

populism in the name of law and the state. The weariness and uncertainty of the father of this system is apparent in his proposal to establish a ‘National people’s front’. In a way that is interesting for the observer, the reaction is suddenly making the move to dismantle everything that it used to protect before.

On the eve of the elections, the ruling party ‘United Russia’ has been announced as being too weak to gain the majority in the State Duma. This is an unbelievable statement for the leader of the party to make, when you think about it! The choice has been made in favour of a despicable political annex with second-rate staff consisting of manipulated GONGO-activists.

The project of the prospective ‘Front’ will stifle the real party of power, which has already been triumphed over by the radicals. **The declaration concerning the front being established by Putin does not even mention the word ‘state’; instead ‘security’ is named to be the central motive.** However, over the last century we have tested several political options that have set security in opposition to the state, willingly sacrificing the latter for the former. As a result, the country had neither security, nor the state at the end of the last century.

4.

A ‘National People’s Front’, nominally established to consolidate pro-Putin forces actually serves as an impediment to this consolidation. It annihilates the legitimacy of the party system and – potentially – the legitimacy of the institution of presidential power. The Front defies investments into the constitutional state for the sake of temporarily strengthening the leader’s position. But a regime of personal rule is not the system that President Vladimir Putin and President Dmitry Medvedev have built. By opening the front in defence of himself, Putin will have to undergo change, and these changes will surprise even his followers.

It is probable that Putin thinks that, having broken his former model, he will be able to once again rely on his former charisma. But it’s gone. It was bred by a one-time request from the masses and a unique electoral reaction of 2000. Now he will have to reign in a different way. For instance, by simulating wide-scale lower strata outbreaks.

It is useful and instructive for a historian to see **how the reaction in Russia has once again failed to stop a revolution and, equipped with progressivist instruments, the revolution is ripening inside this power itself.** Twenty years on Russia remains a (post)revolutionary Russia. This, in effect, makes the future Russian state less and less certain. ■

Exclusively for the Yaroslavl Forum

THE CONSERVATIVES STEAL, AND REACTIONARIES DON’T?



SERGEY KARAGANOV – a Russian political scientist, the chairman of the general committee of the Council on Foreign and Defense Policy, member of the Council under Russia’s President on Civil Society Institutions and Human Rights. He took part in the Global Policy Forum in Yaroslavl in 2010.

Exclusively for the Yaroslavl Forum

Reactionaries, as a rule, are all those who want to finish a progressive process by cruel means. In Russia, such reactionaries can be found in parts of the Communist Party, in Russian national movements, and in the part of the political elite that, due to its relative paucity, cannot dominate in the political field. This part of the elite is actually as marginal, or perhaps more so, than liberal groups. Consequently, these reactionary groups have little to no influence whatsoever. Sure, they can utter some sounds here and there, but nobody listens to them. These groups are quite cowardly, they are afraid of liberals, which stems from the fact that the liberals at least have some sort of agenda.

Things have not always been like this. At several points in our history reactionary forces in fact dominated the political discourse. For example, from 1995 to 1997, reactionaries were a strong political force. At that time our country was facing a need to choose whether to go back to the past or to go on delivering the undertakings initiated

after the collapse of the USSR.

But it should be understood that **for the last decade it has been the reactionary and conservative political agenda that has been exercised.** Many democratic liberties have been scaled down, vertical distribution of power has been restored, and a forceful, brutal, and successful principle has been restored in our nation’s foreign policy. It is a consequence of all this that the potential agenda for these reactionary groups has mostly if not entirely been used up.

Due to the changes of the past decade, both the people and a significant part of the elite have turned into conservatives with a reactionary stance. They do not have as a goal the dismantling of the modernization agenda, they just are not willing to exercise it.

As for present-day conservatives, who have set themselves up as such within the public space, they can hardly become reactionaries in the true sense. **Their shortcoming is the desire for theft. This is what constitutes the obstacle in transforming conservatives into new reactionaries.** ■