

my opinion, *democracy as a way of life* is closely connected with the quantity and quality of labour of its bearers. The foundations of democracy cannot be built under conditions of redistributive economy (Bessonova, 2006), where the value of the honest labour of creative minority is ignored.

8. The power elite response

As many democratic observers and organizers of the above protest meetings stated, in order to extinguish a protest wave the power elite usually employed three successful tactics. The first was deception and secrecy. The authorities promised the concerned public to investigate the case, to set up special commissions (a parliamentary commission of inquiry, in particular), they invited politically engaged experts, worked in full secrecy and many months later said that the protestors had been wrong and they, ie the authorities, were right, acting in strict accordance with law. The second tactics aimed at breaking the unity of leading protest forces into numerous competing groups. The publicity (*glasnost*) of all actions of the too adversarial sides could be the only remedy against such tactics (Parchomenko, 2011). Last but not least was the setting up of the All-Russian popular front and formation from it of a mix of counter-movements, rallies and meetings in support of the existing political system.

Theoretically, the authorities could use several strategies to meet the protestors' challenges. First, they could try to guide the process of social renovation themselves. But for this they had to leave the cocoon and stop shying away from their fellow citizens. Another variant: to get away by chucking a few important but not key figures. Plus to mobilize Russian provinces by spreading a myth that the protestors are rich, uppish and fed-up people. A more advantageous variant might be leadership of movement toward modernization, but this necessitates a partner-like dialogue with the opponents, to which the government is not accustomed yet. Finally, the variant of 'tightening the screws' in the atmosphere of all-out corruption is viewed by experts as an unlikely one (Gorbachev and Samarina, 2011: 1, 3).

What actually happened? At first, the government pretended that nothing had happened at all: there had been and would be protests, but the government strategy would remain the same notwithstanding. Taking the lead of the opposition movement was out of the question. One more princi-

ple of the power elite is known well: ‘we do not give up our fellows’. Therefore the protestors’ proposal to remove a few top functionaries had not been accepted either. The attempt of Kremlin political technologists to present the situation as if mass protests in Moscow had been organized by sated and corrupt bourgeois against labouring and poor provincials appeared to be too risky politically for the officials themselves. Neither had the revivification of the external enemy image, that is, representation of the opposition as the US agent allegedly attempting to trigger a new ‘orange revolution’, brought about anything except a chill in the US relations with Russia.

Then a different instrument, tested more than once, was put into operation: counter-meetings under the slogan ‘We have things we don’t want to lose!’ organized by supporters of the present ruling elite. This tactics proved effective. Putin’s supporters mobilized not only the forces of the ruling party and the All-Russian Popular Front but also huge numbers of population groups dependent on the government (ie the abovementioned *budgetniki*): teachers, the medical profession, public service personnel, etc. What was bad was that these people were compelled to attend the meetings and rallies (sometimes they even had to drive from other towns), and this fact soon became known (Garmazhapova, 2011: 3-7). It was a real shock, for instance, to both teachers and students. Nevertheless, the opposition leaders understood well that the authorities were able to recruit practically an unlimited number of ‘participants’ who would attend such counter-meetings. More than that, the new tactics for raising the per cent of pro-Putin votes had been invented by Kremlin technologists. It just appeared that there were a lot of plants of uninterrupted production cycle whose workers should vote in accordance with authorized list of voters at special electoral districts (Mostovszchikov, 2012).

After presidential elections campaign it became obvious that: (1) there is no changes in power elite. One could observe the exchange of the known cadres between new presidential administration and new government. The tandem cocoon remained the same; (2) the fact that the prime-minister D. Medvedev has become the official leader of the United Russia political party whereas the president V.Putin has remained an unofficial leader of All-Russian popular front pointed out that the tandem would want to construct be-party political system as in the US; (3) the process of multiplication of protest forms primarily emerged in capitals across the country confirmed the idea that capitals still remained the engines of social and political changes in

Russia; (4) during the Spring 2012, the protestors showed its flexibility in using various forms of action repertoire: pickets, meetings, permanent and mobile camps, walks along the city's boulevards with prominent writers, artists, painters as well as the counter-claims and litigations. All in all, in this period the protest actions embraced more than 30 cities. It is indicative that protest organisers in order to avoid clashes with the police used to practice carnival form of collective action open to all who wish to join it; (5) but this carnivalisation does not mean the decline of self-organisation. On the contrary, the new forms of self-organisation mushroomed. Each initiative group of the movement developed a particular form of activity ranging from the project the 'Observer' (of the electoral procedures of the past and forthcoming elections) to protestor's camps with disputes and lectures and full services including voluntary guards. The further the more an internet is used as a universal tool (for communication, fundraising, learning by doing, etc.); and (6) finally, the leadership of the movement is still an open question. On the one hand, the leaders of its radical wing who were sentenced many times have authority over a good deal of protestors. On the other hand, the young middle-class protestors move forth the leaders from their ranks. They incline to support the public figures which offer the concrete, mainly short-term, goals and programmes.

9. Conclusion

The very fact that for the first time after democratic upsurge (ie after perestroika) Russia was encumbered with mass protest meetings is rather indicative because it has already a set of political consequences. First, it means not only that Russian society is politically awakened, but that its confidence in the current political system has been exhausted. It became clear that substantial changes in existing political system are at stake.

Second, the protest mobilization revealed that contemporary Russian society is split into numerous antagonistic groups: the centre vs. the provinces; the 'new middle-class', a challenger of changes, vs. the adherents of stability; the TV-people vs. the Internet-people; the internationalists vs. the patriots; the radical patriots vs. the responsible nationalists. It means that mobilization has revealed the true disposition of social forces.