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THE GLOBAL SITUATION AND CURRENT CHALLENGES OF SOCIAL PARTNERSHIP IN RUSSIA

Today, in the international arena, there is actually a world war between the Western Bloc and the emerging bloc of an-

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ti-Western forces. Events in Ukraine are only part of a more global game. The essence of this game is that the Western political bloc has unleashed a war in order to maintain its dominance. Having emerged victorious from the Cold War, the United States of America planned to expand its influence, which it had previously established over half of the world, to the rest of it. And it should be said they have managed a lot in this area.

However, at the beginning of the 21st century, Western analysts noticed serious obstacles in this way – Russia and

taries. Awarded the Order of Merit for the Fatherland IV degree, the Order of Honor, the Order of Friendship, P. A. Stolypin Medal II degree and others. Awarded a Commendation from the President of the Russian Federation, Honorary Diplomas of the Government of the Russian Federation, the State Duma, the Federation Council of the Russian Federation, etc.

China, which increasingly gained strength, pursuing own independent policy.

Western experts proceeded from the fact that their military-political bloc had already been formed, rigidly structured, clearly headed by the United States, as well as from the fact that then the West was at the peak of economic power, though gradually started to move down. Without waiting for the forces opposing the Anglo-American hegemony to unite into a single bloc, with their economic potential surpassing the potential of the Western world, the United States and Great Britain decided to be the first to attack us. They used Ukraine as a tool, following the precepts of Sbniew Brzezinski, who repeatedly stated that the best way to weaken Russia was to tear Ukraine away from it and, if possible, oppose it.

Nevertheless, at present, the strategic alliance between Russia and China is being actively formed, covering all spheres of public life. This alliance, unlike the Western one, is not aimed at establishing its own domination, but offers the multipolar world.

Unlike Western politicians, who constantly refer to some rules invented by them, this alliance proposes to consistently adhere to international law, primarily on the Charter of the United Nations. This means that all countries that do not want to put up with the role of semi-colonies of the West will sooner or later move towards this union.

By the very fact of its existence, by switching to settlements not in dollars, but in national currencies, this alliance weakens American dominance and therefore cannot but cause aggression from the United States and its allies.

In fact, a new war has been unleashed against us, which takes place in the economic and ideological spheres, with its hot phase deploying today in Ukraine.

Since ancient times, people have believed that at any war two main strategies – crushing or starvation are possible. Neither party to the war can resort to crushing tactics, as modern nuclear potential presupposes the opportunity of mutual destruction.

This means that the war against us will be waged by the method of starvation, i. e. the struggle will be protracted. But, for speeding up the process, our enemies can use as a means of struggle organization of the revolution in our rear.

In this situation, the trade union movement of Russia adheres to the patriotic positions, actively fights for our country's victory in the tough confrontation with the West. The trade unions help participants of the special military operation and their family members, collect humanitarian aid for residents of new territories, promote integration of the new regions into the Russian social space. It is difficult to overestimate the trade unions' role in maintaining social peace, supporting employees of defense enterprises and other industries, who work for the victory.

But in current conditions, the trade unions of Russia face at least three more strategic tasks.

Firstly, today, in the West, workers are increasingly dissatisfied with economic policy, including the policy of sanctions, which painfully affects not only us, but also their own countries' economies. Here, our trade unions should recall traditions of international solidarity, the experience of the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions (VCSPC), and become the main "bridge" between Russia's civil society and the protest movement in the West. In this, society and

the state should provide all possible assistance to the trade unions.

Secondly, in order to win, our society must become ideologically motivated, develop the clear, accurate, understandable ideology shared by everyone, which differs from the ideology of domination of financial capital and neocolonialism, to be adhered to by the West not in words, but in practice. In this case, the significant role can be played by the trade union movement, which has its own ideology based on the principles of patriotism, social solidarity, respect for the man of labour, and on the belief that productive capital should prevail over financial one. If earlier the trade union movement set the task of spreading its ideology among its own active members, today it must broadcast these values to the whole society and participate in creation of the new common ideology of the Russian people.

Thirdly, as mentioned above, our opponents will certainly try to use their favorite tactic – to organize the revolution in our rear. For this purpose, they will try to take advantage of citizens' discontent in any field and support pseudo-social and pseudo-economic movements aimed at loosening the social state system and undermining the people's unity, as happened in Poland in the 80s.

In this situation, mass traditional trade unions adhering to patriotic positions and embedded in the system of social partnership, should assume the role of the main tool of society for legitimate resolution of social conflicts.

To do this, we must provide the trade unions with additional opportunities.

Today, the most important tool of trade union activity is conclusion of collective contracts and agreements, in which employees and employers agree on working conditions, payment and social protection measures. However, many employers do not participate in the unions and therefore evade from implementation of sectoral and territorial agreements. Today, it is enough for them to send the reasoned refusal to the appropriate authority. I consider it necessary to amend the labour legislation, making the agreement binding on all enterprises of the industry or the region, if it is signed by the trade unions and employers representing the majority of workers and the majority of enterprises in the region or in the industry.

The economy develops, new areas of employment emerge, for example, platform employment. Today, millions of people work via various digital platforms: couriers, taxi drivers, programmers, representatives of other professions and specialties. Regulation in this segment is urgently needed, because we have repeatedly witnessed strikes of platform-employed workers and conflicts between them and platform operators. Importance of the regulation is also understood by the operators themselves. They are ready to create their own unions and enter into negotiations with unions of platform-employed workers.

Therefore, it is necessary to adopt a law regulating features of platform employment as soon as possible. We have agreed with the parties to the social partnership that we will prepare this document in the near future.

I would like to note that today, there is a discussion between the parties of the social partnership about the nature of platform employment: trade unions refer it to labour relations, and employers – to civil law. In my opinion, the truth is somewhere in the middle: this is a new form of re-

lations in the labour market, which undoubtedly contains signs of both.

On the one hand, platform operators act to a large extent as employers in relation to platform-employed workers: the operators determine their working conditions, put forward disciplinary requirements to them, often provide them with means of labor: vehicles, uniforms, backpacks, bags, etc. On the other hand, platform employment means relationship of three parties, which is unusual for employment relations. The customer acts as a third party. Formally, the platform operator does not pay salary to platform-employed workers, but takes an intermediary percentage from them for organizing their interaction with clients. So, I believe that the scientific dispute about the nature of the relations (whether these are labour relations or civil-law regulated ones) could be postponed, but it is impossible to delay introduction of norms regulating platform employment, which will allow resolving emerging conflicts in a civilized manner.

Undoubtedly, platform-employed workers should get the right to form their own unions, including trade unions.

It would also be the right measure to establish the council of digital platform operators, which could determine the general working conditions.

And, of course, the legislation should clearly specify that the agreements between these two parties should in no case go to harm a third party – the customer, which is not represented in negotiations between them.

As for the law “On Employment of the Population in the Russian Federation”, in March, the State Duma adopted the new draft law in the first reading. Four of the five factions yeasaid. One faction, “Fair Russia”, abstained. However, no one spoke out against the concept of our draft law. I think this is a very good result for the first reading.

Let me remind you that we have been preparing this draft law for over a year, with direct participation of the parties to the social partnership – the Government, employers’ unions and trade unions. Some of their proposals were not taken into account in the first-reading revision. Moreover, disagreements on certain points have remained. Therefore, we decided to discuss in detail the remaining issues when preparing the document for the second reading and fixed it in the Resolution of the State Duma.

We have agreed to clarify some of the concepts to be used in the draft law. It will also be needed to additionally work out the procedure for recognizing citizens as unemployed, as well as the grounds for de-registering them in employment centers.

Besides, we will pay more attention to employment of people with disabilities. In a number of issues, we have already met interests of the public organizations of the disabled, strengthening their participation in the quota of jobs and providing for the opportunity to rent these jobs within the established quota. But in their opinion, we have given too many powers to constituent entities of the Federation in matters of quotas, which will result in infringing rights of disabled people in a number of regions. We will once again discuss in detail this matter with, inter alia, organizations of the disabled people.

Moreover, we are going to clarify the list of measures aimed at supporting employers maintaining current jobs and creating new ones. Now this is stated in the draft law, but employers require to specify these issues.

It is also necessary to optimize the amount of data to be provided by employers to employment services. And, finally, we must include in our draft law norms related to private employment agencies: since they exist and operate in the labour market, it is required to delineate powers with the state employment service and define the framework, in which they can operate.

Another issue we plan to discuss is what to link the minimum and maximum amounts of unemployment benefits to – the minimum wage or the subsistence minimum. This issue has become especially controversial after the President in his Address to the Federal Assembly has set the task of raising the minimum wage at a pace faster than inflation.

Fulfillment of this task is extremely important. We often see how public attention focuses on issues of increasing benefits and pensions, but both directly depend on wages. It should also be remembered that the higher employees’ wages, the more opportunities to eliminate social problems the budget has, because Income Tax is the key source of financing of the public sector. Thus, fulfillment of the task set by the President on the minimum wage will not only increase wages, but also solve a number of other social problems.

Other tasks set by the President in the Address are also extremely important in context of the special military operation (SVO).

Firstly, it is establishment of the state fund for helping veterans of the SVO and the families of deceased soldiers. We see that many people returning from the front or those who have lost their breadwinners there need psychological support, medical care, assistance in solving everyday problems. Today, they need to apply to different authorities for each of these issues. The fund will allow citizens to receive assistance in a “single window” mode. And if at first the fund will work for the SVO participants and the families of the SVO deceased soldiers, then, in future, according to the President, its activities will be able to be extended to other combat veterans.

Secondly, Vladimir Putin said that over the past years, we had taken many measures aimed at supporting families with children. But we understand that, apart from maternity capital, which is of universal nature, these measures were mainly focused on supporting low-income citizens. Now the head of the state has proposed the mechanism for expanding tax deductions. This is direct financial support for families, regardless of their income level.

Separately, the President focused on social assistance to people working in the military-industrial complex. We are used to the fact that the defense industry acts as an economic locomotive for many industries: various civilian enterprises are loaded through defense orders, the latest developments in the defense industry are picked up by other industries. Vladimir Putin actually proposed to make the defense industry also a locomotive for establishment of new social technologies. It is about establishment of special social packages for the industry workers, as well as construction of rental housing for them at the expense of state subsidies. I would like to note that the lack of social support for people going to work to another region and their lack of rental housing in the new place have always been serious constraining factors for internal labour migration. Construction of rental housing and introduction of social packages, first in the defense industry, and then in other industries, will contribute to solving the problems

met by qualified specialists when moving from one region to another.

Finally, in the Address, the President essentially presented the concept of new industrial policy, which involves not only economic measures, such as industrial mortgages, but also social changes, including restructuring the education system, which consists of phasing out of the Bologna system, and restoring the best elements of the Soviet higher school, considering the experience of recent decades.

I am sure that we will be able to solve all these social tasks quickly and in full.

Another important for us issue is helping citizens find employment.

On September 1, 2022, our party and the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Russian Federation launched a new party project “My Career with the United Russia”. At first, it was implemented in five pilot regions – in the Kaluga, Lipetsk and Ryazan Regions, in the Kamchatka Krai and the Udmurt Republic.

On December 13, 2022, the meeting was held at the venue of the United Russia party, chaired by Dmitry Medvedev, at which it was decided to extend the project to all regions of our country. Since 2023, the project “My Career with the United Russia” has become all-Russian.

Within the project, special career centers have been organized on the base of public reception rooms and public support headquarters. There, employees of the regional executive committees of the party, who have undergone preliminary training, help visitors register on the portal “Work of Russia” and get access to services of employment centers.

In framework of the project, hundreds of various mass events are held to assist citizens in finding jobs and career guidance, as well. In March 2023 alone, about 500 events were held within the project, with participation over 31 thousand people, over 1,300 citizens to be employed.

There are job fairs where employers and potential job seekers can communicate with each other directly.

Professional tours and excursions for young people to regional enterprises are organized. There, senior school students and graduates get acquainted with working conditions at the factories, learn about the most popular professions.

There are thematic meetings of deputies, heads of enterprises, businessmen, representatives of employment centers with students, where young people get acquainted with the basics of business, learn how to make a CV and successfully pass the interview, etc. Such events will definitely be continued.

Recently, new forms of project implementation have been emerging, namely: production of television broadcasts and informational videos, webinars on employment and the use of resources of the Work in Russia platform.

It is also very important for us to keep our subprojects active. For example, the special subproject dedicated to women’s employment. In framework of this subproject, in particular, we actively assist young mothers, whose maternity leave is over, to restore their work skills and adapt.

Another important for us issue is supporting the SVO participants and their family members. In a number of regions, training seminars for women, whose businessman husbands have gone to the front and left their businesses on them, are held. In framework of our project, such women receive consultations from business representatives, economists, financiers, accountants, psychologists. Moreover, there are cases when wives of mobilized citizens were able to retrain or immediately find a job due to our project. But we instruct our colleagues in the regions that we do not have to wait for the SVO participants’ relatives to come to us for support, we should go to them ourselves and find out if they need our help in finding a job.

Another issue we pay special attention to is employment of forced migrants, those who had to leave the territory of the new Russian regions because of ongoing hostilities there. In some regions, in temporary accommodation facilities for forced migrants, vocational consulting is carried out. Besides, due to our project, over 100 people from the DPR, mostly former workers of Azovstal, were employed at the Vyksa Metallurgical Plant in the Nizhny Novgorod Region. Every one of them is provided with official housing and the social package.

Within the project, with providing assistance to citizens, we simultaneously continue to work at the block of laws related to employment regulation. We have received a large number of proposals from colleagues implementing our project in different regions, including such an important topic as operation of employment services in remote territories. We will definitely consider them when working on the new employment law.

I would also like to note that the Young Guard of the United Russia has joined our project. We have identified five federal subjects (Omsk Region, Sakhalin Region, Udmurt Republic, Republic of Kalmykia, Nizhny Novgorod Region), in which our youth organization will assist senior students of higher and secondary specialized educational institutions in finding employment by inviting young people to meetings with potential employers collaborating with our project. If this form of work is successful in the five pilot regions, we will extend it to the whole of Russia.

I hope that our partners – the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, Rostrud and the governors – will also provide all possible assistance to the project implementation on an ongoing basis.