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AND
THE MOSLEM WORLD
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RUSSIA IN THE CHANGING WORLD

Much of what has been going on in this world of ours cannot be placed within either a liberal or an antiliberal framework. The world is now in a state of madness.

First. What is taking place around Russia? It is the rapid redistribution of forces, the swiftest in mankind's history. Plus, a political and information revolution. Everything is changing so rapidly that people are unable to catch up with events and understand what's going on. But, as is known, human beings are able to adapt themselves almost to everything, and therefore we do not see any noticeable features of mass stress so far, nevertheless they are accumulating. The habitual and traditional axioms with which we have been used to explain everything around us lose ground and disappear. New explanations and new theories come to the fore which we see in the mass media and the scientific publications. But they do not work, as a rule. The volume of information becomes ten times bigger every decade. People are unable either to explain what is happening, or to cope with this volume. In this situation they are forced to follow not so much the arguments of reason as emotions.

It seems to me that the age of reason, the Age of Enlightenment which gave birth to Europe, begins to recede into the background. And

now it is emotions that begin to rule the world. Religion, or something like it, is coming to the scene through the back door. People grab the simplest explanations in an attempt to understand the current situation. In short, this process might be termed “re-ideologization of international relations.” Unable to explain in a coherent manner what is taking place around them, people and countries draw explanations from the past, trying to apply old liberal or antiliberal theories to the present time.

One of the most evident traits of ideologization is the exacerbation of the struggle between democracy and authoritarianism. Although it does not explain anything, nevertheless, everybody talks of the threat of authoritarianism and collapse and weakening of democracy.

Old economic recipes evolved during the past two hundred years do not work. We see how countries are trying to cope with the economic crisis, which has now turned into a prolonged economic slump and stagnation, with the help of opposite methods: by the Keynesian methods, that is, by supporting demand at the expense of the budget, and by monetarist methods restricting state activities. It is quite evident that the elites do not know what to do and act “each in its own way,” often guided by one’s own selfish political aims. Luckily, results have not been catastrophic so far, because reason got the upper hand. Nevertheless, it is clearly seen that old classical recipes do not help any longer.

Of course, the most important thing to be always remembered is the existence of such global problems as the climate change and the state of the environment. True, certain positive shifts do take place, especially in Europe. Culture and the way of life now take greater care of the environment and energy saving. However, the real figures show that the amount of harmful discharges increases and more and more

risky phenomena accumulate in nature, which result in the aggravation of the ecological crisis and climatic anomalies. Observations show that never before have there been so many floods, tsunamis and other natural disasters bringing death and destruction to mankind. I do not mean that we shall perish. But the fact is that this problem is not being tackled properly. Evidently, our society has neither strength nor will to take the necessary measures. Even the ecological convention – the Kyoto Protocol – has actually expired. The European states, which have assumed all obligations according to the Protocol, are unable to fulfill them practically alone. The Protocol has actually been made null and void by the United States, China, India, and Russia, to boot, although our country has also signed corresponding documents in its time.

Mankind is not yet ready to offer any alternative way of life to itself. The wellbeing of a considerable part of mankind has been growing at a rate unprecedented for even the past century. Economic growth was negligible in the 19th century. In the 20th century it amounted to two or three percent, on average, a year. From the 1980s the economy grew, on average, by four to five percent a year. This increase has now slowed down, but it continues by about 3.5 to four percent. People want to consume more, eat more and tastier, drive better cars, and live in more comfortable homes. Consumption is now the main aim and criterion of human progress. Perhaps, there is no alternative to this paradigm. This is accompanied with the unprecedented redistribution of consumption. Some fifteen years later a greater part of the world middle class will live in Asia. Just imagine what energy and climate changes this will entail. In fifteen years about forty percent of the world middle class will live in Europe and the United States. The boundless growth of consumption will bring mankind to the dangerous point of no return for the state of energy resources and climate.

Another great change taking place before our very eyes, for which mankind is not yet ready, is its mass ageing. For centuries, right up to the 20th century (of course, we know of great old men who reached the age of 70 or 80), people lived up to the age of thirty – fifty, on average. At present, due to positive changes in the quality of life: better working conditions, better nourishment, better health protection, the number of elderly people is growing, even in Africa. The first negative consequence of this is the problem of social security of the retired people. In our country the pension system was calculated for the population which could not live up to be 55–60. In the advanced countries normal longevity is about 80, and it will grow. It is clear that this will lead to major social changes, especially in the well-developed part of the world. By 2050, there will only be 57 percent of Europeans in the able-bodied age.

Meanwhile, pension systems will continue to collapse because not a single democratic or semi-democratic country will dare raise the retirement age, except Italy's Premier Mario Monti who was bold enough to raise it to 66 for men and gradually to the same age for women.

The world has become really global and as a result of this advanced countries have come across an unprecedented competition which will inevitably lead to a decline in the living standards in Europe, at least by 20 to 25 percent. The problem is that the European economy is distinguished by a very low competitiveness because business and the middle class in Indonesia, China and other countries of Asia and the Pacific are ready to work for less money with the same, or even higher, efficiency. This, naturally, will lead to the transformation, weakening and partial withering away of a socially-oriented state. Of course, there will be no catastrophe, but we shall see that within the next ten to

fifteen years advanced countries, and our European neighbors among them, will live through hard times.

People realize full well that natural resources can be depleted, and they are prepared for the need to be thrifty in using them. However, a shortage of fresh water has not yet become a phenomenon of mass consciousness, and it is not properly understood by all. Everybody pays attention primarily to the districts of Central Asia and the Middle East, but the entire developing Asia is the region of a great shortage of water, including India, China and most Asian countries where drinking water is in short supply due to pollution of the environment and the use of enormous quantity of water for industrial and agricultural needs. Production of food is falling in many regions of the world due to a shortage of water. Drinking water becomes a vital resource of the earth for which people are really at war.

The next problem is a threat of the real reduction of the hydrocarbon production necessary for energy generation. It is quite evident that their simple replacement with the now fashionable shale gas or alternative sources of energy will not lead to a reduction of the deficit of energy resources. Quite often they become the cause of political and economic struggle in the world.

The world has now become really global and requires a genuinely world government. Since the time of the great French enlighteners of the 18th century, liberals have always been dreaming of world government and universal reason. Conservatives have always been searching for Judeo-Masonic, American or communist conspiracies or secret governments. There is no secret government, and governance as such is deteriorating. All of them proved wrong. World government is simply necessary, but there is none. All institutions – from G8 to G20 – become weak or simply turn into places of pleasant but empty talks.

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