

TOWARDS THE PUBLIC CONSENSUS ON DECENT LIFE

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The world has been living through an 'epoch of instability' ever since the second half of the 20th century. The deconstruction of the colonial system in the 1960s resulted in many African countries being plunged into an abyss of civil wars that they have only barely begun to emerge from today. During the 80-s and 90-s in Europe there was the breakup of the Soviet Union and the collapse of the socialist system. Now the 'epoch of instability' continues with the events in North Africa, the consequences of which have forced many European politicians to make rather incisive statements about the potential future of a European Union that is going through hard times.

We can assume that the future of the EU depends on whether a new policy will be proposed to replace a failing policy of multiculturalism. So far there is no new policy, only a

declaration of the possible abandonment of multiculturalism. But for me things look even more disturbing because multiculturalism policy, even if it is to be considered a failure, nevertheless structured the problem of interethnic relations and thus allowed Europeans to cohabit with numerous migrants from former European colonies. Multiculturalism offered rules of the game, which helped to prevent open ethnic conflicts. If these rules are rejected now, what rules will be proposed instead? **Since no new rules of the game have been offered so far, we can assume that the policy coming up to take the place of multiculturalism will be of an anti-democratic nature.**

In such circumstances Russia has nothing to learn from Europe in the field of interethnic relations. Indeed, we have vast experience in the implementation of positive national policy. Besides, our problems in the sphere of interethnic relations lie in a somewhat different area than those of European countries. Above all else, Russian society faces problems of common identity. This is especially acute in the territories that have degraded the most since 1991 (most notably, North Caucasus). Secondly, Russian society has problems with an adequate apprehension of the future. Citizens wish to visualize their life. When a country has a vector of development, citizens 'build' themselves into it: they understand what awaits them tomorrow and in ten years, and their life becomes more comprehensible and more conscious as a result. Nowadays, feelings of abandonment prevail in the mental outlook of a major part of the Russian population, which has begun to spill over into different forms of protest. One of the most notable protests of this kind was the protest on Manezh square in December 2010 that united the most passionate part of any society — the youth. The protest demon-

strated that one of the valves to leak out unrest has already opened. Other valves may open as well, for example, the valve of protest against the government. This protest is more likely the less certain is the perspective of development for the country.

This was demonstrated in 1968 when in Europe and the USA the youth took to the streets for revolt. It occurred under the circumstances of absolute material well-being. One would think that such conditions lead to absolute social serenity; but instead a heavy youth protest broke out. It was not a dispute over welfare or a decent life that was all of a sudden obtained. No, it was because post-war objectives had been reached and the youth felt there was no longer any perspective that applied to them that mass protest burst out. Tension and protest — they all stem from here.

To prevent such protests **society needs to work out public consensus on the question of what modern life is and what decent life is.** While we can more or less come to terms about the definition of modern life, it is very doubtful we can do it with regards to decent life. Parameters of decent life are defined by moral and ethic values that lie at the heart of a nation's development. We can set 60 thousand dollars GDP as a benchmark, or a benchmark could also be some set of intellectual values.

I am sure people are searching for this 'something else' now — in the most developed countries as well, and especially in the USA. The age of consumer society, by all accounts, is a closed chapter. What will the new chapter be about? We are at the stage where we cannot ask the right questions; and being able to answer them is still a long way away. ■

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