

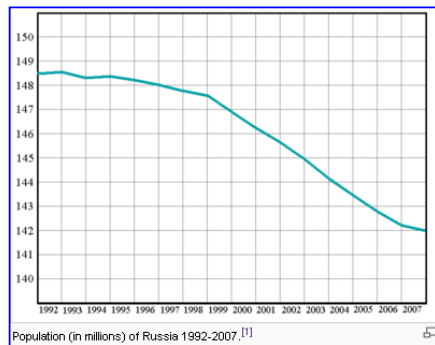
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Russian Demographic Calamity

In my last issue, I alluded to the imminent self-extinction of Russians within Russia, due to a combination of age, ill-health, vodka, net emigration, abortion and an abysmal, population-destroying fertility rate of just 1.3 babies per woman. Some have suggested I expand on this, because it is surely the defining feature of the Russian geopolitical landscape over the coming decades, whether in Russia's tacit acceptance of its slow-motion catastrophe or the actions it takes to deal with it.

When the USSR disintegrated in 1991 it had a healthy fertility rate of 2.4 babies per woman and a population of 293 million. The combined population of its constituent countries has remained unchanged over the last 17 years but combined fertility has dropped to a infelicitous 1.54.

Driving this has been mighty Russia whose population level, currently 141m is dropping off the wall (see chart) thanks to a precipitous fertility rate of around 1.3. Ukraine (46m) and Belarus (10m) are similarly dying with even lower rates of 1.25 and 1.23 respectively. The higher figures in the other countries are largely due to the large Muslim make-up of the



population, to whom the disease of childlessness has not spread.

For pretty much a full generation, Russian women have been producing, on average, 1.3 babies each and this is killing the Russia as a race of people. Because with such a low birthrate, you quite quickly reach a point of no return.

The self-sustaining reproduction rate is 2.1 babies per woman. Two to replace the mother and father, and 0.1 to make up for children killed by accident or disease or indeed not born at all to some couples or grow up to be infertile.

That means that, on average, each woman would expect $2.1^2 = 4.4$ grandchildren and $2.1^3 = 9.3$ great-grandchildren.

There is already an entire generation of women born as part of the 1.3 average who will soon be reaching maturity. Unless they radically change from the habits of their mothers they are also going to produce one-and-a-bit children, to be optimistic say 1.5. Thus when existing mums become Mamushkas, they are only going to see 1.3 x

$1.5 = 2$ grandchildren. So if Mamsushka wants to get back on track, genealogy-wise, she has to convince her lonely pair of grandkids to produce $9.3/2 = 4.7$ children so that she can proudly survey the 9.3 great-grandchildren she needs merely to ensure the family line doesn't die out, not to talk about increasing. But after two generations of families averaging well under $1\frac{1}{2}$ children, it seems highly optimistic to suggest, in the absence of some unforeseen cataclysmic event that changes everyone's world perspective, that young Russian women are suddenly going to have four or five babies apiece. And if they don't? The target for their own (few) daughters will be $2.1^4 / 1.5^3 = 5.8$ babies per woman. It's just not going to happen.

Russia is doomed unless it can find another way to create people.

A number of Russians have talked obliquely about the demographic crisis, for example,

- Alexander Lehmann, a specialist on Russia's macroeconomy at the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development in London observed that "in 2007, Russia's labour force reached a peak of 90 million. It will be 15 million fewer by 2020".
- Last year, Nikolay Petrov, a specialist on Russian society at the Carnegie Center in Moscow, said that "over the next 20 years, Russia will need 20 million immigrants to compensate for the labour shortage".

The projected "labour shortage" in 2027 is of course merely a manifestation of, if not a euphemism for, a baby shortage in 2007. And they certainly don't want the kind of immigrants that would want to immigrate - mainly Muslims

and ethnic Chinese from ex-Soviet republics and from China itself.

Nevertheless, in the past couple of years, the imperial establishment itself began to take some notice and introduced both a down-payment and monthly stipends to second-time mothers. While this resulted in a much-hyped 8% increase in births last year the overall fertility rate has crept up from 1.3 only to 1.4. And since there seem to be no special effort to encourage mothers to produce more than two, current efforts can only slow but not reverse the inexorable downward trend.

Simply put, the empire needs more citizens and its women are not going to produce them.

So the most obvious and easiest solution is simply to steal other countries with large Russian populations. Which is what's going on, starting with South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

The South Ossetia president Eduard Kokoity has already exulted,

"Yes, we will be part of the Russian Federation ... Now we are an independent state and we look forward to uniting with North Ossetia and joining the Russian Federation",

at least until Czar Putin made him retract his premature ejaculation, saying:

"We have no imperial ambitions which people can accuse us of, and nor will we ... we took that decision a long time ago and we have no desire, and no basis, to threaten the sovereignty of the former republics of the USSR."

Yeah, right, he would say that wouldn't he, but his actions say something different. For who can doubt that Mr Kokoity's vision will indeed come to pass, adding a football stadium of Russians (ie 70,000) to the Empire. Abkhazia's absorption will contribute a further 190,000 (Russia has given passports to 90% of its population).

But these numbers are just drops in the bucket. The Empire needs Russians in their millions to make up for the six million it has already lost since 1991 and the further millions projected to disappear.

That is why West-leaning democracies such as Moldova (250,000 Russians), Kazakstan (4.6m) or the biggest prize Ukraine (8 million) with Crimea thrown in, are feeling so threatened, under the baleful eye of the new Russian Empire.

Demography more than oil, minerals, industry, art, sporting prowess or prestige is what determines the long term success of any society. When it's not going your way you have a calamity on your hands. As Mark Steyn once wrote in a seminal article that evolved into "*America Alone*", his best-selling book, "*it's the demography, stupid*".

The Imperial Bear has awoken and found it has no cubs. And this demographic calamity is not making it happy. Indeed it is the very reason the Bear has once again donned his imperial purple of bygone years.

Ireland's Spending on Public Education

The OECD recently issued its annual report, "*Education at a Glance 2008*", a 525- page, 5Mb door-stopper which you can download [here](#).

It has given the left-wing (for there is no other) Irish media and unions what can only be described as a fit of the vapours, all

Source: OECD - Education at a Glance 2008	Expenditure per student, US\$				
	OECD Avg	Ireland	Ireland's Rank	Best	Worst
Annual Expenditure					
Primary	\$6,300	\$6,000	14 th out of 31	Luxembourg	Brazil
Secondary	\$7,700	\$8,000	15 th out of 34	Luxembourg	Russia
Tertiary	\$10,300	\$11,500	14 th out of 34	Luxembourg	Russia
Total schooling					
Primary + Secondary	\$90,000	\$90,000	15 th out of 33	Luxembourg	Brazil

because of one statistic buried in the depths of the tome, on page 237. This says that the Irish exchequer spent 4.6% of its GDP on education, compared with 6.2% of the OECD as a whole. On this measure, this ranks Ireland as 30th out of 34, with Israel first and Russia last.

That's all that has been reported, and it has prompted all kinds of ill-informed comment to the effect that this figure demonstrates that Ireland is under-educating its children, over-filling its classrooms and - above all - underpaying its teachers.

Of course it does no such thing, as it tells you nothing about what is actually being disbursed, ie the amount of money the State

expends to educate each child. Though the effectiveness of money spent certainly varies from country to country, if money is going to be talked about, then the spend per student is the only measure that makes sense.

Had lazy correspondents and voracious teachers' unions bothered to look beyond the single statistic of 4.6% of GDP, they would have learnt the following.

From this table, it is apparent that in terms of education spending by the State, Ireland is firmly in the middle of the road, very close to the OECD average. This may be nothing much to brag about, but Ireland is certainly not "*near bottom*" as some of those excitable headlines would suggest.

One reason for the very average performance may be the cosy relationship between the State and the various teachers' unions, which like their counterparts in many Western countries, seem to view schools more as a medium for pursuing teachers' personal interests (pay, leisure, pastimes) rather than children's education.

For a graphic illustration of the State's acquiescence in this regard, consider the case of [Maura Harrington](#). She is the full-time principal

of [Inver National School](#), a State-funded primary school in Broadhaven Bay on the spectacular west coast of Ireland. But since 2002 she has been a very active protestor, regardless of term-time or school-holidays, against [Corrib](#), an offshore natural-gas project that Shell is developing. Her latest stunt is to go on hunger-strike "*to the death*" unless and until the [Solitaire](#), the world's largest pipe-lay barge, departs Irish waters.

After the long summer break, children returned to school just a couple of weeks ago, yet this headmistress has the effrontery to blithely [observe](#), "*I think going on hunger strike counts as a tinneas pearsanta* [Irish for sick leave]." That she hasn't long since been fired for dereliction of duty, not only on this occasion but regularly for the past six years, tells you as much about the laxity of her employer (the State) as her own cavalier attitude to her pupils' education. Extend this cavalier attitude across the State education system and it is no surprise about Ireland's middling ranking.

Nevertheless, that 4.6%-of-GDP statistic getting all the publicity is a reflection less of Ireland's inattention to education than of its astounding economic success in recent years. With a GDP of \$43,100, it is surpassed in the OECD solely by the USA on \$45,800 and Luxembourg with an outlandish \$80,500. The bigger the GDP, the smaller any expenditure becomes as a percentage of GDP.

So

- could Ireland do more to educate its young?
 - Yes, indubitably; it is distinctly mediocre and over-unionised.
- But is it near the bottom of the OECD league?

- Not remotely.

Bin Laden Lives On :-]

I have written several times to justify my belief that Osama bin Laden is either dead or so badly injured that his image cannot be shown nor his voice recorded.

- Bin Laden Is Dead - September 2002
- Bin Laden and the Latest Audio Tape - November 2002
- Bin Laden Springs Back to Life - October 2004
- Osama bin Laden Is Long Gone - October 2007

All those appalling-quality videos and audio tapes we've been treated too ever since he was last verifiably heard of in December 1991 are clearly fakes. Their quality is deliberately lousy so that he cannot be seen or heard distinctly enough to make a positive identity. Al Qaeda clearly has a number of impersonators, clumsily trained to emulate his speaking manner and gestures, even if they do get the left and right hand mixed up sometimes (bin Laden was left-handed).

Al Qaeda is not alone in its ability to make dreadful impersonations.

Sometime ago I wrote about Aaron Barschak, the camp Osama bin Laden, in trademark peach dress, women's shoes, false beard and - ugh - false pubic hair, who famously gate-crashed Prince William's 21st birthday party at Windsor Castle. He calls himself by the oxymoron



"the comedy terrorist". As a result of this and other antics, he has on several occasions enjoyed the hospitality of the local police station.

Now the constabulary itself has finally caught up with the fun. All except the very top brass, of course.

Earlier this month, Chief Superintendent Colin Terry, a 24-year veteran with the Police, attended a village fete in his home village of Grampound in Cornwall, an annual event which raises money for charity.

To add to the hilarity of the occasion, and no doubt to mark the seventh anniversary of 9/11, he dressed up as Osama bin Laden, and was just as convincing in that guise as any of those famous fake video tapes emanating from Tora Bora.

But his superiors were not amused and condemned his behaviour as unacceptable. However since he happens to be on secondment to the British Foreign Office, to help in Afghanistan in the hunt for - you guessed it - the mythical, elusive, long-dead Osama bin Laden, it seems he cannot be chastised.



This Osama guy is certainly full of surprises.

Never say die.

Issue 182's Comments to Cyberspace

I wrote to cyberspace twice during September, of which one, a tongue-in-cheek ribbing, was actually published.

- Lent is not a "feast" **P!**
Published in the Sunday Times on 7th September 2008
Matt Cooper talks about "*the Catholic feast of Lent*". He must have been looking out of the window during his religious education classes at school. Lent is a season of fasting and abstinence emulating the forty days that Jesus spent fasting in the wilderness on retreat, prayer and reflection. It is no more a "feast" than is Islam's current month of Ramadan, which is of course a copy of Lent.

- Is the conflict in Georgia a sign of renewed Russian aggression?

In an online poll, 61% answered Yes *To the Irish Times on 2nd September 2008*
This is not only a case of Russian aggression. It is the first step in no less a project than a new expansion of Russian Imperialism under Czar Putin (whether he calls himself president or prime minister).

And it's not merely Russian pride that is driving this new empire.

Russia is a dying country, losing nearly a million people a year due to age, ill-health, vodka, net emigration, abortion and an abysmal, population-destroying fertility rate of just 1.3 babies per woman. It has very nearly reached the non-reversible stage.

So it desperately needs more people, and the easiest way to get them is to conquer and annex neighbours with large Russian populations.

First they came for South Ossetia and Abkhazia and I did nothing.

Then they came for Crimea and I did nothing.

Then they came for Moldova and I did nothing.

Then they came for ...

Quotes for Issue 182

----- R U S S I A -----

Quote: "*Through its response to Georgian aggression, Russia has set a kind of standard for*

reaction, which fully complies with international law. Russia has returned to the world stage as a responsible state which can defend its citizens.”

Sergei Lavrov, Russian foreign minister under Czar Putin makes clear that there is plenty of fuel in the Empire's expansionist ambitions.

He also called on the West to abandon the democratically elected leader of Georgia

Quote: “We believe in the right of men and women to live without threat of tyranny, economic blackmail and military invasion or intimidation.”

US vice-president Dick Cheney, to bickering Ukrainian democratic leaders president Viktor Yushchenko and prime minister Yulia Tymoshenko, reminding them of the bellicose, smouldering Bear next door.

The Russian Empire, under Czar Vladimir Putin, is understandably furious at this allusion to the bleeding obvious.

----- U S E L E C T I O N -----

Quote: “I can't stand John McCain.”

At the Republican Convention, Sarah Palin quotes Harry (“*This war [Iraq] was is lost*”) Reid, the Democratic Senate Majority Leader, after which she adds, witheringly, “no accolade we hear this week is better proof that we've chosen the right man.”

Quote: “I guess a small-town mayor is sort of like a ‘community organizer’, except that you have actual responsibilities.

“I might add that in small towns, we don't quite know what to make of a candidate who lavishes praise on working people when they are listening, and then talks about how bitterly they cling to their religion and guns when those people aren't listening.”

Sarah Palin savages Barack Obama at the Republican Convention

Quote: “The idea that a conservative may be an attractive, youthful, smart and principled, funky grizzly bear-hunting beauty queen doubling up as Elliot Ness ... rip[s] apart ... the core belief of the left that they are uniquely good and everyone else is universally bad.”

Columnist Melanie Philips rips apart the Left for its hypocrisy

Quote: “What's the difference between Sarah Palin and Barack Obama?

- One is a well turned-out, good-looking, and let's be honest, pretty sexy piece of eye-candy.
- The other kills her own food.”

Gerard Baker, in a syndicated column for The Times.

Hattip: [Atlantic Blog](#)

----- I R A N -----

Quote: “Iran is taking a major risk by continuing the process of obtaining nuclear weapons, which is a certainty for us. Whatever government is in power in Israel, we may wake up one morning and find that

Israel has struck ... we must avoid this catastrophe.”

French president Nicolas Sarkozy gives warning to Syrian president Bashar al-Assad, Sheikh Hamed al-Thani the Emir of Qatar and prime minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey, in a closed session in Damascus that was, however, inadvertently transmitted to a local hotel.

----- J I H A D -----

Quote: “This action was carried out according to tribal traditions. These are centuries-old traditions and I will continue to defend them.”

Israrullah Zehri an MP from Baluchistan, speaking in Pakistan's national parliament, expressing a view backed up by other male lawmakers.

He was defending the “honour killing” of three teenage girls from the Umrani tribe in the Naseerabad district.

Because they had the audacity of wanting to choose their own husbands, they were shot to injure them, then buried alive in a pit.

Two relatives who tried to intervene received the same treatment.

----- Z I M B A B W E -----

Quote: “They want Mugabe to go. Where should I go? I can't go anywhere.”

Robert Mugabe is of course right, as he whines about the opposition wanting to take power after the recent elections he rigged but not sufficiently.

Amazingly, a few days later he and Morgan Tsvangirai signed a power-sharing agreement. We will wait and see how this works out.

----- I R E L A N D -----

Quote (heard on the radio; no link): “You here in Dublin are nearly the best-dressed people in the UK.”

Ghastly TV fashionistas Trinny & Susannah, putting on a show in Dublin's Merrion Square, get their geography wrong.

There followed a deadly hush from the boisterous crowd.