

## 7. The problem of a movement leader

A change in the context implies generational change and, consequently, replacement of movement leaders. There are still a good many politicians on the national political arena whose leadership mentality practically has not altered over the past 25 years. Such mentality is inherent chiefly to the communist, liberal democratic and social democratic factions whose leaders have been already elected to the new State Duma. One more thing is of no less importance: the mentality of leaders of the so-called non-system opposition is altering [15], but *slower than the changes taking place in society required*. Democracy is initially a process of learning, and it is an infinite process.

To begin with, the tactics of the leaders of the old political opposition lagged behind the tactics of the leaders of new, civic opposition, that is, network tactics which were practiced by rank-and-file activists. Second, opposition politicians wanted fair elections, chiefly in order to create equal competition positions for all political parties, while network-based organizations of civil society had been long practicing ‘non-political politics’ (U. Beck) resting upon horizontal links. The alternative agenda was worked out precisely here. That is why the former’s tactical lagging behind the latter was quite logical. The former, the ‘first-wave’ opposition politicians, fought for the construction of a fair parliamentary and presidential election mechanism, whereas the latter, relying on local protest groups, wanted to create a mechanism of *countrywide* network pressure on government structures aimed at democratization of the whole political system. Third, for the first-wave opposition politicians, part of whom had already been members of the parliaments of previous convocations, engagement in politics was akin to playing a card game: having completed (lost) the first round, let’s start a second one.

As to maturing ‘network opposition’, the continuity of action was crucially important. They had to build up an extra-parliamentary pressure continually because this was the only instrument of political struggle available to them to which the authorities did respond. At the same time, the ‘network opposition’ opposition was to enlighten and to mobilize their local allies and sympathizers. A round table modelled by the Polish Solidarity of the 1980s, suggested by some of the first-wave oppositionists and to which government representatives consented, would have been a step back since the right to draw up an ‘agenda’ belonged to the power elite. Fourth, the employment of direct democracy methods is probably unavoidable at a certain

stage of such struggle. These are not mass protest meetings only but, more importantly, structured pressure on all echelons of power. Fifth, the question when 'it is too early' and when 'it is too late' stood prominently in the Russian political discourse from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. This question keeps its relevancy today. But another, no less important question, is practically not discussed: what political colouring should network power assume? It will be democratic, conservative, national-patriotic or some other? In my view, if network power establishes itself in the foreseeable future, it will be anything but democratic. Because 'democracy' in the current Russian version means mass top-down organized support to the first candidate to presidency and the policy he is going to pursue.

As to the leaders of the 'new middle-class', they want political freedoms and fair competition, but lack the sense of responsibility and empathy to 'others' – they are individualists. Neither do they have an ideology of their own. This middle class has been formed in consumer society and therefore it is alien to Russian culture. There are leaders in fashions, pops, sports and glamour life in consumer society, but there are no real political leaders because of the absence of competitive environment where they might have been raised. The pre-election debates featured on TV looked more like TV shows than serious discussions on the political course and social programmes. The 'new middle-class' have not been briefed in democracy and do not know what types of democratic leaders come to the fore in the periods of political upsurge. Democracy had been proclaimed in Russian Federation for more than 25 years on end, but almost all declarations remained on paper.

On the other hand, the above young people paying short visits to foreign countries actually saw only the façade of Western democracy. There had been no democratic traditions in tsarist Russia for many centuries except for peasant communities perhaps. There may be a long way from the onset of de-sacralisation of rulers today to democracy as a fundamental principle of social system, an immense distance in fact. There are no new brilliant political leaders so far. In the opinion of Vladislav Inozemtsev, a leading Russian political analyst, today's leader 'must be not a politician who has dropped out of power earlier, but a young agitator who is striving to get there... Russia needs its own Vaclav Havel, an unblemished intellectual who has never collaborated with the government and has never been drawn in it' (Inozemtsev, 2011: 3). But Russia has no such people – all Russian intellectuals have already been involved in power in one way or another. Finally, in

my opinion, *democracy as a way of life* is closely connected with the quantity and quality of labour of its bearers. The foundations of democracy cannot be built under conditions of redistributive economy (Bessonova, 2006), where the value of the honest labour of creative minority is ignored.

## **8. The power elite response**

As many democratic observers and organizers of the above protest meetings stated, in order to extinguish a protest wave the power elite usually employed three successful tactics. The first was deception and secrecy. The authorities promised the concerned public to investigate the case, to set up special commissions (a parliamentary commission of inquiry, in particular), they invited politically engaged experts, worked in full secrecy and many months later said that the protestors had been wrong and they, ie the authorities, were right, acting in strict accordance with law. The second tactics aimed at breaking the unity of leading protest forces into numerous competing groups. The publicity (*glasnost*) of all actions of the too adversarial sides could be the only remedy against such tactics (Parchomenko, 2011). Last but not least was the setting up of the All-Russian popular front and formation from it of a mix of counter-movements, rallies and meetings in support of the existing political system.

Theoretically, the authorities could use several strategies to meet the protestors' challenges. First, they could try to guide the process of social renovation themselves. But for this they had to leave the cocoon and stop shying away from their fellow citizens. Another variant: to get away by chucking a few important but not key figures. Plus to mobilize Russian provinces by spreading a myth that the protestors are rich, uppish and fed-up people. A more advantageous variant might be leadership of movement toward modernization, but this necessitates a partner-like dialogue with the opponents, to which the government is not accustomed yet. Finally, the variant of 'tightening the screws' in the atmosphere of all-out corruption is viewed by experts as an unlikely one (Gorbachev and Samarina, 2011: 1, 3).

What actually happened? At first, the government pretended that nothing had happened at all: there had been and would be protests, but the government strategy would remain the same notwithstanding. Taking the lead of the opposition movement was out of the question. One more princi-