

## UNITED RUSSIA IS A PART OF AN OPERATIONAL STATE



MIKHAIL BARSCHEVSKY is plenipotentiary representative of the Russian Federation government in the Constitutional Court, the Supreme Court and the Higher Arbitration Court of the Russian Federation, Professor at the Moscow State Law Academy, Doctor of Law, Honoured Lawyer of the Russian Federation, and 1-class State Councillor of the Russian Federation

Exclusively for RJ

United Russia is not an independent political power and its leaders have noted numerous times in various contexts that United Russia is a party created for the support of Vladimir Putin, proving the dependence on UR.

In my opinion, **United Russia is necessary today; it performs a very important function. In many ways, United Russia is virtually a part of an operational Russian state.**

Objectively, United Russia acts as a part of a drive mechanism that allows the decisions made in the Center to be fulfilled at the local level.

Today there is both a personalized tandem and there is a single team. However, one part of this team works for Dmitry Medvedev while the other works for Putin. Of course, members of the team have their personal likes and dislikes, and while some support Medvedev and others are for Putin, there is no antagonism towards the other or any idealization of the idol, but is merely a case of personal human preference. The same team works both in the

Russian White House and in the Kremlin. Some UR members are a part of this team, and others are satellites of it. Therefore, UR is by no means an independent player.

Lest we forget that the USA, Great Britain, and Japan have had one party rule over the course of decades. It seems that these are the objective rules of societal development during a transition period. That is why, **today, I make no particular claims about United Russia but state that it being a mechanism for state rule, serves its proper function.**

Nevertheless, it is inadmissible to preserve this situation, as then it moves beyond merely promoting the fulfillment of the decisions of the executive authority and instead becomes **a power monolith dictating its decisions to the executive authority.** Therefore, a second competitive party is alright and it can be extremely dangerous and harmful when there is an absence of one.

A party only reflects the processes of the society in which it operates. ■

## UNITED RUSSIA IS A PARTY OF CONSERVATIVE VALUES



MAXIM SHEVCHENKO is a Russian journalist, a member of the Public Chamber of the Russian Federation, and host of the TV show *Judge for Yourself* on the *First* channel

Exclusively for RJ

What group could have more influence than United Russia? There cannot be a more influential party than the party that controls all legislative bodies - but is it also a counter-agent of government? This question is more difficult to answer. Since United Russia is not a close-knit political structure there are people within it with a range of markedly different views.

**A party should be an independent political force.** Whether its opinions match the opinions of the government, which it should form as the ruling party, or not is another question.

United Russia is conservative because it stands for some conservative values. The government does not speak about values, but it does speak about different aspects of activity. From this standpoint our government is rather liberal given its monetarist program of action. **The party understands conservatism as ethical issues.**

In terms of ethics and morals, the opinion of United Russia may coincide with the opinion of the government. Yet in terms of parties' conservatism (for example, the

conservatism of the British Conservative Party), we probably also mean conservatism in the economic sense, not only the fact that the British Labour Party supports same-sex marriage while the Conservatives do not.

**Russia needs a genuine two-party system.** It would be the next step towards the country's development after the positive role that United Russia played in consolidating the elite stratum. It seems to me that we now have enough forces to start developing the political system, but that this requires the necessary political will. And this means not only the will of the President or Prime Minister, but the will of the Russian political classes as a whole.

The political classes must take responsibility for being ready and able to take political action on a national development scale; they must realize their responsibility to the country and prove that they are the vanguard of society, not just a collection of people who want to profit from business activities under cover of politics, or from politics under cover of business. ■