

Leo Semashko  
*Harmonious Civilization*  
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Harmony is a recurrent theme in Russian thought. Harmony is seen as the essence of the world of both nature and humans. Harmony is understandable through higher consciousness but is often overshadowed by temporary but strong disharmonies. Thus there is a necessity for the conscious restoration of harmony or to use a Taoist term, the cultivation of harmony.

One of the pre-Revolution St. Petersburg-Moscow intellectuals to stress the concept of harmony as the nature of the world was Pyotr Denianovich Ouspensky (1878-1947). Ouspensky is often known today for his association after 1915 with Georges Ivanovich Gurdjieff as recounted in his *In Search of the Miraculous* (1). Although Gurdjieff called his training center outside of Paris the Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man, his austere doctrine held that human beings are asleep, mere machines manipulated by the forces around them. Although humans believe that they are conscious and have free will, these are only illusions. Humanity's only chance of freeing itself from this bondage is to awaken, a difficult and dangerous task requiring much work and tremendous efforts. From 1915 when Gurdjieff appeared on the scene in Moscow until his death in 1949 in Paris, Gurdjieff devoted himself to the often unrewarding task of waking up his fellow human beings. His methods involved various exercises designed to awaken the physical, emotional and mental life of his followers with techniques learned among the Sufis of Central Asia and the schools of Tibetan Buddhism in Mongolia.

Yet there was an earlier, pre-1915 Ouspensky, more optimistic, with more emphasis on harmony as the core of the world, author of *Tertium Organum* in 1912 (2), of *Strange Life of Ivan Osokin* (3), of *A New Model of the Universe* (4), and the translator into Russian of R.M. Bucke *Cosmic Consciousness* (5)

Leo Semashko does not refer to Ouspensky but has set out his own view of harmony and balance in a chapter "Tetraphilosophy and Tetrasociology: a Science of Social Harmony". The basic issue is how do we make the concept of harmony operational? How do we move from situations which are obviously disharmonic so as to manifest the basic harmony which lies underneath? Or, if there is no pre-existing structure of harmony, can we create harmony through joint effort?

There are two situations raised in the book that merit analysis: one a situation of disharmony of short duration but of potential danger, the other a longer-lasting situation of disharmony of even greater danger.

The disharmony of short duration is the 7 August 2008 entry of Georgian armed forces into the separatist republic of South Ossetia, followed by an overwhelming response of South Ossetia's Russian allies into both South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

The disharmony of long duration is the stockpile of nuclear weapons held by a small number of States and their impact on world politics.

The demands of South Ossetia and Abkhazia for independence from Georgia date from 1992 and the break up of the Soviet Union. However, both the South Ossetia and Abkhazia conflicts in the terminology of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) were considered “frozen”, that is, no war but no settlement. The United Nations was involved in mediation between Georgia and Abkhazia, the OSCE was to mediate the Georgia-South Ossetia conflict. In May 1994, after some 13 months of fighting between Georgian and Abkhazian forces, a quadripartite agreement was signed in Geneva among the representatives of Georgia, Abkhazia, Russia and the UN. Thus from 1994 to 2008, the Abkhaz and South Ossetia conflicts had been “frozen” with some periodic meetings between government representatives and some efforts among non-governmental organizations to see if compromises could be reached. In 1994, the first Chechen war started and became the main Russian preoccupation in the Caucasus.

Unfortunately, the period since 1994 has not been intellectually creative in terms of political structures or harmony cultivation in the Caucasus. Chechenya has been “pacified” by military means, but antagonism among peoples has grown. Economic stagnation has remained the dominant economic mode of Georgia. The Abkhaz and South Ossetia governments insist on independence and their independence has been recognized by Russia and a small number of other states. Milheil Saakashvili, who replaced Eduard Shevardnadze as President of Georgia, has made national unification a centrepiece of his agenda, although he would be willing to discuss Abkhaz autonomy and military confidence-building measures. In 2009, talks on the future relations of Abkhazia and South Ossetia have started at the UN in Geneva. The conflicts seem again “frozen” but progress toward stable peace seems slow.

Thus the importance of the ideas set out by Leo Semashko and his colleagues of the Global Harmony Association for “Russia-Georgia: Harmonization through Education instead of Militarization.” Such education works toward a new harmonious civilization, based on harmonious pluralism, which is being born painfully from within the old.

The same need for education, awareness and a modification of attitudes and values holds true for the other, longer-term factor of disharmony: the presence of nuclear weapons.

As Albert Schweitzer wrote “The human race must be converted to a fresh mental attitude if it is not to suffer extinction. A new renaissance, much greater than that in which we emerged from the Middle Ages, is absolutely essential. Are we going to draw from the spirit enough strength to create new conditions and turn our faces once again to civilization, or are we going to draw our inspiration from our surrounding and go down with them to ruin?”

War and the potential of the use of nuclear weapons is the obvious opposite of Schweitzer’s philosophy of reverence for life. Thus, in the mid-1950s, when the political focus was on the testing in the atmosphere of nuclear weapons, Schweitzer came out strongly for the abolition of nuclear tests. His statements on the nuclear weapons issue are collected in his *Peace or atomic war* (6). The statements had an impact with many, touched by the ethical appeal when they had not been moved to action by political reasoning. That current of protests led to the 1963 Nuclear Test Ban Treaty which bans tests in the atmosphere — an important first step.

Yet today, there are over 27,000 nuclear weapons in the world; Russia and the USA possess over ninety percent of them. The USA has about 10,000 nuclear weapons — some as battlefield ‘technical’ nukes, some in storage and several thousand mounted on fuelled, hair-

trigger-to-launch intercontinental ballistic missiles. The Russians have over 15,000 nuclear weapons — also several thousand of them on fuelled, hair-trigger-alert missiles. Launch on warning continues as if the Cold War had not ended.

If the US and Russia demonstrated active fulfilment of disarmament commitments, they would have the strongest argument for stopping any new proliferators. Such commitment could easily be achieved by simply de-alerting the weapons, removing the war heads from the delivery vehicles and taking them off launch-on-warning. These steps would give tremendous credence to efforts to stem proliferation.

Thus the Global Harmony Association makes a particular appeal to Presidents Obama and Medvedev to take action towards a nuclear-weapon free world that President Obama has set as a goal in his 5 April 2009 speech in Prague. Nuclear disarmament needs to be part of a plan for general and complete disarmament. Disarmament requires a conscious, coordinated and concerted self-restriction of national interests and use of resources and a move toward finding common interests. There are some signs of a trend which can lead to a qualitatively new era of sustainable harmonious development which would make disarmament possible. We need to work together to strengthen these positive trends.

#### Notes

- 1) In English: *In Search of the Miraculous* (London: Toutledge & Kegan Paul, 1983)
- 2) In English: *Tertium Organum* (New York: Alfred Knopf; 1981)
- 3) In English: *Strange Life of Ivan Osokin* (London: Arkana; 1987)
- 4) In English: *A New Model of the Universe* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1969)
- 5) Richard Maurice Bucke *Cosmic Consciousness* (London: Innes & Sons, 1901) It is this first edition which Ouspensky translated into Russian. There is an enlarged 1926 Fifth edition.
- 6) *Peace or atomic war?* (New York: Henry Holt, 1958)

Rene Wadlow

