

THE PRESIDENT OF RUSSIA APPEARED VERY MODERN AT THE YAROSLAVL FORUM

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is a famous Russian economist, political scientist, public intellectual, and Director of the Center for Post-Industrial Research. He is also the publisher and Editor-in-Chief of the magazine *Svobodnaya mysl* ('Free Thought') and a member of the Council for Foreign and Defense Policies. Vladislav Inozemtsev is the author of 13 monographs, including 'The Split Civilization' (1999).

He was recently a participant at the 2010 Global Policy Forum in Yaroslavl.

The forum was a success. Western colleagues were extremely inspired as they saw the President of Russia as an energetic and very modern man. **At his meeting with experts and academics, as well as various discussions during the course of the session, Dmitry Medvedev left the impression that both the concept of democracy and the ideology of modernization are being successfully developed in Russia.** Moreover, it is quite clear to Western researchers and our Western colleagues that the country follows this path.

However, there was hardly any talk about Russia's involvement in global

discussions, which could have been possible had the Russian participants been following the conference topics more precisely. Unfortunately, by judging the section that dealt with the problems of modernization, it is clear that the Russian participants viewed their speeches as reports about their own successes which undoubtedly decreased our chances for a positive dialogue. There needs to be responses to clearly defined issues at such conferences. The summary of the events of the nineties and of the first decade of this century presented in a report by Gleb Pavlovsky's group raises no doubts. As I understand, this report emphasizes that the tandem situation is a very special one in the Russian political process and it provides the opportunity for certain historical ramifications. Consequently, I would rather assess this report as a statement of facts as Gleb Olegovich and his colleagues competently systematized the processes that have been taking place in Russian politics during the last twenty years. They emphasized that currently the future development of democracy does not seem to be clear.

In regards to the statement that Russian democracy and the Russian political process have certain specifics, based primarily on the idea of consensus and majority, I fully agree. **In Russia, the understanding of public majority is significantly different, because it has been made somewhat sacred in comparison with the traditional understanding.** On the other hand, we must bear in mind that the idea of consensus often turns into the suppression of minority

In my opinion, the President's speech during the main session did not seem very successful. Somewhat secondary issues were chosen as the leading arguments and criteria of democracy. Moreover, it is quite strange to talk about the criteria of democracy without actually mentioning free elections. However, despite disliking Medvedev's speech at the plenary session, I enjoyed his talks with the experts. **The President of Russia was absolutely open and very confident about his views while demonstrating his flexibility and competence with many issues.** He proved to be quite versed in modern Western theories and in modern political practices.

Dmitry Anatolyevich repeatedly mentioned the direct democracy that has appeared and the opportunities opening for it with the advent of the Internet. In my opinion, this is somewhat premature. I am not sure how real such forms of democracy will be in the coming years, I would not even risk saying that there will be a step forward in comparison with what we see today in developed Western countries.

Medvedev's speech at his meeting with experts was entirely based on a purely Western understanding of democracy. Undoubtedly, the President supports this point of view, but there was no recourse to Russia's 'national specifics,' or to its 'collegiality,' and so forth, in his speech. According to the President, we have a usual and standard model of democracy and we do not need experimentation. This desire to follow successful models of develop-

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rights. Unfortunately, this tendency will remain an element of the Russian political culture in the coming years.

ment without inventing 'new' ones engenders hopes for a better Russian future. ■

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