

WANTED: 140 MILLION MODERNIZERS

Igor Yurgens



IGOR YURGENS is a Russian political scientist and economist. He is the first Vice President of the CJSC 'Renaissance Capital' Investment Group and the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the 'Renaissance Capital' Bank. He also serves as the Chairman of the Management Board of the Institute of Contemporary Development (INSOR) and the Vice-President of the Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs (RSPP). He is a member of the Public Chamber of the Russian Federation, a Professor at the State University-Higher School of Economics (GU-VSE), and a member of the Presidential Council for Civil Society Institutions and Human Rights

Preparations for the Yaroslavl Forum 'The Modern State: Development of Democracy and Efficiency Criteria' are now underway. At the moment, there is no point in reporting about specific future activities due to the fact that their arrangement is a collective work and is not solely dependent on us.

I would like to say that what we expect on the part of the participants,

both those coming from within our country and from abroad, is not so much advice and recommendations per se, but rather achieving clarifications as to positions and defining relevant tendencies. This is especially the case with respect to the Institute of Contemporary Development's 'zone of responsibility' (i.e. foreign affairs and European security). Misunderstanding, stereotypes, and wrong impressions about the motivations and objectives of partners have always been and still remain one of the main obstacles on the path towards foreign policy collaboration. Nowadays, when the institutional renewal of the collective security system is being carried out, these obstacles are very perceptible. More clarity is required, both within Russia and elsewhere abroad. I think that the Yaroslavl Forum has the potential to make a significant contribution to contributing to this.

It seems to me that the stage of developing models for Russian modernization is nearly over. All possible models have been elaborated. But **any modernization strategy, whether it is carried out on a full scale, only partially realised or simply proposed for realisation, requires continuous renewal and constant correction.** We are becoming modernized in this changing world and we need to take these changes into account. The effectiveness of the modernization process directly depends on how modern its benchmarks are. The concept suggested by the Yaroslavl Forum, and the regular wide-ranging and open meetings of the political elite and the expert community, are very good if we gear ourselves towards the task of making such adjustments.

Of course, Russia cannot yet set its sights on global modernization. Domestically, **'focal' modernization alone can hardly offer any significant prospects.** It is quite unclear how modernization should subsequently spread from these 'focal sites'. Experimental areas are, of course

good (especially when they are under the patronage of the Presidential Administration, which, in many cases, is the only effective means to support such initiatives). At the same time, they are good only if they remain experimental areas.

Satisfying the social wave, finding an appropriate occupation for everyone, giving a buzz to sophisticated modernizing minds, and maintaining the much spoken about 'stability' in the short-term are among the tasks that 'focal modernization' is probably capable of addressing and where it might prove its worth. **Russia does not need modernization for the sake of modernization itself. It needs it for the sake of its own future dignity and well-being.** Providing the grounds for the development of 'economics of knowledge', strengthening the status of the country on the international stage, developing the middle class, etc. — all of these are issues of another order and their resolution requires comprehensive and multi-layered measures.

To resolve these problems, we need to modernize existing political and public institutions. In what capacity can the unmodernized part of a given society participate in the modernization process? Will they participate as the producer of resources? Our country is not a colonial empire or China. We cannot divide Russia into 'proper' and 'improper' citizens both due to ethical factors and other quite obvious practical considerations. We can only do so on the basis of those conditions that have been created by the present social-economic system. **We will either have more than 140 million modernizers or none at all.** Either our modern state will successfully play the role of a regulator in this process or our archaic state will stimulate this process as a matter of necessity. It is for this same reason that our public and political spheres should be adequate to address those problems that we set in the economic sphere.■

Exclusively for Russian Institute