

THE COUNTRY OF A THOUSAND REPORTS?

The beginning of the new political year is called ‘the season of reports,’ and rightly so. The report on ‘Conservative modernization’ was issued and its authors included famous political scientists such as Dmitry Orlov, Dmitry Badovsky, and Mikhail Vinogradov (Mikhail Vinogradov’s opinion piece can be found in this issue of ‘RJ — Standpoint of the Week’).

A report on the prospect of domestic modernization is being prepared by the Council for National Strategy led by Joseph Diskin. The Institute of Modern Development (INSOR) is working on a report on a similar topic. You can read the interview of Boris Makarenko, one of its authors, on these pages. Moreover we have published extracts from the report on **Political Hegemony of the Majority by the Political Criticism Guild**.

It is evident that the ‘genre of report’ is similar to the petition genre in Imperial China, when pressure groups strived to affirm the priority of their opinions over their competitors in the eyes of the supreme power through reports on the state of things in the country. The intensity of the creative work in this style grew significantly during the ‘transition era.’

HOW THE TERM ‘CONSERVATISM’ LACKS ENERGY

Mikhail Vinogradov



Our report on ‘Conservative Modernization’ (in co-authorship with Dmitry Orlov and Dmitry Badovsky) is an attempt to revive the genre of situational analysis of key political processes in modern Russia. Unfortunately, the main criticism aimed at its authors had to do with the ‘ideological’ part, where certain polemics were included.

Today, United Russia is in search of its own political bay. Discourse over the ideology form a part of this search. **While the term ‘conservatism’ is comfortable for the leaders of United Russia, it means little by itself.** The fact that the term ‘conservatism’ was chosen among many other options indicates that neither the society nor the elites have an ideal country that can be used as an example. That is why a break has been taken to form such an ideal.

At the present moment, the term ‘conservatism’ also lacks energy in terms of its effect on public rela-

tions. But it is rather the problem of technology than of ideology.

The government became ‘conservative’ in 2005 and as a result of monetization anxiety it was decided that stability, rather than reforms, was necessary. In matter of fact, this decision was not the government’s but rather that of the majority of the political elite. If we compare the staff of deputies to the staff of the government, then the term ‘conservative’ suits the State Duma much more.

Nevertheless, today, the influence of liberalism as an ideology is underestimated. **The Russian elite treats liberal recipes as the most tried and tested and is inclined to fall back upon them at least once every few years.** The rational part of the Russian elite has no ideal comparable to that of a liberal (or even utopian liberal) ideal in its appeal, and as state corporations the competitive trends quickly amount to nothing. However, many of the problems of today’s liberalism are directly rooted in its appeal and the virtual lack of options when it comes to liberal ideas.

In modern Russia, clans and groups are stronger than parties; and there is no reason to expect this situation to change.

The key aspect characterizing the force factor in politics is the excess

of power in the hands of force structures and the lack of restraint in their actions.

In the short term, the parties could compete with the power of these force components in two fields. One of those being within the regional network through broadcasting information in a bottom-up and top-down manner, and secondly through forming personnel reserve. Ideally, there should also be a bay of parliament control over the power bodies’ work, including the force bodies, yet currently the political readiness for such an undertaking is nonexistent. **It is still too early to question the competition between party control and the control of force.** Moreover, while there are supporters of the force ideology in any party, including the force enterprise, the spirit of this practice is rooted predominantly in the elite. Nevertheless, if the enemies of this idea (including those within UR) demonstrate enough will and insistence, there will certainly be a chance to put an end to ‘force control.’ ■

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