Public Relations Review, 26(2):191–207
ISSN: 0363-8111

The Emergence of Public Relations in the Russian Federation

David W. Guth

ABSTRACT: This article describes the emergence of public relations in the Russian Federation over the past 7 years. It appears as if public relations has developed more rapidly within the public sector, where officials and practitioners are having trouble with the concept of openness. Russian government practitioners also appear more vulnerable to the effects of crises than their American counterparts. Foreign interests dominate the commercial sector, but that appears to be changing.

One conclusion of this research is that Russia is developing its own vision of public relations. Although many aspects of this emerging profession will be similar to that found in the West, it will also adapt to the harsh realities of Russian life. Those interested in importing public relations expertise to the former Soviet Union are reminded of this dynamic.

David W. Guth is an associate professor at the William Allen White School of Journalism and Mass Communications, University of Kansas. He has made several trips to Russia in recent years to train journalists and public relations practitioners on behalf of the State Department and the former United States Information Agency.

Public relations plays a critical role in the free flow of information in democratic societies. When American colonists declared their independence from Great Britain in 1776, they said, "governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed."[1] The meaning of this phrase is clear: For democratic societies to function in a healthy manner, the government and the people must reach a consensus on matters of universal impor-

tance. Consent cannot occur without the exchange of information and ideas. That, in turn, requires communication.

Those who cannot effectively communicate in democratic societies are left at a distinct and sometimes dangerous disadvantage. This is where public relations plays its critical role. It is through the ethical application of public relations that individuals and organizations enter the great marketplace of ideas. And, through the proper application of public relations, it is how practitioners engineer consensus.

The worldwide growth in the practice of public relations has paralleled the end of the Cold War and the globalization of democracy. In places where public opinion has increasing importance in the process of governing, so there is a greater need for developing effective communication skills.

Nowhere is that transformation more evident than in the Russian Federation. The collapse of Communist rule and the dissolution of the Soviet Union have resulted in a wave of democratic reforms and a free market economy. After an initial blush of prosperity and optimism, Russia has fallen on hard times. Its economic survival may now depend on the generosity of nations it once opposed. Once citizens of a superpower the equal of the United States, Russians have been forced to deal with the realization that the Cold War is over—and they lost.

The lines are being drawn in Russia between those willing to make the sacrifices to secure a new democratic future and those who dream of a return to the Soviet-style imperialism of the past. The future of public relations—and a whole lot more—in Russia rests on this outcome

The purpose of this article is to describe the emergence of the profession of public relations in the recently democratic Russian Federation. Several research methodologies were employed in this effort. Secondary research was used in generating the literature review and to support the findings made by using other methodologies. Interview research, conducted primarily in the St. Petersburg area, was used to provide anecdotal evidence of current conditions. With a 1992 study serving as a benchmark, survey research was used to compare American and Russian government public relations practitioners.

LITERATURE REVIEW

It has been less than a decade since the Soviet Union passed into history. The subsequent social, political, and economic upheaval in the Russian Federation has been breathtaking. Even with its newly found openness, or *transparency* as the Russians like to say, the place remains a mystery to most. Russia is clearly a society trying to bring order to disorder. Much of the focus of scholarship has been on the geopolitical and economic implications of the fall of Communism and the struggle of the Russian people to cope with the many aspects of their new democratic reality. Scholarship in other areas, especially that concerning the growth public relations in Russia, has been mostly anecdotal.

"No matter how much and how long a system develops, from the Big Bang

to the conception of a baby, the first billionth of a second, the first hours, the first days and months define much of the result," writes Leon Aron, director of Russian Studies at the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research. "So it is with economic and political revolutions. A great deal in the present character and the future course of Russia's six-year old capitalism may be explained and forecast by recalling the circumstances that attended its birth."[2]

A common theme that weaves throughout this article is that Russian public relations is very much like Russia, itself: a product of its past. But before discussing the emergence of public relations in Russia, it is necessary to define two important foci of this article: crises and public relations.

CRISES AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

Because the empirical element of this article is based on crisis communications research, some definitions are in order. To many, the very word *crisis* epitomizes the Russian Federation. However, for research purposes, it is necessary to limit this discussion to the narrowest definitions of the term. Thierry C. Pauchant and Ian I. Mitroff wrote that a crisis is "a disruption that physically affects a system as a whole and threatens its basic assumptions, its subjective sense of self, its existential core."[3] Ole R. Holsti defined crises as situations "characterized by surprise, high threat to important values, and a short decision time."[4] Steven Fink characterized crises as being prodromal (forewarning) situations that run the risk of escalating in intensity, falling under close media or government scrutiny, interfering with normal operations, jeopardizing organizational image, and damaging a company's bottom line.[5] Laurence Barton defined the term as "a major, unpredictable event that has potentially negative results. The event and its aftermath may significantly damage an organization and its employees, products, services, financial condition, and reputation."[6]

Although defining crises appears to be somewhat cut and dry, that has never been the case for defining public relations or the roles its practitioners play within an organization. One often quoted example comes from public relations pioneer Rex Harlow, who unearthed approximately 500 different definitions of public relations from nearly as many sources.[7] In its *Official Statement on Public Relations,* the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) said, in part, "Public relations helps our complex, pluralistic society to reach decisions and function more effectively by contributing to mutual understanding among groups and institutions. It serves to bring the public and public policies into harmony."[8]

Critical to this discussion is an understanding that propaganda, an attempt to have a viewpoint accepted at the exclusion of all others, is not public relations. Nor is it a form of hidden advertising, where clients pay undisclosed payments for story placements. However, in the early days of Russian public relations, these distinctions are lost on some. In a November 1995 report on the growth of marketing communications in Russia, *Finansovye Izvestia* reported

> The concept of public relations hit the Russian media scene in the early 1990s with a string of relevant agencies coming along. More often than not, though, the notion connotes articles commissioned to the press. In 1992 such a newspaper article fetched its writer an average USD, in 1993—a hundred dollars, and nearly a thousand dollars in 1995. Russia does not look like having matured enough to have the need for public relations as they are commonly seen in the West.[9]

In another section of its *Official Statement on Public Relations,* PRSA proclaims, "The public relations practitioner acts as a counselor to management, and as a mediator, helping to translate private aims into reasonable, publicly acceptable policy and action."[10] That statement may reflect the ideal, but reality is that in some organizations, public relations practitioners are not as much management counselors as they are the preparers of communications. Although many researchers have developed and refined various models to describe the various roles practitioners play within their organizations, it is the four-pronged model developed by Scott M. Cutlip, Allen H. Center, and Glen M. Broom that is used in this research.[11]

Under this model, public relations practitioners tend to take on one of four distinct roles: the communications technician (nonmanager concerned with preparation of communications), the communications facilitator (a mediator concerned with maintaining two-way communication), the expert-prescriber (the definer of problems and implementers of solutions), and the problem-solving process facilitator (collaborator with other managers in defining and solving problems). The significance of this model, within the context of this research, is the degree to which the individual practitioner adopts the profession's presumed managerial role.

Several writers have argued that the misplacement of the public relations function can undermine an organization's ability to achieve its strategic goals. According to Alec Benn, the organization of corporate communications functions by techniques rather than by audience and purpose is a common mistake. Benn asserts that a task-oriented technician cannot address organizational goals as well as the policy-oriented manager.[12]

PUBLIC RELATIONS COMES TO RUSSIA

Even before the banner of the Soviet Union was lowered from the Kremlin roof and replaced with the Russian tri-color, there was a realization among the nation's leaders that public relations would play an important role in governing the new democratic nation.

> The first attempt to form public opinion in Russia was taken as soon a public opinion was allowed to exist [one Russian publication reported]. Before perestroyka, the term "public opinion" was used to describe the position of all 'progressive human kind' on one or another hot topic. As for the Soviet

> people's attitude towards reality, it was normally described as "mutual disapproval" or "strong support."[13]

Television commentator Vladimir Pozner has claimed that public relations was behind the December 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union. Pozner said an aggressive American communications program sowed the seeds of change. "You had better PR," he said.[14] Although many will argue that this is an oversimplification of events, his statement, coming just months after the collapse, is a recognition of the power of public opinion and the importance of being able to shape it. Russian President Boris Yeltsin began approaching Western public relations agencies to promote his foreign trips and domestic programs as early as May 1992.[15]

Wanting public relations is one thing. Doing it is another. And it appears that the Russians are still trying to figure out exactly what public relations is. Some of the confusion stems from old habits dying hard. As Leon Aron has noted, the system may have changed with the fall of communism, but the players did not:

> The defeat in the cold war did not wipe the Russian political slate clean – as had, in the case of Germany, Italy, or Japan, defeat in World War II. On the contrary, granted complete freedom of political participation, the former Communist nomenklatura successfully deployed its unmatched organizational resources, skills, and solidarity to thwart and dilute the capitalist tradition.[16]

To some of the "nomenklatura," public relations appears to be one of those capitalist traditions. Many have taken their cues from former President Yeltsin, who in one breath championed a free press and in the next publicly humiliated journalists by calling them onto the carpet for not covering his administration in the manner he wanted.

Still, there are others who appear to be committed to two-way public relations. One example came to light during a June 1998 media conference sponsored by the Freedom Forum. Yevgenia Flerova, spokesperson for St. Petersburg's governor, received an angry reception from journalists at that meeting. After Flerova had touted the governor's policy of open government, the reporters countered by accusing administration officials of repeatedly withholding public information from the media. She shot back that the governor's campaign promise for an open government "was not a trick." Flerova added, "People who block information will be punished."[17]

A humorous, an illustrative, example of practitioners dealing with the new reality of transparency occurred in February 1999, when Russian space agency officials had to scrap a highly publicized attempt to position a huge mirror next to the Mir space station. The mirror was supposed to work like an artificial moon, reflecting sunlight into sun-starved Arctic regions of the country. But when the mirror would not properly deploy, officials had to abandon the experiment and allow the mirror to burn up in the earth's atmosphere.

> The failure was especially painful because of the huge worldwide interest the experiment aroused [said Mission Control spokesman Valery Lyndin]. We have

forgotten the old principle of Russian space programs—to do something first and boast about it only after.[18]

PUBLIC RELATIONS AND RECENT ELECTIONS

The growing influence of public relations and marketing communications in Russian life has been mirrored in recent national elections. With each new election, the profession's prominence in the process grew.

Advertising and public relations appeared to have little impact on the 1993 parliamentary elections. If anything, the use of Western-style tactics by some parties may have backfired. One television advertisement attempted to humanize Yegor Gaidar, the leader of Russia's Choice, by showing him at home with a St. Bernard, a child, and piles of fluffy toys. This was too much for many voters who could not afford to own the dog or the toys. Russia's Choice finished a disappointing second. The big winner was Vladimir Zhirinovsky's Liberal Democratic Party, which used more traditional Russian themes and tactics in its campaign.[19]

The 1995 parliamentary elections sent a mixed message. Although the various parties called advertising and public relations strategists into the fray, it was the Communists, who shied away from the Western-style media blitz, that came away the big winners. One explanation for this outcome is that the crush of political advertising turned off voters.[20] Communist party control of 120 newspapers nationwide, along with more than a half-million of its members canvassing local areas to get out the vote, also played an important role in the election.

Public relations tactics played a major role in the 1996 presidential election. With the Chechen war dragging, on and the economy faltering, Communist Gennady Zyuganov appeared to many to be the likely winner. Yeltsin reorganized his campaign staff, hired his daughter, Tatyana Dyachenko, as his public relations consultant and imported three American election consultants.[21] Yeltsin was able to overcome his rival's early lead in the polls by casting himself as the lesser of two evils. Yeltsin's handlers also successfully hid the President's poor health from the voters through a selective use of photo opportunities, including one where Yeltsin danced to rock music at a youth rally. This deception would not have been possible without the collusion of Russian journalists who feared Zyuganov more than they feared Yeltsin.

ON-SITE INTERVIEWS & OBSERVATIONS

I spent 3 weeks in St. Petersburg, Russia, during May–June 1998. The purpose of the trip was twofold. The first was to conduct journalism and public relations training under the auspices of the United States Information Service and the National Press Institute, St. Petersburg. The second purpose was to research the growth of public relations in an emerging democracy. The

latter was accomplished through a series of interviews, observations of public conferences where relevant issues were discussed, and through the application of survey research.

It is safe to say, with an understanding of the risks inherent to making cross-cultural comparisons, that there are similarities between the Russia of today and the United States at the dawn of the 20th century. American public relations was born during a period in which democracy and its institutions matured. With the flood of immigrants and the growth of the middle class, the relationships among government, business, and the voting public changed. Public opinion became more important. It was a time in which the nation reexamined and, to a certain extent, redefined itself. Modern American public relations developed as a means for coping with this change. Similar forces are at work today in Russia.

That having been said, it is still likely that Russian public relations will emerge with a distinct flavor that reflects the unique culture of the nation. Public relations in the United States blossomed in a society that had long standing democratic traditions. That is clearly not the case in Russia. Additionally, the private sector served as the catalyst for American public relations. However, at the birth of democratic Russia, the government public relations apparatus is far more established than it is in the commercial sector.

GOVERNMENT PUBLIC RELATIONS

Depending on to whom you speak, Russian government public relations is either a positive force in democratization or a vestige of the old authoritarian regime. Vladimir Ugryumov, head of public relations for St. Petersburg's city parliament, sees himself as operating in a traditional public relations role, as a link between the city parliament and the various publics important to its success. "The work of the PR service is to find out what people are thinking," he said.

Others, such as Anna Sharogradskaia, regional coordinator the National Press Institute, do not share that view. "Public relations people are just a disaster in this country," Sharogradskaia said in an interview. "They present our governor as such an ideal person that I think he should be a saint while he is alive. You don't trust [what the Russian practitioners are saying] because it is unbelievable."

Some believe that the problem with Russian government public relations has less to do with practitioners and more to do with their bosses. There is a sense that many prefer to operate under the old Soviet approach of "we will tell you only what we think you need to know." Quite often, the practitioner gets caught in the crossfire. Valentina Domosyeva, press officer for the Leningrad Oblast[22] Committee of Social Welfare, said she once prepared a television broadcast explaining a 50% shortfall of money earmarked for mothers with dependent children. Although the program was designed to ease public concerns, Domosyeva said oblast officials refused to air it.

Russian practitioners also voice complaints familiar to those in the West.

"When there is good news, the boss wants to be on the television screen," said Vsevolod Morozov, press secretary for the Leningrad Oblast Committee for Medical Promotion. "When there is bad news, he wants to hide behind his press secretary."

COMMERCIAL PUBLIC RELATIONS

Commercial public relations in Russia, both corporate and agency, are lagging behind government public relations in development. That is not a surprise because the free market has been in place only 7 years, whereas the government has been churning out propaganda since the 1917 revolution. Foreign-based corporations and agencies that import their public relations practices and values are leading the growth in the private sector. "It has been hard to convince Russian companies that they need public relations," said Andrei Barannikov of Gronat, a public relations and advertising agency in St. Petersburg. Although the original owner of the agency had been from Sweden, Barannikov said it had evolved into a Russian-only agency. Despite that, only 30% of Gronat's clients were based in Russia.

An important aspect of private public relations in Russia is building and maintaining relations with an intrusive government bureaucracy that has not fully embraced the concept of a free market economy. "My job is to convince inspectors that the activities of Coca-Cola are not dangerous for customers," said Ogla Chernishova, public relations manager for the company's St. Petersburg operations. "Coca-Cola can't decide for itself if it has the right to exist. The government structure has to be involved."

Several corporate practitioners told stories of confrontations with various government inspectors and the tax police. Each was circumspect as to how these disputes were resolved. Privately, they acknowledged that bribery is commonplace.

Advertising agencies are also feeling the pinch. The offices of Moscow-based Bates Saatchi & Saatchi were raided by tax police in November 1996. The firm was accused of hiding more than $5.5 million in unpaid taxes—despite *Advertising Age* reports that it had a gross income of only $2.4 million that year. One Western tax consultant said, "They may begin targeting [foreign] representative offices because of the perception that they are more likely to pay if confronted."[23]

RUSSIA FOR RUSSIANS

It is likely the public relations profession will emerge with a distinctly Russian imprint. That is certainly the goal of the practitioners such as Ugryumov, who, at the end of a 2-day public relations conference at the St. Petersburg Electrotechnical University, proclaimed,

> Russia is a different place with its own problems. The profession of public relations is based on American and English public relations, [said Ugryumov]. We need our own public relations.

Still licking their wounds after losing the Cold War, many Russians dislike the growing Western influence in their country. As already mentioned, that backlash was evident in recent elections. It is now being felt among advertising agencies. As *Business Week* has reported, "Local agencies are trying to cash in on a growing anti-Western mood among Russians. Many resent recycled Western ads with Russian voice-overs or subtitles." The magazine has also reported that many Western companies are turning to Russian agencies in an effort to "grasp the elusive Russian soul."[24]

Whether such a backlash is being felt by Western public relations agencies operating in Russia is hard to say. Advertising is more tangible and invasive, making it an easier target than public relations. And it is also true that any tactics that stray from traditional Russian themes run a risk of backfiring. However, anecdotal evidence suggests that once Russians begin to understand what public relations really is, they like it. As one government practitioner at that public relations conference said, "The heads of the administration are not so familiar with public relations and what they can do with it. However, once they have gone through an election campaign, they have a better understanding of its importance."

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

In an effort to establish an empirical basis for comparison between Russian and American public relations practitioners, a survey instrument used 6 years earlier in another study was replicated, translated, and administered to Russian practitioners.[25] By doing so, it became possible to compare the data from the two studies in an attempt to gauge the current level of Russian public relations development, with particular attention focused on the area of government public relations. In addition to providing a glimpse of the present conditions, it is hoped that these results will serve as a benchmark for future research.

I acknowledge several limitations in the research design. To certain extent, this is a comparison of apples and oranges. The sample used in the 1992 American study was based on a systematic sampling of the domestic U.S. memberships of PRSA and the International Association of Business Communicators. The Russian study was based on a convenience sampling of public relations practitioners encountered during a 3-week visit to St. Petersburg during May-June 1998. Although the American study was based on data from respondents living throughout the United States, the Russian study was limited to practitioners residing in the Leningrad Oblast in northwestern Russian.

Despite these limitations, the survey has value in measuring the emerging

public relations profession in post-Soviet Russia. Little, if any, empirical data on Russian public relations exists. That is largely because, like almost every aspect of Russian life, the profession has only recently begun to evolve into a recognizable structure. Although the number of Russian government practitioners used in this comparison is seemingly small, it does represent a significant cross-section of municipal and provincial practitioners from throughout the Leningrad Oblast. Although it cannot be claimed that the comparison of data generated in these two studies is scientifically accurate, it can be viewed as an indicator of reality. That these results are further supported by anecdotal evidence compiled during on-site research adds validity to this effort.

Of 444 surveys mailed in connection with the 1992 American study, 223 were returned and had been properly completed; a response rate of just over 50%. The first section of the survey served as a screening questionnaire. Among all respondents, 16 (7.1%) indicated that they were employed by a government agency, a figure comparable to the percentage of government practitioners listed on PRSA membership roles.[26]

In the second section of the survey, a series of 30 rating scale questions served as indicators of how closely respondents were affiliated with the management of their organizations (Table 1). Respondents were asked the degree to which they performed managerial functions, such as budgeting, planning, and policy development. They were also asked the degree to which they performed technical functions, such as typing, photography, and publication design. The technical and management indicators were interspersed in an effort to avoid a patterned response. From that data, each respondent was assigned a management index (MI) number. Through data reduction, those with MI numbers among the lowest one-third in the sample were said to have a "low" MI. Those with MI numbers in the middle one third of the sample were said to have a "medium" MI. The remaining respondents were said to have a "high" MI. For comparison purposes, the 1992 ranges were used to classify the 1998 Russian respondents.

The third section of the survey was a series of 25 rating scale questions that served as indicators of each organization's level of crisis experience (Table 2). Respondents were asked the degree to which their organization had been exposed to various crises during the previous 5 years. Those crises included the forced resignation of executive-level officer(s), public allegations of impropriety, labor unrest, and a major restructuring of the organization. From that data, each respondent was assigned as crisis index (CI) number. A data reduction process similar to that carried out for MIs was conducted. As before, for comparison purposes, the 1992 ranges were used to classify the 1998 Russian respondents.

Respondents were asked to complete a fourth section of the survey, which was a series of questions about crisis plan preparation and demographic attributes. The relationship between organizational crisis experience and size was also examined.

TABLE 1

Managerial Role Indicators

The Managerial Role Index (MI) was developed from the degree toward which respondents indicated they perform these:

Technical duties
- Write news releases
- Write/design brochures or newsletters
- Serve as a photographer
- Seek copy approval from superiors
- Take dictation
- Do own typing
- Do someone else's typing
- Earn hourly wages
- Paid overtime wages
- Cannot be fired except for policy violation

Managerial duties
- Handle news media inquiries
- Prepare public relations budget
- Report directly to CEO
- Engage in research
- Contract outside services
- Engage in planning
- Make public speeches
- Supervise other employees
- Counsel others on public relations concerns
- Serve as organization spokesperson
- Conduct marketing/opinion surveys
- Represent CEO at meetings
- Brief CEO on important matters
- Develop organizational policy
- Draft policy statements/speeches
- Serve at the pleasure of the CEO
- Have a private office
- Have a 4-year college degree
- Work weekends, nights, and/or holidays
- Have prior public relations experience

A COMPARISON OF MANAGEMENT INDEXES

Although the roles the Russian government practitioners played within their organization tended to be more technical than were their American counterparts, Russian organizations also tended to have a higher level of crisis experience (Table 3). Whereas only 25% of the American practitioners had a

TABLE 2

Crisis Indicators

The Crisis Index (CI) was developed from the degree to which respondents indicated that they had been faced with these crises in the past 5 years

The forced resignation of executive-level officer(s)
Potentially damaging civil litigation
Public allegations of impropriety
Criminal charges filed against an employee
The effects of a natural disaster
Public questions about hiring practices
The job-related death of an employee
The reelection/reappointment of the CEO
Public protests of organization actions
Intense scrutiny from state/federal regulators
Intense scrutiny for state/federal regulators
Intense scrutiny from the news media
A civil disturbance or a hostage situation
A major restructuring of the organization
A major relocation of operations
Failure to meet organizational responsibilities
Organizational actions that resulted in death of nonemployee(s)
Substantial loss of property through theft
Severe budget cuts/shortfall
Allegations of financial irregularities
Being the subject of an unsolicited/hostile takeover
Public health related difficulties
Labor unrest
Being at the center of a political controversy

low MI, meaning their jobs were more technical than managerial, 72.2% of the Russians had a low MI. Conversely, 43.7% of the American practitioners had a high MI, meaning their jobs were more managerial than technical. That compared to only 16.7% of the Russian practitioners with a high MI.

Although there is a fairly even distribution of American government practitioners among the three CI categories, almost two thirds of the Russian respondents clustered in the high CI category (Table 4).

A cross-tabulation of respondent MI indices versus CI indices (Table 5) revealed another apparent difference between Russian and American government practitioners. The data in the 1992 study supported the hypothesis that organizational crisis experience influences the role the public relations function plays within an organization. In general, the more experience an organization has had handling crises, the more managerial the public relations function becomes. However that pattern did not hold during the analysis of the Russian respondents. Crisis expe-

TABLE 3

Management Index Distribution (by percentage)

	*American** *(1992)* n = *16*	*Russian (1998)* n = *18*
Low (<99)	25.0	72.2
Medium (100–111)	31.3	11.1
High (>122)	43.7	16.7

Notes: *See note 25.

rience had less to do with role of the public relations function in Russian government agencies than it did in American agencies.

The American and Russian government practitioners were in agreement on one significant point, that intense media scrutiny is the most common crisis they faced within the past 5 years. On a scale of *1* to *5*, with *1* being the lowest incidence of crisis and *5* being the highest, the mean rating for this crisis category was 3.125 among American practitioners and 3.222 among the Russians, higher than any other category for both groups.

However, that is where the convergence ends. The Americans rated "being at the center of a political controversy" as their second most frequent crisis (2.875), with "severe budget cutbacks/shortfall" coming in third (2.750). The Russians rated "public allegations of impropriety" second (2.944) and "a civil disturbance or a hostage situation" third (2.889). These differences may be artifacts of the time in which the surveys were administered. The American survey was administered in the midst of an election year and at the end of an economic recession. The Russian survey was administered at a time when official corruption and crime were high on the public agenda.

OTHER DIFFERENCES

When it came to experience as a public relations practitioner, 75.0% of the American respondents reporting having more than 5 years

TABLE 4

Crisis Index Distribution (by percentage)

	*American** *(1992)* n = *16*	*Russian (1998)* n = *18*
Low (<44)	31.3	38.9
Medium (45–54)	31.3	0
High (>55)	37.5	61.1

Notes: *See note 25.

TABLE 5

Crosstabulation of MI vs. CI (by percentage)

	Crisis Index					
	Low		*Medium*		*High*	
	U.S.	*Russia*	*U.S.*	*Russia*	*U.S.*	*Russia*
Management Index						
Low	40.0	35.7	40.0	0	0	63.6
Medium	60.0	0	0	0	33.3	18.2
High	0	14.3	60.0	0	66.7	18.2

experience, compared to only 17.6% of the Russians. This is not surprising because democratic Russia had been in existence only 6 years at the time the survey was administered. Nor is it surprising that half of the Americans reported being at their present jobs more than 5 years, compared to only 5.9% of the Russians.

This lack of experience is also reflected in crisis planning. Only 35.7% of the Russian respondents indicated that their organization has a written crisis plan. That compares to 62.5% among the Americans. Among the respondents from organizations with written crisis, 60% of the Americans indicated that their employees had been trained in its use. That compares to only 40% among the Russians. However, because of the small numbers involved in the sample, this crosstabulation may be insignificant.

Other differences were in evidence. Although only 6.3% of the American respondents reported having an annual salary under $25,000, all of the Russian respondents said they made less that amount in its ruble equivalent. Whereas women (68.8%) dominated the American sample, men (58.8%) dominated the Russian sample. There was only one category in which the two samples were equal: All of the respondents in both samples were White.

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Anchored along a riverbank in St. Petersburg is the naval cruiser Aurora. It is a popular site for visitors to the city of Peter the Great. On November 7, 1917, its guns fired the shot signaling the storming of the Winter Palace during the Bolshevik Revolution. It was restored in the 1980s and opened as a museum commemorating the triumph of Communism. However, today it serves as the set-up for a popular joke: "Do you know why the Aurora is the most powerful ship in history? It fired one shot and created 70 years of disaster."

That joke says a lot about Russia at the dawn of the 21st century. It tells of bittersweet pride in its past and the uncertainty of its future. Russia is a place of contradictions and irony. Today its people are struggling with the difficult transi-

tion to a free market economy and a sense of defeat brought on by the collapse of the Soviet Union. Yet they are also rejoicing in a newfound level of freedom of expression. It is in this context that democratic reforms, including public relations, have come to Russia.

One can examine the anecdotal and empirical evidence presented in this article and come away with a sense of dread. "They just don't seem to get it," many readers might say. However, others looking at the same evidence may come away with a sense of awe and amazement. "Look how far they have come," may come to mind. Optimists will note that Russia has made tremendous progress, both socially and politically, since the fall of the Soviet Union. An example is the 1996 election of St. Petersburg Governor Vladimir Yakovlev, who defeated an incumbent in a free election. At the same time, the nation is still trying to get its economic house in order. The international community has poured in $22.6 billion in loans in 1998 to bolster the shaky Russian economy. These contrasting views describe Russia in a nutshell: a place where the glass is both half empty and half full.

THE FUTURE

At this stage of development, it appears as if government public relations is far more established in Russia than the commercial sector. Both survey and anecdotal data suggest that Russian government practitioners are currently following the model role of communication technician. This is without regard to the level of crisis experience these practitioners' organizations have faced—a level higher than that experienced by their American counterparts. This is in contrast to the 1992 American survey, which suggested a relationship between organizational crisis experience and the placement of the public relations function within the organization's managerial structure. One can hypothesize that with further maturation, Russian public relations will more closely follow the American model. However, it could be argued that because of differences in Russian culture, such a change may not occur. Either way, it is an issue that merits continued research.

Fueled by an anti-Western backlash, there appears to be movement toward more Russia-based commercial public relations. That notwithstanding, most commercial public relations in Russia appears to be imported by foreign corporations and agencies. And it appears their greatest challenge is importing foreign values. As Coca-Cola-St. Petersburg's Chernishova noted, "We are an American company trying to uphold company policy and make employees loyal to the company." All of this is being done in the context of an unstable economy and a government taxation policy that defies description and invites corruption.

Russian interest in public relations continues to grow, especially in light of the high profile foreign practitioners had during recent elections in Vladivostok. Evidence of this interest can be seen in the growing number of public relations programs springing up at various colleges and universities. American universities,

private foundations, and government agencies, such as the United States Information Service, have been helping Russian schools establish public relations curricula.

However, Anna Sharogradskaia of the National Press Institute is concerned that too much Russian public relations instruction focuses on tactics and body language. "I don't want all these tricks on how to pretend that you are a nice person when you are not," she said. Sharogradskaia wants a more symmetrical approach to public relations education. "What I want to experience is something which is connected with the culture of official-to-citizen relations," Sharogradskaia said. "This should be a culture in which the citizen is treated with dignity."

Her comments suggest that a review of the public relations curricula at Russian colleges and universities would be a topic worthy of future research. Such a study may help get to the core of what appears to be an emerging debate: Should public relations in Russia look any different from that which is practiced elsewhere? Is there any legitimacy to the argument "we need our own public relations?" Or is such a statement an expression of nationalism at a time when the nation's pride had been wounded? This appears to be a fertile ground for research.

CONCLUSIONS

The future of public relations in Russia is inevitably linked to the fate of democratization in the nation. And as Leon Aron has suggested, that outcome rests on whose vision of Russia will prevail:

> In the longer run, Russian development will depend on the outcome of the clash between two fundamental and competing tendencies, both very much in evidence today: statist, oligarchic, authoritarian, closed and Left-populist, on one hand, and liberal [in the European sense of the term], democratic, open, and centrist on the other. A great deal will also depend on the caliber of Russian political leadership, continuing democratic institutionalization, and the state of the world economy.[27]

Despite what he sees as an uncertain outcome, Aron says the chances for survival of a democratic and capitalist Russia are "real and formidable."[28]

NOTES

1. *Declaration of Independence,* (Commission on the Bicentennial of the United States Constitution, Washington, DC, 1991).
2. Leon Aron, "The Strange Case of Russian Capitalism," American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research. Columbia International Affairs [Online]. Available: http://wwwc.cc.columbia.edu/sec/dlc/ciao/wps/ar101/.
3. Thierry C. Pauchant and Ian I. Mitroff, *Transforming the Crisis-Prone Organization.* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1992) p. 12.
4. Ole R. Holsti, "Limitations of Cognitive Abilities in the Face of Crisis," in C. F. Smart

and W. T. Stanbury (eds.), *Studies in Crisis Management* (Toronto, Ontario: Butterworth & Company, 1978.) p. 41.
5. Steven Fink, *Crisis Management: Planning For The Inevitable* (New York: AMACOM, 1986.) pp. 15–16.
6. Laurence Barton, *Crisis in Organizations: Managing and Communicating in the Heat of Chaos* (Cincinnati, OH: South-Western Publishing Company, 1993) p. 2.
7. Dennis L. Wilcox, Phillip H. Ault, and Warren K. Agee, *Public Relations: Strategies and Tactics* (New York: Harper and Row, 1986.) p. 5
8. "Official Statement on Public Relations," Public Relations Society of America, Formerly adopted by PRSA Assembly. Nov. 6, 1982.
9. Alexander Nazaykin, "A Thriving Advertising Market Is Not On The Cards Just Yet," *Finansovye Izvestia* 86 (1996), p. 9. (via Lexus-Nexus).
10. "Official Statement on Public Relations." op. cit.
11. Scott M. Cutlip, Allen H. Center, and Glen M. Broom. *Effective Public Relations,* 6th ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1985) pp. 68–72.
12. Alec Benn, *The 23 Most Common Mistakes In Public Relations* (New York: AMACOM, 1982) pp. 15–16.
13. Andrev Serov, "The Fifth Industrial Factor," *Itogy* (1997).
14. "PR Paved the Way to U.S.S.R. Fall Says Russian Reporter," *Dwyer's PR Services Report* July (1992), p. 1.
15. Betsy McKay, "Yeltsin Looks to West for PR Help," *Advertising Age* May 25 (1992), p. 2.
16. Aron. op. cit.
17. This exchange occurred and was noted by me during the Freedom Forum's "Free Press, Fair Press Europe Media Forum" at the House of Journalists, St. Petersburg, Russia, on June 1, 1998.
18. Vladimir Isachenkov, "Russians Scrap Experiment After Mirror Fails to Unfold," *The Associated Press* Feb. 5, 1999. (via ABC News Online)
19. Ellen Mickiewicz, *Changing Channels: Television and the Struggle for Power in Russia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996) pp. 158–161.
20. Alexi Pushkov, "Political Campaigning on TV a Flop," *Moscow News* Jan. 12 (1996), p. 4.
21. Fred Schulze and Ann C. Bigelow, "Russia's Presidential Election June 1996," *The Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press* Sept. (1996), p. 1.
22. An oblast is a political subdivision. For purposes of comparison, a Russian oblast is similar to a Canadian province or U.S. state.
23. Steven Gutterman, "Russian Tax Cops Raid Bate Saatchi's Office: Foreign Companies May Be Focus As Nation Tries To Boost Collections," *Advertising Age* Nov. 26 (1996), p 4.
24. Vijai Maheshwari, "Russian Advertising: It's New and Improved," *Business Week* Jan. 27 (1997), p. 21.
25. The survey instrument used in this research came from my earlier study, David W. Guth, "Organizational Crisis Experience and Public Relations Roles," *Public Relations Review* 21 (1995), pp. 123–136.
26. "Membership Report." Public Relations Society of America, [Online]. Available: http://www.prsa.org (Jan. 1, 1997).
27. Aron. op. cit.
28. Aron. op. cit.