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***The Establishment of Civic Society
and the Democratic Process in Russia***

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The process of Russia's democratic reformation has entered its second decade. Nonetheless, one can hardly speak in terms of stable democracy. More than that: one can witness an expressed growth of authoritarian tendencies along with authoritarian ways and means of governing. It is impossible even to vouch for the irreversibility of the democratic achieved gains. One of the main reasons why Russia's democracy is unstable is its weak root system, e.g., civil society. Therefore, the analysis of its present state and prospects are, without any degree of overstatement, the key purpose of any research into the democratic process in Russia.

In this report civil society denotes the non-state type of social relations emerging on the basis of interaction between individuals' private interests which create prerequisites for their awareness of their common (public) interest as citizens of the state endowed with civil consciousness (a comprehension of their rights and duties of members in a community). Civil society is located between the political (state) and production spheres and forms an interim milieu between the two. In terms of its structure it is a totality of interest-based unions and associations (professional, creative, cultural, educational, confessional, communal, etc.) bound together not so much by vertical, hierarchical dependencies whose role is secondary, but, instead, by network relationships.

Civil society composes exactly the social habitat of individuals where their social life and activity unfold. In fact, it has "presets" the bounds of their way of life and of their social behavior. The main functions of civil society lie in the following:

- socialization of individuals: by becoming involved in civil relationships through their private interest, the individuals acquire

opportunities for self-realisation and the development of their potentialities as social subjects;

- self-organization and self-management in the vast mosaic-type network of private interests whose external (state) regulation only sets the orderly general framework (civil law), while lasting internal regulators - customs, manners, traditions, moral norms, and behavior stereotypes - operate therein;

- integration of society through the system of horizontal networking links and information channels functioning on the basis of the given sociocultural commonness of semantic tokens and symbols shaped by the century-old forms of social solidarity and competence level based on centuries of experience; something that ultimately ensures the entity of the social organism and the historical continuity of its evolution;

- the creation of basic norms or interpersonal solidarity based on the commonality or proximity of private interests, setting of a mechanisms for the divergent interests co-ordination and conflict settlement, deploying of a broad discourse between socio-political forces as a means to achieve concord and stability;

- initiating of law-making by way of putting forward the demands for legal guarantees of those civic and political rights and freedoms, the awareness of whose need first appears within civic society. [1]

The scope and validity of civil society's functions determine the degree of its impact on the political life. Its influence upon policy is not confined exclusively to election time. It is constantly practiced through the activity of its component associations and institutions, through the moulding of public opinion within it. [2]

Civil society's being rooted in the specific vital interests of its citizens, the prevalence of horizontally networking relationships over the

vertical and hierarchical ones' supplies it with a powerful potential of democratism and turns it into the basic source of democracy (a rule by the people).

The exceptionally important role of civil society in the development of democracy creates a temptation to idealize it. Its establishment is seen as a solution to all the acute socio-political problems. [3] In fact, civil society becomes synonymous to "good society" and is seen as a cure-all undoing all evils, as a world of rationality and consensus. In reality this is far from being true. By definition civil society reproduces in itself all contradictions of the real public life. [4] It cannot be otherwise, since it is an organic part of the real historical process within which it interacts with the state, the economy, and the spiritual sphere. This interaction is in no way simple: within it civil society is not a polarity concentrating everything positive counterbalancing the negative tendencies of the state or the market economy.

Real civil societies established in the process of a lengthy and contradictory historical development are very much different from the ideal pattern that could have guaranteed full-fledged democracy. Different civilizational versions of civic societies have been formed historically. In their many features they differ substantially from each other, something that serves as a basis for some sociologists to deny the general validity of its notion and the quest of alternatives to it. [5]

In reality this seems to be the problem of the diversity of civil society's forms. No matter how special were various societies in their historical development, they need a realization of the population's civic activity. Socio-cultural and civilizational features are by the same token expressed in the specificity of their realization. Certain common features are discernible behind this specificity: broadening of the population's

involvement in the public life; a certain degree of emancipation of the civic sphere from the state's patronage and its becoming as an autonomous system; a process of private interests' structuring and a drawing together between them in understanding the common (public) interest; greater effect of civic relations upon the state and the economy. The singling out of these general features allows one to project a typology of civil societies and place them in a definite order according to the foregoing features: the measure of citizens' militancy, the degree of dependency of the civic sphere upon the political institutions, its ability to influence them, the level of being structured within this sphere itself.

When handled on a broad historical plank, the establishment and development of civil society have an unquestionably positive influence upon the democratic process and the efficient functioning of the social organism. Nevertheless, under particular conditions certain concrete forms of civic structures may also produce a negative effect on other spheres of social development. In particular, there is a possibility that civil society will dominate the political power, something that may ruin the capacity of the latter to accomplish the objectives inherent in it. There are also chances as to the rise of unsettling imbalances and of grave destructive contradictions in the development of civic institutions which, in the interests of society, will require this power's vigorous involvement. No less dangerous is the intention of these institutions to grip power functions not typical of them which is fraught with the loss of power's viability and anarchy as well as to use those functions as a lever for sustaining group, rather than public, interests. On occasions like this the policy of corporativism turns out to be not only an instrument to pressurize the citizens, but it also subverts the foundation of civil society itself. [6] Negative consequences are also produced by attempts on the part of

certain organizations within civil society to achieve its homogeneity. Given the infinite diversity of private interests underlying it, this homogeneity can only be achieved by authoritarian methods which are at odds with the pluralism of contemporary democratic political systems. [7]

The conclusion ensuing from everything said before consists in that civil society by itself does not automatically resolve the problems of democratic development. The civic sphere of the public life emerges and develops within the general context of its socio-political environment, and its functions, role and prospects will have to be assessed by way of fitting other social spheres and institutions within particular society.

Let us move on to the examination of problems of civil society's establishment in Russia.

First of all one must mention the historical prerequisites of Russian civil society. In general, the historical background is not favourable for its rapid and unbarred rise in Russia. Since the times of the Tartar-Mongol yoke this country has been having the system of appanage-vassal relations which blocked civic activity, inculcated the psychology and mentality of obedience and of internecine confrontationism and concentrated the decision-making process of all major issues of society's life in the topmost echelons of power.

Under these conditions an individual could naturally rely on and find protection in the solidarity with the primary social cell, a function which the rural community has been serving for so many centuries in Russia. It was against this scene that the sustained communal-collectivist tradition emerged and got rooted. All this impeded the development of a social infrastructure of civic spirit and attributed a vertically centralized character to administrative structures.

Only a reliable pivot of a strong statehood could consolidate the vast territories of Russia and the multiple seats of diverse socio-cultural traditions. When its grip was weakened, the lava of ubiquitous confrontationism permeating Russian society and boiling up in it would burst outside.

Society's subjugation to the authoritarian and centralized power was regarded as a remedy against instability and disintegration. As a result of this so high is the relevance of the state in the minds and the psychology of the Russian population to the detriment of the individual principle prevalent in the liberal vision. In this respect Russia is closer to the Oriental rather than the Western tradition.

Nevertheless, the first shoots of civil society appeared in Russia after the 1861 reform. The network of local administrative organizations (*zemstvo*) covered the whole country. They laid the groundwork for the local self-government and grass-root initiative. The universities were granted limited autonomy. The judiciary reform created definite opportunities for citizens' rights normative provisions. At the same time the reforms were limited and estate-based, and the prospects of public activity were subject to strict control from the top. [8]

It was not until the beginning of the XX century that the vigorous growth of capitalism supplied a powerful impetus to the development of preconditions for civil society in Russia. Even then the *Stolypin's Reforms* aimed to involve the rural population in this process failed to overcome the communal egalitarian tendencies of the peasant movement. By the time of the 1917 revolution in Russia the state remained omnipotent while civil society was merely at an inception stage.

In the years of Stalin's despotism the elements that could form civil society, like market structures, peasants' farms, independent professional,

business, confessional and other associations and unions, were destroyed. The socio-economic basis for crystallizing group interests and bringing about civic organizations enjoying confidence at the grass-root level in fact disappeared. The system was supported by the hypertrophied vertical ties providing for total state control over societal life.

The communist regime, however, was in need of a social and political mobilization, and to this end it required non-state mass organizations actually engaging the whole population. They were created and functioned under a strict control of the communist party and state. Nevertheless, especially at the grass-root level and in informal terms they fulfilled some of the functions similar to those served by civil society institutions. Though subdued, there still was a glimmer of civic life in them.

Gorbachev's reforms, having ruined the bonestructure of vertical ties, exposed a void there where democratic society usually had a powerful layer of civic relations. Elements of civil society, having emerged from the depth of the administrative bureaucratic system, were underdeveloped and deformed. Here lies the main source of the dramatic contradictions in the development of Russian democracy, political instability and reformation collisions within Russian society.

Still, perestroika ushered in the establishment of civil society as an autonomous social institution. It has cleared the social space for it. How is it being filled in reality?

The report handles the state and prospects of Russia's civil society along three lines:

1. Basic - crystallization of private interests, their structurization groupwise, which lays the basis for the emergence of social structures (cells) of civil society and makes it possible to combine existing private interests with a general (public) interest.

2. Structural - formation of non-state associations and unions forming the structure of civil society.

3. Legal - development of law and legal awareness safeguarding both the functioning of civil society and inception within prerequisites for broader political and legal content of democracy.

Along the basic line substantial changes took place within the ten years. They were brought about by the economic reform, property differentiation, the promotion of market economy and civic relations connected therewith in the economic sphere. The introduction of bargain transactions and contracts in the economic relations practice on the horizontal plank has laid the cornerstone of the system of relations between the autonomous subjects of production and exchange with their quite definite particular interests.

The features of a substantial base (stable interests' groups) of civil society are becoming more explicit against the background of tentative poles of the growing mixed economy. Social interests are crystallizing out and become structured according to the localization of the position of social strata in relation to the newly emergent and modified modes of production. Alongside fragmentary narrow corporate interests there gradually come about larger groups of interests: those of small and medium-size businesses, semi-state associations, the banking, industrial, national and compradore capital, the traditional wage workers, white-collar workers and employees connected with modern technologies, professionals engaged in the technical field and the humanities, cooperated peasants, and small and medium-size farmers.

In spite of all these shifts the boundaries between private interests' groups are still unclear and unstable. They are mostly based on the similarity of conditions typifying the micro-being of their bearers and are

yet to achieve the level of social determination which induces clearly expressed solidarity. Each interests group is fragmented into the loosely connected subgroups. According to the data supplied by the All-Russia Public Opinion Center the business strata in contemporary Russia comprise 11.5 per cent of the economically gainful population. There seems to exist a broad social basis for a clear identification of the group of business interests. In reality, however, the dominant part of the business stratum did not yet clearly distinguish itself from the category of wage workers: about one half (46 per cent) engages in business only when it is free from wage work. In total more than 70 per cent of this stratum is doing wage work. The overall result is that the business nucleus meeting the businessmen's standard comprises only 1-1.5 per cent of the nation's gainful population. [9]

Economic criteria of social infrastructure and its overall composition are not settled in Russia yet. The share of and correlation between various groups of interests, the degree of their compatibility and antagonism and the character and mechanisms of interaction have not so far been sufficiently determined. Uncertainty and instability of the crystallization of interests are intensified by the contradictions inherent in the socio-economic reformation generated, on the one hand, by the conservation of the state and administrative regulation of the economy and, on the other by the application of liberal-conservative methods of reforming which are at variance with Russia's conditions. Social effects of liberal radicalism spurred axiology and the mentality of rapacious individualism, group egotism and utilitarian pragmatism. Private interests arising on this basis are a far cry from the common (public) interest, and they are dominated by corporate mafia cravings incompatible with civic attitudes and democratism.

In a word, the direction of forming Russian civil society is still uncertain. Given the currently blurred social basis of yet unsteady and often time-serving private interests, there opens a vast range of opportunities for the establishment of various types of civil society. On the one edge of the spectrum stands the mercantile antagonist version dooming Russia to many years of acute social conflicts and a tormenting process of nurturing democracy. On the other edge is a civilized and a socially balanced arrangement which allows to take the diversity of private interests to a common denominator of universal (public) interest. The latter is only possible on condition that the structuring and development of private interests go beyond the limits of economic realities, beyond the limit of changes in the property relations and market economy.

As is proven by world experience of civil societies' establishment, it is only in the political sphere under the influence of political and legal activity by the democratic parties and movements aimed to curb the predatory instincts and cravings of private property and market economy that private interest is capable of overcoming the narrow framework of its own particularism and display its organic affinity with the public interest. It is only through policy that the private interest can become civilized, i.e. it sets itself free of the barbaric way of its satisfaction along the lines of irreconcilable struggle with other private interests and acquires an ability to play the game according to the rules meeting the interests of the whole, seeking universal accord.

Therefore, political process is no less important for the structuring of social interests in Russia than the promotion of private property and market economy relations. Under the impact of political struggle and the activity of the parties there takes place a full differentiation of group interests. For instance, subgroups - at times opposing one another - are

becoming increasingly visible within the business interests group: some make emphasis on the state's role and the restitution of the state regulation of the economy while others on a complete elimination of state patronage; some are placing hopes on the authoritarian regime, others follow a liberal-democratic approach; some support the national-patriotic line, others are inclined toward a cosmopolitan stand; some pursue the line of Manchester Liberalism, others advocate a socially oriented economy. A similar differentiation in terms of political positions is observed in other interest groups too.

This differentiation reflects the tremendous difficulties of the incipient process of fusion between the yet nonestablished private interests and the public interest. The process of laying the foundation of civic approaches every now and then comes into a collision course - and is sure to continue to do so for long, - with limitations arising out of inadequate degree of development of private social interests, their indefinite, transient and amorphous character, and their narrow corporate character. This is the reason for the absence of a well functioning system of combining and dovetailing the interests, inadequate experience and lack of culture of social interaction acting as a brake on the formation of an integral system of interests oriented at the common good and mature civil society.

A way towards overcoming these restrictions cannot be comprehended from a position of economic determinism explaining the logic behind the evolution of interests in categories of the basis and the superstructure. It takes another logic in this instance to link up the structuring of interests within the economy with the political and spiritual processes unfolding in contemporary Russia and in the whole world. The fusion between the private and the public interests is impossible outside political practice of systematically applying the democratic forms and

procedures engaging the emerging social groups in politics, imbuing them with civic culture and traditions of respect for the common good and the public interest as major prerequisites for civil society.

Presently, at the initial stage of civil society formation numerous conflicts break out within it as generated by the collision and grinding in of the interests of various social groups that have not yet taken their clear place in the network of emergent and still shaky social relationships. In this setting only the political will to find compromises and national conciliation can safeguard a relative social stability, make up for the inferiority of social relations and the deficiency of civic structures. This will is being accumulated within Russian society as public forces gain their political experience.

In his work "Towards Eternal Peace" I.Kant expressed a fruitful idea of a "devils' republic". A republican setup, he maintains, cannot proceed from the expectation of having angels, because by nature the people are endowed with selfish inclinations. It is, therefore, necessary to arrange them in a way that, in spite of collision of their personal aspirations, the latter paralyzes one another so as to have a result in the public behavior of the people as not having any of those evil intentions. [10] The situation prevailing in present-day Russia makes the advice by the German philosopher quite topical. Various strata within Russia's economic and political elite, behind which there stand the emergent groups of private interests, are learning from their own experience of failures and setbacks that the satisfaction of their mostly economic desires demands a certain minimum of concordance within society which is for the time being devoid of any lasting civic foundation. Along this line our elite is exposed to an increasing pressure from society which got tired of the tension of a protracted confrontation.

In their relationships various groups of economic and political elite are compelled to maneuver in order to find mutually acceptable ways to stabilize society and thereby ensure conditions for meeting their quite often selfish interests.

Until stable groups of private interests are formed in Russia, until the population's stratification caused thereby is completed, in other words until there came about the basis for a mature civil society, Russian socio-political forces, no matter how difficult that would be for them, are facing an imperative: to find ways and means to channel the contradictions dividing their private interests along the lines of a national compromise.

Let us now examine Russian civil society following the structural line.

The first step toward forming civic society after the beginning of perestroika was the rise of political parties and movements that resulted in an avalanche-like process of population's self-organization. The structuring within the non-government sphere was taking place in two ways: by way of breaking away from the state effected by the public organizations which had existed under its auspices and acquiring their independence (confessional institutions, trade unions, creative associations) and by way of establishing the new organizations either competing with the old ones (independent trade unions, non-orthodox religious trends, alternative associations of creative workers), or declaring their continuity with the organizations banned after 1917 (associations of noblemen, merchants, etc.). Self-organization was facilitated by the fact that mass media quickly rid in itself of the control of authorities (the glasnost policy).

The scale of this process is evidenced by the following data. In the first half of 1990s the Russian Federation Ministry of Justice registered

more than 2 thousand national level public organizations. More than 30 thousand various organizations of the growing civil society have been generally created within the country.

In terms of its structure civil society can be conventionally subdivided into three interim layers: the bottom (organizations connected with production), the medium (associations on the basis of common social and communal interests) and the top (associations on a spiritual basis). Let look at each of those.

The center-pieces of the bottom layer are trade unions and entrepreneurial associations. Amongst the former the leading place belongs to the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia (FITUR) established in 1990 on the basis of the previous official All-Union Central Trade Union Council (AUCTUC) which had included the overwhelming majority of the USSR's economically gainful population. At first the transformation was essentially formal. But as time went on the FITUR acquired features distinguishing it from the AUCTUC. The direct dependency on the single political party was gone. Trade unions affiliated in the FITUR started to orient themselves at various political forces quite often modifying their stand in keeping with that forces' evolution. In so doing political liking of some unions proved different from the preferences of the FITUR leadership. A new feature in the behavior of trade union organizations was their increased distance keeping from the management of enterprises whose appendage they had been in the past. The function of trade unions to protect vital interests of their members including the use of industrial actions was becoming increasingly important.[11]

And still, it is premature to speak in terms of a radical renewal of trade unions affiliated in the FITUR. Corporate relations at the factory level and sometimes even at the branch level are still predominant, their

activity still remains bureaucratized while the fundamental struggle for the interests of their members is being replaced by minor social charity.

In late 1980s - early 1990s a number of new trade unions emerged in Russia: Independent Miners' Union, Association of Russian Civil Aviation Aircrews, Federation of Air-Traffic Dispatchers. In 1990 an association of these unions was set up and Sotsprof declared its social democratic orientation. Soon the Russian Confederation of Free Trade Unions split away from it. Mention should also be made of the Confederation of Labour, which united strikes' committees formed in 1990 and several alternative trade unions, and the Trade Union League "Zashchita" (Protection) of a fundamentalist communist orientation. However, the influence of the new trade unions on the economically gainful population is minimal for the time being. Their membership is only 400 thousand as against 60 million members in the unions affiliated in the FITUR.

On the whole Russia's trade unions did not yet get the place which these organizations usually have in advanced civil societies. But they, nevertheless, have a lot of potentialities. [12]

Unlike trade unions, Russian associations of entrepreneurs are new entities. They were practically non-existent in Russia before perestroika, though in 1960s - 1970s deeply within the administrative-and-command system there was some degree of development of lobbying in favor of various groups of the economic and bureaucratic elite which prepared the groundwork for the emergence of organizations of entrepreneurs who were previously engaged in the state sector. But in early 1990s there began a vigorous consolidation of businessmen, both regionally and industrially. [13]

At first the Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs bringing together the managers of large-scale state enterprises was the

most representative organization of businessmen. Simultaneously association of private producers took place. They set up a number of organizations (the Union of Entrepreneurs and Lessees, Association “Businessmen for a New Russia”, Association of Russian Business Women and a few more).

As privatization progressed the dominant position of the Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs started to decline. New powerful associations - in banking and manufacturing - came into being (Association of Russian Banks, “Russia’s Business Round Table”, etc.). [14] These associations started to play the dominant part in major sectors of the economy and exert tangible influence on the bodies of state power and management by means of the lobby systems and in other ways. According to the experts, this influence is much higher than in advanced market economies. This imbalance endangers the process of civil society’s establishment. [15]

Mention must also be made of the activity in the sphere of production by the illegal (or semi-legal) mafiosien structures. These structures cater not only for the specifically criminal business (trading in drugs, weapons, people, doing financial swindles, the gambling business, etc.). They are also serving the function of doing business activity deliberately evaded by the state bodies (the protection of legally established businesses against extortion, the safeguarding of the fulfillment of commercial obligations, etc.). Private power institutions, commercial companies’ security services, private security agencies and private detective bureaus became one of the most powerful structures of this kind. All of them are usually staffed with highly skilled specialists with an original background in the KGB, the Ministry for Interior and other law enforcement bodies which proved unable to grant adequate payments to their staff workers and, besides,

prone to non-stop cadre reshuffling. According to certain data in Moscow alone 20 thousand people are employed in the private power structures, the figure for the whole of Russia being several hundred thousand.

Another form of clandestine structures servicing the production sphere is formed by the teams and associations whose main purpose is either “money laundering” or the bringing of direct pressure by the criminal business upon political decision-making and the political process in general. The opportunities of this sphere are large enough which is due not only to the financial power of the criminal business, but also by its growing together with the corrupt section of the state and administrative apparatus, a process which has gone too far.

The medium layer of civil society structures coming about on the basis of non-economic group interests is confronting even bigger difficulties in the process of its formation. As was said before, the organizations which formerly existed in this sphere were, in fact, the instruments of the political regime. Most of them proved unable to get adapted to the changed conditions and went to pieces. Only tiny fragments are left of the mass youth movement. Quite a ramified and active movement in support of the defense efforts (Voluntary Society for Assisting the Army, Air Force and the Navy - *DOSAAF*) collapsed. Women’s organizations ceased to exist. The movement “Women of Russia” created on its wreckage acquired the character of an electoral bloc.

The first mass public movement of a new type which came about on the crest of perestroika was the association of numerous informal organizations on whose basis the so-called “Democratic Russia” was formed. This organization, alongside other less influential associations (the Russian People’s Front, the Moscow People’s Front and the like), by the

end of 1980s turned into a most influential public and political force within the country. By bringing increased pressure upon the state structures it took many thousand-strong demonstrations into the streets, campaigned (successfully, as a rule) for the removal of local party and state functionaries who has disgraced themselves, brought many of its representatives to the USSR and the RSFSR Supreme Soviets as well as to the local bodies of power in the 1989-1990 elections, and ultimately played the decisive part in speeding up the political transformation.

However, the heterogeneous character of the movement, the evident discrepancy of purposes pursued by its component groups and the growing frustration of citizens as to the results of the transformations determined its fast downfall. Already by 1993 this movement was no more as an entity. Several political parties appeared on its basis and were soon on the sidelines of the public life (including the Democratic Russia party which has kept its former title). Some degree of influence was preserved by particular organizations close or kin to the old "Democratic Russia", including Society "Memorial" - an association representing the interests of individuals who had suffered from political persecution and seeing its objective in preventing new violations of human rights. Most groups, however, which emerged on the ruins of the "Democratic Russia" are so small in number and in their influence that their influence on the nation's public life is practically negligible.

The mass ecological movement composed of various environmental protection groups also came into being at the prime time of perestroika. At certain stages it came very close to and even mixed together with the general democratic protest movements. In 1989-1990 there was a differentiation of the ecological movement into two trends - a political and a functional. The political trend was very soon absorbed by the forming

democratic parties, while the functional continued to exist as a major component of civil society.

The International Social and Ecological Union was for several years the largest ecological organization. Several competing trends existed within it - conservationists, alternativists, traditionalists, environmental politicians, environmental patriots, etc. Similar trends existed outside this Union, too.

The fragmented nature of the environmental movement in conditions of a worsening economic crisis resulted in a decline of its influence as compared to the end of 1980s. The efforts to revive it found their expression in the formation of Russia "Green Cross" and the constructivist movement "Kedr" in 1993, later reorganized into a party. Nevertheless, a general revival did not ensue, though the deterioration of the ecological situation within the country and the more frequent environmental disasters are all the time supplying a fresh impetus to the green movement. [16]

In 1990s the Russian tenants' movement gathered substantial momentum, though it failed to get the expected dimension. [17]

Attempts are being made to give a fresh start to the general democratic movements. They were especially noticeable just before the opening of the 1995-1996 election campaigns. In particular, a civil movement was initiated against the military actions in Chechnya and the consequent growth of authoritarian tendencies in Russia's political life. But after truce in the Chechen war it has mostly ended.

On the whole the gaps in the medium layer of structures of the emerging civil society give ample of material for consideration why it had a so far small effect on the political system.

The upper stratum of civil society structures encompasses organizations and associations of the spiritual and ideological sphere. Most

of them emerged on the ruins of the all-embracing system of exerting the ideological influence on society which existed under the etatist-bureaucratic regime. Some of them, in particular the majority of creative associations (of writers, journalists, cinematographers, theatrical personalities, composers, etc.), were bound by continuity with the former system, though substantial changes took place in the content and forms of their activity. Another part arose out of antagonism with the old system as an alternative to the latter. And, finally, many ideological associations and enlightenment groups came about as a form of creative pursuits in the process of the intellectual sphere's emancipation from the fetters of official ideology.

In fact, ideological and world outlook structures, mainly different analytical centers and discussion clubs are closely intertwined with society's political institutions. Ideological groups of communist orientation concentrated round the left and extreme left parties. Many scholars abiding by the former ideological tenets are affiliated in the Association of Socialist Orientated Scholars which is close to the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF). Others got united in various left intellectual clubs. The public and political movement "Spiritual Heritage" is also close to the CPRF.

There appeared many non-Communist and anti-Communist clubs close to the parties of a democratic orientation. One of the clubs most influential by early 1990s was the so-called "Moscow Rostrum" (*Moskovskaya Tribuna*) which groomed many leading public figures of the first stage of the reforms. Left-centrist forces have grouped round the movement "Realists", the association "New Socialism", the Gorbachev Foundation and a few more, moderate nationalist - round the Congress of Russian Communities, right-wing nationalists - round right-wing radical

parties. Simultaneously a totality of public and quasi-public associations was set up in order to render ideological support to the present regime.

The influence of church organizations went up significantly. Alongside the Russian Orthodox Church dominant amongst the Russian population and the Moslem and Buddhist Churches dominant amongst the non-Russians, a lot of promotion has been given to church groups and sects marginal for Russia, like Baptists, Seventh Day Adventists, Witnesses of Jehovah , Krishnaites, etc.

The debunking of communist ideology which was the epitome not so much of knowledge, but rather of faith, created some sort of an ideological void open to new values and beliefs. This void in significant degree is being filled with religion. At the same time the dimension of influence by the church organizations and organizations associated therewith should not be overstated. According to the expert estimate approximately 40 per cent of the adult population is under their influence.

Mass media are the most advanced and efficient element of contemporary civil society in Russia. In terms of the number of newspapers, magazines and publishing houses Russia is abreast of the most advanced countries. There are six federal and hundreds of regional TV channels. The crucial impetus to the development of the mass media system was given by the policy of glasnost adopted in the years of perestroika. After the Law on the Press entered into force (1990) the last administrative restrictions regarding their activity were lifted. Since then there were attempts to bridle mass media (restriction of access to information sources and open pressure). This placed definite difficulties but failed to alter the situation drastically. Mass media's impact on the current policy is becoming more and more obvious.

Still, as the time went on, the problem of mass media dependency on the sources of financing has become more salient. This restricts their freedom and compels to reckon with the will expressed by sponsors (on some occasions these are state structures, on other occasions - banking corporations) and to impose it - one way or another - on the public. We are facing the danger of the greater part of news media, mainly electronic, turning into an instrument serving the political will of corporate groups.

During the years of reformation in Russia there appeared great many political parties. For instance, 43 political blocs bringing together more than fifty party units took part in the 1995 parliamentary election. The number of those registered is much higher. If one measured the degree of democratism by the number of political parties, Russia would have been among the world's most democratic countries.

It is known, nevertheless, that what matters is not the number of parties but whether or not they represent the interests of mass public forces, whether or not they are capable of formulating these interests within a nation-wide discourse and thereby participate in the formation of the political line for the nation's home and foreign policy. Regrettably, Russia is greatly falling short on these criteria not only by comparison with Western democracies but even with its Eastern European neighbors.

By their political thrust Russian parties, diverse as they are, can be conventionally divided into three large groups: liberal-democratic, socialist and traditionalist.

The liberal-democratic group encompasses political forces which came to power in August 1991 and initially were the bulwark of the present regime. Here belong Russia's Democratic Choice, Democratic Russia, the "Yabloko" ("Apple") movement, Russia's Peasant Party, Democratic Party of Russia, Economic Freedom Party, etc. Ineffective

economic reforms, their grave socio-economic consequences, authoritarian incursions of the government, especially the Chechen war, compelled the majority of these parties to join the opposition. On the whole they advocate the continuation and the deepening of reforms, but are divided between themselves by internal contradictions which prevent them from uniting in a single bloc. After the unfortunate “shock therapy” experiment these parties experience a bad ideological and political crisis.

The socialist group of parties fills the left side of the political spectrum including the left center and quite obviously falls into two subgroups: the communist and social democratic. In the first there belong the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF) and the extreme left-wing fundamentalist communist parties and groups. The second subgroup is represented by several social democratic parties (Social Democratic Party of Russia, Russian Social Democratic Center, Russian Social Democratic Party, Young Social Democrats of Russia) and a number of socialist parties (Socialist Working People Party (SWPP), Socialist Party of Russia, etc.). The Russian Party of Social Democracy created with the assistance of the Presidential Administration can only be referred to this group because of its title: in terms of its composition and program, it belongs more to liberal democratic parties. Affiliated with the socialist group is the Agrarian Party of Russia whose activity is of pragmatic character but mostly abides by the socialist platform. The parties within the group in question come out for carrying out far-reaching reforms to create conditions for the resurgence of socialism on a democratic platform.

The traditionalist group presents a motley of parties oriented to national-patriotic values and authoritarian and great-power traditions, the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR) being the most influential of

them. This group also includes the Congress of Russian Communities, the National Republican Party of Russia, the Russian National Unity Movement, the Russian People's Alliance, the Russian National Assembly, the Derzhava («Power») Social Patriotic Movement, the National Redemption Front, the Conservative Party, and others. Some of them come out for right-wing and even pro-Fascist positions, others claim to be left centrists, but all of them concentrate on Russian national identity, reject priority of the universal human values, and strive for the restoration of authoritarian great-power statehood.

Naturally, this classification to some extent simplifies Russia's actual political setup. Some parties do not fit into this typological pattern. Neither does it include the party of power, i.e., the All-Russian Sociopolitical Movement «Russia Is Our Home» (ROH), and the Self-Government Party advocating the Liberal Democratic line on the one hand and supporting some Socialist ideas in its policy statements on the other. Yet the proposed pattern, despite its approximate character, allows to perceive the general alignment of political forces.

A distinction of the current situation is that only three or four of those political parties can be regarded as national organizations. First of all, it is the CPRF. But its influence and membership are largely determined by the inertia preset by the former CPSU rather than by the impetus coming from emergent social strata. The ROH's influence is also based not so much on social support as on the central and local administrative structures. Most of the political organizations are in fact quasiparties or at best protoparties. They are often consolidated around charismatic leaders, not common interests. Some of them are but small groups of like-minded persons, influential within the limits of Sadovaya St., i.e., the center of Moscow.

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In general, Russia's present party system is amorphous. The parties, with the exception of a few, are hard to identify on the basis of their policy statements which, as a rule, are declarative, abstract, and largely similar to each other.

The current condition of these political parties determines the degree of their influence in society. The polls conducted in last few years show that around 50 percent of the citizens do not have political sympathies for any existing parties. Furthermore, according to the estimates of the Institute of Sociology RAS, over 70 percent of the population do not trust any political parties. [18]

In other words, the multitude of parties in Russian politics does not reflect the diversity of social interests yet to be shaped. Neither is it the political pluralism of a mature democratic society. This is just a result of collapse of the one-party monolith imposed on society. This plurality reveals disorderly, unstable, and unsystematic political relations.

Thus the general appearance of the emergent civil society structures is quite impressive: a multitude of organizations and associations in all spheres of social life and outwardly high level of activity. Naturally, this is a great shift in comparison with the totalitarian past when the freedom of civil activity was confined to official public organizations and meetings of friends in the kitchen. The achievements, however, should not be overestimated. Many civil organizations and associations are only formally independent. In reality they are still tied up to power structures financially, ideologically, and organizationally. Even independent associations mechanically reproduce bureaucratic orders heading off citizens' initiatives. There is no integrated system of civil structures. The condition of civil associations in Russia is quite in line with the incomplete restructuring of social interests and social stratification of society.

Let us now examine the Russian civil society according to its **legal axis**.

Civil society as a definite type and sphere of social relations has a normative content. Its existence and functioning are based on a sum total of certain rules. Most of them are moral norms stemming from customs, traditions, and established way of life. At the same time, civil society is unthinkable outside the system of legal norms: individual rights and liberties, freedom of assembly and association, right of privacy, pluralism, freedom of speech and information, etc. The system of legal norms is important for the evolution of civil society in two ways: first of all, it creates a social atmosphere generating a civic spirit, furthering a political culture adequate to that society, and stepping up political activity. Secondly, only a ramified legal structure provides civil society institutions with necessary conditions for large-scale social activities and performance of socially meaningful functions.

Hence a free development of civil society implies a democratic rule-of-law state. This kind of state is only shaping in Russia. Fundamental laws ensuring the normative content of civil society have been adopted. But they are still imperfect, often lacking mechanisms for their implementation and often disregarded by local authorities.

Before perestroika, the clearly defined legal ground for the normal functioning of civil society in the USSR was very limited. Formally, the citizens had the right of association. The officially recognized organizations worked on the basis of established norms. They had their own charters, elected their leadership, were accountable to their members, and so on. In reality, however, their rights, responsibilities, and activities were regulated by resolutions and instructions of the top party and state leadership that also determined both the establishment of organizations and their liquidation. [19]

By the mid-1990s, the legislative base for a more or less normal functioning of civil society structures had been created in Russia. [20] That was the Constitution of the Russian Federation of 1993. The Constitution was a result of intensive party and political confrontation and reflected a lot of rushing from one extreme into the other. That is why its text contains nonmatching and at times contradictory tendencies and discrepancies between general declarations and concrete mechanisms of their implementation. The Constitution has all major elements of a democratic rule-of-law state: rights and liberties of man and citizen as a supreme value, people's sovereignty, supremacy of the law, division of authority, and independent judicial power. At the same time, the institutional governance model defined by the Constitution is stamped with clear-cut features of authoritarianism.

Yet the Constitution provides for a minimum legal ground, including the concept of «public associations» (Articles 13, 19, and 30) with all the rights and responsibilities envisaged for legal entities. Alongside the public associations in the narrow sense of the word, this means associations of citizens in business and any other economic activity allowed by the law (Articles 35 and 36).

The new Civil Code of the Russian Federation adopted by the State Duma has played an important part in the legal provision for the development of civil society in Russia. It has attached a principally new dimension to the established system of legal regulation of non-government and nonprofit social relations. According to Article 117 of the Code, public and religious organizations are voluntary associations of citizens, formed in conformity with the established legal procedure, on the basis of common interests in order to meet spiritual or other nonmaterial needs. Such organizations may include consumer cooperatives, associations of

legal entities, charitable or other foundations, public associations, religious organizations and institutions (Articles 117-121). This list is not exhaustive, for in some cases specified by law, corresponding nonprofit organizations may be established in other forms.

The federal law of public organizations, effective from May 1995, is a framework and in many ways decisive legislation in this sphere. The clearly formulated citizens' right of choice and preference of organization is an indispensable principle specified in Article 3 of the law. It provides for the unrestricted establishment of public associations at one's discretion without the government authorities' preliminary consent and for the opportunity to join such public associations. These associations may be registered (as legal entities) or function without official registration and legal entity status. An association is considered to be founded following the decision to set it up, approval of its charter, and election of its leadership and auditing bodies. It operates in keeping with its charter, acquires its rights, excluding legal entity rights, and takes on responsibilities specified by the law (Article 18).

For the purposes of official registration, the law divides public organizations into national, regional, and local. National, interregional, and international public organizations as well as branches (affiliates) of foreign public associations, set up in the territory of the Russian Federation, are registered by the RF Ministry of Justice; regional and local public associations are registered by offices of justice of the corresponding federation subjects (Article 21). Official registration can be denied only in the following cases: documents of association do not correspond to the law; at least one of the founders is disabled or disqualified; another organization bearing the same name is already in the register. A denial of official registration can be appealed against in court (Article 23).

The rights of public organizations are specified in other enactments.

The Law of Freedom of Religion adopted in December 1990 provides for the existence of religious organizations as voluntary associations of citizens of age, established to jointly exercise the citizens' freedom of religion. Religious organizations enjoy all the rights of a legal entity from the date of registration of their articles of association (Article 17). They may carry out charitable activities, establish cultural and educational organizations, and set up mass media bodies, including radio and TV (Article 24).

The Law of Education of July 10, 1992, (as amended on December 24, 1993) allows to establish nongovernment (private and public) educational institutions which in turn may set up associations, complexes, leagues, and other organizations.

The Fundamentals of Legislation of the Russian Federation contain concrete directions pertinent to associations of cultural institutions. The Federal Law of Chambers of Commerce and Industry in the Russian Federation of July 7, 1993, specifies the designation of those associations and relations with the state, principles and procedure of their establishment and liquidation, as well as their rights and responsibilities. The Federal Law of Support for Public Associations of Youth and Children (May 1995) regulates relations between these associations and executive power offices as regards the state's support (Article 1) and guarantees the rights of these associations. The Law of Charitable Activity and Charitable Organizations (July 7, 1995) underlies the legal regulation of that sphere of social activity, including the functioning procedure for appropriate associations of foundations and institutions.

Yet the legislation bound to guarantee a normal operation of civil society structures has many gaps. The main of them is the lack of firm

guarantees of implementing these laws and effective sanctions against their breach or failure to execute them. Bridging this gap is important especially as the neglect of law and inclination to ignore legislative directions, typical of both the grassroots and the powers that be, are Russia's most widespread misfortunes.

Examining the development of civil society in Russia in three aspects - basic, structural, and legal - provides a general idea of the level of maturity of its major objective distinctions and mechanisms of operation. But the subjective aspect of the process, characterized by the level of civil consciousness and culture of the population, is no less important to understand its current state and especially its development prospects. No civil structures will work by themselves without an atmosphere of civil responsibility in society, encouraging citizens' initiative and solidarity. As the authors of *Dignity and Truth* rightly point out, here lies the spiritual and moral dimension of civil society that «gives people an ideal to strive and a sense of belonging». [21]

An absent or suppressed civil and moral dimension threatens civil society institutions with degeneration into bureaucratic structures representing purely private corporate interests.

The available data concerning the Russian population's level of civic spirit present a rather contradictory picture. Undoubtedly, the degree of people's alienation from power and political system at large is very high. The loss of trust in political parties, presidency, government, parliamentary institutions, and local power structures undermines the population's adherence to democratic forms of governance. Public-opinion polls show an expressed tendency toward the growth of authoritarian sentiments. In 1996, 25 percent of the population fully or partly agreed with the

assumption that democracy as a system of governance in society was unacceptable to Russia. [22]

At the level of behavior, citizens' alienation from the political system has been reflected in increasing electoral absenteeism. In 1991-1993, the share of participants in voting was steadily going down and amounted to nearly 50 percent at the end of the period (the election to the State Duma of December 1993). In the late 1995-mid-1996, electoral activity rose to some extent (around 65 percent in the election to the State Duma in December 1995). [23] But in the second half of 1996, voting activity started declining consistently and even went below the 1993 level. For example, during the regional election of late 1996-mid-1997, the 25-percent participation looked quite representative against the background of the general decline of electoral activity. Such a high degree of political alienation obviously poses a serious obstacle to the promotion of a civic sentiment as a predominant factor of mass consciousness and behavior. The efficiency of civil institutions will remain in question until the situation has changed.

At the same time, there are other tendencies. In the years of antitotalitarian reformation, the population has markedly got accustomed to democratic procedures. Most of the citizens take for granted the freedom of information and press and extensively use the right of unrestricted criticism of power institutions and authorities. Despite all the drawbacks of the electoral process, the citizens' feeling that they participate, albeit indirectly, in politics, and determine at least something anyway, has taken root in their mentality. This develops and enhances the civic spirit and hence the efficiency of civil society institutions.

The growth of grassroots civic activity is another indication of positive changes in social consciousness. According to some experts, this

activity is more noticeable in small towns and settlements. Active groups have more opportunities for civic initiatives due to more intimate and transparent social relations. [24] The specific character of municipal authorities combining state and public principles in their work also contributes to the process. In some places, civil organizations' aspiration to act in solidarity and take an active part in dealing with social problems has developed into the establishment of regional public chambers, specific forums for broad civil discourse. [25]

Naturally, there is no need to exaggerate the scope of civil activity. In the present difficult economic conditions, the majority of the population in the regions are waging a bitter struggle for survival, taking a greater part of their vital energy. This factor deters the growth of civil consciousness and responsibility. However the prerequisites for their rapid increase in the future are being accumulated latently. This growth as well as the prospects for the development of civil society as a whole depends upon the general context of relations between the latter and the political system and state power.

Civil society's potential cannot be realized if it is closed in itself. In this case it will remain the domain of private interests. Combining them with the common (public) interest is feasible only through interaction with the political system. This means that civil society's normal development and operation require a state that embodies the public interest. Furthermore, civil society is able to influence the democratic process only through this interaction, by bringing the population's civic activity into it and thereby preventing state structures from fencing it in with etatist and bureaucratic barriers. [26]

A developed and strong democracy is possible where the citizens can influence state power and control it. This implies close interaction between

the political system and civil society. Jean Baechler rightfully points out, «... a democratic regime cannot become established and last until upright and resolute individuals are capable of controlling power and preventing it from turning into a hierocratic regime or into an autocracy... But democracy and individual are not confined to a dialogue between the two. By necessity, individuals unite into groups to attain their ends». [27] Here lies the problem of the dialogue between the state and civil society.

Both a democratic political system and a mature civil society depend upon interaction between them, due to which a political system acquires stable links with the vital interests of society and individuals comprising it, i.e., the social base of democracy. In this interaction, a ramified network of public organizations frees itself of the corporatist snare and becomes a genuine civil society. [28]

It has been said that civil society, by virtue of the unlimited pluralism of private interests, cannot perform power functions. [29] But it can and must, in its essence, resist etatist tendencies threatening democracy. According to E. Gellner, civil society is «a set of diverse nongovernmental institutions which is strong enough to counterbalance the state and, while not preventing the state from fulfilling its role of keeper of the peace and arbitrator between major interests, can nevertheless prevent it from dominating and atomizing the rest of society». [30]

In Russian conditions, this function, so important for the defense and development of the democratic process, has not been expressed adequately for a number of reasons.

Traditionally, the degree of citizens' alienation from power in Russia is higher than in many other countries. Power is regarded in mass consciousness as something opposite and hostile to the individual and society as a whole. This perception, which has become part of the Russian

mentality, determines not only the behavior of individuals but also that of communities at the grassroots level. The years of the Soviet regime did not interrupt that tradition. After its recession during the initial post-revolutionary period, it became firmly established and went on strengthening as the administrative bureaucratic system was disintegrating. The domination of the new bureaucracy that replaced it and came to power under the banner of radical liberalism, significantly increased mistrust and hostility toward authority.

This circumstance considerably affected the behavior of many public organizations comprising the backbone of civil society. Some of them lost their initially declared purposes and principles, turned into political parties' instruments and adjuncts typical of the preceding period, and in effect stopped being elements of civil society. Others, reflecting the citizens' predominant sentiments, demonstratively turned apart from everything that was beyond their narrow functional tasks and deprived themselves of opportunities to influence the political system and hence power.

State institutions acted in a similar way. Alienation between power (including political) and society resulted in Russia not only in the lower classes' deep mistrust toward the upper crust of society but also in the latter's mistrust and hostility toward the former as well as toward any forms of public initiative even those that were not directed against the system. In the past, this circumstance largely impeded the process of social changes in czarist Russia and thereby provoked revolutionary and violent solutions to urgent problems. After the revolution, especially after its Stalinist degeneration, the paternalist component of the authorities' policy that later acquired extremely hypertrophied forms, became the alpha and omega of governance behavior.

During perestroika, some elements of paternalist policy in its extreme manifestations were dismantled. Then came a short break when power stopped (at times due to its inability) controlling many public organizations which in turn effectively avoided that control. But soon the continuity of state paternalist traditions in relation to society was restored. While it has not so far been revitalized fully in practical politics, it has completely prevailed in the mentality of governance. Hence follows the continuous aspiration of state institutions not to interact with public organizations and, consequently, civil society but to command it; not to perceive its impulses and adjust their policy accordingly but to suppress such impulses and ignore them, turning public organizations into one-way channels of communicating governing directions from top to bottom.

Naturally, alienation between society and a political system cannot be absolute. It was not absolute even when the administrative bureaucratic system was at its peak. The less absolute it is now, when democratic procedures albeit restricted have become established in the country, and when the system of public organizations has considerably developed. Interaction between civil society and the political system, including state institutions, does exist. Yet it is a great deal less effective than it would be necessary for a normal course of events and often assumes distorted forms.

The absence of an efficient system of links between civil society and a political system often results in that solving outstanding problems and adjusting current policies is essentially protracted. Problems are piling up. When their number reaches a critical mass, attempts are made to solve them. It usually occurs in two cases: when the economic situation becomes catastrophic, or when a nation is on the eve of an election, and political institutions' dependence upon society's sentiments becomes quite explicit. This largely determines the convulsions in Russia's current politics, its

typical spurts and turns, and the tensions attending any significant electoral action.

The relations between civil society and the political system in Russia are complicated by the factors accompanying the development of the new Russian federalism. This means that civil society interacts not only with federal power but also with regional authorities, both attempting to govern civil society institutions.

This factor has a dual impact on the functioning of civil society. On the one hand, the distance between it and regional power bodies is getting shorter, which allows civil society to exert more pressure on political power and increases the efficiency of its institutions. On the other hand, regional authorities ignoring national interests may disregard local institutions of civil society and even deprive them of their legitimate status. This creates peculiar gaps on the map of the Russian Federation where the influence of civil society institutions comes to naught, and the ground for local authoritarianism polluting the atmosphere in the country as a whole. [31]

It should be recognized that at the regional level, Russian civil society is weaker than at the federal level. Consequently, its ability to confront political (administrative) power is considerably less than at the national level. This negative phenomenon can be overcome only by way of creating a ramified local self-government system opposed to it, which, as we have said above, combines both power and civil relations. As a result, local self-government agencies will be able not only to oppose regional authorities' despotic ambitions but also to serve as a school forming the activist element for other structures of civil society. Although local self-government is legislatively recognized in Russia, it has so been in embryo. This is another reason for the weakness of Russian democracy.

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In some cases, interaction between state institutions and civil society is carried out through corporate channels. Due to some of their properties, corporations constitute an integral part of civil society, but they have their own specific features. They are strictly oriented to realizing their clearly expressed group interests and structured not only horizontally but also vertically, with access to the political system. Such corporations bear a likeness to parties which, in contrast to political parties, achieve their goals not in the framework of public politics but through a direct impact on political structures that is often unofficial and underhand. In doing so, they use a system of railroading necessary managerial and economic resolutions through the state machinery. [32]

Widespread nonlegal relations between bureaucracy and corporate representatives are a byproduct of the corporate form of interaction between state power institutions and civil society structures. Underhand activities, especially in terms of their serious material consequences, create favorable conditions for criminal behavior (corruption, bribery), particularly when corporations and their representatives trying to push through one or another decision, are directly or indirectly connected with shadow economic structures or organized crime. Similar tendencies are known to take place all over the world. But in Russia they are much more explicit and widespread due to its specific and peculiar situation at present.

It is not simple to reveal the difference between the corporate form of pushing through managerial and economic decisions and normal, socially necessary impact of civil society upon the political system and state institutions. In many ways, the two are at least parallel if not identical. Publicity is a criterion allowing to see this difference. As soon as corporate railroading becomes public, i.e., open and conducted through generally accepted channels and under public control, it stops to be a

distorted form of civil society's influence on political power and acquires a normal and legitimate character.

A system of functional representation (actively discussed by experts today) would be an efficient form of legitimizing corporate channels of influence upon state structures. Acting alongside party and parliamentary representative bodies based on the territorial principle and franchise, it would represent corporate interests and thereby ensure both their direct and public contacts with power offices. In a broader sense, the system of power institutions may also include economic, ecological, or cultural parliaments performing legislative functions in their spheres. [33] Such a decision would be especially important and promising to Russia with its inadequately functioning civil society.

In general, the promotion of constructive interaction between the state and civil society, including the overcoming of corporatism, is possible only by way of a broad nation-wide discourse. Democracy is impossible in modern complex society without such a discourse that would nurture democratic ethos and shape public opinion and channels of its influence on power. «There can be no strong democratic legitimacy without ongoing talk», said Benjamin Barber. [34]

Political parties play a key part in organizing a nation-wide discourse. They act as mediators in the dialogue between state power and civil society and communicate with power in political, not corporate terms, by offering programs and alternatives of sociopolitical reforms on behalf of different sectors of society. Parties formulate particular interests of civil society structures in the context of national development. It is hardly possible to align major groups of particular interests with the common (public) interest without political parties. And that the Russian political parties inadequately cope with that mediation function is, as we have said

above, due to the fact that Russian civil society is only about to leave its embryonic stage and is just beginning to realize the importance of political formulation of its interests within the painstakingly evolving multiparty democracy.

* * *

So we have all grounds to regard as untenable the assertions that civil society does not exist in Russia at all. It does exist and is functioning, which allows a moderately optimistic assessment of democratic development opportunities and prospects.

In spring 1985, when perestroika began in the Soviet Union, there was hardly anyone who could foresee the scale of coming changes and the time they would take. General intoxication with liberty and glasnost was attended by romantic illusions. It seemed enough to destroy totalitarian governance for democracy with all its attributes to prevail in the country.

Ten years after, bitter experience dispelled the illusions. It was now obvious that the 1985 breakthrough with all its significance of a turning point was but a starting point of democratic reformation in Russian society that will take an epoch measured not by years but decades. Democratic institutions and relations must be firmly established in society during that period, which is possible only on the substantial basis of a developed civil society. It took Western countries centuries to form it. It would be naive to think that the civil basis of modern democracy and multiparty system in Russia, originating from a strict administrative bureaucratic setup, could emerge rapidly and smoothly. For this, Russia lacks even those minimum prerequisites that exist in some East European nations which have preserved the traditions of the market, private property, and democratic

process and had a starting ground for market relations and democratic institutions.

Today's civil society in Russia is fragmented; it has not become fully aware of itself as such. It is not sufficiently developed to serve as a firm ground for a stable democratic political system.

Here lies the source of the dramatic contradictions within Russian democracy, its weakness and instability. Hence follow the uncontrollable nature of the ruling elite, its obsession with its own interests, and inclination toward authoritarian actions.

Russia is on the way to a mature civil society and stable democracy. But this road will be long and hard.

Footnotes

1. The concept of civil society expressed in this report generally similar or quite close to the conceptual views substantiated by Cohen J. And Arato A. in *Civil Society and Political Theory*. The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England, 1992; Keane J. (ed.), *Civil Society and the State: New European Perspectives*. London and New York: Verso, 1988.
2. «Civil society should become a permanent thorn in the side of political power». - Keane J. *Democracy and Civil Society*. London-New York: Verso, 1988, p. 15.
3. « Civil society simply becomes all that is desired in the making of a democratic society». - K. Kumar in *British Journal of Sociology*, 1993, vol. 44, No 3, p. 388.
4. J. Alexander criticizing A. Arato and J. Cohen, who, in his opinion, following Habermas, present a highly idealized and rationalistic understanding of good (i.e., civil) society, emphasizes that «bad» and «irrational» are also «categories internal to the discourse of civil society itself». He writes, «The emergence of an independent solidary sphere is not only the solution but also the problem, for there are internal contradictions within civil society itself». The author even assumes that «it is the tension between the forces of civil and uncivil solidarity that creates the dynamics of social life». (Jeffrey C. Alexander. *The Return to Civil Society*, in *Contemporary Sociology*, Los Angeles, 1993, November, 22 (6), pp. 800-802).
5. Ernest Gellner, a British sociologist of Czech origin, sees alternatives to civil society in Islam and Asian capitalism offering instead a «tightly

- bound kinship society». (See Ernest Gellner. *Conditions of Liberty: Civil Society and Its Rivals*, London: Penguin, 1984).
6. Robert Miller aptly remarks, «Corporatism, by its very nature, is corrosive of civil society». (Robert Miller (ed.). *The Development of Civil Society in Communist System*, Allen and Union, 1992, p. 9).
 7. According to Paul Hirst, «'Civil society' as a homogeneous **political** force is an idea at variance with modern pluralist mass democracy, which relies on the **divisions** of civil society expressed in political competition contained within the party system to ensure social and political order». (Paul Hirst. *The State, Civil Society and Collapse of Soviet Communism*, in *Economy and Society*, vol. 20, No 2, May 1991, p. 234).
 8. See Y.V. Gridchin. «**On the Way to Civil Society. Reforms of the '60s in Russia**», in *Problems of Shaping Civil Society*, Moscow: RAS Institute of Sociology, 1993, pp. 101-127, (in Russian).
 9. T. Zaslavskaya. «**Business Stratum of Russian Society: Its Essence, Structure, and Status**», in *Obshchestvenniye Nauki i Sovremennost*, 1995, No 1, pp. 17-32 (in Russian).
 10. I. Kant. *Collected Works*, vol. 6, Moscow, 1966, pp. 285-286 (in Russian).
 11. «**Labor Unions in New Economic Conditions**», in *Khoziaystvo i Pravo*, 1994, No 2, pp. 26-38 (in Russian).
 12. See K.D. Krylov. «**Labor Unions and Problems of Labor Legislation**», in *Gosudarstvo i Pravo*, 1996, No 3, pp. 33-38 (in Russian).
 13. V.V. Tolstosheyeva. «**Associations of Entrepreneurs (Problems of Legal Status)**», in *Gosudarstvo i Pravo*, 1994, No 2, pp. 54-50 (in Russian).

14. See «**Businessmen in Quest of Their Eternal Interests**», in *Kommersant Daily*, June 21, 1995, No 113 (in Russian).
15. S. Peregudov rightly remarks that due to the weakness of the Russian party and parliamentary system and inadequate mechanism of functional representation, «lobbyism based on the priority of group interests to the detriment of national interests, started to play an excessive role». («**Civil Society: a Political Dimension**», in *Mirovaya Ekonomika i Mezhdunarodniye Otnosheniya*, No 12, 1995, p. 85), (in Russian).
16. O.N. Yanitsky. «**Evolution of Ecological Movement in Modern Russia**», in *Sotsis*, 1995, No 8, pp. 15-26; see also A.V. Shubin. «**Social Strategy of Green Movement in Russia**», in *Vestnik FROPC*, 1996, No 2, pp. 53-63, (in Russian).
17. Y.S. Shomina. «**Development of Housing Movement in Russia**», in *Sotsis*, 1995, No 10, pp. 78-87, (in Russian).
18. *Opinion Mirror*, Moscow: RAS Institute of Sociology 1992-1995, (in Russian).
19. See D.V. Shutko. «**Evolution of Legal Status of Public organizations**», in *Civil Society and Rule-of-Law State: Formation Prerequisites*, Moscow, 1991, from p.81, (in Russian).
20. See N.Y. Beliayeva. *Legal Status of Nonprofit Organizations in Russia*, Moscow, 1995, (in Russian).
21. *Dignity and Truth. Civil Society and European Cooperation*, the Hague, 1996, p. 31. The authors point out that the market tends to dominate over society at the expense of the latter's social and moral content and emphasize that «'dignity' and 'truth' are crucial values to both Christian democracy and the concept of civil society» (Ibid., p. 14).

22. Project Russian Regions. A nation-wide public opinion poll. Materials kindly provided to the author of this report by the project experts.
23. *State Duma Election of 1995. Electoral Statistics*, Moscow, 1996, p.46, (in Russian).
24. According to T. Kuznetsova, the intimate atmosphere of a small town «makes it easy to set up socially and economically active groups capable of uniting, organizing, and creating various socioeconomic entities». (T.Y. Kuznetsova. «**Small Russian Towns: Population Characteristics**», in *Ekonomicheskkiye i Sotsialniye Peremeny*, 1994, No 6, p. 117), (in Russian). A. Evans of University of California specifically studied the condition of civil society in the small town of Semenov (population: 57,000), Nizhny Novgorod region. His conclusion is that the civil society potential in such towns is higher than in large cities. In particular, the author pointed to aligned public and state principles in the work of the local assembly (*zemstvo*). (See Alfred B. Evans, Jr. *Civil Society and Political Authority in a Small City in Russia*, prepared for delivery at the 28th National Convention of the American Association for Advancement of Studies, Boston, Massachusetts, November 14-17, 1996).
25. For example, since November 1990, the Public Chamber of Kemerovo Region) has been functioning in Kuzbass. It is aimed «to establish a dialogue and interaction with the regional legislative (representative) and executive authorities, to express public opinion of various issues of life, and to promote civil society». («**Problems of Shaping Civil Society in Russia**». Report outlines and materials of the scientific and practical conference, Krasnoyarsk, April 25-26, 1996, Krasnoyarsk, 1996, p. 235), (in Russian). See also The Agreement of Association of the Public Chamber of Kemerovo Region (Ibid., pp. 392-395).

26. It would be an illusion to think that civil society and state power can develop in a parallel way, without interfering in each other's affairs. G. Ekiert writes that during the rule of J. Kadar in Hungary, the power policy sought to establish «an implicit pact of nonaggression» between «domestic society» and the state. But this kind of «annihilation of political society» would lead to «the informal institutionalization» of «an elaborate and enormous system of clientelism and corruption». (Grzegorz Ekiert. «**Democratization Process in East Central Europe: a Theoretical Reconsideration**», *British Journal of Political Science*, 1992, No 21, pp. 302-303). «Neutrality» leads to the transformation of civil society into corporate, on the one hand, and conserves power authoritarianism, on the other.
27. Jean Baechler. *Individual, Group, and Democracy in Democratic Community*, Nomos XXXV, N.Y. and London, 1993, p. 24.
28. The effect of civil society on the state is not always positive from the viewpoint of democratic development prospects. It may well be negative, say, in case of domination of corporatist tendencies in the civil sphere. Jeffrey Alexander maintains that particularistic interests of civil society structures «dangerously impinge upon political authority and economic exchange, layering them with the kind of demonic symbolization of group loyalties that demarcates spaces of exclusion and strategies of violence». ((Jeffrey C. Alexander. *The Return to Civil Society*, p. 802).
29. J. Keane remarks that «the idea of civil society for political purpose should be resisted». (*Civil Society and the State: New European Perspectives*, London and New York: Verso, 1988, p. 23). The abortive attempt of Poland's Solidarity to take on political functions untypical of a civil institution graphically confirms this conclusion.

30. Ernest Gellner. *Conditions of Liberty: Civil Society and Its Rivals*, p. 5. This proposition is given a concrete expression in *Dignity and Truth*: «Communities and organizations in the field of civil society provide a basis for the limitation of state power, hence for the control of the state by society... A society in which strong autonomous institutions exist, is less vulnerable to the threat of authoritarian or totalitarian government. Even democracies may degenerate into such a state, if a government and a parliamentary majority aspire to control all aspects of civilian life and the citizens lose interest in politics and society. Disintegration of organized society, which is the destruction of independent *loci* of power, is a well-known instrument in the hands of governments that seek authoritarian or totalitarian control». (*Dignity and Truth. Civil Society and European Cooperation*, p. 100).
31. See S. Barzilov and A. Chernyshov. «**Regions as a Political Space**», in *Svobodnaya Mysl*, 1997, No 2, pp. 3-13, (in Russian).
32. *Evolution of a New Russian Statehood: Reality and Prospects*, Moscow: the Strategia Humanitarian and Political Center, 1996, pp. 128-130, (in Russian).
33. Some prerequisites for establishing such chambers already exist. See The State Duma Committee for Public Associations and Religious Organizations. *Representative Power: Monitoring, Analysis, and Information*, No 1 (3), January 1995, Moscow, 1995, (in Russian).
34. Benjamin Barber. *Strong Democracy: Participatory Politics for a New Age*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984, p. 136.