

LEVIATHAN IS AN IMAGE OF THE PAST

Peter Schulze



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■ *What should form the core of the ‘new consensus’ between power and society, that of the new ‘social contract’?*

I am afraid there has been no dramatic change or alteration in the synthesis of societies and in their relation to power structures, or ruling strata, elites etc. Legitimation of power is still the central issue and it is based on a societal consensus which of course is by no means static or fixed. As the economy pulls society and ventures through various phases of growth, decline, and above all modernization (i.e. the permanent quest for producing high quality and competitive goods, as well as high-end technologies that need to be diffused and integrated into the industrial structures), any society and political system will be exposed to a permanent task of absorbing shocks possibly created by such devel-

opments. In a globalized economic sphere there is no way anymore for single national states to stem against such ‘external factors’ alone. The present economic and financial crisis underlines the issue of conditional solidarity, at least among the European Union and its member states.

The ideology of (neo) liberalism and individualism, the focus on market rules as the only determining factor for the welfare and stability of societies and states, has come to a crushing end. In the real world, economic practice has already embarked upon a path of shared responsibilities between state and the market. This does not lead to the rebirth of socialism or state planning, but to a more active role of the state in economic matters vis-a-vis the society. However, the state alone cannot perform without a responding society. You need an actively engaged civil society, which participates in decision making from below. If such a model can be achieved by a dynamic interaction of society and political institutions, the issue of legitimacy and loyalty would be cemented in a new social contract.

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A model of active participation requires an environment of secured basic rights and privileges for citizens to express, organize, and communicate

freely with each other and to have given and open channels to interact with politically and societally elected, and therefore controlled, decision makers.

■ *To what extent is the problem of consensus between power and society’s renewal topical for the West?*

The issue of a new social contract is haunting all developed societies. Because we do see serious flaws in our election systems, as parties and trade unions evaporate and loose societal acceptance, as people do not bother to vote anymore, and as above all the layer of anti- or apolitical political behavior grows thicker and thicker. If we do not succeed in mobilizing our citizens to develop a superior consciousness of social responsibility, i.e. for the fate of our societies, we will no doubt fail and dire consequences will arrive. To put it bluntly, we are in the need to implant that old-fashioned idea again into the minds of our people, namely to serve and accomplish societal goals.

This cannot be done by looking back at traditional conservative ideologies or formula. Such

a model needs to be based on demands resulting from modern technologies and their infusion into industrial structures. **The image of a leviathan, i.e. of a**

huge corporation in which labor and capital are concentrated and work according to hierarchical structures and orders, is an image of the past. Of course, a few such dinosaurs will survive. But the rest will be composed of medium and small enterprises working alone or in clusters or in synthesis with a larger corporation. Thus their responses to change will be faster and more effective, reducing costs, because they will be flexible in implementing innovations, and elastic in adapting to market changes and the integration of new technologies. The environment will reflect the internal structure of these firms, demanding a highly flexible labor organization. There will be low and flat hierarchies of

required? Can the middle class become such a subject?

For rebuilding the society you need the support of the middle classes, and especially of the intelligentsia. The creation of a technical intelligentsia is most important. However, such a plan cannot be based on a middle class that is predominantly engaged in trade and business services, or other non-productive activities. To create the middle and small entrepreneur is essential for a successful completion of the model. The German model can prove this statement. The hot house/motor of industrial activity and technological innovation are Baden Wurttemberg and Bavaria, and perhaps already

President Putin once proclaimed, ‘the dictatorship of law,’ should be put into action, no matter who will be punished. Such an act would restore the people’s trust and confidence in a political system and limit the scope of corruption and arbitrary action. The state must be at the same time visible, an approachable partner, a service institution that is considered efficient, neutral, and one that listens to the people’s needs. For achieving and implementing such a role the political system must develop independent and autonomous intermediaries (parties, social organizations, movements, etc) who are respected and trusted by the people as well.

The social issue is on the agenda and will stay there for a long time. In addition, it is no longer possible to solve social issues within the national framework. Simply the means are not sufficient enough to guarantee social peace and political stability. The situation becomes even more aggravated if we do look at the yearly invasion of hundreds of thousands of working immigrants from the Third World or from poverty stricken areas on the European continent. Their influx tends to destroy the homogeneity of Western societies, creating estrangement and leading to irrational attitudes and social protest that may be exploited by authoritarian forces.

To stem against such potentially dangerous developments and in order to preserve and solidify a ‘social perestroika,’ it will indeed be necessary for Russia to have a political system based on a high and active interrelation with segments of the society. ■

*Julia Netesova
exclusively for Yaroslavl Forum*

More justice should be introduced into the fabric of our societies. The rule of law should be put into action, no matter who will be punished

command lines, a shift of responsibilities to the lower echelons, and the strengthening of individual/work collective responsibility.

From the above it seems to be clear that such developments cannot proceed in an insular way, there has to be a society model encompassing all related aspects, like education in school and higher education, and an openness to international contacts and cooperation. The time is over where a society can be ruled and developed by repressive means. Every society always reflects in a certain way the prevailing conditions within its organization of labor and industry.

■ *Who is the new majority (class, stratum, layer), the new political subject, that the Russian government can rely on if it decides to ‘rebuild’ society if it is*

Saxony. There the mix between SME’s and large corporations is approximately 80:20.

This does not exclude the working class from participating in such a growth and stability model. Their share is linked via wages to productivity growth and a constant improvement of labor security, and elements of industrial democracy.

■ *What are the ways in which power can gain the extra legitimacy and loyalty (and maintain its current ones) required for its economic, personnel, and political rebuilding?*

A radical answer would be to introduce more justice into the fabric of our societies and into the relations between ‘us and them.’ To punish the ones who misuse their positions of power and enrich themselves ruthlessly or illegally. **The rule of law, or as**