

A CLASS OF RULERS AND OWNERS

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'Political Class'

Bureaucracy is the ruling class in Russia that emerged during the formation of Moscow as a centralised state, which took place at the time when grand dukes began calling themselves 'tsars'. There is no convincing evidence, or even theories, that actually refute this thesis.

The changes that occurred in the ruling class over the last six hundred years can be considered minimal. **In Imperial Russia, in the Soviet Union, and in modern-day Russia, we are dealing with the same ruling class.** Bolsheviks seemed to radically reform the ruling class of the country. But the Bolshevik-inspired state was not built up from scratch. Indeed, there was a great renewal in 1917-1918 from a physical perspective, but it wasn't significant enough to break such centuries-old traditions.

If we speak about what has changed in the ruling class over the last few centuries, we should concentrate our attention on its social picture. Until 1917, the ruling class was noble-bureaucratic with a considerable inclusion of the industrial business forces in existence at the time of Bolshevik Revolution. The ruling class of the Soviet period was a party-oriented and nomenclatorial-bureaucratic one. The modern ruling class of Russia is oligarchic-bureaucratic. The latter differs from its predecessors, not because it functions in a liberal-democratic market system, but because it's a possessive class. The Soviet ruling class managed all the resources and distributed the national budget. These functions are also a part of bureaucratic competence in global practice at present. Today in Russia, the state is not separated from property and property is not separated from the state. Officials possess property, often secretly, and oligarchs have direct political power. It is also not a secret that there are a number of members in the Council of the Federation (and these are politicians due to their status), who are, at the same time, millionaires and billionaires who have not given up direct control of their business interests. In other words, **the ruling class doesn't try to conceal its possessive attitude towards the country.**

There is a cold civil war continuing today in Russia. However, nowadays, it is fought with other tactics and for other reasons. One example of this pertains to an issue that has remained since the Great Patriotic War. For some, Vlasov is a hero, while others deem him to be a traitor. The

split, which exists because of this, is naturally projected onto the ruling class. Some people suggest setting up a monument to Vlasov because he fought against Stalin. Others suggest hanging him one more time. It appears that the ruling class is still divided between Westernists and Slavophiles.

This is supplemented with the clan struggle that exists between oligarchic political groups. In its pure form, this struggle began during the 1990s, when there was an open redistribution of state property. Today the property is already distributed, but it is constantly being re-distributed. Conflicts between the clans are arranged according to different criteria. Regional clans fight against a number of federal ones, and there is also struggle between clans formed on a national basis. These struggles are tempered by a **desire for profit, which consolidates the ruling class and puts it in opposition to the whole society. This desire trumps the antagonism between its various clans.** They can put each other in prison, without having divided the property amongst themselves, but they can also perform very cohesively in opposition to the rest of society. This also doesn't mean that this will always exist. Such a situation poses a great danger to the integrity of Russia. Such contradictions can ultimately tear the country to pieces.

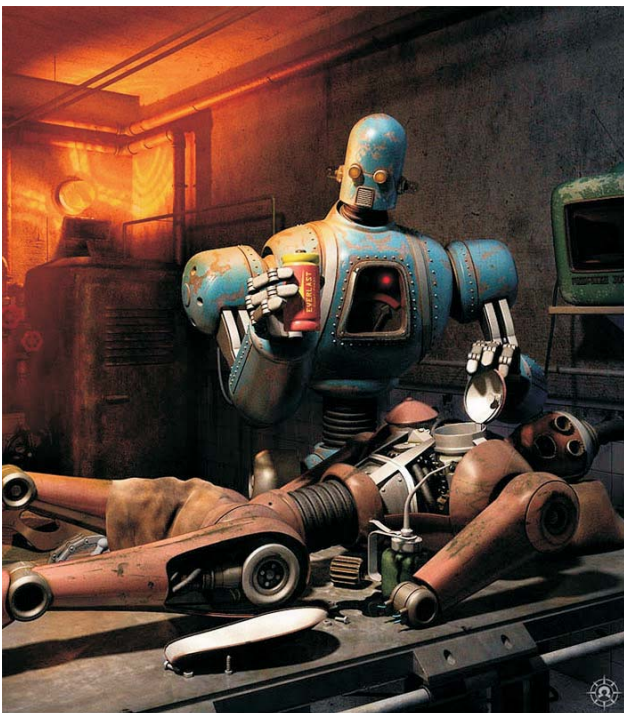
Why do I, alongside a number of others, actually welcome the bureaucratic principles embodied in the person of Vladimir Putin? I welcome them because, unfortunately, our society still cannot manage to restrain the instincts of the ruling class. At the same time, an increase in antagonism within the country can tear it apart. The system created by Putin hardly resembles democracy in its pure form, while also putting someone above the ruling class — someone

who can suppress its private interests. It reduces the situation entailing a war of everybody against everyone to a framework that is more acceptable. Russia needs Putin or another bureaucrat who has similar abilities, in order to ensure that representatives of the ruling class will not detriment each other and will not rip the country to pieces. One should be happy if a new mechanism of governance should emerge. Currently, there is no other mechanism other than the existing centuries-old tradition of state management.

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Bureaucracy is a government-formative class, which has always exploited Russia, while, at the same time, maintaining the country's unity. Who was it that restored the unity of Russia in the 1920s? Can this be credited to the unity of the masses? Of course, they also strived for this, but the organisational decisions were actually being made by the bureaucracy of that time. It was the bureaucracy that considered this territory necessary and that it would be common. Bolsheviks preserved the state with their iron hand. This sharply contrasts to the situation today, when the ruling class is not succeeding in consolidating the country, but ends up splitting it more and more. We can also speak about the existing and imaginary contradictions between Dmitry Medvedev and Vladimir Putin for a long time. Vladimir Putin is a stronger figure, as his political experience and history is greater than Medvedev's. Putin has been in big politics for eleven and a half years. The country needs Putin or a similar figure before the Russian ruling class finally stops tearing Russia into pieces. ■

Vitaly Tretyakov was speaking with Liubov Ulianova



PEOPLE AT THE TOP OF THE FOOD CHAIN



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Exclusively for RJ

Bureaucracy is a system for the division of labor within a sphere of decision making. It was initially created by the government for its own sake, and only later did bureaucratic mechanisms spread widely. Bureaucratic methods are characterized by a division of privileges, a hierarchy, that acts according to the directions in the framework of instructions on service, the account of state documents, control of activity, as well as other functions. All of these methods are used everywhere and any management activity today is impossible without them.

This is not the case with Russia. This is about the other side of the fence. Unfortunately, on this side of the fence everything is more complicated.

For the Soviet man, the word 'bureaucracy' meant procrastination, endless waiting in dusty corridors, incomprehensible documents that needed to be completed, dreadful certificates available only from very distant institutions, and a whole host of Soviet nonsense. **Nowadays, the amount of small, everyday inconveniences have been reduced, but the power of bureaucrats has increased incomparably.** This fact is so great and so obvious that nobody dares to dispute it. 'They can do anything. Just anything.'

Of course, there are people in such a system — those at the bottom of the food chain — who are eaten by

everybody, the so-called 'common people.' There is the predatory 'cop shop' and secret services able to kill or rob anyone. There are 'authorities' of different levels that possess 'immovable property' and 'budgets.' **But the backbone and the soul of the mechanism is the hierarchy of bureaucrats, who possess the most deadly weapons of all — stamps and signatures.** The results of every robbery and obscenity need to be formalized sooner or later, and the bureaucratic line has a right to formalize them. Moreover, while it may be possible to come down on a specific bureaucrat, it is impossible to come down on the whole organizing system. The bureaucratic system can ask as much as it pleases for official registration and its price is only limited by the price of the legalizing resource. Legalization is unavoidable and necessary as nobody will pay two rubles for what costs one ruble, no one will even pay fifty kopecks. But the price of bribery can be low, especially if everyone needs the same legalization and the resource is passed constantly from one person to the next.

Of course, the word '**debu-reaucratization**' in such a system has absolutely no meaning. If the state machinery profits from its ruling position, the load on society will remain the same no matter how you reduce the bureaucratic apparatus. ■