

THE POLITICAL CULTURE OF POST-SOVIET RUSSIA: HISTORICAL CONTINUITY AND TRANSFORMATION

The discussion of the place of Russia in world history, the ratio of the Western and Eastern civilization values in the culture of the country, its special way and destiny, which never stopped in the Russian philosophy before the October Revolution and was interrupted by the Bolshevik regime, revived again after the USSR disintegration. It has become keener in the recent decade because in the environment of Russia's confrontation with the West, the authorities strive in their foreign and home policy to find a foundation in the cultural and historical traditions of the country.

The main vital issues of the correlation of power and property, state and individual were solved in the multi-century history of Russia differently from Europe and the United States. This does not require detailed proof and substantiation. It's just enough to compare: the English Great Charter and the United States Bill of Rights are respectively more than 800 and 300 years old – the serfdom was flourishing just 150 years ago in Russia and Soviet totalitarian regime collapsed only one quarter of a century ago.

But it's not fruitful and even risky to explain the current realities by a special civilization code, strictly programming the public psychology from the ancient times. According to Norbert Wiener, the longer the way, the lesser the weight. The course of history accelerated. Political culture can considerably transform, behavioral scenarios can become various under the impact of changes in the way of life, urbanization and globalization processes, interaction with the institutional structure.

Thus, contrasting Russian collectivism and Western individualism has become a stable stereotype. It fed on the ideas of conciliarism and collegiality in the period before the October Revolution. A. Khomyakov, the leader of the Slavophiles, wrote that “The spirit of consent and brother's love is typical for Russian life, while Western life is war of all against all”. The Bolshevik regime announced collectivism to be the state ideology, individualism was blamed as manifestation of backwardness and antisocial egoism. Dropping ideological blinders, acknowledgement of human rights and freedoms as the highest value in the Russian Constitution did not change the notions fixed in the public views and ideas that individualism can't become the domineering world outlook within the framework of Russian political culture as it goes against the national archetype. In recent years, V. Putin acknowledges such an outlook, saying in particular on the Russia Today TV channel that “the basis of American self-consciousness is the individualistic idea, and the basis of Russian one is the collectivistic idea”, because of which “it's sometimes difficult for us to understand each other”.

But historical facts clearly don't interfere into such a cliché, besides being ideologically tinted. Collectivism and individualism supplemented each other in recent Western history. All West European countries had an agricultural way of life some time in the past, and peasant communities originated everywhere naturally. As the Western society "mutated", urbanism developed and strengthened, the property relations changed, collectivism in human relations was not lost but took the forms corresponding to urban life – shops of craftsmen, guilds of traders, inns and collegiums of lawyers, religious communities and trade unions of workers later. The free will of collectivism strengthened – in accordance with convictions, inclinations and interests of the people. And currently, the state of affairs in cases of public solidarity, people trusting each other, local self-government, volunteers and charity, trade union movement is much better in the West. At the same time, individualism dominates with its values of freedom, rivalry and personal success. That turns out to be collectivism of individuals.

The history played an evil joke on Russian political culture. While social class and feudal ties weakened in Western Europe, tsarist Russia was stuck in the Middle Ages – serfdom enslaved the natural rural community, turned voluntary association of plowmen into a forced one. The half-hearted Emancipation Reform of 1861 did not solve this problem. After peasant riots of 1904-1906, the unsolved agrarian issue, the necessity to change the form of land ownership was already understood by many educated statesmen. As P.A. Stolypin said in front of the State Duma in 1908-1910, "Is it really forgotten... that the colossal experience in guardianship over a giant part of our population already failed and seriously failed... According to our concepts, it's not the land that should own humans but humans should own land ... Free labour and not forced, our land won't be able to compete with our neighbours' land".

The Bolshevik regime did not allow to apply free labour to land. And what is more, liquidation of private property and total nationalization of economy enslaved all working people – not only in villages but in cities as well. All working people became slaves of the state – the only property owner in the USSR. Frail sprouts of civil society just born in tsarist Russia in the 20th century were crushed. The state took all spheres of human vital activities under its control, turned citizens into its subjects, achieved their alienation from interests related to recognition of political and economic rights and freedoms. Natural human rights were treated as a bourgeois invention, the law was defined in keeping with positivism like any law, to which the will of the ruling class is raised. The urban and rural proletariat was hypocritically called that, while really a new ruling class was created – nomenclature, or functionaries in key administrative posts. Personal initiative was suppressed in every possible way, except taking upon oneself higher obligations to fulfill state planned tasks ahead of time. The basis of Soviet totalitarian regime is: everything should move forward exclusively by bosses' initiatives and ventures.

That's why the word "individualism" became nearly a swearword for many decades. Collectivism was praised mostly as an ability of Soviet people to unite around the Party and Government and sacrifice their personal interests to building bright future and fighting enemies.

It would be a mistake to explain long existence of such an unnatural economy in the country, excluding any possibility for an individual to take care of his/her well-being himself/herself, by only giant natural resources of the country. A new man was required for such economic activities, and the Bolshevik authorities engaged in his creation. And it should be acknowledged that they achieved unquestionable success on that way. Permanent repressions, the Iron Curtain, elimination of other information sources except the Party radio and newspapers and later TV, constant propagandist brainwashing did their work. And if Bulgakov in his *The Master and Margarita* could assess the residents of Moscow of the 1920s through Woland as common people just spoiled by the apartment issue, Soviet people did not already satisfy this characteristic after collectivization and repressions of the 1930s.

Surely, there is a big variety of human types in real life. But the image of an average Soviet individual as seen by analysts with various political orientations – prominent public figures, scientists, writers – was allotted such qualities as standardized ideological conscience; lack of initiative and evasion of personal responsibility; indifference to results of one's labour; paternalism; submission to authorities, resigned obedience to any boss orders; lowered ambitions; low level of social aspirations; readiness to staunchly endure life hardships; inclination to hard drinking. At the same time, there was the feeling of participation in solution of the grand task of building the just Communist society, pride of one's state, winning once and again on the international scene, successfully opposing hostile capitalist surroundings.

Finally, the Homo Soveticus type was formed by the victory in the Great Patriotic War, strengthened by making the nuclear and hydrogen bombs, Yuri Gagarin's flight into space. Perceiving oneself as a small part of the giant force, in front of which the whole world trembles, compensated poverty, poor households, total shortage of products for a Soviet individual. Socialist equality ("everyone lives like that", "equal parts for everyone") also helped to endure financial difficulties.

The USSR disintegration, break-up of the totalitarian economic system dealt not only an economic but also a moral and psychological blow on the overwhelming majority of the population. The strong Socialist power turned into a totalitarian monster in the state propaganda, on pages of printed mass media, which immediately transformed, and a Soviet man with his blown-up "victor's complex" turned into a nobody, Homo Soveticus made a fool of by Communist and Soviet authorities. Wild capitalism originated, and energetic and enterprising fellow citizens, who managed to enter the practically unregulated market, psychology of social

Darwinism to which haughtiness and boorishness were added, widespread. The aphorism "If you're so wise, why are you so poor?", ascribed to the Americans, was widely circulated.

Such a turn in the world outlook, when money and ability to make it were announced the main values instead of labour, knowledge, education, social justice, could not be accepted by the population of Russia – mostly those who worked for the state and were paid from the state budget. A simple truth though forgotten by the reformers was revealed – no nation can reconcile itself with national humiliation, people need not only bread to sustain them, they need to be proud of their country, they need glorified heroic past, which may even be mythical, it's difficult for them to part with illusions, "golden dreams" evoked by utopia that had been in power.

That's why discrediting the 70-year way endured by the country, with the lack of social, including educational psychotherapy called to soften the most difficult consequences of the "shock therapy" in economy, was taken by the Soviet people as spitting at them, their fathers and grandfathers, the life they lived.

These public sentiments were detected by V. Putin during the first year of his Presidential term: the offered by him and later adopted state symbols – state coat of arms, state flag and national anthem – were intended to bring the ideas of succession in the country's existence, to stand in a sense under political feuds and quarrels that shook the history of Russia: the Bolsheviks announced complete break-up with the Russian Empire and intention to destroy it down to the foundation; the Constitution of the Russian Federation of 1993 announced recognition of human rights and freedoms the highest value, introduced prohibition to establish any ideology as state and obligatory, and thus fully renounced the ideocratic Soviet regime.

Russia always was, is and will be a great power – the Russian people responded to this presentation, which the Kremlin started promoting in foreign and home policy. Opposing the United States on the international scene, protection of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, intervening into the conflict in Syria, support of Russian-speaking secessionists in the Ukraine, annexation of Crimea, rearmament of the Army, menacing military rhetoric, softening attitude to Stalin ("he should not be excessively demonized") – all that was called "getting up from the knees" by the official propaganda, picked up by masses of people, Putin's approval rating breaks all records no matter the economic recession in the country. Soviet features of a today's Russian did not disappear – we can tighten our belts for the greatness of the country.

Social surveys fixed patriotic upsurge in all strata of the population, including variously politically oriented people, and structural changes in economy strengthened during the third V. Putin's Presidential term together with that: the share of private business steadily declined and the state's role increased. The Federal Antimonopoly Service (FAS) informed in its report that state monopoly capitalism was established in Russia, the state and state companies increased

their contribution to GDP twice over ten years, from 35% in 2005 up to 70% in 2015, the number of state and unitary enterprises tripled over the recent three years, and according to FAS assessments, they are “the main enemies of competition on local markets”.

The state is the biggest employer in contemporary Russia. A half of the working people work for it directly or indirectly. For comparison: there are only 17% in the USA, and the authorities evaluate that as a too heavy load on the budget.

Nationalization of the economy is a worrisome trend in two aspects: competition is limited and efficiency of commodity markets reduces, corruption multiplies; paternalist sentiments inherited from the Soviet period are conserved and additionally fed.

Historical development highlighted a governing law, which is principally not argued by anyone: *ceteris paribus*, the economy based on competition of private owners is more efficient than state capitalism. Private property does not obligatory make the state flourishing but there is not a single example yet when liquidation of the free market could provide a worthy life for the people.

Collectivism and individualism should not be made to collide and played as ideological cards. Both of them are important and common to all mankind. Individualism with its idea of the society as an aggregate of individuals with equal rights and equal virtues is the most important catalyst for world civilization development. Collectivism appeals to the necessity to protect the weak, guarantee the minimum living conditions, calls for social solidarity. Collectivism should not be forced. Development of civil society, non-commercial, first of all volunteer and human rights organizations, expansion of jurisdiction of jury courts are urgent for today’s Russia. The mainstream movement is expanding opportunities for self-realization, basing on one’s own strength, desacralization of the state, understanding it not as some sacred high power but an employed administration, an agent for the society.

The history of Russia is multifaceted. No traditions predestine its future. The society itself decides what to take from the past and what to part with – but not forget in order not to repeat. We only have not to make a mistake in choosing.