The Russian Quest for Peace and Democracy, Interview transcripts

Dmitry Furman (sociologist), 2008

Dmitry Furman, Moscow, May 21, 2008
Interviewer — Metta Spencer, with Ignat Kalinin
This was my second conversation with Furman, a sociologist of religion and politics. This interview took place on a rainy spring day. Later, in 2010, I called him from Toronto. He is suffering from some sort of disease in which he is progressively losing control of his muscles. Still, he has been publishing articles and (I think he said) even a book.

DMITRY FURMAN: You are from Canada?

METTA SPENCER: Yes. Toronto.

DF: Do you know Plekhanov?

MS: Yes, very well. He is a very good friend. … We work together in Pugwash.[omitting some transcription here…]
At our last conversation you mentioned the relationships between Orthodox religiosity and pollitical orientation.

DF: Yes, first of all, in the past, the contact with foreigners was the most important status symbol in Russia. Anybody – the peace movement – were status symbol. And people wanted to belong to Pugwash or other peace movement only to get the possibility to come out. Now it is not important. Now we can take a tourist trip anywhere. Now we are much more rich than before, so there is no great interest in this political contact, or these conferences. Then the peace movement and so on, all these kind of movements were in the Soviet period a very important part of official ideology — the struggle for peace against imperialistic aggressors and so on. So all these contacts were important for the officials as well. Our rulers. Now it is not important for them as well. Naturally.

I think that spontaneous movements of this kind may appear in 20 or 30 years but not now. There is no psychological or intellectual soil for these movements. Movements of the soviet period were not real spontaneous movements. Now we are not in the period of such movements. Not now

MS: Is it because – well, I shouldn't put words in your mouth but what I am troubled by is that the notion of importing democratic procedures or goals, the idea of bringing democracy from abroad into Russia – any attempt to use foreign money, foreign influences in Russia is rejected. And equally troubling to me, as someone with a great belief in democracy, is that even in the West there are now strong misgivings about exporting and importing democracy to another country. I am a left liberal in Canada but many of my social democratic friends now say, "I'm not so sure about democracy. It's not our business to help spread democracy in the world." Democracy has arisen in three different waves. We have passed the

third wave of democratization and now we are very much in a slump. We are not just in the slump of the Russian government, which says you can't use foreign funds, but it's anxiety and guilt, almost, in the West among people who say, "I'm not sure we should be helping spread democracy."

This bothers me. I believe in spreading democracy through nonviolence and support – not imposing democracy. Never something like what happened in Iraq. But always supporting and assisting grassroots groups in countries that need help. I believe in that. And I believe in working with people from Burma and Tibet, for example, who have that problem.

DF: What about people from Chechnya?

MS: I think I met a man from Chechnya for the first time on Sunday. He was a very fine man who is helping to democratize Chechnya by teaching members of vulnerable groups to become small business people. So I believe in that. I don't know what more you have in mind but that kind of thing I would certainly support.

As far as separatism goes, I wrote a book about separatism a few years ago and I take a very strong position that almost always separatist movements are destructive. I want democracy, not separatism.

DF: I think that the export and import of democracy is more or less impossible. The society must be prepared by its internal development for its democracy. And all premature attempts to impose democracy can lead only to backlashes and to reactions. Of course it is possible to help create democracy. It is a very, very complicated task. And I think that the Western powers in Russia played a not very good role for creating democracy. First of all, in 1991 when the Soviet regime collapsed, the most important problem for nascent democracy was the problem of opposition. But there was a group of people who may be sincere, who chose for themselves slogans of democracy. Yeltsin – all this democracy. But what is democracy? The choice – the rotation of power. The institutions over persons. So the problem was, Who will be the opposition? There was the natureal opposition – the communist opposition. But the Western powers hate communism or its coming to power – by the democratic way as well.

MS: Well, was it really the Westerners who took such a position or was it the people locally who excluded the communists?

DF: For sure it was people here, but with the support and applause of Western powers. In 1993 when Yeltsin made his coup d'etat and shot the parliament building, he appealed to Western governments for democracy. Naturally, they were not democrats. They were Communists, nationalists.They appealed to the rule of law, the rules of the game. Naturally, they had nothing. In 1996, there were new, very important elections – the second term of Yeltsin. These elections were absolutely fraudulent. Of course, not all Western governments supported Yeltsin. Nevertheless, in the headquarters of his campaign, there American specialists. I don't think these specialists played a real, serious role in this —

MS: They worked for Yeltsin?

DF: Yes. The meaning was symbolic – symbol of support. But after this absolutely fraudulent election, there was no possibility of the rotation of power, of the real choice. I think personally that there was no possibility of it from the very beginning – from 1991 – but nevertheless, after 1993 and 1996, there was absolutely no possibility because any opposition leader who would come to power could not have brought Yeltsin to trial. After 1993 and 1996 Yeltsin had only one choice — to hold onto power or to go to jail. Absolutely! This was not a choice between power and – I don't know – a simple life of a common citizen and writing memoirs. No! This was a choice between power and jail. It was very clear, very simple. Nevertheless, Western powers and Western specialists preferred having Yeltsin stay in power to risk somebody else in a rotation.

So I think all this present day system –- of course it was not created by the west. It was a natural outcome of our development and culture and so on. Nevertheless, it was created with the support of the West. And now, when this system has blossomed — you don't like him.

MS: I never liked him in the first place.

DF: Now nobody likes him. Nevertheless, the West helped create this system. I think that many times in history there were situations of choice for the Western powers –- choice between the risk of destabilization, risk of the Communists coming back and support for totalitarian regimes. The position of the West in post-Soviet Russia was the same as the choice of Pinochet, for example . The choice was between a democracy which brings with it some risks — risk of communism, risk of who knows? – and the possibility of a "good dictator." In Latin America, for example, the same situation was the same many times. And many other places too – in countries such as, I don't know, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, and so on, which were more or less pro-Western – nor very dangerous, but dictators. And where a real democracy would mean the coming to power of an Islamic state. It is very natural – I don't accuse anybody, no – I think it is very natural. But in the long run, these choices were not wise. And maybe these risks would be better than an unrisky dictator in the long run.

MS: I completely agree. The main comfort I take now in the United States is that most people are aware of this and are disgusted and ashamed of their country's past support of authoritarian regimes.

DF: Nevertheless, some years ago – 2004, I think – there was a situation of counter-revolution in Azerbaijan, where there were fraudulent elections. And the opposition came to the square and nobody in this situation could say who was the real [winner of the election?[— who knows? There were lots of people on the streets of Baku. There was no support from the [US? West? White House], first of all because of the [alliance] and Aliyev. Who knows? One of the parties is Islamic. I know this. Maybe they are ashamed of this very old past, but they are not ashamed of this very recent past – three or four years ago.

MS: That's interesting. I am sure that the average American, certainly the average Canadian, was not at all aware of Azerbaijan. Even I. I follow a lot but I did not know anything about that election. I can say only this – that at the time when Clinton and all the other American officials supported Yeltsin, he was regarded as some kind of democrat, I guess, but not by the people I knew. I don't actually know any Canadians or any Americans who had any respect for Yeltsin. It was not a popular position that our leaders took.

DF: I understand.

MS: Most of us would have been happy to see somebody else elected instead of Yeltsin, at every step of the way.

DF: Of course there were others – such as Zhuganov. A bad guy, I completely agree.

MS: I would have thought that Yabloko would have been a lovely alternative.

DF: Alternatives can be not very good, but it is the rule of the game. The principle.

MS: Absolutely.

DF: And I can say only one thing. In 2000 in Moldova, real Communists came to power. I have read many articles. And I don't see any difference between Zhuganov and Voronin. Voronin, now the president of Moldova, has even said that he will hold onto power and he calls on socialist Cuba. But now Moldova is the most democratic country in the CIS. It is nearer to entering the EU than any other country, including Ukraine.

MS: Really!

DF: Really. And they have adopted anti-communist ___. And why was there such a difference between Russia and Moldova? The difference is that Russia is very big with nuclear weapons, and Moldova is small and unimportant. In Moldova the West was very principled and honest. The West said that it's not important to us. And the result was very good. Voronin is a clever man, very simple, natural man, nevetheless clever. And I think the elections are honest. That's very important. It is inevitable that after the Communists the [rightists?[will come to power. But it's not a problem. the country is democratic now.

MS: That's a very good example. I'm glad you mention it, though it is not one that would have occurred to me. I certainly acknowledge the validity of your point. I see that you're right.

DF: Moldova is an example of Western honesty, and it shows that honesty sometimes is a good policy.

MS: I see that's an interesting and valid point.

DF: Now all this kind of conversations is absolutely theoretical. There is no possibiliity to influence the situation now. Maybe sometime in the future but not now.

MS: You're making gestures that look like you're saying we're locked down in a situation that is not about to change, no matter what we might wish for. Of course, I find that troublesome. In a way it's not my business, but as somebody really committed to assisting human rights activists and democratic opposition movements, I find it distressing that there is no prospect of things changing here.

DF: Now there is almost no prospect. The liberal democratic movement is tiny, demoralized absolutely, and split. In such a situation as Russia, the normal way to democracy is a color revolution, like Ukraine, like Georgia. Of course, it is not enough – I understand that. But it's a necessary first step to democracy. But now a color revolution now is absolutely impossible. For a color revolution you must have an opposition in parliament or somewhere near to parliament. You must have strong parties who can, in Moscow for example, bring to squares about a million people. But now our demonstrations bring only about 100 people, not more – about the same as the dissidents in the Soviet period. So it is impossible now. There are only two possibilities, I think. First of all, the most real possibility is a collapse – like 1991.

MS: He would like that. (pointing to Ignat).

Ignat Kalinin: I've been talking to Metta a lot of times about this and what I said to her was I am waiting for some economic disaster.

Df: Yes, yes, economic disaster. This is the most real possibility. The less real is a split in the ruling party. Maybe there is some little possibility for a division of power. It is not a very real possibility. As far as I know, Western political science really didn't study what the system of a ruling "democracy" like ours – imitation democracy. They concentrate on the real democratic countries around the world and the real totalitarian regimes. But this is very big zone, between the real totalitarian system and real democracies – a zone that may include the majority of countries now, and of course in the CIS, a majority of countries. It is not studied – the rules of transformation, the types of collapses – it is not studied. Nevertheless, we see now that the "color revolution" in Ukraine was not the first color revolution. There were many earlier ones, but no attention was drawn to them. For example, in the CIS the first color revolution – but not victorious — was in 1994 in Armenia. But now there is a similar situation in Kenya and Zimbabwe. It is a common mechanism. If something natural exists for this kind of political system, maybe they are not really established because they are more or less new. The majority of them was created only after the collapse of the colonial empires, in Africa and so on. I think that maybe there are very interesting "pre-historic" examples in Latin America, even in the 1930s. There are many historians of Latin America but nobody has tried to understand the laws. Nobody looked for example at Juarez in Mexico, as a kind of system. So maybe some of the political choices of the Western powers are connected to this misunderstanding of the system. They never theoretically thought about this. And of course it needs comparative analysis. Between, say, Indonesia's Sukarto and Russia's Yeltsin and Putin. Between

Mubarak in Egypt and Nazarbaev in Kazakhstan, and so on. It is very hard work. Very complicated.

It is like an organism. In the beginning they are weak. Then they get stronger and stronger. Then after their mature stage there is a period of decline and necrosis, then the end. We need the comparison of these ends. Many ends. There is the Marcos regime in the Philippines. Sukarno and Suharto in Indonesia and so on. But all these regimes are not very stable. The more stable is in Egypt now because three presidents since Nasser — it has been 50 years. Still, they are unstable. Even the Mubarak regime now is unstable. So I think the life of our regime, even in very favorable conditions, with high oil prices, can be about 14 years, something like that, in the best conditions. And about five years. Because I think that the peak of our development, the apogee of this regime, is now in the past.

MS: There are people who are doing research that is similar to what you're recommending, but not quite. There are people who are followers of Gene Sharp in the US. Gene Sharp is a scholar of nonviolent revolution. He trains people in how to accomplish it. There are several organizations doing research on nonviolent revolution. A rich man in Washington DC, Peter Ackerman, has started an institution for the study of nonviolent conflict. He was formerly connected with Gene Sharp. He is now the head of Freedom House, an organization (I think based in New York), that was founded by Eleanor Roosevelt.

DF: Yes,, I know. They give ratings.

MS: Yes, they do. And they are on very good terms with the National Endowment for Democracy, which supports movements, including the Orange Revolution in Ukraine. So there are people who have done a number of studies. The most interesting one I think I could print it out and bring it to you because it's on my computer. It's a study comparing about 80 or 100 nonviolent revolutions that have taken place over the past several decades. [The actual number is 67. ms] I don't remember exactly but a lot more than one would think. Peter Ackerman is the chairman of Freedom. He and another fellow who had previously been the chair of Freedom House, coauthored the paper. They are not doing exactly what you suggest. They are not studying the nature of different types of regimes. They look at the techniques of overthrowing the regime. What they discover is that the countries that have achieved their democratization through grassroots activities, such as the Orange Revoltuion, have much more success in the long run than countries that were given democracy by the leaders. So Russia would be a case of that type. Gorbachev conferred democracy on the Soviet Union but it was not won by people protesting and demanding it. It seems that the countries that have won their democracy their own grassroots initiatives are much more likely to still be democracies five years later. So it's important to have the people demand democracy rather than have the leaders give it to them.

DF: Naturally. But even in the perestroika period, the ____ came from above. All this democratic grassroots movement, which supported Yeltsin, came only after

Gorbachev had spent about three years explaining to them: Don't be afraid. The first slogan of these people was against Gorbachev! [We laugh.]

MS: I know. It's ironic, isn't it?

DF: Yes, yes. There was a natural return to the Soviet system. Nowadays we have something that is more or less similar to the Soviet system. There's one ruling party. It is like a parody of the Soviet system. Because it was much more simple to change the slogans, to change the words than to change the substance, the psychology. But nevertheless I think that psychologically we now are much nearer to democracy than in 1991. Even in the end of the Soviet period, we were psychologically nearer to democracy than during the Tsarist period.

MS: Really.

DF: Really. It is really so and what I can say is some interesting example about this. For example, Ukraine during the period of the Great Russian Revolution. It was something terrible. It was absolute anarchy. Without any stable —- But now it is more or less a normal and democratic state. Even the Baltic states. They forget about their past and they say they were democratic from the very beginning and so on, and that they have returned to democracy. _____ could not ____ beyond the first rotation of power. In 1926 they chose social democracy and immediately after that there was a coup d'etat. And then after this there was a normal fascist system. And this fascist system was from 1926 to 1940. In Estonia and Latvia from 1933 to 1940. But it is an example of the development of the Baltic states, after the liberation from the _____, this fascist system, after the collapse of the Soviet empire. The Soviets did very different reform. Before the Soviet period there was a much less democratic than after. So there is a natural democratic evolution, which is going on even under undemocratic regimes. I think that we will go through one very serious, but only one, crisis. There will be no return to the _____. But in about 20 years, Russia can be more or less a democratic state.

MS: But notice the way that the way the Baltic states and Ukraine became democracies. It was through grassroots protests. They were in the streets demanding it from Gorbachev. I remember seeing him going out into the street with them.

DF: But that does not guarantee democracy.

MS: You're right. We see that in Burma and Tibet. But what I want to know is this. You say, and Ignat and everybody I know, says there is no possibility now of any kind of movement that would bring democracy to Russia. Is it a waste of time or is there any value in when people do what they can in protests that will get crushed for sure. For example, in the Moscow Times that I was reading this morning an article by a young man who had published it originally in the Washington Post or some other American newspaper. He belongs to an organzation that starts with an O. Some kind of youth movement here in Moscow. [LATER: HE IS OLEGKOZLOVSKY, LEADER OF OBORONA.] I'm sorry I didn't bring it. In fact, he might be able to get one here. [Ignat gets up to fetch one.[He's a young

guy of 21 or so who protests in the strees and the police arrest him but he and his group keep doing this. He is a real dissident. As you say, there is no prospect at all that he will succeed now in what he is trying to accomplish. Is it useful in any way for him to do this?

DF: It's the same question for the dissident movement.

MS: Yes. Was it a waste of time?

DF: I think no. But nevertheless, from a pragmatic point of view it was a waste of time because the transformation came not from the dissident movement. Absolutely.

Ignat: Here it is.

MS: Oh, it's not the one I looked at. No. I'm glad to get it but it was yesterday's that I was looking at. I had asked him while you were away, Ignat, whether it is futile for this guy and his people to go out to the street and get beaten up. Is there any value in it at all in the long term.

DF: No, it's not a waste of time. First of all, nobody knows. For example, Lenin in 1903, with all these very little social democracy. It was funny. Very little. But the situation was absolutely unpredicted that he came to power. So it is all these little moments. Who knows when something will happen. But then, there are people who say, "It's my right." Some people must go to the square. For them it is a natural thing. So maybe, I think it would be very bad if nobody would gripe. It is part of their normal life.

MS: You have commented on the status of Russia now as an authoritarian regime. I guess that's the word for it. It's not totalitarian.

DF: No, there is no ideology.

MS: Okay. But I had a conversation with Sergei Plekhanov recently when he was comparing Russia to China. He said that Russia is far, far, far better than China – much, much more democratic than China. Much freer. You can go abroad whenever you want, etc. I didn't say much because he was more cheerful than I am.

DF: I more or less agree with Freedom House ratings. Sometimes I don't completely, but more or less I agree. They put Russia one point nearer to democracy than China.

MS: They have seven points.

DF: Yes. Russia has six and China seven, if I don't make a mistake.

MS: If you were advising young people – here you have one to advise. We've got to make him responsible for seRving Russia since you and i won't be around much longer.

Ignat: You never know. Lenin in the beginning of 1917 wrote that the question of socialist Russia is 20 or 30 years away. And by the end of the he already –

MS: So you have to advise bim and his generation how to fix Russia – how to make it democratic.

DF: First of all, I think that all these choices are absolutely individual. It is a problem of compromise of the choice between pragmatism and idealism. And this choice is absolutely individual. I think nobody can advise anybody because the situation and the psychology differ. To me it is very difficult anywhere, not only in an authoritarian country, but anywhere to live honestly is terribly difficult. But I think that the more honest one lives, with all these individual compromises, the more Russia will be fixed.

MS: That's an encouraging and inspiring message. I like that.

DF: I think that democracy is a moral problem – the rule of the game is honesty. So the more honest he is –

MS: If you were his age, how would you go about your daily life?

DF: I, for myself, I would study. I would study.

MS: He's in a very good position to do that. His degree is in history. But you don't have any particular policies that you would promote as a way of creating a movement that would succeed?

DF: I don't know the youth political organizations now, but I think I would be alone. But now my friends. I have many good relationships with [Yavlinsky?] and with Yasin. Not Gaidar. But I would not be a member of these parties. I prefer to be independent.

MS: That's very interesting but it doesn't help me write my book. What I want to know is whether there are valuable contacts that might be useful in discussing the value of dialogue – especially people from the west in discussions with intellectuals and people working as you do.

DF: I more or less agree with this Freedom House, and I think it's very important to know our situation – to know where we are on the map. I think it is the most important thing to understand our regime. Maybe it was inevitable. Maybe it is even good for this period – I don't know. But it is important to understand. I think that Putin and maybe Medvedev next, in their complex ideology, there is a democratic aspect as well. I think they are sincere, sure, that their system is democratic. We need an understanding of our situation. We need to understand that our system is like Mubarak. It is not something terrible. But we need to understand this. I think that this is maybe the most important thing.

MS: I was telling Ignat's mother last night that if she can write the truth in Moskovsky Komsomolets that's the most important thing that can be done.

DF: [exchanges a few sentences with Ignat} I have known for many years Ignat's father, and I have known Julia Kalinina for many years, but I did not know until now that they were together.

MS: You didn't know? Really! How interesting. I have known them since they were together. I am a dual citizen – a citizen of both Canada and the United States. I was originally American and then moved to Canada.

DF: Canada is better.

MS: Yes, it is much better, but we have our own problems too.

DF: The USA is too big for me. New York is very depressing. I was once in Montreal. Very nice.

MS: The closeness means that Canadians are not as free to be as they would like. We have a Conservative government now that is much more conciliatory toward Bush than most of us would like. Anyhow, I am interested in the current election in the US and I am very optimistic that Barack Obama will win.

DF: For me, it's not a big problem but there is real urgency. If Bush has committed too many mistakes, he will not be re-elected. The real movement ahead can only be through these mistakes. Move to the right, move to the left – it is normal. I think that Bush is a limited personality, but nevertheless it is not a problem.

MS: It is. It makes a big difference. Of the three candidates who might be elected, McCain is closer to Bush, Hillary is closer to McCain, and Obama is far to the left.

DF: There is one idea of McCain that I like: to create an alliance of democratic countries.

MS: Obama says the same thing. I think it's a good idea too.

DF: Yes. It's a very good idea. I think there is a big moral and political problem. For example, the USA is friends with Saudi Arabia. It is normal. It is profitable for both sides, so no problem. But the problem is not in the good relationship with non-democratic states, but in the almost inevitable lies about these things. You can support Nazarbaev, for example, because it is a stable system. But you can't say that this is a democratic system and that under Nazarbaev Kazakhstan is becoming more democratic. That is bad.

MS: I agree.

DF: It was not so bad that the West supported Yeltsin against Communist opposition. Not so bad. The bad was that it affected the Russian way to democracy.

MS: Yes. The thing is, when you talk about how the US has influenced the course of affairs in Russia. That's what I mean when I say that a complete break from that trend is going to happen. I think that Obama is going to lead in that direction. He will tell the truth.

DF: Maybe. But there was no big difference. I think that Bush Senior was more realistic about the Soviet Union than the Democrat Reagan.

MS: Maybe. I was never enthusiastic about Clinton and have not been enthusiastic about any US candidate in many years, and now I am.

DF: Obama is good for the US.

MS: And I think for Russia too. Having an honest attitude about foreign policy is important, for all the reasons you were giving.

DF: I think this US campaign has some influence on Russians. Very many people talk about who will be the candidate.

MS: I think the debates have been real.

DF: I think it is more important than who will win. It think that such a person like Obama without an American background is too early. I think in ten years, maybe. I think too many voters will be afraid in the last moment.

MS: It's going to be a factor. But they have done polls and something like about twenty percent of the people supporting Hillary say they would not vote for him if he wins the nomination.

DF: Hillary, for me, is not sympathetic. I don't like her.

MS: I don't either. This visit is immensely useful to me.

Ignat: I have two questions. First one, my father asked me to ask you so Metta can hear the answer. He wanted to hear your opinion of Kremlin ideologists. I guess he meant Surkov.

DF: I have never met him personally. I think he's a more or less normal Kremlin ideologist, in the tradition. Like in the Soviet period. There was a department of propaganda in the Central Committee. Even then I didn't know the head of this department. Now I know.

Ignat: What do you think – is there ideology? I heard that there is. They started making something. First there was nationalism, then there is remembrance of Victory Day, and our former greatness.

DF: that's playing with symbols but not ideology. I think that it is in the nature of this system (which I call imitation of democracy) that there is no ideology. No ideology of Nazarbaev and so on. There are some ways to explain their authoritarian regime, but it is not ideology, no. For example, what kind of race? I know that this is not a stable, developed democracy, but the alternative will be very bad. It will be communist or Islamist or, I don't know. Of course it is not Western democracy but we have developed traditions in our democracy that's different. It's not ideology because the idea of democracy is included in this ideology. It is not the alternative to the idea of democracy, not like fascism or communism. No. The problem of such regimes is the discrepancy between the official ways and the official doings. What is the color revolution? It's the bringing together of something proclaimed and reality. I think there may be other attempts to invent something – like "sovereign democracy" and so on. But it is impossible to create a real, serious ideology. It is impossible.

MS; Is there any place in the world where today there is an ideology?

Ignat: USA.

MS: What is the US ideology?

Ignat: Greatness of the people of the nation. I don't remember it in English. It was born in the nineteenth century that the American nation is the one to control the Western hemisphere.

MS: I don't know what that means.

Ignat: Liberal democracy is ideology.

DF: Liberal democracy is not ideology because the idea of liberal democracy is the rules of the game but not the winner. Democracy is who is the winner.

Ignat: The other question is probably close. You talked about communists coming to power in Moldova. Is a democratic state where democratic elections were won by a fascist party, is it democratic or fascist?

DF: It's democratic. Subjectively, Voronin of course is Communist. He invented some kind of notion that is his personal ideology. For example, a Catholic can be a Catholic and a democrat, naturally. But it is this Catholic's problem to connect the dogmas of Catholicism with democracy. It's not our problem. And so with Voronin. It's his problem how he connects Communism with democracy. But he stands by the rules of the game.

MS: Hitler came to power under a democratic rule of governance that brought fascism to power, but then he did away with it, so it was no longer democracy.

DF: Yes, yes. He came to power through the democratic rules. If he had supported the democratic rules it would be a democracy. No problem.

MS: Of course, once he starts exterminating people, whether you would want to call that democracy. Once you've got democratic elections there still are problems about human rights and the rule of law and freedom of press, of assembly, of speech, and so on.

DF: If Hitler had made the next elections free and honest, there is no problem. He had some racist notions – that's his problem.

Ignat: So democracy is about giving up power when the time comes.

DF: Yes, yes.

MS: I think there are some other issues too.

DF: I have said that this is a moral problem: what is more important for you – rules or your desires?

MS: yes, but if there's a minority. One of the things that Tocqueville pointed out is that there's a possibility for a minority to be tyrannical. So if a majority got elected but then did not observe the rights of minorities. I would want to make sure that each democratic regimes include ———

[talk about the rain and taxi arrangements here.]

What are you writing now? You say you spend your days writing

DF: I write for an independent newspaper. Nezivisima Gazeta, and some independent articles. Just now I have just published a little book on Moldova.

Before, I have made many (about seven) books on the post-Soviet republics. Kazakhstan, etc. This is my academic work.

MS: Let's exchange email addresses. I think you might be interested in the nonviolent revolutions. I will send it. Here's my card.

DF: Give me a slip of paper. I have no card.

MS: Furmande@ntu-net. I think that what is going on at Freedom House is very good. Peter Ackerman has another book. His book is called A Force More Powerful. It's a big book, published maybe five years ago about nonviolent revolutions, comparing them throughout history – maybe 50 nonviolent revolutions. Including 1905 Russia.

DF: Ancient history. It was not nonviolent. The beginning was nonviolent, but it's always nonviolent at the beginning, even in France.

MS: I wish I could have brought copies of that book to give away but my suitcase was full of books.

DF: It was strange how, in our time. For example, we met twice. And you know Plekhanov. And your mother is Julia Kalinina! [We laugh]

MS; We had dinner with her last night. Tonight she will spend her evening with the football team. What a miserable life, to be with the police all night. They will be playing in the rain. So are you at an institute?

DF: I work at the Institute of Europe of the Russian Academy of Science but it is not very important. The place of work.

MS: Is Sergei Karaganov there?

DF: Yes. He's the vice-director. I go to my office once a week for an hour, so I don't have many occasions to talk to him.

MS: I don't go to work at the office. I retired eleven years ago. I go once in a while but mostly I work at home. I edit a magazine called Peace Magazine. I didn't bring a copy but I will send some to you.

DF: There was a chair of the history of the communist party in the Soviet period in the history faculty. There is no communist party. There is no Soviet Union. But there is a chair. [we laugh]

MS: Does it still address the question of the history of communism?

DF: Of all the political parties. But Stalin has created Jewish, autonomous republic. It was another idea of the early communist party, the creation of the jewish socialist nation. Almost no Jews went there. But nobody in the Soviet time was so brave as to eliminate this oblast. Even now, after all this, there is no Soviet Union, no soviet alternative to Zionism. Even now there is a Jewish oblast.

Ignat: It's in the far east.

MS: Yeah, I've heard of it. Have you ever been there?

Ignat: No.

DF: It is much easier to destroy the Soviet Union than to destroy a single institute in the Academy of Science.

MS: [laugh]. Academia is the same everywhere, I guess.

DF: During the Soviet period there was the idea of socialism in Latin America, so there was an institute on Latin America. Now there is no such idea. Almost no contact with Latin American countries. But there is an institute of Latin America.

MS: I think that's true in American and Canadian universities. Sometimes new topics come up. I organized a program in peace studies. I had sometimes 30 students per year who were taking a degree in peace. I believe it is ncessary for a new program to create its own department, but that is very hard to do. It is easy to put together an interdepartmental program, so I made up a menu of courses from history, sociology, philosophy, political science etc. When I retired they dropped the program because it had been mine and nobody else wanted it. I didn't mind because I knew that if they continued it they would assign somebody to teaach it who didn't know enough about it. Peace studies could be an independent program. We have our own body of knowledge that everybody should know. But now we depend on other departments, so if interest in this program declines a bit, the interdisciplinary program will be dropped but the departments will stay forever.

I'll bet you don't have anything called peace studies as a degree program in Russia, do you?

Ignat and DF: No, no.

DF: In Soviet times it would have been easy to create the chair for such a program, but not now. There was a very short period when Stalin had an interest in pan-Slavism. In the beginning of this period there was some play with the idea of Slavic unity. They created a chair of Slavism—the history of Slavs. But such countries as Romania and Hungary, there is no place for the history of such countries. But there was a very serious look at Polish and Yugoslavian history. It was the result of a very short term situation. The result is more stable than,not only Stalin but of the Soviet Union.