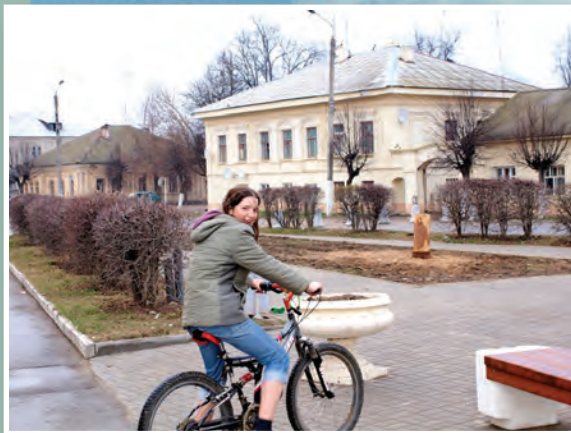


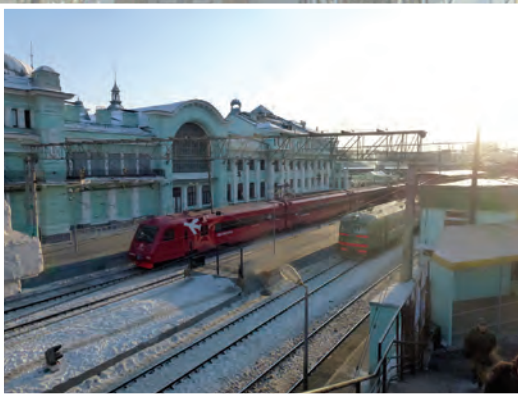
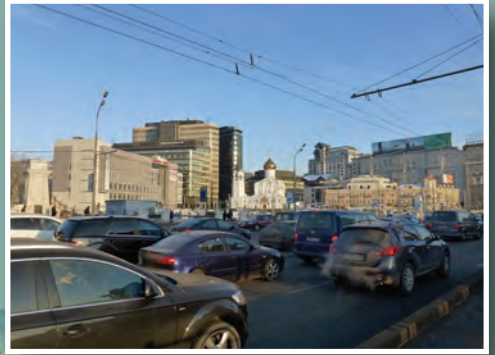
Victor
Kogan-Yasny



RUSSIA AT THE CROSSROADS AND THE PROBLEMS OF DEMOCRACY



RUDP «YABLOKO»



Victor Kogan-Yasny

RUSSIA AT THE CROSSROADS
AND THE PROBLEMS
OF DEMOCRACY

Articles and Notes

RUDP «YABLOKO»
Moscow

The author is indebted to his late mother Lia Davydovna Grinshpun for her close participation in the preparation of this book.

The author expresses his deep thanks to Grigory Yavlinsky without whom this book would not have appear.

The author is grateful to Andrey Kosmynin, Vyacheslav Izmaylov and Elvira Goryukhina for very useful discussions.

The author also expresses his sincere thanks to all those who helped to organize his not simple trips: Alexey Shishnin, Victor Zimonin, Vladimir Gridin, Ivan Mel'nichenko, Sergey Goryainov, Sergey Sokolov, Alexander Generalov, and many others.

The author is extremely grateful to his friendly translators for their indispensable work.

The author expresses his sincere thanks to Stepan Sultanov and Vladimir Pentegov for their very valuable technical assistance in the preparation of the present edition

Translation from the Russian by Victor Shneerson,
Murad Saifulin and Alexander Markov

Photo by Peter Petrov and Victor Kogan-Yasny

© Victor Kogan-Yasny, RUDP "YABLOKO" 2012
All rights reserved

Published by the Russian United Democratic Party "Yabloko"
Pyatnitskaya Str. 31/2-2 119017 Moscow Russia

ISBN 978-5-4399-0028-2

Printed in Russia

Content

A Retrospective of the European and Post-soviet Political Development	4
Civil Society and Politics	13
In Search of Litter Leaves	21
Overcome Lawlessness	34
A Glance at the World after the Cold War and Psychology of Post-Soviet Russia	41
Politicians Should Be Responsible and Serious in Their Assessments	47
NGOs in “Post-modern” Political Reality	51
Time at a Standstill	57
Tikhoretskaya	63
Notes 2007 — 2011	67
Supplement	
Participation in the “Europe’s World” Web Site Discussions	75
Reading Michael McFaul. A “symbolic review”.	80

A Retrospective of the European and Post–Soviet Political Development

T

he relations between Western Europe and the Soviet Union in the 1960 – 1980 were, if we may say so, relations of respect of respect of strength and power. The Soviet Union, acting from the iron curtain position, could not, for all this, fail to recognize the dynamism and effectiveness of the West European economies, shielded by their military alliance with the United States, and could not deny the reality of European integration. Though never admitting it aloud, the Soviet leaders recognized the effectiveness of the entire West European politico-economic system, and constructed their policy with the leaders of France, the Federal Republic of Germany, and Great Britain in pursuance of that undeniable fact. On the other hand, mistrust of the Soviet Union as a political system, and fear of its intentions, certainly did not prompt the other side to spurn the position of the Soviet leaders or to hold the peoples of the Soviet Union in contempt. The negative attitude towards the Soviet Union did not by any means speak of a lack of interest towards it in the politically active milieu. In fact, its interest was very great. The appreciation of the significance of the Soviet phenomenon, its variety, was unquestionable and natural.

Sharp deterioration of relations between the Soviet bureaucracy and the West gave way to periods of detente, and the last of the *détentes*, the one under Gorbachev, was in effect a qualitative change in Soviet relations with the West in general and Western Europe in particular. There were murmurs about an end to the cold war, and the all-European Helsinki process initiated at a time of one of the bureaucratic *détentes*, to the surprise of many, began to gain realistic outlines, gained an opportunity to transform itself from a merely bureaucratic phenomenon into reality. There was serious talk of partnership between the Soviet Union and the West, and no one perceived it as a demagogical gimmick. The Paris Charter of a New Europe, signed in 1990, had every appearance of a transition to the political ideology of a Greater Europe from Vancouver to Vladivostok.

But as time went by, matters took an entirely different turn. For reasons of its intrinsic texture (the dissonance between the system of government and the new strategic tasks), the Soviet Union failed in attaining a constructive transformation, but rather suffered a collapse, and in place of an enormous united multicultural space there appeared on the political map many territories where various newly emerging traditions gained predominance and for each of which the aim was to form a new state, starting in many factors from zero. The period of “moving about the stones” of the Soviet house, of relaying the foundation, became highly painful and resulted in numerous sacrifices. Nor has it ended to this day. The question of strategy proved exceedingly difficult for each of its participants, for each of them had much too different viewpoints about the newly arisen conditions.

In these circumstances, the position of the West played a special role and gained specific significance. The collapse of the once powerful neighbor, its inevitable and at least temporarily political and economic provincialisation were a very serious challenge for Western political thinking and for Western practical politics. Regrettably, only a very few perceived this challenge. The majority, unfortunately, backed away, relieved that no—well organized power threatened it from the West. Others relapsed into a strange mix of euphoria whipped by the anti-Communist rhetoric of the “new personalia” in Moscow and simultaneously of fear of the sudden emergence of a numerous “Russian mafia”.

The war in Tajikistan and Transcaucasia in 1992, the fact that in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan people were imprisoned for political reasons, and the inflation in Russia had risen several thousand percent, was digested by some people in the West with indifference and unconcern as something that was none of their business, while others saw in it an optimistic light and in the context of the cardinal changes in “a light of future progress”. Boris Yeltsin was applauded for his resolute fight with the outward consequences of communism and won himself unlimited credit of confidence in resolving the task of rooting out the Soviet past, while the “all-European house” and “Europe from Vancouver to Vladivostok” was quickly consigned to oblivion the moment the Soviet Union disintegrated. In the sphere of the real-politik of the then emerged European Union there prevailed an entirely different, more practical paradigm which, as a scheme, was designed to expand the West’s political and economic structures up to the former Soviet border, and to forget everything that

lay farther East, forget the plan of any profound tasks of political and economic integration. The situation in the post-Soviet states, the attitudes of their leaders and the post-Soviet political elites worked in favor of this outlook. Considering the international legal, geopolitical, and historical role, the above related first of all to the Russian Federation. Having taken over the baton of Kremlin rule from the dominant stratum of the Soviet Union, the new Russian leaders with Boris Yeltsin at their head, consisted of three main groups: there were reactionaries with imperial inclinations, there were technocrats which were the most concerned with the tasks of their administrations, and, finally, there were many priorly persecuted or suppressed people in the Soviet Union who belonged to the liberal intelligentsia – human rights champions, publicists, and figures of the world of science – who were appointed to the responsible posts and offices. But chiefly there were many simply accidentally promoted characters. All were under the strong impression of what had so precipitously happened with the Soviet Union, and many people of anticommunist views saw the objective of the new state (and especially their own goal) to create an economic basis and the ideology of the new Russian state by renouncing communism and wiping it out as abruptly and rapidly as possible. Yet the people of communist and imperial views had no intention whatever to lay down their arms. A sharp face-off appeared in Russia practically overnight accompanying the economic and social shock. Meanwhile, practically all the then known politically active groups turned their eyes not forward in search of the right road to take forward, but back to the past and wasted their breath on public discussion of history

rather than future. That distracted Russia from the real social, economic, and political processes. In the “new” Russia there were two plans of what to do with the heritage of Soviet communist history: either to carry out an official “decommunization” with the communist party charged with crimes and with a categorical renunciation of all remnants of communist symbols in the country or – since there was not vigour enough for this to waste no time at state level round the symbols of the past, let the passions settle, make life gradually a little easier to live, and show the guidelines to the future. The new Russian leadership proved incapable of either. It tried to do one thing and another, and a third, running things the Soviet way, in disorderly fashion, by fragments, while remaining in the “here and now” tactical framework. In practice it was a mix of ultraliberal prowestern slogans with a Soviet system of primitive restricted and petty authoritarian government at all levels, keeping the background visibly imperialist.

An episode in February 1992 was highly typical. Suddenly, and very sharply, Boris Yeltsin put the movement for the revival of the Volga Autonomous German Republic in their place in keeping with Russian nationalist positions (at a time when the public, it seemed, was prepared for the idea as the only fair one) by declaring categorically that the former republic will not be revived and the descendents of Germans expelled from their Volga country could, if they wished to move closer to their former native location be granted the territory of a nearby military proving ground. This humiliating move encountered no rebuff: life proceeded in the framework of a “credit of trust” in Boris Yeltsin, and, to be sure, “practical interests”, too, contributed to

the scheme: in Germany, I think, they were more eager to see the Germans return to their original historical homeland than have justice restored in Russia. The movement of Russian Germans, which was about to have its say heard loud and clear, suddenly fell silent, and this was a signal that in the “new Russia” political reaction was possible.

The policy of the “credit of trust” on the part of the West actually meant the self-withdrawal of elites from Russia and the former Soviet Union, a transfer of the subject of these countries in the Western intellectual circles from key centres to the marginals, and on the practical plane on the part of the Western leaders friendly and emotional relations with Yeltsin and his closest cronies, while spurning and ignoring many “integrational” wants of ordinary Russian citizens and those of other post-Soviet countries. These citizens were told diplomatic fantasies and outright lies. The leadership of most of the new countries made no effort at all to outline some strategic perspective, and the outside world, too, did not try to do it. Neither the citizens nor the states as a whole were given expert assistance in the most difficult points of legal and economic transformation either individually or all of them together (and what was called expert advice was really little more than deliberate adventurism). Let us add the very small amounts granted in charity aid, the negligible volume and indigestible form of the financial projects of a civic society, the large restrictions in matters of temporary legal work places, the rapidly raised visa barrier, and so on.

At the bottom of the “credit of trust” policy lay a cynicism combined with an irresponsible and aloof “hope for the best”

when the matter concerned someone else and not yourself. Then the superficial and short-lived “hopes for the best” fell to pieces, while the cynicism continued and still continues to do its dirty work, making today’s key EU leaders build their relations with present-day Russia on the basis of polite handshakes with leaders and officials in order to secure “mutual benefits”. Meanwhile relations with ordinary Russian citizens (as well as Belorussian, Uzbek, Tajik, Kazakh, and quite the same with Ukrainian, Moldavian, Georgian and Kirghiz) are tarnished with a “presumption of mistrust” and with interest in the post-Soviet space in any way lively only in case of major scandals or yet another political revolution.

And there is nothing surprising that fifteen years after the collapse of the Soviet Union the forged and in seventy years hardened spanner of the Soviet communist system of government is hidden just below the surface, and more often than not at work as before, and despite all the changes in the style of life and economic system is quite capable of functioning in one direction only – tightening the bolts.

The fourteen years after 1991 abound in very many events, some of them even joyous and logical, and many profoundly tragic and repulsive. Historically, the time span was short. No country or territory can change radically in such a short time. Still, the duration was not simply a political period. It was on the boundary between political and historical. And most of the

events (even recent ones) for all their large scale have ceased arousing an active psychological reaction among most people and have shifted from the sphere of public life into the sphere of “current history” of interest to but a few people.

But the matter concerns more than a duration. Globally, and in particular in Russia, there is a “destructurization” of historical and political thinking when for people of different locations, different styles of life, and different levels of prosperity the problem of their own survival is so psychologically urgent that in this setting the absolute majority of any of the least complicated generalizations lose their urgency. Accordingly, the sense of personal responsibility for what is happening in society loses urgency and the interest in any in the at least abstract social problems begins to fade.

The epoch of primitive globalization entails loss of not only global political agenda but also of many crucial regional and national ideas.

One of the results is the appearance here and there of “teflon” political regimes which settle their own problems of stability practically outside the context of political and economic-social results of their activity.

In Russia of 2005 all this is felt very keenly. Very much like in the Soviet time, the absolute majority of citizens senses the direct connection between their own survival, the survival of a minimum of well-being in keeping to a downright conformism in what concerns social affairs. The inertia of mass Soviet consciousness has not vanished, of course, after the collapse of communism in a country where all adults practically were born

and reared in Soviet conditions. But as we see, under President Vladimir Putin the Soviet inertia is deliberately actively cultivated from “above”, is used as an in fact sole psychological basis of government and control over the situation. (In this framework the younger generation is actively inculcated with “light Soviet”).

This occurs in step with a cardinal drop in the West’s prestige, with the loss of political hope and of the stability and progress of American and European systems. Yet in different segments of Russian society there is an understanding, often paradoxical and unrelated to anyone’s authority, that an open society and freedom are essential for country’s advancement, and that in this sense there is no alternative. Nothing can stop this understanding from growing neither today’s leading “neomenclatura” nor the devaluation of the “Western example.”

Today’s understanding in Russia of freedom and openness has no direct relation to elections and does not signal any practical changes that may occur “from below”. It is a deeper and evolutionary process, and, on hope, substantial.

If it gains strength in the foreseeable future, say the next ten years or so, there is still reason for hope. The question hinges on whether or not repressive or even absolutely destructive processes occur before this happens, before a new democratic intelligentsia appears that would be able to restore the continuity with the liberal vector of the Russian tradition of 1917 and the best tradition of the European and world culture.

*Written for the Heinrich Boell Foundation,
August 2005*

Civil Society and Politics

P

olitics is a word of many meanings, with objective and at the same time subjective implications, in a general and local sense. At least in Russia. Politics, for instance, means making political decisions. And those who do so, take part in politics.

But a person may not acknowledge this, and say: I am no politician, I am simply a public activist. And he will be right, because in the narrow sense politics is not only proclaiming particular aims but also general ideas which concern the foundation of society and presuppose systemic responsibility not only for proclaiming them, but also for getting results; this means constant professional work (not “in between,” not “among other things”) for a systematic adoption of decisions and in this framework also for a professional conclusion of alliances and coalitions both at the level of society as a whole, and also within groups functioning in the administration. More, it presupposes struggle for power, a definite plot (though the latter may be repulsive).

Finally there is policy, a line of administrative behavior, anybody's line, say the line of some state administration. When there was a political line, a policy, the will to create a civic society

in countries of Central Europe, the same in the leadership of these countries both in Western Europe and the United States, the objective was attained despite all reservations and difficulties, at a fairly rapid rate.

In Russia and in the West as concerned Russia, there was no such line, no such will, and no such policy.

Lastly, policy is also our choice of going (or not going) to the polls. Civil initiative, of course, is not the same as politics in any one of the narrow meanings of the word. It is more concrete, local in substance, and, therefore, possibly embraces many more people of different types and convictions. If the people in power acting in the interests of society as a whole, including their own corporative interests, do not by their political line persecute but, on the contrary, welcome, civic initiative, the latter becomes ideologically diverse as it comes into contact with the administration, broader as regards number of participants, socially more significant, and lays the ground for civic society. Civil initiative comes from the grassroots. In a civic society many people participate in civil undertakings on their own initiative, aware that solution of problems, whatever they are, depends on their own creative efforts. Civic society is directed to settling problems and is constructive in substance even if this sometimes occurs in the form of protest. The people in power, being responsible to society (and to themselves) heed the people's demands.

Civil society stands for head-on courses of plain people with initiative and the people in power. After all, the most important sphere and responsibility of professional politics is to

create an atmosphere for society's productive development. One element of this atmosphere is dialogue. (Imitation of dialogue, ritual functions, manipulation, use of this by any of the sides for its current ends has no relation whatever either to responsible politics or to civic society. Mass media are no more secondary, and certainly not primary, in relation to the subject we are discussing. Much less, too, has politico-bureaucratic plagiarism, i.e., deliberate borrowing of ideas with the object of having them put into effect by "their own people" and obfuscating their true author: nothing productive can ever come of this.)

Technologically correct initiatives of the people in power cannot replace civic initiative; a trustworthy corporation exercising power cannot replace civil initiative; the former and latter need each other's support.

Is civil public initiative outside the realm of politics? It probably is, provided its authors and participants take no pains to express their preferences as concerns all matters that do not concern them concretely. Whether this is possible depends on various circumstances.

In the practical definition of "policy" of "civic activity" many elements are naturally subjective and arbitrary, and depend on what motivates the definition (hardly ever through painstaking and thorough deliberation).

The leader of a state might say of himself "I am no politician," because he does not want to be continuously involved in the administrative process, does not care to interfere actively in anything unless absolutely necessary, and simply strives to see to it that everything is above board and in good order.

The courageous men who had dared to openly raise the question of human rights and violations of international law in the Soviet Union refused to consider themselves politicians. They maintained rightly that they were not taking part in any plot, that they did not seek to overturn the power corporation, and that they plainly and simply spoke the truth for all to hear. But the people in power, and not without reason, saw the matter in a different light. They believed that the outspokenness of these brave men and women undermined the very foundation of their seat of power, and either sent them to prison or banished them from the country. As it turned out the corporation in power had been right in sensing the danger these men and women were to them.

If a repressive power is aware that someone had “intruded” into its territory, this someone is branded a politician for attracting attention to it even if he had absolutely no desire to be so considered and fears (for moral reasons or out of a sense of self-preservation) to be qualified a political animal. In actual fact the corporation in power is the only one that does not cease to act politically in such a situation. And the term “political prisoner” does not mean that a person is deprived of his freedom for any political activity but because the people in power put him out of circulation on the strength of political motivations.

There is a distinction between civic activity and political work. It is an important distinction as I see it. The politician is obliged to figure out all possible consequences of his actions, and is responsible for them, while a civic activist bears no such responsibility for what he does.

But the concepts are wide, of course, and tend to blend one with the other. There are attempts to divide them conclusively, and this leads to misunderstanding and acts of civic irresponsibility if they are performed by active citizens and their groups. Carried out by power corporations who think they are the only competent quarter in matters of public importance this leads to historical failures or even disaster.

Considering the present situation in Russia we should probably dwell on a subject we might call “concordat.” I believe this historical term could be used in a situation where the people in power strive to avoid open conflict with the dissident part of society and, in general, with people of independent mind and initiative. Hence, they set distinct bounds concerning what one can and cannot do on one’s own initiative. Depending on the “softness” and “liberalism” of the administration, the extent of independence varies. It always leaves itself leeway to give or withdraw freedom. That type of relationship prevailed, for example, between the Soviet state and the main religious communities in the Soviet Union after 1945. Stalin decided it was no longer productive to suppress people for the mere fact of their religious convictions and laid the accent on controlling their loyalty to the state. The rules and framework of coexistence within certain bounds were worked out by the monopoly power and the opposition in a number of Latin American, Southeast Asian, and Middle East countries, and China. The same applies today to some countries of the CIS. The result of this for the development of these countries varies on the face of it, but in seemingly “successful” states of that kind the situation is obviously unstable and calls for serious change.

What comes to mind, among other things, is the epoch of Tsar Alexander III (1881-1894). He was deeply concerned about the state's manageability. Understandably so, considering the state's enormous territories with very poor communications, inhabited by diverse ethnic groups, with the absolute majority of the ordinary people illiterate, while the bulk of the educated people strongly opposed to the political regime, not short of ever more individuals joining the ranks of the ideological revolutionaries and even detachments of armed conspirators. For all these reasons the Tsar firmly suppressed all attempts to alter the prevailing system of government. In matters of charity, on the other hand, and of public health, education, local self-government, construction, and modernization of industry and transport, he afforded the nation considerable freedom. The educated class was granted space to be independent and to take up occupations which were, in effect, save for the Tsar. Many most important issues were swiftly settled: a system of widely open public health and primary education was built up, trial by jury was instituted, and a corps of highly trained lawyers was given a free hand. The empire was tied together by a web of railroads, which is functioning to this day. Many European-standard universities and technical schools were founded. There were no wars in the empire and around it. It would seem that the road to a historic triumph was open. Things turned out differently, however. Free thinking was barred in the political realm. The basics of the Tsar's policy were not open to discussion. Eventually, this barred access to important government offices, including the military. People devoted to the Tsar were put in office instead of specialists. Soon

after the death of Alexander III, Russia was gripped by a disastrous military and political crisis owing to the incompetence of that type of administrators. The war with Japan (1904 — 1905) resulted in an enormous loss of life, a slideback of military power, loss of territory, and an armed social conflict.

In general, the whole political estate, and above all the executive branch, and its corporation bears responsibility for administering the country, for making it manageable, for seeing to it that nothing suddenly goes out of control and upsets stability. This is an enormous and certainly not imaginary responsibility, and we should always bear in mind that the political leader, be it monarch, president, head of government, even leader or member of an organized opposition in parliament or member of a public movement with large-scale objectives relating to national and international interests, is not the same as an individual civic activist with some particular idea. The question hinges on where, when and what priorities prevail, at what time concern for a current issue of government is really a priority and at what time it is destructive, where the moral (and rational) boundary of priority concern of current control lies in face of other crucial risks, and where the bounds of the means applied and action taken run, beyond which they do not justify even the most sincere and sensible countrywide or local collective goal.

If the people in power treat “manageability” separately and put it higher than the interests of citizens, if they consider themselves responsible for manageability and nothing else, they have a short-lived chance for some success of their line, but are bound to collapse in the longer term along with the system they created.

Conclusion

To have a chance to create a civic society one premise is essential – a society. There must be a country of individuals who take care of themselves and are also capable of respecting the human nature of every other individual, trusting each other to exercise common sense. Surrounding circumstances and long-drawn-out practice must not lead them to believe that the only way to survive is to lie and disbelieve. There is room for joy and sadness in society, room for laughter and tears, while hypocrisy and dissimulation with an insincere and tragic look has nothing optimistic to look forward to.

Those are big problems not only where many generations have been accustomed to live and survive according to authoritarian or totalitarian rules. In many countries of traditional democracy of the past half-century civic society and responsible politics has given way to a corporative system of relations between people. Matters of civic and political responsibility are dealt with technocratically, in a managerial context, while strategic objectives based on morality fade into the background. Now back to Russia and the conditions of social existence in our country. We have no instrument to alter the course of history by our own will and energy. But as a friend of mine says, in such a situation free people should as best they can put up markers along their path with the thought of indicating the part of the road that remains free. That leaves a chance to avoid total failure and even win in the long run.

*From a paper at the Olof Palme Center seminar,
Velikii Novgorod, November 20-21, 2004*

In Search of Litter Leaves

In Study of the Difference between a Citizen and a Clerk, between Glamour and Time.



In Russia, where the majority of the population was brought up in the period between 1950's and the 1970's, it was extremely difficult to explain the difference between a civil and corporate behavior. The Soviet Union was established as a strictly corporate state, in which the citizenship was represented as a sign of loyalty to its command and ideology, as a starting ground for joining the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Those persons who did not accept such interpretation became renegades or dissidents (I would remind you that such people could be deprived of their citizenship for a harsh retreat from government politics)

Bureaucratic Eurasia.

The very fact that the corporate state disappeared in the period of 1981-1991 was due to the latent massive presence in the USSR of “non-Soviet” elements (in this sense the use of the correct word and term “element” in the Soviet or Russian language coincides by chance). On the level of mass consciousness this word referred to the people of the Baltic republics, Armenia, a part of Moldova and Ukraine. As for other parts of the ex-USSR,



including Russia, this word referred to the people who witnessed and kept in mind the reality in the country before October 1917 and did not recognize intrinsically the righteousness of Soviet power (at least in the Soviet period), and also accidentally survived during the years of repression and war. Or like the first post-October generation that is to be found a short way off. And as much again the emigration of the first wave. On the border-line of the 1980's and the 1990's people of this sort were numerous and active. They kept silence or they had not been heard during long Soviet decades. But when the possibility appeared, they loudly pronounced a lot of truth with the result that the unattractive Soviet state falsehood did not hold ground.

Today the people of this generation and orientation have survived in very small numbers. The question concerns not so much celebrities as grandmothers and grandfathers. Today they represent members of the Young Communist League of the

1950's. The present-day average functionary did not hear at Party Congress false but culturally significant speeches of the prominent personalities of "the multinational Soviet-culture" that had grown from the pre-revolutionary Russian culture. The present-day functionary in a figurative (and often direct) sense has been brought up on the basis of the party Soviet pop art, on tastelessness and cynicism that encourages primitive subordination and even makes it meaningless. It is impossible to explain to this functionary and the fast part of the citizens today the difference between citizens and office or bank officials, why the country's citizens have the right to unite and make protests, although those who get jobs strictly on voluntary lines in the Gasprom, inside this company, do not have the right to this for a salary. Citizenship for them is a code of rules and disciplinary duties. In all places, accidentally or deliberately, they confuse genres, leave out of account the fact that the State is not a factory, neither an educational establishment, not a military unit, that citizenship is not a service and not a separate factory and the country as a whole develops in different ways.

Today the formerly Soviet people who make up a vast majority of the population and take part in the administration of their country have been placed in new conditions. At the end of the 1980's and the beginning of 1990's most of them supported the change of the situation in the country, not for the reason that they saw social value in freedom and humaneness but simply for the reason that they were superficially attracted by the example of the West, where life is idle, where they can buy everything in all places and where they have succeeded in stylish life within the framework of their dreams.

Glamorous Wielders of Temporary Power.

In terms of openness Russia may not be compared with the Soviet Union. Russia is a part of the world and the Soviet tenor of her psychology she is now processing not so much as her own heritage, rather than what is taking place in the surrounding world. The dreams of the “stylish” opposition of the communist power have come true by 250 percent. In the sense of “Rublevka-life” (which bears a little relation to the development of the country) it is possible to achieve everything people like.

But without the recognition by the European democratic civilization in its best humane patterns of the main single state program of Russia this country will remain to be society of dying out factories, infantry divisions and night clubs.

Conscientious people of Russia and the world expected a different result from the end of the “cold war”, from the strategic victory which real freedom won over the non-freedom on the borderline of the 1980’s and the 1990’s.

The epoch of the end of the “cold war” ushered in the West not by the establishment of rational policy that sensibly combined idealism with pragmatism, but by the onset of spontaneous and irregular globalization and by the simultaneous loss of elementary traditional Christian values on the level of mass consciousness. This leads everywhere to the ethical and aesthetical triumph of the phenomenon of wielding temporary power (“take just now from your life everything you may take because tomorrow nobody will give it to you”). The total domination of tactical thought sets it, when it is not acceptable to ponder over the goal in life and let alone to speak about it. Peoples and coun-

tries become bourgeois-glamorous wielders of temporary power. Such phenomena are especially strong and perhaps particularly dangerous in Russia for political reasons and due to the political circumstances of today.

The Christian imperative of “neglecting the morrow” in the sense of creating the good today, here and there, adopted a very clear and justified in many respects domestic projection: “we shall live on by one day”, which reflects our sensation of full helplessness in the face of surrounding elements. But we should not live by one day; we should nevertheless leave a penny for a rainy day. This is already one half-step to the blasphemous transformation and distortion of full helplessness into limitless pleasure and self-interest: today and only today “in one day” it is possible to take what “is given for the time being”, otherwise my present property may be given to somebody else and I shall “be given” exactly just the other way around.

“The after-us-the deluge” mentality was cultivated in Russia from top to bottom. He who is not a time server, who thinks seriously about prospects, must not survive. Herein lies a great distinction between pre-Revolutionary Russia and this country in the Soviet era both in terms of political power and of its dissidents, the intelligentsia and the taciturn opposition. In Soviet times the dissidents popularized the wrong and criminal strategic plan for the development of the country, whereas the opposition philosophized in search of means to build up an antithetical system. The Soviet power did not conceive itself as a temporary wielder of power. Herein lay the embryo of its potential transformation that produced the needed effect at first



in the 1960's and later during the reign of Gorbachev. However, neither the followers of Tvardovsky, Solzhenitsyn nor Sakharov were able to decisively influence the ongoing processes. It turned out that under the plan for building communism they were ranged against the domestic half-baked claimants to power. The Brezhnev quasi-middle class of small businessmen, speculators, extortionists, bribe-takers, owners of small offices and private tax-dodging taxi drivers was so numerously great and significantly decisive, and how they lived from day to day in the 1970's, they live today in the old way on a quite new level and in new generation.

Strictly speaking, there has never been a true sensation that in The Russian Federation of the political self-identity that existed in other republics inside the USSR. The authorities implanted the awareness that Russia was identical to the Soviet

Union. Today unproductive attempts are being made to build up its past-Soviet status. As a result, what is achieved is not the fortification of the unity of Russia and not the sensation of the continuity with regard to the USSR with its exclusive polyethnicity and multicultural development, but parochialism, local self-consciousness, the lack of the vision of the country as a whole, the substitution of such vision for the sense of the civil responsibility for the primitive subordination relations formed in Russia in Soviet times: the village-the district-the region and higher, when everybody obeys a master in a district or regional centre and in Moscow, but given that the village of Pantileyevo may have practically no direct connection with the village of Patrikeyevo at a distance of five kilometers: subsidies are distributed in a centralized way and the populated localities have to take part in the socio-bureaucratic competition.

I can not but note one more specific feature of our consciousness that manifests itself in a different social status, its fraction character. In this sense no wonder, if a prominent personality of art or a man of science will support on the level of public relations a very cruel leader or absolutely irresponsible political force: he will say frankly that he supports not cruelty and irresponsibility but practical care for art and science. For the same reason it can be possible that in the reply to the question “how much will be twice two?” the most liberal man of culture or the economic expert will categorically disown the topic of human rights, whereas any honest advocate of any outlined range of rights will suddenly repeat as invocation that he is not a politician, not an economist, that he does not know

for whom he should vote and is not unable to see differences between the translation of a Milan Opera and a film about the life of beasts and prey.

In the period of the total domination of the king for a day as a way of life the entire life turns into a continual survival on any material and financial level – neck or nothing. A person from any social stratum thinks above all about threats and dangers and the outlays of any deed of his and especially later on about any positive prospects in his life, about his possible good bargains and advances forward. “As if the worse may come” is the leitmotif of all his life. And those who deny such approach look as blockheads or hypocrites (or who are represented on purpose by propagandists). Conformity of behavior reveals everywhere the indubitable resemblance with the Soviet epoch, but often in quite absurd and tragic-farce forms.



In such a situation the owner of a major processing company differs psychologically very little from a shuttle trader in a Caucasian bazaar and a vociferous singer in an underground pass from a famous pop-star. In all cases the situation is fortuitous and may be irreversible or lost tragically at any time, outside the logic or any stable rules. Therefore, it is not worth emerging that no business bears social responsibility, that people of creative artistic work are fully devoid of civil responsibility. Therefore, it is quite understandable why a rich man, “a king for a day”, has no alternative to Courchevel, a castle on Rublyevka Highway etc., that a well-known vocal and dance ensemble has no alternative to the performance of an exceedingly trite composition at 6 hours p.m. on the first Moscow TV channel. According to the formed standard of social being it will be dangerous and not only risky, to give up extra money to a children’s home, a church, to a really functioning public association or to invest money in innovatory business instead of spending it in Courchevel. Likewise it will be risky to display stubbornness in the singing of something musically decent. Likewise it will be risky for a functionary or a politician to think about public weal and about the benefit for his country and not about his role in a cabinet of ministers. Likewise it will be risky for voter who is fully dissatisfied with the real conditions of his life to vote for the political party that is not encouraged “from above”. Everything like that proves to be outside the standard of behavior, and he who affords himself to do this will be subject to full marginalization. Rara avis will be wounded by a shot, if not today, then tomorrow. Unless it is wounded by a shot, the

crow will be deprived of all possibilities and its existence will be disguised by 100 percent. It will be able to “come to life”, if only circumstances change suddenly by 100 percent.

Of course, in the context of the mass consciousness of the generation born after the Second World War, formed under the Soviet government, the generation badly educated, intimidated and accustomed to perform commands and at the same time to be able to snatch what turns up anywhere, it was difficult to expect cardinally different tendencies. But the higher Russian authorities bear a large measure of responsibility for what took place after 1991.

The period of the 1990's was the time of the warped service falsehoods, when it was possible to speak the truth. It was the time of the very quick establishment of the nomenclature democracy and capitalism, the historically dangerous hybrid of the Soviet system of government with the Western style of everyday life. It was the time of the populist exploration of imperial and nationalist sentiments and of the recreation of the shaken Soviet historical myths about heroes and military leaders. That was the time of the active support of corrupt and dictatorial regimes in the former Soviet republics. There was a bloodshed and a habit of bloody battles: at first the Assettian-Inguish conflict in 1992, thereupon the Moscow collision in 1993 and later the long-term and ceaseless bloodshed on the unprecedented scale (after the Second World War) in Chechnya, quite apart from developments in Tajikistan and Southern Caucasus with the direct or indirect participation of Russia. That was a practical attempt to build up on the ruins of the USSR a literal



empire where the military force and Russian nearly-organized market relations dominate.

The president Vladimir Putin did not cure the illness of the 1990's and drove it to inside. The vertical of power which he set up solved the problem of the sustainability of departmental and corporate offices, but not the problem of the integrity and development of the country. The vertical of power practically means the responsibility of the official for order in his study, for correct accountability indicators and for his loyalty to a higher functionary. In so doing he hardly bears the responsibility for the real work in his department but actually he cannot exert influence on his work.

Having set up the atmosphere of "fast buck" people and at the same time latently supporting the cult of tyrants, Russia has formed a political agenda, the special one as compared with her

nearest neighbors. And if, for instance, the Ukrainians compare the present day with the President Kuchma's time, Russians do the same not without some reason — with Stalin and Brezhnev.

Unnatural Fruits of the Soviet Civilization

Both for internal and external reasons Russia keenly needs a gradual correction of its deadlock course. It is never late to begin to do this, so far the native country exists. It will be a difficult and slow process. For the internal reasons of the system the leader who dares to start transformations will have the less right to make a mistake that Gorbachev committed in his time. There is no durable state machinery that could be used for the benefit of reforms. People have lost an active communication and a common language. Therefore, there is no numerous social estate that is ready to act actively for the benefit of reforms in “the European spirit”.

In fact it is necessary to create anew communication, a language for cultural and political intercourse. And this is the main task; it is ahead of all rule-making and practical administration tasks. A country is not an economy, neither its laws nor its formal borders. A country embraces people and covers the atmosphere of their coexistence. The leader who will realize this and who will not budge from his position will prove to be a historical victor, despite possible local setbacks and defeats.

The totalitarian Soviet system, a vagabond heir of the authoritarian, autocratic rule, tried to grow up a social tree to bear fruit without leaves, that is without people and human souls. Thereupon the same attempt was continued in quite

new economic conditions: there was no different experience or there was not enough such experience. The tree has already adopted to the environment and litter leaves are trampled under foot more and more deeply into soil. In present-day Russia, as distinct from other countries, a street crowd cannot be a generator of any movement in support of public culture and civilization. But there is still a chance for the growth of leaves on this tree, so that it could raise a normal, not perverted, unnatural fruit.

“Novaya Gazeta”, December 2007

Overcome Lawlessness

A

detailed description of the post-Soviet phenomenon at the end of the first decade of the present century would take much effort and room. That is why what I am going to report now will be approximate and one-sided.

The Georgian–Russian conflict along with the intention of Georgia to join the NATO has made many people say that the post-Soviet space is no more. But a closer look allows one to make an opposite conclusion. Political space is a life-style and pattern of thought in no less degree than geopolitics, frontiers and pipeline routes. It is not torn even by military confrontation.

Usually when one speaks about community in a broad sense of the word, positive aspects are meant, such as common economic development, equality in access to medicare and education and so on. However, negative peculiarities and traditions, too, form specific and substantial “community” that would be wrong to neglect and that should be better transformed into some possible positive.

Everywhere in the post-Soviet CIS and Baltic states one can observe in varying degrees proneness to populism, lack of political culture, and narrow-mindedness.

In almost all countries of the former USSR one can clearly see a new turn of neglect of the principles of open society, civil liberty as an absolutely essential tool for development. Democratic procedures are often considered as a means of solution of corporative instead of social problems.

Corruption is one of the unwritten standards of society. Corruption and administrative dependence of judiciary system block its role as a means of justice and resolving conflicts. For the same reason in most post-Soviet states low-enforcement bodies are ineffective and do not enjoy any authority in society. The Army has been traditionally misused. Adventurism and provocation often become an essential factor of policy and do not meet effective resistance.

The West offers no resistance to these dangerous phenomena. On the contrary, similar approaches have become part and parcel of public life in the USA and the European Union. Civil control over power, a dialogue of power and society is reduced to the most primitive and ineffective forms.

Modern European political traditions were elaborated with great difficulty after the Second World War. Now one can see that forms of these traditions have various kinds of technologic and bureaucratic development. However, the content remains stagnant and the whole tradition is being emasculated and will fail not to endure the test of new realia.

Being a Russian citizen, I am particularly worried by the policy waged by my country. Self-isolation, militarism and chauvinism thaw in a softened form and even if it is provoked by behavior and logic of others are absolutely unacceptable for

us. If Russia says to the West: “You have demonstrated political idiocy in one place, we will retaliate with an adequate cretinism somewhere else,” it means a dangerous and ruinous way for the future of my country. Both a victory and defeat of such a course would have destructive consequences.

I think it is high time we should discuss combining efforts of all those who realize the dangers of such a situation in a movement for peace and the rule of law in the post-Soviet region. May be we should set up an independent centre of legal and political analysis for the region that would be conducive to preventing violence and irreversible conflict situations.

The former USSR is a space of extremes. There one takes as a model everything bad happening in the rest of the world and realizes it with a particular derision, whereas one could have acted in a different way and shown a good example. The absence of any tradition of feedback between society and power and civil responsibility lead to insolubility of moral and all other social problems. The word “confidence” in this mental space exists only as an object of derision. Here thrives special cynicism and post-Stalinist attitude towards people. Here the reality is substituted for what is shown on the “box”.

Here television is understood not so much as a means of reflection of social reality rather than a method of its “forming”. Here aggressiveness and primitivisation are habitually perceived as a way of achieving success be it business, home or foreign policy.

Extreme contradictoriness of utterances and behaviour both at a mass level and particularly among public leaders has become

a standard. It hardly surprises anybody, seldom makes one think that something goes wrong here. Such standard of behaviour makes it easier to inculcate the maxim that “life should be taken as it is “ and that it is no use to oppose traditions of lawlessness.

Political speechifying of post-Soviet leaders is hard to understand due to its inconsistency even to the rather cynical representatives of the Western establishment. They cannot grasp that politicians and officials fulfill their functions in the way life-tired glamour crooners lip-sing to a recording.

Despite the differences in the social structure of post-Soviet states and irrespective of the fact which geopolitical choice has been made by their elites, the above-mentioned peculiarities in varying degrees remain common for all these states, be it the Baltic states or Ukraine, or the trans-Caucasian region or Russia, or even Central Asia – there lies paradoxical unity of the post-Soviet region, the “proof” of the fact that the post-Soviet space exists and will be existing at least as community of style. And here, in my view, emerges motivation why a considerable set of problems of the former USSR should be solved jointly and why “the external world” should not negate the existence of the post-Soviet space but should instead try to understand better this phenomenon.

It is important to understand the role and responsibility of Russia. Despite the fact that various and conflicting geopolitical vectors have been formed, the stylistic role of Russia and the Kremlin is still part and parcel of psychology and is still essential.

It is the “armies” of the Kremlin officialdom that set the tone and style of lying, arbitrary and inconsistent interpretation of both past and current development in order to support internal stability

and global “raising from knees” Such policy and political philosophy could be called a doctrine of wholesale lawlessness”. It is not just lie or political rowdyism and expansion, it is a cult of inconsistency and breaking any rules. The state interests are equated with those of officials. They “butt” with a strong opponent by giving a kick to someone third who is, whether he is right or not, obviously weaker. The world should be made to accept us only as we are and in this case we will defend ourselves and everything we possess. Such the meaning of this dangerous and peculiar post-Soviet ideology rooted in the worst aspects of Soviet history and mentality. If it is not stopped, it can bring new enormous misfortunes above all to Russia and very likely to the surrounding world. Hence, overcoming the policy and philosophy of the post-Soviet boundless lawlessness is a very important universal problem that concerns all.

The attitude to possible conflicts in the post-Soviet space sometimes is connected, as it were, with the inculcated notion of duty: it must be done, such is our role. In our childhood we played a children military game called Zarnitsa (“Summer Lightning”) We went to the woods and shot from toy pistols at our peers from a neighbouring class. Why shouldn’t grown-ups with real arms play this game if their “teachers” told them so? The game would be started and finished by order. Obvious and deep motives are irrelevant. Nothing personal. Just order.

There is a number of conflicts in the world where contradictions of the sides are so considerable (in a historical, philosophical and existentialist aspect) that their solution in the framework of any long-term political philosophy, long-term strategy of mutual peace and individual freedom is impossible

in principle. It is impossible to impose a strategy of peace and freedom under such contradictions. Eighty-five per cent of Jews in Israel and same number of Arabs in the Gaza strip view their life in a mutually excluding way. Something similar can be observed in the relations between India and Pakistan. No “European idea” of improving common life can remove such deep contradictions there. That is why one will have to be content with narrow ad hoc and tactical solutions mostly far from being rational from the point of view of a detached liberal observer. Even in Europe in determining priorities of public life hatred gains the upper hand not just over humaneness but over elementary reason (Spain, North Ireland, the Balkans) despite the fact that freedom of the individual and integration of the single economic space are recognised by all as the only guarantee of development and an alternative to mass violence. It is impossible to make one person or a whole people love your neighbour and be free people.

But it is quite different matter when conflicts are only ripening, bear not a fundamental but a multi-aspect and “intermediate” character, where the atmosphere has not yet become completely closed. In such situations independent thought, monitoring, rational intervention from the outside can introduce their own necessary positive impulse. Especially if conflicts are exacerbated not so much due to their internal nature as they are provoked by cohorts of ambitious “superiors”.

Precisely such situation is observed on the territory of the former USSR: catastrophic ending is felt, but not everything has been lost, it is still possible to work out such a peaceful and “European” plan for all and that would not cause a sweeping

rebuff from no public-spirited person or state. It is still possible to build “consensus framework” for the entire post-Soviet space based on the values of respect for the individual law and then to try to move gradually in this direction. It is an extremely difficult but not hopeless task.

The alternative is: either to “rise from knees” time and again and be floored or choose a way of peaceful and balanced development that will not lead to the kingdom of prosperity but will give us a chance to evade new historical catastrophes.

In 1990 the Soviet Union and the NATO member-countries signed in the OCSE framework the Paris Charter for New Europe which set a strategic task of building “bigger Europe” from Vancouver to Vladivostok in order to ensure really trustworthy and partnership relations of all sovereign subjects of this space connected through common cultural roots in the spheres of the rights of the individual, security and economy. It was the time of preparation of the first war in the Gulf and at that period the importance of partnership and unity of political approaches was sharply felt by leaders of all major countries. Unfortunately, such approaches were forgotten very quickly. It can be returned if we only return understanding of the strategic meaning of the bigger European unification and see the task of this process as the inseparability of the sphere of security and sound political and economical space. Such partnership is hard to reach, and we should form it persistently striving for establishing common base humanitarian values instead of aiming at only tactical interests of business and officialdom.

“Europe’s World” web site, 2010

A Glance at the World after the Cold War and Psychology of Post-Soviet Russia

R

Recently my friends from NATO countries asked me to express my view on the situation with tactical nuclear weapons in Europe. Being no narrow specialist in military matter I shared my political my political position with my friends.

It is absolutely evident that Europe should become free of confrontations and suspicions and of such symbol of confrontation and suspicions like tactical nuclear weapons. Nuclear confrontation between Russia and NATO is, in a historical context, harmful and absurd, especially when it concerns the territory of Europe. But it is difficult to solve this problem in practical terms. Russia represents in all senses, including a military-political one, a historically-formed peculiar community, which is in a considerable degree isolated from the surrounding world and which in a considerable degree represents, say, a subculture phenomenon. Russia, one can say, constantly poses a task of preserving its identity, considering this task as a priority and feeling it as a strong but very indefinite psychological dominant. Problems of the country's own development come second. That is why Russia, its establishment, are afraid of even approaching any consideration of Russia's stra-

tegic prospects, its choice of allies, its openness, etc. Consideration of these problems is often viewed dangerous for the country's present stability. Contemporary Russia is hardly looking for trust and does not trust anyone as it exists with elements of psychology of a besieged fortress and within the framework of a secretive, sometimes rather peculiar ideological paradigm. This, in varying degrees, is typical of all post-Soviet states; but Russia is much bigger and more influential than the rest. The above said is true of the military sphere as well, from general problems to minor ones. I should like to add, that within the framework of Russian mentality many things, including problems of armament and disarmament bear not only a direct but also a parallel symbolic sense. This circumstance should always be taken into account.

In the long run, solution of any problem associated with Russia lies in suggesting to work out an idea concerning its future which would be organic for Russia and simultaneously lead the country along openness and trust in relation to the rest of the European world. Transformations in Russia should be very serious and simultaneously peaceful in order not to allow a rebellion in this vast and heterogeneous country. So, all who are not indifferent to the fates of people living in Russia, to the fate of the world and European civilisation, should think about the character of such transformation.

It happened that Russia, especially its ruling circles, is prone to look for the roots of its problems anywhere but not in itself. To correct such national arrogance is an extremely hard, if not hopeless task. Still, one should look for approaches. There is no other way out.

As for current negotiations, they should be conducted in a pragmatic way. Russian official persons speak the language of practical benefit of this or that decision. If such benefit has been proven, they agree to the proposed decision. They do not trust words and promises but honestly respect agreements signed. (They burned their fingers during the period of romantic euphoria in the beginning of the 1990's.)

Of special importance would be to work on building a joint counter-missile defence and reaching an agreement on ceasing illegal reconnaissance activities.

My colleagues and I would like to see a bit different character and tone, as compared with what we see today, concerning the relation of Russia with the rest of Europe; but we are powerless at present. We are trying by peaceful and non-sandalous methods to uphold in politics the necessity to form value approaches common with the West, and we intend to be persistent in this. True, we do not know, whether our efforts will bear fruit; and if they do, when.

We want Russia to stop becoming marginalised, to be needed for itself and to be needed, in a good idealistic sense, by the West, its intellectual and political elites. That, in their turn, should overcome the growing primitiveness and marginalisation of social and political consciousness.

Triumphing pragmatism is a reality of our time but this reality is very dangerous. Problems of armaments are always in the long run problems of trust and, at the same time, problems of symbols. One should strive for affirming good and honest symbols.

So far, the impossibility – 20 years after the disintegration of the USSR – to solve such an archaic problem as tactical nuclear weapon in Europe, once again, demonstrates the helplessness of some persons, the provinciality of others and the unwillingness of third persons.

If a situation is observed in the field of elementary problems, then what can one say about serious challenges which concern all of us? It is necessary to embark on such a political, civil and historic making root on which Russia and the West, with all their inevitable differences in minor aspects, will be together, without reservations, on essential problems. And no detailed agreements and protocols on minor points will be required.

Here I finished my expose. But a discussion that followed made me write some more lines on this topic.

Many problems constantly rise in relations between Russia and the West. It is quite natural in historical terms, though it makes one feel sorry. What puts one on his guard is the monotony of frequently similar problems in their substance and style. This takes place as the background of changing epochs and generations of politicians. Twenty years ago, in Gorbachev time, one would think that the Cold War is irrevocably had gone into the past. The final fall of communism seemed only to confirm this fact. At the beginning of the 1990's Russia, USA, NATO were almost 100% allies. But... Years past and history is already perceived in a different light. In September 2010 at the International Forum in Yaroslavl', Silvio Berlusconi said that detant in relations between Russia and the USA began after 2001 and that prior to that everything

had been very tense. In 2009 the «reset» was resorted to. Now some similar actions are on the agenda. The Cold War refuses to die. As if it is surrounded by invisible resuscitation ambulances to help it to survive. People living in Russia feel much worse as a result of it.

Photos of smiling leaders do not mean anything as real problems fail to be solved. The whole atmosphere is permeated with the spirit of distrustfulness and formal attitude.

In terms of military and political thinking Europe is being considered as a potential theater of military operation between Russia and the NATO if contradictions concerning some question go too far. We become witnesses to «armament», «re-armament», “upgrading of armaments” on the border between Russia and the NATO if not in reality, but in plans and rhetoric.

Of course, there are many explanations to this situation, which do not help much.

For me one of the important explanations why the processes which 20 years ago with such political brilliance have lost all their former energy is the fact that at that time the Cold War was a phenomenon big in scale but limited in terms and understanding. It fitted simple, local in its character, schemes of thinking and approaches. Now challenges which political elite of the democratic world is facing have become literally global, numerous and various, while human thinking due to its nature remains limited and cannot cope with multifarious problems which must be solved now all over the globe. Problems have become really global but people remain limited and provincial. No wonder, positive results are poor.

At the same time it is quite evident that real achievements of modern “detent” are needed both from the practical point of view and from the point of view existence and development pan-European political space and for strengthening global potential of pan-European policy and European political culture.

“Europe’s World” web site, 2010

Politicians Should Be Responsible and Serious in Their Assessments

R

ank-and-file citizens, public-spirited activists have a right not to analyze thoroughly various events, but simply to react emotionally, sometimes in public politicians do not have this right, they are always, even when their influence is formally insignificant, responsible for the consequences of their words and actions.

That is why the bitingness with which some liberals, whose sincerity and honesty are beyond any doubt, undertake to comment one-sidedly intricate collisions from which they are far away, gives rise to concern.

Extremes are inspired by marginal or abstractly and irresponsibly thinking persons who see only themselves but later the consequences will have to be disentangled by all without exception.

If a tradition of openness, supremacy of law and democratic procedure has settled in society, there is a considerable immunity to extremes, though not absolute one. A social psychological “cushion” that takes upon itself the majority of signals addressed to society. They include endless discussions, bureaucratic explanations, longish court trials. In a word, all that makes one feel sick when looking at a genuine democracy.

In such conditions demonstrations, exhibitions, flashmobs and even much more serious and vexed problems become only part of life according to the principle “see if you want, do not see if you do not want; accept if you wish, do not accept if you do not wish.” If someone allowed an aesthetic blasphemy, and someone else organized a xenophobic demonstration, the general mood will not change much, and people who are in conflict over some serious question today may become allies in some other question tomorrow. It can be Philistinism, narrow-mindedness but this is that civil peace in an open democratic society we lack so much and which we should work hard to build it.

In the conditions of an authoritarian regime from public vulgarity a social problem arises quickly and easily. A social problem not in sense that it presents interest to a quantitatively considerable part of people (the majority of people for some time to come are busy with other things and simply obedient citizens), but in the sense that a very small layer of people still preserving their civil, social and political activity begins to be carried away unwittingly with scandalousness and vulgarity taking them for independence and courage. The vulgarity of the power does not arouse any sympathy and support among them whereas here – opposition, courage. The level of this opposition is very low. Instead of hard and courageous looking for methods of transforming their country and defending the “insulted and humiliated” they begin to be carried away with scandals as an aim in itself and self-admiration. The behavior of this opposition at a human level is almost not distinguished from that of the authoritarian power, the difference being only in the vector of

declarations and the level of real influence. Yes, the power takes vengeance and the oppositional scandalists bear consequences. But if one day everything suddenly turns over they (if not personally, then their environment, their way of thinking and those who will quickly join them) will organize adequate consequences for someone else. The authoritarian regimes due to their spiritual and intellectual helplessness bear a germ of a radical turn of the whole situation to which the oppositional marginals push up whether they want it or not.

The marginals' forms of protest have their own reasons: police everywhere "pack" people, these "have got us". But what do you do yourself and what result do you want to get?

The twentieth century is covered with such scars. We do not want to be involved again in big shake-ups coming from marginal love of fame, lack of culture and petty aggressiveness.

From time immemorial and especially as a result of the insurmountable stamp of Bolshevism and Stalinism, Russia has been facing the question of forming a society when everyone remains by himself, but if not all, then the majority are capable of solidarity and peaceful relations with one another. It is necessary to overcome the spirit of subcultures which exist in parallel worlds, as it were, and when coming in contact with one another, what they are capable of doing at most in the way of "peaceful mood" is a mutual complete indifference or rather, if given free reign, they will irrationally exert constant petty aggressiveness. In our time the same problem is returning to the West, is spreading all over the world. We should universally renounce the all-absorbing individualism while keeping individ-

uality intact. Western political correctness, which has become in many respects just form without content cannot so live this problem. In Russia especially, one should not approach this or that problem demagogically, be it on the part of power or on the part of opposition, respect is required for content of problems and responsibility.

“Yabloko” web site and “Novaya Gazeta”, 2008

NGOs in “post-modern” Political Reality

T

hough the first NGO-like groups were established several centuries ago, in reality the structures called “NGOs” obtained pan-European and trans-Atlantic importance after the Second World War. A lot of independent groups with a humanitarian and democratic orientation grew up everywhere in the West in the 1950’s. The Western governments favoured this process, because it was clear that the grassroots of the civil society were a means of protecting all sorts of dictatorship. Small groups with very limited financial resources turned out to be able to seek fresh approaches to deal with complications and conflicts on a par with governments and rich corporations. Setting up independent pan-European networks had become a serious historical innovation, which was conducive to build the European integrity and oppose totalitarianism and authoritarianism.

In the 1960’s and the 1970’s new NGOs were established with the aim of protecting human rights at a national and international level. People set up these organisations on a generally loose humanitarian basis, a fact that had its tactical pluses and

strategic minuses. Signing in 1975 the Final Act of the CSCE in Helsinki gave an impetus to these motley organisations to act with a better motivation.

At that period the building of the European Community had two aspects: moral values one could term “Social-Christian” and a detailed elaboration of economic foundations. Combined with the Euro-Atlantic security policy it helped to build speedily a more or less effective pan-European society, able to overcome militarist claims, xenophobia, to establish the rule of law principle, and to abolish the death penalty. This became one more challenge for the rival Communist system and was conducive, historically, to its failure.

European NGOs played an important role in this process. They acted as a moral authority and, simultaneously, as a kind of “public think tanks” whose information and expertise could be relied on by everybody, including major decision-makers of that time.

When in the course of the past 15 years the global paradigm has entirely changed, decision-making as well as expertise, against the background of new challenges of the past decades, have revealed their organic weaknesses.

The European Union is remarkably successful in a technological aspect, though it has lost its moral authority. In the globalised world of ‘top managers’ and ‘key players’ EU official representatives usually demonstrate just an insignificant difference in style and declarations as compared with leaders of non-democratic, poor, socially contrasted countries and regions and often seem to act rather like managers of big corporations than politicians protecting democracy.

Civil control, the main force of European democracy during the past 50 years, is fading drastically, especially as far as pan-European institutions are concerned.

Modern authoritarian governments are hostile to independent civil and political activities and often use the “puppet” mechanism to diminish their influence. However even democratic governments in the conditions of the post-Cold War global change in mode and style of political management often demonstrate their tendency to self-containment and neglect of independent experts and expertise bodies as useless in the solution of practical issues. Things in the world seem to them to be either too obvious or too complicated to seek diversity of an independent analysis and expertise.

Independent expertise carried out by think tanks, NGOs and the media becomes less and less welcome and is not, in no small degree, taken into consideration in decision-making process. Thus, independent institutions are leading more and more their own life, being separated from decision-making and, what is more important and significant, from reality itself. They are losing their influence, becoming passive and bureaucratised bodies, in accordance with the growth of their peripheral role.

One can say that whereas in the 1980’s information society took over the totalitarianism based on propaganda, in the 2000s we exist in some new kind of “post-information societies” where information is becoming psychologically excessive both for the majority of ordinary people and bureaucracies and therefore is systematically neglected.

In recent time the most often quoted in the media are those NGOs that perform monitoring of violence or freedom abuses and defend individuals or groups that have become victims of violence or abuses. Some other NGOs that are trying to tackle problems on a more advanced level and seek solutions based on moral principles and simultaneously realistic ones often lower the level of their activities and lose their importance.

One could add that globalisation to some extent has replaced the “existential” dominant of personal responsibility widely spread among intellectuals after the Second World War with more “positivist” and passive approaches in societies as well as in governments. Therefore, more and more crisis and conflict situations become inaccessible for independent evaluation and any sort of independent mediation. This is a very alarming signal for modern humanity.

I can see no proper “know how” to improve this situation. But one thing is obvious to me. Independent institutions can and should remain a serious source of knowledge and expertise in the areas in which they are active. NGOs, as well as the serious media, should be able to propose honest, humane, and at the same time realistic patterns for a peace settlement of certain conflicts. They should make realistic proposals for building infrastructure and for defining ways of peaceful and realistic spread of democracy and the rule of law principle in the European sense of the word.

An important mission of responsible NGOs is to pay a particular attention to building dialogue between authoritarian governments and oppositions making the oppositions’ voice heard and listened to if even a small possibility for it does exist.

It is really difficult for independent experts and NGOs to express any influential point of view onto, say, relations between India and Pakistan, Russian gas, etc. They are not serious players there.

Nevertheless, in some other also very dangerous situations an independent and timely intervention could be expedient.

For instance, if the situation in Georgia and the Russian-Georgian relations had drawn close attention at least since 2007, the 2008 armed conflict possibly could have been avoided.

There is a major task now of filling the EU “East-European Partnership” programme with a real content. In my view, this programme is much more politically precise and promising than NATO voluntaristic attempts at a rapid expansion.

It is very important to approach the problem of reconciliation of the Albanians and the Serbs and lifting the hostility barrier between the Serbian people and NATO structures. The enmity on these “demarcation lines” will remain an explosive factor even in the context of outwardly safe versions of political development. The way Russia and Central Asian states of the former USSR are developing will remain to be a European topic not only in philosophical but in a political aspect as well. Different vectors of development of the EU and Russia present a huge problem overlooked in its time and harbouring by dangers.

At the same time some NGOs may act as a “Sherpa” for European governments and the European Commission in relations with those countries of Latin America, Africa and South-East Asia where prospects can be seen of modernisation, social institutions and economies.

Discussion on the future of China would also be timely.

Independent bodies still have human resources to avoid superficial approaches, to establish necessary coordination and to reach important practical results. As 30 years ago, active coordination and exchange of opinions and experiences is necessary between NGOs and media, particularly those whose declared views are close to each other.

Measure of NGOs effectiveness (including their projects) has been and will be different. But to support them is, on the whole, a very reasonable investment, for it is incomparable money against sums spent on state structures and analytical services of business corporations. What is meant here is uncommitted independent activity whose participants depend only on their convictions.

Let's add that independent honest persons who sometimes are, by their origin, from problem countries and regions get an opportunity to effectively realise themselves often bringing considerable positive results. This benefit should be also encouraged.

"Europe's World" web site, 2010

Time at a Standstill

*Archangelsk Region.
The Former GULAG Settlement Called Yertsevo.
The Present.*

R

ussia is a country with varied velocity, where there is no uniform space and no integrated time. Upon the arrival in some populated locality not only remote from a big centre, you find yourself not only in today's environment, but also at the time in the decade that signifies the most active period of the existence of this little town, settlement or village in the last, say, half-century.





You may find yourself in Moscow in the 1990's, if due to fortunate coincidence in a populated centre you have started up a profitable business. Or you may go for a tourist trip to somewhere in the 1950's, where the elements of the way of life of long ago are reproduced *per se* and are present in reality in a natural, not alliterate way by creating the atmosphere that cannot be made in any museum.

Everybody who turns up in such a place and who has lived according to its rules and rhythm at least for several hours becomes not only a spectator, but a living exhibit. Generally speaking, all our country lives like this, and all of us live in such a way, including those who come across... But some places bring to life quite peculiar sensations...

Yertsevo is a rural settlement in the south of the Archangel Region, located near the Vologda Region. It sprang up on the main line of the Northern Railway at the very end of the 1930's



to become a NKVD departmental settlement. Modern buildings were erected after the war and turned into an administrative centre named Kargopollog, the capital of the forest camp that united dozens of zones scattered over a large territory with impenetrable forests.

Today the vast space of the camp is neglected. Only two colonies have left, one with a strong regime in the settlement and the other 20 kilometers away from the settlement that functions as a colony-settlement. What is remained to date is the camp railway between the settlement and the far away colony together with the still functioning camp administration. In Soviet times there was a ramified system of camp railways and other communications built up by jail-mates to deliver workers and cut greenwood to their remote working places and back. Now a “damka” runs on this line. Perhaps it is a freight car or the electromechanical trolley that carries wood and convicts from the



colony and to the colony through the fields and the local forest twice a day. If something happens on route, the driver and the guard lift and move the rail and start the engine of the trolley. There is another railway by a timber carrier through a swamp. On the station the workers often await the trolley. They are accompanied with the escort squad with a sheepdog. Workers receive tickets on the form of 1965. The settlement that remains numbers over 4,000 inhabitants.

For nearly seventy years the settlement was subordinate to the NKVD and the MVD and quite recently has become a municipality. Descendants of those who built buildings, who served imprisonment terms and who guarded convicts. There are many persons who retired on a pension directly from the correctional system and who as distinct from young people could not leave way from this place. The share of inhabitants of various ages with a higher legal education is enormous. Now they cannot defend

themselves and prove their right of ownership of the former municipal residential accommodation. But they read a lot. The settlement's library is all the time full of people and represents a peculiar independent cultural centre.

The Yertsevo library includes a special section of transmigration books that hardly attract much attention by visitors. The local prisoners and exiles linked their fates with these books. When the first camp for detainees was set up on the Solovki islands, it was decided that both prisoners and guards ought to read books. Therefore, the authorities sent numerous pre-revolutionary editions from the best Leningrad libraries. These books were regarded as ballast, needless in the new Soviet epoch. Thereupon the prisoners lived and worked, ran their economy, attended themselves and guards with the aid of a special infrastructure. They needed reference-books for their activities and these books came in there from the "old world" by following on their heels. When camps grew stout and special measures were no longer needed, books followed the streams of people, the convicts, civilians and guards. Such books also appeared in Yertsevo, settled in its library and became accessible to all inhabitants. On the title sheets one can see stamps like those in passports: "The Duma of tsarist Russia", "Imperial University", "Solovki", camp centers and "The Yertsevo settlement library".

The political life in the settlement was peculiar due to the unusual composition of its population: it was very active and devoid of standard cynicism. Elections of the head of the settlement administration were held honestly and justly. The elected "mayor" is in the public eye, but the house of the admin-

istration is not more comfortable than any common old house in the settlement...

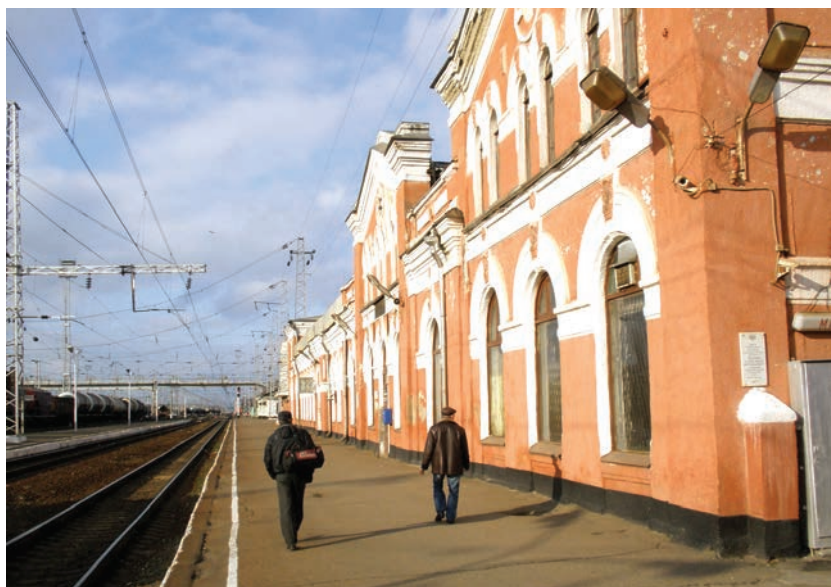
When Yertsevo was built up, it had no church of its own. The wooden church was built only in 1994 but soon it was burnt down. No doubt that it will be restored. But for how long it will function nobody knows, because no one is aware what will be the fate of the big settlement in several years with its special “town-forming enterprises”.

Nameless burial mounds and brotherly burial places of the people who vanished there for ever will be scattered over the boundless territory.

“Novaya Gazeta”, June 2007

Tikhoretskaya

I first heard the “Tikhoretskaya Gate” song in a hoarse recording by Vladimir Vysotsky. It was next to impossible to make out a single word but my imagination was captivated by an inexplicable power of emotion and truthfulness contained in this strange city romance in combination with Vysotsky’s serious and “charged” intonation, touching music and absolutely indistinct words.



Much later I heard this song composed by Mikael Tariv-erdiyev (words by Mikhail Lvovsky) in the film “The Irony of Fate”. This time I began to discern the words and look for any facts connected with the song. I discovered that there was no “gate” in the song but there was a train travelling to Tkhoret-skaya from Krasnodar (or from some other place) and a story about a senior school pupil from Lvovsky’s play “A Childhood Friend”, written somewhere in 1963. The play had not reached the stage and remained forgotten. The song is built in a non-linear manner, it has a plot traced with difficulty being covered, as it were, by a row of pictures seen by everyone in his own way and leaving no hearer indifferent. Hence, the illogical title of the song given by the authors or, perhaps later, by its performers and hearers but in view of the specifics of the context nobody paid any attention to it.

Tikhoretskaya station is a railway junction in the Krasnodar Territory. It was opened in 1873 near a Cossack village bearing the same name on the Tikhonkaya River. People from different places came to work at the station (for instance, Mihail Zoshchenko used to work as a conductor here). A new populated area appeared by the station Tikhoretsky Farm. In the early years of Soviet power this settlement was transformed into the town of Tikhoretsk, at first within the Kuban - Black Sea Territory, then the North Caucasus Territory, now the Krasnodar Territory. The town is a conglomeration of transport and power development industries. One can only imagine the acuteness of the situation there during the Civil War, collectivization, industrialization and the Great Patriotic War.

Earlier I used to pass through this symbolic place bearing a beautiful name on my way to a friend of mine Dima Lahin, a soldier heavily wounded in Chechnya at the start of his active service in the army. He lived in a far Cossack village Dmitrievskaya near the border between the Krasnodar Territory and the Stavropol Territory. I used to go to him from Moscow via Rostov. From Rostov I with my friends went to Dima in a car. There was no time to stop at Tikhoretskaya and we passed at a great speed a road sign with the words “The Tikhonkaya River” calling us in to the depths of history and literature. So we never managed to get to the railway station famed by Vysotsky, Alla Pugachova (in the above mentioned film) and incomparable Nadezhda Lukashevich from the Meridian Trio.

Dima Lahin died in 2005. For a long time I had been promising his relatives to visit Dima’s grave. A month ago I did it. Moreover, on my way from Dima’s Cossack village to Rostov I, without any effort on my part, visited Tikhoretsk. The town and the building of the railway station with its platform remained to stand together with its fate when fifty years ago a “small railway car” began to move whether from or to the station. Anyway, that’s how they were fixed in my pocket Olympus. Though, not without a problem: the local railway police detachment suddenly began to ask me energetically whether I had a permission to photograph the building of the railway station and informed me that it was prohibited as the building was a strategic object. I make a lot of photographs of railways in various places of the country but I came



across such a problem for the first time. So far, without consequences both for me and my photographs.

Later, on my way to Rostov I saw an enormous and rapid construction whose scale I've never seen anywhere in recent years except Moscow. A modern highway is under construction for the Olympic Games in Sochi. A whole fleet of construction machinery, very many road builders, swift pace of construction, four or six rows instead of two, overpasses after every ten kilometers. Nearby, the picture, alas, is quite different. But this is a separate topic. Anyway, here is my photo of this construction.

Finally, take a look at this road sign. The abbreviation reads: GAS MAIN PIPELINE ADMINISTRATION. Earlier here was a poster glorifying the Communist Party. And only Lenin's statue still stands before the building of the railway station.

Notes 2007 — 2011

October 5, 2007

In the “Cold War” the information society won a victory over the propagandist society. In these days the information society has ceased to exist. Idiosyncrasy to information is felt everywhere. Today’s “post-post-modernism” is characterized by a mocking attitude to morality and information. Opinion may not relate to reality deliberately: there is no interest in reality and one is sure that it is shaped up in a measure sufficient for those who do it to feel safe in the process. Demagogy is again becoming an exceptionally major factor. In today’s “post-information” society manipulating the majority may become as easy as in a semi-literate block in the middle of the twentieth century (very important but particular examples are Chechnya and Iraq).

June 28, 2008 (about Russia)

Russia has never had the middle class in the “European” sense. But since the times of Catherine the Second there has been an encouraged layer of independent intellectuals called

to exert influence of society and the powers that be. From here the “intelligentsia” has grown: people of the right, left, the Centrists with a broad education and mental outlook, independent thinking, people aware of their calling and responsibility to influence their society’s destiny. This layer was actively employed and enslaved by Soviet power. But it had not exterminated it as a layer. The power of creative language and outlook were not attributed to bureaucrats, and they did not pretend to them. Their business was stiff control. Nowadays the bureaucrat has become the owner of the Word and he directly shapes up mass mentality. What he earlier was doing through Mikhail Sholokhov, Konstantin Fedin, Alexander Chakovsky now he does himself. We shall have to exist in conditions of such phenomenon. This does not mean that the way things are is catastrophic for creative work and independent thought and that it is worse than a perspective which in this respect was looming in Soviet times. The point is that this situation requires a substantially new analysis. Conformism for many reasons has long been a national feature of Great Russia. The emergent situation, when the middle class is absent and the intelligentsia is disappearing, is not conducive to the change of this picture.

June 29, 2008 (about Russia)

Polyphony is not envisaged in the existing organization of society, self-protecting conservative mechanisms of mass psychology work subconsciously. Mass consciousness “knows” or is afraid that it will not find in itself awarenews of proportions in order, in conditions of legitimate pluralism of political

opinions, not to run into extremes of brutal anarchy of thought and solutions instead of today's brutal uniformity. In this way mass consciousness guards itself, as it were, both from real and illusionary threads.

June 30, 2008

A catacomb or semi-catacomb, underground existence of human soul, is the result of total spiritual poisoning of the surrounding world. Such way of existence to some extent represents protection of truth and freedom from sin and violence of the surrounding world. Simultaneously, it is an environment which creates protective discipline marginalizing human soul accentuating on fostering behavior and corresponding rules instead of building a "line of human soul". Dual life, be it in a catacomb, a semi-catacomb or in quite official totalitarian environment cultivates behavior but does not develop soul. The result is wholesale callousness.

July 6, 2008 (about Russia)

Russia has long been a country with a disproportionally big role of social "lower strata" both in quantitative terms and in national life—style. Manipulators actively resort to "low" social inquiry to shape media in the most profitable way to protect authoritarian power.

August 19, 2008 (about Russia)

Found in Internet: "policy of aggressive isolation" and "policy of mocking".

July 19, 2008

Intellectuals are prone to see others as intellectuals, sometimes they are doing it in a globally comical way.

February 13, 2009 (Russia – US relations)

For Russia and the USA the “occasional” partnership since the middle of the 1990’s up to now is no good at all for it is a road to a highly probable and absolutely senseless strategic opposition and conflict. A strategy and policy of real fully-fledged allied and friendly relations is needed (this does not mean constant consent with each other in everything). To do it Russia has to change the course and style of her policy no less than the US President sets the task of changing the course and style of policy of his country.

December 27, 2009

(about Russian political disposition)

Russia now wants to be simultaneously like the Soviet Union, the USA, Europe and something separate and specific that shapes up psychologically very strange and provincial phenomenon. What modern Russia has inherited in terms of “mentality constants” from times prior to 1917 is provincialism and high-flown manner of expression of some estates having reduced it to nonsense.

January 6, 2010 (about different games)

For the past twenty years relations between people in Moscow have acquired almost obligatory “fourth wall”, it is

nearly always a role play, certain “grimacing”, hidden finding out who is the boss. There was nothing like that in such vulgar form in Soviet times. There was a rigid formal hierarchy, very stiff rules but people were not engaged in constant “positioning”, “token policy” all among themselves. A total banditry with all informal signs appeared somewhere in 1984.

January 6, 2010

We have two parties; a provincial socialist party and a periphery-capitalist one.

January 6, 2010

In the world the “boss” is who has paid, in our country the “boss” is who has been paid. That is why an actor teaches the audience how to live, a football player teaches his fans and a manager in shop is rude to his clients even if he loses the profit.

January 6, 2010 (about Yabloko mission)

Politics are agitation, dissemination of views, sometimes “missionary work”. Dissidence is quite another task that does not suppose agitation for struggle, forecast, it is confession keeping oneself and other people away from lies, it is the task to think truth, speak truth and commit minimal harm. It is retirement into one’s shell and one’s community when there is no other way not to play the hypocrite. The approaches are totally different. A politician attracts attention, agitates in crowds. A dissident does not strive for attracting attention to himself, on the contrary, he subjects those in contact with him to testing and

is fully aware of the fact that to be beside him is unsafe and useless from a practical point of view. Paradoxically, in modern conditions Yabloko community should combine both.

January 25, 2010

(about provincialism of the Russian Federation)

The Russian Federation will hardly disintegrate within the “pattern” of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union into distinct political fragments. Flagrant provincialism protects it from this process. The decomposition of the Russian Empire and the USSR is the result of their lack of correspondence to the hypertask that their “political elites” had set before them. The Russian Federation is a structure which has no hypertask. It is a protective structure threatened by something else and historically worse: transformation into a “failed state”. Provincialism is such a phenomenon that cannot be overcome in principle by efforts from the “bottom”. It is such a stable mass subculture when the whole world is limited only by its own stereotype of existence. In order to overcome provincialism, survival at the expense of self-isolation efforts are needed of those have already reached the “top”. This is a closed circle but history knows many examples breaking out of such situations.

June 28, 2008 — August 21, 2011

Moral life has two wings: a disciplinary-conservative wing, and a creative one. The latter without the former turns into triviality and a betrayal of principles, the former without the latter turns into profound provincialism and obscurantism. For many

reasons spiritual energy of Great Russia, the most powerful of its manifestations in popular spirit have gravitated to the inclination to the side of the disciplinary-conservative principles that valued and employed personal courage and will–power (rebellions are a phenomenon of the same kind as they need discipline and courage, but a not sober-minded movement to freedom at a common–sense basis). Hence, an enticing tediousness and insipidity of the Russian tradition, its rigidity cynicism, and infertility in many creative senses of this word. Hence, a paradoxical, at first glance, chaos, disorder extreme individualism of “Russian soul”, frequently observed conformism in behavior and idiosyncrasy towards thought (as Georgi Fedotov put it, maximalism always turns into minimalism.)

The extreme individualism may flourish under the guise of collectivist rhetoric. In the history of the “nucleus” of the Russian territory rituals of respect at the address of variously understood society have chiefly been just a cover for reluctance of dialogue, individualism of everyday life and thought. The history of the “nucleus” of Russia is an endless process of forming a lot of sub-cultures, mental estates tormenting one another sometimes even against their own will. Conservatives, liberals, innovators, protestants in church milieu, monarchists, populists, patriots and Westernizers in politics and art made a many-voiced noise but were not destined to form a society where people would hear one another, for too many lived according to the motto: “I’m all right, Jack!” Each of the mental estates thought the price of the mistake too big to allow itself to get out even just a bit of its limits. Many cherished an ardent desire to overcome this situation (let’s recall

the Zemstvo movement, figures of Constitutional Democrats or the Church Council of 1917-1918), but this wish was not destined to come true. Stalin took full advantage of the subcultures tradition by turning into subculture everything that could still move: everyone lived in his or her cell with his function and any violation was punished severely. The perception of the price of the mistake went beyond all human limits. Society develops by trials and errors through corrections, improvements and ability to forgive. Conglomeration of subcultures is constant life amidst mortal dangers and enemies; it is punishment in a broad sense, and falling out of life for the “committed mistake”.

“Yabloko” web site, 2011

Supplement

Participation in the “Europe’s World” Web Site Discussions

30.03.2009

1. It stands to reason that the EDA does not set itself a task to compete with NATO both in force and military-political influence. These structures are, by definition, in different weight categories.
2. At NATO disposal besides the force component is a long tradition of control and communication. The European force structure despite its considerably lesser scale has to learn it if it wants to be efficient.
3. The strengthening of the EU military component is in a considerable degree a question of financing, hence to a decisive measure a problem of political decisions of the EU.
4. The part played by the political component of the EU may be largely positive as a kind of a bridge between the NATO and military structures of those countries which consider NATO, for historical reasons, as a threat or a rival. In this respect the role of new EU member-states which

traditionally have ties on the Balkans and to the East of EU, neutral states and France.

13.04.2009

Good from the crisis may be derived if only all those who bear responsibility for the current development of the situation have comprehended not just technical but also moral reasons of what has happened.

This refers both to officials and other citizens.

Why should one expect that those, who have been managing monetary resources in the past ten years and have failed to invent some kind of necessary infrastructure in problem countries and regions and later have let in recession in the developed world, would suddenly acquire knowledge and nobleness in order to tackle, with trebled energy, major strategic problems of development instead of impending current saving of themselves?

To solve such problems both those who make decisions and society as a whole should first of all become critical of themselves and pose a question what kind of their own world and the world around them they would like to see and find, just like after the Second World War, a consensus of at least the minimal range of topics. Without this any fragmentary decisions will always remain on paper and result in self-deceit.

11.05.2009

Of course, the space of the former USSR is not a bloc, and its multistate fragments are not blocs ever in the strict sense of the word, despite all solemn proclamations. It's good that the most "experienced" EU member-states are trying to set up intensive relations with everyone member of the CIS.

The Eastern Partnership programme looks like a promising one in many aspects.

However, the European Union and the USA, in my opinion, should not ignore the fact that the post-Soviet space does exist, and it has been not invented by the Kremlin neo-imperialists.

Yes, it is not like what Russia's television propaganda pictures. The post-Soviet space does exist in really solid aspects: in its life-style traditions, human ties and, what is impossible to exclude from reality, in real political, economic and military role of Russia. Those who closely study the former USSR know well that even anti-Russia hysteria is often a tribute to the rituals born in the Soviet Union, which are easily transformed, in changed conditions, in the "embraces with the Kremlin".

Russia has no right to blackmail any country or has no right to use the arms fighting tactics in relations with other countries. But I think that the question of the development of the CIS countries should be settled, if possible, in cooperation with Russia. One should strive for the exclusion of any surprise for Russia on the post-Soviet expanse. Contradictions are possible and perhaps inevitable, but they should not be manipulated. First of all it is necessary to strive to avoid contradictions and, moreover, conflicts.

The way Russia behaves is inconvenient to the West. However, the Western countries should decide for themselves: which way of things they would like to have in the post-Soviet expanse and what Russia should look like, in their eyes, in the future. All the countries of the ex-USSR should have a European outlook. I think, for the USA and the European Union the question of strategic reliability is to achieve the position so that Russia and all the CIS countries should be as close as possible allies and not simply somewhere located "neighbors" or "partners". For this it is necessary to proclaim and to realize common values such as the human rights, the supremacy of law, the inviolability of private property and to devise the base mechanism of decision-making. Of course, it is very far from being realistic in short-term prospect. It may be a difficult and uncomfortable way. However, a strategically substantial policy is never an easy thing and not always glamorous. It never guarantees ready results, but it does not mean that one should take a more primitive way out.

31.05.2009

In the course of the present ten-year period, which substantially differs from all preceding historical periods, the European Union has scored a number

of major achievements. In the institutional aspect it is the expansion up to twenty-seven member-states and, despite all risks, the introduction of Euro. In the moral, humanitarian aspect it is what has been attained in the struggle against militarism, anti-Semitism and racism.

But all this is obviously insufficient in the light of expectations set on EU by its citizens and people of the surrounding world. The cause here is not rooted in institutional shortcomings. It lies in a considerable loss of the political scale both by leaders and rank-and-file citizens.

Ever more pompous forms too obviously disguise content helplessness and that is why cause not only allergy among ordinary people but evidently harmful irrational moods as well that due to irrationality, lack of foresight and the spontaneity of their manifestation may, quite unexpectedly, make the European Union face a “tensile test” that would be harmful for whole the world.

EU foreign policy more often than not demonstrates its helplessness rather than the required “soft power”. This may be partly associated with the fact that with the loss of necessity to solve many “intra-European problems” by means of full-scale diplomatic negotiations many foreign ministries in EU member-states have started to work less intensively than before while general European structures have not adopted (and hardly would be able to promptly adopt) their functions. Let me stress: it is the question of quality of activity but not of institutions. Institutions can be any (it would be better if they could be properly organized) but the main point is that they should work competently and win authority by their competent activity.

Equally important is that there are persons capable of being leaders of a general European scale who could restore and promote the authority of such a notion as European values both inside EU and outside it. It is irrelevant whether they would occupy formal posts or not.

I wish every success to programmes of Eastern and Southern EU partnership. These are very difficult and bold programmes. In my view they to a large extent do express the moral, professional and political essence of the European Union. It is important that they should be rich in content and be a

success, be conducive to the development of both EU and neighbouring regions in solving military-political disputes, advancement of economy, raising the level of living, establishing standards of legality and human rights.

6.07.2009

Amid the turmoil of the EU foreign policy a project emerged at last that has meaning and a sense of measure. A mechanical inclusion of Georgia and Ukraine into the NATO looks unrealistic, has no evident pluses for the population of these countries and is sufficiently dangerous both because of Russia and arising problems with other neighbors of the former USSR. In contrast, the Eastern Partnership plan can really tie the states of the Western USSR with the European Union for the good of all, Russia included, if one understands by it not imperialist circles but the country as a whole and its future.

What is meant here is a major “political investment”. Unfortunately, such an approach and tool are very rarely employed in the European Union. Besides there is no any thorough concept how to realize such an approach.

However, in the given case, an idea at least is present. Besides it seems that political energy is available. Let’s wish it every success.

As I see it, a failure of the Eastern Partnership, should it happen, would be a major political failure of the European idea.

The peoples of six East European countries – former republics of the USSR – expect that the European Union, unlike other centers of political influence, has got something substantial and positive to offer them. I hope very much they will not be disappointed and that this in the long-range prospective will also be of use for Russia and other states of the former USSR.

Reading Michael McFaul. A “symbolic review”

Michael McFaul has been known both as a researcher of political processes accompanying the collapse of totalitarianism and a lecturer in this field of knowledge and a public figure. As a researcher he has devoted much time to studying Russia and post-Soviet space and as a public figure he opposed the practicalness and duplicity of policy pursued by George Bush Jr. In Barack Obama presidential term Michael McFaul has become a high-placed governmental official responsible for numerous aspects of the US-Russia political dialogue.

In recent years he often visits Moscow but somehow unobtrusively. It is rather hard to get information at firsthand about how this researcher, teacher and influential person in US shapes his world outlook and activities. So when I saw, in the Amazon.com, his latest monograph entitled with American straightforwardness “Advancing Democracy Abroad” and subtitled “Why We Should and How We Can” (to put it mildly for the non-American reader, I would call the book “Promoting Democracy in the World. Why We Should and How We Can”) and on the spur of the moment I bought it.

Running ahead of my story I must say that my behavior was a bit out of the ordinary for US Internet book shops: the book is not easy to read and its style hardly suits the non-American reader.

In general the purpose of this book immediately poses a big question for me. I believe that professorial books are written to be read, the more the better. Books by political leaders are written not to be read but to be admired and aptly cited. The book in question is something in-between. It is a book for the “close circle”; some notes to a happy few about the most global. How to make the world better, how to promote democracy everywhere but not for the sake of peace and not “everywhere” but for his students and learned council.

The book consists of six chapters and a short preface.

In the preface the author sharply criticizes the methods of foreign policy pursued by George Bush Jr. On the one hand these methods consisted in impulsive pushing American tactical approaches everywhere where it was pos-

sible while on the other hand these methods formed among very many people a rather negative image of democracy as a political principle and ideal. The author sets himself a question of a larger historical and philosophical and political perspective in order to defend democracy, even to justify it, to demonstrate its effectiveness and prospects in modern history, to induce people to overcome their disappointment. In the process a major polemic message remains to be buried under rather colourless formulas of university rhetoric and confused examples.

Michael McFaul devotes the first chapter to an analysis of program statements made by George Bush Jr. in 2003-2004 about spreading political freedom in the world. The author quite rightly notes the narrowness and sketchiness of such approaches of US foreign policy at that time, their historical contradictoriness. US poll's results show that Americans have little trust in democracy according to Bush. A memorable and polemic example is given in this chapter; in 2006 in St. Petersburg George Bush Jr. made a broad statement expressing his wish to see freedom and democracy everywhere in the world. Vladimir Putin immediately parried his interlocutor by saying he would not like Russia to be like Iraq. The author writes that the given period is filled with extremely contradictory phenomena, namely: simultaneously essential democratic changes in Pakistan and Liberia, "colour revolutions" in a number of countries of the former USSR, relatively liberal transformations "from above" in a number of Arab and South-Asian countries with a traditionally authoritarian setup and an abrupt rollback of democracy in many politically key-countries of the world including Russia. Further Michael McFaul makes a valuable observation: in Egypt and Iran supporters of democratic reforms began to see it as a drawback if their views were perceived as similar to the position of American Administration, and in a broad sense, to American views in general. Further the author sets forth an analysis and discussion of diversity of views and utterances of American statesmen and public figures on how US should consider the context of establishing and developing democracy in the non-democratic world, from general considerations to specific recommendations of various researchers and social commentators on how a "future president" should have behaved towards this or that country and towards this or that leader of authori-

tarian regime. In my view, the author presents rather sketchy, poorly related fragments whose importance is doubtful. Then the author makes an attempt at a historical analysis. The attempt due to its briefness and abundance of names and terms transforms into skipping from one point to another: from Woodrow Wilson right to Bill Clinton and Boris Yeltsin. The subtitles put the reader in a serious mood but the text is unfortunately too concise for political and philosophical topics.

In the second chapter Michael McFaul resolves a very difficult task: how to give a short and sufficiently deep definition of democracy so that it could be understood by ordinary people and “practical experts” of social processes.

To teach banalities in a serious and responsible manner is a difficult and ungrateful job. One can say that the author has approached the problem from the right side trying to find something original and unordinary in the most banal. He emphasizes the existing contradictions instead of evading them. Regrettably, a monotonous and a very rapid style of this part of the book weakens the possibility of perception, decreases convincingness and leaves, as a result, the impression of banality instead of novelty of the text. The author and what he writes about deserve another assessment but this is a question of style, ability to reflect through the text that scale of the problem which you want to reflect. The author’s style does not allow the author to solve his task, the approach dwindles and does not correspond to its scale. What a pity! If all this had been written on a bigger scale, the attractiveness of reading and convincingness would have been higher.

In the next chapters much place is devoted to examples from the recent past. The examples cited are important and essential. Unfortunately, their abundance produces in my apprehension an effect of “preparation for yesterdays’ wars”. The level of the text would have been considerably higher if the author had attempted to conduct an analysis having at least a minimal prognostic value. Such an analysis should be based on differentiation of political and social specifics of different countries and cultures. A profound analysis should be broader than characteristics of regimes, enumeration of events and assessment of personalities.

In order that the level of this work should correspond more to the task set by the author, he should be released from obligations of “political correctness” both in relation to government and politicians of democratic states and in relation to N60s. He should objectively consider modern aspects of phenomena of real politics in Europe and “Human rights business” which radically contradict to promotion of democracy. World democracy suffers when institutions of developed democratic societies function formally, treat with disrespect citizens of countries suffering from authoritarianism. To promote democracy in the world it is necessary, first of all, not to discredit it on a large scale. The point here is not only in the USA and its presidents. The responsibility is considerably wider.

It is important that the author tries to answer the question on leadership of democratic transformations, correlation of an evolutionary and revolutionary version. It is here that his numerous examples from recent history are appropriate.

The book leaves a dual impression. It is very interesting in places but as a whole it is uneven and does not have that “face” which would correspond to the most fitting fragments.

I would define this book as an attempt to explain the American reader that freedom is better than unfreedom. I am afraid that the book’s influence in this respect is limited. Americans learned little about it, a few looked through the book and everybody remained of the same mind. If the book had been written and arranged more thoroughly, its attraction and influence would have been a bit higher.

I wish the book were translated into Russian. First, it has an interesting and productive political and philosophical content unexpected to many Russian language readers. Second, the book will help our ruling structures and the community to form a more realistic and sober notion of political and philosophical potential of US political circles, to see their natural limitedness of intentions and possibilities. Anyway, since the publication of the book a year ago, history “has run” so much forward that many fragments should have been written anew.

In some places the book reeks of scholasticism. Still, even in such fragments the scale is considerable. Especially, when compared with home-bred Russian “political science”. In our country “The Volga river flows into the Caspian Sea” all the time, whereas here the Ganges, the Hwang Ho, the Amazon, and the Nile flow accurately into somewhere.

It is good that something has been written with the aim of drawing attention to problems of humanity in politics, to human values, leaving out abstract “problems of the USA and the rest of the world”. True, realization of this aim leaves much to be desired. I am afraid that conscientious readers will find it difficult to read this book from cover to cover. This diminishes its value, especially if we mean beginners in political thinking.

Despite all my irony I wish the author every success with his book.

The indigestibility of this literary work is directly connected with the Procrustean bed in which the author was driven by the framework of American formal political science. If I were in his shoes, I would have less common sense and more self-assurance and conceit.

A book on this topic should be sufficiently complete as far as its content goes, ethically principled, tactful, delicate in its tone, take account of who and where will read and use it. There is no need to demonstrate a detailed knowledge of nomenclatures of authoritarian states. But it is absolutely necessary to teach the reader some political geography, ability to feel the atmosphere of remote nooks of the world he has never seen and most likely will never see, ability to think how and in what direction to change the world. Maybe in this case both the reader and the author will achieve something constructive.

Michael McFaul managed to solve some of his tasks.

“Yabloko” and “Relga” web sites



