

## CHINA IS STILL LESS DEVELOPED THAN RUSSIA

Sergey Guriev



## SERGEY GURIEV

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*RJ* Dear Sergey Maratovich, do you think that the Chinese model of modernisation can be considered successful and acceptable for modern-day Russia?

The Chinese experience can, by all means, be considered as successful. This success rests on two factors. First of all, **China has a real political party that may not have an ideology but has meritocratic mechanisms, which help the elite to develop long-term guidelines for the country's future.** Russia does not have such a party and there are, at present, no signs that some-

thing like this will ever be created. In China, the key role in the development of the mechanism of meritocracy and elite rotation was played by the dreadful administration of Mao Zedong, which contributed to the establishment of a system where there exists no threat of any seizure of power or long-term one-man system of rule. This creates just the right stimuli for the ruling elite, including the provincial elite.

Secondly, China is at a different level of its development than is the case with Russia. China is now working towards the industrialisation of the country. It does not have to cope with the problems of public benefits and social obligations. Russia, on the other hand, currently faces the challenges of post-industrial development and the social contract, which implies huge social obligations.

So it remains unclear whether China will not also have similar problems when it finally reaches the level where contemporary Russia is now located.

*RJ* Can we say that, in many aspects, President Dmitry Medvedev is oriented towards a pattern we see in the Chinese experience of modernisation?

This is not quite clear yet. Dmitry Medvedev has made a lot of encouraging speeches from which people end up deriving different conclusions. For example, Dmitry Medvedev sometimes says that we need to develop democratic institutions; sometimes he says that it will take a long time for the existing imperfect democratic institutions to undergo change. It is not quite clear which exact model he himself prefers. Nevertheless, **we can support Dmitry Medvedev in his opinion that we need an effective and non-corrupted judicial system and bureaucracy.**

In China, there is no independent judicial system, but the Chinese bureaucracy is really very efficient and meritocratic despite the existence of corruption.

*RJ* In your opinion, what is the optimal program for the modernisation of Russia? Can the Chinese pattern of development be a model for Russia?

There are two ways that are possible. First, we can try to establish a party as solid as the Communist Party of China. In the last ten – or to be more precise – in the last twenty years, all attempts of party building have gotten us nowhere. Unfortunately, all efforts made in building a party have resulted in non-viable institutions. The second existing option is a path involving the gradual political liberalisation, which can really work; the only question that remains concerns the speed at which such liberalisation would occur.

*RJ* Do you agree with the opinion that Russia's modernisation program should involve some sort of 'neo-Stalinism', i.e. the concentration of resources with the government stimulating a wider scale of intellectual activity and, at the same time, the fastest and broadest application of its results?

A neo-Stalinist path of modernisation would only be possible in one case: if you were to confiscate the passports of all intellectuals and businessmen and forbid them from undertaking travel abroad. Talented people are very well aware of what is going on in the world. They understand they can be reasonably well off and develop professionally in other countries. Furthermore, they do understand that Russia does not have any national idea that might make them want to stay, to endure suffering, risks to their professional career or well-being.

**Any modernisation attempts taking a neo-Stalinist form will end up bringing about a mass drain of the professionals and businessmen that President Medvedev is pinning his hopes on** as soon as they can possibly leave. Thus, there would be no one left to implement such modernisation projects. ■

*Sergey Guriev was speaking with Lyubov Ulianova*