

of a middle-class (Anikin, 2009; Golenkova, Igitkhanan and Orekhova, 2010; Golovlyanitsyna, 2009; Gorskov, 2011, 2012; Lapin, 2011; Tichonova, 2007; Tichonova and Mareeva, 2009; Yavlinsky and Kosmynin, 2011). Basing on these works, I define a ‘new middle-class’ as a part of Russian middle-class which is engaged in the sphere of informational production and, accordingly, is actively embedded in various social networks and network communities. I attribute to this class those involved in innovational practices, ie those who is capable to take decisions and to assume the responsibility for them; those who prepared to creative activity beyond the prescribed norms and procedures. The crucial point is that the expectations of this class could not be met by existing regime.

‘New middle-class’ is mostly represented by young people (20-35 years old), who lived in Moscow and some largest cities of Russia. As a rule, they grew in families in which both parents have a higher education. Members of this class are engaged in science, education, private business or in various NGOs, though this fact is usually missed by the majority of researches of social stratification. But this is a principled fact because in the cases of social conflicts these NGOs are often transformed into the SMOs, that is, into the nuclei of protest movements. Among the meeting attendants one could observe a lot of liberal professionals. It is indicative that nearly a half of the ‘new middle-class’ were jobless or were forced to become blue-color workers during the crisis of 2008-09s. These people are politically active because have a risk to repeat this sad experience of ‘downshifting’ in the run of forthcoming economic crisis. They are politically active for the reason that their satisfaction in their labor and quality of life are the lowest among all categories of modernizing countries in the world (Lapin, 2011).

It is necessary to distinguish this ‘new middle class’ from another new specific middle-class which shaped in 1990s at the expense of extra-income from the selling of natural resources. This class is a kind of service-class subjected to the ruling elite (Yavlinsky and Kosmynin, 2011).

3. Shifts in national and global contexts

The said mistrust is both tightly bound with turbulent context, national and global. The looming second wave of the economic crisis; entry into the WTO, which is fraught with complete conversion of a good many branches of economy; the volatility of exchange rates and other uncertainties

in economic sphere. The situation at the world political arena is not promising as well. A series of ‘colour revolutions’ and coups in North Africa and ex-Soviet countries as well as the ‘Occupy Wall Street!’ movement still troubling the Russian establishment. Next, the growing threat to Russia from the south brought about by the anticipated withdrawal of the NATO contingents from Afghanistan; the mounting political frictions with the UNO and leading Western powers engendered by Russia’s position in relation to Syria; smaller-scale but sensitive frictions with China and Japan. On the whole, the geopolitical map of the world into which Russia is embedded, is changing actually before our very eyes. Russia is presently holding firm to Europe by its ‘oil sleeves’, but for how long? [1].

Home affairs are lacking stability too. I spoke about the burden of past problems in my previous paper (Yanitsky, 2011). However, during the ‘fatty years’, when the working population’s living standards were improving and any conflict could be put out using oil dollars, society seemed to be more or the less homogenous because the greater majority of the people accepted the public contract offered by the government: ‘we pay you, and you do not interfere in our affairs’. Besides, the mass media had been inculcating an idea upon Russian society that the superrich live in a world of their own and all the rest live separately from them. As long as the population’s welfare was on the rise, such social order appeared to be legitimate and even natural. But the past and forthcoming crises raised the degree of public dissatisfaction: why has it fared ill only with us while they fare well as before? Here a great role was played by the proliferation of living on credit to which the Russians had been absolutely unprepared and because of which a large number of borrowers who lost their money and health joined the ranks of those who were socially concerned and irritated.

In the run of protest actions it is became clear that contemporary Russian society has long been split into numerous antagonistic groups: the large city’s residents vs. those who lives in the provinces; the ‘new middle class’ vs. the adherents of stability; the TV-people vs. the Internet-people; the internationalists-democrats vs. the patriots-statists, responsible nationalists vs. ultra-nationalists, and so on. And each of these groups has serious claims on the government. All in all, Russian society *is divided into two large groups*. The major part of Russian society is *budgetniki*, ie people who lives on salary. Except high-ranked managers, the majority of them are poor, ill-educated and immobile workers and civil servants (office employee), who

lived in numerous decaying small towns and villages in the depth of the country [2]. A subgroup stands close to them is the wasted people: drunkards, drug addicts, spongers, tramps and hobos. The former's fear of the future and the latter's dissatisfaction with their existence sharpen the general feeling of uncertainty. Since they both live under the sign 'let it not be worse', they are *the partisans of the idea of stability*.

In institutional terms, military-industrial complex, oil-gas, and agricultural complexes, regular forces and so called independent trade unions are the stronghold of Russian conservators. As Igor Jurgens, the director of the Institute of modern development, stated, 'their <leaders> perceived the very word "modernization" as something hateful for them' (Jurgens, 2012: 13). The true 'new middle class' is displeased at the absence of social lifts and opportunities for opening private businesses, corruption and all-round bureaucratization of social life that hamper their social progress and making a decent living in general. The idea of 'normal life' and honest labour are accentuated in the political discourse of this advanced group.

Honest labour is very important notion in Russian culture. From pre-Soviet times onwards, honest labour meant work in strict accordance with particular technological norms and standards, without deception, delays, and without all that what might be called a 'symbolizing work' (a kind of symbolic behaviour) which today became widespread in Russia. Recently, honest labour practically ceased to be a measure of individual wellbeing and a source of public good having been ousted by the practice of goods and benefits distribution by the employers. The whole atmosphere produced by media and corrupted business tells to the young people that it is much easier to swindle, to steal, to bereave, to catch property belonged to somebody else by sheer force even to merry advantageously, etc., than to earn money by honest everyday labour.

Labour remuneration as an economic category was replaced by *payment for service and loyalty* to the boss or political regime, that is, by a political category, and at the same time made into a criterion of promotion up the social ladder. This shift also entailed gradual cancellation of economic and social remunerations for past employment. Honest labour as a pledge of social recognition and promotion up the social ladder shrank to the minimum which produced an additional source of dissatisfaction and irritation.

Inadequate performance of the labour institution and its derivatives (trade unions, technical safety services) is to a great extent accountable for the accumulation of social unrest and psychological tension. The growing number of accidents and disasters, non-motivated acts of violence and murders, large-scale adulteration of foodstuffs and drugs, and, what is most important, the endless chain of fraud and extortion cases in financial and other spheres – all this taken together means that *no safe places have been left* in the everyday life space; there remain only more or less dangerous places.

Finally, two sociopsychological factors of dissatisfaction should be mentioned. The former is that the gestalt of the ‘favourite leader’ shattered and even those who loved it got bored with it (Radzichovsky, 2012). Taking into consideration the age-old Russian tradition to sacralise supreme authority, its delegitimation is a very serious destabilizing factor. The latter is mistrust again. The government simply stopped paying attention to it. ‘...So many stillborn empty slogan-like campaigns have been engineered by the rulers over the past decade: “modernisation”, “commercialisation”, “transformation”, “intellectualisation”, “nano-technolisation”’ (Gurevich, 2011: 16). But How will all this improve people’s sociopsychological well-being had not been addressed at all.

4. Accumulation of a critical mass of protest

An illusion persisted in Russia that if something had not been shown on central TV, it not happened at all. Two events put a stop to wishful thinking: forest and peat fires in Central Russia which TV could not keep silent about, and arrangement of aid to victims via the Internet, which boosted the potency of networking and, what is even more important, imparted a new quality to it (Yanitsky, 2011a). The internet has made public the government’s incapacity and reluctance to perform its functions.

And so the protest movement started to expand steadily beginning in 2010. At first, there emerged small seats of protest, then protestors began to unite into regional and local coalitions and, finally, series of mass protest meetings combusted in Moscow, St. Petersburg and other large cities [3]. The general trend: transformation of social, environmental and others civic protests into political ones [4]. Another feature: their network affiliation, to which the traditional Russian power vertical had been absolutely unprepared.