

THERE SHOULD BE MORE THAN ONE MOSCOW IN RUSSIA

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RJ *Does the public have any opportunity to influence the politics of a megalopolis?*

The budget of Moscow is approximately the same size as that of Poland. In other words, if we judge in financial terms, Moscow and its surrounding region is like an entire state within a state. The public's influence in politics here is

the same as elsewhere in the country. However, the level of protest in Moscow has grown threefold during the last six months.

It is true that at some point city authorities were visibly putting the city in order and their actions were duly appreciated. But **when city authorities started to destroy historical monuments and private houses the resistance became inevitable.**

You will rarely see such issues provoking expressions of protest in megalopolises elsewhere in the world. This is because in other cities the electability of a mayoral candidate presupposes that he or she share a certain harmony with the city populace. In New York or Los Angeles, for example, the issues that inspire protests tend to be more national or even global.

London is a multinational city, and apparently there is little solidarity amongst its inhabitants. But you will find solidarity amongst Parisians. It is mainly the actions of corrupt city authorities that provoke protests there.

It should be noted that, as a rule, megalopolises are vastly corrupt, much more so than the national government. That's because megalopolises are full of real money in the form of construction budgets and contract allocation. Corruption is inevitably present in such conditions. We have corruption in the megalopolises of Italy, France, Britain, and America, with only a slight decrease among Scandinavian countries. Ultimately, the struggle against corruption, which occupies an important part in city politics, is not a subject for the public to deal with.

RJ *Would it perhaps be possible to bring back elections by uniting Moscow with its region into one entity, and re-running the mayoral elections?*

I think that elections are a must. Because, without elections, serious issues are only resolved through lobbying. Remember that Luzhkov's policies were once very favorable for the city when he was being elected by its citizens.

It is quite possible that the private interests of lobbyists actually do influence Moscow politics. This is partly due to the fact that the Moscow Duma consists of a very small number of people. It's likely that no other city council in the world has such a small number of deputies. Electing thirty suitable people that no one knows should not be a problem given the availability of administrative methods for political pressure. The city council should definitely consist of respected people who have their own opinion on municipal issues.

RJ *Is the corporate concept of representation possible, like when we had elections from public organizations and famous people became deputies?*

I would likely applaud such a rather non-democratic option. **Corporate representation on the national level is certainly a crazy idea. But why not implement it on a city level?** Why not elect the city council out of a pool of deputies from trade unions, business people, creative associations, and universities? Naturally, they will be more uncompromising on certain issues and their positions would not always coincide with those of the administration.

RJ *'The Guild of political critique' has recently produced a report on the necessity of creating a party of the 'intellectual class' in Russia. Do you think such an initiative makes sense?*

This initiative would make sense if we were talking about the proper representation of the intellectual

class. There was a time when I proposed the creation of a creative union. The project failed because the union was hijacked by people with radical democratic views, who demanded the expulsion of academicians from its ranks. What sort of a creative union would it be without academicians or institute directors? As a result, we were left without the support of the Presidium of the Academy of Sciences as well as the institutes and the project failed. However, nowadays we can see certain evolving conditions that favor the creation of such a party.

Meanwhile, we do not see our writers, scientists, or members of the artistic elite properly represented. Picasso, for example, was a man of quite radical political views and a member of the Communist party. He was never shy to voice his independent opinion, which would resonate throughout society. However, today we can hardly speak of such a thing. The cause of this lies with the global media that is too busy promoting photo-models, pop-stars, and politicians.

In the 1990's, I took part in the creation of the SLON party (People's Union for Education and Science) initiated by Vyacheslav Igrunov, but who unfortunately had neither the necessary administrative support nor money for the project. Igrunov did not agree with my vision of the particular association. It was my point of view that, at the creation stage, the intellectual networks left over from Soviet creative unions were still operable. I thought it was possible to reanimate them. I urged him to engage some intellectual leaders from those networks in order to attract people to them and to our party. However, he did not seem to grasp the matter, and those networks are nonexistent today.

RJ *Do you regard the 'focal' model to have potential for modernization?*

It is simply impossible to modernize a big country in a uniform manner. It is possible to modernize Holland or Switzerland evenly, but when you come to UK, France, or Italy it is not so. Particularly in

Italy there is great disparity. France has also developed very unevenly. UK is developed fairly evenly, but in the US you find as many as almost a dozen global centers, with rather undeveloped spaces between them.

The bigger the country the greater is its developmental disparity.

I rather dislike the expression 'focal modernization' because it doesn't point to the heart of the issue. We're not talking of a 'focal' point producing this or that result, but rather many different centers simultaneously hosting banks, universities, hi-tech and fashion enterprises etc — a country in miniature. In the US, this model is fully implemented. If you live in Los Angeles you are in no worse condition than if you lived in San Francisco, Boston, New York, or somewhere in Atlanta.

In Russia, we actually have a similar modernization process in the shape of developing 'global portals' because **by all parameters, Moscow qualifies as a global portal** and it is also a political center.

As for the 'scientific centres' which lately have become fashionable to speculate about in Russia, there should be a very rich intellectual life present so that people will not think about anything else but their work. For this you need to amass a critical number of qualified specialists in such cities.

Creating a critical mass of experts in specific places that would make living there more interesting than in Moscow would be a real challenge.



RJ *Is it possible to democratically secure the preservation of the uneven development of modernization?*

This is a very difficult question. You should know that in China this is solved by shutting off certain zones with barbed wire and not allowing the rest of the people in. I do not think that Russia will require such drastic measures, after all the demographic pressure in our country is not so big. Those who were able to abandon small cities for the centers of urbanization were gone a long time ago. Russia is in need of a dozen global centers, as many as twenty perhaps, that would 'draw in' whatever is around them. In this case, democracy would not be threatened. It is important to note that **countries are rated by the availability of their 'global portals.'** Whenever a country gets its 'global portals' it is promoted to the highest ranks of a globalized state. If a country lacks 'portals,' it is doomed to forever dwell on the outskirts of civilization. ■

Victor Sergeev was speaking with Boris Mezhuhev