

work in small rural municipalities. As the saying goes “it is as broad as it is long.” This situation doesn’t depend on the size of the city. If citizens are active in any country, they are similarly active both in huge metropolises and in small rural municipalities. Conversely, if they behave passively and delegate their rights to executive power instead, this also tends to happen everywhere.

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If we talk about social forces that are capable of opposing the strength of bureaucracy and big business, I would say that they do really exist. It is obvious though, that their activity is local and extremely sporadic. For example, there is an organisation called ArchNadzor (Architectural Control), which struggles for the protection of architectural monuments and, sometimes, it is also quite effective in its efforts. Nevertheless, this organisation cannot cover all lines of activism. Political parties are better adapted to this system in terms of their carrying out activity to the fullest extent. Social organisations do not have the same opportunities. Some environmental organisations are also focused on Moscow, but they are also extremely weak. There are initiative-based groups of city-dwellers, but, as a rule, they only tend to demonstrate interest in their own backyard.

Opposition on this level is very important. Thanks to this opposition and our efforts, we have managed to roll back the tide of high-rise development, and to exclude some urban planning projects from the General Plan, such as the earlier-intended construction of waste incinerators.

As for the intellectual stratum of Moscow, **a significant part of Moscow intelligentsia is directly dependent on the Mayor’s Office.** Among them there are leading figures, such as the heads of theatres, museums, universities, and state-financed organisations working in the sphere of cultural activity. Together, these individuals constitute a rather solid layer of the intelligentsia. In this context, their support for the Mayor is inevitable. As for the part of the intelligentsia that doesn’t enjoy such support, it essentially behaves like a firm opposition. In reality, this part of the Moscow intelligentsia is, after all, a minority - a protest minority. ■

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THE FINAL REHEARSAL FOR THE CHANGE OF MOSCOW MAYOR



VLADIMIR PASTUKHOV

is a Russian political scientist and the Scientific Director of the Institute of Law and Public Policy

Exclusively for RJ

The reasons behind the current outburst of the ‘protest movement’ by societal figures in the city of Moscow against Yuriy Luzhkov do not directly correlate with the work that he is carrying out here and now. Today, Mayor Luzhkov is not doing anything conceptually new in comparison with what he did three, five or even ten years ago. I believe something else here has happened. **The so-called ‘intellectual class’ or more simply, the successors of Soviet intellectuals, are sensing a power vacuum and the possibility of filling this gap from within their own ranks.**

Russia has never had what can be considered a civil society. From times immemorial, this role has been practically played by a ‘general public’ that is closely linked with the country’s political players. The general public is, in effect, the soft intellectual underbelly of Russian power. It tends to treat leadership with traditional piety, but the powers that be also listen attentively to how things are happening below at the lower levels. They want to know “does it ring true there”? With few exceptions made by infrequent revolutions, the tone is usually defined by representatives of the intellectual elite, who tend to be closer to representatives of the power structures. This very elite is still active today and its first blow came, directed against Yuriy Luzhkov when they finally felt that his power is beginning to wane.

Indeed, **within power circles, opportunists have revealed themselves. Once they noticed the rising opposition within the ‘intellectual circles’, they simply started to try on the Moscow mayor’s shoes**

to see if they fit. These two processes have converged and have combined with resonance. As a result, an illusion has been created to the effect that there is an ‘opposition’ per se to the dominant influence of the Moscow bureaucracy. Against this background, I think that the central government will sooner or later endorse the idea of sacrificing Luzhkov for ‘new political sentiment’ in order to confirm its commitment to taking a ‘new course’.

Does this movement bear any relation to the problem of the Moscow’s municipal administration’s self-governance? Unfortunately, I think that it doesn’t. Luzhkov’s substitute will not end up bringing about any particular change in relations between the bureaucracy and the general public. It is just the case that **some bureaucrats will replace others.** They may be either more progressive or more reactionary than is the case with Luzhkov. I think that the most likely scenario is one where everything will remain pretty much the same.

The substitution of the Moscow administration could, however, effectively inspire the usually cowardly ‘intellectual class’ to take action. In fact, the federal government should answer one question when it comes time to make its difficult staffing decision. **Is it possible to create a local revolution in a particular supercity, or once this has started in the capital city, will such a revolution inevitably spread all over the country?** This leads to the main question. Is the Russian Government ready for this revolution and does it really want it? ■