

doxy, and transform it into a sort of political panacea. The expectations cherished under communism were all shifted to democracy. **However, democracy is not an arch-value, but rather a tool that can be perceived differently and ought to be treated pragmatically,** with a real understanding of what it can and cannot do. The conclusion that democracy is both the most effective and costly way of making decisions is quite evident. Only relatively successful nations can allow themselves to develop such an effective decision-making tool as democracy.

Freedom is an axiomatic notion, whereas democracy is an instrumental one. Of course, democracy provides a certain method of fulfilling freedom, sovereignty, power, interests of certain population layers, etc. But the public consciousness exists in real life, which is important for democracy, because we need to clarify and decide into which aspect of this consciousness it should be placed.

The paradox of civil society in Russia lies in the fact that people actively use its services (they know when to address the society of consumers, the ‘Memorial,’ the environmentalists or the movement of car owners), however, they give a negative answer when asked whether a civil society exists in Russia. **In essence, there is no understanding of what the civil society is in the Russian public consciousness, as no public philosophy has yet to describe it.**

The same goes for Russia’s historical consciousness. For example, historical movies omit Kozma Minin entirely from the Times of Trouble. Pozharsky brandishes his sword, while Susanin saves someone, and people are elected to the Assembly of the Land. A great deal is remembered with the exception of Kozma Minin and without any understanding that the main factor in overcoming the Times of Trouble was a certain form of socialization. Again we return to the issue of the need for a public philosophy.

Civil society is often presented to the public consciousness either as a hidden form of politics or as a certain commercial transaction, because the public philosophy has yet to clarify it in the public consciousness. And this is exactly where this real and applied notion could be understood, accepted, and turned into a value. The task of the public philosophy then is to open the ‘drawers’ and ‘cabinets,’ and discover where the public consciousness may be hiding certain factually existing ideas. ■

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THE MAJORITY TODAY IS MUCH MORE ADVANCED THAN THE ELITE



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The term ‘populist democracy’ has gained a bad reputation, owing in large part to the rule of Hugo Chavez and Evo Morales, which have done much to discredit its legitimacy and the left populist project that it represents. In fact, in the context of Latin America, the only thing that has saved this project from being viewed a shameful failure is the **positive experience of Brazil.** There are people who consider any form of socialism to be nonsense, but president Lula da Silva has managed to realize the benefits of a ‘wise socialism’ and a socially orientated strategy of modernization.

One should certainly distinguish between ‘social democracy’ and ‘populism’ – these are two different things from the logical point of view. The trouble is that they often presuppose one another, since the turn to social democratic policy first requires the formation of a strong social coalition, carried through by populist mobilization. But if populism can work for a ‘wise’ socially orientated project, then it should be considered historically reasonable and legitimate.

The use of populist mobilization should be measured and studied in Russia today. **Populism is quite effective for managing intense social troubles, for mobilizing society and curing it of its depression, but it is a bad system for rou-**

tine social management. For leaders such as Chavez, populist mobilization is the Alpha and Omega of a state’s life, while Napoleon Bonaparte created the institutions of a regular state, such as the Napoleonic Code, on the basis of the energy he received from the French society.

In regards to Russia, it seems reasonable to state that the rule of Boris Yeltsin and Vladimir Putin, as well as that of Dmitry Medvedev, were not and are not entirely populist, despite employing some populist methods from time to time. In fact, Russian mechanisms that support the popularity of its leaders tend to encourage demobilization, and inhibit the majority, preventing them from entering into real politics or from influencing the real policy of the Russian state.

Putin’s ongoing pattern is that of a ‘shield,’ protecting himself from wide participation in politics. It would be wise, however, for him to revisit this pattern. **The majority today is much more advanced than the elite in terms of its values and sense of civil culture.** It is important therefore to look at the benefits of populist democracy. However, in order to avoid the negative experiences of Latin America, populist methods must be used sparingly and not as the guiding principle of an entire government. ■