

THE YAROSLAVL FORUM: TOWARDS A NEW IDEOLOGY OF NATIONAL RELATIONS

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The world has been in a state of never-ending instability since the collapse of its bipolar structure. For some time, the United States has claimed the functions of the world’s only great power and its position as the foundation of a new stability. But the events of the past few years have revealed the USA’s failure on a major scale. Moreover, the United States has, in turn, itself become a factor of global instability.

The upheavals in Northern Africa and the waves of out-migration that they have caused are all manifestations of further global divisions. While it is not tantamount to a new epoch, it is a new stage in an ongoing process, which is at least twenty years old now. One other manifestation of the same process is the coordinated announcement by various European politicians of the failure of multiculturalism policies.

It is clear today that **Europe is having a hard time coping with a newly-**

emerged situation in the area of migration and interethnic relations.

Moreover, the economic crisis has seriously aggravated these problems. The problems of migration in Europe and other countries used to be resolved with money. There was plenty of money and addressing problems could be postponed. Now there is no money. This state of affairs can hardly be called stability, since the moment a system enters economic rough waters and the moment that employment, business and market competition become intensified, all of the problems that purported to previously have been ‘successfully’ solved have once again surfaced with a foul smell to them. Hence the rise of nationalism in France, the aggravated situation with respect to Roma in Italy, and various immigrants issues in Germany, etc. There are plenty of examples.

The rise in nationalistic sentiment within Russia stands somewhat apart from the events in the rest of Europe. Russian nationalism has a long history. Its current intensification is rather due, on the one side, to the general atmosphere of an ideological vacuum and the lack of public discussion of issues that matter to society. On the other, this is provoked by the failure of the ruling authorities and the entire political system to provide a timely response to the significant changes occurring in the social structure of major Russian cities, especially Moscow and St. Petersburg.

Moreover, the situation in our country was initially given little consideration. Also some **strict ideological taboos exist among Russian intellectuals, dating back to the nineteenth century, which effectively block any discussion of the Russian question** or interethnic relations. In a certain way, these taboos contribute to fortifying an inferiority complex in the minds of those who label themselves as Russians. There are certainly negative consequences of this development.

Our multi-ethnic society will become even more so in the future if

current demographic tendencies are to be continued. Demographers claim that, by 2050, the deficit of all sorts of labour power in the Russian Federation will amount to twenty million people. If Russia is to proceed with its plans regarding its economic growth and development, it will need an additional twenty million workers.

Where will these additional workers come from? It’s quite obvious that they will be provided on account of people from the countries of Central Asia and the former Soviet Union. However, Russia’s qualified labour resources from Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova are almost exhausted already. Central Asia is not capable of providing much more in spite of high birth rates in these countries. This means that we need to find new solutions and approaches. Is our society ready for such a situation and is the state ready for it?

Russian society will have to come up with a totally different ideology and practice in terms of inter-ethnic relations. This is true, both with regard to forming tolerant attitudes between its various national groups (encouraging a community culture) and with regard to forming political and social institutions that are able to regulate and harmonise these relations.

An earnest discussion is inevitable, as well as a sober reconsideration of the existing reality. Unfortunately, until the present day, we have not seen any serious discussion taking place. Instead, what we see are rather inconsequential polemic surges of emotions.

In view of the aforesaid, the Global Policy Forum in Yaroslavl, which will feature a discussion on ‘Democratic Institutions in Polyethnic Societies’ is both important and timely. I think that the Yaroslavl Forum can have a great impact if we succeed in bringing together truly knowledgeable experts who are competent in the issue at hand. ■

Exclusively for the Yaroslavl Forum