OVERCOMING THE SOCIAL CRISIS IN RUSSIA: SYSTEMIC MODERNIZATION AS AN ALTERNATIVE FOR ITS FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

ABSTRACT: The author tackles the ways of further development of Russia and its perspectives in the global world. The main directions in national scientific thought are analyzed — the theories of Westernization, Isolationism, and Eurasianism. Special attention is paid to the theory of modernization as an effective way of overcoming the crisis in contemporary Russian society, which proposes innovative methods of rebuilding Russia’s political and economic systems, taking into account the effects of the global financial crisis.

The article also highlights the problem of deep spiritual crisis in modern Russian society and suggests a solution for that problem. It supposes an upgrade in the spiritual sphere, the formation of a new mentality, innovative ideology, in which the factors of human creativity, energy and initiative will occupy the leading position.

KEY WORDS: social crisis, spiritual crisis, innovations, modernization, mentality, ideology, national identity

At present, when the global economic crisis has caused stagnation in the development of the largest countries of the world community, Russia has not remained immune to its destructive consequences. According to the President of the Russian Federation Dmitry Medvedev, the global economic crisis has shown “that we are far from being in the best image. Twenty years of rough transformations did not relieve our country of humiliating dependence on raw materials” [Medvedev 2009: 7]. As a result, in comparison with other countries, Russia has experienced a greater decrease in manufacture and sharp fluctuations of the stock market during the present crisis.

Social contradictions in Russian society that appeared in the 1990s, due to its transition to democracy and the development of a market economy, have become aggravated at present. Special attention should be paid to the deep spiritual crisis of the modern Russian society. This crisis is expressed in a mental crisis among the Russians, their loss of native spiritual values and models of behaviour, loss of their national identity. A sharp transition to democratic so-
ciety was marked by the collapse of the communist ideology. The new system of values which has come in its place appeared to be alien to the Russian mentality in many respects. The reformers have ignored Russian historical and cultural roots. They haven’t taken into consideration the fact that the features of the Western mentality and its basic values are in many respects alien to Russian historical and cultural tradition and the Russian mentality, which doesn’t accept individualism, pragmatism and rationalism that characterize the Westerners. They have discounted the national peculiarities of the Russians, such as its deep spirituality, communal consciousness, Orthodox Christian values, etc.

Thus, the wreck of old ideals has caused a condition of a spiritual crisis, when previous values have lost their currentness, and new ones have not yet been accommodated in the collective consciousness. All these factors explain the complex situation in the spiritual sphere, which modern society has brought.

In this situation discussions concerning Russia’s further development have become rather urgent. In their attempts to understand the problems facing Russia and its people, its science, culture and mentality, modern scientists and researchers express rather contradictory ideas on questions regarding the social, economic, political and especially spiritual stabilization of the country and its society. Such an orientation towards forecasts and scripts for the future demonstrates that the country requires changes. But what type of changes? Certainly, much here depends on leaders, but first of all, on the society itself. It is obvious that Russia is at a crossroads of its future historical and cultural development, that it is necessary for it to define its purposes and for its society to make a conscious choice in order to pass this fork in a correct direction and without irreversible losses. On this choice depends whether, at last, it will be possible for Russia to become a modern country in every respect. The Russians are once again facing a threat of being helpless witnesses of a degradation of their country as a great power.

There are several directions in national scientific thought concerning the ways of Russia’s development and its overcoming the social, economic and spiritual crisis. These are theories of Westernization, Isolationism, Eurasianism and a very popular theory of modernization.

There is not a big difference between modern Westerners and their representatives of the XIX century. Like their predecessors, they focus on a continuation of liberal market reforms, their development and further cooperation and integration with the West-European community. However, the concept of the “overtaking economy”, which would demand a half-century and more to satisfy the norms and standards of the West-European standard of living, is not suitable enough. Moreover, the propaganda of consumer behaviour that forms the psychology of a consumer oriented society, peculiar to the Western ideology, is absolutely alien to the Russian mentality. In the words of a contemporary sociologist, “Russia with its ethnus, mentality and traditions” is badly equipped “for classical capitalist development of the Western model” [Evzerov 1998: 23].
Isolationists champion Russia’s autonomous development and reject the borrowing of Western values. They also consider the influence of the Western culture as being disastrous for Russia. They believe that purposeful attempts of the West to impose their values and type of civilization will result in a decomposition of national consciousness, which will ultimately lead to the destruction of Russia. Supporters of this approach consider the process of globalization to be especially dangerous. They understand it as a process of forming of a new world order characterized by a merging of national economies in one uniform economic system, and uniform spiritual, cultural, political, economic and other spheres. In our opinion, the isolationist model represents an extreme measure. We agree with a modern researcher, V. Surkov, who calls the representatives of this direction “the party of two steps back” and considers that if national-isolationists reach power in Russia, “it will be a worse copy of the Soviet bureaucratic state, without the Soviet greatness” [Surkov 2006: 29].

The most suitable approach supported by many political and public leaders is the Eurasian approach. Its proponents assume the achievement of democratic unity within the framework of association with the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). A good example of such cooperation is the Customs Union that has been recently agreed between Russian, Belarus and Kazakhstan leaders. The agreement is directed towards the rendering of mutual administrative help on the basis of performance of inquiries, the organization of customs control and of information interchange between customs bodies. Other major priorities are Europe and the European Union, as well as a Eurasian orientation of Russian foreign policy.

Supporters of the Eurasian approach consider that, in order to stabilize the social and economic situation, to realize the national interests so that they do not contradict the interests of Europe and Asia, to mobilize spiritual and moral values of the Eurasian civilization and, finally, to overcome the social contradictions of Russian society, it is necessary for Russia to define its own role and place in the world community, its allies and its civilizational niche.

Thus, it is necessary for Russia to create its own unique innovational model of a social and political system, different from the Western and Eastern models, but combining the best achievements of both these civilizations. That model should be based on democratic principles, development and distribution of information technologies, preservation of traditions and the Russian national identity, openness and a transparency of society. In that respect, the theory of modernization is seen as an effective way of overcoming the crisis phenomena in Russian society. That model suggests innovational ways of political and economic reorganization in the context of the effects of the world financial crisis. Also the basic priorities of Russia’s post-crisis development and its new position in the world would be determined. The given model consolidates the positions of experts of different specializations, assumes development in various fields of knowledge, and combines not only development of ways of reaching new boundaries, but also general values and common views on social ethics and political morals.

The basic principles of theory of modernization are submitted in the report developed by the Institute of Modern Development (IMD) of the Presi-
dent of the Russian Federation, which presents innovational ways of Russia’s post-crisis development of Russia. The report consists of five sections: post-crisis development of the economy, reform in the social sphere, democratization of the political system, security and military reform, and the geopolitical position of Russia in the world. The authors — E. Gontmaher and N. Maslennikov assume that Russia needs a new model of democracy — a competitive one, which should provide an impulse for the development of flexible institutes of civil society capable of quickly reacting to modern challenges. The Russian model of democracy assumes the presence of universal principles, as well as an accounting of national peculiarities. „Each country builds democracy in its own way” affirms the director of IMD political programs Boris Makarenko.

Thus, the authors of the report are certain of one thing: democracy in Russia should be spread from above because, if it were to spread from below, it could appear only in revolutionary form, which, according to Maslennikov, is a way “that is not suitable for Russia”. Another peculiarity of the given model is that it assumes a complex character, it is a systemic modernization — in the spheres of economic, social and foreign policy. An obligatory part of modernization is an updating of the political system, which, according to Gontmaher, “will open up opportunities of free self-realization for the most active and productive categories of citizens”.

A very prominent aspect of the given model is the spiritual factor, which always has been the specialty of Russia and, speaking about modernization of economic and political spheres of society, it is impossible to exclude modernization from the spiritual sphere. Crisis phenomena in Russian society in many respects are related to the loss of the Russians’ national identity. In this respect we agree with a modern researcher, A. Panarin, who considers that today, when the world’s civilizations are once again in movement and, here and there, in collision, “the least security and stability is demonstrated by those societies that have lost their social and cultural identity during technocratic modernizations, and are not able to mobilize on the basis of spiritual priorities” [Panarin 1996: 126]. Russia possesses experience of enormous universal value. To overcome the crisis of belief and the mental crisis, and to restore the national identity, it is necessary to create a new civilizational (super-ethnic) idea that highlights the peculiarities of Russian culture in a new way and, thus — the common historical perspective of many nations of the CIS.

Here a humanitarian component acquires specific meaning: values and principles, morals and motivations — those specific traits of the Russian national character that form the mentality of its people. Russia should resolve the fundamental conflict of values, which will promote the creation of a new mentality, an innovational ideology based on the creative abilities of the person, their energy and their initiative: “The way to modernization begins with an ideological recognition” [E. Gontmaher 2010: 105]. Human advantage becomes a strategic resource. In contrast to the Soviet ideology, in which the person was considered a part of the “mega machine of the state”, the most valuable qualities of “human capital” become independence of views and opinions, along with rationalism, initiative and responsibility, dynamics and mobility. The cultivation of these qualities in society and people should be the main
strategic purpose of any modern authority. It demands a new system of mutual relations between the authorities and society, the state and the person, based on the principle of serving not to itself or to an abstract power, but to living people, the citizens of that country. It will also promote a revival of the Russians’ national identity, their awareness of belonging to the Russian nation.

A very important role in the theory of modernization is reserved for the preservation of national features, those views and values that have been formed in the consciousness of the Russian people during its historical and cultural development. The specific role of spiritual factors and value-based motivation is a Russian peculiarity: “The spiritual values of the nation should become the national interests of Russia! A new concept — the moral sovereignty of the nation — should be brought to the consciousness of the Russian people” [Gontmaher 2010: 105]. That atmosphere of value-based motivation should also concern daily occurrences, and material and household problems. It is already evident in the cyclic character of Russian history: in phases of value-based enthusiasm, all kinds of social creativity become more active. The state gets stronger and society is consolidated. On the other hand, in phases of “decline of belief”, destabilizing factors are sharply amplified. To overcome the crisis of belief and the crisis of values, and to restore Russian national identity it is necessary to create a new super-ethnic idea that will highlight the peculiarities of our culture in a new way. The editor-in-chief of the informational Orthodox agency “Russian Line”, A. D. Stepanov, emphasizes that the spiritual and moral values of the Russian people represent a lasting idea that has formed the basis of public consent for centuries. “Today it is as acute as it has never been” — the researcher notes.

One of the varieties of the modernization theory is the realistic model presented earlier by Vladimir Putin in his message to the Federal Assembly on April 10, 2006. This model is based on the use and development of Russian competitive advantages in those areas in which the Russians can be proud of their achievements. The concept of Russia as an energy superpower is consistent with this approach. The main economic system of Russia, which provides the main share of its national product, is the fuel and energy complex. Naturally, this does not mean that Russia should remain a very large supplier of raw materials, but that it should develop them to a new level. Vladimir Putin confirmed this in his message to the Federal Assembly of Russia on May 10, 2006: “Today we need an innovative environment that will set new knowledge into motion. We have to create the necessary infrastructure: technology incubators, technology parks, venture funds, investment funds. We need to establish favorable tax conditions for financing innovative activities” [Putin 2006: 40].

This approach tackles another important problem of modernity, which concerns the entire international community — the threat of depletion of natural resources and the search for alternative fuels. In this sense, Russia, which produces large quantities of hydrocarbons, can use this advantage and, in cooperation with other countries, develop ways to solve this problem. And if Russia manages to join international cooperative efforts geared toward inventing the fuel of the future, it will ensure a positive future for the new genera-
tion of the Russians. This requires the development of power-plant engineering, energy-saving technologies and new technologies in the field of energy transport. In addition, the very location of Russia makes it a good transport corridor between East and West, and there are also good opportunities for creating an attractive infrastructure.

Regarding communications, only the direct participation of Russian companies in the development of global information networks will provide Russia a worthy place in the international community. In some industries, for the sake of sovereignty, the influence of national capital must be predominant. National — but not necessarily state-owned. Still, the fuel and energy complex (FEC), strategic communications, the financial system, and the military sector should be primarily Russian. The remaining sectors should be maximally open to foreign investment and deep modernization. “We must strive to participate in the global economy in new multinational corporations — multinational, not trans-, super-, over- or non-national. The economic future does not lie in the disappearance of the great nations, but in their cooperation” [Surkov 2006: 29].

However, in the present situation, the given model is not sufficiently effective, because it emphasizes the development of the fuel and energy complex, which threatens other industries and doesn’t pay enough heed to the social and political spheres. We agree with the supporters of the Eurasian approach and we share their opinion that Russia should move on its own way of development, resorting to the accumulated experience of Western civilization, but transferring it to its own ground and adapting it to modern political, economic and social realities. At the same time, the innovational model of Russian development seems to be more promising. Its realization, based on a systemic modernization, will allow the overcoming of crisis phenomena in the economic, social and spiritual spheres of Russian society and the achievement of steady economic growth, providing favorable conditions for obtaining new knowledge, forming new values, creating an innovational ideology appropriate to the requirements of the epoch, but based on the preservation of the Russian historical and cultural tradition, in accordance with the features of the national mentality. The development of the above directions based on the use of the strengths of the Russian civilization, both in the material and the spiritual sphere, will allow Russia to enter a new level of development and to occupy a worthy position among the modern — innovative and dynamic — states.

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КАКО ПРЕВАЗИЋТИ ДРУШТВЕНУ КРИЗУ У РУСИЈИ: СИСТЕМСКА МОДЕРНИЗАЦИЈА КАО АЛТЕРНАТИВА ЊЕНОГ ДАЉЕГ РАЗВОЈА

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Резиме

Ауторка разматра могуће видове даљег развоја Русије и њене перспективе у глобализованом окружењу. У том смислу она анализира три основна права која преовлађују у актуелној руској научној мисли — теорије вестернизације, изолационизма и европизија. Посебна пажња се посвећује теорији модернизације чија примена може да води ефикасном превладавању кризе савременог руског друштва; модернизатори предлажу иновативне методе обнове политичког и економског система Русије, узимајући при том у обзир ефекте глобалне економске кризе.

У чланку се такође указује на питање дубоке духовне кризе у модерном руском друштву и сугерише се решење тог проблема. Решење подразумева подизање духовне сфере на вису раван, поступно образовање новог менталитета, иновативне концепције и акције и стварање атмосфере у којој ће чиниоци људске креативности, енергије и иницијативе заузимати водећи положај.

Кључне речи: друштвена криза, духовна криза, иновације, модернизација, менталитет, идеологија, национални идентитет