to last. The abolition of serfdom in 1861 triggered a swelling tide of indigenous Russian capitalism in the Core region, signaling the relative decline of St. Petersburg. By 1917 Moscow had caught up with Petersburg in numbers of industrial workers and overall population. Much more advantageously located for the domestic market, Moscow attracted self-made native Russian entrepreneurs, whereas St. Petersburg’s industry was mostly controlled by foreigners or run by the state. The revolution of 1917 took away St. Petersburg’s status when the capital was moved back to Moscow. The North ultimately lost its competition with the Core, and today Petersburg’s population is only half that of Moscow.

Suspicious of its liberal traditions, Stalin routinely discriminated against Peter’s city, forcing it into acceptance of the role of just another oblast center. Leningrad was left to take comfort in the feeling of intellectual superiority to Moscow. The city still enjoys a reputation as the most cerebral city of Russia, a place of refinement and high-brow culture. The image of the soft-spoken, polite and reserved Petersburgian is the opposite of the ebullient, expressive Muscovite, and Petersburghian types were always perceived as the cream of Russian intellectualls.

A Region of Grievance and Resilience

New England, in comparison to the rest of the United States, experienced the fate of a teacher outstripped by her pupils. Several times the region dominated the nation as the focus of innovation, but even as waves of new ideas were spreading out, New England was losing its leadership role. During the first century of European settlement, New England was at the top of the national ladder, attracting more immigrants than other colonies. But with competition from more fertile regions, many began to leave their farms and join the migration west in search of better land. It was said that the only crop New England’s fields could produce were rocks and that their only export was people; and by the time of the American Revolution, the region’s leadership already was more spiritual than economic. Nevertheless, it emerged once more as the national leader during the Industrial Revolution which had blossomed beside waterfalls in the cities of New England during the 1800s. But by the middle of the same century, misfortune again took over, and the first signs of aging and inflexibility in the once young and innovative region appeared. Shipping and shipbuilding sharply declined after 1860 because the region clung too persistently to sailing ships. The larger labor pools, coal fields, and mineral deposits, and the more fully developed railroad networks of the Core and Heartland soon placed the North in a secondary position, and by the early 20th century the South had lured away its textile industry. During the post-World War II transformations that resulted in the modern, high technology- and service-oriented economy, the North again experienced early success that was not sustained. The Route-128 beltway around Boston became synonymous with the rapid expansion of computer and related industries in the 1960s, but the Silicon Valley of northern California soon surpassed Boston-area enterprises.

Feeling outrun and bypassed since the 19th century, New England developed a sense of “area grievance.” While Boston natives finally acknowledged that New York’s
Although the Northwest lost its role as the economic frontrunner of the country, it preserves the advantages of accumulated industrial tradition and the propensity for technical innovation. More than a mere appendage to the Core, St. Petersburg maintains its lead in high-technology industries and continues to be home to some of the biggest and most technologically advanced factories in the country, such as Electrosila, producing super turbines for power stations, or the shipyards which turn out nuclear icebreakers. St. Petersburg draws such innovative firms with its highly educated workforce; in fact, the North was long known for superior educational standards (even medieval Novgorod claimed a literate populace who maintained their correspondence on birchbark paper).

Yet beyond the sprawl of St. Petersburg, the Northwest is essentially a bypassed region. For potential migrants, the Northwest does not have the “Long Ruble” rewards of areas farther north (high salaries paid to compensate for locations where few want to live). The Northwest has been caught between the pioneer zone of the Northwoods and industrial cities of the Core, both sides luring out its population. The countryside is almost empty and has turned into a mockup frontier of sorts for residents of Moscow and St. Petersburg who come here to fish, pick berries, canoe on the numerous rivers, and enjoy vacations in cottages cheaply purchased in emptied-out villages. The once glorious ancient cities are unnoticed by passengers of express trains between Moscow and St Petersburg. The schedules of the line were put together to accommodate the interests of bureaucrats shuttling between the two metropolises, so the trains whiz non-stop through this abandoned land to be in either terminus by the beginning of business day.

exceptional transportation connections gave it commercial supremacy; they never made concessions on the cultural front. One of America’s most literate periodicals, The Atlantic Monthly, continues to be composed in editorial offices in Boston. Culturally, the region persistently lays claim to universalism and intellectualism of a rather European brand. Early on, it developed a sense of “civilizing” mission with respect to the rest of the nation and rendered it great service by exporting its public school system, high educational standards and thousands of teachers. Education remains the just source of regional pride, and residents of Northern states have some of the highest literacy rates in the nation. A larger percentage have attended college than in most other regions, and support has been given to a dense network of private colleges including the best known “Ivy League” schools. The foremost complex of higher educational institutions in the U.S. is along the northern side of the Charles River, where Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology sprawl in stately splendor. The higher educational levels of Northern residents are reflected in their incomes. In Massachusetts and New Hampshire, median household incomes exceed the national average by nearly 20 percent and poverty rates are well below the national average.

Yet industrial resiliency and intellectual leadership are essentially limited to southernmost New England, while its north is a sea of forest. Hillsides of trees angle down to picturesque lakes. A few cabins dot the shores, but many are empty for much of the year. Small villages center on churches and a store or two, but the sawmills, creameries, and factories around which economic life once revolved have long since closed. With the ongoing abandonment of farm land in New England, the forests seem to return from their temporary exile; while in the harsh environment of the Northwoods, they never left in the first place.
THEME 1: A DIFFICULT ENVIRONMENT - THE FIRST SIBERIA

The seal of neglect and the economic dependence on territories to the south are felt even more strongly in the eastern part of the region. In this densely forested Northwoods area winter lasts up to six months, and January temperatures sometimes reach down to -80°F. Huge, sturdy houses, often two to three stories tall, were built from pine, and to conserve warmth, served as living quarters, grain storehouse, and cattlepen all under one roof. In terms of climate and environment, the Northwoods is the doorstep of Siberia, while historically it served as the forerunner of the Siberian frontier.

Initially explored by Novgorodians interested in tapping its wealth in furs, the area was long a frontier appendage to the Northwest. During the trade fairs of old northern cities, pelts were collected from surrounding forests and even from beyond the Urals. Both Russian trappers and indigenous tribal hunters visited the fairs, and their reindeer teams and tents lent those northern cities a frontier flavor. The harsh nature of the North inevitably hardened the northern character, creating here a pioneer spirit of self-reliance and independence, qualities which were strengthened by the virtual absence of serfdom in this region. Enormous expanses of land also encouraged wanderlust in northerners and bred the talent for traveling great distances. The Northwoods was the birthplace of many famous explorers who pushed the boundaries of Russia into Siberia in the late 17th and 18th centuries. Semyon Dezhnev (the first to circumnavigate Asia from the northeast), Valdimir Atlasov (who gave the Russian monarchy Kamchatka), and Erofei Khabarov (who led the first expeditions to Maritime Far East and Manchuria) all hailed from the Velikiy Ustyug area. The city of Tot'ma, now a small district center without a single paved street, even served as the de facto headquarters of the Russian-American trading company that ruled Alaska.

THEME 1: A DIFFICULT ENVIRONMENT - THE FIRST NORTHWEST

In terms of landscape, the Northwoods are a preview of the great interior wilderness of North America. In this portion of the North region, the southern boundary (starting in northwestern Minnesota and curving to the southeast) coincides with the limits of the area dominated by conifer forests when Europeans first entered the region three centuries ago. Farther south, mixed forests fell before the lumbermen to give way to cropland, but in the North, the climate was too harsh and the soils too poor to permit viable agriculture except on scattered dairy farms. It is revealing that historically the Northwoods was termed “the Northwest,” as if in anticipation of future Pacific Northwest, the culmination point of the great expansion across the interior of the continent.

The settlement of the Northwoods was long retarded until loggers swept through the Upper Great Lakes in the timber boom of the late 19th century. Lumbermen were originally dominated by French Canadians from Maine, and later were mostly Scandinavian. However like most activities in the Northwoods, the lumber industry was Yankee-owned and directed, and “Yankee” descendants became the most dominant group that settled the Upper Great Lakes states. Though the North looks split on the map, movement between New England and the Northwoods across the Canadian “bridge” was easy and traffic busy. The Grand Trunk and Soo Line railroads were built across the bridge to provide access to Chicago.

While timber resources remain one of the mainstays of economy of the Northwoods, its geologic history helped turn the area into an important resource appendage to the American Manufacturing Belt. If the massive glaciers that moved out of northern Canada left in their wake rugged, barren terrain unfit for agriculture, they also brought the mineral wealth of Canadian Shield closer to the surface. Large-scale mining is concentrated in the impressive open pits of northeastern Minnesota where iron ore is

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Our northern summer, swiftly flying,
In southern winter’s travesty;
And even as we are denying
Its passage, it has ceased to be.

More often now the sun was clouded;
The sky breathed autumn, somber, shrouded.
Shorter and shorter grew the days.
~Alexander Pushkin, "Eugene Onegin" X

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The sun that brief December day
Rose cheerless over hills of gray,
And darkly circled, gave at noon
A sadder light than waning moon.
Slow tracing down the thickening sky
Its mute and ominous prophecy,
A portent seeming less than threat,
It sank from sight before it set.
~John Greenleaf Whittier, "Snow-Bound: A Winter Idyl"

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Yet Siberia was won not for Novgorod, but for Moscow. Novgorodian tenure in their far-flung commercial empire was always precarious. The east-west link between the Northwoods and the Northwest was assured by rivers and portages, but the eastern area remained almost unpopulated, and was eventually colonized from the south. Using the rivers that flow from the raised platform of Central Russia, colonists from the Core region literally floated downstream toward the low Arctic coastlines in a movement first foretold by fortified monasteries. The only obstacles to this colonization were along the edges of the Northwoods: in the barren granite cliffs of Karelia and the equally bare foothills of the Urals, where the indigenous populations of Finno-Ugric Karelians and Komi survive.

Thus Muscovy, the newly ascendant Core of recent centuries, not only relegated the Northwest to peripheral status, but also stole from its orbit the Northwoods which it turned into a private resource storehouse. In economic terms, the North remains a poorly integrated region: the Northwest gravitated to St. Petersburg, while the Northwoods was tied to Moscow. Since Peter's times the principal wealth of the Northwoods was in its boreal conifer forests, the taiga. The North exported timber, tar, wax and honey to Europe, and also became Russia's lumberyard. Huge pulp and paper mills (the one in Syktyvkar is the nation's largest) ensure the Northwoods a monopoly on the Russian paper products market. Iron ore mining (especially in Karelia) and bauxite mining are equally important. The new industrial projects of the Soviet period (such as the blast furnaces of Cherepovets) were characterized by gargantuan “Siberian” scale and also by the wide use of prison labor. The original concentration camp of communist times was opened in 1921 on Solovetskiy Archipelago in the White Sea. Political prisoners and exiles felled the forest, built coal mines, and laid new railways in the taiga and tundra. Even in recent times, prisoners accounted for every third or fourth adult resident in the Komi Republic.

removed from the Mesabi range. But as barges loaded with iron ore or logs float south down the rivers and the Great Lakes, relatively little income returns to the North since further stages of manufacture are located outside the region.

The livelihoods of Northerners are dependent on the fast-paced economy of the Heartland and the Core in yet another way. The eyes of Americans increasingly turn toward the rugged yet beautiful natural environments of the North, especially to the resource that the North has in greatest abundance - water. The numerous lakes of the North attract hundreds of thousands of visitors. Strips of summer cottages have lined the surfaces of that state during the opening weekend of the fishing season, an especially impressive figure when one realizes that the entire state's permanent population is only 4.4 million. The North's forests complement the lakes, providing what many find is an especially restful environment.

But the gifts of the North are not for everyone. While many visitors enjoy the bracing weather and the thrill of various activities, they return to their more temperate homes remarking that the North is a marvelous place to visit, but they couldn't imagine living there. Yet a significant minority of Americans find that the same characteristics that others believe they couldn't endure are exactly what convinces them to stay. For example, a number of elderly individuals have converted their recreational homes -- “the lake place up North” -- into permanent residences. As a result, the band of counties dubbed by geographer Phil Gersmehl as “the Midnight Sun Belt” has experienced population growth since 1970. The snow makes daily life more difficult, but the white blanket helps many places become year-round recreational destinations, as cross-country skiing and snowmobile trails follow the same paths where hikers trek during the spring and summer and leaf-watchers amble during the fall. This belt of
The cold climate of the Northwoods allowed it to preserve the purity of its culture. As if kept in a “cold storage”, the villages in the area still hold to many customs, songs and dress of long ago. The people speak a very distinct northern dialect, immediately recognized by any Russian. The survival of the indigenous Finno-Ugric-speaking populations is another aspect of the region’s role as a refuge. Only one hundred years ago, rich collections of tales and legends which were passed orally from generation to generation were written down by scholars touring remote northern from the universities of the capitals still wander around the North in the summer, but to little avail. The last famous storyteller of northern epics died in the 1940s, and nowadays northern culture mostly survives in its museums and unique wooden church architecture. The distinctively “nordic” stubborn culture is the major unifying bond between the two parts of the North.

THEME 2: A STUBBORN CULTURE

Lying well north of the main track of nomadic invasions, the North has preserved what many believe to be pure Russian culture. Remoteness also protected the North from the periodic outbursts of administrative “initiatives” from centralizing Moscow. For example, the traditions of the Old Believer Movement (which originated in the 17th century as a rejection of reforms undertaken by the official church) are still alive in many northern villages. In the communist period, the North suffered comparatively less from militant atheistic politics, and preserved most of its distinctive stone monasteries and wooden churches.

While the impacts of remote Central Russia were weak, west European influence has left many tangible imprints on the region. A famous northern breed of livestock, the Kholmogorskiy milk cows, were bred from Holsteins. The windmills and famed lace-making of Vologda evoke Holland, and architecture in and around St. Petersburg imitate European styles. A great admirer of things European, Peter saw his urban belt of recreation and retirement counties stretches from the Maine coast through New Hampshire, Vermont, into northeastern New York, and reappears in northern Michigan, Wisconsin and Minnesota.

The North remains a place of small towns, but life in both parts of the region fully depends on what is happening beyond its southern border. Little wonder that many people who live in the northern parts of Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota periodically call for secession from those states and the establishment of a new state called Superior, which is expected to serve this area in its own context rather than from the perspectives that dominate in Detroit, Milwaukee or Minneapolis-St. Paul. The latter metropolises are strictly peripheral to the Northwoods, and in many ways its regional focus is still in New England. After more than two centuries of being separated by the wedge of Canada, relatively few people in New England and the Upper Great Lakes area realize the similarities of their situations, especially obvious in the “nordic” stubbornness of the northern culture.

THEME 2: A STUBBORN CULTURE

The challenging environment of the North may help explain the emotional reserve and hardiness of the stereotypical northern character. Residents of the North have developed reputations for a reserved stoicism that verges on the extreme. The laconic speech of the “Down East” residents of Maine is widely lampooned, but discussions in other parts of the North can be equally terse. The classic “town meeting” form of government in New England is often characterized as seemingly endless discussions among townsfolk about trivial issues, but the real wonder of the North is that citizens can condense a year’s worth of discussions about how their governments should function into a single night.
creation as either the “Venice of the North” or as “New Holland.” Fyodor Dostoevsky, all of whose novels take place in the St. Petersburg of palaces and hovels, believed it to be “the most abstract and conjured up city in the world.” There is something of an air of fantasy about the place. The regular baroque layout of St. Petersburg’s center, the numerous canals, Venetian palazzos, and Italian architecture, sharply contrast with the charming irregularity of Russian traditions exemplified by Moscow.

Despite this outward westernization, the North is widely held to be a refuge of “truly Russian” spirit, pilgrimage of tourists from mostly urban background who stream here to commune with the soul of “The Real Russia.” The apparent contradiction in regional identity stems from an attempt by both romantic nationalists and westernized intellectuals to reinterpret Russian history—rejecting its “oriental” Muscovite pages as deviations wrought by external forces, the Mongols. Since northern Russia was never conquered and did not know serfdom, qualities attributed to its population (business-mindedness, industriousness and self-reliance) may therefore be interpreted as “true” Russian traits.

On the other hand, one could maintain that northerners are self-centered and isolationist, with aspirations to a worldliness which may be alien to people of the Russian Core. The revealing episode is the failed attempt to reform the Orthodox Church in a manner resembling North European reformation. Undertaken almost simultaneously with the advent of Luther’s ideas in Europe, this movement was most successful in the rich monasteries of the North, believed by many to be the buttresses of orthodoxy, yet perhaps more remarkable for their successful entrepreneurial activities. From early on, the monasteries became the nuclei of settlement and economic development in the North. Even as late as the turn of the twentieth century, Solovetskiy Monastery owned a shipping company, a shipbuilding wharf, a hydroelectric plant, and a radio station to communicate with the mainland.

Although quiet evenness is a primary characteristic of many Northerners’ personalities, a certain air of superiority often underlies their attitudes. The American poet Robert Frost championed New England in his verse and represented well this regional pride. He wrote in his poem “New Hampshire”:

She’s one of the two best states in the Union. Vermont’s the other. And the two have been

thick-fellows in the sap-yoke from of old

In many Marches. And they lie like wedges,

Thick end to thin end and thin end to thick end,

And are a figure of the way the strong

Of mind and the strong of arm should fit together...

The spirit of superiority that sometimes borders on smugness is energized by beliefs that Northerners have reached their present status through hard work in difficult conditions. New England’s culture in particular has been described as moralistic. On the one side, there is restraint and moral idealism (especially in the attitude to hard work); on the other, a tendency to self-righteousness and moralizing about the faults of others. Many traits of this northern culture appear to be strikingly different from the mainstream, almost un-American. In the words of George Pierson, Northerners tend to be pessimist rather than optimist; introvert, not extrovert; frugal, not wasteful. The region emphasizes the importance of words and ideas as opposed to the simple calculation of interest. Not surprisingly, in terms of politics many states of the North are the most liberal. Wisconsin and Minnesota display the greatest extent of social experimentation at voters’ request, somewhat resembling the “welfare state” philosophy of Scandinavia from where many residents came. The American belief that the best governed are least governed has been historically weak in the region. Yet another Europe-like departure from the American norm may be seen in the deep social and cultural cleavages between the elite and proletarians, especially in New England. Even when the newer immigrant
Ties between Europe and the Russian North may have had their benefits, but they were still overshadowed by an often icy military and political standoff. What was at stake was not only control over the bleak eastern shores of the Baltic in what is now modern Latvia and Estonia, but also a choice which was to define the very character of Russia. While the Core to the south was being overrun by Mongols from Asia and becoming a vassal state to these Asian invaders, a decisive battle was fought in the North when Prince Aleksandr of Novgorod defeated the Swedes on the Neva River in the 13th century. Thus the great name “Aleksandr Nevsky” came into Russian history, and his victory symbolized a choice between dependency on the Mongols (many of whom adopted Russian culture) and struggle against crusading Germanic neighbors from Europe whose purpose was to wipe out Eastern Orthodoxy. That choice of battle front was one of the decisive turning points for the subsequent course of Russian history as it saved the independence of Russian civilization and religion. Nevsky is therefore either a hero or culprit, depending on whether one’s sympathies are nativist or pro-western. Since the erection of the first fortresses guarding the approaches to Novgorod and Pskov, Russia has tried to strengthen its northwestern borders, and has succeeded to some degree— it is the only place where Russia’s boundary is the same now as 1000 years ago. No other part of the country has such a concentration of both ancient and relatively recent fortresses. Peter the Great built his city as an opening to the West, but the northwestern boundary of Russia seems not so much a wide-open window as a narrow embrasure in a fortress wall. This standoff on the western “front” continued right up to the twentieth century; the Baltic states have long played the role of a shatterbelt between Russia and Germany. Thus annexation of Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia by the USSR in 1940 may have served Stalin’s geopolitical purposes, but one can also view it as part of a cycle of revenge for Germany for defeats suffered centuries before. In fact, one year later, the pendulum swung back against Russia, as a heroic 900 day-long defense of besieged Leningrad in World War II began.

underclasses (like the Irish) produced their own strong leadership, it came to emulate the ways of the old aristocratic elite of New England, such as its intellectual and social exclusiveness.

In fact the uniqueness of northern culture was born largely by exclusion. Colonies established by the Puritans were to a surprising degree free of British rule, and later New England was largely self-consciously distanced from mainstream American developments. The resulting culture is extremely stubborn in its self-perpetuation. Puritans became Yankees, and in the 19th century sections of the North became dominated by the Irish, Italians, French Canadians or Scandinavians, and yet the political attitudes of the Catholic clan of Kennedys continue the New England tradition. The exclusiveness of the North, which still in many ways faces across the ocean, was largely due to the fact that it was excluded from the frontier movement. As the settlers moved westward, they were blocked not so much by the mountains as by the activities of the French, established in Quebec since the early 1600s. One colonial leader complained that the French were “running all along by the back” of the British settlements. It was the French-Canadian fur traders, the riverborne voyageurs, who initially opened the Northwoods to Europeans and left on its map a rich splattering of French names. France ceded Quebec to England in 1763 only after a whole series of British-French conflicts. But Britain discouraged its American colonists from further incursions into the western frontierlands which would anger the indigenous tribes, and in 1763 established the Proclamation Line that ran along the western edge of New England.

When Britain, rather than France, became the major opponent, conflicts continued. During the War for Independence the North was the setting for many battles, such as the successful American taking of Fort Ticonderoga on the western front at Lake Champlain. Several decades later, the North once again framed the scene for conflict
At the same time the history of the Northwest was closely interwoven with that of the Baltics, conquered by Peter at the same time that Petersburg was founded. German elite from Baltic provinces traditionally made up the higher echelon of Imperial bureaucracy of Petersburg, and for Dostoevsky and many others the city was a “German blot on the map of Russia.” In the late 1980’s Leningraders were the most avid supporters of Baltic independence, some even harboring plans of a Baltic Commonwealth including Leningrad.

Perhaps regions, as peoples, are the sums of opposites. The two contrasting faces of the North are represented by the westernized Northwest on the one hand and the ethnographic refuge of the Northwoods on the other. Blending into one in the city founded by Peter the Great, the western and oriental streams of Russia’s soul come together in a dazzling complex of both culture and conflict.

ST. PETERSBURG

On the marshes at the mouth of the Neva River, Peter the Great was determined to build a great city in the early 1700s, and St. Petersburg was thus born despite the whims of the harsh northern environment. The fight cost Russia many casualties, as thousands of lives were lost from deprivation and disease during the construction. A Russian historian named this proud capital, boasting of its European architecture, a “paradise built on human bones.” Conceived and built as a challenge to Russia’s traditions, St. Petersburg has developed into a generator of social upheavals. Nowhere else in Russia were social gaps so wide. The accumulated “negative energy” of discontent reached critical mass in the 19th century. The city of bureaucrats and imperial triumphs was fast becoming one of the global centers of capitalism, the center of Dostoevsky’s “The Insulted and Humiliated.” The spark that ignited the discontent was liberal thought imported from the West via the city, exploding violently on the more Asiatic soil of Russia. A series of tumultuous events have thus torn St. Petersburg, beginning with Great Britain, as naval engagements occurred along the Great Lakes during the war of 1812. If all the British lands in North America had become part of the U.S., vast portions of Quebec and Ontario would have become part of the North, linking New England with the interior Northwoods; but the failure to acquire Canada left New England stranded on the coast. It is indeed ironic that the region that so fiercely opposed European control of America was also the one that saw itself as the foothold of European refinement in the young nation. The cousin-regions of Northwoods and New England thus became permanently separated by geographic fate, but still united in a uniquely northern character and history.

BOSTON

The paradoxes of the North are all on display in the city of Boston. The small peninsula known to the local Indian people as Shawmut was not particularly imposing in 1630 when John Winthrop and Richard Saltonstall moved there from Salem. It would have been hard to believe that by the nineteenth century, the people of Boston would regard themselves as the center of the known world. Today, Boston is still proud of the history that thrives on every street and draws in tourist dollars each summer along the “Freedom Trail.” West of Boston are more sacred spots of Americana: the green at Lexington and the bridge at Concord where the Revolutionary War was sparked. New Englanders can be a perverse folk, stubborn in their consciences and old ties: Concord holds a monument not only to the American colonials, but also to the British soldiers who fought there. And when the commander of the troops who shot down the city’s civilians during the 1770 “Boston Massacre” needed legal counsel, he found help from an unlikely source: a Boston colonial lawyer named John Adams who was to become the second President of the United States 27 years later. Boston thrived after independence as the core city of the North, nourished by maritime trade with Europe and a second “revolution” - this time an industrial one, as textile factories relying on the
with the abortive Decembrist rebellion in 1845 and culminating in the two revolutions of 1917. To this day, the city still spawns extreme political movements from both right and left.

Peter’s city retains its universal intellectual pretensions. It is rational and detachedly speculative, just as Moscow is irrational and feverishly active. The superb art created in St. Petersburg bears an imprint of the west, but much of it is a refined art for art’s sake, and something of the northern cold creeps into its beauty. Fittingly enough, the period of unprecedented cultural florescence at the turn of the century was called the Silver Age, the color of cold glitter evoking the eerie light of Petersburg’s famous white nights. Nostalgia for decadent arts more than fits the decaying city. A murderous climate, treacherous marshes and a lack of maintenance are slowly destroying the “northern Venice.” The seal of decay marks numerous palaces, many of which are now honeycombs of congested communal apartments, and much recent renovation has only been bought by foreign investors. Many intellectuals are defecting to Moscow, and the intolerant proletariat of the “city of revolutions” may be poising itself for a new eruption. There is a sad beauty in the slow death of a once proud city, and the question remains: even if it is Leningrad that is dying, will the resurrected St. Petersburg be the same without its lost empire?

water power of New England rivers brought money into the city’s economy. While the Erie Canal and superior railroad connections shifted the Core focus southward to New York City, Boston’s intellectual and cultural pride was still at its peak in the nineteenth century as a series of literary figures emerged (Longfellow, Lowell, Whittier, Emerson, Thoreau, Alcott, and Hawthorne). Boston spawned many firsts in America: a college, a daily newspaper, a public school. The stuffy upper class, mainly of white Anglo-Saxon Protestant ancestry and with names like Lowell, Cabot, and Winthrop (often called “Boston Brahmins”) became more than fits the decaying city. A murderous climate, treacherous marshes and a lack of maintenance are slowly destroying the “northern Venice.” The seal of decay marks numerous palaces, many of which are now honeycombs of congested communal apartments, and much recent renovation has only been bought by foreign investors. Many intellectuals are defecting to Moscow, and the intolerant proletariat of the “city of revolutions” may be poising itself for a new eruption. There is a sad beauty in the slow death of a once proud city, and the question remains: even if it is Leningrad that is dying, will the resurrected St. Petersburg be the same without its lost empire?
"As to Dikanka, I think you’ve heard more than enough about it...as to its gardens, this goes without saying; even in Petersburg, you would not find anything like that."

These words belong to a simple Ukrainian beekeeper, a character in Gogol’s famous series, “Evenings on the Croft Near Dikanka.” with plots that mix the realities of rural life in the Ukraine with fantastic folklore stories.

Thanks to standard school courses on Russian literature, fictional Dikanka is a well-known place and an easily recognizable one: the Ukrainian village has not changed much in the one and a half centuries that have elapsed since Gogol’s times. Gently rolling picturesque landscapes of benevolent South and the rural way of life in the Dikanas of today convey an image of a country idyll. To the Slavic ear, the very placename Dikanka sounds cozy and lyrical. It seems to resonate with the softness of melodious Ukrainian speech and evokes the sounds of folk songs, which are still often heard in these parts. The impression is conveyed not only by the whitewashed daubed brick cottages engulfed by the green of cherry tree gardens and by the gold of ripe grainfields, but also by the richness of the local harvest. Moscow’s farmers’ markets overflow with Ukrainian lard, early potatoes, fruits, and honey. Today, much more than in the past, the southern village appears to be colorful and full of life, in stark contrast to the emptied and drab villages of the North.

"Maycomb was an old town, but it was a tired old town when I first knew it. In rainy weather the streets turned to red slop; grass grew on the sidewalks, the courthouse sagged in the square. Somehow, it was hotter then: a black dog suffered on a summer’s day; hony mules hitched to Hoover carts flicked flies in the sweltering shade of the live oaks on the square. Men’s stiff collars wilted by nine in the morning. Ladies bathed before noon, after their three-a-clock naps, and by nitefall were like soft teacakes of sweat and sweet talcum."

NECTIONS

Harper Lee, To Kill a Mockingbird

The South has a deep, rich literary tradition tying the region of today with its past. That past often seems set in eternal summer, with its shimmering heat, lazy days, and sudden rainstorms. It may be hard for Yankees to understand, but to Southerners the heat of summer was not simply something to be endured; rather, the season’s languid pace helped define the special character of the region, a character that made it somehow better than the rest of the country. “People moved slowly then. They ambled across the square, shuffled in and out of the stores around it, took their time about everything. A day was twenty four hours long, but seemed longer” (Ibid). The South in literature is also a place of small towns, courthouse squares, and farmers. Urban America with its Atlantas might have intruded upon the reality of the modern South, but the South of the region’s literary imagination remains firmly fixed on its more rural past.
THE SOUTH: MORE THAN UKRAINE

The South spills more definitively across a new international border than any of our other regions, and outlining a “south” without Ukraine would be unthinkable. Yet the South incorporates more than the elusive southerness of Ukrainian and southern Russian culture. The region has been largely “made” by its warm climate and fertile soils. In the 17th-18th centuries, the rewarding environment helped make the South Russia’s granary, but its bounty was based even more so on the backbreaking labor of bonded peasants, the serfs. Only in the South was the low productivity of forced labor (in comparison with free labor) offset by the high efficiency of nature itself. The origin of the Russian derogatory word for people at the bottom of society, “chern’” (literally “the black ones”) may have been in the South, where the rich black soil collaborated with serfdom. The heritage of serfdom has left a lasting imprint in the region’s social conservatism and persistent ruralism.

The economy of the South is still firmly rooted in the soil: 45 percent of the working population are farmers, while another 15 percent are employed in processing farm products. Life revolves around very large villages, while most towns are small service centers and themselves in essence glorified villages. Cozy village-like wooden cottages are surrounded by fruit and vegetable gardens, and even “cityfolks” cultivate plots of land to provide for their tables. A surprising 80 percent of the region’s territory is under plow, which accounts for the breathtaking open landscapes of rolling fields.

To a large extent, the parochial agrarian society of the sleepy South is the living past. Its conservative culture is permeated with the ideals of peasantry, quite literally bent to the soil. In the outsiders’ stereotypical view, southerners are “country bumpkins” with limited horizons. Yet today’s provincial periphery has ample reason to be proud of its historic glory. The South was one of the two cradles of Slav statehood and culture, while its later frontier history largely shaped the two major successor peoples of ancient

THE SOUTH: MORE THAN DIXIE

Everybody knows the South: it is Dixie, the land of cotton and confederate flags! Yet the reality of regional identity is much larger and more complex. In attempting to define the South, the Southern historian Ulrich B. Phillips wrote about the region in 1929, suggesting “Let us begin with the weather. [It] has been the chief agency in making the South distinctive. It fostered the cultivation of the staple crops, which promoted the plantation system, which brought the importation of negroes, which not only gave rise to chattel slavery but created a lasting race problem.” One might include the additional legacies of cultural conservatism and poverty. The war that ended slavery was fought nearly 130 years ago, but the triad of race, conservatism, and poverty (all easily and directly attributable to the culture and economy of the region’s pre-Civil War plantation system) continue to be defining regional themes. By almost any measure of regional poverty, Southern states rank at or very near the bottom.

But defining the area by these characteristics alone gives an incomplete story. Change is a seemingly contradictory but almost equally well recognized component of the South’s identity. “The New South” is heard so often across the region that it has become a cliche. Prior to this century the South was a strikingly rural place, another consequence of its historic agricultural economy. Large cities were few and widely scattered. As late as 1940 nearly half the population of states like Georgia and South Carolina were classified as farmers by the Census. Today the typical Southerner is far more likely to live and work in a city, and the South leads the nation in the share of its population employed in manufacturing. But then again, manufacturing is no longer synonymous with progress in a service-based economy. Is it perhaps a region permanently trapped in a race to catch up with the rest of the nation?
Kievan Rus, Russians and Ukrainians, who share the region. If today the South has been cut in two by the line between Ukraine and Russia, the split is actually again about history - an offshoot of the old dispute over who is more senior. Reliving old glories and quarrels, the South remains trapped in the past.

Ukraine - Hearth or Periphery? From the 9th to the 12th centuries, the Ukrainian segment of our region was the southern heath of that loose confederation of Eastern Slavs’ principalities known as Kievan Rus. As with Novgorod, Kiev’s ascendency was due to trade carried on the Dnieper along the route from the Varangians (Vikings) to the Greeks. But while the North was in many ways a transmitter of influences from Northern Europe, Kiev became the major way station for introducing Byzantine cultural models and Orthodox Christianity into Russia. The area was formally baptized in 988, and the temple of Sophia was erected in Kiev as a replica of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople. In the 13th century, Kiev was one of the largest and most resplendent cities of Europe. The mixed forest-steppe environments of the South proved conducive to farming that was far more productive than in the barren forest zone to the north, while scattered riparian forests provided protection from the warlike nomads who roamed the open grasslands farther south. After centuries of uneasy coexistence with the steppe nomads, the South was overrun and utterly destroyed by Chenghis Khans’ in 1240, and it never managed to recover its focal role.

Russia’s southern territories, known as the South, had a different history. In 1667, when Moscow, as the largest center of power in Russia, was faced with serious threats from the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the Tatars, Tsar Alexei I elevated Moscow’s southern territories to the status of a province (uezd), much like those of Western Europe. By the early 18th century slavery was legally established as an acceptable form of labor for those foreign territories, and the practice spread to the rest of Russia. By the early 19th century, the most successful slave and indentured laborers were Africans, who were imported from the Caribbean and other slaveholding areas of tropical and semi-tropical crops.India’s trade in slaves originated in the 17th century, with the first Africans sold to the British in 1645. The first Africans came into Virginia as slaves back in 1619. Their forced migration to the New World was a result of the British desire to control the tobacco trade, which had been a major source of wealth for colonial Virginia. The indentured servant system was introduced into Virginia in the 1620s, and it remained in place until the early 1800s. The indentured servant system was a form of labor that allowed young men and women to serve as laborers in exchange for transportation to the New World and the promise of freedom upon completion of their terms of service. The indentured servant system was replaced by slavery in the late 18th century, as the demand for labor in the plantation economy increased. The transition from indentured servitude to slavery was a gradual process, and it was not until the early 19th century that slavery became the dominant form of labor in the Southern colonies. In the early 19th century, slavery was an accepted and institutionalized part of Southern society, and it played a central role in the economy of the South. The system of slavery was characterized by the exploitation of African Americans, who were forced to work in the fields, in the mills, and in the mines, often under harsh and inhumane conditions. The system of slavery was based on the belief that slavery was a necessary evil, and that it was not only justifiable, but also a means of controlling the African American population and maintaining social and economic order. The system of slavery was a brutal and inhumane one, and it was practiced in the United States for over 200 years. The system of slavery was eventually abolished in the United States in 1865, with the passage of the 13th Amendment to the Constitution. The system of slavery had a profound impact on the history of the United States, and it continues to be a subject of much discussion and debate today.
colonial plantations developed, owned by Polish landlords and worked by enserfed Ukrainian peasants. What an irony that the harshest variety of serfdom evolved in Ukraine in direct response to the development of European capitalism. While the North served as Russia’s window onto dynamic Northern Europe, the South recreated the social order that was a throwback to Medieval Europe.

Since the immense wealth accrued by the new landlords lured the old Ukrainian nobility into adoption of Polish ways, the resistance to Polish atrocities and attacks against Slavic Orthodox culture was led by Ukrainian Cossacks. These freebooters gathered beyond the southern boundary of the region to live by plunder. On the great bend of the Dnieper, the Cossacks created a sort of anarchic independent republic (Zaporoz’ye Sich). At first completely opportunistic in the choice of their victims, the Cossacks gradually came to see themselves as protectors of Orthodoxy and the common man, and during the uprising of 1648 they briefly established a virtually independent Ukrainian state. Unable to stand on their own in the squeeze between Poland, Russia, and the Ottoman Turks, the Cossacks chose the lesser evil and applied for Muscovy’s protection, granted in 1654. From then on Ukrainian fate was inextricably linked with that of Russia.

Although the realm created by the Cossacks on the east bank of the Dnieper was for a century an autonomous part of Russia, it was fast losing its distinctively Ukrainian character. Wooded into the wider imperial culture and service, the self-styled Ukrainian nobility (of former senior Cossacks) was thoroughly Russified and actually became the greatest opponent of Ukraine’s political separateness. For a second time Ukraine lost its intellectual and political leaders: first to Polonization and now to Russification.

The Ukraine was clearly quite different from the rest of Slav lands, and yet it seemed permanently reduced to peripheral status. Under the Poles, it was merely an economic appendage to Europe. Polish Catholics, who saw non-Catholics as inferior semi-property rights for citizens. In 1790 slaves constituted 43 percent of the population of South Carolina, 39 percent in Virginia, and a third of the populations of Maryland and Georgia.

The plains of the lowland South created a pattern of broad, slow moving, lazy rivers along which export products from the plantations were shipped downstream to the coast where they could be transferred to ships. The goal was to export those crops as efficiently and inexpensively as possible. The transport system, and thus the pattern of cities, emphasized the rapid movement of goods to the coast; overland connections between cities were few, and less important than direct economic links to Europe. The elite also maintained close cultural ties with Europe. They sent their children there for education, purchased their fine furniture from European craftsmen, and long clung to the coast to maintain close transport ties with the continent.

The society and economy that emerged in the South was in many ways a world of its own, with attitudes and aspirations quite different from those of the northern colonies. Many Southerners still insist that the terrible war between the North and the South should be properly called the War Between the States, not the Civil War. In the South, Europeans did not come to create a new world as did the Puritans, but rather to recreate the old European one and in a form that was by then disappearing in Europe itself. The chivalry and aristocracy of Southern society were almost a recreation of medieval Europe, just as slavery carried European serfdom to the logical extreme. At the same time, African traditions expressed in such diverse areas a food, architecture, and speech became part of the broader Southern culture, helping to further differentiate it from the North.

Only after the Civil War was the South integrated (forcefully) into the all-American economic fabric instead of being a mere appendage to European markets. Yet the region long remained something of a semi-colonial periphery, this time to the industrial
barbarians, were the first to call the South the Ukraine, a word that literally means “borderland” or “periphery.” Under the Russians the Ukraine was a periphery again and fittingly enough Russians called it Malorossiya, Little Russia. From the time that Peter the Great obtained a direct “window to the west” in the North, Russia was fast becoming far more westernized and secular than Ukraine, which was sinking into provincialism. No longer just a geographic term, the name Little Russia began to acquire condescending overtones.

The Central Chernozem Region, the South Claimed from the North

The South thus grew from two segments: a Ukrainian part that was acquired by Moscow as it gathered former Kievan lands under Orthodox rule and a Russian part that was an extension of the new Muscovite Core, conquered and settled from the north.

After the Mongol conquest, the forest-steppe south of the Oka river remained practically deserted, and came to be known as the Wild Field, disputed between Russians and the nomads. While Russians gradually moved south along the river valleys, the nomads annually made plundering raids north along the dry watersheds. Moscow itself was last burned by the Tatars in 1571, finally spurring the government into decisive southward expansion. To obstruct the advance of mounted Tatars, fortified margins pushed south to the Belgorod line, coinciding with the present southern boundary of the region, completed in the 1650s at the same time as the acquisition of Ukraine. Since the area was settled by Russians from the Core, a sharp ethnic boundary separates it from Ukraine even to present day. Yet the original capitals of both the Ukrainian realm (Baturin) and the Soviet Ukraine (Kharkiv) were located on this boundary which stitched together this Russian portion of the South and the “Old” Ukrainian South.

North. With the region’s defensive withdrawal into Dixie nostalgia about past glory, the rest of the U.S. increasingly came to view the South somewhat condescendingly: a place doubtlessly colorful and touchingly romantic yet certainly provincial. The Old South became “Down South” - a name defining the region in relation to its marginal nature in the eyes of northerners.

The Piedmont, the South Claimed from the North

To the west of the southern coastal lowland from Virginia to Georgia lies the rolling upland of the Piedmont, an area once regarded as the rough, interior wildlands by the coastal southerners. The zone of contact between the young, relatively soft, and easily eroded rocks of the coastal plain and the older, harder, and less easily eroded rocks of the Piedmont is marked by a stretch of waterfalls or series of rapids which bar the upstream movement by river boats. One consequence is that for much of the colonial period this Fall Line served as an effective barrier to the westward expansion of the plantation economy and its demand for cheap water transport. The line is straddled by a series of towns (from Richmond to Montgomery) initially established to deal with the transfer of goods shipped across the line or to take advantage of the water power generated by harnessing the tumbling streams.

In the first half of the 17th century, the uplands were occupied substantially by settlers who wandered southward from Pennsylvania down the Great Valley (called the Shenandoah in Virginia) and then through gaps in the Blue Ridge. By the 1730s the Great Philadelphia Wagon Road marked the route. The result was that the Piedmont population was largely white, and often German, into the early national period. With comparatively few slaves the Piedmont had notably lower black percentages than the coastal plain areas of the old cotton and tobacco belts. In the late 18th and first half of the 19th century thousands of white migrants from the region, seldom rich but usually individualistic, carried the distinctive Upper Southern culture westward.
This Russian part of the South has been called the Central Chernozem region, the epithet “Central” reflecting the region’s key economic role and central location. The area “made” by the Core was also central in the sense that it helped shape Russian serfdom. The southern frontier attracted thousands of peasants who fled the tax burden imposed by the centralizing state (not least for the purpose of guarding this same southern frontier). The drain bled Russia, which needed both money and armies. The attachment of peasants to the land became the answer to military challenges of the frontier, and little wonder that it occurred between the 1550s and 1649 - exactly the period of southward expansion. Ironically, the very freedoms of the frontier reinforced the emerging system of universal serfdom. The region that had been the Wild Field became the Russian Field, the outwardly serene stronghold of landowning gentry that was the pillar of the conservative political and social system of pre-capitalist Russia.

THEME 1: ECONOMY BASED ON HERITAGE OF INJUSTICE

By the early 18th century the South had lost its frontier character, and its lands were occupied by larger estates. While serfdom existed over all of European Russia, its forms varied and were nowhere so entrenched as in the South. In the less fertile northern regions, the labor duties of serfs were reduced to payment of a money rent, which the peasants were free to generate by pursuing any trade. The system paved the way for the eventual growth of commercial enterprise in villages and towns. In the South, on the other hand, an obligation to provide actual labor prevailed, and a number of days every week had to be devoted to work in the landlord’s fields rather than on the serf’s own plot. Normally a whole village would belong to a single landlord, and the strong institution of the village commune enforced collective compliance, while at the same time stripping the individual of responsibility and initiative. A high southern culture may have developed among the landowning class, but it was paid for by serfs who lived in poverty and ignorance.

In the decades after the American Revolution plantation the economic life of the country rushed into the Piedmont, led by cotton production. With a rapidly growing population, the region eventually surpassed the coastal lowlands in economic and demographic clout. In a symbolic severing of the umbilical cord to the Old World, state capitals were relocated from lowland (and thus colonial) to piedmont (by definition non colonial) locations Virginia’s from Williamsburg to Richmond, North Carolina’s from New Bern to Raleigh, South Carolina’s from Charleston to Columbia, and Georgia’s from Savannah to Atlanta. When the dominant focus on agriculture in the South began to erode in the 1880s, the development of manufacturing focused on the Piedmont. The lead was taken by the relocation of the cotton textile industry away from New England to the rolling hill country from south central Virginia across the central Carolinas to northern Georgia. In part this resulted from the local availability of abundant water power resources.

In many ways the Piedmont became “another” South, largely shaped by the North which first sent down its settlers; a century later, northern carpetbaggers and companies presided over the birth in the Piedmont of the industrial South. The Piedmont can perhaps be seen as the formative area for the New South, a South which was already more than just the old Dixie.

THEME 1: ECONOMY BASED ON HERITAGE OF INJUSTICE

For over three centuries Southern culture was dominated by the legacy of the plantation system. Virginians began exporting tobacco from their James River settlements in the early 1620s. Despite the lament of many that it was a “noxious weed” that was sure to damage the health of its users, the acquired taste and demand for tobacco swept the continent. By the end of the 17th century the coastal swamps of South Carolina and Georgia had become a major source for rice and indigo. Long staple (or Sea Island)
**FRIED CHICKEN, SOUTHERN-STYLE**

1 chicken cut into pieces
2 eggs
bread crumbs seasoned with salt and pepper
flour for dredging, oil for frying


**CHICKEN, KIEV-STYLE**

1 chicken breast halves, boned and flattened
1/2 cup cold butter cut into six pieces
3 tbsp chopped green onions
2 eggs, beaten
1 cup bread crumbs
salt and pepper

Flour for dredging; oil for frying.

Place butter in middle of each chicken breast, sprinkle with salt, pepper, and green onion. Roll up, place on plate, and flatten.  Dredge in flour, dip in egg, roll in bread crumbs.  Fry in hot oil.  Serve with cream gravy.
cultivated lands owned by the Russian nobility were in the South, and only their resistance delayed the final abolition of serfdom until 1861. In a sense, the emancipation of serfs was a victory of the industrial-capitalist North of Russia over the retrograde South, and it dealt the region a deadly blow.

Decline and Conservatism

Neither the serfs nor their masters could easily adapt to Emancipation. Freed serfs received little land, but had to pay heavy "redemption debts." Many estate owners (such as described in Chekhov's classic "Cherry Orchard") proved to be lousy entrepreneurs and went bankrupt. In Chekhov's play the nobleman returns to his dilapidated hereditary estate to sell it to a nouveau riche capitalist, who has already scheduled the destruction of the pride of the estate - the cherry orchard with all its nostalgic memories. The fragmented fields of southern peasants could not compete with the huge, flat geometric fields of the new national granary that developed in the once empty grasslands of southern Ukraine. The fertility of the long mercilessly exploited soils sharply declined, while in the more southerly steppes rich virgin black earth abounded.

The old estate economy relied on the serfs' numbers, but the emancipated South found itself overpopulated. Industrial growth was as phlegmatic as the proverbial southern character and provided no outlet for landless peasants. Although the South acquired a widely dispersed sugar-refining and grain-milling industry, most of the development impetus came from the North. In Ukraine, Ukrainians hardly participated in the city-based commerce and industry at all. While northerners moved hundreds of miles south to the local factories, land-craving southerners preferred massive exodus to new agricultural frontiers thousands of miles east. The southerners, and especially Ukrainians, made up the majority of migrants into the newly opened southern grasslands of Russia all the way to the Far East, and even to the USA.

Virginia. The South was the major region of export economy during much of the country's early national period. On the eve of the Civil War cotton, exported almost entirely from the South, accounted for to-thirds of total exports from the United States by value.

Decline and Conservatism

With the end of the Civil War and the advent of slave emancipation in 1863, the South, which had been one of the wealthiest regions, was suddenly the nation's poorest. Plantation owners found their assured labor force gone and their property often destroyed, while freed African-Americans were assured of political rights and quickly gained many elected positions. This period of change was short lived, and a decade after the war the region had returned to something remarkably like its old self. As sharecropping replaced slavery after 1865, control shifted from slavery to the crop lien system, where a merchant (also often a land owner) provided basic needs of the sharecropper's family in return for a portion of the crop. The system encouraged eternal indebtedness. For decades after the war many landless rural southerners, both black and white, never had the opportunity to accumulate the capital needed to improve their circumstance.

Blacks, while now free, found that slavery had been replaced by institutionalized segregation enforced by a series of "Black Codes" that restricted access to economic opportunity outside agriculture and to educational opportunities. In the 1890s the states of the South began passing so called "Jim Crow laws" that legalized the segregation of the races in a wide variety of areas. In education, southern states provided separate systems for whites and blacks. While the U.S. Supreme Court in Plessy v. Ferguson (1896) had given its approval to the separation provided the two systems were equal, the reality soon became white systems with vastly superior resources
Following a brief breathing spell after the 1917 revolution, the region suffered a near-complete resurrection of serfdom in the guise of the collective farm (kolkhoz). Under Stalinist socialism, labor duties reappeared in the form of obligatory work to be done on the collective fields. Until the 1970s, the peasants were even denied freedom of migration. Little wonder that once “the second emancipation” of the later Soviet period arrived, a new exodus followed, and Southerners made up the majority of high wage-seeking migrants to Siberia. Today the population of the South is a staggering 11 million less than it was in 1897, but even so its heavily rural population is second only to the industrial-urban Core of the country. Farming gives proof of the relative immutability of the South. Although its productivity today is among the highest in Russia, it still loses to the Breadbasket in terms of scale and specialization. The region itself essentially consumes its agricultural bounty. But then self-sufficiency is exactly its ideal. The South always tended to revert to comfortable subsistence whenever central power was weakened. The latest such period arrived in the 1970s when the more laissez-faire policy of Moscow allowed southern peasants to farm private plots. The southerners’ creative tendency to circumvent the system helped them to work out a comfortable modus vivendi with the kolkhoz. A few pigs secretly fattened by fodder stolen from kolkhoz fields bring the southerner a good annual income on top of guaranteed pay. Stripped of initiative by centuries of serf labor, southerners are not eager to assume the insecurities of private farmers. The region lags behind the rest of Russia in the spread of private farms, as the kolkhozes carry on. The region spawned a corps of collective farm chairmen, a strongly conservative lobby in new Russian politics and worthy successors to the big landowners of the South who once dominated the Emperor’s ultra-conservative Private Council. The southerners’ conservative political culture largely rests upon a respect for the existing order and reliance on the wisdom of traditional superiors. During the first Soviet free elections in 1988, the region overwhelmingly elected the old communist compared to their black neighbors. Segregation eventually permeated nearly every aspect of southern life. Blacks were excluded from some urban occupations and industries (such as cotton textiles) or confined to the lowest paying jobs. This trend was to dominate Southern industrialization until well into the last half of the 20th century. Manufacturing was located in areas of largely white populations, sections away from the centers of the plantation economy. Stranded Black populations had no option but to migrate to the industrial centers of the north, sparking the great exodus that so altered the racial composition of the northern metropolis. The institution of slavery, and later the widespread availability of cheap labor (often black) limited European immigration to the South, as reflected in the insularity of ethnic identities in the region (largely English and Scots-Irish). Shunned by new immigrants and losing its own population, the South rapidly slipped down on the scale of population that had given it so much political leverage in the past. Whereas in 1810, Virginia was the nation’s most populous state, and Virginia and North Carolina together accounted for one-third of all U.S. population, by the time of the Civil War the share of these two states had declined to 10 percent. With a growing local sense that the area had been treated poorly, the two terms best defining southern culture were conservatism and loyalty. To many in the region, the two have a close meaning, defining loyalty to the past and to tradition. Former President Lyndon Johnson, proudly T exan, referred to himself as a “Yellow Dog Democrat” given a choice, he would rather vote for a yellow dog than for a Republican. That statement was one most southerners clearly understood and supported. Democrats presided over a period when black disenfranchisement and segregation were institutionalized. For decades state legislatures were prohibitively Democratic. The system that developed placed most real power in the hands of a small group of elected
party functionaries and emerged as a bastion of political conservatism. Outwardly conformist, southerners actually seem indifferent to politics, as long as they are left alone to quietly enjoy fruits of the land. Even the political tempest of Ukrainian independence left most southerners cool: within a one-year period a strong majority of Ukrainian residents (including Russian-speakers) voted first for the preservation of the Soviet Union and then for independence. Be it in politics or modernization, the South came to stand for conservatism as much as the North stands for experimentation.

THEME 2: HOW INDEPENDENT IS AN INDEPENDENT SOUTH?

Change has not completely bypassed the South. Its economic rebirth started in the 1960s when the North again reached into the south with new industrial enclaves such as the metallurgical complex of the Kursk Magnetic Anomaly. The two largest cities of the South, Kiev and Voronezh, have emerged as economic capitals of respectively Ukrainian and Russian parts of the region, and were chosen as sites for many labor-intensive, high-tech industries such as electronics and aircraft building. Yet industrial centers are few, and the share of the South in Soviet national industrial output was still below its share of population. With urban population barely one half of the total, the South remained the least urbanized of the Slavic regions of the former USSR.

Maybe a more valid sign of the recent revival of the South is the fact that the southern villager is now better off than those in the north, the reverse of previous patterns. Surrupitious farming on private plots, with the produce of the fertile South carried to markets in the North, brought a modicum of prosperity. Statistically speaking, the southern standard of living still lags behind that of more northerly parts of Russia, particularly with inflation problems in post-independence Ukraine, but few southerners would agree that their quality of living is inferior. In the USSR, where the chronic food problem made the easy availability of good food a major yardstick of well-being, the South acquired a new stereotypical image of the land of satiety. Actually, support of Ukrainian independence among common people largely rested on the premise that officials and party leaders, tended to encourage lengthy stays in office, and gave the South a powerful say in national politics through seniority control over many Congressional committees. Only in the 1940s did the Democratic Solid South (at least at the national level) begin to erode, as the increasing liberalism of the party scared off many whites while attracting black voters. Former Southern Democrats fiercely loyal to the tradition argue that they have not left the Democratic party - the party left them.

The South's white voters often support Republicans now, favoring conservative values reflected in their religious as well as political lives. Southerners of most stripes are much more likely to attend church regularly than are people in most other sections of the country; their Sunday mornings, and at least one evening each week, are given over to religious activities. Southern white Protestants are more likely than other white Protestants to listen to religious shows on radio and television and to name a religious person (usually Billy Graham) as their most admired individual. Most southern religion is conservative, evangelical, and democratic. Northerners were often surprised by the strong church involvement on both sides of the Civil Rights movement; in fact, it was just part of the participatory nature of southern religion.

Over nine in ten southerners identify themselves as Protestants. Fully half of those are Southern Baptists, and a majority of the remainder are Methodists. Blacks are even more likely to be members of (usually all black) Baptist or Methodist churches. The Southern Baptist Convention was created in 1845 in a dispute with northern Baptists over slavery and sectionalism. It emerged from the war as one the most important molders and carriers of southern culture. A map of Southern Baptists today is very much a map of the South and of those places to which southerners have migrated in large numbers.

THEME 2: HOW NEW IS THE NEW SOUTH?

The last half of the twentieth century has seen a remarkable integration of the South into the national economy, coupled with the breakdown of racial segregation. Some
Ukraine is a cornucopia feeding “hungry” Russia, and it would be even better fed if left alone.

On a different plane, Ukrainian independence can be seen as the culmination of a long southern resistance to peripheral status, and easily the most important harbinger of the arrival of some “New” South. What had been grievances related to geographic discrimination became a sense of national consciousness in Ukraine, following a pattern typical for Eastern Europe. Since local loyalties of the traditional elites were lost to wider political entities, the future nation had to be bound by ethnicity, the path beginning with the “reinvention” of language and culture. For centuries, the Ukrainian language was considered a lowly peasant dialect unfit as literary medium. The best known writer produced by Ukrainian soil, Gogol, refused to consider Ukrainian a fit language even for his burlesque novels. Only by the 1850s was the new Ukrainian (constructed as a sum of several regional dialects) becoming recognized, largely due to the efforts of Ukraine’s greatest poet, Shevchenko. Yet Ukrainian national consciousness is a very recent phenomenon: even three generations ago, most Ukrainians still called themselves “Little Russians”, khokhols, or “locals.” Ukrainians, rather than Russifiers from Moscow, demanded Russian-language schools for their children, so that they could advance beyond the limited opportunities existing in the rural South. Throughout recent decades the use of the Ukrainian language in schools, publishing, and even daily life has been steadily declining.

In Russia, the establishment of the protectorate over Ukraine in 1654 has been viewed as the reunification of peoples sharing common descent from Kievan Rus. Since Russians were the only surviving political heirs to “the glory that was Kiev,” they felt themselves to be the elder brothers, or Greater Russians. Because the Ukrainian and Russian culture and language are very close, it seemed logical to see their differences as the result of a temporary separation. Ukrainians were Little Russians, or younger brothers that could be expected to blend eventually with “true” Russians of Muscovy.

viewed the revitalized economy and social changes as evidence that a “New South” was emerging. In 1880, 90 percent of the nation’s textile production was centered along the streams and coastlines of New England, but in the following decades what had been a trickle of economic change developed into a flood. By the 1910s half of the cotton textile industry was in the South, and by 1940 the industry was largely southern. Cotton textiles were a low skill, low wage industry, and a prime attraction of the South was the availability of a large and poor labor force.

World War II brought a new level of economic change to the South. The federal government invested billions in new and expanded military bases and defense plants in the region. The farm population fell 20 percent while farm incomes flourished. For the first time in recent history, much of the region’s people, especially in whites, had a disposable income. The boom continued after the war, as entrenched politicians in Washington used their influence to send development into their districts. Georgia legislators, for example, helped make defense contractor Lockheed the largest private employer in their state. Huntsville, Alabama, emerged as a major center for space exploration and research. In North Carolina, the state’s governor encouraged the creation of what became the highly successful and emulated Research Triangle Park. Many national and international manufacturers established southern plants in response to the region’s new wealth and demand for products.

Atlanta especially boomed with a concentration of a broad spectrum of firms choosing to establish regional management centers in the South’s centrally located economic capital. Perhaps nothing better symbolizes the “arrival” of the New South than Atlanta’s success, personified by the election of President Jimmy Carter in 1976 and the selection of the city as the host of the 1996 summer Olympic games.

Meanwhile, a combination of local civil rights demonstrations and actions of federal courts and the U.S. government eroded much formalized segregation. In 1940 only five
The provincialism of Ukraine gave the Russian view some credence. Ever since “Evenings on the Croft near Dikan’ka” Ukraine has been seen as a picturesque and romantic ethnographic corner of Russia, the preserve of lyrical folklore and songs. In the Soviet “family” of peoples, Ukraine was the privileged but junior partner, second among equals.

The Ukrainian counterargument to Russian claims of seniority is that the true Kievan heritage was passed on to future generations not through Muscovy (peripheral to Kievan Rus) but Ukraine. In Russians such claims cause fits of laughter: imagine a family where a younger brother declares himself to be elder! This laughter is true to the long Russian tradition of seeing Ukraine as a humorous place. Following the lead of Gogol, Ukraine came to be seen as almost a parody of Greater Russia. This Russian amusement is all the more offensive to Ukrainians because of its family-like, condescending nature. Since Ukraine was in no way discriminated against or lagging behind Russia economically, such condescension is the major irritant that provokes Ukrainian anti-Russianism. Russia and Ukraine seem to be tragically unable to understand each other. It may be unavoidable for such closely related peoples that antagonism toward Russia becomes almost the sole basis for shaping Ukrainians’ separate identity. Even Russian laughter is used to Ukrainian advantage: the first president of newly independent Ukraine once said that “it’s better to appear crafty, than ominous.” People are not afraid of what is funny, and while Russians refused to take it seriously, Ukraine slyly emerged as Eastern Europe’s second-largest state, gaining more territory from the Soviet dissolution than any other successor republic.

percent of voting age black southerners were registered, but by 1955 the share had increased to 25 percent. By 1969, after the Voting Rights Act eliminated nearly all special barriers to black registration and voting, nearly two thirds of African-American adult Southerners were registered. Blacks have been elected mayors in several large southern cities and scores of smaller ones, governor of one state, and to the supreme courts of most states in the region. Federal Supreme Court decisions in the late 1980s concerning proportional representation resulted in the 1992 election that sent southern blacks to state legislatures at the U.S. House of Representatives in numbers approximating the black share of their state’s population.

Although inherited racism is still a vibrant theme in Southern life, the erosion of the institution of segregation and the impact of that erosion have been real. More blacks now hold public office in the South than in any other section of the country. In the 1980s the average income of black southerners increased while declining nationally, and surpassed that in the Midwest. Most dramatically, perhaps, more blacks now migrate to the region than leave it, a change reversing a dominant trend of much of the century that would have been unimaginable at the time of the passage of the Voting Rights Act. Economically, the region may still rank at the bottom in most measures of well-being, but the bottom is not nearly so far from the top as it once was. In 1910 a poor Southern state might have an income half that of the average for non Southern states, but by 1990, it was more likely to be 85 percent of the average for the rest of the country. However, it is important not to overstate the real meaning of this change. While many Southerners consider the upward trend momentous, it unfortunately in part reflects the opposite: progress looks good because the starting level was so low. The region is still the poorest in the country, and its overall rate of economic growth compared to the national average has slowed after the spurt of the 1960s and 1970s.
One South or Many?

Even at its zenith (1648-1667) the historic forerunner of independent Ukraine included only the Ukrainian portion of the South, less than half of the area of the modern Ukrainian Republic. Interestingly enough, this historic Ukraine played little part in the independence movement fermented by the aggressive nationalism of Galicia (the westernmost part of Ukraine that had a completely separate history from the 13th century until 1939) and emboldened by the economic muscle of southern Ukraine, which belongs to the Breadbasket region. The Russian Empire wrested the southern grasslands from the Ottomans and nomads and largely settled the region with Russians. The historic separateness of Breadbasket Ukraine is well highlighted by a language division in which Russian-speakers even slightly outnumber Ukrainian-speakers. Adding Breadbasket ethnic statistics into all-Ukrainian figures is routinely used as false proof of Ukraine's Russification. In reality, the Ukrainian language prevails in the historic Ukraine, where 90 percent of the population call Ukrainian their mother tongue.

Deep historic and cultural cleavages persevere even within this Ukrainian portion of the South. The Dnieper remains a major divide. The East Bank is the most "authentically" Ukrainian part of Ukraine. Due to a relatively short period of serfdom and the absence of the village commune system, East Bankers have a reputation as the most thrifty and entrepreneurial of all Southerners. The East Bank experienced only a short period of Polish rule, while centuries of almost unperturbed control had strongly Polonized the West Bank. The West Bank's villages were dominated by Polish nobles, and its cities by Jewish merchants, while the East Bank was long dominated by native Cossack elite and developed an egalitarian ethos. Through ties of common history, East Bank Ukraine has a strong kinship with Russia, while the West Bank gravitates to the West. Only Kiev serves as a unifying link for these two parts of Ukraine.

One indicator that the South may be stuck in its relatively poor economic situation is its persistent ruralism. The plantation South had little need for towns and cities, and small market centers or the coastal plantations were enough to serve as local collection and transshipment points; larger cities were not needed, and therefore few in number. Today in such states as Georgia and South Carolina, fewer than one person in 25 can be thought of as farmers. But even though most Southerners have urban occupations they preserve a strong link with the countryside. The Carolinas, and the South in general, lead the nation in what the census calls the "rural non farm" population, i.e. people who live in the country but have a city job, people who love their family farms but now earn a living elsewhere.

One South or Many?

Change has created a Southern economic (and, in many ways, social) geography that looks a bit like a wildly distorted checker board. "Integration into the national economy" in fact means the growth of cities with activities that are not much different from cities elsewhere in the U.S. Large cities have dominated the South's economic surge, while much of the rest of the South has experienced far less change. The traditions of Georgia, however lacking they may seem in Atlanta, are alive and well across much of the rest of the state.

Is there more to the "South" than the geographic south itself? The region defined here may be only part of a wider southern cultural entity, yet perhaps the divisions may well be more visible than factors which bind the region together. In the United States, we speak of many Souths: thus, Appalachia was settled by southerners, but this Upland South was so opposed to the social system of planters' domination in the Lowland South that it took the side of the Union in the Civil War. The area consisting of adjoining parts of Kentucky, Tennessee, Arkansas, and Missouri, known as the Border South, combines cultural proximity to the South proper with economic orientation to
The scale of differences between parts of Ukraine is comparable to that between the Ukrainian and Russian parts of the South. The customs and ways of life of Ukrainians and Russians in the region are strikingly similar, and this close proximity seems obvious to outside observers. Thus the southern dialect of Russian language seems to speakers of standard Russian to be almost Ukrainian and just as “funny.” At the same time the majority of Ukrainians in reality speak the so-called surzhik, a Russo-Ukrainian mixture driving the purists to apoplexy. The traditional Ukrainian pejorative for Russians, moskali, literally means Muscovites, and conveys very southern resentment toward big government and northerners rather than toward fellow-Russians in the South. In fact, among those who hail from the South itself, the feeling of a common southern culture is stronger than ethnic divides. A good example is Nikita Khruushchev, a typical mercurial southerner who first brought southern speech into the Kremlin halls. Born in a Russian village in the south of Kursk Oblast, he made his political career in Ukraine and favored the republic in many ways, including the generous transfer of the Crimea from Russia to Ukraine in 1954. Today the dispute over the Crimea is among issues that antagonize the two states, but among common people relations are as cordial as ever: after all, according to the 1988 data, about half of all marriages in Ukraine were between mixed Russo-Ukrainian couples. While irresponsible politicians quarrel over maps, the people of the South know better.
are as likely as Southerners to say “right here.” They may well dislike the obvious disadvantages of their region (low wages, poverty), but southerners still have a special fondness for the South, and are likely to say that the best state is their own. Money is important, but the sense here is that it is not the only important element in a region’s quality of life.

“American by birth, Southern by the grace of God” is an often seen bumper sticker proclaiming a strong regional allegiance. The common opinion of people living elsewhere in the country is that the region is separate and somehow different, and no other section of the country possesses such regional persistence. Southerners know they are a people set apart in their own country, and gain a regional solidarity from their own sense of distinctiveness.
The beautiful provincial town of Yelabuga cozily nests on the high shore of
the Kama River right across from the huge industrial city of Naberezhnie
Chelny. Little in the town hints of the typical dull vistas of Russia’s industrial
heart just on the other side of the river; you cannot even hear the hum of
the massive truck assembly lines or the screeching noise of nearby oil
rigs. Surrounded by industrial giants, Yelabuga manages to preserve the
charm of an old merchants’ town. Well-built squat and solid stone houses
with warehouses on the ground floor hide behind secure iron-clad doors
and window trellises. The vistas from the Kama shore would do nicely
on the cover of a “Beauty of Russian Landscape” photo album. And yet,
paradoxically, the runaway industrialism of the Heartland provides the
necessary contrast that makes Yelabuga seem like such an idealized
Russian scene. Little wonder that the Russian landscape painting tradition
originated in the Heartland, and its founder, Ivan Shishkin, was born, lived,
and discovered inspiration in Yelabuga.

The city seems a strange spot indeed, all the more so because this very
Russian place and archetype of Russian landscapes ironically is located on
Tatar land.

It was the end of another day, and as he left the mammoth River Rouge
industrial complex, the worker mused about the immense contrasts that
repeatedly confronted him. Within miles of crumbling brick factories
abandoned decades ago were stylish steel structures within which
computer-controlled robots assembled new vehicles while workers
maintained supervisory watches. The gleaming glass-walled offices of
multi-national corporations stood beside modern shopping malls and
hotels, which were connected by an automated transport system of small
vehicles scurrying along on elevated monorails. After a few turns, however,
the worker drove down a thoroughfare that might well have been in 1970s
Beirut, as numerous small shops and restaurants owned by Lebanese
and other Middle Eastern immigrants crammed into storefronts that once
housed German markets.

He passed through areas where small, battered houses stood amid weed-
and asphalt-covered lots and zones where mansions lay protected behind
security gates and dense woods. The latter clearly spoke of the promise
that so many people had realized in the area. But as the man listened to
radio news reports of industrial plant closings and a new wave of random
murders, he realized that for many people, the promise was past and the
future looked grim.
MOTHER VOLGA: SOMETHING SACRED AND INDUSTRIAL

The region that embraces the middle section of the Volga river basin is the land which is the cornerstone of the sprawling Russian state. The Core may bind the country with invisible threads of political and intellectual control, but the Heartland cements Russia through its pivotal location and intense economic metabolism. While the Core had to build its supremacy purposefully by imposing over Russia a spidery web of radial roads, the Heartland is Russia’s predestined transportation hub. Here the mighty north-south tending trunk of the Volga branches to the west and the east, and this tree-shaped river system provides easy outlets into Central Asia, the Caucasus, and Siberia. In the era before railways, this great inland waterway was Russia’s commercial mainstreet, and later the road of trade became the road of industry. If the Core is an emanation of Moscow as the nation’s commanding brain, the Heartland was “made” by the Volga, the muscular working river which is the country’s backbone.

For Russians, the Volga has always been much more than just a river. Its popular image was well captured by the philosopher Rozanov: “a lot of what is sacred and something industrial.” The river’s unique life-nurturing and nation-building role is comparable to that of the Nile for Egypt. For a landlocked country, the Volga was the great internal sea, which opened wide horizons to the mind and many opportunities to enterprising souls. Little wonder that the river is venerated in folk culture as “Mother Volga,” the benefactor who breast-fed early Russian trade and industry, and it was on the shores of the Volga that Muscovy made a decisive step to become Rossiya, the world’s largest state.

Actually you can read the whole history of Russia in its shifting centers of gravity from one river basin to another. Early on and before the Muscovite period, ancient “Rus” churn cautiously to the North’s waterway which linked Viking and Byzantine lands, an imitative society out on the periphery of Europe. But with a bold step into the basins

MIDWEST: THE BACKBONE OF AMERICA

Soon after he resigned as President of General Motors to become U.S. Secretary of Defense in 1953, Charles Wilson stated, “For many years I thought what was good for our country was good for General Motors, and vice versa.” This declaration generated considerable controversy, as many Americans objected to its implicit assertion that a primary role of government was to serve the interests of private corporations. That perspective still engenders lively debate nearly a half-century later, but from another perspective, Wallace’s observation that the fates of major companies like General Motors and the nation as a whole are highly correlated still rings true. When the nation’s economy booms, when most people are working, when sales are high, General Motors has prospered. But when the American economy sours and the output of its factories sputters, many GM workers find themselves unemployed. In 1991, when the deficit of the federal government exceeded $350 billion, General Motors posted a loss of $3.5 billion, a mammoth amount for a private corporation. Just as the health of a body is related to the strength and consistency of the beating of the heart, so the economic and cultural health of the United States has been reflected in the prosperity and degeneration of the Heartland of America.

Commonly identified as part of the “Middle West,” the region may also be called “MidAmerica.” “Middle” is in many ways the key word describing the region. The mid-sized town served as the formative environment of the midwestern personality, and popular and literary images of American “Middletowns” have their prototypes in such places as Muncie and Kokomo, Indiana. The Midwest invented skyscrapers and is dominated by major metropolises today, but many of its cities have been described as lacking the cosmopolitan vigor of cities in the Core. Large corporations dominate the modern Midwestern industrial economy, but it also remains a region of healthy medium-sized farms. Henry Ford, J.D. Rockefeller, and other prominent industrialists
of the Oka and Upper Volga rivers, Muscovy (the Core) truly emerged and Russia almost severed its umbilical chord to Europe. Finally, the conquests of the Middle and Lower Volga from the 16th through late 19th centuries created a springboard for the impressive Russian thrust to the East that followed. Within a hundred years Russians jumped from the Volga shores all the way to the Pacific, and what had been the small core of Muscovy became the Russian Empire. It was here in the Heartland that Russia first emerged as an uneasy synthesis of European and Asian, Christian and Islamic worlds. The Heartland, with its largely non-Slavic population, became the model Russian melting pot.

Industrial growth in the 20th century only strengthened the region’s role as Russia’s strategic and geopolitical heart. During the Second World War the importance of the Heartland was recognized both by the Nazis, who saw control of the Volga as the key to victory, and the Soviets who chose Samara (Kuibyshev) as a reserve capital in case Moscow fell.

Swift Rapids and Quiet Eddies of Povolzhye

The traditional title for this region in Russian is Povolzhye, literally “along the Volga”, and its shape does indeed suggest the line and flow of the river itself. The major cities of the Volga, all with populations now ranging up to 1.5 million, were vital to the industrial expansion of the 1930s-1960s that solidified the character of Povolzhye as the industrial Heartland. Old cities which were once Russian fortresses, such as Kazan, Simbirsk (Ulyanovsk), Samara, Saratov, and Nizhni Novgorod (Gorky), acquired industrial satellites on the opposite bank of the river. Thus, a string of dual cities was created and the region’s urban corridor functioned much like the main channel of the powerful Volga.

who hailed from the region started out on farms and in small-town shops. Recent history shows the vulnerability of the corporate behemoths they established, but the family businesses likely would not have grown to such prominence had it not been for the economies of scale that could be achieved in this pivotal location.

It was in the Heartland that America really arrived as a mature world of its own rather than a European transplant clinging gingerly to the Atlantic seaboard. In the minds of many people in other parts of the world, things American are Midwestern. Cultural geographer Raymond Gastil commented, “It is a commercially minded area because of its New England heritage, yet ruggedly individualistic as a heritage from the Upper South. It is here that the rationalism of nineteenth-century Yankees fused with the familialism and folk beliefs of central Pennsylvania and the Upper South to produce a new industrial folk ideology. The American cult of the average, which in fact gives the average man a good deal, owes much to the Middle West. In this region reform has generally been a middle-class rather than upper- or lower-class concern. This naturally follows, for the middle class rules. The Heartland has historically served and largely remains as the backbone of America the citadel of its values and economic might.

In the Shadow of Smokestacks

The American Heartland is first and foremost a set of industrial cities. The major urban corridor running from Buffalo, Cleveland, and Toledo along Lake Erie to Milwaukee and Chicago on Lake Michigan lines the Great Lakes, the unsurpassable natural artery of commerce. Many smaller aging industrial cities speak of the former importance of local resources. Geographers traditionally have seen the Heartland as the western part of the “American Manufacturing Belt.” The Belt is not limited to the U.S. though. Across the transparent border, southern Ontario is a spillover of the same industrial Heartland, replete with
subsidiary plants of many U.S. corporations, while Toronto is regarded as a twin of Chicago, one of the most representative American cities. Most of the remainder of the Manufacturing Belt falls within the Core, but only in a small stretch of upstate New York do the Core and Heartland abut against each other. Though the corridor south of Lake Erie links the Atlantic Coast and the interior areas, the cities at each end of it look in opposite directions both literally and figuratively. Buffalo may be within the same state as New York City, but the latter faces across the Atlantic and considers itself the senior sibling in a family of ports that includes Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Boston, while Buffalo faces west and sees its problems and potentials mirrored in cities like Cleveland and Detroit. Finance, trade, and other forms of commercial activity may be more common in the cities of the Core, but Heartland metropolises have throbbed to industrial rhythms. The Heartland’s boundary from the west is that line beyond which the smokestacks and storage tanks of Heartland factories cast deep shadows over nearby fields, and agriculture takes a backseat to industrial enterprises.

In other directions, the boundaries of the region are the product of natural forces that led other areas to be less conducive to industry. As you head south toward the Ohio River, you move away from the areas of recent continental glaciation which scooped out the Great Lakes into more rough terrain. To the north, denser forest cover and thinner soils that reflect harsher climatic conditions and more frequent glacial erosion inhibit development. Thus the Heartland is surrounded by areas of greater natural wealth in terms of forests, minerals, and soils, but the costs of moving goods, or processing them in the more rugged terrain are higher. The Heartland has always relied on the relative ease with which it could establish and maintain superior transportation networks, and its central location among diverse neighbors to draw in raw materials for processing in its factories. As a result, the magnitude of the circulation of people and goods has been one of its most distinctive characteristics.

But the Heartland is also a place of quiet backwaters in its outer boundaries. These rural hinterlands have largely non-Slavic people which creates the melting pot image of the region. What links them to the main channel are urban centers located on the tributaries of the Volga, possessing the same diversified manufacturing base as the larger cities. These linking cities are themselves largely Russian and belong to the region’s main urban rapids. For example, heavily industrialized Izhevsk also serves as the capital of the nominally non-Slavic Udmurts’ republic, and Ufa, a major petrochemical center and million-plus city, is the capital of Bashkortostan. Several smaller centers on the Volga (Cheboksary, Yoshkar-Ola and Saransk) are the capitals of other autonomous republics of the non-Russian peoples of the Middle Volga area. The compact blocks of native populations appear on the map to be facing away from major river corridors, cut off by nearly uninterrupted currents of Russian predominance. On all four sides the middle-Volga variety of native people is encircled by purely Russian territories, and this ethnic divide helps to draw the boundaries of the diverse region. The area north of the latitudinal stretch of Volga and Kama with its forests and Finno-Ugric speaking native Mary and Udmurt people strongly resembles the North. South of that line, fertile soils dominate, and the native people speak Turkic languages (with the exception of the Mordvinians). With such a diverse ethnic and economic landscape, it is no surprise that it takes a river like the Volga, the Heartland’s great inland waterway and backbone, to hold the region together.
Under the rolling clouds of the prairie a moving mass of steel. An irritable clank and rattle beneath a prolonged roar. The sharp scent of oranges cutting the soggy smell of unbathed people and ancient baggage. Towns as planless as a attic floor...It is September, hot, very dusty...Here-she meditated- an attic floor...It is September, hot, very dusty. The traveler's feet become dusty and sore; only the leaves of oaks and maples are stiff, as if made of tin, and it takes more than a man's strength to split a pine; only the leaves of oaks and maples are stiff, as if made of tin, and it takes more than a man's strength to split a pine. The Volga region enjoyed unique advantages of location that helped it become a Main Street through the Eurasian continent. What it was to be Russia's Heartland long ago was also the focus for commerce and kingdoms of many diverse peoples. Just as trade along the Dnieper created the early Slav state of Kievian Rus, so commerce that linked Europe with the Islamic Orient via the Volga created a cradle where many states were formed along the great river. By the 10th century both areas had adopted the religion of the southern ends of their trade routes: Christianity on the Dnieper and Islam on the Volga. The first Volga state was formed by a branch of the same people who gave their name to modern Bulgaria. These Volga Bulgars traded with Central Asia by way of Astrakhan and across the Caspian Sea or by caravan routes. After the Mongol invasions of the early Middle Ages swept through, the Kazan Khazante (a kingdom governed by a Khan) or leader inherited this trade. The Volga (or Kazan) Tatars are thus descendants of the ancient Bulgars and other local tribes, but with a strong Mongol element. This complex genesis is mirrored in the confusion surrounding the very name "Tatars." The Mongols used "Tatar" as a pejorative term for all conquered people, but gradually as the never-ending trade routes therefore made it an empire-builder, a crucially important region that served as springboard for the major thrust of frontier movement. Leaders in the rapidly settling states of southern Ohio, and Illinois saw great opportunities for building canals between the streams draining into the Great Lakes and tributaries of the Ohio River. But despite the improvements the canals provided, they quickly fell into disuse when railroads arrived in the region and provided even broader, better, and cheaper service. By 1870 the Heartland had the nation's densest rail network. Freight costs fell dramatically, and shipments reached eastern ports in three days or less. Detroit's pivotal location along the waterways connecting Lake Huron and Lake Erie epitomized the locational advantages of waterway-based centers, but Chicago took greatest advantage of the railroad. Using land grants and investment schemes, Chicago made itself the terminus of more than a dozen lines. For nearly a century, most rail shipments passing through the north central U.S. were transferred from one line to another, under the rolling clouds of the prairie a moving mass of steel.
Thus never barbarian, the early Heartland became the scene of rivalry between two matched and intermingling rivals, as the Russian and Tartar states met and established emisary cities along their mutual Main Street. The Kasimov Khanate on the Oka River served as a waiting station for Moscow-backed claimants to the Kazan kingdom. In turn, the Russian city of Nizhni Novgorod was founded on the Volga in the 13th century to spearhead downstream colonization movement and has been the connecting hinge between the Core and Heartland ever since.

In the 16th century, with the formal annexation of Kazan (which had been Russia's dependency for much of its brief history) and Astrakhan as the Caspian end, Russian merchants inherited their trade routes to the Orient. Commerce was long limited, however, to luxury items because of primitive transport technology. Flat-bottomed boats were pulled upstream by teams of the so-called burlaks, the famed Volga boatmen or barge-haulers, and the journey could take months. Economic growth on the Volga was greatly spurred only with the wide introduction of steamboats in the 1850s, when the Volga truly became the Main Street of the country at last. The eastward shift of Russia's population helped propel the changes. By the early 19th century, Russia's population east of the Volga had caught up with that to the west, and the Heartland could enjoy a pivotal location in the emerging all-Russian market. Grain from the Breadbasket and salt from Kazakh saltpans were carried upstream, later supplemented by far more important cotton from Central Asia, coal from Donetzk basin and oil from the Caucasus. Downstream, the main commodities were northern lumber and industrial products from the Core. Trade thrived in those prime locations where the Volga made sharp bends and several overland routes converged. Thus, Kazan is located near the point of confluence of the Volga and Kama rivers. Samara prospered on the famous loop of the Volga where it flows around the so-called Zhiguli mountains.

The Heartland's industrial boom created a peculiar "mercantile" element of regional culture. Because industrial success in the Middle West generally resulted from real productive achievement rather than speculation, no moral stigma was associated with wealth. Those who accumulated money commanded additional respect when that money was used for public benefit. Philanthropists like Rockefeller and Andrew Carnegie endowed numerous projects that gave them popular prestige unknown to aristocrats and other rich people elsewhere. Middle Western attitudes toward material success were reflected in other cultural traits like pecuniarism, the measurement of a person's standing based on income; functionalism, which placed great emphasis on how "useful" people and things were; and conspicuous consumption. Salesmanship became the hallmark of the Midwesterner, and in the Heartland more than in any other region success in business was regarded as a proper purpose in life. Midwesterners also came to be strong believers in technology, as industrial know-how was often the key to prosperity. The region became known for its technological competence and its many
innovators. In part, early development of steam-powered devices was encouraged by the flatness of the terrain, which ruled out extensive use of waterwheels. The relatively flat topography also permitted the ready adoption of automobiles in the 20th Century. Motor vehicles required smooth, dependable roads, and as had been true with the expansion of railroads, the Heartland led the way in the provision of improved roads. When the burgeoning number of cars quickly overwhelmed old two-lane highways, the region's engineers responded by constructing "dual highways" with limited points of access, the forerunners of modern freeways. Among the earliest were the tollroads leading from Chicago across northern Indiana and Ohio. By 1947, Ohio, Illinois, and Michigan were among the nation's leaders in terms of miles of multi-lane highways. As the nation's network of freeways expanded to provide all parts of the U.S. with high-speed roadways and as airports were improved to provide all major cities with ready access to air service, the transportation supremacy of the Heartland somewhat diminished. Nevertheless, for nearly 50 years, the nation's busiest airport has been in Chicago and more recently, Pittsburgh, Detroit, and Cleveland emerged as major airline hubs.

For nearly two centuries, the Heartland has been the region through which a vast share of the nation's movement has been channelled. Walter Havinghurst saw this land without barriers as an avenue through which restless people moved on to new frontiers beyond the Mississippi. To cross the country you still must cross the Heartland.
The Foundry Turned Rustbelt

The long-established link between the Heartland’s transport role and its economic profile was only strengthened with the 20th century arrival of the automobile industry. Building on earlier successes in wagon and carriage production, the Detroit area emerged as a production center for motor vehicles in the first decades of the century. Henry Ford ensured his company leadership in the nascent industry by using mass-production techniques to rapidly assemble large numbers of inexpensive yet dependable cars. As Detroit’s two largest firms, General Motors and Ford, rapidly expanded, the Heartland became the preeminent motor vehicle manufacturing center in the world.

The two giant companies speeded the establishment of related industrial operations throughout the Heartland as they strove to control nearly all aspects from iron mining and steel production to the transportation of finished cars to dealers. The explosive growth of automobile sales throughout the first half of the century sent repeated waves of automobile-related manufacturing expansion across the Heartland. Such industries as rubber in Akron and glass in Toledo provided products used by other industries, and manufacturing diversified in the region.

By 1950 almost one third of the value added in U.S. manufacturing came from the Heartland. But by 1986, that share dropped to less than one quarter, as many relative advantages of the Heartland faded. To a great extent, Heartland industries fell victim to their earlier successes. Many of the massive investments in facilities and equipment made in earlier decades became obsolete. Many industries also seemed to lose the determination that fueled their earlier ascendancy. Both Ford and General Motors, which had pioneered automobile manufacturing, were known for their conservatism by the 1970s, and only when foreign autobuilders severely eroded their markets did they respond with new designs and operating procedures. The assembly lines constructed during World War II were becoming obsolete, and the skilled labor forces of Heartland cities became increasingly expensive and superfluous as many operations were

Marketplace Turned Workshop

The industrial ascendency of the Heartland started modestly with lumber and flour mills at transshipment points, but the energetic drive of the Volga merchants soon assured it a prominent place in technical innovation and industrial growth. It was on the Volga that oil was used in railway and ship engines for the first time in the world, or the first Russian mechanized lumberyards appeared. From modest beginnings in ship repair, Sormovo works in Nizhnii Novgorod grew into Russia’s major general engineering manufacturers, shipbuilder, and car-maker. But the real development spurt arrived during the Soviet industrial revolution. With the general shift of Soviet industry to the east, the Heartland found itself midway to Siberian mineral resources. During the Second World War large-scale oil production began in the Tatar and Bashkir republics, and before the later oil bonanza in West Siberia, the Heartland was the nation’s leading producer, accounting for 60 percent of oil output. Nowadays the share of the region has dwindled to 20 percent, but its leadership has already been firmly established in petrochemical and chemical industries. Location of other heavy industries was promoted by the attraction of abundant water and cheap electricity from the large hydroelectric stations on the Volga.

Large-scale transport projects undertaken between the 1930s and the 1950s improved the Heartland’s position as a transport hub. Three canals, the Volga-Baltic, Volga-Don, and Volga-Moscow, finally created the unified system of waterways for all of European Russia conceived so many years earlier. Even if these improvements arrived when the role of river transport was increasingly taken over by railroads, automobiles, and pipelines, the region’s transport supremacy persisted. All major oil and gas pipelines from Siberia still cross this ancient Main Street on the way west to domestic and foreign consumers.

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As if oil alone were not enough, other transport-related industry was drawn into the region, continuing the symbolic link between the Heartland's main street role and its industrial profile. The Heartland is the dominant automobile-manufacturer in Russia. The three biggest automobile producers in the country formed “auto triangle” within the region. Its three apexes were in Naberezhnie Chelny (where the KAMAZ truck factory is located), Togliatty (the VAZ factory mass-produced the Soviet “people’s car” -Zhiguli) and in Nizhniy Novgorod (GAZ factory turned out cars and trucks). KAMAZ and VAZ were conceived on a grand scale as breakthrough projects in the Soviet attempt to overcome the backwardness of the auto industry, and they are the worlds two largest individual auto factories. Togliatty and Naberezhnie Chelny may well be the world’s largest company towns as well, both growing from scratch in the 1960s to exceed a half-million by 1990. In the smaller towns, these automobile giants spawned a whole panoply of supporting industries turning out anything from car electronics to tires to draperies. Faithful to its romance with the transport industry, the Heartland is also the major focus of the nation’s civil and military aviation industry.

In the turbulent world of post-Soviet ethnic resurgence, control of the major industrial and transport assets of the Heartland has become a trump card in the hands of new nationalist movements. Tatarstan alone is in a position to block the supplies of practically all Russian oil and natural gas, and to cut the trans-Siberian and Volga routes. Such threats are a sharp reminder that the great river of Russia is not so Russian after all, but the melting pot of many nationalities.

THEME 2: THE ETHNIC SALAD BOWL

Intense economic metabolism aside, the Heartland’s pivotal location also set in motion some intricate ethnic chemistry: An insight into its peculiarly Russian “melting pot” is provided by the history of the Tatars, who experienced a longer period and greater degree of Russian political control, cultural influence and modernization than any automated and as new factories were built in places where labor costs were far lower. The massive blast furnaces that symbolized the power of the steel industry became obsolete as new technologies reduced the demand for heavier metals or offered new, smaller scale ways of producing them. Between 1977 and 1986, the number of industrial jobs in the region declined by nearly 20 percent. The precipitous drop in manufacturing left the Manufacturing Belt reeling, inspiring the new and somewhat pejorative name “Rustbelt” for the region.

Still, even as smokestacks retreat into memories, industrial decline is countered somewhat by the construction of new plants in new Heartland locations where the most advanced technology reestablishes the region’s competitiveness. While no longer the dominant industrial concentration within the United States, the Heartland remains an area where diversified manufacturing operates at scales evident in few other places on the globe.

THEME 2: THE ETHNIC SALAD BOWL

The region was not only a crucible of American industrialism, but also a melting pot for the evolving mainstream culture. The roots of the region’s remarkable population diversity were established quite early, soon after American independence, when a series of forced Native American land cessions were converted into the sale of individual tracts to new settlers. Eager migrants converged on these easily cultivable flat lands from all directions. Immigrants from New England and New York who used the Erie route generally flocked to the northern parts of the Heartland. Those coming from Pennsylvania and states farther south traversed the mountain passes that conveyed them into the Ohio River system along the Heartland’s southern margin. The arrival of many southerners helped create a representative cross-section of “old stock” Americans. The linguistic blending of these diverse people produced a dialect that many believe provides the norm of standard American speech.
other Islamic people in Russia, and yet appear today to be far from Russified, possessing a thriving ethnic culture and strong nationalism. With 5.5 million people, the Tatars are the Russian federation's largest minority.

As diverse elements mixed in the homogenizing environment of the Heartland, the prototypical Middle Western character was formed, of which Alan Parker asked, "Is it too fanciful to see in its upper reaches the drives, acuity, shrewdness, and hardness of the Yankee combined with the animal energy, competence and sturdiness of the German peasant, and among its common people an emotionality, tempered by a sophistication about human suffering, that must have belonged to a people that grew up among the moral and human ambiguities of southern slavery?" Finally, Pennsylvanian Quakers added to the mix, and their steadfastness and careful behavior were traits which became a hallmark of Midwestern business.

Following the "old stock" population were Italian, Irish, and East European immigrants, who arrived in the Heartland in greater numbers than in either the North or the South. This new wave first appeared in the latter decades of the 1800s, when new opportunities increasingly concentrated in the region's cities. The industrial jobs seen as less desirable by already established Americans were filled willingly by newer immigrants. It was during this time that Chicago earned its reputation as the second most populous Polish city in the world, and Cleveland's West Side became an amalgam of eastern European nationalities as complex and diverse as the lands between the Baltic and Adriatic seas. As industrial development continued, employment opportunities in Heartland cities attracted Americans from the south. Many blacks forsook the economic bonds that left them shackled to the rural south for decades and moved to Heartland industrial centers, with major movements occurring during both world wars and continuing into the 1960s.

This mixture of peoples seemingly made the Heartland the nation's preeminent melting pot. However, the coalescence of significant numbers of so many types of people from so many different places was highly uneven. Groups more similar to the white, English-speaking, economically successful citizens that came to symbolize American culture tended to assimilate themselves into that culture, readily discarding their old practices. As diverse elements mixed in the homogenizing environment of the Heartland, the prototypical Middle Western character was formed, of which Alan Parker asked, "Is it too fanciful to see in its upper reaches the drives, acuity, shrewdness, and hardness of the Yankee combined with the animal energy, competence and sturdiness of the German peasant, and among its common people an emotionality, tempered by a sophistication about human suffering, that must have belonged to a people that grew up among the moral and human ambiguities of southern slavery?" Finally, Pennsylvanian Quakers added to the mix, and their steadfastness and careful behavior were traits which became a hallmark of Midwestern business.

After the Russian conquest under Tsar Ivan IV, crusading policies were at times harsh but never consistent, and the Islamic population of the Volga was not displaced or forced into conversion. The freedoms of Volga Tatars in the Empire were finally secured during the enlightened reigns of Catherine the Great, who regarded the Muslims as a civilizing influence on other peoples of the Volga and favored them. The official encouragement of Tatar trade with Kazakh steppes led to the rise of the rich commercial Tatar bourgeoisie in the 19th century. Of the greatest importance in transforming Tatars into a modern nation were Russian policies that strongly favored education in the native Tatar language (rather than in traditional Arabic). The first printing press publishing religious books in the Arabic script was opened in Kazan by the Russian government as early as 1802 (the second Arabic press in the Islamic world). Turning out thousands of titles, the printing press effectively countered any proselytizing attempted by the same government. By the late 19th century, new Tatar schools appeared which focused on teaching the Arabic alphabet in a way suited to spoken Tatar. This helped Tatar to emerge as a literary language, and a veritable mania of Tatar book publishing followed, creating new bonds of culture and language.

In the field of tension between the secularizing impact of historically close Russians, and religious influences from distant Islamic brethren, a religious-secular symbiosis was forged, a new strong identity held together by emerging Tatar nationalism. In marked contrast to the conservative Islam propagated from Central Asia, Tatar reformers advocated more flexible Islam tuned to modern challenges. Armed with their cosmopolitan "Eurasian" culture, Kazan Tatars came to fulfill the role of mediators between Russians and the peripheral Islamic peoples of the Empire, and helped spread Russian influence deeper into Asia. At least until the 1920s, they remained the other Islamic people in Russia, and yet appear today to be far from Russified, possessing a thriving ethnic culture and strong nationalism. With 5.5 million people, the Tatars are the Russian federation's largest minority.

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in order to conform to the norm. People who were more distinctively different because of their skin colors, accents, or ways of life were less likely to be accepted, however, and discriminatory practices and sometimes violence accompanied their settlement in the region. More so than in any other part of the nation, wealthier and middle-class residents of Heartland cities responded to growing diversity through rigid spatial segregation of communities. In record numbers they moved to suburban locations where houses and lawns were larger, schools were funded amply to provide better education, and fewer people who were different were encountered. Countless old neighborhoods were allowed to deteriorate, turning many locales into readily recognizable symbols of inner city decay and racial tension. Heartland commentators once pointed with pride to the emergence of a hybrid American culture created in the “melting pot,” believing that the best characteristics of those groups blended together in a distinctive new entity. As the end of the 20th Century approached, however, observers seeking to cast reality in the best possible light came to talk of a demographic “salad bowl” within which different people maintained their own distinct identities while working together.

In addition to being the place where a composite American identity was being forged, however incompletely, the Heartland was instrumental in working out quite a few valuable elements of the American cultural heritage. Although the region acquired wealth rapidly, and life focused on economic enterprise, its social character did not degenerate into the individualistic pursuit of profit at any price. The foundations that preserved the essential liberalism of that society were education and justice. The respect for practical education was deeply imprinted in the psyche of major groups that settled the region, especially the Puritans and Quakers. Since the mid-1800s, a proliferation of land grant universities set high educational standards and produced armies of skilled public servants. Southern individualism was balanced by the Puritan belief that freedom in society includes the willing acceptance of an orderly discipline.

undisputed leaders of cultural and political life of Russia’s Muslims. Even today, a large segment of the educated urban elites in Central Asia and Kazakhstan are Tatars, and Tatar communities are dispersed all across Russia.

Among other Volga peoples, Islam and Tatar influence fully prevailed among the Bashkirs, while Russian influence proved stronger among the Mary, Udmurt, Mordvin and Chuvash peoples, who by the 18th century were Christian and had largely adopted Russian ways. Even in facial features it is hard to tell Russians from native Volga peoples, since both are products of an ethnic cocktail. Names and facial features of many local Russians lend credence to the proverb “scrape a Russian and you’ll find a Tatar.” Lenin, who was born in Simbirsk, is a good example: his father was Chuvash, while his mother was German, and the leader of the Russian revolution hardly looked a Slav at all. Today the native inhabitants of the Heartland are barely distinguishable from Russians in levels of education or social mobility. They participated in the Slav colonization movement to previously vacant tracts in the region, furthering an incredibly complicated pattern of interspersed settlement of various ethnic groups. The Russian attempt to carve autonomous territories from this crazy patchwork of ethnic groups was but high-minded idealism. Thus only a third of all Russia’s Tatars live in Tatarstan, while in Bashkortostan, Tatars actually outnumber Bashkirs.

For all the impact of a mostly Russian population and considerable modernization, the Volga peoples are far from dissolved in the Russian sea. Throughout the Soviet period the proportion of native groups in the Heartland remained nearly unchanged. While most residents are bilingual, full linguistic assimilation into Russian is very limited and not growing. In four hundred years of Russian control, native groups were changed but not annihilated or assimilated, as often the case in western nations. In the Heartland’s “bowl” the ethnic salad is still very fresh.

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This freedom was derived and also curbed by laws, which emerged as a real foundation of American society.

Building on the earlier frontier spirit of mutual aid, the region helped shape a very American answer to the dilemma of how to reconcile individual rights with collective responsibilities. Alan Parker thought that this response was best illustrated by the phenomenon of individualistic friendliness. Individualistic in their businesses, Midwesterners “were generous to neighbors and combined readily in community projects. Clubs, churches, circles, lodges, societies flourished in the Midwest soil the more so because their members felt themselves to be free and equal individuals. And certainly there were some who found in such association the means to respect and status that seemed so hard to achieve in a near-egalitarian society.” The blunt character of intellectual and political life in the Middle West was the reverse side of this venerable egalitarianism. Seeing themselves as pragmatic doers, Heartland residents often have taken what they like to think is a no-nonsense, business-like attitude to the world. Such an approach often has appeared to others as overly simplistic. The region’s political culture is strongly job-oriented, in contrast with more liberal, issue-oriented politics in the North, or the Core.

If Midwestern beliefs and values are not universally accepted in the United States today, they remain close to the image that many people in other nations have of America as a whole. This foreign association may result from the fact that in the period when America was rising spectacularly to world dominance, the Midwest was America. The region largely embodies the great period of industrial revolution, booming growth, swelling immigration, and socio-economic change roughly from the Civil War through the 1930s. Those were self-confident times when fortunes accumulated with regularity, and the values of capitalism and American democracy were hardly ever questioned. Not coincidentally, the period was an era of Republican Party dominance. Over a 44-year period from 1869 to 1913, six of nine U.S. presidents hailed from Ohio, and one

The Volga has not become a Russian river in the narrow ethnic sense, but more in a spiritual sense, the unifier of Rossiya and its culture which transcends narrow ethnic limits. Even though the Heartland opened the history of Russian expansionism, it is far more representative of the expansiveness of the Russian character, of its ability to adapt to other cultures and to peacefully coexist with them. Among the people of the Volga, the eternal contradictions of the Russian soul were tempered by traditions of learning and pragmatism. The educational feats of the Tatars reflect the belief of Volga eoples in practical learning as a vehicle for individual achievement. It was in the Heartland that the first Russian provincial university was opened in 1804, and it enjoyed far wider than provincial fame, especially in sciences. Quite in contrast to the refined intellectuals of the capitals, the Volga peoples were distrustful of education for education’s sake. These were self-made practical people, whose careers were due not to aristocratic privilege, but to abilities. The most action-oriented (and successful) of all Russian social democrats, Vladimir Lenin, obtained at Kazan university the professional profession of a lawyer. Another lawyer who came from Simbirsk was Kerensky - the prime minister of Russian short-lived democratic republic in 1917. And appropriately enough, Lenin's and Kerensky's fathers were both educators. Spirituality and pragmatism, Lenin and Kerensky, solid merchants and unruly burlocks - many mutually opposite Russian traits and types were fostered by and peacefully coexisted on the Volga. The river had room for both individualism and collectivism, provoking in such thinkers as Rozanov a purely Russian answer to universal dilemma of individual vs collective - the notion of sobornost' (togetherness), where balance is reached on a moral basis.

In the words of Rozanov, the Volga “...moved everything ahead, moved somehow nobly, without impertinence or coercion.” The Heartland is indeed the embodiment of Russia “on the move.” The heyday of the region was in the great period of economic change and cultural florescence in Russia, roughly between 1861 and 1917, the

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of the other three came from the Heartland portion of upstate New York. As the relative economic stature of the region has slipped in recent years, however, so has its political prominence. Since 1930, the only Heartland residents to fill one of the nation’s top two positions were Gerald Ford and Dan Quayle.

times of fast-growing and self-confident capitalist Russia. Will the region, long overshadowed by Moscow’s omnipotence, regain its prominence in the new times of change? It may be too early to tell, but Nizhnii Novgorod’s leadership in market-oriented economic reforms may be a harbinger of the region’s revival as Russia’s inner heart.
Linking up Russia’s railways with those of Europe at Brest is not an easy task, perhaps because the track widths do not match. Train delays are caused by the change from the European railway gauge to the wider Russian one, a choice made in the 1840s in a conscious attempt to prevent the possibility of western attack by railway. The history of the region suggests that the precaution was far from paranoid. But even in peacetime, the bustling railway station in Brest has always been the major entry point into Russia from the West. Around the battered trains bound for Warsaw or Minsk swarm crowds of luggage laden characters, whose clandestine border trade activity bears witness to close links between Poland and Belarus. There also are elegant trains of uncrowded sleeping cars, bound for Paris or Berlin. For their passengers, Brest with its unnerving delays and even Belarus itself is but a nuisance on the trunk road between Russia and the West. A short ride from the station is one of the major symbols of Soviet resistance to Germany in the Second World War the famous border fortress of Brest which was besieged and defended to the last man under German attack in 1941. This defense earned Brest the distinction of being called the premier Hero city, but also left it fully destroyed. Aside from the gloomy ruins of the fortress and the frenzy of the station, it was the ultimate Soviet city of standardized apartment blocks that could have been anywhere in the USSR.

The waters of the Mississippi and Ohio rivers near Cairo, Illinois do not blend smoothly. To a towboat captain pushing a tightly strapped barge up river, the Mississippi’s thicker brown waters become distinct from the thinner and creamier Ohio, supporting writer Jonathon Raban’s observation that the mixing of the waters from the two rivers was “a confluence of thick machine oil and rosewater...so different that it was hard to believe they could fuse into a single element without curdling.” At the junction itself, the tow will head one way or the other, but this is only the first of many channel choices the pilot will make. Within a few hundred miles, more channels appear as the Missouri and Illinois flow into the Mississippi, while a shorter reach along the Ohio would encounter the Tennessee, Cumberland, and Wabash. In fact, decisions made along this stretch of streams could ultimately lead boaters in all compass directions because at this mid-continent meeting point, north meets south and east grades into west. But the crossroads where the waters mix in an uneasy union is a truly a place of transition, and the primary bonds of the people here are to regions on the outside.
**BETWEEN RUSSIA AND THE WEST**

Some atlases have a two-page spread of Europe out to the Urals, and there is one section of the map that usually ends up in the page binding. Perhaps this fact is symbolic of the mixed identity of the Crossroads: its history, political boundaries, and exchanges of dominant ethnicities all bear witness to a place with a turbulent location. The story of the Crossroads is that of Russia's borderland, for centuries caught in a devastating tug of war between Russia and the West. With fortunes of the contending sides shifting many times, their overlapping imprints created a region where the transition from Russia to Belarus to Poland is nearly imperceptible, a violent playing field facilitated by a lack of physical barriers to movement.

The fortress of Brest guards what is in fact a narrow bottleneck opening the easiest road from Europe into Russia. To the south along the river Pripet' are formidable marshes and forests, nearly impassable for mass movements of peoples and armies. To the north, ancient glaciation erected barriers of barren sandy hills covered with dense pine forests and surrounded with thousands by lakes. Between lies an elevated watershed known as the Belorussian Ridge that goes all the way from Brest to Smolensk. In this amphibian land of rivers, lakes and marshes, the Ridge offers the only convenient dry route from the West into the Core of Russia. Not surprisingly, ever since the first Russo Polish conflicts in the 16th century, the Crossroads has been a veritable theater of war, and the axis from Brest to Moscow became the corridor of overland invasions.

While the Crossroads includes portions of western Russia and northern Ukraine, Belarus takes up much of the region. The heroic role of the Crossroads as first line of defense against invaders from the West is epitomized by the popular image of Belarus known to all people of the former USSR: that of the indomitable “Partisan Republic” which withstood so much abuse from Hitler’s forces. But geography was no friend to the Crossroads, and the landscape allowed armies to roll relatively quickly even over

**BETWEEN NORTH AND SOUTH**

The Crossroads of the United States pops up all over the place in an atlas: smaller sectional maps may have portions of it variously in the Northeast or the Central region or the Southeast. Because it is a region which is everywhere and nowhere at once, it has a poor identity for many Americans. Sometimes, the area has been called “The Border South,” presenting the image of a transition zone, particularly during the Civil War when it was torn between the Union and Confederacy. Culturally, the region is definitely more southern than northern. On the other hand, its economic orientation is North, not South. Agicultural and industrial economies in southern Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio as well as central Kentucky are tied strongly to urban centers in the Northeast. Yet to say this region is merely a transition zone would do disservice to its full identity.

Perhaps the Crossroads is just a place of leftovers and “between-ness.” for it does indeed borrow from each of the surrounding regions. The Crossroads does not have the far more prosperous economy of the Heartland or the Breadbasket, and the irregularity of its meres and bounds land survey contrasts with flat geometric terrain north of the Ohio river. It is culturally close to the Old Mountains, but is far more densely settled and less marginal economically. Even the Ozarks, which many geographers would regard as an outpost of Appalachia, are far better suited for agriculture, are more actively farmed, and enjoy higher educational standards, to say nothing of the recent influx of amenity-seeking transplants (tourists and retirees) from the north. Perhaps the Crossroads is exactly as the name implies: a transition or “fusion” zone where transportation lines criss-cross the territory of mid-America - a region smack in the middle, a bridge for the country's traffic, both literally and culturally.

The truth seems to be that the Crossroads is all of these, and yet the sum is much more than the parts merely added up. If the region is a cultural transition zone and a
Belarus, with resistance growing toward the east. The Crossroads lured various historic enemies until they were stopped in decisive battles almost at the walls of Moscow. In fact, the eastern boundary of the region can be drawn along a line of cities which have seen more than their share of battles over the centuries from Borodino, where Napoleon lost 50,000 of his troops, to Bryansk, a city vital to the Soviet Army’s return threat against Germany in 1943.

Perhaps the place which most epitomizes the cost in human blood of controlling the Crossroads is Smolensk, Russia’s foremost city of military glory and Moscow’s gatekeeper from the west. From the early 16th century, the shield belt from Smolensk to Chernigov served as Moscow’s military frontier with Poland, and until Russia’s decisive victory over Poland in 1667, Smolensk changed hands four times. When Hitler invaded in 1941, Smolensk again put up a valiant but futile defense which slowed the German advance. The total human loss to the Crossroads region during the Second World War was greater than for any other part of Europe: one quarter to one half of the population perished. It took Belarus almost thirty years to bring its census numbers back to prewar levels, while in the Russian segment of the Crossroads, the population count has never recovered.

In a region of such volatile identity, political boundaries have likewise traveled back and forth in the competition between Russia and the Polish-Lithuanian state. The 13th century had brought disarray to Russia after the Mongol invasion, and the Grand Principality of Lithuania used this to its advantage, taking over the Slavic lands of the Crossroads. Russia did not manage to regain the lands of present day Belarus until 1395. But in 1920 Poland again prevailed over a weakened Russia and occupied the western part of Belarus (and Ukraine) until 1939.

In this land of shifting boundaries, the international border on its western edge is the line of cities which have seen more than their share of battles over the centuries from Borodino, where Napoleon lost 50,000 of his troops, to Bryansk, a city vital to the Soviet Army’s return threat against Germany in 1943. The Crossroads straddles the confluence of the country’s three greatest rivers - the Mississippi, Ohio, and Missouri - and in the pre-railroad era this was the natural transportation intersection for the continent’s interior. This water route’s northern section is the St. Lawrence waterway opening up into the Great Lakes, while the southern channels are the Mississippi and Ohio rivers. The role of the link between the two is the easy portage between the headwaters of rivers flowing respectively into the Great Lakes and the Ohio-Mississippi system. Until 1763 both terminals of this great river arc were controlled by the French, who were firmly established in Montreal and New Orleans. Realizing early that the region held the key position on the St. Lawrence-Mississippi axis, the French established trading outposts within the Crossroads as early as 1701-1703. Finally they founded Saint Louis, which was to eclipse its predecessors as the great midway city, near the confluence of the Mississippi and Missouri in 1763, the same year that France lost all of its American territory: Quebec to Britain and the Louisiana territory to Spain.

But by that time a new player was emerging in the fight for the interior - the thirteen British coastal colonies. The French were spread too thinly across their huge territory and their trade was almost exclusively with the indigenous populations. The coastal colonies, on the other hand, had built up sufficient demographic pressure to make westward colonization relentless once they could bridge the Appalachians. In the early 19th century, the decisive role in the fight for the continental dominance belonged not to the old French North-South trade axis, but to the East-West axis of American frontier movement along the Ohio-Missouri line.
and Lithuania (which included Belarus) as early as the 14th century. A geographer attempting to draw the boundaries of the Crossroads in other directions may well decide it is a “leftover” region, less distinct than its neighbors with more precise characteristics. The region includes small portions of adjacent Lithuania, Russia, and Ukraine, all marked by dense forests and peculiar, in-between cultures. The identity of these three interfaces is so fuzzy that native residents define themselves simply as “locals,” rather than by any ethnic label.

A certain “watery” elusiveness of the region’s character seems to mirror its amphibian environment. Plenty of rain, a water-retaining forest canopy, and widespread marshes account for an extremely dense network of rivers and lakes. Spring floods inundate large areas and are frequently of catastrophic dimensions. But if rivers endanger life in the Crossroads, they also once provided an excellent network of natural roads. The Belorussian Ridge that forms the spine of the region is the watershed between river basins that empty into the Baltic, Black, and Caspian seas. Since the watershed is low, the rivers here were easily linked by portages, forming the great interior waterway system. In the times of Kievan Rus’, the region found itself in the very middle of the Varangian-to-Greek waterway that had been so important to the development of the Russian hearth in the North, and the system of portages opened access to Novgorod, the Baltic and Muscovy. In the western direction, the Dnieper’s tributaries nearly interlock with the tributaries of rivers that penetrate the heartland of Poland. Hence the region was the roundabout in the movement of people and trade between all parts of the Slavic realm.

The Wilderness Road through the Cumberland and Pine Mountain gaps and the Ohio’s southern tributaries served as natural access roads for expansion westward, and it was also the line of least resistance. The entire territory between the Ohio and Tennessee rivers had no permanent Native American settlement and was used as neutral hunting ground. As early as 1763, the Proclamation line that elsewhere limited white settlement to the Atlantic coast and eastern Appalachian slopes traced a sharp inland wedge into the lands between the Ohio and Cumberland rivers ceded by the Indians. By the 1790s the area roughly corresponding to the Kentucky Bluegrass was the only continuously populated region west of the mountains, and Kentucky (originally part of Virginia) became the first state west of the Appalachians. Mounting pressure by American colonists helped Thomas Jefferson persuade France to sell the Louisiana territory (which it had only just retaken from Spain) to the United States in 1803. Jefferson then commissioned Lewis and Clark to explore the lands beyond the Mississippi. Saint Louis soon became the gateway to the western lands they mapped and described.

As population growth and the political call to extend the United States’ control across the continent propelled westward expansion, the Crossroads, once at center stage of continental geopolitics, was increasingly bypassed and soon appeared to be little more than a borderland between North and South. Yet during the Civil War both sides considered control of the Crossroads crucial. For the Union, the Mississippi, Cumberland, and Tennessee rivers offered easy corridors into the very heart of the Confederacy. Likewise, the Confederates considered the Ohio to be a vital line of defense. Kentucky was torn asunder, its declared neutrality ignored by the invading Union. The region’s internal fragmentation came sharply into focus when Kentucky sent volunteers and recruits to armies of both sides, while Tennessee joined the southern cause only after long hesitation. Remarkably, the Union and Confederate leaders, Abraham Lincoln and Jefferson Davis, were both born in Kentucky within 50 miles of each other. While the Midwestern states were Northern supporters, their...
THEME 1: THE CROSSROADS OF CULTURES

Both blessed and cursed by its “in-between” location, Belarus had little chance to shape a distinctive culture and identity. Russia and Poland alternately dominated the region and developed a falsified view of Belarus as a cultural desert: the Russian perspective focused on the subjugation to Poland and the aping of alien western cultural forms; whereas the Polish perspective saw all Eastern Orthodox Slavs as barbarian pagans unless civilized by Polish ways and the adoption of Catholicism. At a cursory glance, the dearth of Belorussian cultural figures of wide renown would seem to support such pejorative views. As the Belorussian language was reduced to the role of peasant patois, and upward social mobility depended on learning first in Polish and then in Russian, Belorussians themselves came to be known under Polish, Russian, or Lithuanian labels. For example, the American Revolutionary War hero, Thaddeus Kosciuszko (often identified as a Pole) was Belorussian by birth, as was the great poet Adam Mickiewicz, who wrote in Polish and Lithuanian and is claimed by both cultures. Under Polish rule both the language and faith of Belarus withstood severe onslaught. Between 1620 and 1654 the Jesuit order unleashed religious wars against non Catholics which cost Belarus 55 percent of its population. Because the use of Cyrillic characters in the Belorussian language ensured a strong bond with the Russian language and church (in contrast to the Latin based Catholic Church), even the public use of Belorussian was prohibited in 1696.

And yet, far from being culturally sterile, Belorussia developed into a relay station for western culture movement into Russia. Thus in the 16-17th centuries, Belorussia became the easternmost participant in the European Renaissance. It was through the mediating offices of educated Belarus that the faint wisps of western humanism reached 17th century Russia and paved the way for its opening up under Peter the Great. Well into the 18th century the Crossroads preserved its role as cultural mediator. Between 1700 and 1760 Belorussians and Ukrainians outnumbered Russians among the southern sections (included in the Crossroads) had “Copperheads,” who were Southern supporters. The war was a bitter civil one indeed in Kentucky and Tennessee, the two states which suffered the greatest losses of civilian population.

THEME 1: THE CROSSROADS OF CULTURES

The majority of original Crossroads settlers came from the South. These were not the representatives of Coastal South plantation-based culture, but poor yeomen of the Upper South. From the Virginian and Carolinian Piedmont, these people retreated west into the isolation of Appalachia and then moved beyond, where they found a similar forested environment. In this fashion, Upper South culture spread all the way to the Ozarks, ensuring a degree of cultural unity across the region. Many early migrants into Kentucky later moved across the Ohio river. While Cincinnati with its Kentucky suburbs is a typical industrial metropolis of the Heartland, southern Illinois and Indiana with their rolling hills and marginal economies are not typical of the richer agricultural Midwest. In fact, the southern portion of Illinois was in the past a northern extension of the cotton belt stretching along the Mississippi, and large African American populations were brought into the area for work on the plantations.

Mid-Atlantic culture was carried into the Crossroads by migrants following the Ohio River, a major route used by settlers from Pennsylvania. From the 1840s numerous Germans from their European exodus moved into the Ohio valley where they frequently still outnumber residents of Anglo-Saxon heritage. Although most Germans in the area were Catholics (traditionally more conservative than German Protestants), they brought a whiff of fresh liberal air into the Crossroads, including the virulent rejection of slavery. These overlapping patterns of past migrations are evident in the region today in the dilution of typically southern cultural traits. Thus travelers from the North will begin to note slightly slower speech and a distinct “southern drawl” once they cross the Ohio River, but those traveling north into the Crossroads from the
hierarchy and theologians of the Russian Orthodox Church. In the literary movement known as Latinism, western educated Slavs composed orderly and imitative verses and odes in Latin. The authors were frequently Catholics, since church sponsored education was the Belorussian's rare opportunity for upward progress, but, ironically, the topic of the odes was likely to be the glorification of the ancient splendor of Orthodox Kievan Rus. Himself a Latinist, Franciscus Skorina worked on the revival of Russian/ Belorussian as a literary language by cleansing it from Polonisms. The first printed books and Bible in Russian were published in Minsk, showing the deep respect for learning among Belorussians, a characteristic which still serves them well today.

In many ways Belorussians seem to be western Europeans in Russian guise, and the Crossroads to be the easternmost West. But then, the opposite is true as well; if language is the greatest element of self identification, the Crossroads is the westernmost bulwark of things Russian. The extreme proximity of the Russian language to Belorussian (far more so than to Ukrainian) and the role of Russian as the language of science and vehicle to high social achievement explain the Belorussians' near universal adoption of Russian. Russian language schools have numbered three out of every four in the republic, even though Belorussians account for 78 percent of their state's population. Attempts to revive the Belorussian language are supported only by a handful of Minsk literati in obvious contrast to Ukrainian linguistic revivalism.

Perhaps due to a history of Polish oppression and the devastation of the Second World War, the Crossroads is understandably wary of the West, and looks more toward Russia. Belarus never knew secessionism or possessed a nationalist movement comparable to the Ukrainian one, and the separate Belarus state was twice created by external forces: after the Revolution by Moscow's desire for a buffer state on the boundary with hostile Poland, and in 1991 by the dissolution of the USSR. The region's dramatic resurrection after the complete destruction of the Second World War encouraged allegiance to the Soviet Union as well. In many ways, Belorussia (along with Lithuania, Estonia, and South will note that the drawl is less pronounced. The pace of life is not as fast as in the urban areas of the Core or the Heartland, nor is it as slow as one might associate with the South.

In national politics the region is never consistently associated with either liberal or conservative votes. Legislators and officials at all levels are more likely to prefer taking a "wait and see" attitude before acting. To the northerner the wait may seem too long, while to the southerner it may not be long enough. While conservatism (especially in rural areas) can be seen in the large number of dry counties (not selling alcoholic beverages), in opposition to gambling, and in support for teaching creationism and prayer in schools, conservative sentiments are far from uniform within the region. Newcomers, especially from the north, tend to broaden the region's somewhat parochial outlook, and sometimes the urban social and political climate is very distinct from the traditional rural atmosphere. During the 1980s, Lexington twice voted on whether restaurants should be able to sell liquor on Sundays. In much of "dry" Kentucky, such sales were considered an unacceptable and unwelcome innovation. In Lexington the vote passed the second time, in what some residents consider proof that the city's newcomers from the north and reformed native Kentuckians vote in tandem. The North and South mix together at the Crossroads, creating a surprising mosaic within a relatively small region. For example, Little Egypt (around Cairo in Southern Illinois) with its acute rural poverty is to our day something of a deep southern enclave within the region. The Bluegrass area with its physical beauty and rich soil seemed fit for establishing plantations, and once attracted many aristocrats from Virginia and Maryland. This "aristocratic" outlook is evident in its social life and unique landscape, as well as in the noble mainstays of the local economy: horse farms, bourbon distilling (the area used to account for 85 percent of national output), and tobacco production introduced from Virginia. These traits are no less pronounced in middle Tennessee in the Nashville Basin, which along with the Bluegrass remains something of an oasis of
Latvia) evolved into a showcase of socialist success, the more efficient "westernized" brand of Soviet socialism, and has therefore been much less reform-minded than some other USSR successor states. There could not be a greater contrast than that of Belorussian allegiance to Russia (and later to the Soviet Union) with strong anti-Russian and anti-Soviet sentiment in Western Ukraine or Lithuania adjoining the Crossroads. 

What an irony, then, that it was Lithuania which in a sense preserved these lands for Russia. The very survival of Belarus as an entity in the Russian-Polish tug of war is largely due to its historic association with the Grand Principality of Lithuania, where Russian was long used as official language and the regime tolerated Orthodox culture. Belorussians therefore were able to remain Orthodox, and peasants called themselves simply "Russian," the name "Belorussian" only came into use in the late 18th century. Even today, some traits of Belorussians resemble those of Lithuanians and other Baltic nations: industrious, disciplined, and lacking the anarchist bent of both Poles and Russians, who see these qualities as docility and submissiveness. Rational and level headed, Belorussians shun the mysticism and religious fervor of their neighbors, which the latter certainly interpret as a lack of spirituality. With a reputation for being honest, reliable, quiet, and soft spoken people, they once again contrast with ebullient Russians and Poles.

The identity of the Crossroads is a sum of contradictions. While hardly distinguishable from Russia in language, proud of its role as Russia's defender and faithful to socialist ideals, the region also somehow shares a superiority complex about belonging to the West. It is not merely a blurred zone of overlap between Russian and Polish cultures with no identity of its own: in fact, the most distinguishing feature in Belorussian character may be stubbornness and resilience. People in the region simply know they are different.

If the Crossroads is tugged between North and South culturally, it at least faced westward. The westward dynamic of the region is symbolized by the life of that legendary pioneer, Daniel Boone, who grew up in North Carolina, led the first settlers into Kentucky, and died in Missouri. Frontier leaders like Boone left a lasting imprint on the region. In the opinion of Ellen Churchill Semple, a geographer from Louisville who wrote about Anglo-Saxons in Eastern Kentucky in 1901, those who grew up in the westward-facing Crossroads were the first genuine white Americans (the seaboard population were but Europeans, transplanted across the ocean). In 1796 a traveling Frenchman remarked that the inhabitants of the Atlantic coast called the lands beyond Appalachia the Back Country, but the new, trans-Appalachian Americans applied the same name to the Atlantic coast. The region became the earliest embodiment of traits that later came to be considered the generic American frontier heritage: democratism, vigor, enterprise and independence. The region does indeed seem all-American in self-identification by many of its residents, with a high proportion of persons claiming their ethnic identity as simply "American", rather than German-, Irish-, or some other hyphenated American group.

the Old South. Traditions of cultural sophistication make Lexington and Nashville (in the past called the "Athens of the South") vie for the title of cultural capital of the Crossroads. At the same time, Nashville is best known as the world capital of country music, a style which is actually a heritage from the southern Appalachians. Even the Old Mountains region has something of a smaller replica within the Crossroads - the Ozark Plateau, which resembles Appalachia in its gentle upland topography, low level of economic development, and relative cultural isolation.
THEME 2: CRISS-CROSSING THE VOLATILE REGION

Torn asunder, the Crossroads found peace and calm only within the Russian Empire, but it was a deadly calm. The dynamic industrial regions of the Empire surrounded the Crossroads on all four sides: St. Petersburg and Riga to the North, Donbass to the south, Moscow and the Central Industrial region to the east and the well-industrialized Kingdom of Poland to the west. The region was crossed by transit railways that linked the industrial areas with each other and effectively prevented any significant industrial growth in the intervening space of the Crossroads. The region did not even benefit much from the final improvement to the ancient transportation system, when in the late 18th century two major canals were constructed linking the Dnieper with the rivers Neaman and Bug respectively to the Baltic and into Poland. This impressive waterway allowed direct navigation from Ukraine to Germany, but it was useless for Belarus, which it traversed in the least developed Polesye region. The only important commercial centers of the Crossroads (and still its major cities) were those located on the Dnieper axis: Vitebsk, Mogilev, and Gomel. Beyond them the bypassed region lost much of its old cottage industry and acquired a strikingly rural character.

However, the sandy or waterlogged soils of the Crossroads with their ubiquitous birches and peat bogs are barely suitable for farming. The only staple that thrives on these poor soils is the potato, which in the past was the basis of the Belorussian diet and exposed the populace to frequent potato famines. Native Belorussians in particular suffered from rural poverty, as they were practically left out of urban life where Jews and to a lesser extent, Poles, dominated. In 1837 Jews made up 18 percent of the total population of Belarus, but half the urban population. When the Russian Empire acquired its western belt during the partitions of Poland, it also acquired the world’s greatest concentration of Jews. Migration of Jews was limited beyond the so-called Pale of Settlement. The core of this huge territory stretching from Riga to Rostov was former Polish lands: Lithuania, Belarus, and Ukraine. Before the great exodus to...

THEME 2: CRISS-CROSSING THE VOLATILE REGION

The prohibitive costs of transporting produce upstream and across the mountains long focused the commercial interests of the Crossroads on the Mississippi River. Until the railway age, most regional produce was sent downstream to New Orleans and from there by sea to the east coast. So paramount was the role of New Orleans as the de facto regional business capital that in 1799, the federal government had great difficulty preventing an expedition of local militias to capture it from Spanish hands. The route became even more important when, between the 1830 and 1850 the old Louisiana-to-Quebec waterway finally acquired the missing link: a system of canals that connected the Ohio’s major northern tributaries with the Great lakes. It was soon clear, however, that the competition to become “Main Street USA” respectively to the Heartland even though the Crossroads controlled the major water thoroughfares and was populated earlier. Prime location proved to be less important than the expanding market and growing industrial muscle of the Heartland. Instead of encouraging local industry, the new canals took the mineral and forest wealth of the rugged terrain to be processed in the urban Heartland.

Today, the economic base of many Crossroads communities remains marginal and dependent on northern control. In parts of southern Illinois, Indiana, and western Kentucky the significant economic enterprise is coal mining. Strip mines produce high sulfur coal which faces stiff competition from better coals produced in Wyoming and Montana, even among utility companies in Kentucky. Forest products industries, including paper and pulp and small furniture enterprises, also face competition with companies farther south and overseas. The marginal nature of many of these enterprises is felt by the small communities for which they are the economic backbone. In terms of average per capita income, much of the Crossroads is near the bottom of state rankings, with Kentucky and Tennessee 43rd and 42nd in the United States. Yet there are exceptions to the marginal rural economies, for example in Kentucky’s “Golden...
America and Palestine in the late 19th century, more than half of the world's Jews were concentrated within the Pale. It was here that the distinctive Yiddish-based Jewish culture of small townships (schtetls) was finally shaped and such important religious developments as Hasidism occurred.

After the emancipation of the serfs, with poverty pressing and opportunities beckoning beyond the region, the overpopulated land of potato famines became the land of emigration. The more enterprising element of the population was washed out of the region in all directions. Between 1896 and 1912 Belorussia generated 16 percent of the settlers who moved to Siberia, although it accounted for only 8 percent of European Russia's population. The Crossroads did not have a single university, and aspiring youths, many of them sons of Polish nobility or Jewish merchants, had to go elsewhere. Thus, the most feared of the early Bolsheviks, KGB founder Felix Dzerzhinsky, came from a family of impoverished petty Polish nobility in Belorussia, but his life and revolutionary activity were divided between Lithuania, Poland and Moscow; in the 19th century, hundreds of thousands left for the new lands of the Breadbasket and for the port of Odessa, where the tradition-bound Jew of a schtetl finally found open horizons. The sons of the first wave of migrants left through the porous Pale line for the university centers of Russia, becoming doctors, lawyers and industrialists, or radicals who constituted the backbone of either the Bolshevik party (like the famous Leon Trotsky) or the Zionist movement.

In retrospect it seems clear that the central location of the Crossroads was a very mixed blessing. The region has never been more than a dependent pawn of its powerful neighbors, alternately serving as either the thriving hub of interaction between them or a devastated buffer zone. After the Second World War, the ancient role of the region was resurrected as a hub of Slavic lands united within the Eastern bloc. Its locational advantage allowed the Crossroads to return to its status as a relay station, but this time for the adoption of western technologies. Railways which had previously drained life into the “Triangle” linking Cincinnati-Lexington-Louisville and in the Nashville-Basin. The growth of such cities as Saint Louis, Louisville, and Nashville continues to be helped by busy navigation along the important water arteries, but for the Crossroads as a whole most of the traffic passing through it is strictly transit. In contrast to the Heartland, the Crossroads is not so much a thriving business hub on a busy downtown intersection as a crossing of country roads. Although cultures meet and cross-fertilize in the region, major migration flows after the mid-nineteenth century largely bypassed it. The Crossroads was not northerly enough for job-seeking migrants from the South, while in recent decades it proved not warm or exotic enough to attract Sunbelt-bound businesses or retirees. Instead, marginal economies encourage massive outmigration, especially toward the nearby Heartland and the Atlanta metropolitan region. Bypassed by the intellectual mainstreams, the Crossroads retained a strong rural flavor that may be seen in the relatively slow pace of political and social reforms.

The region preserves a strongly rural character. The proportion of rural population in Kentucky was 50 percent in 1990, twice the national average, and most urban population lives in small towns. The land, aside from the Bluegrass and Nashville Basin areas, is marginal, and farms are small and not suitable for highly productive agriculture. The farms are seldom specialized to the degree they are in the Heartland, and they often mix beef cattle, hogs, corn, wheat, and (in Kentucky) tobacco. Small farmers cannot compete with large agribusinesses, and many farmers must maintain full-time jobs off the farms. Many will commute seventy or eighty miles to small industrial plants or to seek service employment in county seats or mid-sized cities. Because of the region’s strong agricultural heritage, outdoor living is very popular. Hunting and fishing are favorite pastimes, and many enthusiasts proudly display their guns or fishing poles in the rear window of pickup trucks. Community and church celebrations and civic festivals are an important part of social life, as are family
out of the region now helped develop modern industry in the Crossroads, augmented by pipelines leading into Europe. If Belarus (and Lithuania) entered the postwar years as the least developed parts of the European USSR, they emerged as the most dynamic and successful regions by the time of the country’s dissolution.

Since the republic had skilled and disciplined labor but almost no mineral resources, the emphasis was on advanced industries: electronics, automobile building (sturdy agricultural tractors and trucks), engineering, and the chemical industry. In levels of per capita GNP, Belorussia by the late 1980’s was in the leading group of Soviet republics, well ahead of Ukraine. Belarus was the only republic other than Russia to have a positive balance of domestic trade within the USSR in the early 1990s. The frenzy of industrial development rapidly made the region predominantly urban, with the proportion of urban population in Belarus rising from 45 percent to 66 percent between 1970 and 1990. Minsk was the fastest growing of Soviet cities with populations of over a million throughout the postwar years.

The very name Minsk means “the place of exchange,” and Belarus was a leader within the Soviet Union in the rate of trade it conducted. But it also meant that the economy was vulnerable: Belarus received almost all raw materials and energy from Russia, and marketed the products of its highly specialized manufacturing beyond its own boundaries. The very economic survival of the Crossroads thus still depends upon unified commerce and the splintering of the economy across the former USSR has hurt the region.

Both the need for and the precariousness of Slav unity were dramatically brought into focus by the nuclear catastrophe of Chernobyl which contaminated areas in all three Slav republics of Belorus, Ukraine, and Russia. Although the plant is located in Ukraine, the lion’s share of damage was suffered by Belarus, and both republics blamed Russia for the accident.

gatherings. Many communities have developed special “days” during the past decade to bring in tourism or to promote boosterism, local pride, and dollars into the local economy. Metropolitan newspapers carry descriptions of such upcoming small town events as music and craft fairs, outdoor performances, food events (ice cream socials) or local beauty pageants. Although such activities are not unusual for small-town America elsewhere, they round out the image of the Crossroads as an embodiment of poorer rural America with its low budget forms of relaxation and leisure. Maybe it is no coincidence that the famous Kentucky colonel of Kentucky Fried Chicken fame, and the founder of the WalMart retail goods chain were both from the region.

In recent decades the drain of the region’s resources seems to be abating. Transportation again proved crucial: as interstate highways opened the region during the 1970s, central location relative to U.S. markets and proximity to the industrial Heartland proved beneficial. The region attracted branch plants of companies with headquarters in large northern cities. Although many such jobs are low paying and demand low skills, the Crossroads also seems to enjoy a peculiar revenge toward the Heartland with location in the region of some major new automobile plants, including General Motors’ popular “Saturn,” the Nissan pickup plant near Nashville, and a large Toyota Camry plant near Lexington. This plant even hired some workers who became unemployed because of closures in Michigan and Ohio. Nashville also has an aviation industry and extensive banking and insurance industry that earned it the nickname “Southern Wall Street.”

General Electric operates a huge electric appliances factory in Louisville. IBM in its heyday built a large plant in Lexington in the 1960s, and with its excellent amenities and low unemployment the city became a magnet for out-of-state migrants, including many highly educated professionals.

Despite recent upturns, the whole history of the Crossroads suggests that optimism about the future should be tempered with caution. The drawback of its central location is in the volatility of its fortunes being determined by events outside the region. Saint
There is hardly a person in Russia not familiar with the name Uryupinsk. Invariably, it is uttered with a contemptuous sneer and even sounds somewhat indecent in Russian. Uryupinsk became the embodiment of what Soviet Marxist ideology with its strong anti-peasant thrust branded as the "idiocy of rural life." At first sight, Uryupinsk, a small town lost amidst the flat grain fields, is a sleepy hollow that has grown torpid from boredom. In summer, all is sultry and downcast in a dull feather grass steppe, once in a while crossed by a chain of low hills, much like Chekhov’s description of the rural scene: “A kite-bird glides right over the surface, smoothly flapping its wings and suddenly stops in midair, as if struck with the thought of how boring life is.” Much akin to their crops, the locals seem to spend their lives locked into unchanging seasonal cycles.

Yet the air of slumber is deceptive. At harvest time the place awakens to frenetic activity, as what was called in sovietspeak “the battle for the harvest” began, and the national media touted the best workers in places like Uryupinsk as heroes of bread harvesting campaigns. These annual fenzies were actually a modern twist on the real battles that Cossacks fought here against Russia’s nomadic neighbors. Uryupinsk once was a district headquarters of the Cossack armies and was also widely known for its vibrant district fairs. In modern times, both the unique militarized lifestyle of the Don River Cossacks and this lively commercial activity are reviving, underlining again the traditional ambiguity of a region sleeping with a ready eye open.

The landscapes of the flat plains in the center of the United States have always generated strong opposing judgments. Hamlin Garland, raised in South Dakota in the late 19th century, expressed one view: “How poor and dull and squalid it seemed! The one main street ended at the hillside at his left and stretched away to the north between two rows of the usual village stores, unrelieved by a tree or a touch of beauty.”

But others see different textures in the landscape. From any small knoll in central Iowa, for example, you can gaze out in all directions at rectangles of green and yellow. Different shades of green dominate. Taller stalks of corn undulate in the breeze, while the deeper green of the soybean bushes couch lower and are more still. In contrast with the corduroy texture of the row crops, scattered fields of golden wheat sway in the gentle wind like a finely woven sheet.

To some people such a summer scene of the rural Breadbasket makes it the most boring place in America, but these landscapes have their own beauty, and their placidity is deceptive. As the late summer turns into autumn, the landscape changes abruptly. Large combines strip first the wheat and then the soybean and corn fields. Trucks of all sizes pulse along the roadways, carrying many of the kernels and beans to silver, cone topped storage bins beside the area’s farmsteads. Other truckloads will unload their cargoes at the massive, cylindrical concrete grain elevators that loom over every village and town in the region. Like the crops around whose planting and harvest the region’s economy revolves, the rhythms of the American Breadbasket are geared to the seasons. Despite long periods with little apparent activity in summer and winter, the fields of the Breadbasket provide enormous yields that help keep Americans well nourished and supplement the diets of millions of people in other parts of the globe.
RUSSIA’S FERTILE TRIANGLE

The Breadbasket region is first and foremost Russia’s granary. The majority of people actually live in cities and work outside agriculture, but the popular and not so misleading image of the region is sharply brought into focus during harvesting campaigns, when newspapers are crowded with photographs of the campaign heroes, the best harvester operators set against the backdrop of mountains of threshed grain. Like their Egyptian counterparts, these pyramids of grain convey a somewhat sacral image, and were part of the official myth of the happy socialist village, while the major product of the Breadbasket, wheat, is something of a national cultural symbol.

The harsh conditions of Russian regions limited staple grains to the coarser varieties, such as rye or barley, and wheat bread became a lingering symbol of bounty and well-being. Honored guests are still greeted with the present of a ceremonial loaf, and Russians eat far more bread than any western nation. Russian language abounds with sayings like “Bread is master of everything,” and to the extent that such sayings are true, the Breadbasket is the master of the country.

In most of Russia, climate makes agriculture akin to Russian roulette, rather than an orderly activity with predictable outcomes. But the Breadbasket was and is a region with a stable output of surplus grain and other products, which makes it vitally important for feeding the mostly urban nation. The region became Russia’s cornucopia thanks to its black soils, the chernozems, named for the thickness of the black organic layer that accounts for their proverbial fertility. According to a common saying, it is enough to stick a broomstick into the soil for something good to grow out of it. During the Paris International Fair of 1900 a sample of Russian chernozem was dubbed as the world standard of soil fertility.

AMERICA’S FERTILE TRIANGLE

Since the 1840s, when immigrants from eastern and southern states and from Europe started settling the region in large numbers, the Breadbasket has been a region focused on agriculture. Few parts of the world produce as much food, and while the number of people who live and work on farms has steadily declined during this century, the ebb and flow of the farm calendar still regulate the rhythms of the region, just as the fortunes and failures of the agricultural economy establish the roller coaster on which many other establishments ride. Agriculture remains the backbone of economic activity, and farms dominate rural landscapes.

The Breadbasket’s agricultural bounty results from the lassitude of nature. Nowhere else in the world is there such a large region with an ideal combination of fertile black soils, a sufficiently warm and moist climate, and flat terrain. When Vermont native Robert Frost saw the prairie soils, he reportedly remarked that they could be eaten without the bother of conversion into plants. Because of the region’s interior location, the temperatures are continental, with daily averages differing by more than 70 degrees F (40 degrees C) between winter and summer. Annual average precipitation is quite adequate (from 20 to 40 inches), but often streaky. Periods of drought or heavy rains often last for months or even years. Droughts rarely extend throughout the region, however. The large area of the Breadbasket relative to the fluctuating pressure systems and jet streams ensures that abundant yields in some parts more than offset diminished harvests in others. The region therefore is always a major exporter of food products.

The triangular shape of the modern Breadbasket is remarkably similar to the area east of the 100th meridian that two centuries ago was dominated by grasses. The region’s eastern point thrusts into central Indiana and the Heartland region. In his sweeping study of the places and characteristics associated with the term “the Middle West,” geographer James R. Shortridge observed that all Midwestern states historically were
The natural vegetation of the Breadbasket is that of the steppe, the Russian grasslands. Over millennia, the decaying stems and massive roots of tall grasses enriched the organic content of the soil, while the flatness of the steppe allowed for orderly landscapes of huge rectangular fields. The harvest can be scuttled not so much by a dry year but by the unpredictability of the climate itself. Despite these ups and downs, the Breadbasket performed a crucial food supply function, located between the better-watered farmland of the South and a region where soils become too dry to support farming without irrigation. The Breadbasket provided a wedge between cultures as well, since this drier land on its southeast flank was home to populations of Asiatic ancestry.

Today the landscapes of the Breadbasket are as tame as those found in any American region. Yet only 150 years ago these lands were a nomadic range. Confrontations between alternative possible uses of this environment, between farmer and rancher, settler and nomad, were an important part of the region’s history and help define its western boundary.

In the early 1800s, when future President James Monroe asserted that the territory of Illinois was a flat plain unadorned by a single tree and so barren that it would never attract enough population to form a state, he was wrong about both the future and the past. Even before Europeans arrived, the indigenous people had long been reshaping the natural landscape of the region. For example, the climate is suited to broadleaf deciduous forests, but the emergence of natural grasses as the dominant vegetation (with forests limited to river valleys) was fostered by frequent fires ignited by Native Americans to aid their hunting. Tribes like the Dakota were edged into the region from the east by the struggles between the French and English around the Great Lakes. Forced out of the woodlands that nourished them for centuries, these tribes accepted associated with the pastoral image. But as manufacturing became preeminent in the urban centers of the eastern Middle West, that region emerged as a not-so-bucolic industrial Heartland. In terms of culture, the Breadbasket is part of Midwest and a continuation of Heartland, but differs in its agricultural profile. The Breadbasket’s western boundary is similarly defined by the growing importance to the west of non-agricultural activities and landuse. As Joel Garreau stated, the boundary follows the line “where carbohydrates become more important than hydrocarbons.” The “middle” in the name Middle West when applied to the Breadbasket today designates not only a geographic position but also a symbolic median between the industrialized East and the more natural West.

From Buffalo Range to the Granary

The natural vegetation of the Breadbasket is that of the steppe, the Russian grasslands. Over millennia, the decaying stems and massive roots of tall grasses enriched the organic content of the soil, while the flatness of the steppe allowed for orderly landscapes of huge rectangular fields. On this flat and monotonous plain, the boundaries of the region (which fittingly enough resembles a ploughshare in outline) are a classic expression of the relationship between human activity and a precarious physical environment. Farming is a risky business in the steppe belt, where average yearly rains from 12 to 20 inches are not generous. The harvest can be scuttled not so much by a dry year but by the unpredictability of the climate itself. Despite these ups and downs, the Breadbasket provided a crucial food supply function, located between the better-watered farmland of the South and a region where soils become too dry to support farming without irrigation. The Breadbasket provided a wedge between cultures as well, since this drier land on its southeast flank was home to populations of Asiatic ancestry.

Today the Breadbasket is a bucolic landscape of European-style farming, but in the past the whole region was the scene of prolonged fighting between the worlds of the sedentary European farmer and the Asian nomad. Gained by Russians only in the closing years of the 18th century, the Breadbasket became the symbolic middle between the developed and tamed Slav/European part of the country and its unruly Asiatic periphery.

Just as the region’s climate alternates devastating droughts with good years, so its history is a seesaw between the farmer and the cattleman. The steppes were fleetingly dominated by such diverse and more sedentary peoples as Christianized Germanic Goths, the Khazaric Jews from the Lower Volga, Kievan Slavs, and Muslim Bulgars, but it was the nomad who always regained the upper hand. The northern boundary of the region is laid down not only by nature, but also by history, as Russian expansion associated with the pastoral image. But as manufacturing became preeminent in the urban centers of the eastern Middle West, that region emerged as a not-so-bucolic industrial Heartland. In terms of culture, the Breadbasket is part of Midwest and a continuation of Heartland, but differs in its agricultural profile. The Breadbasket’s western boundary is similarly defined by the growing importance to the west of non-agricultural activities and landuse. As Joel Garreau stated, the boundary follows the line “where carbohydrates become more important than hydrocarbons.” The “middle” in the name Middle West when applied to the Breadbasket today designates not only a geographic position but also a symbolic median between the industrialized East and the more natural West.
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Many people think of the Cossack as quintessentially Russian, but Cossacks (from the Turkic word for “adventurer”) would pointedly draw a line between themselves and other Russians. The beginnings of the Cossack story may be traced to the Tatar warbands of the steppe, expert horsemen who lived by the plunder of adjacent states or mercenary service, and Cossacks include both Slavic and Tatar blood. Only in the 16th century did the Slavic element finally predominate among the Zaporozhian Cossacks of Ukraine and the Don Cossacks of Russia when a swelling bow of fugitives from serfdom fled into the steppes. Yet the Cossacks still preserve many Asiatic features in their garb and their wildly courageous mounted fighting techniques. During the Napoléonic Wars, frightened Europeans who saw Cossack troops marching down the boulevards of Paris gave rise to legends of their military prowess. While their teachers (the steppe Tatars) increasingly allied themselves with Islamic powers, Slav Cossacks (superficially Orthodox) had a growing sense of affinity with Russia. But they also saw themselves as independent people superior to Russian farmers, whom they called “muzhiks” (peasants) and despised as obsequious. The subjugation of the Cossacks to the Russian state was the expression of the independent and rebellious side to the Russian character or scolded as defectors from the hardships of building the Russian state. While often viewed as the heroic defenders of Russia, the Cossacks were also seen as the expression of the independent and rebellious side to the Russian character, and as Robin Hoods for the common people, they also were self-serving anarchists who saw themselves as independent people superior to Russian farmers, whom they called “muzhiks” (peasants) and despised as obsequious. The subjugation of the Cossacks to the Russian state was the expression of the independent and rebellious side to the Russian character or scolded as defectors from the hardships of building the Russian state. While often viewed as the heroic defenders of Russia, the Cossacks were also seen as the expression of the independent and rebellious side to the Russian character, and as Robin Hoods for the common people, they also were self-serving anarchists who plundered Russian villages without qualm up until the 17th century.

Once the Russian monarchy drew the Cossacks to its side, they mutated into the elite corps of Russian army. The entire male Cossack population lived in military status as a permanent standing reserve for the army, but in exchange it was awarded with many privileges. Thus the largest group, the Don Cossack Host, received a special administrative status with a wide internal autonomy, and ownership of land within the horses that were the unintended gifts of early Spanish colonists in the southwest, and became expert mounted hunters. The buffalo that roamed the prairies by the millions became their primary source of sustenance, and nomadic tribes scattered themselves across the grasslands west of the Mississippi and Missouri rivers. Just as human beings altered natural conditions, the region’s environment required major adjustments from the people who entered it. White settlers who entered eastern parts of the region in the first half of the 19th century saw its opportunities and challenges differently from Native Americans and ushered in a new stage of transformation. Many early pioneers moving into the Breadbasket from their accustomed forest environments found the paucity of trees disconcerting, while the densely interwoven root of prairie grasses made plowing difficult. Yet they quickly discovered that those dense grasses provided the humus that made the region’s soils fertile. The invention of the steel plow (able to cut through the roots) by John Deere in 1838 spurred rapid settlement in the region.

The expansion of settlement onto the Great Plains after the Civil War did not proceed as smoothly, however. The horses that made tribes like the Dakota, Comanche, Cheyenne, and Arapaho skilled hunters also permitted them to be mobile warriors. And having watched numerous violations of treaties, they were not willing to acquiesce to the relentless onslaught of white settlers. A series of bloody fights resulted, but during the 1870s, the rapid destruction of huge herds of bison and the advanced weapons of U.S. military forces doomed the Native Americans to lives on reservations in remote locales. The belatedly opened prairies were settled with amazing speed thanks to inventions like barbed wire and the rapid expansion of railroad networks from the Heartland which provided access to rapidly growing markets in the east. By the 1890s, the Great Plains were occupied with at least two people per square mile, and historian Frederick Jackson Turner decreed that the frontier had ceased to exist in the United States.
territory was denied to non-Cossacks. To preserve their warlike character, Cossacks were even once prohibited to farm, but as the frontier bypassed them many were forced into agriculture. With liberal land allotments and no landlords, Cossack farming thrived. After the 1860s when imperial boundaries moved beyond the Caucasus and into Central Asia, agriculture in the region decisively gained the upper hand. With the influx of non-Cossack settlers released by the Emancipation, the virgin lands were rapidly transformed into an area of large-scale grain farming. But as the region acquired purely Slav character, its southern boundary became a sharp divide between the world of the Slav farmer and that of the Asiatic cattle rancher. A step south from the Breadbasket, Russian speech is drowned in the sea of Caucasian or Turkic languages. In Eurasia, East and West are divided along a latitude, not a longitude, line.

With European occupation of the Breadbasket the steppes frontier was not yet closed; our region does not include all of the steppe granary, as the chernozem belt continues beyond the Ural into the Virgin Lands of northern Kazakhstan. That area was opened to European settlement only in 1889, when a flood of homesteaders was brought by the Transiberian railroad. The decisive supremacy of farming and people of European stock arrived only in the 1950s during the Virgin Lands campaign, when the area was transformed into a spring wheat belt. Cossacks played little role in opening up this eastern wing of the steppe belt, but that’s not the only reason for excluding it from our region. Although impressive in terms of output, grain farming in this area is extensive. Siberia-like winters and dry desert winds make it less predictable than anywhere else. The taming of the one-time range only seems to be complete.

Despite Turner’s assertion, struggles between the range and the field never ended along the western margin of the Breadbasket. In reality, the boundary is not a line but rather a brushstroke on coarse paper that follows the whims of the climate with its dramatic periodic fluctuations in precipitation. As an approximation, the boundary can be drawn at roughly the 100th meridian, with farms predominating to the east and ranches to the west. Although grain farming occurs well to the west of this meridian, including much of the northern wheat belt in Dakotas and Montana and part of the southern wheat belt in Kansas and Texas, its extensive and largely marginal nature disqualifies those areas from inclusion in the Breadbasket. The fragility of farming there may be seen in the history of the Dust Bowl which effectively ended local farming in the 1930s. It has since revived only with heavy reliance on groundwater from the Ogallala aquifer. The rapid development of the aquifer after the Second World War pulled the winter wheat belt far to the south and west, but this water-induced expansion is strictly temporary. The rapid depletion of the Ogallala aquifer will eventually bring back the cattle. Thus the exclusion of areas west of the 100th meridian is true to the principle of defining our regions as entities with longer life spans, which means unearthing deeper boundaries that may be hidden beneath the “dust” of fleeting change.
THEME 1: AGRICULTURAL LANDSCAPES OF THE GRANARIES

The Mosaic of Fields

With their bold step into the unfamiliar grassland environments of the Eurasian steppes (simultaneous with penetration into the American prairies and pampas), Europeans claimed the few large areas of the world ideally suited for mechanized farming. The whole landscape of the region is dominated by huge geometrically laid-out fields. The Breadbasket leads the former USSR in the per capita extent of arable land, and the proportion of lands under plow reaches 80 to 90 percent. In the USSR the Breadbasket accounted for about a half of all grain production, as well as a major meat industry.

The Breadbasket was the land of exemplary socialist agriculture, touted as a model of the efficiency possible in kolkhozes (collective farms arranged as cooperatives) and sovkhozes (Soviet farms run by the state). This was probably the only region where the economy of scale allowed by collectivized agriculture outweighed the inherent inefficiencies of the non-market agricultural economy. The development of the Sal steppes of Stavropol’ territory in the 1930’s provides a good example. The government created Socialist farms in the place of scattered homesteads and established centralized farm machinery stations for optimal use throughout a large area. Plowing and irrigation of virgin lands was undertaken on a large scale, as on the appropriately named sovkhoz “Giant” which incorporated 125,000 acres.

In terms of grain harvests per acre the Russian Breadbasket was quite on par with its American sibling. Even such a generic illness of Soviet agriculture as the loss of harvested produce due to inadequate transport, storage and processing, was far less acute here. The region pioneered the Soviet version of integrated agribusiness where farms formed joint concerns with processing and storage operators and even obtained their own wholesale and retail outlets to control the entire chain from the field to the

THEME 1: AGRICULTURAL LANDSCAPES OF THE GRANARIES

The Mosaic of Fields

As its name emphasizes, the American Breadbasket is a region where grain production is the focal economic activity. The eight states (Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota) that occupy the bulk of the region comprise 17 percent of the nation’s area, but they produce 29 percent of its crops and 38 percent of its livestock products. Unlike other regions where feed for livestock must be imported, the Breadbasket’s hogs and cattle consume corn and other crops produced locally, often on the same farm where they are fattened. Crops are harvested on nearly 60 percent of Iowa’s land and more than 55 percent of the land in Illinois, shares that are much larger than for any other states in the union.

Iowa and Illinois are at the core of the Corn Belt, the quintessential part of the Breadbasket. Climatic conditions enable corn to thrive in the fertile soils of the gently rolling glaciated plains. Because of its myriad uses ranging from livestock feed to a cheaply processed liquid sweetener, corn has remained a more reliable source of revenue than many other crops. The development of new uses for soybeans in recent decades has buttressed the market for this crop as well. Because corn and soybeans have complementary nutritional requirements, many farmers now grow both, alternating annual production depending on soil and market conditions. Wheat and other small grains are more common in cooler or drier areas like the western margins of the Breadbasket. Throughout the region, however, farmers have become more specialized. Long gone are the days when farmers raised a variety of crops and animals, using small machines and relying heavily on the labor of a relatively large family.

Evidence of specialization abounds on the landscape. The Breadbasket has a large livestock production, but fences have become an endangered species in many parts of the region, because crop farmers often have given up animals completely. Traditional
market. In stark contrast to the rest of the country, most Breadbasket collective farms were solidly in the black (the expression "millionaire-kolkhoz" for those with seven-digit bank accounts originated), and collective farmers were well off. In the rate of private car ownership, the Breadbasket was well ahead of other regions in the Soviet period. The rectangular grid of the fields lends the whole region a rather uniform aspect, but a closer look actually reveals considerable diversity of farms. Ubiquitous bread aside, the labels of Breadbasket producers dominated on the canned meat, vegetable, and fruit shelves of Soviet grocery stores. Southern Ukraine and the northern Caucasus had the most productive grain farming in the country, as well as productive livestock breeding.

The change as you move from west to east is very gradual. The appearance of irrigation ditches and sheep flocks betrays the growing dryness and harshness of climate, and beyond the Volga high soil fertility combined with a dry, sunny climate favors the cultivation of some of the world's best strains of hard wheat. Nature itself seems to have suggested a balanced mix of crops for the Breadbasket: the growing cycles of corn and wheat are complementary, and a year of a failed corn harvest is frequently a bumper year for wheat. The discrepancy between cycles of drought in western and eastern parts of the region also lends stability to its overall grain output.

The economy of smaller urban places of the region is rooted in agriculture. Some of them are actually the so-called agri-cities—headquarters of huge collective farms and the site for their processing industries. The local chemical fertilizer industry and major agricultural machinery and tractor building factories meet the needs of farming. Yet metropolises such as Tzaritzyn, Kharkov, and Rostov, where large agricultural plants are located, do not quite belong: they are in, but not of, the region. The coastal cities along the Black Sea from Odessa to Nikolaev to Mariupol' were once major grain exporting centers, but today their economies are geared to the all-Russian manufacturing complex rather than local needs, while culturally they share the cosmopolitan mix of other Black Sea cities.

barns are also less common. They frequently have been allowed to deteriorate, because they are too expensive to maintain simply for the storage of machinery. In their place, large metal "polebarns" have been erected. While much less stylish to those who want traditional bucolic images, these utilitarian structures are far more functional. Where hogs or beef cattle are raised, animals are often confined to barns and feedlots at the core of the farmstead. Large cylindrical metal storage bins now hold dried corn and other grains, used either to fatten livestock on site or simply stored until market conditions warrant their sale and delivery to grain handling facilities.

Fields also provide ample evidence of the changing character of modern Breadbasket agriculture. Although the number of farms in the region has declined by more than one-half from 1930 to the present, the total area used for farming has remained almost exactly the same. With farms averaging more than 440 acres (200 ha) in area, farmers now make great use of machines to perform increasingly specialized functions. Large, specialized equipment moves across fields at critical stages in the growing cycle. Rented wheat combines move up and down the western margins of the Breadbasket, harvesting different strains of wheat for hundreds of farmers. In contrast, farmers specializing in corn and soybeans, the most important Breadbasket crops, usually possess their own equipment.

The imprint of agriculture is also present in the cities. Operations that handle and process farm products long have functioned within communities both large and small. Flour mills, vegetable canneries, meat packing plants, sugar beet refineries, and other food processors stand at crucial points along rivers, railroads, and highways. In some communities, the visual impact of these plants is accentuated by smells. Visitors to Decatur, Illinois, for example, quickly learn that a soybean processor is the city's largest employer if they approach the city center from downwind. Other factories assemble farm machinery, and most of the massive machines that churn over the Breadbasket's fields were manufactured within the region.
While many medium-sized cities dot the region, major metropolises are rare. The economic character of the region fosters dispersed rather than concentrated activity, and many major centers that serve the region are actually located outside its boundaries. Chicago is effectively the region’s capital, but its status as a diversified industrial and global service center functionally makes it part of the Heartland. Other major centers serving the region Dallas-Fort Worth, St. Louis, and Minneapolis-St. Paul exist along or beyond its margins. Kansas City is the only metropolitan area with more than one million residents that sits squarely within the region.

The Breadbasket’s residents harbour a long-standing suspicion of large cities. Heavy reliance on transportation and grain-handling companies, many of which were based outside the region, fueled the discomfort of many Breadbasket residents with what was perceived as excessive control by large external institutions. Because expenses have a seasonal regularity while income fluctuates dramatically, most farmers have to rely heavily on loans. In addition to providing funds for operating expenses and the purchase of land, banks have furnished money enabling purchases of expensive equipment. While acquiring land and equipment frequently was deemed prudent in years with high yields and high prices, declines in farm income because of the vagaries of weather or markets regularly placed many farmers in financial peril. Their difficulties periodically led to sharp revisions in banking practices, much to the consternation of farmers, whose longing for stability had brought diverse ethnic groups from all over Europe into the region in the first place.

The Mixture of Peoples

Ever since colonization started in Catherine the Great’s time, a rich ethnic mix defined the region, where peasant transplants from all over Europe easily sent down firm roots. Because Russian peasants were tied to the land, the government issued an invitation to settle the empty steppes of “New Russia” (today’s Southern Ukraine) to land-hungry Europeans. The settlement began with “New Serbia,” when thousands of Serbs occupied what today is roughly Kirovograd oblast. People as diverse as Swedes and Armenians followed, but the ones who responded in great numbers were the Germans.

Sea ports. The affiliation with other Volga cities is more important for Tzaritzyn and Saratov. A major cluster of Ukrainian million-plus cities (Donetzk, Dnepropetrovsk, Kharkiv and Zaporoshye) are all part of the Donetsk coal and metallurgical enclave.

Thus even if the Breadbasket has more large cities than other regions, its real face is seen in villages or small towns, while the metropoles were long felt to be alien and viewed with suspicion. Stacks of steel did not easily root in the fertile soil. Only Rostov-on-Don (nicknamed “the bread city”) can qualify as a truly regional metropolis. It is revealing that during the Civil War in 1919 when the Don Cossacks were the backbone of the White troops, industrial Rostov (located amidst Don Cossack lands) remained the Bolshevik stronghold. Local xenophobia ripened as new settlers (not bound by militararistic collectivism of the Cossacks) turned out to be much better entrepreneurs. New tensions revived the old ambiguties of Cossack self-identity: on the one hand these people saw themselves as Russia’s defenders and spoke Russian language, but on the other the proud Cossack distanced himself from the land-bound Russian muzhik. The fact that Cossack identity is not dependent on ethnicity alone bears witness to the Breadbasket as a complex and thorough ethnic melting pot.

The Mixture of Peoples

Different ethnic groups dominate in various parts of the region depending on the timing of that area’s initial settlement relative to the major waves of internal migration and immigration from different nations. The ethnic pattern of the region changes from north to south, related to differences in climate and agricultural production.
With settlers promised religious freedom, towns and villages with names like Munich, Stuttgart, or Strasbourg began to sprout in Novorossiya. By the early 20th century, most Germans had moved farther east into the steppes beyond the Volga, where an autonomous republic of Volga Germans existed between 1918 and 1941. The eastward drift of German settlers along the chernozem belt was tragically continued during World War II, when they were deported to northern Kazakhstan and the Altai territory. Even in that new location, the majority of Germans prospered and their communities became models of efficiency for Slav settlers. But while preserving compact communities, most Germans are fully Russified and no longer speak German.

The Cossacks as well drifted to the East, following the movement of the steppe frontier. Many “unemployed” Don Cossacks bypassed by the frontier moved farther east to the Volga, Ural River, and Orenburg areas to guard the Kazakh frontier, while the remains of the Zaporozhian host were moved to the northern Caucasus. The Ukrainian flow eastward was the most spectacular. It started in the 16th century when Muscovite government opened its lands in the so-called Sloboda Ukraine (present-day Kharkiv-DonBass area) for settlement by Ukrainians fleeing Polish oppression. Since the earliest sections of the Breadbasket, Novorossiya, was mostly colonized by Ukrainians, they were the first to develop the technique of plowing through the matted roots of the virgin steppe with heavy plows pulled by buffalo teams. The Ukrainian sod-busters were among the pioneers throughout the steppe belt all the way to its Siberian outcrops. In many parts of this belt, Ukrainians left a strong imprint on landscapes and speech patterns, and initially outnumbered Russians; but by now the two groups have almost completely blended and most Ukrainians claim Russian as a mother-tongue.

The industrial development of Novorossiya and the Northern Caucasus brought an influx of Russians. Today the population of Southern Ukraine is split between Russians and Scandinavians were the largest group migrating into the northern part of the region, while Germans were foremost among the complex mix that settled in the central states, and descendants of immigrants from Great Britain were more common in the southern tier. These broad generalizations mask the considerable complexity that abounded at local levels, however. Ukrainians, Germans from the Volga region, French emigres, and numerous Canadians also filtered into the region. Widespread communication required multilingual approaches. For a short period in the 1870s, official documents of the state of Nebraska were published in German, Swedish, and Czech as well as English.

The pattern of rural settlement in the Breadbasket facilitated the blending of this conglomerate of immigrants. The region’s farmers were not concentrated into small villages as was common in other parts of the world, so the inward-looking villages could not serve as vehicles for perpetuation of cultural differences. The dispersed pattern of family farmsteads encouraged uniformity both of the people and of the landscape. Most immigrants and migrants from the eastern U.S. belonged to the same “nordic” family of European culture or its American derivatives, and by the time other ethnic groups started migrating in significant numbers around the start of the 20th Century, almost all farmland had already been settled. As a result, the Breadbasket emerged as one of the most homogenous parts of the nation with the greatest prevalence of white Americans.

In some ways, this model melt pot emerged as the embodiment of the nation as a whole. “See how it plays in Peoria!” long has been an expression anticipating that the reactions of residents in that central Illinois city will foreshadow those elsewhere in the U.S. More recently, Des Moines, Iowa, has become a favored site for market researchers to test how new products and advertising strategies may be received by consumers in other parts of the country. While changing demographics have significantly altered the ways that other regions relate to each other, the Breadbasket remains as the middle ground, the part of the United States against which all others areas can be measured.
and Ukrainians in equal proportions, and Ukrainian nationalism there is rather unpopular. On Cossack lands, the Cossacks were hopelessly outnumbered by Russians proper even before the 1917 Revolution. The homogenizing environment of the Breadbasket and the Slav ancestry of major settler groups allowed the region to become Russia’s most efficient melting pot, more so than the Heartland, where the coexistence of ethnic communities created an ethnic salad.

The blurred all-Slav identity of residents helped the region become something of a spokesperson for the nation, the embodiment of things all-Soviet. Here sociologists sought the “average Soviet man,” and the slogans of many national economic initiatives were born. From Brezhnev to Gorbachev, the rulers of the USSR came from the Breadbasket, the region that always enjoyed a rather special relationship with the state.

THEME 2: THE CHECKERBOARD OF GOVERNMENT ACTION

In satellite imagery, the Breadbasket looks like a blueprint made with a ruler and compass: rectangular fields, straight lines of irrigation canals, and protective tree belts planted to block dry winds from the Asian interior. These flat expanses are like a clean sheet of paper that almost invites a willing hand to draw geometric patterns. For the Soviet state with its itch to regulate everything, the temptation was irresistible. The region became a testing ground where simple two-dimensional “geometrical” solutions were sought to solve complex problems, while ignoring the “verticals” of three-dimensional human beings.

No other region suffered so much by the forced collectivization of the 1930s. The government believed that the fertile soils of the Breadbasket nurtured the dangerous sprouts of capitalism exactly because the region was old Russia’s model of efficient commercial farming. With much land and few people, the estates in the southern steppe were the first in Russia to resort to the use of modern farm machinery and free
The surveys that shaped the geometry of the region were but the first in an ongoing series of official endeavors that affected the region. After 1862, land became available free to homesteaders who occupied and improved the property for a period of at least five years. Direct disbursement of land by the government was augmented by federal donations of land to the states for the support of education. From the early 19th Century, one section of every 36 was donated for public schools, and in the 1860s, additional land was donated to states to support “land grant” universities. These public institutions, which often specialized in the development of agricultural technology, became the backbone of the higher educational system throughout the Breadbasket states.

Over the last half century, the role of government in the lives of the region’s inhabitants changed profoundly. As American agriculture matured and farm production increased to the point that supplies far exceeded demands in the United States and abroad, the federal government instituted a series of measures designed to reduce production and increase prices. Widespread governmental intervention in farm production began in the 1950s, including the manipulation of trade policies, such as the export of surplus commodities to provide emergency relief for poorer nations. Other federal farm policies have sought to inhibit soil erosion. These policies often succeeded in ending production on marginal farmland, but they also had unintended consequences, including the drastic reduction in equipment and fertilizer sales that resulted in the mid 1980s when farmers were given surplus commodities from government stockpiles as replacements for crops they would have grown themselves.

Ironically, such government programs are largely in response to the effects of unbridled individualism characterising the culture of the Breadbasket. More than anywhere else what was happening in the region reflected the decisions of individuals each acting in their own interests, while the bounty of mother nature tricked the local farmers into believing that all their successes were due only to their superb skills and mastery of nature. Such over-confidence and a certain short-sightedness helped produce the Dust...
The history of relationship between the central power and Cossackdom is even more paradoxical. On the one hand, the Cossacks long resisted state attempts at regimentation of their lives; however, once won over they became the most faithful and willing servants of the regime. In the Russian Empire, Cossacks were routinely used to disperse anti-government demonstrations and perform punitive functions. The protection of the Empire’s boundaries turned into the safeguarding of its “foundations” and political conservatism. The Cossacks’ arrogant defiance of the state in the pursuit of their collective privileges always coexisted with militaristic discipline and cruel suppression of individual rights within the strata. Today, the emergence of self-appointed Cossack moral police makes public whipping of offenders a revived norm of local life.

The movement for the restoration of Cossack autonomy is driven not by ethnic sentiment, but by the desire to restore the coveted freedom of Cossackdom from the binding laws obeyed by everyone else, to renew their special covenant with the state as its well-rewarded defenders. The break-up of the Soviet Union was particularly painful to a people who see themselves as builders of Imperial glory, and thus has revived the traditional xenophobia of local culture. Even as Cossack movements seek territorial autonomy, most Cossacks favor the reanimation of the Soviet Union in its old boundaries. Now that the southern boundary of the Breadbasket has again become Russia’s frontier with turbulent Asian neighbors, the new Russian state has to fight the temptation to use the Cossacks as willing pawns in new games of geopolitical chess.

As the rural dreaminess of the Breadbasket alternates with the insomnia of Cossack vigilance, the region seems to have reverted to the old fights between peaceful settlers and professional warriors, only now they joust within the regional character. The region of many a paradoxical about-face is again in uncertainty what to arm itself with: a Cossack whip or a peasant’s plow.
In the spring of its life, the valley in the Cumberland Plateau had a hardwood forest so thick that light barely penetrated through to the ground. Oak, laurel, walnut, and maple trees grew on the green slopes, while rhododendron and wild flame azaleas colored the underbrush. Here and there were dogwood and redbud trees. With summer came settlers from the young nation’s east coast, most on their way somewhere else, but some choosing to stay and try to farm the forest soils or cut the timber. The town was founded in autumn times, self-reliant and isolated in its valley, nestled amid the ridges of the smokey mountains. Log cabins gave way to frame houses made of wood, laid out in a line along the valley floor. The coal companies came in early winter. They offered to buy rights to the earth, and the people of the mountains sold their land cheaply. Soon, the locals themselves were working for the companies, tunneling into the hills and scraping out the black diamonds. But the pace was not fast enough, and the companies began stripping away the very land to bring the coal out more cheaply and rush it off to places outside. Tall, gray slag heaps of coal and slate buried the forest, and the slopes became gashed and decapitated.

The mountains and the people were old now, and in its late winter, the town was winding down. Measured in miles, the plateau was smack in the middle between the huge cities of the east and the rich central heartland; and yet, was there any other place so alone or so far away?
THE URAL MOUNTAINS: NOT MUCH OF A BARRIER

The Urals may be the most elderly young mountains on earth. Although geologically they are considered recent, a more accurate term is “rejuvenated.” Fresh tectonic uplift uncovered the base of more ancient mountains, exposing mineral riches accumulated over millennia. The region’s pioneers were startled with miraculous treasures that seemed like easy pickings. In fact, they say that the first deposits were discovered when the wind blew down trees and revealed precious minerals right there on the roots. From those dead roots grew the quarries and ironworks which made the Urals famous later in the 18th century.

While vernacular images of most Russian regions are somewhat vague, the Urals provokes a definite, if somewhat unflattering response. When you ask someone “so, what are these Urals?” the answer will be a prompt, “well, they’re mountains,” but the word “mountains” would likely be blurted out with a hint of doubt - it’s not Mountains with a capital “M” (the way people of the Russian flatlands speak of the Caucasus and Pamirs with a combination of admiration and awe). The average elevation in the Urals is only about 3,000 feet, with the highest point at 5600 feet – hardly a mountain climber’s challenge. Strong river erosion has hacked up the mountains, making them easily passable. Some rivers even defiantly flow westward, despite the fact that their sources are on the eastern slopes. Just as the rivers do not “notice” the Urals, the passengers of the Trans-Siberian railroad who stream across the mountains in numbers barely know they’ve been over a range. The amount of actual climbing that the trains have to do is only about 300 to 500 feet, a disappointingly easy victory for the travellers, who then spread the disparaging image of mountains with a small “m.” And yet, in modern spoken Russian, the very expression “beyond the Urals” is synonymous with crossing a certain critical threshold. Stretching for about 2,000 miles almost strictly north-south from the icefields of the northern Arctic Ocean to the deserts of the Urals.

THE EASTERN MOUNTAINS: NOT LONGER A BARRIER

The old mountains of a young continent are found in Appalachia. In geography books, you may just as often see them called “plateaus” or “highlands,” reserving the term “mountains” for the Rockies or Cascades. Yet in American history, the Appalachian system represented a formidable barrier to westward migration. European-American settlers, moving in from the coast, encountered the escarpment wall of the eastern side of Appalachia, and it must have seemed that this region was the mountains indeed, stretching from the Canadian Maritimes all the way to northeastern Mississippi.

Appalachia consists of several distinct echelons; the Blue Ridge Mountains, a very old range of granitic mountains mostly in Virginia and North Carolina; a series of parallel ridges and valleys from Pennsylvania to Alabama; and two plateaus, the Alleghany in the north and Cumberland in the south. Today, a traveler through the old mountain regions will not find them much trouble to cross, but may be touched by the way the areas hang on to their beauty, with small towns nestled in the valleys, some huge areas of what looked to be heavily forested and mined lands, and small farms, often crawling up the steep hillsides. It might be surprising to the motorist on the interstate highways that now crisscross the mountains to realize how difficult an impediment they were in the 18th century, a barrier that was both physical and psychological. It was not easy for many early settlers on the eastern coast to consider migrating inland because there were too few easy routes. Even those gaps that permitted access across the mountains still required vast amounts of energy and skill.

When the settlement wave finally did break the mountain passes, people flooded through, and the mountains gave way like a broken dam. As the country grew and expanded, the mountains did not seem so tough to conquer anymore - in fact they seemed a little older every year. They seemed to get emptier too, like a shrunked shell of their old self. Although in area the region is larger than California, its population pales...
Kazakhstan, the Urals stand in the way of all routes to the east. Traversing these mountains is perceived as moving beyond a psychological frontier delimiting the Real Russia. Until as late as the mid-twentieth century, the expression “from the Carpathians to the Urals” or “from the Baltic to the Urals” was used in Russia to denote the idea of the “tamed” and lived-in part of the state.

The Novgorodians who first crossed the Urals in the 12th century in the quest for Siberian furs called the mountains by the cold and cruel word “stone.” In doing so, they defined the character of the Urals not by its topography, but by the nature of its soil. This sterile land was too inhospitable for Russian peasants - the shoulders of the Urals reach into the Arctic, and the harshness of the north barrels down the cold stony backbone of the range far toward the south. The arriving Russians were accustomed to the softness of the plain where sediments hid the rock, and found this alien, exposed stone frightening. Maneuvering along river valleys, they hurried to reach the West Siberian Plain, a place that evoked images of the more familiar Russian flatlands.

Therefore, although on a geologic map the Urals are a mountain range thrust between two great plains, they have actually long been a type of trench on the map of Russian colonization: western Siberia on the other side of the mountains was settled before the Urals themselves. Two well-settled and urbanized belts of piedmont preceded the development of the mountains proper. Defining the boundaries of the Old Mountains is therefore no easy task.

Today, western approaches to the Urals are controlled by two major administrative centers - Perm in the north and Ufa in the south, each of them gripping its respective section of the Urals with a double-pronged fork of arterial railways. In pre-revolutionary Russia the Urals region was governed from Perm and Ufa. Both cities grew beyond the narrow mining core of the Urals, as factories for the further processing of Uralian mineral resources emerged along the transport routes. It was as if the mining industry rolled off the slopes westward in a kind of economic debris flow, following the by comparison, as about half of Appalachians live in scattered rural areas. Where are all the cities here? Why does the region seem “empty?”

For early Americans who wanted to venture westward into the anticipated rich agricultural interior, the Appalachians were viewed as a place to go through in order to get somewhere else. Early European frontier settlement in the late eighteenth century was confined to a few select roads, passes, and rivers. Three main routes through the mountain barrier were used: the forks of the Ohio River, the Cumberland Gap along the southern edge of the Virginia/Kentucky border (what became the “Wilderness Road”), and the valley of East Tennessee. By 1800 the National Road went up the Potomac to the Ohio. Many who traversed the mountains realized the opportunities were few for large numbers, so most stopped briefly and went farther west into central Tennessee, the Kentucky Bluegrass, and Ohio, all places with better agricultural lands that could support higher population densities. Those few who remained fashioned an economy and livelihood strongly tied to timber and mining rather than agriculture. They also became increasingly bypassed by larger numbers of people moving into the continent’s interior. In a sense they became isolated by choice from the major currents of economic change that were sweeping the country.

Traversing any physical barrier is difficult, especially in times of slow transportation. There was also fear of the strong Native American nations (Cherokee, Chickasaw, and Choctaw) of southern Appalachia. Finally, the Appalachian system was a psychological barrier. Early explorers and veterans of military campaigns against the Native Americans returned home with tales that there were few easy passages in and around this thousand-mile mountain system. Probably more than one settler was also fearful of the forested mountains; these were unfamiliar terrains to those who grew up in northern Europe and in the flat coastal plains. Few African-Americans settled in the region, leaving it to become a stronghold of white Protestants. Despite the hazards, people from the east ventured into the mountains: Scots-Irish, English, French
stream of raw materials drawn from the Urals toward the main areas of consumption. As a result, the Urals as an industrial region is considerably tilted to the west with respect to its mountain backbone. The contours of the Old Mountains as a social and cultural region were defined by the pattern of Russian settlement. Gradually widening its stream, population movement crossed the Urals as a continuation of the original basis of the Russian eastward colonization - the Volga Basin. The eastern tributaries of the Volga (between the Kama and Samara Rivers) are like two beams of a slide projector which highlight the Russian-populated middle section. The overlap of this well-populated mid-section with the narrow Uralian backbone (beyond which the wormholes of mines and quarries seldom go) defines the quintessential Urals. Perm and Ufa have their counterparts within this ultimate Urals in the large cities of Ekaterinburg and Chelyabinsk.

THEME 1: AN ECONOMY AS WORN DOWN AS THE MOUNTAINS
A Region Used Up
What magnet drew people into these gloomy mountains that had so long remained empty? The question itself holds the answer - magnetic iron ore, abundant in the Urals but absent among the sediments of the Russian plains. The mineral riches were fabulous: the city of Magnitogorsk derives its name from the mountain Magnitnaya (Magnetic) which was one huge mass of rich iron ore. Today the mountain is mere memory preserved in a local pun that neatly sums up the whole fate of the Urals: “It once was a Mountain Steep, now it’s a pit deep” [it sounds better in Russian - “Byla gora vysokaya - stala yama glubokaya”]. The effects of eroding action of millennia of geologic time pale in comparison with what economic time has wrought in a wink, as iron mining pitilessly chewed away the mountains.

Russians who entered the Urals found ample reason to be scared of the unfamiliar rocky environment. Placenames left over from indigenous people even warned them about local dangers: don’t sit on the Devil’s Stool or Satan’s Armchair; don’t settle the Devil’s Campsite; don’t climb the Evil Mountain; don’t trust the ghostly light of darkness from the Moon’s Pillar; and finally, a simple - “Yurma!” - Stay Away.

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A FOREBODING LANDSCAPE
Americans in Appalachia found their own ways to express the harsh and foreboding mountain landscape in placenames which reflected hardships - “Needmore”, trials - “Shooting Creek”, or the eerie supernatural atmosphere of the mountains - “Devil’s Court-house”, “Takin Rock”, “Bone Valley”.

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If the Old Mountains seemed a region off the beaten path - an area to be traversed and forgotten - they became a place of interest with the discovery of the rich coal resources of Appalachia. The people of the region were often all too willing to sell their land for existing or speculative mineral value. Very quickly, outside companies obtained mineral rights to lands in Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Kentucky. These were available at cheap prices as much of the land was unused and had little value for agriculture. The beginnings of regional exploitation had arrived, in the sense that control of the properties and mines was by outsiders with little concern for the general welfare of the population or for the environments they were destroying to obtain fuel for industrial America. It is small wonder that Appalachians felt maltreated by outsiders. A list of offenders would include those who made much money mining a product from the region, but took it out and invested little in Appalachia, those outsiders who have a much higher standard of living because they burn cheap energy produced in Appalachia, and those who continue to see the region as beset with pressing economic and social problems, but steadfastly refuse to solve the root causes of the problems identified by government reports and scholars during the 1930s and again in the 1960s. These include high unemployment and underemployment (sometimes reaching 40 percent), acute rural poverty, dated industrial infrastructures, marginal agricultural economics, low education levels and inferior quality schools, poor job skills, an aging population, poor health standards, and inaccessibility to vital human services.

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Before the Urals were tapped for resources, the Russian ferrous metals industry relied on deposits of bog ores with low iron content. The deposits of the Urals were far superior and were combined with an abundance of forests for burning charcoal — a true technological paradise for ironworking of that day. In the 18th-19th centuries, the technological advantages for the industry in the Urals clearly outweighed the locational disadvantage of great distance from consuming areas. Even British industry at the time of Industrial Revolution heavily relied on imported Uralian pig iron. The industrial development of the Urals took place simultaneously with the militarization of Russia’s economy that started with Peter the Great’s wars. By gearing Uralian industry to military needs the centralized Russian state reforged the region’s mineral wealth into its territorial acquisitions.

Yet for all its importance, the Old Mountains region has always been a loser with respect to the interregional balance of national income. Both before and after the revolution, it sent out more wealth than it took in, and the economic history of the region is one of exploitation for the benefit of people from the outside. Industrial magnates turned pig iron, gold, and precious stones into a means for satisfying their own desires, regardless of the interests of the region: building mansions in St Petersburg or buying castles in Europe. “Be grateful at last: turn your attention to this part of the world which has adorned the whole world with the best amethysts on earth!” passionately implored artist Denisov-Ural’skiy at the end of the 19th century, but in vain. Repelled by the stone heart of the Urals, entrepreneurs who made their fortunes in the region could hardly resist the temptation to become absentee-magnates.

State intervention also revived the military role of the region. Many defense industries were evacuated from the central regions of the country during the Second World War. Just as in Peter the Great’s day, the Urals became the second echelon of defense for the country, a line of “industrial trenches” running parallel to the German front. A third of the country’s arms were produced here, including tanks (Nizhniy Tagil and Coal mining remains the major industry in Appalachia. Kentucky, West Virginia, and Pennsylvania still produce about 40 percent of the bituminous coal of the United States. Other minerals mined in the region include limestone, feldspar, and oil. Coal was discovered in Appalachia in the 18th century, but became important when the industrial revolution started in earnest during the latter part of the last century and steel industries required vast amounts of coal. Engineering and geology teams from major steel companies in the Northeast ferreted out the sites of rich coal seams in Appalachia. But coal is a cyclical industry: times of high industrial demand give way to dips when unemployment rises. During hard times young and middle-aged miners and their families may migrate to nearby Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, and Knoxville hoping to find work. But the mines re-open, the workers often return home to work in the mines once again.

The human face of coal mining is partly reflected in the story of coal miners and their strikes and stoppages, sometimes violent and bloody. The story is also seen in the places where miners lived, coal mining towns which had a familiar appearance: rows of shotgun houses at the bottom of valley (houses laid out straight from front to back, where it is said you could fire a shotgun into the living room and the shell would go through every room and out the back door), an occasional church (often of a European ethnic group brought in to mine the coal), and the most ostentatious houses of mine owners and officials on hillsides overlooking the settlement. Despite the early unionization of miners that helped improve labor conditions and incomes, glaring contrasts of wealth and poverty persist. An explosive example of class tensions in the area can be seen in Harlan County, Kentucky: one of the richest in the United States in terms of mineral profits, yet so poor in terms of per capita incomes that it went down in history as “Bloody Harlan” of miners’ revolts in the 1930s.

Many a coal mining town is indeed dismal, depressing, and an unhealthy place to live. Temperature inversions were not unusual in these valley settlements, and the dust
Chelyabinsk), military transport equipment (Miass), and chemical weapons. After the war, the region began to produce nuclear warheads (near Chelyabinsk) and bacteriological weapons (Ekaterinburg). Far from the prying eyes of western intelligence-gathering, the Urals became an area of absolute secrecy.

The Soviet galvanization of the nearly stiffened corpse of the antiquated industrial region had considerably worsened the unattractive features of the Urals, that repelled people even when the region was young. Mounds of tailings, unusable by-products from mining, pockmarked the face of the region, the stagnant air of intermontane basins filled with pollutants, and the shallow rivers lost the struggle to flush out polluted water. Such then was the fate of the Urals - from lofty heights to the abysses of worked out quarries; from the modest flames of early furnaces to the endless fire of radioactivity. Ernst Neizvestniy, a Urals-born sculptor, has designed a monument in Ekaterinburg to victims of the Stalin repression. It features two sobbing faces: Europe, shedding tears in the direction of Asia, and Asia in turn crying for Europe. There is a real grief in this heart of stone - this is the region that sacrificed itself at the altar of the Motherland.

A Region Propped Up

It would not be enough to say of the industrial Urals that it is merely an old region - it is an area of downright antiques. With a mixture of historian's pride and economist's sadness, guides will show a visitor industrial buildings constructed in the 18th century that still perform their original function. In almost any settlement people remember seeing the demolition of the last blast furnace or mechanical press built at the time of the 18th century Demidov magnates. Uralian cities look like the untidy and disorganized display cases of a regional museum of technology, where antedeluvian factory buildings rub shoulders with industrial giants hastily built in the fever of the pre-war years and scattered specimens from the piecemeal modernization of the post-

from the mines was in the air one breathed, in the food one grew and ate, in the clean clothes one wore, and even inside the house. In the mines themselves, health and safety problems lurked. Machinery was dangerous, roof supports were unstable, dynamiting was reckless, and the all-pervasive coal stifled the lungs of workers through ten- and twelve-hour shifts. It was not unusual to have explosions, roof support collapses, and machinery accidents that resulted in loss of limbs. More silent were the deaths attributed to those who worked forty or fifty years or more in the mines and developed black lung disease. Those victims represent part of the social and health costs associated with years of working to produce energy for the nation's factories and utilities.

Equally as destructive as the toll of human life has been what the coal economies have done to the environment. People welcomed early coal mining in Appalachia because it provided a dependable source of income, certainly much more than timber industry or eking out a survival existence from marginal and submarginal agricultural lands. Mining was seen as beneficial, and jobs and environmental quality were considered separately. Hillsides were being eaten away by huge machines, mountain tops were being removed and flattened to provide easier access to minable seams of quality coal, rivers and streams were turning ugly shades of yellows and browns, and the air was unfit to breathe. Land reclamation is now required after strip mining, but accusations of inefficient and half-hearted efforts still abound.

A Region Propped Up

The Old Mountains have been identified as a problem region far back in American history, when even Abraham Lincoln called for economic assistance to Appalachia. Numerous federal and state policies and programs have been implemented to try to end some of these problems, but the issues seem to persist.
war period. The Old Mountains were never able to accumulate enough capital to afford the luxury of rejuvenation. Big investment was directed there only during turning points of history: Peter the Great’s perestroika of Russia in the early 18th century, Russia’s European wars in the late 18th century, the war with Nazi Germany, and later the peak of the Cold War. Investment was always limited to the barest minimum necessary for immediate returns on capital, and was exclusively concentrated in the material sphere of production.

If in the past the mountains tolerated the plunder of their seemingly endless treasurehouse, now the steamshovels no longer dig into thick layers of minerals, but scrape the very bones of the exposed mountain skeleton. When mining development started, ores with about 66 percent iron content were worked, but now even 17 percent content ore is regarded as a lucky find. The metallurgical industry in the region is no longer a link in the technological chain converting Asian raw materials into European products.

The industrial structure of the Urals, with a preponderance of the obsolete smokestack industry, will continue to handicap its future development. The conversion of military industries has already dealt the region an extremely painful blow. This poorly planned process cut to the quick the very foundations of the economy in many major cities. There is little doubt that complete victory of the free-market economy in Russia will again spell death for the Urals, already suffering from the shift of investment from heavy industry to the consumer products sector. But the Urals is not an empty backwater that could weather the storm by living on social security. Today, the region ranks second only to the Core in terms of industrial output. The size of the region’s population (about 13 million people) rules out a hands-off approach to its problems. As in no other region, the future of the Uralian economy, which had been saved by state intervention in the past, depends on the political course of the country.

The Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) was created to resolve a host of rural problems in the southern Appalachians. In May of 1933 the authority was established by federal law “to improve navigation and provide flood control of the Tennessee River,” as well as to deal with reforestation, encourage use of marginal lands, and help develop agriculture and industry in the Tennessee Valley. The people of the area at the time had incomes less than 45 percent of the national average. The 1940s was a big growth period for the TVA as dam construction and electricity generation became the cornerstones of its various projects. In 1933, only 3 percent of the farms in the valley had electric power; by 1950, the number approached 80 percent.

The TVA, however, was a top-down project, a child of the Roosevelt era designed to show what big government was capable of achieving. In a later attempt to improve the region’s economy through more local approaches, the American government created the Appalachian Regional Commission in the 1960s across the thirteen states that contained portions of Appalachia. A host of programs were carried out with federal and state cooperation. Local and civic groups benefited from the almost $6 billion of investment. Improved housing, job training, health services, transportation networks (in the early years of the program most money went into roads), and educational programs were but a few of the efforts to raise the region’s standard of living and quality of life.

Government efforts to resolve the nagging human problems of Appalachia have met with some successes. New schools, clinics, libraries, bridges, small town airports, industrial parks and shopping centers represent part of the newly built landscape in the region. Programs for job retraining, training local health professionals, small business development, and environmental cleanup abound. These projects, small or large, visible or invisible, are funded not only with government money, but also by churches, unions, and philanthropic organizations, many of the same groups that invested in human welfare last century. Volunteers from outside Appalachia continue to contribute time.
THEME 2: A CULTURE WALLED UP IN THE MOUNTAINS

The pioneers who entered the mountains filled in the void left behind by more enterprising migrants en route to Siberia. The oldest Russian inhabitants of the mountains are Old Believers, who fled from governmental and Church persecution and intolerance in European Russia and found in the narrow river valleys of the Urals their burrow for hiding. Later, the population was largely formed from the ranks of “called up” people: destitutes unable to control their own fate who surrendered themselves to government agents recruiting for the factories of the Urals. The agents would “call up” these unfortunate souls at the bazaars - volunteers, yes, but then locked into a kind of industrial serfdom. The construction of factories in the Urals went hand-in-hand with the importation of serf peasants and the use of free settlers, who were “attached” to factories, fully dependent on the mining administration. This industrial serfdom was accompanied by other forms of forced settlement: exile and imprisonment. The region had no shortage of prisons, among them some of the best known in Russia: the Nizhniy Tagil labor camp, designed for formerly high ranking state officials, and Perm Camp, with the dubious distinction of being the most feared in the country. In the Soviet period, new migration flows into the Urals followed the age-old model of the “called up” people: contract laborers and the idealistic Komsomol youth, lured into sacrificing their best years “building Communism” out in the hinterland. Thus the settling of the Old Mountains took place in the passive mode: strong personalities with enough will to act independently seemed to avoid the area. How vastly different this type of settlement is from the pattern of the Russian Breadbasket steppes and even Siberia, where free pioneer settlements preceded government efforts. While self-reliant personalities bravely ventured into new frontiers, the more passive or outcasts allowed themselves to be squeezed into the stony dungeons of the Urals’ canyons, mines, and sweatshops. If you want to call someone a hick in Russia, you may say “What is it with you? Are you from the Urals?”

and money to try and correct local problems. But in spite of these visible changes and successes in alleviating pressing human problems, the region remains poor, worn out, and neglected. Perhaps Appalachia has little political clout because it has few people scattered in rural areas in a dozen states; in a predominantly urban nation, where most voters live in cities, it is difficult to obtain federal and state funding and support for problematic rural regions. The “neglected” and “bypassed” nature of the region two hundred years ago still seems applicable today.

THEME 2: A CULTURE WALLED UP IN THE MOUNTAINS

The isolation of the people of the Old Mountains created a culture that became a living museum of American traditions. But while people who know how to build a wooden spinning wheel and construct a log cabin from scratch may still be found here, the uniqueness of the culture came at the price of education levels lower than national averages, poor access to ideas from the “outside,” and a kind of siege mentality of regional pride. Jack Weller (who wrote about the region in *Yesterday’s People: Life in Contemporary Appalachia*) noted that such characteristics as traditionalism, independence, and fatalism seem to imbue the culture of the mountains.

It is little wonder that fatalism and fatalistic religions have support in coal-dependent economies, as many a mining community has experienced the human toll of coal mining; a walk through a local cemetery would show numbers who died the same day, many at very early ages. The number of families without fathers and husbands in mining towns shows the human tragedy of coal mining. The people of the region also had good reason to fear the outside world. Although the outsiders brought in capital to invest in the coal industry, they also took advantage of the local peoples’ lack of sophistication to win mining rights cheaply. The federal government told them that their stills, representing years of traditional conversion of corn to “white lightin’” were suddenly illegal. The outsiders brought or lured in many miners. The immigration
Russians did not feel quite at home in the Urals, and they felt that hostile forces still lurked in the land beneath their feet, as if they lived on the back of a huge, sleeping dragon. Reptilian images were always associated with the Urals. Even in ancient Russian folklore, the monster dragon “Zmey Gorynych” was thought to have its lair in the Urals. (“Gorynych” in Russian can relate to both the terms “gora” for mountains and “gorye” for grief). The best-known writer of the Urals, Paul Bazhov, who drew from local folklore, peopled his mountain tales with myriads of tiny gorynyches - magical lizards who formed the retinue of the Queen of Copper Mountain (the most purely Uralsian persona of Russian literature). Many young gem-seekers were lured by the cruel flattery of this ice queen of the mountain and driven to death.^

Warmth seeped out of the people held in the stony embrace of the Urals, until even their souls seemed cold as the stone. The folk tales of the Urals shocked the reader who saw the hills, the trees, the men, and the gods as they really were. This was the experience of the ill-fated hero of one story, who was turned to stone by the cruel flirtation of this ice queen of the mountain and driven to death.


The mountain people were devising their own ways to entertain, to express themselves, and to survive in a harsh environment. Isolation and inaccessibility represent a positive part of their heritage. The mountain people were devising their own ways to entertain, to express themselves, and to survive in a harsh environment. Isolation and inaccessibility represent a positive part of their heritage. The music described here demonstrates how Americans and Europeans have appropriated and transformed folk traditions in various ways.

their heads. These labels implicitly deny them the “All-Russian-ness” of full-fledged national fame. Whereas the focus of truly Russian writers has always been on the eternal Faustian dilemmas of humanity, those in the Urals were more parochial, limiting their work to purely regional topics such as the daily life of factories, the folklore of prospectors, or descriptions of mountain landscapes. Only in sculpture did artists of the Urals breach the confines of purely regional fame and achieve renown all over Russia, perhaps inspired by the three-dimensionality of the mountains.

The Old Mountains has always been a region out of sync with time and surrounding space: a mountain barrier between Europe and Asia which was really no barrier at all, a forgotten place jumped over by voluntary settlers, but later populated by people not wanted elsewhere, a place impoverished despite its own riches, looking only inward—still held captive by the monster Gorynych, but safe in the isolation of its mountain box.

Popular forms of entertainment even among early settlers were music and story telling, both of which required little or no formal schooling. Legends and ghost stories were spun in the tradition of the Scots-Irish; this was not only a way for parents and grandparents to convey personal and family histories, but also to regale children. It has only been during the past several decades that these so-called “jack tales,” often humorous stories about politicians, lawyers, and favorite town drunkards, have been collected from older generations. Valuable information has been gathered in recent years through a project known as “Foxfire,” founded by Elliott Wigginton, a school teacher in northern Georgia. He started a magazine with his students in the 1960s which encouraged them to mine the hills, but not for coal this time: the children interviewed members of their community and tapped into a treasure-trove of information on local culture: stories, instructions on cooking wild plants, and building log cabins, and a wealth of crafts from the Old Mountains. The Appalachian region has long been associated with “home made” items, be they pottery, tables, chairs, music instruments, dolls, toys, or quilts. Today, members of a new generation of Appalachian craftspeople have arisen, often living in artisans’ communities (such as Berea, Kentucky), and traveling to a series of crafts and antique fairs and exhibitions throughout America. The crafts industry thus represents a mix of “old and new” Appalachia. And while not employing large numbers of employees or generating huge sums of income for the region, these low-technology ventures are an integral part of the Appalachian cultural landscape.

Tradition is an appropriate term to describe the peoples of Appalachia. It is not difficult to understand the strong sense of pride and identity the residents have to their region, not to understand why many people believe that the region has changed little for the better in recent decades.
THE TROPICAL SOUTH
Raymond Krishchyanas

Flying into the seaside city of Batumi from Moscow in January may be a shock. With ice-bound Moscow only two hours behind, disembarking passengers are enveloped with warm air and a sea of greenery that seem to defy winter. The road to town runs past plantations of fragrant tangerine trees laden with bright orange fruit. Sprawling two-story private houses with surrounding verandas, grand staircases, and fancy cast iron gates sit amidst orchards and flower gardens. For a visitor from Russia these are real villas. The streets are jammed with disorderly hosts of private cars and lined with stately and exotic trees.

It is off-season, and crowds milling in the streets and city bazaars are blessedly free of tourists. The colorful look and sound of the people instantly evoke the image of cosmopolitan ports of the eastern Mediterranean: Here Georgians, Russians, Armenians, Greeks, and Turks all mix together. Even a newcomer unable to distinguish between most non-European peoples will soon notice that many Georgians speak Georgian curiously intermingled with Russian words, and many who speak Georgian are not of dark Mediterranean complexion, but blue-eyed redheads - native Muslim Adzharians from the mountains towering above the city. Wearing skullcaps and fingering amber prayer beads, old Adzharians linger in smoke-filled coffee houses that cluster in the port area amidst quaint blocks of turn-of-the-century modern art townhouse, relics of Batumi's glorious past as a booming free port.

THE TROPICAL SOUTH
Wilbur Zelinsky

What a difference a few centuries can make or the vagaries of weather! If the wind had shifted just a bit in direction in October 1492, Mr. Columbus might well have waded ashore somewhere near Daytona Beach instead of onto one of the least impressive isles in the Bahamas. Such a brush with the North American continent would not have been too encouraging for someone with the mercenary appetites of the Great Navigator. Beyond a coastline blocked by a succession of sandbars and having virtually no decent natural harbors, he would have seen endlessly flat, steamy, mucky terrain of questionable fertility and few resources.

Yet five hundred years later, nowhere else in the world is there anything like the seemingly endless East Florida conurbation, a narrow, uninterrupted strip of grandiose urban tissue reaching all the way from Miami's southern suburbs northward to Jacksonville for a distance of nearly 400 miles. Where Federal or state regulations or the physical limitations of the coastal zone do not discourage it, the same sort of hodgepodge of hotels, condominiums, resorts, marinas, fast food outlets, shopping centers, and parking lots that make up the modern American city seems to be materializing along Florida's west coast.

The transformation of peninsular Florida and so much of the Gulf Coast in the 20th Century has been amazing, a Cinderella story verging upon a geographic miracle.
FROM BACKWATER TO NOUVEAUX RICHES

For the most part the Tropical South consists of a narrow strip of the coast squeezed between the sea and the mountains. Though tiny on the map, the region can rightfully boast of an ancient history and a role far out of proportion to its small area.

Almost completely enclosed, the Black Sea is in many ways an appendage and a smaller version of the Mediterranean. Since the seventh century B.C., Greek colonies dotted the shores of the Pontus Euxinus - the Hospitable Sea - making the straits of Bosporus and Dardanelles one of the world’s busiest waterways. The Mediterranean connection was maintained as the coasts became part of consecutive empires focused on Constantinople: Roman, Byzantine, and finally, Ottoman. All of them embraced the Black Sea with two narrow arms of coastal footholds. Until a century or two ago, the political and ethnic history of this coastal ring was quite separate from the hinterland, making it a beachhead of the Mediterranean-Balkan realm. Under Ottoman rule, the coasts were strongly Islamized and faced off against Christian Georgia and Russia.

In the words of the famous Prince Potyomkin, Crimea was “a wart on Russia’s nose.” The Hospitable sea of the Greeks was the ominously Black sea of Muslim threat for the Russians. The Islamic beachhead proved to be precarious, though, as Russia took over the coasts in late 18th to early 19th century, turning the region that had been the periphery of Mediterranean empires into the “South” from a Russian perspective.

And yet, the region until the twentieth century was a sleepy and nearly unpopulated backwater. Surrounding states were uninterested in the Black Sea except in terms of strategic value. The accounts of travelers who moved through western Georgia a mere hundred years ago speak of the unimaginable poverty and primitive lifestyle of the peasants: in a sense, the tradition of slavery continued in Western Georgia until 1912.

In an amazing turn of fortune, the region that in the past epitomized poverty has been miraculously transformed in modern times. Dense forests and swamps with a scattering

A LATE BLOOMER

For a surprisingly long time, Florida remained one of the orphan regions of the Western World. Even in 1892, anyone surveying the area would have noted remarkably little change from the time of Columbus, especially in comparison with the rest of the bustling republic farther north. The Gulf Coast fared somewhat better. Control of the mouth of the immense Mississippi, and thus of the wealth and commerce of its vast drainage basin, excited interest among the French in the early 1700s, the Spanish a little later, and subsequently the Anglos. From its earliest days, New Orleans became a prize worth jostling over.

Lacking any hinterland worth bothering about, coastal Florida was neglected; aside from a token, poorly provisioned garrison at St. Augustine, a few small, ineffective coastal and inland church missions, and a scattering of place names, the Spanish impress was negligible. The only perceived value was geopolitical: as a staging area for naval and military efforts to keep marauders out of West Indian waters, the source of so much European wealth, the region where all the real action was taking place. Simply because of its location, the French and British intermittently challenged Spanish sovereignty over Florida, and when the United States finally scooped up the state from an enfeebled Spain around 1819, the transaction was almost absentminded and stirred little political interest among the American populace. Furthermore, over the next several decades settlement and development remained minimal in the southern two thirds of the state. During the same period, the only notable growth in activity along the Gulf Coast was in New Orleans and a few other port towns. Elsewhere, populations were sparse and economic enterprise was stunted and desultory. As for the indigenous inhabitants, which probably numbered in the hundreds of thousands, most had perished during the first century of direct and indirect contact with Europeans, chiefly because of susceptibility to Old World diseases.
of cornfields have given way to vineyards, citrus and tea gardens, and huge sprawling villages of two or three storied private houses. Cars replaced the recently ubiquitous water buffalos; and in the rate of private car ownership, the coastal strip from Crimea to Georgia ranked at the top during the Soviet period. Waterfronts have been transformed into almost uninterrupted lines of resorts. The children and grandchildren of poor docile peasants now ostentatiously display their wealth in the expensive restaurants of Moscow or Petersburg inaccessible to most Russians. Ironically, the Russians, who have good reason to believe that much of this prosperity is at their expense, still perceive the region through a distorting veil. The condescending romanticization of colorful (“Italian”) southern poverty has been replaced with envious admiration of the region’s loud prosperity. The children and grandchildren of poor docile peasants now ostentatiously display their wealth in the expensive restaurants of Moscow or Petersburg inaccessible to most Russians. Ironically, the Russians, who have good reason to believe that much of this prosperity is at their expense, still perceive the region through a distorting veil. The condescending romanticization of colorful (“Italian”) southern poverty has been replaced with envious admiration of the region’s loud prosperity. The dramatic about-face in the prosperity of the Tropical South came about through social and economic changes that occurred in what might be called the Soviet Frost Belt (which pretty much coincided with all of Russia). Improved standards of living in the North resulted in a greater appreciation of leisure and “tropical” amenities, creating a uniquely Soviet variety of Sunbelt. The environment closest to tropical could be found along the rim of the Black Sea, and what the region lacked in genuine “tropicalness” could be added by manipulating popular perception.

**Tropiki**

Strictly speaking, the “Tropical” South is really only subtropical, but even that is amazing so far to the north. In fact, the region embraces the world’s northernmost point of subtropical climate. Moldova lies at the same latitude as Newfoundland, and Batumi (in the southernmost extremity of the region) corresponds to New York City, though its climate is that of northern Florida. This anomaly is due to the protective mountain wall which screens the coastal rim from invasions of cold air. The Greater Caucasus Range and the Crimean mountains provide a sharp divide between the Tropical South and the steppes of the Breadbasket with their harsh winters. Weather forecasts and tourist brochures always treat the region as a separate entity, calling it a Tropical South.

Other factors account for the prolonged somnolence of the American Tropical South: until the 20th Century, such places were not readily accessible nor environmentally appealing to Europeans who tended to gravitate to habitats that were reasonably homelike, and the Tropical South was emphatically not like Europe. Even the Spaniards, who did colonize various tracts within the American low latitudes, kept to the temperate uplands and shunned the hot and wet coastal plains. Americans considered southern Florida to be a wild and dangerous place, definitely not worth visiting, much less living in. At the time of Census of 1830, Florida ranked 25th among the 27 states and territories, having only 34,730 inhabitants, and nearly all of them living outside our region within the northern quarter of the state, an area that, in terms of economy and culture, was little more than an extension of Georgia. Even as late as 1876, the entire voting population of what are now Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach counties was only 73. In an incredible change, the statewide population tally for Florida by 1990 had reached 12,938,000, a figure surpassed only by California, New York, and Texas; and the great bulk of these people were located in the peninsular section of the state.

How did this neglected region achieve such an amazing transformation in popularity? Miami, Orlando, Tampa St. Petersburg, and New Orleans have experienced a localized expression of much broader trends operating among highly advanced modern societies everywhere: millions of middle-class people now enjoy a surplus of leisure time. But also relevant is what might be called the Tropicalization of American Life. For most persons, the summer season has become the emotional climax of the year. And, of course, the best way to accommodate the lure of the tropics is to move southward for a few days - or better yet, for a lifetime.

**Tropicana**

Climate is a key consideration in explaining the metamorphosis of the Tropical South. Year round warmth and abundant sunshine have been powerful enticements for
At Oreanda they sat on a seat not far from the church, looked down at the sea, and were silent. Yalta was hardly visible through the morning mist, white clouds stood motionless on the mountain tops. The leaves did not stir on the trees, grasshoppers chirruped, and the monotonous hallow sound of the sea rising up from below, spoke of the peace, of the starred sleep awaiting us. So it must have sounded when there was no Yalta, no Oreanda here.

- Anton Chekhov, "The Lady With The Dog", translation by Constance Garnett, the Ecco Press, p. 12

The subtropics are a rather conjured-up tropics. Although all of the region has January temperatures above the freezing point, on occasion winter frosts are strong enough to harm citrus trees. Snow occurs almost every year, though it seldom lasts for more than a few days. More importantly, the Tropical South is a bit contrived with respect to its image. No other region of the USSR had a portrait that was so recently and consciously manufactured by agents ranging from Russian literature to Soviet media and mass-culture.

In earlier days, the “tropics” had been ignored. Russian nobility’s quest for the exotic was satisfied by trips to the Mediterranean, and Russian writers’ thirst for the romantic was quenched by the mountains of the Caucasus, where gallant montagnards resisted the Empire for nearly a century. Only in the 20th century did the growing middle class of capitalist Russia discover the Black Sea as an affordable Russian Mediterranean. Villas, health resorts (sanitoriums), and hotels for sun-deprived Petersburgians began to dot the coast. A new infatuation by Russian writers with the romantic South began to manufacture by agents ranging from Russian literature to Soviet media and mass-culture.

This phenomenon is no small matter for a region that banks on the influx of visitors during the cold months, where central heating is almost unknown, and so much of the agricultural economy depends on frost sensitive crops such as citrus, tomatoes, and sugar cane. Even the very warmth that draws people can also cause problems. Relative humidity is often so high as to cause “super tropical” discomfort.

As if I lived in ashen ground, as if
The leaves in which the wind kept up its
sound
The palms were hot
Her mind had bound me round.  The
pals were hot
As if I lived in ashen ground, as if
The leaves in which the wind kept up its
sound
~ Wallace Stevens, "Farewell to Florida", collected poems 1955 from Ideas of Order

For music, for whispering from the reefs.
Her days, her oceanic nights, calling
For music, for whispering from the reefs.
~ Wallace Stevens, "Farewell to Florida", collected poems 1955 from Ideas of Order
the Black Sea as an invented world of romanticized tropics, with bright colors and noble characters with strong passions. This conscious desire to find a bright make-believe world amidst bleak Soviet realities explains much of the willing self-deception about the “Russian Tropics.”

Under Stalin, an ethnic Georgian, the image of the Tropical South was particularly enhanced by official propaganda keen to accommodate the dictator’s tastes. In Soviet “factory of dreams” movies, the region became the locale for the “all-union health station” (offered as a boon to the best workers) and the land of romance and chivalry. Some former dachas of the nobility were indeed turned into sanatoriums and resthouses for the workers, but more importantly, Stalin added to the old royal villas in the Crimea a whole network of dachas for the new communist rulers of the country, and the region continued to be a playground for the elite.

By the 1960s, the mythological foundations were laid and the stage was set for the real opening of the Tropical South, which occurred with major changes in post-Stalinist Soviet society. Considerably improved standards of living produced a new urban middle class of educated professionals who valued leisure and were eager to fulfill the socially prestigious aspirations earlier denied to everybody but the elite. The floodgates opened, and the avalanche of tourists and vacationers quickly followed.

The Tangerine Invasion Of Moscow

The integration of the Tropical South into the Russian mainstream fully transformed the region’s agriculture. Even before the revolution, the first tea gardens were laid out around Batumi, and the famous Botanical Gardens were established north of the town to promote acclimatization of citrus trees, avocados, and other tropical species or fruit trees or medicinal plants. The pressure to develop “tropical” agriculture grew with the Soviet economic policy of self-sufficiency, and the scheme was overall a success. The region largely met domestic demand for tea and tobacco, but transport constraints long after herculean exploits and vast expense that the U.S. Corps of Engineers has been able to safeguard New Orleans and other riverside towns from calamity. Another distinctive regional weather characteristic is a most unhappy one - tropical hurricanes. During the summer and autumn of almost any year, at least one of these potentially devastating storms sweeps in from the lower latitudes of the Atlantic Ocean to lash the Gulf or South Atlantic coast. It is not only the ferociously destructive winds that make these visitors so unwelcome. The accompanying vast surges of sea water that can rush over low lying coastal tracts may cause even greater havoc. As construction and population buildup continues at a merry pace (especially in Florida) in close proximity to the shore, it is all too likely that the worst of hurricane disasters is still to come on that fateful day when a storm of exceptional viciousness hits a densely settled area lacking adequate evacuation plans or facilities. Something close to such an ultimate disaster came to pass in 1992, when Hurricane Andrew laid waste to much of Miami’s southern periphery.

How did this bundle of atmospheric contradictions come to attract one of the biggest population flows in recent history? Perhaps the answer lies within the realm of social psychology. During the past several decades, there has been a remarkable shift in our collective and individual mind sets. Work has become little more than the prelude to play, so that many of us spend our hours in shop or office daydreaming about weekends, vacations, or retirement. Everywhere one turns it seems that hedonism is rearing its lovely head, and the doctrines of pleasure and fun have begun to mold our destinies. What has emerged is a type of social Tropic-ana, born out of the key role that the advertising industry played in forging the region’s image: not too coincidentally, advertising came of age at the same time that modern Florida did.

Taking Over The American Breakfast Table

As it happens, a desire to enjoy the country’s very own tropics has been mated with technologically enhanced opportunity, especially in terms of accessibility. Although
impeded the production of citrus fruits. Although the coastal railway to Georgia was finally completed in the 1920s, the transport of perishable fruits was impossible without then-scarce refrigerated boxcars. As a result, never easily obtainable tangerines and oranges (the only fresh fruits available to Russia in winter) acquired the prestige of rare delicacies.

Citrus fruit revolutionized the agricultural scene in the 1960s. While the Frost Belt was discovering Tropical South through exploding tourism, the natives of the Tropical South were discovering the bonanza of northern markets, which the inefficient state sector could never satiate with products of the “Lush South.” The belated spread of affordable air transport and private autos put the European regions of the USSR within easy reach of the Tropical South for the first time. Meanwhile, the increasingly laissez-faire Soviet regime was relaxing its vigilant control over local affairs. All of these factors explain the rapid expansion of private (rather than collectivized) agriculture and the eventual triumph of the shadow economy in the region.

The private plots of collective farmers were rapidly converted into intensively cultivated citrus orchards, flower, and early vegetable gardens, while production in the collective sector was neglected. In the balance, “tropical” produce was kept below demand with monopolistically high prices. Private farming became an extremely lucrative activity, open only to the native rural population. Ironically, it could be such a source of wealth only within the Soviet socialist economy, where a closed domestic market ruled out foreign competition, laws prevented outsiders from buying land in the Tropical South, and the absence of free market prices and realistic taxation boosted the profits made on exotic crops. A shipment of tangerines or flowers delivered to Moscow or Donetsk in the midst of winter could command almost any price, and little wonder that an average annual crop of tangerines from a family lot in Adzharia produced a household income 50 to 100 times higher than a private plot of equal area in European Russia.

most of the Gulf Coast had been approachable by ship or rail by the mid 19th Century, nearly all of peninsular Florida lay beyond the reach of any but the most fanatic of travelers until the 1890s. Shrewdly anticipating the eventual economic and demographic payoff of the region, Henry M. Plant plunged into the wilderness and began to develop a rail system into southwest Florida, while Henry M. Flagler extended his Florida East Coast Railway into Palm Beach by 1893 and Miami by 1896. Modern Florida had been born. People could come in; oranges could go out, both in great volume and at reasonable cost.

As the years passed, Florida's rail network grew, and the transformation of the environment set in with it. With the availability of power machinery for earth-moving, much of the shoreline of the region has undergone radical change as urban developers have filled in or reshaped wetlands to create new waterfront lots. Inland, there has been the inevitable suburbanization and sprawl of such metropolises as Orlando, Winter Haven, and Lakeland, despite problems in drainage. Wetlands were also transformed into prime orchards and vegetable gardens, and specialized agriculture and horticulture created a family resemblance between the economies of the Gulf and Florida sections of the Tropical South. Their climates enable them to grow a variety of tropical and subtropical fruits, vegetables, and ornamental plants not otherwise available cheaply in the eastern United States and to penetrate northern markets with fresh produce all year. Thus Florida and Gulf coast growers find it profitable to rush the first lettuce, green peppers, corn, and tomatoes of the season northward every spring while the Midwest and Northeast are still frost bound; and, similarly, mid latitude consumers will pay premium prices for the earliest cantaloupes and watermelons of the year. Here is also the only part of the United States outside Hawaii where sugar cane can be grown and harvested, though at considerable risk of frost every few years. The development of frozen juice concentrate in the 1940s allowed the Tropical South to surpass California in output of oranges, tangerines, and grapefruit; and few people in America can
Such easy wealth in agriculture set off a chain reaction throughout the economy as a whole. The great inflow of money into Georgia pushed up demand and black market prices for consumer goods that could not be produced by weak local industry, thus luring many people into profitable speculative trade. Merchandise purchased at fixed low prices in state shops in cities “up north” was taken south to be resold at several times the original price. Thus, overpriced agricultural produce from the “shadow” private sector went North, just as state-subsidized consumer goods from the north traveled south, creating immense profits in both directions; and in a uniquely Soviet reversal of scenarios common elsewhere, the agricultural South in fact benefited at the expense of the developed North.

THEME 1: THE SUN-AND-SIN ECONOMY

Manufacturing A Sunbelt

Over half of all Soviets who left their immediate home areas for vacation went to the Black Sea coasts. Moreover, most of them crowded into the central stretch, from the southern tip of the Crimea roughly to Sukhumi, which over the years became something of a linear recreational metropolis. The names of Yalta, Sochi, or Gagra were known to every Soviet as resorts symbolizing middle class prestige.

The developed resort strip is very narrow and even frequently interrupted by mountain spurs falling abruptly into the sea. The mountains prevent physical expansion into the hinterland, putting demand pressure on existing facilities and creating an overall impression of severe crowding. Yet such overpopulated built-up areas are interspersed with undeveloped stretches of the coast or populous villages. The curious combination of densely packed resorts and generally extensive land use could only be possible in the absence of a true market for land. Health resorts were operated like any socialist enterprise, in a strictly planned and “organized” way. There were no readily available sit down to their breakfast juice today without feeling the influence of the region.

Despite these successes, two principal problems for the area’s agriculture remain: the recruitment of a transient labor force from domestic and foreign sources and increasingly effective competition from Mexico and the West Indies. But in the case of at least one major (though climatically marginal) crop in Louisiana and Florida sugar cane government support has come to the rescue in the form of subsidies and quotas on foreign imports.

THEME 1: THE SUN-AND-SIN ECONOMY

Populating A Sunbelt

Probably more than any other state, Florida has benefited from the building of the Interstate Highway System from the mid 1950s onward. It has brought this subtropical wonderland within one or two day driving time for a considerable majority of Americans. By the thousands and hundreds of thousands they came: the permanently transplanted, the tourists, conventioneers, snowbirds, retirees, refugees, migrant workers, and college students on their spring break, all in search of their version of the latterday American Dream. During every single decade since 1900 (with the exception of the 1910s and 1930s, with World War I and the Great Depression), the total population of the state has grown by at least 30 percent and in the 1950s at the astonishing rate of 78.7 percent. The peninsular segment of Florida claimed the lion’s share of the increment, with a demographic explosion taking place largely in the major cities. Smaller urban centers also welcomed their share of the new arrivals, as did much of the nominally rural countryside. To a degree probably unmatched elsewhere in North America, this region holds many scattered residential developments seemingly in the middle of nowhere. Much of the western component of the Tropical South has not been able to match southern Florida’s feverish growth pattern, a fact that raises some provocative questions. The Mobile and Baton Rouge metropolitan areas have registered
drop-in motels or hotels on the coast. Reservations for state-operated resorts were at a premium and normally obtained through one's trade union, frequently involving several years’ wait for a turn to go to a more desirable location. As a result, skyrocketing numbers of so-called “wild” visitors rented a room or even just a bunk in a private residence. The incredible congestion of cheaper accommodations and prohibitive prices for better ones explained the high seasonal incomes of those who were lucky enough to be permanent local residents. Always tolerated, this was a rare sphere of officially allowed private enterprise in the USSR. Not surprisingly, since 1897 the pull of the sun and lucrative occupations produced a more than seven-fold increase in the population of the “resort” segment of the coast, making it the fastest-growing region of the former Soviet Union.

In contrast to the resort economy of the Crimean and Russian parts of the Tropical South, it was more lucrative to spend solar energy in Georgia on plants than on human sunbathers. Western Georgia is an endless village that sprawls along all major roads and blankets hillsides. While the line between urban and rural was so sharp in most of the former USSR, it was blurred in Georgia, which remains an essentially rural society with urban population barely exceeding half of the total. The towns are for the most part local commercial and food industry centers, and even in cities much of the income comes from the countryside: either through family channels or by exploiting positions of power.

The lackluster performance of the official economy of Georgia stands in stark contrast to its visible prosperity. If one excludes the three Baltic states of Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia (which ranked first in the USSR in both well-being and economic performance), then Georgia emerged first in the rate of private car ownership, but only seventh in terms of national product per capita. This discrepancy is eloquent proof of the pre-eminence of “shadow” sources of wealth in a generally underdeveloped economy. According to 1980s data, Georgia, endowed as it was with the best only slight gains, the population of Greater New Orleans seems to be at a standstill, and several counties located between southeast Texas and the Florida Alabama line along the Gulf Coast suffered population decline over the same period. What is the explanation for these two quite different trajectories of growth?

Part of the answer lies in the contrasting situations of the two areas at the start of the boom period. Peninsular Florida was almost a clean slate, especially after the elimination of much of the indigenous population. In contrast, the Gulf Coast was already rather well developed; in particular, the banks of the lower Mississippi were taken up by all manner of economic enterprises, and a well entrenched population had preempted all the relatively dry or accessible portions of the bayou country within the Delta. Expansion of the venerable, regionally dominant metropolis of New Orleans, which had consistently ranked among the top half dozen cities of antebellum America, was becoming problematic. In part this has been a matter of the sheer physical constraints of a difficult site, but at a more fundamental level the city is afflicted by the same syndrome of social ills bedeviling the older metropolises of the so called Rust Belt.

The Texas and Louisiana portions of the region are abundantly endowed with petroleum and natural gas both on land and under water and also blessed with some of the world’s richest reserves of salt and sulfur. The mineral wealth of the Gulf Coast makes it much more heavily industrialized in the conventional sense than is Florida, but Florida is well ahead in attracting the newer high tech and information based industries thanks to the siren call of amenities the living conditions that enable the area to bid successfully for skilled technicians, professionals, managers, and executives. As a region so largely devoted to the production and sale of pleasure, the Tropical South is peculiarly sensitive to the crests and troughs in the national and international economy. Overbuilding and excessive expansion followed by temporary collapse has become a familiar cycle. But even more troublesome is the fact that here there is a zone poised between the wealth and glitter of the United States and the poverty of more than a
agricultural lands in the former USSR, ranked only seventh in the value of agricultural product per unit of sown area. Such dismal performance of the state sector stemmed from its degradation into little more than a smokescreen for lucrative underground or “second economy” activities. Carefully cultivated private lots stand in striking contrast to the deplorable state of collective farm fields.

If the Soviet Sunbelt is measured in terms of in-migration or economic power, it would appear to be a failure. Its population has barely reached 5 million (6 million with Odessa) and market reforms now mean that the polluted beaches and expensive fruits of the region will face competition from Bulgaria and the Mediterranean. The palatial houses of the village nouveaux-riche are a facade, with their tasteless decorations trying to imitate marble but still unmistakably stucco. The whole prosperity of the region was based on using the anomalies of the Soviet system. Without this system, each grand villa of the Tropical South may prove to be only a house of cards.

Playing the Black Market

Many people are taken in by the gaudy displays and believe that Georgia’s prosperity is due to an entrepreneurial streak in its population, but reality suggests otherwise. Rather than modernizing the region and helping to develop the western-style work ethic, the massive infusion of unearned wealth into rural areas helped to preserve or revive many traditionalist cultural codes of society, including the leisurely attitudes of a once-numerous petty gentry. The stress on ritual display of goods, on the expenditure of huge sums on elaborate feasts with show-off hospitality and on expensively decorated cemetery plots only reinforces the desperate quest for wealth.

The question of whether to consider the shadow economy of the Tropical South (especially Georgia) as criminal is highly ambiguous. It certainly seemed illegal from the viewpoint of Frost Belt populations who felt exploited; for the local population it dozen countries just over the horizon. The moral and material tensions between the two worlds are stark and insistent.

Smugglers’ Coves

One of the basic facts of international life is that there is inevitably a lively illegal trade in all sorts of things whenever two countries at very different levels of development are within striking distance of each other. Nowhere in the developed world is there stronger proof of this axiom than in the American Tropical South. It may be impossible to determine precisely the volume of contraband being smuggled, but the indirect evidence is convincing enough. It is likely that the flow of illegal aliens and goods into Louisiana, Florida, and other parts of the region had materialized as early as the 1800’s. The authorities have always been hard put to patrol so long a coastline with its myriad coves and beaches, and it was especially difficult back when so much of the region was thinly settled. But the action became really hot and heavy during the Prohibition Era (1920-1933), when parched Americans were eager customers for the bottled goods carried by rum runners in speedboats and other vessels from the Bahamas, Cuba, and other points.

If this illegal trade has become much more diversified of late, one category of freight strongly dominates the scene: narcotics. This commerce, only a small fraction of which is intercepted and confiscated by government agents, certainly runs into the billions of dollars each year. It relies on all sorts of transport from baggage and clothing of travelers to camouflaged cargo on scheduled airliners and freighters, light planes landing at isolated airstrips, and small ocean craft seeking out obscure inlets. The proceeds from this and other outlaw enterprises generate much of the prosperity of a booming regional banking industry by means of various money laundering schemes.
was simply the clever use of loopholes in the socialist system. Obviously, the second economy existed throughout the Soviet Union, but in Georgia it might well have been larger than the official or “first” economy. Corruption, black marketeering, speculation, and bribe-taking were carried out on an unprecedented scale and with unrivalled daring. The reasons for this were largely in Georgia’s uniquely privileged position in the former USSR.

Open favoritism by Moscow started with Stalin and gave the ruling ethnic elite a free hand within the republic. The combination of local political autonomy with the Caucasian reliance on familial and clan ties in all aspects of life led to the creation of a nearly impenetrable network of mutual aid and protection that clearly excluded those who were not part of the system. Illegal economic operations and exchanges produced great personal wealth for many Georgians, while the official economy of the republic grew only insignificantly. In the sunlit Tropical South, many people prospered by staying in the shadows.

THEME 2: STORMS ALONG THE BLACK SEA

The newly acquired wealth of the region has increased the stakes for control of this valuable prize. Since the coast had almost no tradition of statehood and its rise from poverty was so recent, the political arenas of the states that carve up the coast were traditionally dominated by inland areas, and the rapid ascendency of the coasts has introduced a peculiar dichotomy between the centers of “money power” and traditional power seats. The newly independent states of Georgia and Ukraine have tried to strengthen their grip on the rich coasts, reviving the deep, ancient cultural divide between coast and hinterland.

Ethnic separateness from the “mainland” is about the only unifying thread in the bewildering ethnic mosaic of the Tropical South. The region’s geographic isolation and

In addition to drugs, the Tropical South is the entry zone for such other commodities as prohibited animal pelts and feathers, live birds and other endangered creatures, archeological articles, and art objects. But far surpassing all these in importance is illicit traffic in human beings. As already dismal living conditions continue to deteriorate for much of the rapidly growing populations of the Caribbean and Latin America, many desperate persons have opted for northern flight. Florida has been the principal target for the newcomers, the great majority of whom in recent times have arrived from Cuba and Haiti (the former group for the most part legally), but Bahamians, Dominicans, and many other folks have managed to filter into most regions of the Tropical South.

THEME 2: AMERICAN SHORE OF THE TURBULENT CARIBBEAN

The Tropical South contains a striking internal ethnic diversity that makes it distinct from the rest of the United States. Intra regional patterns show that the mix of people living along the Gulf Coast is decidedly unlike that in peninsular Florida. In fact, the ethnic personality of southern Louisiana is about as different from mainstream America as any sizeable chunk of the country can be. Most of the Black population originated as transferred slaves from the French West Indies. Some residents of New Orleans arrived directly from France, the rest by way of the West Indies or as dispossessed Acadians (Cajuns) from Nova Scotia. Until recently, the back country of southern Louisiana remained one of America’s most isolated regions, and the dwellers in its bayous and prairies preserved and enjoyed their own quite special brand of culture. The “discovery” of the Cajun/Creole enclave has resulted in efforts to maintain the local French patois and to celebrate other elements of the cultural heritage, especially the local cuisine (indeed, many regard New Orleans as the gastronomic capital of North America) and dance music (zydeco).
historic obscurity allowed it to preserve populations ethnically separate from those in adjoining parts of Georgia, Ukraine, and Moldova. Thus coastal Georgia is populated with Adzharians, Mengrelians, and Abkhazians. Adzharians speak Georgian, but centuries of Ottoman rule (until 1878) resulted in a strong sense of Muslim identity. Abkhazians are largely Muslim and have a language and political history quite separate from Georgia. Between Abkhazia and Adzharia live Mengrelians, who speak their own language and have an identity separate from Georgian, while the traditional Georgian perception of them has been a pejorative one of rural hicks, the target of ethnic jokes. Coastal Bessarabia is part of Ukraine claimed by Moldova, yet the majority of its population are neither Ukrainian nor Moldovan, but Bulgarian, Russian, and Gagauz (Turkic-speaking Orthodox Christians). Finally, in the Ukrainian Crimea, the population is over 80 percent Russian.

The region’s history is filled with dramas of voluntary and forced exiles of whole peoples. Before the Russo-Turkish wars, the coast of present-day Krasnodar territory was populated by Circassians, people related to Abkhazians. Circassians long valiantly resisted the Russian advent, and the impressed victors, eager to vacate the coast from Ottoman subjects, offered them the option of emigrating to Turkey. The majority left, and today Circassians and Abkhazians number about one million in Turkey, more than in Russia and Georgia combined. At the same time, many Crimean Tatars left the Crimea, giving Russians a decisive majority which was later finalized by the deportation of Crimean Tatars in 1944. Today, there are some five million Crimean Tatars in Turkey, while only one million in all of the former USSR.

This gruesome burden of unsettled ethnic accounts was exacerbated by administrative changes during the Soviet period, with the creation of ethnically-based states in which the peoples of the coastal areas were small minorities. Discrimination and nationalism have slowly diluted the ethnic diversity of the coastal strip. Thus, Abkhazia was originally a separate union republic, but in 1932 it was made an autonomous part of In the sharpest of contrasts to the Gulf Coast, the peopling of southern Florida has been a recent affair, with only a small minority of the people in question not themselves migrants. The newcomers to Florida’s east coast have originated mostly in the Northeastern states, so much so that the area has begun to mimic New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania in many of its social and cultural characteristics, while along the west coast, the new Floridians have largely originated from the Midwestern states. The popular image of Florida as a haven for the elderly is not illusory. Retirees are definitely over represented statistically in the population, most notably in Tampa St. Petersburg, the metropolitan area claimed by Moldova, yet the majority of its population are neither Ukrainian nor Moldovan, but Bulgarian, Russian, and Gagauz (Turkic-speaking Orthodox Christians). Finally, in the Ukrainian Crimea, the population is over 80 percent Russian. In geopolitical terms, the Caribbean has been virtually an American lake since the 1820s, when the Monroe Doctrine claimed the Americas as the exclusive arena of the United States. Military incursions into Panama, Grenada, the Dominican Republic, and, by proxy, Nicaragua, are only the most recent of a series of such U.S. interventions that have involved every country in the Caribbean region. The American flag still flies over Puerto Rico, the American Virgin Islands, and Guantanamo, Cuba, and for all
Georgia (the state which the leading Soviet freedom-fighter, the late academician Andrei Sakharov, called a mini-empire for aggressive ethnocentrism and discrimination). But the Abkhaz and Adzhur units existed mostly in name, and even the very title “Adzharian” has been struck from the population census lists. An official campaign was undertaken to replace Muslim names with typically Georgian ones, and not a single mosque remains in Batumi. In the 1970s Abkhazians began to agitate openly for greater influence in the affairs of their own region and to favor secession into Russia, until in 1992, the Georgian versus Abkhazian struggle erupted again into all-out war.

In a similarly complex circumstance, the Crimea was part of Russia until 1954, when it was transferred to Ukraine as a “gift.” Not surprisingly, Ukrainian independence prompts strong Crimean sentiment for secession into Russia. Throughout the Tropical South, loyalty to Georgian, Ukrainian, or Moldovan states comes only third after local ethnic identities and pro-Russian sentiment (largely the product of the desire to preserve the fragile prosperity that depend on the North). These coastal beachheads are precarious though. For example, like Crimea’s previous attempt to become independent in 1917, a new effort can be easily foiled by a Ukrainian blockade of the peninsula (which receives three-quarters of its food and fresh water from mainland Ukraine).

The devolution of the USSR demonstrated how shaky is the very existence of the Tropical South. The region failed to become a true Sunbelt, while Russia became one more empire that failed to keep the Black Sea ring. Ancient Russians called the sea “Black” for its frequent and violent storms, and the conflict-torn region still seems to be perched on the edge of deep and turbulent waters.

practical purposes, Cuba was an American possession until the Castro regime took over in 1959. At the time of the annexation of Spanish Florida, the justification was that it was a “blunt dagger” pointed at the United States; but the dagger really points southward.

In terms of economy, the Caribbean has long been an American lake as well. The Gulf ports and New Orleans in particular have served as the principal gateways for the receipt of tropical produce and other exports from Central America, Mexico, the Antilles, Venezuela, and Colombia, while money has flowed freely back and forth. The economies of Jamaica, the Bahamas, Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, and many of the Lesser Antilles might well collapse without North American tourism. In some ways, Miami has become the capital of the Caribbean.

There is a certain delicious irony in the fact that so many hundreds of thousands of Spanish speaking immigrants have been flocking to a former corner of an empire the Spanish Crown so systematically ignored back in the time of Columbus. The Tropical South is fast becoming the hot spot of America in many ways: in the growth and ethnic mixture of its population, in the economic explosion associated with pleasure enterprises from Miami resorts to baseball spring training camps to Disney World, and in the geopolitical tempest of its connections to the Caribbean Sea.
The fragrance of the spring steppe near Dzhezkazgan is inebriating. In the area where the grasslands are not yet plowed under or overgrazed to become a desert, where the land blooms blood red with poppies and the wild tulips grow, the memories brought back by that smell may drive a native Kazakh or Russian alike to sense the hidden strength and vanished glory of this land. In the restlessly nomadic Russian spirit it awakens the subdued urge to move into open spaces; in the hearts of yesterday’s nomads, the Kazakh people, it may stir the image of the pastoralists’ happiness, expressed in the poem of Kazakh 19th century poet Abai Kunanbaev:

On springtime pasture my people gather; Kinsmen embrace and rejoice together. Joking and laughing, they stand and chat. About everything - from their herds to the weather. But the pleasant reverie set off by the spring grasses may end abruptly with the roar and blast-off of a rocket from nearby Baikonur, for this ancient steppe was turned into the launching site for all Soviet manned missions into space. The faces of this region could not be in greater contrast, yet is it any wonder in this place where two worlds meet?

Could this place be in the United States? The plaza in Santa Fe, New Mexico does not seem to be standard American. The architecture suits the southwest desert and the merchandise offered by the sidewalk vendors is unfamiliar, but appealing in its own way - pottery and weavings, Spanish-American food, leatherwork, mementos of the Old Anglo West. Even the skies are bluer, the air more transparent, and the smells different. People may expect something exotic in border towns like Mexicali, but this place is more than 200 miles from Mexico, and no foreign flags are flapping in the breeze.

But at a second look the city begins to feel less alien, even to East Coast Americans. The “southwestern” furniture and jewelry displayed in the shop windows look similar to ones sold in fashionable establishments back east, and the more adventurous suburbs throughout the United States are copying these Pueblo or Spanish motif buildings.

Santa Fe turns out to be not an exotic place at all, but rather something both uniquely influential and peculiarly emblematic of a special region and a new way of thinking about places in the United States. This is the land of intertwined peoples, a place clearly rooted in times long past, but a place that speaks to Americans of an altogether possible postmodern future, where cultures and lifestyles hybridize into new, unpredictable forms.
A GRASSLAND COMMONS WHICH DOESN'T QUITE UNIFY

Almost all of the region is a wide belt of dry grasslands and semi-deserts. To the north lie the steppes and forest; to the south, the mountains of Central Asia with their intricate lace of piedmont oases. From ancient times this sea of grass was home to a succession of nomadic peoples who navigated it on camel and horseback. For the nomads the grasslands, extending from China to the very doorstep of Europe, were a highway of expansion and a base of operations for plundering richer sedentary neighbors to the north and south. The Kalmyk people in the extreme west who speak a Mongol-related language and profess Buddhism are an exotic reminder of the past unity of the huge nomadic sea.

The heirs to the latest wave of nomads, the Kazakhs and Kirgiz, are a product of the blending of various local Turkic peoples with Mongol invaders. Their languages are Turkic, while in racial type they are distinctly Mongoloid. Among the Kazakhs, Kirgiz and Turkmen, the nomadic way of life prevailed until the 20th century, and nomadic traits are still a visible element of their culture. The origins of the ethnic name “Kazakh” are probably the same as of “Kazak” (the Russian for Cossack) and are often traced to the Turkic “qaz” (to wander).

Being a nomad is practically defined through cattle ownership. Abai Kunanbaev wrote, “Honor, reason, science, all for them is less than the herds. They think that by the gift of livestock they receive the good opinion even of God. For them religion, the people and influence is all livestock.” Even the souls of dead ancestors were believed to occupy animal bodies. The Kirgiz, with their annual migrations from alpine pastures to lower valleys, were nomadic as well and are closely related to Kazakhs, although their mountain environment is quite different from dry grasslands.

AN INTERNATIONAL BORDER WHICH DOESN'T QUITE DIVIDE

The international boundary between Mexico and the United States bisects two halves which are certainly distinct, yet are intimately intertwined. It is this line that gives vitality and substance to the entire region, acting as the spine or central organizing mechanism. “Mexistan” is the place where two streams of people and their cultures have entered, met head-on, and intersected, one arriving from the south, the other from the east and north, and both superimposing themselves upon various earlier, stubbornly surviving Native American societies.

The border is a crucible for intense interaction and some remarkable international chemistry, an interface that has sprayed its effects far into the interiors of the U.S. and Mexico alike. It is difficult to think of any other border that jostles together two such utterly different ways of life. More than 1500 miles in length, it has much in common with many other international boundaries established by the imperial European powers and their settler colonies during the 19th Century. Generally, there was little thought given to historical or cultural realities, but maximum attention to national power, profit, and convenience. The outcome is the legacy of a one-sided conflict and US invasion in the 1840s and the subsequent diplomatic arm-twisting, and has never made a great deal of sense in terms of either physical or human geography.

The Rio Grande is a flimsy, porous barrier since its waters are only waist-deep or even lower much of the time. Elsewhere the boundary is a sequence of straight segments that blithely ignore the lay of the land and seldom impede the determined wanderer. In fact, the whole U.S.-Mexican boundary has always been a rather permeable sort of membrane, so much so that the social and cultural presence of the foreign neighbor is readily detectable some hundreds of miles beyond the border checkpoints.
Both the Kazakhs and Kirgizs became distinctly separate people around the year 1500, about the same time as the emergence of their future adversaries, Russians and Uzbeks. Ever since, the region has been either a buffer or a bridge between two mutually opposed worlds: European-Christian Russia to the north and Islamic Central Asia (where the Uzbeks dominated) to the south. Maneuvering between these two expansionist forces, the Kazakhs managed to preserve the independence of their tribal federations until the mid-19th century, when Central Asia was annexed by the Russian Empire in the worldwide scramble for colonies. The native population found itself within the same state with Russia and Islamic Asia and was heavily influenced by both. But even if the two once opposed worlds overlapped here, they have as yet hardly blended. The grassland commons are vast enough to be shared by both Europe and Asia, presenting the two faces of the dual society of the region.

Where Russia and Islam Converge

Even a hundred years ago the nomadic corridor was much wider. But for the sedentary neighbors of the nomads, the grasslands were an open frontier. By the late 18th century, Southern Ukraine and lands on the Volga were lost to the nomad and gained by the Slav farmer. What remained was no longer the commons for the nomads’ wandering, but rather their besieged refuge. Already by the 17th century, Russian and Kazakh expansion clashed in the zone between the Siberian forests and the grasslands - the zone that was summer pastures to the Kazakhs, but virgin lands waiting for the plow from the European viewpoint.

The cliche of official Soviet history about the peaceful incorporation of Kazakhstan into the Empire was not entirely hypocritical. Acting as an arbiter in the perpetual squabbles of the khans (local leaders, considered the direct political successors of the Mongol Genghis Khan) for about a 150 years Russia did not move beyond its fortified boundary which stretched almost exactly along the present-day northern boundary of

The least “Mexican” segment of Mexico may be the northern Mexican states along the border - places in which the imprint of North American culture is inescapable - and likewise, in terms of U.S. territory, New Mexico, roughly half of Arizona and Texas, and small slivers of Colorado and California are the least standard region within the U.S based on the traditional Anglo definition of what is American. But perhaps these terms are already out-of-date, and here in Mexistan, a new idea of “American” is being born.

Where Mexico Meets Anglo-America

The initial European thrust into the region came in the 1540s, not long after the conquest of Mexico. Motivated by rumors of opulent cities to the north, Spanish explorers marched through New Mexico and as far as Kansas before turning back with empty hands. So great was their disillusionment that it was not until 1598 that the Spanish regime founded the first church missions and settler colonies in the upper Rio Grande valley. The settlers were few because the economic potential of the area was so meager and the supply lines and communications to the well-settled core area of New Spain were so slow and hazardous. Nevertheless this remote outpost has somehow persisted, and the descendants of the pioneer generations still cling proudly to their Spanish (rather than simply Mexican) heritage. The introduction of European cultural items, most notably livestock, metal-working, and an assortment of grains, fruits, vegetables, and other domesticated plants, meant considerable change in the economy and lifestyles of the surviving Native American groups.
Kazakhstan. One after another the khans of major groups accepted the Russian protectorate, but Russian presence became a reality only after the 1840s when the line of forts encircled Kazakh territory. The subjugation of the grasslands was made easier by the nomads’ lack of unity. Until they were brought together by the Russian rule, the three major groups of Kazakhs were quite separate and each was caught in a personal vice between Russia and Asia. The term for their social and political organization was “horde,” and the Kazakhs were divided into three of these federations, believed to date back to the sixteenth century, and translated as “Great, Middle, and Small.” The Smallest (or Junior) Horde was under pressure from the special Russian government in Orenburg and from the oasis Khanate (or kingdom under the khan leadership) of Khiva. The Middle Horde was controlled by the Russian governor in Petropavlovsk on the one side and lost territory to the Khanate of Kokand on the other. The Great, or “Senior,” Horde was gripped between a third Russian headquarters in Semipalatinsk and Chinese pressure. The Turkmen were caught between traditional dependency to Persia and the Russian conquest, which arrived across the sea and spread from the coastal base in Krasnovodsk. These separate corridors of conquest were later revived in the configuration of railways that crossed the region en route to Central Asia. Historic disunity persists in the economic disunity of the region today.

By the 1870s when the conquest of Central Asia was complete, the nomads discovered themselves living in the midst of Russian possessions. The long process of the shrinking of the nomadic sea culminated with the opening of the Kazakh grasslands to Russian homesteaders in 1889. By 1917, the northern zone of more fertile steppe (the Virgin Lands) was settled by a flood of Slavs, and the range became Russia’s latest granary.

While this Rio Grande corridor was the least unsuccessful Hispanic venture into Mexistan, there were two other paths of colonization in the region. Missionaries and settlers managed to create a foothold in the Santa Cruz Valley in southern Arizona. To the east, the Spanish had explored parts of Texas, but it was not until 1690 that the first church missions were attempted, and gradually handfuls of colonists and soldiers set up small outposts in central Texas. But the Texas strategy was a halfhearted one, and the newcomers had barely begun to set down serious roots in the region before bands of Anglo-Americans started to arrive in the 1820s to dispute ownership of the land. At that time, this was as remote and obscure a sector of the Greater European World as could be imagined—almost totally out of sight and out of mind, an area of the most marginal economic value and of concern only because of potential geopolitical conflicts.

The coming of the Americans heralded the beginning of the modern Mexistan. The movement of an expanding United States started with the incursion into the Mexistan periphery, the fertile, well-watered woodlands and prairies of central Texas by land-hungry folks from the American South who were quickly to evolve into Texans. At the same time, the central segment of “MexAmerica” became a player on the North American stage by virtue of its location. Merchants from the United States rushed to exploit the lucrative trade of transporting goods in pack trains via the so-called Santa Fe Trail, one of the principal land routes to California. The Gold Rush and the subsequent population and economic developments in California shortly after the U.S. annexation of “MexAmerica” made it imperative to have reliable overland connections with the East. Wagon trails and steam railroad systems were promptly created. Burgeoning commerce breathed considerable life into both older and newer towns situated at strategic nodes along the routes: El Paso, Albuquerque, Tucson, and Yuma.
Islamic Asia was winning the nomads’ hearts at the same time that Russia was gaining their lands. Although in their numerous treaties with the Steppe rulers Russia consistently referred to the natives as Moslems, that was an overstatement. Kazakhs and Kirgiz embraced Islam only superficially, retaining nearly unchanged the old totemistic cults dating back to the times of Tamerlane (sometimes called “Timur”). Tamerlane centered his empire of the late 14th century in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, and conquered an area from Iran through India. In fact, the devout Moslems of the oases of Central Asiaproper treated them as infidels. Following Russian conquest, Islam became the natural rallying point in seeking a resistant cultural image, reinforced by the fact that the nomads were united within the same Empire that incorporated the Islamic centers of Bukhara and Samarkand. Ironically, Russian conquest thus actually promoted the recent Islamization of the steppe.

Exactly one hundred years after Russian colonization began, the 1989 population estimate of this vast region found a sparse 12 million inhabitants, 48 percent of whom were indigenous Muslim peoples, while the Slavic population (mostly Russians and russified Ukrainians) accounted for 35 percent. Yet this ethnic duality developed only recently. Even immediately before the Second World War, the region’s population was only 4 million and was heavily dominated by natives. The attraction of mineral wealth brought about swift and sweeping change. Strategically located far from troublesome western boundaries, the mineral resources of the former nomadic range became especially important during the Second World War and Cold War years. As the native population remained in the countryside, Russians mostly carried out development. New industrial cities have become ethnic islands, and the gap between the modernity of urban areas and the traditionalism of countryside coincides with the divide between the European and native populations.

The end of the Mexican War in 1848 removed all doubt as to who would be the controlling population in Texas, with Anglos subduing the Hispanic population. Yet in a sense Mexico responded with a steadily growing migration of its residents into the United States. Today, the outer boundary of American Mexistan is that of the area where important Hispanic presence is clearly evident. This boundary may partially reflect the environmental tastes of Mexican migrants gravitating to places that look and feel familiar. With its several rugged, north-south-trending mountain ranges, various plateaus and basins, a multitude of dry stream beds and short supply of rivers, and an abundance of deserts, nearly all of Mexistan would look like home to any citizen from the upland sections of Mexico.

By 1900 the total number of persons inhabiting the core of Mexistan (i.e. without Texas) was only approximately 200,000. But by the 1990 count, Mexistan was home to some 12 million persons. The older string of cities along the Santa Fe trail was supplemented by a new string of twin cities that have grown like crystals along the string that is the international border: from San Diego/ Tijuana to Brownsville/ Matamoros. The presence of these paired cities indicates confluence of two social streams that cannot quite be kept apart, even by such a significant line on the map.
Soviet Union’s Testing Ground

With the advent of Soviet control, the region became a huge testing ground in the experiment of planting socialism on Asiatic soil. Stalin’s collectivization drive revived the tsarist attempt to settle the nomads and completely uprooted the traditional way of life. While the Kazakhs had no conception of private land ownership, livestock was always owned privately and was the single most important measure of one’s social status. Loath to give their animals to the collective, Kazakhs preferred to slaughter their herds. In the famine that followed, the population decreased by a quarter—a loss of life unprecedented even in Stalinist USSR, and the blow that sealed Kazakh submission to whatever system the Russians imported. It is sadly ironic that the shocks to the native way of life here were particularly heavy exactly because the region was never perceived or treated by Russians as a mere colony, but rather as a land of people who could be taught to accept mainstream Russian/Soviet civilization for their own benefit. As early as the 18th century, Catherine the Great sent wheat seeds and advisers to teach the Kazakhs to grow grain, and Kazakh youths began to receive Russian education. The far-sightedness of such policies became apparent later: in an about-face, many Kazakh nationalist intellectuals who proclaimed independence during Russia’s Civil War became early Kazakh Bolsheviks. Even one of the leaders of the 1916 anti-Russian rebellion became a pro-Bolshevik field commander in the Civil War and later the communist leader of Kazakhstan. Altogether, the republics of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan had the unofficial reputation of being the more quiescent parts of the former USSR.

The fanciful name for the region, “Mexistan,” provides a unifying idea of cultural blending, but certainly would not appear on any map of real places; therefore, the notion of a “Rossistan” (joining the Persian “stan” or “country” and the Russian influence) may be more appropriate here. While the Empire-builders saw this region

The Market’s Testing Ground

These dramatic changes reflect major post-war developments in Mexamerica, which became a sort of testing ground for the latest permutations of a hi-tech driven economy and sun-driven urbanization.

Entrepreneurs have set up a multitude of “Maquiladoras” or “maquilas” south of the international border that cuts through Mexistan. These inventions are factories owned by non-Mexicans and usually run by foreign-supplied machinery, but with a largely Mexican female work force. Products manufactured or assembled here are exported to the United States and elsewhere. The Maquiladora phenomenon has changed the character of the border and with it, of Mexistan. Almost half a million people are employed in these factories which have become the second highest source of revenue for the Mexican economy, surpassed only by the oil industry. Boomtowns are growing along the border, attracting migrants by the tens and hundreds of thousands, person in search of jobs and a better life. And the opportunities are there, at least for those with modest expectations.

The arterial heart of Mexistan, the international border, has attracted more than two thousand Maquiladoras now, all within a few miles of the boundary. Productivity in these factories is reputed to be close to that of U.S. workers, despite much lower wages (which, from the viewpoint of the Mexicans, are still higher than those available elsewhere in their country). The desirability of the Maquiladoras is debated in both the U.S. and Mexico, but one conclusion is clear: two “L” factors have come together in a formula that is changing the character of the region: Labor and the Line. A new twist on the economics of the region is sure to be The North American Free Trade Agreement, taking effect in 1994 and promising to eliminate all trade barriers between Canada, the United States, and Mexico within fifteen years. Thanks to NAFTA, the international boundary may become even less relevant over time.
as a hinge between Russia-in-Europe and Russia-in-Asia, and as an intermediary for the further expansion of the Euro-Asian Empire, the non-imperial Russian approach to Asia was represented by the so-called Eurasionists. The latter believed that Russia-Eurasia constituted an independent civilization, equally separate from both Europe and true Asia, but organically blending elements of both. For them “Rossistan” was a model for the future grandiose synthesis of Europe and Asia, facilitated by certain common qualities of Russians and natives that made mutual rapport possible. Russian culture contains such elements linking it to the East as the penchant for contemplation, the devotion to ritual, and the quality of udal (extravagant daring or audacity), a purely steppe value which Turkic people understood and appreciated. The Russians’ spiritual proximity to the steppe is matched by the relative adaptability of the nomads. The Kazakh open-mindedness and near-paganism (so contrasting with religious fundamentalism of Central Asia) seemed to make them more receptive to Russian influence. From the Tatars, the original mediators between East and West, the relay baton could be passed on to the Kazakhs.

The new political configuration emerging in place of the former USSR may finally fulfill the Eurasionist expectations. Symbolically, Alma Ata (now Almaty) was the site for the signing of the 1991 agreement that created the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) out of eleven former republics of the USSR. Along with Belarus, Kazakhstan as an independent state has become the most ardent advocate of closer integration among the republics of the CIS. This emerging axis of states favoring strong ties, Belarus-Russia-Kazakhstan, includes the traditional geographic go-betweens who have bridged West and East. And just as Belarus of the Crossroads region served as a model case of Soviet socialism in its westernized version, so Kazakhstan was the only case of its relatively successful application in Asia.

In New Mexico and Arizona, the nature of the region’s lure for the outsider tends to be quite different. If the international border has lent the region its focal identity, it is the sun that has helped spur the recent enormous growth of Phoenix and other Mexistan metropolises not clinging to the boundary. In terms of climate, natural scenery, and the human landscape, here is a region absolutely unlike anything in the eastern United States. This is the sunniest part of the country and the warmest as well, an area with precipitation well below the national average. The simple pleasures of sun and warmth have been enough to satisfy many newcomers and visitors, especially during the winter months. The availability of air-conditioning has been a critical factor in making the region livable.

Arizona can claim the championship in a novel North American activity: as the leading roosting place for snowbirds. From December through March by the tens of thousands these seasonal visitors arrive, either pulling their own trailers or motor homes or renting some at the scores of trailer parks. They are mostly middle-aged or elderly couples, coming from the Mid-West and Canada. For a large percentage of these persons, the seasonal stayover leads gradually to full-time retirement in Mexistan. The region has begun to rival Florida and California as a retirement mecca. Added to many other enticements is the presence of a large number of residential complexes specifically designed for the elderly, exclusive colonies with thousands of well-to-do residents all over the age of 50.
THEME 1: THE DUAL SOCIETY
City vs. Countryside
In a truly Eurasian synthesizing manner, the region developed a working model of "Asiatic Socialism." Soviet institutions in the region were in fact a thin veneer hiding a largely traditional society, based on the system of extended family and kinship relationships. Thus high profits earned by the illegal grazing of unaccounted for flocks on socialist pastures were used to milk the benefits of the urban power system. The natives’ comfortable make-believe Socialism contrasted sharply with the exacting mainstream Soviet system in which Russians were enmeshed. The system of clan cooperation with accepted forms of official corruption clearly excluded the Russians, who perceived it all as a kind of collective Kazakh conspiracy. But from the Kazakh viewpoint, the superfluous adoption of communist rituals was a clever attempt to outwit the dominating Russians at their own game. In contrast to Central Asia, which attempted a defensive withdrawal into Islamic identity, the Kazakhs accepted Russian challenges. Characteristically, the Kazakhs display by far the highest level of bilingualism of all the Asian republics (63% of Kazakhs are fluent in Russian).

The main line of divide between Russians and Kazakhs is that between the city and countryside. Notwithstanding the recent influx of native population into the cities, they are still by majority Russian, and natives are seldom encountered in the industrial sector of the economy. Thus in 1989, Kazakhs accounted for 40 percent of population of Kazakhstan (in its political boundaries) but made up only 27 percent of its urban population and 20 percent of its industrial workforce. At the same time, over 80 percent of the rural population were natives. And yet, a vigorous policy of "nativization of the cadres" has brought important changes in the comparative employment profiles for the two communities. Key positions were normally held by Kazakhs "sandwiched" with Russian deputies to maintain the Russian-Kazakh balance of power, but by...
now the balance has clearly shifted. Russians are still strongly overrepresented in the essentially blue-collar sectors of industry, transport, and construction—occupations shunned by the Kazakhs, who now dominate the white-collar sectors (with the exception of science). Although it may be premature to talk about a complete reversal of social roles, in such cities as Almaty, the main social divide is already that between the more proletarian Russians and the new white-collar Kazakh elite.

As educated Kazakhs and Russians compete for the same professional positions in the cities, the friction between the divided populations of the region grows. Increasing instances of pressure and discrimination force many Russians to leave. In the 1980s the migrational balance of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan demonstrated a complete reversal of earlier patterns as Russian exodus began. But most important of all, Russians have long been losing the battle of the cradles. The much higher birth rate among the Muslims is fast tipping the population scale back toward native predominance. While in the 1960s Slavs outnumbered native people in both Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, by the year 1990 the situation was reversed.

The duality of the region has a geographic expression as well. In the past, the relative strength of Russian versus Islamic influence was markedly different in the north and south of the region. The southern tier rather resembled Central Asia. It was within easy reach of renowned centers of Islamic thought in Bukhara and Samarkand and embraced the fundamentalist and mystical Islam propagated from there, as well as irrigated farming techniques. But just as Quranic schools were opening in the south, more progressive schools were opened in the north where missionary activity was mostly carried out by the Tatars, who by that time had already experienced strong European impact.

Today, the North-South split persists with the symbolic juxtaposition between official and “shadow” capitals of the region’s states. In Kyrgyzstan, the predominantly Russian fabric of city landscapes corresponds to the social hierarchy of Mexistan, where the top rungs of the occupational ladder are much more likely to be occupied by Anglos. The modern high-tech industries of Phoenix or Houston are overwhelmingly Anglo in terms of financing, management, and work force, with only minimal involvement on the part of the Hispanic and African-American communities. One rung down economically from Anglos are the “old Spanish,” who may be poor but are politically active, the proud aristocracy of a land bound together by traditions of patronage. In contrast, recent arrivals from Mexico share with African-Americans the lowest rungs of the social ladder and thus the least desirable occupations.

The demographic seesaw of Mexicanans answers the influx of each new batch of sun-seeking Anglos with the importation of equal or greater number of Hispanics to serve the needs created by new Anglo arrivals. With its growing numbers, the Hispanic community has achieved considerable political power and recognition at levels from local to national. New Mexico, where the proportion of Spanish-speakers is more than 35 percent of the population, has even become the only officially bilingual state of the country. But does a coherent Hispanic identity exist?

Many internal divisions split Hispanics along lines of location, ideology, and even time of arrival. In fact, there is no general consensus even as to what name best applies to the entire community. Such terms as Texanos, Californios, Chicanos, MexAmericans, and La Raza all have some popularity. According to the 1993 Latino National Political Survey, few of those surveyed actually call themselves Latinos or Hispanics. Eighty percent supported bilingual education, but as a means of learning English, not as a way of maintaining separate identity. More than two thirds of American-born Hispanics speak English better than Spanish. The more ardent ethnic champions use “Aztlán,” the name of a mythical pre-Columbian kingdom, as the name for Mexistan, but no irredentist movement exists, no effort to reattach their homeland to the Mexican 19
and industrial capital of Bishkek faces off with the city of Osh in the south, which became notorious for the first calls for an anti-Russian religious crusade. The industrial and Russian Krasnovodsk is warily watched by Ashgabat, the cultural center for indigenous Turkmen. In Kazakhstan, Almaty is the essentially administrative capital and the home to white-collar Kazakhs, nationalist intellectuals, and educated youths agitating for Islamic and national revival. By contrast, the economic capital, Karaganda, is a grim proletarian city exemplifying the worst aspects of hasty socialist industrialization. The city is largely a memorial to the World War II effort to provide the USSR with a new source of coal and steel, and its development was mostly carried out by political prisoners’ labor in prisons of the GULAG, an acronym standing for Chief Administration of Corrective Labor. (Solzhenitzyn’s GULAG Archipelago is based on his personal experience in the camps in that area). Yet both Almaty and Karaganda are predominantly Russian (over 75 percent), and the interspersed pattern of settlement will doom any plans to carve separate ethnic states. The future of the region depends on whether it will learn to live with this dual nature; otherwise, it may be forced to make an impossible choice between Russia and Asia, its two estranged parents.

Escaping Dualism

Today’s independent states of the region are again caught in a vise, this time a dilemma of choice between the imperial frying pan and the fire of Islamic fundamentalism. To remain faithful to Moscow in an attempt to forge a new Eurasian Empire or to side with pan-Islamists and pan-Turkists from Central Asia? Understandably, many see the answer in reviving an identity independent from both neighbors. After all, the distinctiveness of the indigenous Kazakh culture clearly makes the grasslands a world of its own, not merely a transition zone between Russia and Asia.

Overcoming Dualism

From the Hispanic vantage point, the annexation of Mexistan by the United States has had the most tremendous consequences. The new arrangement placed the large, politically stranded Hispanic component of Mexistan’s population in a rather confusing psychological situation: they must adjust and submit as best they can to a basically alien set of laws, regulations, and cultural intrusions, annoyances that may be alleviated by the material benefits that flow from allegiance to the most prosperous state in North America. While in parts of Texas, the Anglo-Latino relationships may still look like a caste system, the duality of Mexamerica seems to be partially overcome in the vibrant mix and interpretation of cultures in the region. Norteno music, born of Hispanic and German origins, is heard in Texas, and rock songs sung in Spanish are infiltrating “Anglo” radio stations. Even such limited fusion (or rather sharing of traits) as has occurred has created something special in the way of a generalized regional culture. Thus the Anglos have borrowed much from the Native Americans, especially in terms of architectural and artistic motifs, while the latter group has born the impact of European civilization. In similar fashion, the Hispanics, including the fresh arrivals as well as those whose ancestors came centuries ago, have been obliged to absorb great gobs of the Anglos’ material culture as well as at least a smattering of English. Of more than passing interest is the appearance of a bastardized “Spanglish” usage (to the horror of linguistic purists), or the conversion of many Hispanics to the Protestant faith. But for evidence of the continuing vitality of the Hispanic culture you need only look at the growing swarm of colorful outdoor mural paintings, so much in the modern Mexican vein.
Some of the region’s intellectuals advocate the return to pre-Islamic “pure” Turkic values related to the old totemistic religion - a cult of nature harmoniously blended with the world of humans, a combination of materialism with spirituality. Quite possibly, the greatest asset of this Os-Turk heritage is the innate liberalism of basic clan people, combining individualism with deep-rooted pragmatism. Representative of such an outlook is the local folklore figure of Akylman, a man of wisdom who derives his skill from respect for past traditions. The contrast with Russian cast of mind is very profound: where Russians restlessly pursue change, the natives value continuity. The difference may be seen in Kazakhstani’s conservatively pragmatic approach to reforms resembling the Chinese way: gradual economic liberalization without the complicating upheavals of a political one. In the final analysis, the Kazakhs’ pragmatic individualism may pave an easier road to a market economy and steer the former nomads away from the collectivist myths of both pan-Islamism and communism.

Another valuable part of the Kazakh heritage is their open-mindedness and tolerance. In the past, the steppe corridor was the caravan road, the Great Silk route that carried both trade and ideas. Past exposure to Christianity and Buddhism that spread along the Route might have influenced Kazakh’s receptiveness to new ideas and their gift for synthesis. This gift may be seen in the way in which earlier Kazakh intellectuals tried to build the Kazakh state on the combination of Islam and secular ideology borrowed from Kemalist Turkey, or their later idea of Islamic communism. Modern Turkey is Kazakhstan’s likeliest model in the attempt to reconcile Islamic roots with freemarket ideology through the cultivation of secular nationalism. The region also hopes to revert to its ancient role as the Silk Route, the great corridor between the West and the Far East, a dramatic realignment that would mean escape from the dilemma of choosing between Russia and Central Asia.

But what is particularly thought-provoking is the partial Hispanicization of a still economically and politically dominant Anglo community. Although most of its members may be quite reluctant to learn more than a few words of Spanish, many have taken warmly to Mexican themes in architecture, furniture, clothing and jewelry, and have adopted Spanish names for new residential developments and shopping centers. Desert landscaping with its strong regional roots has become fashionable among Anglos in Tucson, Phoenix, and elsewhere. Mexican cuisine may have recently diffused to restaurants and supermarkets all over the United States, but nowhere is it more firmly entrenched among non-Hispanics than in Mexistan, and one of the glories of Texas life is the invention of Tex-Mex food, a culinary complex that differs from, but richly honors, its obvious parents. From food styles to political power, all that embodies the various peoples of the region mingles, argues, and coexists.
THEME 2: WEALTH AND WATER

In attempting such an escape maneuver the region may rely on its mineral wealth. The pillar of the region’s economic strength is its energy resources: oil and natural gas along the Caspian coasts of Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, coal in Karaganda, and uranium ore in the Mangyshlak Peninsula. For Kazakhstan, wealth in hydrocarbons combined with other mineral resources and low population pressure promises some chance for evolving into a new Asian industrial dragon. Even now Kazakhstan is far ahead of Central Asia in terms of industrial development, urbanization, and income levels. As to its economic prospects as an independent state, Kazakhstan is second only to Russia, and its economic clout enables the republic to be something of a second power-broker in post-Soviet space.

The down side of the success of resource-led development in the region is its new vulnerabilities, especially thirst for water. Karaganda only receives water via a 300 mile canal from the Irtysh river, and the oil and uranium area on the Mangyshlak Peninsula has to be supplied by a unique, nuclear-powered desalination plant. The Volga and Irtysh rivers are peripheral to the region, and the major sources of water are the narrow lifelines of the Amu-Darya and Syr-Darya rivers, which begin in the mountains of Central Asia and flow into the land-locked Aral Sea. Because the rivers are drawn so heavily for irrigation, the Aral Sea is evaporating from the face of the earth in a global environmental catastrophe. Between 1960 and the late 1980s, the Aral Sea fell about 40 feet and the surface area shrank by 40 percent. The sea has split into several basins, where the salinity of water is so high that marine life is impossible, thus eliminating the local fishing industry and leaving ports high and dry. The exposed sea bottom is a massive saltpan where winds pick up over 100 million tons of salt annually and deposit it over the already saline agricultural lands of Central Asia. The very survival of the local Kara-Kalpak people is in question, as severe shortages of drinking water and

THEME 2: WEALTH AND WATER

As geological fate would have it, Mexistan contains little of gold, silver, or other precious metals or gems. The dominant item within the region’s mining industry is copper, particularly in southern Arizona, which ranks as one of the world’s leading producers. A rich, remarkably productive zone of petroleum and natural gas exists in the Texas coastal plain to the east and south of San Antonio, and the Houston and Galveston areas have acquired major oil-refining and petrochemical facilities.

Leaving aside the easternmost fringe of the region, agricultral accounts for only a tiny fraction of the land surface. Traditional crop and irrigation systems are still pretty much intact in those sections of the Rio Grande Valley and southwestern Arizona that have been cultivated for many generations. Using much more elaborate, modern forms of engineering and irrigation, the Salt and Santa Cruz valleys now contain some intensively worked “agribusinesses,” serving national markets. Much of the vast remainder of Mexistan does not bring in profits in the usual sense. Some of the region is used for low-intensity cattle and sheep ranching, and pine forests that thrive in the higher, wetter uplands of New Mexico and Arizona also provide employment. Mexistan is a popular destination for tourists thanks to spectacular natural features. But the greatest source of Mexamerica’s rising power is the rapid increase of its population. Smack in the middle of the legendary “Sunbelt”, it is one of the fastest growing regions of the United States, a change reflected in its burgeoning political power.

The population and economic boom in the Sunbelt and expanding irrigation make the arid region severely thirsty. The ground water and rivers are eagerly sucked up, and the Colorado River is a major victim. So great is the drawdown on the river by various dams and irrigation projects that little of its water actually travels the whole way along its 1,450 mile length to empty into the Gulf of Mexico. In 1922 a compact was created
contamination with salts and pesticides in the Kara-Kalpak republic cause an infant mortality rate on par with the poorer countries of Africa.

Unfortunately, plans to save the Aral resemble other grandiose but poorly thought-out experiments that have colored the region’s history. The so-called Siberia-Aral water diversion project was to transfer fresh water from Arctic-bound Siberian rivers to Central Asia, initially via a 1300-mile navigable canal from the Irtysh. The water of other Siberian rivers was to be tapped later and brought as far south as Turkmenistan. Dropped because of potential environmental consequences only in late 1980s, the project is still being pushed by the governments of the Central Asian republics.

These environmental challenges are set against an already vulnerable economy. The agricultural sector remains crucial, but its productivity is extremely low. The region is still more than half rural, and between 1959 and 1989 the proportion of urban population increased very slowly (in Kyrgyzstan only from 34 to 38 percent). Furthermore, the dominance of primary industries means that economies are at the mercy of volatile international prices. Equally serious is the dependence on the presence of skilled Russian specialists (likely to be the first to emigrate). The impressive mineral potential of the state of Kazakhstan lies largely in the predominantly Russian area north of our region’s boundary. Any government of a more assertively ethnocentric Kazakh state would find control of those areas problematic.

Regardless of whether the region chooses to be a bridge or a buffer between increasingly divergent Russia and Central Asia, it cannot afford to dispose of its Russian affiliation altogether. Ardent Oz-Turk nationalists like to point out the relation of the Turkic word “tora” (mode of government) to the old word for “marriage.” The future may depend on whether its marriage with Russians will be a truly equal alliance or just a twist on the ancient nomadic custom of wife abduction.

to share the waters of the Colorado among seven U.S. states, but arguments over its use have increased with the population boom. The Colorado also belongs in part to Mexico, and a dam has been built at Morelos to drain off the last bit of water for Mexican farm fields. In addition to its disappearing act, the Colorado is also suffering from water quality problems as salts build up from both natural and human-aggravated sources, making it the most saline river in North America.

Mexistan shares this problem with neighboring southern California, and water transfer schemes from as far away as the Pacific Northwest have been suggested. Everyone argues about water in Mexistan. Cotton farmers are at odds with urban dwellers, environmental concerns compete with golf courses and lawns in areas that once held only cactus; states are rivals for new projects and discuss exchanging water rights in fear that once leased out, the water will not be available for return should future growth demand it; and Mexico and the United States face off for water along the booming border.

Thirst may be one of the few truly unifying characteristics along both sides of the Mexistan spine. Another overwhelming distinction that promises to keep Mexistan a unique corner of North America is that whatever may happen elsewhere, this is not a melting pot. Substantial though the seepage of cultural traits may be, there is little prospect that the divide among them will ever dissolve or become meaningless. The cultural traditions and social stamina are simply too stubborn and deep to tolerate extinction. Whatever the future may hold in store for the region, one characteristic will remain as a constant: the enduring importance of that long border that both separates and stitches together two such fundamentally unmixable worlds.
If you pull off US-93 in south-central Idaho into Craters of the Moon National Monument, park at the bottom of Inferno Cone, and hike to the summit, you have climbed into a 6000-foot high crow’s nest at the top of the world. Around you is a sea of lava, desert soil, buttes, sagebrush, pine, and juniper, stretching for what seems to be a thousand Idahos. The only sign of settlement is the town of Arco on the distant horizon, a long-time gathering point for “seekers.” It began as a junction for miners heading north to Montana and the Idaho Panhandle, seeking mineral wealth from the land; then it worked as an agricultural center when people took up the fight against the arid western soil, trying to turn the desert brown into green with Snake River waters. In the 1950s, Arco became a boom town again when the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission sought an isolated place to build the nation’s first nuclear power reactor; and finally, the town found its niche serving the tourists and hunters who seek out the Great American West, hoping to bring the frontier myth to life.

There are few signs of travelers today, and below you from Inferno Cone, the Land Ocean undulates in waves of grass and mountains. Your eyes can find no borders here. On this vast sea, there is only frontier.
SIBERIA

The train takes almost a week to traverse this immense Land Ocean, and little wonder that the notion of “Siberian distances” has become idiomatic in Russian. Spanning eight time belts, Siberia has an area far larger than Australia. Most of land area is the wilderness of the taiga, the northern coniferous forest dominated by fir and larch, the monotonous ocean of trees where human settlement is a scattered archipelago of small islands. A line from a popular 1960s song, when the romanticization of the Siberian frontier was at its peak, conveys a rather accurate image: “the green seas of taiga are humming under the wings of the airplane.”

The surface of the Land Ocean is not smooth: the southern and eastern perimeter of the region consists of rugged mountains and plateaus separating it from China and the Pacific. The overall build is that of a bowl open to the Arctic, offering the cold air an unimpeded road into the interior. The image of the great frozen wilderness is of course the biggest part of the popular perception of Siberia both in Russia and abroad. The Land Ocean is indeed a continuation of the Arctic Ocean, part of the great northern realm of the cold. Not surprisingly most of the region is underlain by an ocean of frozen water in permanently frozen subsoil, the “permafrost” that is the blight of Siberia. It not only severely constrains opportunity for agriculture, but makes the construction and maintenance of permanent roads extremely costly, as roadbeds begin “to flow” with each spring thaw. One-third of Siberia’s land area lies north of the Arctic Circle in the tundra zone of Arctic grasslands, which in the extreme north becomes almost an arctic desert with only sparse mosses and lichens for the reindeer to browse. Even the official designation of this area as the “Extreme North” or the “Far North” evokes a feeling of the edge of the world, where life give way to the reign of ice and people huddle in layers of fur to survive.

THE AMERICAN WEST

Big Sky Country, Great Plains, Grand Canyon, Great American Desert - there is nothing small about the Land Ocean. Perhaps no other region of the United States inspires such clearly defined imagery, both at home and abroad. Mention the American West, and immediately people see cowboys, covered wagons, and cattle drives. It is a place that lends itself to legend, hyperbole, and promotionals; in fact, the West was opened up to a large degree by developers selling mythology to the American public.

The initial element of that myth was a picture of an “empty” land, waiting for a growing population to flex its muscle and spread from sea to sea. In the first of a series of historic contradictions, what turned out to be the truth was that the land was hardly empty, and the indigenous people who used it for millennia were reduced through a series of wars and betrayals to tenancy on the most meager parcels of the Land Ocean. The cowboy cattle drives that were to become one of the most enduring legends of the Old West turned out in reality to represent a relatively brief period before rail connections and roads integrated the West into the national economy. Perhaps in the most ironic twist of truth, the rugged individualists who are supposed to have built the West by their own stamina and tenacity have been supported all along by a generous federal system of subsidies.

But what exactly is the West? The topography of the region is strikingly diverse. The rolling high plains of western Kansas are joined with the peaks of the Rockies of central Colorado, the stark flanks of Utah’s Salt Flats with the dramatic gorges of the canyonslands of northern Arizona and southern Utah. A key element of the West is the region’s général aridity. The land from the mountains of Colorado, Wyoming, and Montana eastward to the Middle West are distinguished primarily on the basis of a climate too dry to support the fields of grains that characterize the “heart of America.” To the west, only the Pacific-facing higher elevations are moist. Lowlands everywhere
humans are scattered far and wide in this unlimited region. the yamal peninsula has one person per 2.5 square miles - islanders lost in the ocean of land. in the tundra, blizzards can strike in july; the last snowstorm of spring can be easily confused with the first one of fall, the clock may show noon in utter darkness, while the sun may shine at midnight. even the areas that lie south of the arctic circle have climates far more harsh than the equivalent latitudes for european russia. the four directions of the compass rose reduce to just two here, as north and south. this area was in and of itself, no matter how the eye involuntarily searches for signs of human existence on this green wasteland. - d.n. mamin-sibiryak, gold, minsk, nauka i tekhnika publ., 1984, p. 282.

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of major cities of modern Siberia were founded. The amazing swiftness of annexation of this huge chunk of the world’s land surface was not due to cunning state enterprise and foresight. It was rather a combination of adventurism (as seen in the expedition of Yermak, a plundering cossack leader of a privately hired and outfitted band who “conquered” West Siberia by defeating a small Tatar khanate called Sibir) and serendipity (Russians entered a geopolitical vacuum: China and the Kazakh hordes were far to the south, and the native tribes were no match for Russians armed with firearms). This swift and easy annexation established a long tradition of carelessly taking Siberia for granted as an asset somehow destined to become Russian.

The goal of the initial advance into Siberia was the quest for the “hard currency” of those times, furs, which were collected as Russia’s tribute from the subjugated native population. Fur trade alone could not lead to any firm settlement, however, and the real annexation of Siberia occurred only with Peter the Great’s attempts to harness its wealth and to integrate Siberia into the Russian Empire. Numerous expeditions were outfitted by Peter and his successors to prospect for minerals and map Siberia, and mining began. At the same time, the tightening of serfdom in European Russia sent into Siberia growing numbers of fugitive peasants who formed the core of the so-called “old settlers.” The substitution of deportation to Siberia for capital punishment (1753) brought in a third element of population. If Russians were outnumbered by the native peoples in 1700, by the 1730s they accounted for 70 percent of the population: Siberia had become part of Russia in more than merely a political sense.

An explanation for the comparative ease with which the United States acquired its western half has more to with a series of fortunate differences in political goals than with any special destiny. At the beginning of the century France was involved in a bitter struggle for control of Haiti, so the Louisiana Territory, recently acquired from Spain, was just not that important to French interests. They were almost pleased with the opportunity to sell the land to the United States, for it meant that they could focus their effort on holding their sugar-producing Caribbean colony. Texas in 1845 was largely controlled by American-born settlers who had been instrumental in defeating Mexican forces in the War of Texan Independence (1836), and many of them had sought the opportunity to unite with their home country immediately. It was barriers created by the United States that largely slowed incorporation of Texas for nine years. Great Britain agreed to the Oregon Cession largely because it feared that an eventual flood of American settlers into the Northwest would overwhelm a relatively modest British settlement based on the fur industry. And finally, Mexico, having lost its war with the United States, had little choice but to sell its own northwest, the land that became America’s southwest, for about 5 cents per acre - the same price that had been paid for Louisiana Territory 45 years earlier.
Submerging Native Siberians

The impressive ethnic diversity of the Land Ocean is reflected in the pattern of two east-west belts of native peoples, one in the north and another in the south, separated by a Russian wedge along the main penetration route. For the peoples of the northern tier occupying the tundra and taiga zones, the traditional economy relied on fishing and hunting; that of the much better endowed southern tier was based on nomadic cattle and horse-breeding. The fate of the native peoples in these two belts under Russian rule differed even more than their traditional lifestyles.

The peoples of the northern tier are officially recognized as “the small peoples of the north,” a reflection of their sparse numbers (on the average several thousand) and special protected status. Some of these peoples belong to the Paleoasiatic group (the Chukchi, Koryaks, Idelmens, Yukagirs) and are extremely ancient, relics who were pushed into the north by much later arrivals from the south. The societies of shamanist native northeners had little incentive to change as the risk of discarding the accumulated experience of generations was too great. The fragility of these “frozen” cultures which were perfectly but rigidly acclimated to their equally fragile northern ecosystems spelled doom under Russian impact. Although Russians were paternalistic so long as the natives paid tribute, epidemics and the introduced addiction to alcohol began to decimate their numbers. Over the last 300 years their populations remained static or even dwindled, and added to this loss was the destruction of the natural environment. It takes many years to heal a scar left in the tundra by the passage of a single caterpillar tractor, or to restore spawning grounds in rivers maimed by mining. The Soviet government created huge territorial autonomies for the peoples of the North that account for 71 percent of Siberia’s area, but only 19 percent of its population. The influx of Europeans to develop mineral resources has meant that now the proportion of native population nowhere exceeds 15 percent. Native peoples are raising a demand for smaller territories with exclusive rights to the use of land and resources, in fact almost reservations.

Marginalizing Native Americans

Perhaps 2.5 million Native Americans were spread rather thinly across what was to become the United States at the time of first European contact. By 1900 the ravages of contact with Europeans had reduced their number by 90 percent. The government had followed a two-nation policy during its first century, with Native American groups repeatedly moved westward beyond the areas of European settlement, creating a Euro-african East and a Native American West. President Monroe had given expression to this approach in 1825 when he wrote that the Native American “should yield to the greater force of civilized population, and right it is to yield, for the earth was given to mankind to support the greater number of which it is capable.” The native population, its numbers ever decreasing, was pushed toward the margins, away from more productive, more accessible areas.

For a time the Land Ocean, viewed as the least desirable portion of the West, was bypassed by this expansion. The region’s native population – the Crow, Cheyenne, Arapahoe, and Comanche hunting buffalo and antelope along the dry margins of the prairies; and the Utes, Paiutes, and Shoshone, living on a diet of deer, small game, and wild edible plants - were briefly ignored. Eventually the open-range cattle industry, dry farming, and minerals attracted American settlers and the process of removal crept across the region. Huge blocks of land earlier set aside for Native Americans were reduced to smaller and smaller parcels. The two-nation concept was abandoned, replaced by a reservation policy that required the indigenous population to surrender their general claim to the land and placed them on clearly defined and generally rather small reserves. By the late 1890s nearly all Native Americans had been moved to some 268 reserves, most of them in the most marginal portions of the West. In a separate current, the 1887 Dawes Act encouraged Native Americans to opt out of the communal lands of the reservation, claim what had been reservation land with the same 160 acres provided for Whites under the Homestead Act, and become farmers. Nearly
Almighty Spirit Noomy-Torum was busy creating the Earth. He took off his precious girdle with heavy buttons and girded it around the Earth to fortify it. Where the girdle touched the Earth there appeared the Ural Mountains—just as a girdle touched the Earth there the Earth to fortify it. Where the girdle touched the Earth there appeared the Ural Mountains—just as a girdle touched the Earth there the Earth to fortify it. Where the girdle touched the Earth there appeared the Ural Mountains—just as a girdle touched the Earth there the Earth to fortify it.

The scattered settlement pattern of the small northern peoples is the major cause of their loss of culture, since the teaching of native languages becomes an almost unsurmountable problem of logistics. Founding even a single school can ensure the survival of a native language, but is not always possible. Young people often refuse to learn their own language. Worlds of local culture are hidden on the bottom of the Land Ocean beneath the tidal wave of modern “civilization.”

While the fate of the tribal societies in northern Siberia justly arouses public sympathy, it is often overlooked how different was the course of history for the far more numerous south Siberian peoples (Buryats, Altayans, Khakas, Tuvinians and Yakuts). These Turkic and Mongol-speakers (Buddhist with the exception of the Orthodox Yakuts) occupied the southern band of mountains and forest-steppes adjacent to Mongolia. Their numbers grew from about 200,000 in the 17th century to 1.3 million in 1889. Yakuts and Buryats learned the techniques of sedentary agriculture and the tricks of trading from Russians. These people perfectly adapted to Russian rule and thrived trading from Russians.


THEME 1: THE FRONTIER AS MYTH AND SYMBOL

The very name “Siberian” suggests to Russians a tough and independent character shaped by the stern life of colonists. This image of the classic Siberian as a bearded peasant, reliable, simple, and solid in his ways, was kept alive by the efforts of the Soviet

100 million acres were lost to reservations in this process, with perhaps a third of all Native Americans seizing the opportunity for independence.

Unfortunately, most of their land was unsuited to agriculture, and they soon gave up the attempt and sold the land if they could. Having rejected the reservation system, they became a landless, poor population of ranch and farm workers or urban laborers.

Today many Native Americans in the West live either in relative deprivation on reservations or in poverty in urban areas. Reservations, often inaccessible and lacking resources, offer scant opportunity for improvement. Full integration into the society and economy of urban American has also been difficult. Still, a very real Native American Renaissance is a part of this environment. It has taken many forms - a return to communalism, a revival of the reservation as a main base of life and culture, a rise in native-owned businesses, an increasing wish to preserve traditional institutions, and a vibrant activist seeking broader recognition of Native Americans as a part of the fabric of American life.

THEME 1: THE FRONTIER AS MYTH AND SYMBOL

The notion of the West as frontier central to the formation of American character is perhaps the core myth of the United States. The West became the symbol of the qualities that set Americans apart from those who had not the opportunity to experience the frontier. Europeans might have their long history and ancient institutions, but they could not match the self-reliance, the special quality and importance of each individual American forged by the frontier experience.

The emergence of the idea of the West as the creative caldron of America began soon after the American revolution. Crevecoeur in Letters from an American Farmer wrote in the 1780s of Americans as a new people, certainly not all good but vital nonetheless, emerging from the experience with the wilderness. As the United States grew during

After a long time, Tsichtinako spoke to them. What are we going to do now concerning the earth. We are going to make the mountains... After all this was done, Tsichtinako spoke again and told them. "Now that you have all the mountains around you with plains, trees, and canyons, you must make the growing things of these animals.

“village prose” circle, whose best-known members were Valentin Rasputin from Irkutsk and movie producer-actor-writer Vasily Shukshin from the Altai. One of the favorite plot lines of Shukshin is that of a dashing young Siberian lad without a penny in his pocket who “conquers” Moscow, a story in essence the expression of Siberian frontier identity as opposed to corrupt and false Moscow. Portraying Siberia as a reliable rear guard and frequent savior of ungrateful European Russia has a grain of truth. Such writings have far wider than regional appeal, which may be explained by the desire of non-Siberians to believe that somewhere out east there still is that land of pure rivers, great wealth, and strong people who will never let them down.

The work of another known Siberian, the poet Yevtushenko, demonstrates a quite different facet of the Siberian image. His Siberia is the “Wild East” of tramps, vagabonds, and outlaws. Even at the height of Soviet totalitarianism, Siberia was the place where a man without a passport could easily get lost and find work. Hobos alternating chance jobs with petty crime and drinking sprees are familiar local figures to this day. The Land Ocean has the dubious distinction of having record-high levels of alcoholism and crime, and the rude mores of motley work crews in its logging camps and mines are well known. Part of this spirit of frontier lawlessness stems from Siberia’s past as the land of exiles, many of whom were deported for life or stayed by choice in the rough and tumble Siberian scene when freed.

The mixture of steady peasants and unruly outlaws accounts for the lack of a clear and widely accepted image of the Land Ocean. Furthermore, until recently, the region never was the country’s only or even most important frontier. In contrast to the southern frontiers of Russia, it does not evoke the heroic mythology of colonial wars, Cossack chivalry, or Christian triumphs over Islam. Beginning with Peter’s projects, most of the region’s population were brought there to serve state interests: even Siberian Cossacks were little different from the regular army. The region faithfully served and furthered the strength of that same state whose dictates it instinctively opposed. In the Soviet

the 19th century, and especially as the East developed into a more urban and urbane seaboard, interest in the West as a special place blossomed. Eastern writers almost flooded the country with an endless series of Western stories and heroes, some based in fact but many pure fiction. From James Fenimore Cooper’s Leatherstocking tales to Kit Carson and Buffalo Bill Cody, America’s fascination with the Frontier seemed insatiable. Cody himself gained considerable additional fame and fortune by gathering together a collection of his friends and acquaintances, plus a herd of animals, and touring the East and Europe with his Wild West show. This obsession with the West did not end with the passing of the century. Television and American movies have mined the rich possibilities of stories about the West for decades, with John Wayne the embodiment of the American hero.

The West of popular image is as much an experience as a place, moving with settlement and allowing for a constant repetition of the western experience. The Land Ocean may simply be the last West, the final place (outside Alaska) in the country where Americans could be renewed and energized by the frontier experience and by meeting a series of physical challenges: great distances, arid climate, rugged terrain, and an earth difficult to subdue. As writer Tom Mathews described it: “you have to grasp the seductive power of the Western landscape. Drive over the Big Horn Mountains in Wyoming or stand at 7000 feet on Mesa Verde...look out and each mesa is an acropolis, each canyon a cathedral.”

Even a tenacious shrub called artesmisia tridentata (better known as sagebrush) has come to symbolize the West, and the population of the United States is probably the proud owner of more of it than any other plant. A single sagebrush may live 100 years, surviving on winter snow waters and tapping water below with its extensive roots. Perhaps in its lonely determination and individualism the tough plant has come to represent the qualities of western life that permeate American mythology about the region.
period, the need to shift population eastward led to the manufacturing of a new image of the region as the land of youth. Here was a wilderness that needed to be "conquered," the romantic lure of opening new lands and a test for one's willpower and physical strength (and a great service to the motherland, of course). Land Ocean is still the land of the young, and yet it is a strange frontier. Several times nearly forgotten and then rejuvenated, Siberia seems trapped in "eternal youth" even though in terms of Russian history it is 400 years old. It may now be losing population, and the scarred look of its once pristine nature betrays an advanced age, but the region is still the ever-hopeful debutante with naive visions of a great and special future.

Although the prevailing image of the Land Ocean is that of a great wilderness, it is in fact one of the most urbanized parts of the country. In Northern Siberia the cities (such as Murmansk and Noril'sk, the world's two largest cities located beyond the Arctic circle) stand as solitary icebergs in the emptiness of the Land Ocean. The profiles of cities in southern Siberia are more diverse, and bear testimony to the gradual southward shift of the all-important east-west trunk road. The original administrative and cultural capitals of Siberia (Tomsk, Tomsk, and Yakutsk) were beaded along the early "road of chains" that went well north of the future course of the TransSiberian. Bypassed by the railway, they afterwards grew little, preserving quaint old church-studded streets and the atmosphere of Siberia's first cultural centers, where refinement was brought (somewhat paradoxically) by Russia's early political exiles.

In contrast, the cities along the Transiberian from Tyumen' to Krasnoyarsk experienced explosive growth in the 20th century. During the Second World War numerous factories (evacuated into this deep rear) laid the foundations for diversified modern industries, better linked to European Russia than to the resource frontier farther north. The population of focally located Noril'sk and Krasnoyarsk grew from about 60 thousand before the Revolution to respectively 1.4 and 0.9 million by 1989. Noril'sk with its famous Akademgorodok (a city of science, housing the Siberian If sagebrush still thrives in the West, the buffalo has almost disappeared from what was once the grasslands of the Great Plains. Early travelers could not have imagined that extinction could even be a remote possibility; the buffalo population on the North American continent was estimated at 45 to 60 million before European-Americans began to eliminate the herds. More than one million per year were killed in the latter half of the 19th century, and in 1883 the last great herd was wiped off the Land Ocean. In the National Bison Range in Montana and other centers, the buffalo is now protected, another symbol of the stubborn Western spirit.

However, in a blow against American myth, the people who inhabit this vast region are hardly rural folks. Most people in the West are classed as urban by the U.S. census and live in a series of scattered city dots on the map of the Land Ocean. For example, the majority of people in Colorado live in a string of cities at the western edge of the grasslands along the Front Range from Pueblo in the south through Colorado Springs and Denver to Boulder and Greeley in the north. Similarly, the great majority of Utahans live in cities in an irrigated lowland along the east side of Utah Lake and the Great Salt Lake from Provo through Salt Lake City to Ogden in the north. Most residents in Nevada live in the Las Vegas urban area, and many of the rest live in Reno. Why should the land of "home-on-the-range" be actually quite urbanized? The answer is essentially a list of many of the reasons why cities exist in the first place. Denver, the Mile High City and easily the region's largest urban area, has become a major service and administration center for a large portion of the country's western midsection. The Denver Federal Center is said to be the largest single concentration of federal government operations outside Washington. Like a number of other western cities (Albuquerque and Ogden are examples), Denver has become a major service and warehousing center for transcontinental shipping. Its airport is one the country's busiest. Like nearly every other state capital in the country, Denver has grown in response to the increasing role of state government. Denver has also become a major
branch of the Academy of Sciences) has developed into the new cultural capital of Siberia.

Cities aside, some of the oldest islands in the Land Ocean are the villages and homesteads of ancient settlers, many of them schismatic Old-Believers who retreated from religious persecutions ever deeper into the taiga. (Symbolic of the remoteness possible only in Siberia is the recent case of an Old-Believers family, discovered in the taiga, who had still not heard the news of the 1917 Revolution). The youngest islands are those of mining and industry, many of them small company towns grouped into archipelagos of almost dictatorial rule by a Moscow ministry. The notorious GULAG archipelagos adds to this mix its own islands of penal colonies. The popular image of the region features fettered convicts and political exiles, but like much of Siberia’s portrait, this image weaves myth with reality. Truly enough, since the 17th century it was the land of “damnation and chains” that culminated with Stalin’s forced labor camps. But before the Stalinist terror, the proportion of convicts in Siberia seldom exceeded 5 percent, only one-fifth of them political exiles. The stream of settlers was always dominated by free people who came on their own will. Throughout the length of Russia’s history, Siberia’s role was twofold: the voluntary refuge of non-conformists who fled from the system and the forced destination of those who openly threatened it. While Siberia served as a safety valve for the state, it also satisfied the quest for freedom in the Russian soul. In Land Ocean there was room for all.

THEME 2: THE BAM AND BUSTS

The wealth of the Land Ocean has long been perceived as a strategic reserve - a safeguard of Russia’s future. Frenetic campaigns to tap the rich storehouse followed whenever the geopolitical situation demanded. The tidal rhythm of active booms interspersed with calm interludes punctuates the whole history of the Land Ocean. One of the most recent booms of activity on a grandiose scale is the BAM: the Baikal-

regional retailing center, with some shoppers willing to travel hundreds of miles to sift through the delights of the city’s stores and shopping malls.

But it is ultimately our myths about western heroes which permeate national place imagery of the Land Ocean. The image of an ability to deal with life’s problems without the ever-present help of society, and certainly without government assistance, is popular with many inhabitants of the West. Is the myth valid? In a real sense the answer must be “of course not.” Westerners today are every bit as dependent on government support as residents of any section of the country. Yet the myth persists. Not a few of the flood of tourists so important to the regional economy are there in hopes of sharing the western experience. Cowboy hats and boots are common Western garb, even for folks who seldom see or ride a horse. The West has given America resources, space, and always - a fresh start.

THEME 2: THE BOOMS AND BUSTS
Near the headwaters of the Missouri River at Three Forks, a skeleton town called Gallatin City remains as a monument to human foolishness and greed. This place in Montana is not atypical of the hundreds of ghost towns which cobweb the western landscape. Eastern land speculators created Gallatin in the 1860s, hoping to cash in on service needs for prospectors. Unfortunately, no one thought to check the navigability of the river until after thousands of dollars were invested in building the town. Only then did the founders realize that the waterfall at Great Falls prevented boats from reaching this far upstream. Gallatin was abandoned almost as soon as it was built, a tangible example of the precarious nature of economic life on the Land Ocean.
Amur Mainline, cutting across Siberia to the Far East and representing one of the most ambitious railroad engineering challenges in history. Technical problems, setbacks, and massive investment requirements for the BAM show that collecting the riches of the Land Ocean does not come easily, and the region’s economy has been on a roller coaster ride from the beginning.

A Resource-Based Economy

The fur bonanza that followed the initial conquest was the first high tide in Land Ocean’s economic history. For a while this “soft gold” constituted the bulk of Muscovy’s foreign trade and created the economic foundation on which the Romanov dynasty forged a Russian state. However, the depletion of furs soon put the region backstage until it was reawakened by Peter’s reforms which gave Siberia a new role as Russia’s mineral treasure chest. The first silver and copper mines and smelters originated in the Altai and served as a major source for coinage, and the lower Lena became the country’s prime gold-producing area. This emphasis on precious metals highlights Siberia’s longtime role as Moscow’s emergency hoard of resources.

After this burst of development the Land Ocean experienced a century of calm. The construction of the Trans-Siberian Railway in the 1890s had momentous consequences, but only for the southern fringe of Siberia, where a swelling tide of peasant settlers claimed their homesteads, while in the rest of Land Ocean the population grew even more slowly than in European Russia. The Trans-Siberian itself was largely built for strategic reasons to secure a link with the Far Eastern provinces newly annexed in 1858-60. The intervening spaces of the Land Ocean were perceived as a mere obstacle to be overcome. Remoteness, as well as European Russia’s wealth in resources essential to the Industrial Revolution, again left Siberia forgotten, one of the least developed regions of Imperial Russia. Reflecting this lack of interest, the region’s southern boundary with China remained nearly unchanged from 1689 to the Soviet period, when Siberia belatedly became Russia’s main frontier.

A Resource-Based Economy

The economic structure of the West for many years resembled that of any underdeveloped region: raw materials were sent out; manufactured goods and investment capital sent in. The Land Ocean at first held far less interest for the westward drift of American settlement than did the new Pacific margins of the country. The moister lands of the Willamette Valley in present-day Oregon, or the bountiful opportunities of California after the discovery of gold in 1848, drew people westward. Between 1845 and 1860 an estimated 200,000 Americans journeyed westward into the region. Most were bound for California or the Oregon Territory. Only Mormon Utah attracted a significant settlement within the Land Ocean. Trails in the region (such as the famous Oregon Trail and its California Cutoff) were not routes to this dry and often rugged land, but merely across it.

To our day, most major transport routes in the interior West still connect east with west rather than north with south. Five major interstate highways lace the region in a strikingly even series of east-west ribbons. The region’s railroads have an even more dramatic east-west orientation. Lines of transport have integrated the Land Ocean with the rest of the country better than they have joined the sections of the region itself. Exploiting the resources of the West has always been a transportation challenge, and a map of America’s interstate highway system, railroads, and air routes shows that the Land Ocean is still an area sparsely served by all three.

While for those making their way to the gold fields of California or the Klondike the Land Ocean was merely an obstacle, others later found riches by dipping into the “waters.” Nevada was the site of the Comstock Lode, and Virginia City, Montana, soon boomed to a population of 20,000. Gold, silver, lead, zinc, and copper drew miners to the West, and in later years, tungsten, molybdenum, and uranium were added to the list. Butte, Montana, became famous for sitting on “The Richest Hill in the World.”
In the Soviet years, the depletion of resources in the European part of a quickly industrializing Russia along with strategic concerns prompted the movement of the economic center of gravity eastward, and in the period from the 1930s to 1970s, the Land Ocean experienced its greatest boom ever. Even without the southern fringe, the region’s population grew at twice the rate of the country as a whole and many new cities emerged.

Thus, the new Kuznetsk coal basin (Kuzbas) was developed as an alternative to the country’s old metallurgical bases in a mere ten years. Between 1926 and 1939 the Kuzbas centers of Novokuznetsk and Kemerovo, grew from about 5 thousand to 150-200 thousand population. Today the Kuzbas accounts for 37 percent of coal production in Russia and has three metallurgical plants, two of which are the largest in the country, yet in another sense, this young industrial area already appears to be worn-out. From the mid-1970s to the early 1990s the proportion of Siberian industrial output turned out by Kuzbas shrank twofold, while thoroughly neglected amenities and dismal atmospheric pollution caused an absolute loss of population. Novokuznetsk and Kemerovo rank among least desired urban places in Russia.

Similar features of a failed utopia are evident in Tyumen’ oblast - Russia’s hopeful oil emirate. The area’s development as the linchpin of a crash program to boost Soviet oil and gas output began only in the late 1960s, and by the 1970s it appeared to be a spectacular success as the area came to account for two-thirds of oil and more than one-half of natural gas production in the former USSR. Oil and natural gas exports from Land Ocean provided the bulk of Soviet hard currency earnings and brought the country a modicum of prosperity. They propped up the senile Soviet regime, just as furs had bolstered the early Romanov reign. But this bonanza was short-lived. In a hurry to skim the cream off the best oilfields, the reserves were overtapped and the oil fields damaged, to be abandoned for new ones beyond the Arctic Circle. Despite this as a wealth of metals were mined from the city for over a century. Copper came out of the Bingham Mine near Salt Lake City, and vast oil shales were discovered in Utah and Colorado. The gluttony was promoted by the Mining Law of 1872, which facilitated easy and cheap rights to mining on public lands.

The mines created fortunes for some people, but also their share of headaches. Local environments were wrecked by polluted runoff and topsoil torn off to create open pit mines. Smelters smothered vegetation, buildings, and human lungs alike in arsenic and other poisons. Mine tailings piled up on the landscape. The West and the United States as a whole are still dealing with the cleanup cost of the mining bonanza of the Land Ocean.

Timber extraction has played a large role in some local economies of the West, but perhaps the tradition most branded into public folklore of the region is cattle raising. Ranchers have in the past been in close competition with both farmers and sheep graziers; more recently, battles are being fought between those who still favor federal lands for cattle and those who believe the practice creates too much environmental damage.

In the 1800s, millions of wild Texas longhorn cattle fed on the open ranges of Texas. The tradition of rounding them up for the drive overland to railroads in Missouri and Kansas began in 1866, spawning the era of the cowboy. But almost from the beginning, cattle raising on the open country has been hazardous. Open warfare erupted between cattle ranchers (mostly Mormon or Anglo-American) and sheep herders, who were often of Mexican origin. The cattlemen accused the sheep of ruining the rangeland by their habit of eating the grass right down to the roots. Other disputes arose over ownership of unbranded cattle on the range and the desire of farmers to build fences. But perhaps the greatest threat came from the cattlemen themselves, whose confidence in the ability of the Land Ocean to support the herds was soon proven foolish. The
extension, in the 1990s the production of oil in West Siberia has been declining, and boom towns like Surgut or Urengoi are pondering their future. Although industrial areas like Western Siberia received huge infusions of investment, the race to open them up meant that creating decent amenities for migrants was always neglected. Hastily built and lacking a lived-in feeling, the cities appear makeshift, adding to a false image of the region's eternal youth: everything seems to lie ahead. But maturity is never reached, as neglected areas moveRectly into senility, and the wave of new development rolls deeper into the wilderness.

The opening up of the Land Ocean required connecting it into the national economy, but that has not been an easy task. Obviously, the most important linkages run east-west. The backbone of the system and Siberia's umbilical chord to the nation is still the TransSiberian railway, easily the world's record holder in terms of the bulk of cargo moved. The second major east-west route into the region is the legendary Northern Sea Route along the Arctic coast, dependent on powerful icebreakers accompanying convoys of ships, and available only a few months of the year. Between these two great routes the only links are those of the world's longest domestic air-routes, now managed by the sometimes-risky regional successors to Aeroflot.

The preponderance of east-west routes accounts for the weak link between southern and northern Siberia. While the southern fringe has a developed urban-industrial economy, the rest is still a poorly attached appendage. The horizontal bands of Siberian territory are stitched together by the vital seams of north-flowing rivers. Frozen for nine months a year they become roadbeds. Mortally dangerous, the work of truckers on Siberia's famous highway to Yakutsk and Magadan has made them into folklore figures.

Overall, the map of Siberia seems to be as sketchy as its cities are makeshift: scattered blots of cities or oilfields and disconnected traces of transport lines do not form a cohesive entity.

early 1880s were a time of deceptively mild winters, and grazing pressures grew as more and more cattle were released. In 1870 a steer could derive enough nourishment from 5 acres of grassland; by 1880, 50 acres were required. The animal population level was already too high by 1885 when one of the worst winters known hit the plains, followed by a second bad season in 1886. Up to one-third of the herds perished. The precarious nature of the meat industry here continued up to the 1980s, when a decline in domestic demand for beef occurred at the same time that exports to foreign markets were constrained by rising exchange rates for American currency. Debt problems for farmers and ranchers in the West increased as costly, capital- and energy-intensive techniques drove many out of business. Land prices declined as well, and communities whose economic base depended on their role as agricultural service centers were hurt by spin-off effects. In a final “bust,” energy prices fell in the 1980s, and plans for development of western oil shale reserves turned out to be not only environmentally unpalatable, but also plain uneconomical.

The New West was now dependent on urban-dwelling service employees, ready and willing to spend money in the countryside on weekends and for vacations, but firm in demand that the same countryside not be deforested, strip mined, or overgrazed. Meanwhile, the rural population of farmers, ranchers, and miners were aging and becoming fewer in numbers as landholdings were consolidated, giving way to large operations that could survive the financial crunch of the later 1980s. Tourism has grown to be a major income source, not only in states such as Nevada which have long sought tourist dollars in the form of gambling and legalized prostitution, but also in places like Montana, only recently emerging as a prime travel destination for people who enjoy the outdoors. Pressure from sightseers and outdoor sports enthusiasts sometimes requires developments that are not always benign for the western environment, and the culture imported by urbanite western tourists may not sit well with local folks.
For all its vicissitudes, the Land Ocean remains the country's economic mainstay and hope. With 20 percent of Russia's population, the region accounts for 40 percent of its exports. Taking into account the crucial dependence of most ex-Soviet republics on Siberian oil, the region is vital to the economic re-integration of the former USSR; Tyumen' wields more power as a defacto CIS capital than Minsk. Besides fuels, the Land Ocean supplies the bulk of Russian diamond and gold production and exports. Such areas as Noril'sk and the Kola peninsula provide the bulk of strategic non-ferrous metals. Reserves of coal and natural gas in southern Siberia and Yakutia are among the world's greatest, and may acquire international importance in the future. But even if the region becomes a resource semi-colony of the western world rather than of Russia, it will hardly escape its boom-and-bust predicament.

Who Should Own Siberia?
The extreme remoteness of Siberia led to a sense of separateness and a desire for autonomy. This notion was even given official support under Catherine the Great, who instituted the “Siberian Kingdom” in the 1760s, envisioned as a self-supporting dominion with separate currency. Siberian coinage stopped in 1781, but until the Revolution there existed a movement of the so-called “regionalists,” who foresaw the prosperity of Siberia in federal union or secession from Russia. Even ethnic differences were cited in support of autonomy, as a large proportion of the old Siberian population were of mixed Slav-native origin and felt little affinity with Russia proper. In recent times, living literally on top of the rich mineral wealth combined with the strict control of resources by the central authorities strengthened the local feeling of a victimized region, from which resources and profits are unfairly taken.

While Siberians quite justly feel that their region was historically neglected and used, some also blindly accept the simplistic notion that Siberian oil belongs to those who happen to live in Tyumen' oblast or that Yakutian diamonds belong to residents of

An example of this employment-base shift is Kellogg, Idaho, a town whose original name was “Noah Kellogg’s Jackass,” after an animal of the man who discovered the lode that created the Bunker Hill Mine. Beginning operations in 1885, Bunker Hill brought lead, silver, and zinc out of the mountains, but in 1981 economic change, environmental concerns, and resource depletion called for closing down Bunker Hill, throwing 2000 people out of work. Today, Kellogg is the site of the Silver Mountain Resort, a destination ski resort. Tourist money is filling in the income gap for many places in the Land Ocean, but even as the visitors come for an “authentic” experience, they are by their very presence changing the face of the West.

Who Should Own the West?
An historic irony in the American West is that the federal government became the biggest landlord in the region, despite the fact that no one seemed to want it that way until Teddy Roosevelt’s era. Since the 19th century, many American citizens in the West have complained about government interference in private ownership rights; but at the same time, the U.S. government has been attempting to get rid of vast tracts of the Land Ocean, a goal evidenced by various pieces of legislation giving away the rights to farm, mine, and ranch public land.

A landlord-style government, especially one based in the East, was not the image of America that most nineteenth century citizens held, and almost from the beginning there was pressure to give over rights of utilizing the land to private interests. If ownership is defined as use, then the federal government has been a give-away agent of historic proportions. Land rights were ceded to the railroads, to land speculators, and in perhaps the biggest gift of all, to agriculturalists. Congress passed the Homestead Act in 1862, allowing any man or woman who applied to own 160 acres of public land that had not yet been otherwise appropriated. Claims continued well into the twentieth century until 1934 when the Bureau of Land Management took over stewardship of
Yakutia. They would happily see themselves as oil or diamond “emirates” emerging from the chaos of Soviet devolution. The Yamal-Nenets “republic” and Yakutia have both declared sovereignty over land and resources. The stakes of such struggles for resource ownership are quite high. Yakutia (which has reclaimed the old name “Sakha”) provides 99 percent of Russia’s diamond output, about one-fourth of such gems mined in the world. Since such a small proportion of the population is non-Slavic, ownership claims may be more related to local managers and politicians’ ambitions than to the rights held by indigenous peoples. In the case of Yamal-Nenets, only one percent of the population is native “northern people.”

In fact, most residents of northern Siberia are temporary drifters, modern nomads attracted by the “long ruble” of northern wage differentials. Their tour of duty finished, they leave the region to settle down with accumulated savings in a more welcoming climate. The majority of oil workers in the north of Tyumen’ oblast are even flown there for their workshifts from the European part of the country or Tyumen’ city (900 miles away). Without a population attached to the land, the land is in turn poorly attached to the nation; and the colonials are pressing to renegotiate relations with the mother country.

The Land Ocean clearly gives the country more than it receives. But with its insatiable need for infrastructure investment and state-subsidized transport and its requirement for special salary incentives, it is also strongly dependent on the center. The predominance of large-scale economic enterprise in strategically important sectors means that Siberia will long lag behind other regions in privatization. What Siberia seeks today is not so much fair treatment as special privileges, and to get that, Siberians need a strong central government. The regional bravado about self-sufficiency and isolationism have been born largely out of the Land Ocean’s self-promoted myth of a perennial frontier.
To fishermen or who sail down Russia’s Pacific coast, the forests of wild oak that line the mountains of the Lazovsky Nature Reserve must look like a landscape painted on an ancient Chinese porcelain plate. The leaves meet in an unbroken canopy over the slopes, and along the ground grow mushrooms of unearthly size, shape, and color. Hiking through the reserve is not easy because there are no paths and only carved marks on tree trunks from previous travelers show the way. Lianas, or vines, twine around the tall trees, and among the leaves on the forest floor, wild boar and spotted deer still run, and black bear perch up in the branches, munching acorns. Through the underbrush of this forest, the Siberian tiger roams, the largest tiger in the world. But in recent years, this region has opened up to the outside world and the tiger of Russia’s Pacific may not survive to see the end of this century. Poachers have decimated it, eager to meet market demands in China and throughout the Far East for tiger skin and bones believed to have magic medicinal powers. Only a handful of tigers still hunt deer and goral here, often trapping their prey in the Pacific waters with the high cliffs of the mountains to their back.

Out along the shoreline, a naval vessel is sailing down to Vladivostok, and there are ball-like floats washed ashore from Japanese fishing nets and other tell-tale plastic signs of civilization encroaching from the Pacific Rim. But today the sun is warm, the waves gently lap the shore, and along the sand the prints of the tiger lead into the sea.

Nature is so untamed on the Pacific beaches of Washington State that you can get killed just by walking along the shore. Signs at the few areas of coast that are accessible from land warn people about deadly logs of giant cedar and Douglas fir which are hurled like missiles onto the beach by the waves rolling in from the Gulf of Alaska. But the brave soul who dares to walk the rocks and sand will be rewarded by the spectacle of the largest ocean on earth, and will find on the shoreline scavenged fishing floats and debris printed with strange Oriental characters, telling the tale of what lies just beyond the sunset. If you could look far to the north to Cape Flattery and the Strait of Juan de Fuca, or down to the ports of Puget Sound, you might get a glimpse of container ships making their way from Korea and Japan, or tugboats pulling barges up the Inside Passage to Alaska, or perhaps even a huge Trident nuclear submarine going down Hood Canal to the base at Bangor, for this region is the strategic “corner” of America. Over your shoulder may be only the back door to the rest of the continent, but in front lies a gateway to Asia and the Pacific.

* This chapter was alternatively called “Pacific Gateway” & “Pacific Edge” during the writing of Beyond Borders
OUTPOST IN THE FAR EAST

The image of a precarious strategic outpost pervades the Russian perception of the Pacific Edge, a region which opened up with a vengeance after the break-up of the USSR. Once isolated by location and the strong presence of the Russian military, the Far East of Russia now attracts foreign investors, as well as get-rich-quick hopefuls and a sinister criminal element that has flourished in the post-Soviet period. Clinging to the edge of the continent and facing the Pacific more than Moscow, the region has exploded into the chaos, riskiness, and excitement of a real frontier. In the once-sealed military port of Vladivostok, Nissans and Toyotas now drive the potholed streets alongside Russian-made Zhigulis; sailors walk the boardwalk next to visiting businessmen from Taiwan; and local “entrepreneurs” talk joint ventures with foreigners eager to cash in on the warehouse sale of Russia’s resources.

Such scenes stand in real contrast to more distant times, when the expansion of Russia ran into unusually tough resistance in this youngest of frontier regions as well as competition from other powers, suffering serious setbacks as a consequence. The initial Russian conquest was slowed even by the landscape of the Far East. The rivers that conveniently bore Russian explorers across Siberia stop short of the Pacific, which is separated from the interior by an uninterrupted chain of rugged mountains running all the way from Chukotka to China. It was only along the inhospitable coast of the Okhotsk Sea that Russians easily dispersed weak native tribes and established their original Pacific foothold in 1649.

Farther north, the extreme remoteness of the Chukotka and Kamchatka peninsulas long hampered Russian control by their extreme remoteness. The Chukchis of Chukotka were eventually left to their own devices and enjoyed the distinction of being the Empire’s only officially “not fully pacified” people down to the 20th century. Fierce resistance of native Koryaks and Itelmens delayed Russian control of Kamchatka until

UTOPIA IN THE NORTHWEST

The Pacific Northwest is the place of the great getaway, a region described by Alan Furst as “a mystical zone of indifference, a place so remote, so utterly far away from everything that even your private demons will get lost trying to find you. All the refugees out here have at least one thing in common: in their secret hearts they’re people who don’t want to be found.” But getting away from it all is becoming more difficult in western Washington and Oregon, northern California, and even Alaska as more people discover the natural beauty and amenities of the region. What has sometimes been termed the most livable part of America is experiencing rapid population and economic growth, to the point where arguments over development have become a major political issue.

The Cascade Mountains serve as very effective barriers of the region to the east. Blocking the Pacific rains from entering the estranged eastern portion of the states, they set off a chain reaction of differentiation that begins with climate and vegetation, runs into separate economies and population densities, and ends in deepest cultural differences. Eastern Washington and Oregon are absolute parts of the vast Land Ocean – in terms of how they make a living, in the appearance of the landscape, and by their very political spirit. The Cascades not only are a barrier to moisture, but they also inhibit east-west transportation and trade. While the ports of the Pacific Gateway provide a linkage to Asia, the back door connection to the rest of the United States is via highways that must clug up mountain passes or railroads that tunnel through some of the longest stretches in America. Easier connections are north and south to Alaska and California. Los Angeles is only 1000 miles from Seattle and Portland, but Chicago is 2000 miles away; New York City, 3000. By air transportation, Anchorage is about half the distance from Seattle as is the U.S. East coast. On the other hand, the ports of the Pacific Edge are favorably suited for trade with the “tigers” of Asia. Japan, South
The gunpowder mist melts over Sakhalin. 
And through the V-form of the cranes’ flight,
away...
Split around the eyelid, fall down the face and die
onto the land 
Rush over the buoy, spread across the breakwater
Where waves pouring heavy as leaden slumber
Even the stones and such always face to the east,
Where roads cannot bear up - so heavy is the earth.
Overflowing rivers and rice fields,
Where rains are mixed with clay and the drain steep,
Aged stones and such face to the east,
Face to the East
one in Murmansk. The military presence is highly visible, as sailors reportedly make up
open ocean. The huge naval bases in Petropavlovsk and Vladivostok are second only to
strategic importance of the Far East: the Arctic aside, this is Russia’s only outlet to the
gateway to its neighbors. Vladivostok literally means “The Ruler of the East.” Military
Russia in 1918-22 and in 1937) and the Far East long remained a fortress rather than a
Russia’s bastion on the Pacific was hard won and is therefore gingerly guarded. Large
portions of the region continue to be claimed by China or Japan (which attacked
Russia in 1918-22 and in 1937) and the Far East long remained a fortress rather than a
gateway to its neighbors. Vladivostok literally means “The Ruler of the East.” Military
concerns reigned supreme over economic development goals, especially due to the
strategic importance of the Far East: the Arctic aside, this is Russia’s only outlet to the
open ocean. The huge naval bases in Petropavlovsk and Vladivostok are second only to
one in Murmansk. The military presence is highly visible, as sailors reportedly make up
Korea, Singapore, and Taiwan. The great circle route on the globe shows that Seattle is the
closest port to Tokyo in the coterminous United States.
The states of the region are relatively new: Oregon joined the union in 1859, 
Washington in 1889, and Alaska only in 1959. We include a small portion of
northern California in our region, so it is the grandparent with statehood in 1850.
But human habitation here dates back thousands of years. Members of the Native
American tribes of the Pacific Northwest probably witnessed the devastating eruption of
Mount Mazama that formed Crater Lake in Oregon or even the Great Spokane
flood of 15,000 years ago, believed by some to be one of the largest floods ever to
occur on the planet. The culture of Native Americans along the Pacific coast has been
among the most highly developed on the continent. Despite years of decimation
and impoverishment thanks to the arrival of the Anglo population, tribal groups are
still evident in the economy and culture of the region. The Coast Salish and
Oregon Penutian tribes have connections to the Native Americans who expand up the
coast through British Columbia and Southeast Alaska. Within Alaska itself, Native
Americans have made important economic inroads in terms of land claims, particularly
since the 1971 Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act.
Early exploration and settlements by Europeans in this region extend back to the
16th century when Spain and England sent exploratory parties. The 1778 voyage of
James Cook from England, 1788 exploration of Robert Gray from Boston, and the
famous 1805-1806 Lewis and Clark expedition all marked the start of larger scale
white movement into the Pacific Northwest. Meanwhile, Russian influence had been
expanding the region since the late 1700s, when the first Russian settlement was
founded at Old Kodiak in Alaska. Russian fur traders, working with the native Aleut
people and borrowing their skills in trapping sea otters, made their way down to
California in search of food supplies for the Alaskan settlements. By the time Russia
"Once by the Pacific"

The shattered water made a misty din.
Great waves looked over others coming in.
And thought of doing something to the shore
Would be more than ocean-water broken
Before God’s last ‘Put out the Light’ was spoken.
     -- Robert Frost
10 percent of the population of Vladivostok and 40 percent in Nakhodka and Petropavlovsk. Separated from Russia by the huge expanse of the Land Ocean, the Pacific Edge is still something of a militarized “overseas” dependency.

Throughout the Soviet period the Pacific Edge was persistently the fastest-growing region of the country, with a population expanding more than fivefold. Since the 1960s, migration has been driven not so much by the earlier romantic appeal of the last frontier as by the magnetic pull of high wages. Among the increasingly non-idealist generations of young Soviets, the region acquired the reputation of a “Promised Land,” where special wage incentives sometimes double what is paid for equivalent work in European Russia. The region drew those who were ready to tolerate temporary deprivations for the sake of a good future life. Forfeiting their previous skills and prestigious professions, these people came to clean fish, to work as cooks on fishing trawlers, and to serve as cargo handlers in harbors or as general manual labor in expeditions. Their sole goal was to save enough money to start a decent life back home.

But this image of a “Promised Land” proved to be misleading. Nowhere else in Russia was there so acute a housing crisis. In the smaller settlements in particular, many still live in makeshift shanties popularly known as “Shanghais.” The high proportion of well-paid young people in the population makes especially intolerable the shortage of kindergarten facilities, movie theaters, or good consumer goods in stores. High wages also prove rather ephemeral due to a correspondingly high cost of living. For many, the savings are just enough for an extended vacation and spending spree “back west,” and then they are forced back to try again. The influx of new waves of youths is counterbalanced by the out-migration of older people, mostly disillusioned former enthusiasts no longer able to tolerate the unsettled and raw life in the region. Due to this turnover of people, in recent decades the population grew only at the average national rate. Numerous temporary residents, mostly women, are recruited to work in fish processing plants during the season, from June to October, and leave afterwards.

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sold the United States its claims in Alaska for eight million dollars in 1867, Russian cultural presence was firmly on the landscape in places like Sitka and as far south as San Francisco. “Oregon Country” was claimed by Russia, Spain, France, England, and the United States, but by 1818 England and the United States were left to be the real game players in the region, spurred on by the fur trade. Astoria, named for John Jacob Astor of the American Fur Company, was established near the mouth of the Columbia River. By the latter half of the 1800s, there was an uneasy joint occupancy of the region by the British and Americans, as well as a strong migration of pioneer agricultural settlers into the Willamette Valley. The Oregon Trail and Oregon Country became a major focal point of the great American westward flow of white people. Portland, Seattle, and Tacoma were established settlements by the 1850s. Compromise in 1846 had determined that the U.S.-Canadian border should extend along the 49th parallel, thus cutting off British Columbia from inclusion in our region, although by climate, economy, and recent influx of Asians it may logically be considered part of the “Pacific Edge.” The international boundary also isolated a small piece of Washington State, Point Roberts, which can be entered by land only through Canada, and left undetermined the boundary around the San Juan islands, which became part of the United States much later when the German Emperor arbitrated the land dispute between British and American islanders in 1872.

With the advent of railroad connections to tie the young region with the rest of the country, the friction of distance began to erode. From the 1880s to 1910 for example, Washington Territory witnessed a 1400 percent growth in its population, a forewarning of philosophical battles over growth that would be repeated later in the century. The feeling of separatism from the rest of the United States has been strong in the Pacific Edge, and when Ernest Callenbach published a novel in 1975 hypothesizing the secession of Oregon, Washington, and Northern California, it rang true to many people who wanted to keep their environmentalist values and utopian imagery of the
The threads of migrational moves continue to tie the young and immature Pacific frontier to European Russia. The residents are likely to have more friends and relatives in Moscow than within ten miles from home, and experience the region only as a remote and isolated outlier of European Russia. The "island" sense of psychological isolation is strengthened by the lack of cohesiveness within the region. The more firmly settled Amur Lands are reliably linked to European Russia by the TransSiberian railway and have developed as Pacific outcrop of Russia’s main settlement zone and diversified economy, lying beyond the emptiness of the Land Ocean. The populations of both Vladivostok and Khabarovsk have reached the one-million mark. In contrast, the northern part of the region is dominated by small, scattered, and isolated settlements linked only by air. All basic necessities for Chukotka, Kamchatka, Sakhalin, Kurile islands, and Magadan, as well as all regional exports, pass through the seaports of Vladivostok, Nakhodka, Vostochnyi, and Soviet Harbor/Vanino, where the TransSiberian terminates. The whole of the region clings closely to the Pacific, which binds together its parts and also accounts for the region’s importance to Russia. Shut off from the rest of the country by the Land Ocean, the region has long enjoyed a semi-autonomous island existence. Between 1920 and 1922 it was the nominally independent Far Eastern republic, created as a Russian buffer to thwart Japanese expansion. Afterwards, the nearly autonomous Far Eastern Territory preserved its own economic planning system as late as 1937. Even today, local residents acutely feel that they are islanders, usually referring to the European regions of Russia as the mainland, or the continent. Whether for Russia or Pacific investors, the region seems to still function as an island dependency in an economic sense.

region intact. The name “Ecotopia” became popular, fed by the anti-growth sentiment that was perhaps most strong in Oregon. But the battle seems to be lost. “There are just too darned many people here now” is a complaint one hears frequently in Portland and Seattle. Traffic jams regularly choke interstate highways that were once “overbuilt,” formerly pristine hiking trails fill like crowded streets on summer weekends; huge new urban corridors are springing up around Portland and on the eastern side of Lake Washington; and in the heart of Ecotopia, pollution is an ongoing problem. The final blow to the hideout region came with change in its geographic situation. The Pacific Northwest has become a victim both of its own quality-of-life mythology and the post-industrial economic shift that has freed up the American population to locate in areas once considered too remote. And when the variable of Pacific Rim boom economies in Asia are added in to the equation, it is clear that events outside the Northwest are still determining the fate of this utopia.
THEME 1: CHASING A RIM OF GROWTH

As befits a dependency, the economy of the Far East focuses on the extraction of resources for outside markets, and, as befits an island, it is strongly linked to the sea. The principal treasure of the Far East has been fish. The region accounts for 40 percent of the national catch, and the fishing industry is its leading economic sector - in Kamchatka and Sakhalin fishing accounts for a staggering 55 to 75 percent of the value of industrial output. Yet most of the catch is limited to coastal waters, rather than the nearby open ocean, and the fish reserves are severely overtaxed, not least by Japanese poaching.

Another prime resource for exploitation has been timber, but many of the best species and easily accessible stands are tapped out. What remains is either larch (not a prime commercial species) or forests on mountain slopes. A wood products industry commensurate with the resource size has not been established, thus limiting the economic value of the wood cut. Trade with Japan, which originally purchased much of the raw log exports from the Far East, has become more limited as the most desirable species are exhausted. Much wood is harvested in a reckless manner, and foreign investors from South Korea and the United States have met opposition to logging from Native Siberian groups and environmental organizations.

The gift of ancient volcanoes (non-ferrous metals, especially tin) is another source of wealth, but the extent of mining is not at all comparable to the huge operations in the Land Ocean. Although the region has long been known to possess coal and oil, local production accounts for only one fifth of regional needs. Both coal and oil are mostly found in the north of Sakhalin island, with major new oil and natural gas fields located offshore in the Sea of Okhotsk, clad in ice for most of the year and frequently stormy. Thus far Russia has failed to develop these offshore fields without western technology. Overall, the share of the region in Russia's industrial output and exports is well lower.

THEME 1: CHASING A RIM OF GROWTH

The story of jobs in the Pacific Edge of America is a journey from lumber mills to Nintendo games, and along the way, people could always find work building airplanes or missiles. Trees, soil, fish, and minerals formed the first base for employment in western Washington and Oregon, and raw materials still very much dominate the Alaskan economy.

About 25 percent of the nation's lumber comes from the Pacific region. While hemlock, spruce, and cedar are important species, perhaps the one tree that symbolizes the timber industry in the Northwest more than any other is the Douglas fir, a coniferous species that is not really a fir at all but can grow to 325 feet tall, with diameters up to seventeen feet. Douglas fir provides about fifty percent of the annual harvest in the Northwest, thriving in the climate to become a favored species for regrowth in the tree plantations that supply much of the mill and export logs for the region.

The timber industry may be the founding heart activity of the Pacific Edge. For over one hundred years, the forests of western Washington, Oregon, and northern California provided an apparently unending supply of huge-diameter, original growth, and second-growth trees. But in the 1990s, it looks as if the party is over, and many people in towns that depended on the trees are feeling the impending loss of their employment base. The controversy over logging the remaining original forest is representative of the changing identity of the region, in what has come to be billed as the fight between logger and environmentalist. The trees of the Northwest also point to the importance of trade with Japan and other countries of the fast-growing Pacific Rim. About forty percent of logs cut in Washington, for example, have been exported yearly to markets in Japan. While many regions of the United States complain about jobs lost to Asia, the Northwest has benefited as Japan, Taiwan, China, and South Korea absolutely dominate the turnover in trade through Seattle, Portland, and other port cities.
than its proportion of population. Local production of consumer goods is able to meet only 30 percent of the region's needs and half of its food is imported. The geopolitical importance of the outpost region has led the Russian government to subsidize up to a third of regional spending. Since the Soviet economic system tended to underprice major imports into the area, such as fuels, foodstuffs, and especially labor, the huge expenses of creating a workplace, building housing for volatile migrants, and paying higher wages necessary to attract a workforce were mostly borne by other regions. As Russia's switch to a market economy stopped the flow of subsidies, most businesses could not afford to pay higher wages themselves, and residents who came here for big money started leaving in droves. The current crisis underscores not only that investment in this region is proving risky due to organized crime and a chaotic economy, but also that the Far East was a money-losing dependency of Russia, not a profitable resource colony.

These hard times are especially ironic since the region was viewed earlier by the Soviet government as a gateway, a hinge linking their economy to the dynamic Pacific Rim. To facilitate Russia's entry into the "Pacific Age," projects such as BAM (Baikal Amur Mainline railroad) were undertaken in the 1970s to create a new Siberian land bridge linking the Pacific and Europe. During the world oil crisis of the same period, prospects looked bright for the development of the Far East as a resource frontier for capital-rich but resource-poor Pacific Rim economies. A number of resource projects were conceived jointly with Japan, including timber harvesting and processing as well as oil and liquified natural gas production in Sakhalin for the Japanese market. Most big hopes of the period were dashed with the onset of post-oil-crisis resource-saving technologies that dramatically devalued primary materials and reduced the attractiveness of investment in resource projects. Also, in comparison with Canada or Australia, the Soviet Far East simply is not the most attractive of resource frontiers in the Pacific Rim. The brilliant perception of the Far East as a potential Klondike, colored strips of imported Asian cars cover Seattle's waterfront piers; banks and trading companies that specialize in Asia bring money into the Northwest economy. Small wonder that when the Seattle baseball franchise fell under ownership by Nintendo, the main complaints about Japanese purchase of an American institution like baseball were heard largely from outside the region.

Hard feelings have evolved over the years, however, regarding fishing disputes between Asian countries and Northwest companies in the Pacific. Many of the original salmon runs are threatened or gone, and much of the focus of the fishing sector has moved on to Alaskan waters. Similar to problems in managing forest resources, arguments abound over who has the right to take salmon; from questions over guarantees made by treaty to the Native Americans (for whom the salmon is an important part of traditional culture and spirituality), to international conflicts with Japanese fishing interests. When voices are added to the fray from commercial and sports fishers, from users of hydopower produced by the Columbia, and from farmers depending on irrigation waters in the eastern portions of the states, the salmon hardly have a chance. The fish with the romantic names like sockeye and chinook, who hold so firmly to their home beacon, have proved no match for human competition.

Manufacturing has always played a smaller role in the region's economy. Distance from major market centers has tended to limit industry only to that related to resources, such as lumber mills or canneries, or to specialized production not directly tied to transportation. But in Washington State manufacturing bears the name of one company: Boeing, which has dominated local industrial employment more intensely than any other comparable example for manufacturing in U.S. cities. By 1970, as a result of a downturn in demand for airplanes, Boeing laid off 65,000 workers within two years, putting a dent in the city's economic base that was to affect urban planning in Seattle for many years ahead. The city swore it would never again be so addicted to...
widespread among Russians, is but a misleading exaggeration. In this region, the potential and the actual seem to be at odds. The Pacific Edge of Russia is still a young frontier in the early rude stage of development. Its population of 5.5 million, clinging to the international line is completely overshadowed by its neighbors: about 120 million in Japan, 60 million in Korea and 90 million in the Manchurian provinces of China. Nowadays, with always remote Russia in disarray and the economy liberalizing, these realities of geography prompt the Pacific Edge to trade the old idea of a hinge between Russia and Pacific Rim for one-way integration into the latter. Following the example of the economically-aggressive “Tigers of Asia” (such as Hong Kong and South Korea) the Far East became home to Russia’s first free economic zone in Nakhodka, and the whole of Sakhalin Island enjoys a special status of “economic homerule.” The region is Russia’s leader in the development of transborder barter trade, especially along the Chinese boundary. Special economic zones are being created on the Chinese side of the international line to take advantage of commerce with Russia, the largest of them being across the Amur River from Blagoveshen. The two banks of the city are now linked for the first time by power and telephone lines and a railway crossing. The United Nations is financing a project that plans to bring together the comparative advantages of Russian natural resources, Chinese labor, and technology from Japan and South Korea to undertake manufacturing for export. China and North Korea are regarded as potential sources of labor for the chronically underpeopled region, especially for achieving food self-sufficiency, and the first groups of Asian farmers are already tilling land in the Maritime territory.

Yet even as the region’s hopes to join the Pacific club are revived, it can be admitted only as a semi-colonial resource appendage. Choosing new masters will hardly bring rapid prosperity. Thus far, Pacific integration is most visible in the terms of one company, and began a program to diversify its work force. Today, Boeing is still the main game in town in terms of the manufacturing work force in the region. Compared to Seattle, Portland has always been more diverse in its manufacturing employment, relying on wood products, transportation equipment, and machinery companies.

Geographers and economists studying the urban economies of the Pacific Edge had subscribed to traditional theories that held to the notion that manufacturing would provide a major export base for a region’s economy. Despite the downturn in timber, fishing, and some manufacturing, the region gained jobs in services and there was a boom in downtown office construction. Where were the jobs coming from? Reports suggest that transportation and trade, communications, finance, and business services are bringing money into the region. What has come to be known as the “Post Industrial Economy” nationally is already apparent in the Pacific Northwest, with markets in other western states, in Europe, and particularly in Asia. By the end of the 1980s, Asia was providing 43 percent of imports into the United States and buying 31 percent of American exports, and the ports and businesses of America’s Pacific Edge were big beneficiaries of this growth spurt. Added to these connections was the location of “high tech” activities in the Seattle and Portland metropolitan areas, particularly computer software firms such as Microsoft, recreational firms like Nintendo, and biotechnology and genetic engineering companies.
automobiles and videocassette recorders for sale in Far Eastern cities. In most cases the
worthless cars are traded for precious natural resources in shady deals by mushrooming
local businesses that operate in the gray zone between law and crime. The region is
gripped by the “grab and go” spirit of unbridled speculation. As a result, crime has
skyrocketed, particularly street robberies and burglaries, and it is not uncommon for
foreign business investors to hire armed guards to protect equipment deliveries. Some
regard the system of pay-offs as a necessary expense, and perhaps a more serious damper
on investment is the uncertainty of the business climate along the Pacific Edge.

THEME 2: LIVING ON A RING OF FIRE

In its attempt to become a prosperous gateway, the region may well lose its most
valuable asset, that of being the remote refuge of nearly pristine nature. Foreign wood
products companies have already invaded the forests of the region, with North Korean
operations in Amur Oblast already accused by Russian environmentalists of severe
overcutting, and U.S. companies interested in tapping into the remaining tracts of
trees. Wild animal populations are experiencing increased pressures as well: having
discovered the high value of bear bile on the Japanese market, poachers killed 2000
bears in Kamchatka just in the summer of 1992, frequently not even bothering to take
the animals’ hides. Considering that the entire bear population of Kamchatka barely
exceeds 10,000, the consequences can be dramatic. This case is typical: the rootless
population that has gathered in the region in search of fast money is ruthless in pursuit
of a new Klondike, and is quite willing to sell to the highest bidder not just their
labor but also the region’s unique natural wealth. For all its immense area, the region
has little room to reconcile its Gateway and Getaway functions. Hortensia, a typical
domestic plant in European Russia, circles tree trunks up to the tops. In the wild forests
of Sikhote-Alin, you can still hear the growling of the Ussuri tiger under the larches.
Kamchatka boasts fur seal breeding grounds on Kommodore Islands and bird rookeries
along the coast.

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THEME 2: LIVING ON A RING OF FIRE

The Pacific Northwest may be at the “edge” of the continental United States, but
geologically it is at the center of action. Volcanoes, mountains, and earthquakes
all provide evidence of the region’s belonging to the Pacific Ring of Fire, a rim of
seismically active zones around the Pacific Ocean Basin. The Pacific Edge is one of the
few places in America where someone can actually see geologic processes happening.
The result has been a place of both incredible natural beauty and deadly attraction.
This environment of fire and ice can be traced back to the Pacific Ocean plates, riding
on a crust of magma. Off the coasts of Washington and Oregon lies an oceanic trench,
swallowing up seafloor crust at a rate of 2 to 3 inches per year. As the North American
continent drifts westward, the Pacific Plate slips into this trench. There was a time
when you could own Pacific beachfront property in Spokane - if you were around a few
hundred million years ago.

The microcontinent that formed the North Cascades sailed across the Pacific fifty
million years ago, bringing with it the volcanoes that were to form the classic peaks.
Along a line parallel to the ocean trench a series of fire breathers grew out of the
mountains - the stratovolcanoes of the Cascades, formed by alternating layers of lava
and debris thrown violently out of the mouth to create giant cones on the landscape.
One of the most striking of these may have been Mount Mazama in Oregon, 9,000
to 11,000 feet high. About seven thousand years ago, Mazama blew its stack in an
eruption so huge it resulted in a caldera - a collapsed cone. As water seeped in, it
became one of the most beautiful sights in the northwest - Crater Lake. The most
recent example of the dangers of life among the volcanoes has been the May 18,
1980 eruption of Mount St Helen in southern Washington. The blowout took the
lives of thousands of animals and more than 30 human beings, in an explosion that
released the equivalent energy of 21,000 Hiroshima-sized atomic bombs. People in the
Northwest watched the whole event on their televisions.
The desire to preserve these unique environments led to the creation in the Pacific Edge of some of Russia’s largest nature reserves. The 934,000-hectare (>2 million acres) Kronotskiy reserve on Kamchatka protects native sable which had been overhunted. The reserve contains sixteen spectacular snow-covered volcanoes such as Krasheninnikov and Kronotskaya Sopka. The warmth of the underlying strata heats up the waters of some lakes in the reserve to the point where they do not freeze even in the harsh winter, and plant life as well as animals flourish around these natural hot tubs. But perhaps the most famous feature of the reserve is the Valley of the Geysers, not even “discovered” by scientists until 1941. While the whole valley churns and steams with hot springs and twenty-two major geysers, the most famous are “Velikan” (the Giant), which explodes water every five hours, and “Fontan” (the Fountain), which sends out a jet of water five stories high.

Any misstep can destroy the fragile environmental balance, and indeed the region provides examples of both Russian early environmental protection and thoughtless “frontiersmen” exploiting the “unlimited bounty” of nature. In Kamchatka, marshes have been drained to increase agricultural areas, which, along with lumber operations, pronounces a death sentence on the salmon nursery grounds - the main treasure of the area. The All Terrain Vehicles and caterpillars used by geologists and the military leave scars on the landscape that take five or six years to heal. The destroyed vegetation undercuts the foodbase of small rodents who are in turn the main food of the sable and fox populations. It has been reported that in Kamchatka alone there are about 12,000 of these so-called “geologists’ paths.”

But nature here can turn the tables and be threatening as well to human inhabitants of the Far East. Just as the sea forms the identity of the Far East, its landscape is dominated by the mountains. There are about thirty active volcanoes just on Kamchatka, and the Kuriles are simply a chain of partially submerged volcanoes. The great volcanoes, such as Avachinskiy, Karymskiy, Shiveluch, and Klyuchevskoi (which...
rival the perfect beauty of Fujiyama's cone), are objects of unconscious worship by the Far Easterners, who speak of them as if they are living beings. The violent explosion of volcano Bezimyannyi ("Nameless") in 1956 blew off the volcano's top in a manner resembling the later famous Mt. St. Helens event. Tsunami waves and tropical typhoons with their devastating effects are not infrequent visitors to the region as well.

The Russian expression "Life on Volcano" is not just metaphorical along the Pacific Edge, and the allusion to the European Russia as the "firm earth" is not merely a reflection of local "islander" mentality, but also a comparison to their own ground, which indeed frequently trembles. People live here endangered by all four great elements of nature - earth, water, air, and fire - and equally insecure in their alternating roles as defenders of Russia's outpost or inhabitants of a new colony thrown wide open. The region is as young and rudely chiseled as its ferocious volcanoes, and just as unsteady on its feet.

preserved under this policy; others feel that too much land is being locked up that could otherwise be used successfully on a multiuse basis. Also in the 1980s, the Columbia Gorge was added to the nation's list of wild and scenic rivers. Development versus preservation is a constant battle on this beautiful section of the Columbia.

The Oregon side alone already enjoyed 27 state parks, and the stretch of river from Hoodspoor to the Dalles is considered one of the premiere windsurfing paradises in North America.

People on the Pacific Edge seem to take full advantage of life on a ring of fire, and the beauty of the natural environment may be dooming the area to a continued battle over growth. The region's service as front door to the Pacific is booming, and as most of the local economy remains strong and the region's national image so positive, new people keep drifting in - for jobs, for the excitement of living in young states, for a chance to sip espresso on the waterfront after work and climb the Cascade peaks on weekends.

It is not the cobwebbed corner of America any longer. Perhaps there has never been a place which has had such mixed feelings about its own success.
“There are at the present time two great nations in the world which seem to tend toward the same end, although they started from different points: I allude to the Russians and Americans...their starting point is different, and their courses are not the same; yet each of them seems to be marked out by the will of Heaven to sway the destinies of half the globe.”
-Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*

We began this book by claiming it was an experiment in Geography to understand two large states by comparing their component regions. We therefore had to decide what to include and compare, and what places to exclude. Our Russian and American team of geographers found little trouble in seeing elements of New York on Moscow’s streets, picturing Siberia’s open space and the great American West as mirror images, and finding pieces of Vermont just northeast of St. Petersburg. But when we sat back at our meetings, closed our eyes, and imagined California, we saw, well...California.
THE PLACES WE LEFT OUT

The places excluded from our new geography help explain why the eleven regions we did include form such strong parallels. They also remind us about the organic nature of boundaries and the fact that people will find ways to adjust to and overcome political borders, living instead within the true lines that define everyday life and culture.

California

The authors could find no legitimate Russian counterpart to California, although the suggestion was made that had Russia held onto Manchuria, it may have evolved into an apt parallel. We borrowed only a small portion of southern California for the Mexistan region, so what makes California largely un-pairable? With its size, economic strength, and agricultural richness, the state could stand on its own as an independent country. Twelve percent of the people in the United States live in California, and despite recent economic troubles, California puts out a remarkably large share of American farming and industrial products. Yet perhaps what makes California so unique is the fact that it best represents the United States of the future. The mixture of people who have converged in California give a demographic preview of the United States of the 21st century, when less Americans than ever before will be of white European ancestry, and people of color or of Hispanic origins will form a significant share of the American profile. This state already receives the major portion of new immigrants coming from Asia and Latin America. In the twentieth century, American culture is being exported all over the world, and most of that culture has been born in California. Los Angeles, with almost 15 million people in its greater urban area, is reaching out beyond the United States and becoming a leading city of the new Pacific Rim world region. In short, California suggested no Russian counterpart to us because it is a phenomenon as much as a place, and has no parallels anywhere in the world.
The Baltic States, Western Ukraine, Moldova

The fluidity of culture and borders was apparent when the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics split up, new political units formed, and fifteen independent countries emerged. Yet the outward wave of Slavic society and influence did not quickly recede, and greater “Rossiya” is still alive along the border republics which we have included in the book, such as Belorus and Kazakhstan. On the other hand, when the authors designed the book’s scheme of regions, we excluded the Baltic Republics of Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia from the start. In part this choice represented the recentness and controversy surrounding their incorporation into the USSR in 1940, but the decision to exclude them had as much to do with their cultural and historic differences from Russia. Lithuania itself for many centuries formed its own empire at the western edge of Russia; Estonian culture has more in common with that of Finland; and Latvia is a place of ancient Baltic traditions. With independence, the three republics have looked more toward economic integration with Europe, although Estonia retains a large and restless Russian population.

Western Ukraine bears little resemblance to the South of our book that includes eastern Ukraine, let alone to Russian territory. The religion here is Catholic, and the historic orientation toward the Central Europe of the Austro-Hungarian Empire that once incorporated its lands. Moldova likewise was taken into the USSR relatively late (1940) although as “Bessarabia”, its ancient name, it had been acquired by the tsars in the nineteenth century. Romanian culture dominates here, despite the presence of a significant Russian population with periodic suggestions of secession of the eastern edge from the Moldovan state.

Caucasus

It was not hard to give up immediately trying to find an American counterpart for territory in the Caucasus republics (Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan). With the exception
of the narrow coastal strip of Georgia we include in the Tropical South, the Caucasus are another peripheral zone separate to itself, despite years of inclusion within the USSR. We also excluded the Caucasian internal republics of Russia just across the mountains, such as Chechenya and Ingushetia. The people in all these areas live in what may be one of the most complex cultural regions of the world, where linguistic, historic, and religious differences all clash. Warfare has been a major feature of this zone of collision, with periodic fighting between Chechens and Russians, Chechens and Ingush, Abkhazians and Georgians, and Azeris and Armenians over control of territory.

Central Asia

In the lands south of Kazakhstan, a new consciousness is emerging for the people of Uzbekistan, southern Kyrgyzstan, and Turkmenistan who increasingly see themselves in terms of their own native heritage or as part of a greater Islamic or reborn Turkic world. Therefore, these places seem un-pairable with any counterpart in the United States, and indeed, seemed inevitably to be detaching from the USSR even at the start of our project. Tajikstan, with its Persian cultural heritage, has been engaged in fierce civil warfare, and Russia has not yet totally abandoned its influence on the region. The imprint of the communist era is still felt here in terms of the political background of some of its political leadership, the economic structure, and potential commercial ties back to Moscow. Yet culturally, the Russian realm is receding, and even the Cyrillic alphabet may soon be an historic artifact on the landscape.

All these regions did not fit into our book plan not only because they were essentially unpairable with a counterpart, but also because they did not fit into the heart identity of a new geography of Russia and America. They are places out of synch with time as well as territory. Just as California may represent the identity of America in the future, the former USSR republics we excluded were part of the past: a state held together ever so tentatively by a notion of a union “soviet” or a tsarist empire. Whether the borders
of that unit pulse outward again in the future has been less a question here than the core identity of what is and will stay as “Russia.”

THE LAST PLACE

But there is one region left to explain on our Russian and American maps, and it is perhaps unique, even to a greater degree than California. The region where the borders of the two countries actually meet along the Bering Sea is an elephant’s graveyard of boundaries. Here, the lines of longitude which define east and west on the planet begin a frantic convergence toward the poles. Only here did a geologic bridge once unite the two huge landmasses; and in this region geography shows its best irony as the Aleutian island chain goes so far west that Attu Island spills over the 180th meridian and gives Alaska the odd distinction of being both the easternmost and westernmost state in the United States. Even time itself gets converted by an odd boundary in this place as the international dateline turns Russia’s Monday into America’s Sunday.

In this region of strange geographies, Russia and the United States almost touch, with only three miles separating Big and Little Diomede Islands. There are no mirror regions here, only a territory in the Bering Sea where all that has both divided and unified Russia and America has been played out. In 1942, the two World War 2 allies exchanged lend-lease planes across the Alaska-Aiberian route, and by the end of the war, Soviet pilots had flown almost 8,000 U.S. airplanes to Russia; yet, merely a few years later in 1948, the line between the two countries became a wall, and the Cold War closed the touchpoint, isolating native communities who had always lived along these borders.

The bonds in this region between America and Asia went back even longer than the lifetime of the local people; in fact, 15,000 years ago, ice formed a link here and people from Asia traveled that landbridge which was one-thousand miles wide and claimed a
new world. The people who live here today from the Chuckchi of Siberia to the Inuit of Alaska to the decimated Yukaghirs of the Russian Far East, recently saw a reforming of the ancient linkage - this time by air as Alaska Airlines in 1988 reestablished the route that was severed by the Cold War. Yupiks from Nome flew to Provideniya in Russia to reclaim their connections with the people of Siberia.

Americans may be unaware of how many times Russia reached out across that frozen sea. The Russian explorer Simon Dezhnev was the first white man to traverse the water between the two continents. Vitrus Bering, for whom the Bering Strait was named, traveled in the name of the Russian empire, and Alexei Chirikov explored the region in 1741, followed then by a litany of Russian, British, and American seagoers. Russian fur traders and priests left behind a heritage of onion-domed churches along the Alaskan coast. When Count Nikolai Rezanov determined that his fur traders in Alaska were starving, he tried to extend his empire’s food search all the way to California where Fort Ross was established in 1812 (with far more native Alaskans in residence than Russians). Even today, services at St. Michael’s in Sitka, Alaska are given in Russian, English, and Tlingit.

Some of the earliest joint ventures between Russia and America were fishing activities that plied the waters of the Bering Sea, and commercial airline flights as well as tourists now fly the arc that unites the two countries. Non-human inhabitants also persist in overcoming the international border. Every year, 25,000 snow geese from Wrangel Island leave their breeding grounds and fly to distant Washington State for winter break. Cooperative Russian and American scientific work in the Bering Sea and Arctic area focus on polar bear, sea lion, whales, and walruses. An international park has been proposed between western Alaska and eastern Chukhotka to unite Russian and American efforts to protect the special cultural and wildlife heritage of the Bering Sea bridge.
Our portrait of Russia and America then may end at this last place where two continents touch and lines defining entire hemispheres and even time itself are drawn in confidence not by nature, but by human convention. But the sureness with which past borders on the globe have been rendered is giving way to puzzlement, and the geography of tomorrow may seem more and more beyond the understanding of most people. With a North American Free Trade Agreement that breaks down boundaries between the neighbors of the western hemisphere and threatened civil wars of secession to trouble Russia, the permanence of borders may increasingly be a comfortable illusion. Perhaps the best way to make sense of a world map that seems to be a moving target is to understand the real regions that people create through their common lives together. At best, the rest may be just lines on a piece of paper.