

# EDITORIAL

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## “Russian Federation – a Welfare State?”

*Assessing the Results of 25 years of Implementation of Article 7 of the Russian Constitution*



**Vladimir A. ILYIN**

Vologda Research Center of RAS  
Vologda, Russian Federation, 56A, Gorky Street, 160014  
E-mail: [ilin@vscc.ac.ru](mailto:ilin@vscc.ac.ru)



**Mikhail V. MOREV**

Vologda Research Center of RAS  
Vologda, Russian Federation, 56A, Gorky Street, 160014  
E-mail: [379post@mail.ru](mailto:379post@mail.ru)

**Abstract.** December 12, 2018 marked the 25th anniversary of the adoption of the Constitution of the Russian Federation. The paper provides our own assessment of the implementation of one of the main provisions of the Constitution of the Russian Federation: “The Russian Federation is a social State whose policy is aimed at creating conditions for a worthy life and a free development of man” (Article 7). We define and substantiate the criteria of efficiency of implementation of this provision; we also provide the data of foreign, Russian and regional sociological studies that reflect a subjective assessment of the dynamics of living standards and quality of life by Russians. We pay special attention to public administration efficiency in overcoming social inequality and achieving social justice. Ultimately, we raise the questions whether Russia is a social state, how far it has advanced in this direction over the past 25 years, and what its prospects can be in the near future.

**Key words:** Constitution of the Russian Federation, welfare state, social justice, public administration efficiency, public opinion.

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On December 12, 1993, the Constitution of the Russian Federation was adopted. Of all the Russian constitutions, it was the first one to become the “main law of an independent and truly sovereign state”<sup>1</sup>. Over the 25 years that have passed since then, Russia has accumulated a lot of contradictions and many reasons to wonder how this document corresponds to the actual Russian reality, because all Russian laws are ultimately written in accordance with it. The economic situation in the country has changed, as well as its geopolitical status and the nature of public sentiment; the country is ruled by a new President who built a new hierarchical structure of public administration. The world itself has changed – it is facing an increasing amount of challenges associated with the tensions in geopolitical relations, achievements in scientific and technological progress and the growing number of information technologies affecting almost every citizen of any country.

The qualitative changes that have occurred in the country and in the world over the past quarter century, urge many experts to take a fresh look at the Constitution and find a lot of contradictions in it. For instance, S. Sulakshin draws attention to the need to consolidate the diversity of ideologies and rights of the opposition and to introduce the institution of “politically responsible government”<sup>2</sup>. N.V. Starikov points out that the lack of ideology enshrined in the Constitution of the Russian Federation in 1993 in fact means the lack of development goals, which is quite logically due to the fact that this document was prepared in the midst of the “turbulent” 1990s, that is, under the dictation of our “foreign partners”, who obviously do not welcome the imminent return of Russia in the geopolitical race.

By the way, we find it of interest to note the statement of N.V. Starikov, who says that in order to revise any provisions of the Constitution

<sup>1</sup> Tavador G.T. *Ethnology. Modern Reference Dictionary*. Moscow, 2007. Pp. 157-159.

<sup>2</sup> Draft Russian Constitution. Sulakshin Center (Center for Scientific Political Thought and Ideology). Available at: <http://rusrand.ru/dev/konstitutsija-rossii-proekt>

The Constitution establishes an official ban on state ideology. What is ideology? It is a purpose. The state should have a purpose and the Russian people should have a purpose. And the Constitution officially prohibits it: there is no purpose.

Accordingly, what does our state exist for? The Constitution doesn't contain this information. It says that Russia is a social state, but it is just a formal statement; but really, what does Russia exist for? To change phones every six months? To consume more yogurt today than yesterday...?

There is no goal-setting and hence a very large number of problems arise: alcoholism, a sense of loss... Because the whole nation, the whole civilization has no purpose, and it is directly written in the Constitution<sup>3</sup>.

it is necessary to convene the Constitutional Assembly, but there is no law on this convocation: “From 1993 to the present day, no law has been adopted on the procedure for convening the Constitutional Assembly – a special body designed under Article 135 of the Constitution to amend it. That is, if you want to change the basic principles of the Constitution, it is necessary, according to the Constitution, to convene the Constitutional Assembly. And there is no law on how to convene it; consequently, it is impossible to amend the Constitution”<sup>4</sup>.

Special attention should be paid to the implementation of, perhaps, the main principle, the spirit of which permeates the 1993 Constitution of the Russian Federation: “The Russian Federation is a social State whose policy is aimed at creating conditions for a worthy life and a free development of man” (Article 7)<sup>5</sup>. This principle has swept through all 25 years of Russian transformations and it still forms the basis for national security in our country. According to

<sup>3</sup> Starikov N. *We have to change the Constitution!: an interview with N. Starikov*. July 20, 2014. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZSe6kFB-OQ8>

<sup>4</sup> N. Starikov's official blog. Available at: <https://nstarikov.ru/blog/76003?print=print>

<sup>5</sup> Constitution of the Russian Federation (December 12, 1993). Available at: <http://www.constitution.ru>

the National Security Strategy approved by the President of the Russian Federation on December 31, 2015, “improving the quality of life” is “one of the national interests in the long term” (Section III, Paragraph 30); “the strategic objectives of national security in improving the quality of life of Russian citizens are the development of human potential, satisfaction of material, social and spiritual needs of citizens, **reducing the level of social and property inequality of the people primarily by increasing their incomes** (Section IV, Paragraph 50) ... In order to counter threats to the quality of life of citizens, public authorities and local authorities in cooperation with civil society institutions: ... **contribute to the growth of welfare of citizens, reduce income differentiation of the population, reduce poverty...**”<sup>6</sup> (Section IV, Paragraph 53).

It is important to note that the National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation establishes personal responsibility of the head of state for the implementation of the state policy in the field of national security<sup>7</sup>.

Does the real state of affairs in the country correspond to the key principles and criteria of the social state declared in the main and fundamental documents of Russia – in the Constitution of the Russian Federation, in the National Security Strategy, in the Presidential addresses to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, in the “May decrees” of the head of state? To answer this question, it is necessary first of all to understand what the criteria of the social state are, because in fact it is largely a utopian concept, and the effectiveness of its implementation can be assessed only in the

context of international comparisons; especially when we consider the fact that no state in the world is in a static condition; countries undergo continuous changes trying to find answers to new and more complex internal and external challenges.

The analysis of theoretical aspects and practical models of the social state allows us to distinguish three of its criteria:

**1. Extent to which social justice in society is achieved.** The German historian, philosopher and economist Lorenz von Stein – the author of the term “welfare state”<sup>8</sup> – pointed out that “the state must contribute to the economic and social progress of all its citizens, because ultimately the development of one is a condition for the development of the other, and it is in this sense that we refer to the welfare state ... **The function of the state is to maintain absolute equality of rights for all different social classes, for a private self-determined individual through its power**”<sup>9</sup>.

Among the words most commonly used in everyday life, there are those whose meaning at first glance seems clear to everyone almost regardless of age, gender, nationality, social status and other characteristics...But “justice” is not just a word from the vocabulary of a particular language, but the main driving force of many human actions; without justice, a significant number of these actions can not only be justified, but understood. There are moments in history when, in the name of justice, huge masses of people are willing to sacrifice many of what they have, even their own life<sup>10</sup>...

<sup>6</sup> On the national security strategy of the Russian Federation: Presidential Decree No. 683 of December 31, 2015.

<sup>7</sup> “The implementation of the state policy of the Russian Federation in the field of national security is carried out by coordinated actions of all elements of its providing system **under the leadership of the President of the Russian Federation** and with the coordinating role of the Security Council of the Russian Federation” (source: on the national security strategy of the Russian Federation (Section 5, Paragraph 108): Decree of the President of the Russian Federation No. 683 of December 31, 2015).

<sup>8</sup> Major work of Lorenz von Stein:

1. *Der Socialismus und Kommunismus des heutigen Frankreichs*, 1842;

2. *Geschichte der sozialen Bewegung in Frankreich von 1789 bis auf unsere Tage*, 1850;

3. *Die Verwaltungslehre*, 1865–1868;

4. *Gegenwart und Zukunft der Rechts- und Staatswissenschaft Deutschlands*, 1876.

<sup>9</sup> Roik V.D. Conceptual bases of formation of the social state in Russia: issues related to the income of the population and social budgeting. Available at: <http://viperson.ru/>

<sup>10</sup> Epikhina Yu.B. (Ed.). *Social Justice in Russian Sociological Thought: Collective Monograph*. Moscow: RAS Institute of Sociology, 2016. 219 p.

Over the next almost 200 years, there emerged many different interpretations of the concept of the social state, but, by and large, the classical definition, in our opinion, still remains relevant.

In the development of Russian society, in all political, economic, cultural, religious and other processes taking place in our country, social justice has always been a cornerstone. This is due not only to the fact that Russia adopted the Greek (Byzantine) Christianity in 988, but also due to the fact that BEFORE this event justice had already been present in the language and customs of the Slavic tribes. The moral principle prevailed in the ancient pre-Christian worldview of Russians, so Christianity in Russia found fertile and receptive ground, having consolidated the ancient worldview of the Russian people, giving it a more refined and sublime character. O.A. Platonov wrote the following in this connection: “The old Russian views clearly show the idea of improvement, transformation of the soul of the Russian person on the basis of good and harmony. Ancient Rus adopted Christianity with these moral ideas, and this moral core of the old beliefs organically merged with Christianity, for it was largely in tune with it”<sup>11</sup>.

For the Russian people the truth-justice and the law coming from the state are not the same thing. Russians act rightly because they carry the truth in themselves, while people of the Western world, the heirs to the Roman state, believe something is true if it corresponds to the external law<sup>12</sup>.

To date, the world has several models of social state: Nordic, Anglo-Saxon, Continental, Southern European... Each of the models has historically determined features; but the different way of their formation in Russia, the United States and Western Europe is united by the fact that **social justice is an integral need of society**

<sup>11</sup> Platonov O.A. *Russian Civilization*. Moscow, 1995. Pp. 21-23.

<sup>12</sup> Kozlov M.I. *Social Justice in the Context of Russian Tradition*. Arkhangelsk, 2010. P. 66.

**and individual; and (as von Stein noted) only the state can guarantee it”<sup>13</sup>**. Understanding this thesis is extremely important for key participants of geopolitical competition, the participants on which the future of all mankind depends. It is important for Russia as well, since it rightly claims to be one of the centers of the multipolar world according to its objective features (historical traditions, natural resources, military-industrial complex, etc.).

## ***2. Minimization of social inequality, and sustainable development of the standard of living and quality of life of the general population.***

The history of the social state in the United States and Western Europe resembles **a kind of dialogue between society and government, the dialogue formed against the background of objective conditions of transition to post-industrial development. The degree of evolution of this process depended on how the participants of this dialogue were able to communicate with each other**. For Europe, the 19th century (when the idea of the welfare state was conceived) was a period of bourgeois revolutions, the century of industrialization and the time when new socio-political forces emerged. By the 1930s, most European countries were overcome by the consequences of the industrial revolution that began in England in the second half of the 18th century. However, the industrial revolution led to an increase in the number of representatives of the working class: most of the villagers moved to the city, and found themselves in extremely difficult life conditions, as they were forced to pay unfair taxes and penalties, and their labor rights were violated. As a consequence, in the mid-nineteenth century in many countries of Western Europe (France, Germany, Italy, and Austria; a little earlier, in the 1920s–1930s – in Spain, Portugal, and Greece) there was a powerful wave of revolutions known as the “Spring of Nations”. Under the circumstances, the ruling elites were

<sup>13</sup> Zakhar’yan D. Social state: the main stages of development and the current condition. *Bulletin of Peoples’ Friendship University of Russia. Series: Sociology*, 2016, p. 651.

forced to make concessions and to declare a new mission of the state. Thus, *Germany* adopted the laws on accident insurance (1883), on disability and old age (1889). In the 1970s, *England* adopted regulations on compulsory insurance of certain categories of workers in case of disability in the workplace. The *United States*, which embarked on the path of building the welfare state later than the countries of Western Europe, laid the fundamental basis of the welfare state after the great depression in the 1930s, when Franklin Roosevelt announced the “New Deal for the forgotten man”.

**Thus, based on the very nature of the emergence of the social state, we can say that its criteria are the standard of living and the quality of life, as well as the extent to which social inequality is reduced.**

### ***3. Goal-setting and evaluation reflection of public authorities, which is aimed at the priority implementation of public interests.***

“Public administration without evaluation reflection has no chance of self-improvement and development. The quality, as well as the success of public administration, cannot be assessed without appealing to any value. The result of public administration outside the value context of the goals to be achieved is not in itself a characteristic of quality. Depending on the targets, the same result can be assessed in the opposite way. For example, Russian privatization as considered from the standpoint of material expectations and the interests of the majority of society is an absolute failure; whereas within the framework of the goal – rapid transition (at any cost) to a market economy – it is quite an effective management operation”<sup>14</sup>.

Having defined the criteria, we can assess the effectiveness of the implementation of the social state in Russia.

**The first criterion of the social state (social justice)** is subjective in nature, so it can be

<sup>14</sup> Sulakshin S.S. The quality and success of public policies and management. In: *“Political Axiology” Series*. Moscow: Nauchnyi ekspert, 2012. P. 23.

estimated only by the results of sociological studies, which give a clear picture: **social justice is what Russian society needs the most**. So it was in 2012, when the all-Russian research conducted by the Institute of Sociology showed that “living in a more fair and more intelligently arranged society” is pointed out by 33% of Russians, and this need is among their top three dreams, along with “having good health” (33%) and “living in prosperity” (40%)<sup>15</sup>.

So it is today as well... in 2015, scientists received “completely unexpected results” showing that “most respondents (51%) are concerned about social justice, in particular, combating corruption”<sup>16</sup>.

**M.K. Gorshkov:** “We got **absolutely unexpected results**. It is clear that financial well-being comes first. It is clear that in the scale of values an important place is given to work, friendship and communication, health and beauty. This is typical for the Russian mentality. **But we did not expect that the second priority was to live in a more just society**. It means that the problem of social injustice has now become so acute that people in a crisis period, when there are so many serious economic problems, gave priority to the desire to live in a more just society. The Government ought to think about it”<sup>17</sup>.

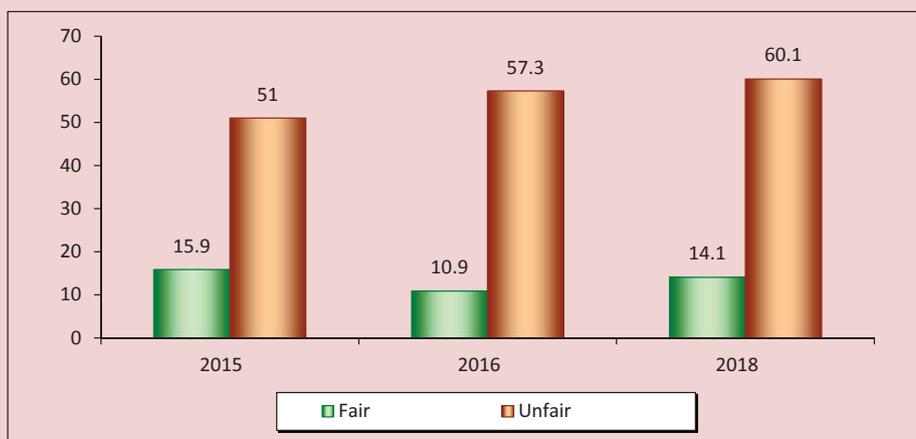
Our studies generally correlate with the nationwide data. According to more than 50% of the Vologda Oblast residents, **modern Russian society is unfairly organized, and the proportion of those who share this opinion is increasing (Fig. 1)**.

<sup>15</sup> Gorshkov M.K., Krumm R., Tikhonova N.E. (Eds.). *What Russians Dream About: Ideal and Reality*. Moscow: Ves' mir, 2013. P. 11.

<sup>16</sup> Sociologists: results of the research “Russia in 2017” (V. Petukhov, head of the Center for Complex Social Research at the Institute of Sociology of the Federal Sociological Research Center of RAS). Available at: [http://www.aif.ru/event/info/sociologi\\_rezultaty\\_issledovaniy\\_rossiya\\_v\\_2017\\_godu](http://www.aif.ru/event/info/sociologi_rezultaty_issledovaniy_rossiya_v_2017_godu)

<sup>17</sup> Gorshkov M.K. A new social resource has appeared in the society (an interview for the journal RF Segodnya dated June 1, 2015). Available at: <https://vestirossii.com/obshhestvo/v-obshestve-voznik-novyi-socialnyi-resyrs.html>

Figure 1. In your opinion, is modern Russian society fair or unfair?



Source: VolRC RAS survey data.

**The second criterion of the social state (sustainable development of the standard of living and quality of life, overcoming social inequality)** is closely connected with the dynamics of the sense of social justice; and according to this criterion, we cannot say that the principles of the social state in Russia are implemented effectively.

Table 1. Dynamics of income shares in Russia<sup>18</sup>

Income group	1905	1990	2015
Top 10%	45	25	45
Middle 40%	35	45	40
Bottom 50%	15	30	18

Distribution of pretax national income (before taxes and transfers, except pensions and unemployment insurance) among adults. Corrected estimates combine survey, fiscal, wealth and national accounts data. Approximate estimates rely only on independent survey data. Income of married couples is divided by two.

Authoritative international studies show that “the situation concerning the problem of social inequality in the Russian Federation in 2015 is similar to that in 1905” (*Tab. 1*)<sup>19</sup>. Russian experts

<sup>18</sup> Our own compilation based on: Novokmet F., Piketty T., Zucman G. *From Soviets to Oligarchs: Inequality and Property in Russia, 1905–2016*. National Bureau of Economic Research. Cambridge: MA. August, 2017. P. 4.

<sup>19</sup> Novokmet F., Piketty T., Zucman G. *From Soviets to Oligarchs: Inequality and Property in Russia, 1905–2016*. National Bureau of Economic Research. Cambridge: MA. August, 2017.

state that “Russians’ high assessments of the acuteness of different types of inequalities that exist in Russian society today are not detached from reality, but are dictated by it”<sup>20</sup>.

Russians are acutely aware of the inequalities they face personally or observe in their society. At the same time, income inequality is most acutely perceived today, and the severity of this inequality for the population has increased significantly during the crisis (which is not surprising, since income inequality in modern Russia determines a number of non-monetary inequalities, from which the population suffers today, including the opportunity to receive the necessary medical care)<sup>21</sup>.

The data in *Table 2* show that income inequality is perceived by Russians most acutely, but it is not the only problem that worries them: among others, they consider inequalities in access to healthcare, housing and good jobs as very acute, too. From 50 to 80% of Russians consider these problems as “acute for society”.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem*. Pp. 30–31.

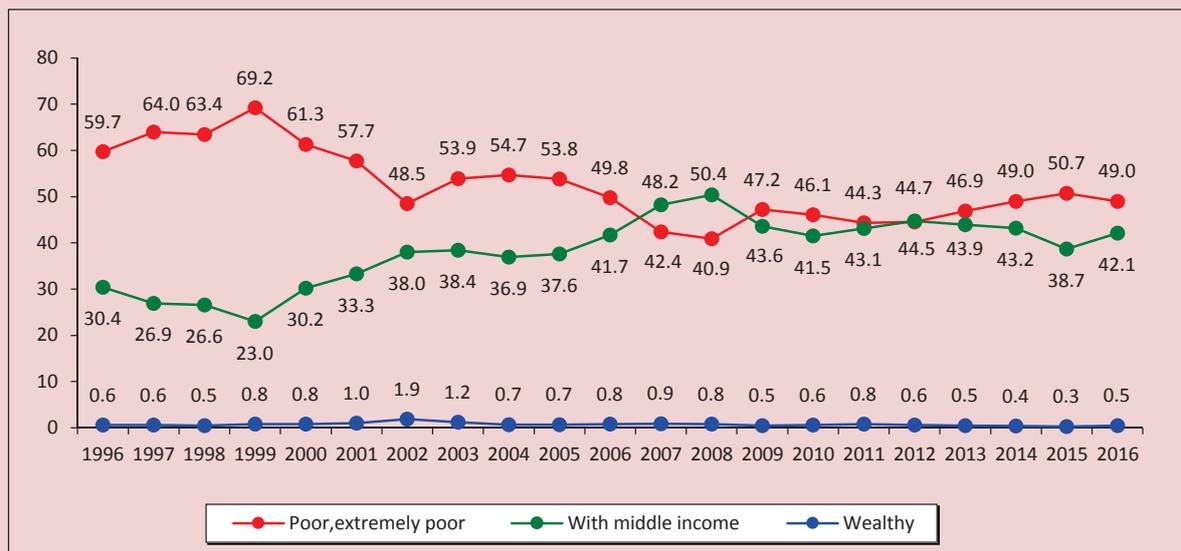
<sup>21</sup> Russian society: a year in the crisis and under the sanctions: information and analytical material on the results of the all-Russian sociological research. IS RAS. Moscow, 2015. P. 32.

Table 2. Degree of acuteness with which Russians perceive various inequalities, October 2015, %\*  
(ranked by the inequalities that respondents find acute to themselves personally)

Inequalities	Most acute for society as a whole	Most acute for oneself (one's family)
Income	82	66
Access to health care	59	39
Housing	61	30
Access to good jobs	50	23
Opportunities for children from different social strata	31	18

\* The data on working Russians. The question featured 12 answer options; the table presents the first five of them.  
Source: *Russian society: a year in the crisis and under the sanctions: information and analytical material on the results of the all-Russian sociological research*. RAS Institute of Sociology. Moscow, 2015. P. 31.

Figure 2. Dynamics of Russians' social self-identification (% of respondents; wording of the question: "What category do you belong to, in your opinion?")



Long-term monitoring of public sentiment carried out by VoIRC RAS on the territory of the Vologda Oblast also shows that over the decades of market transformations there have been no qualitative changes in the subjective perception of one's financial position in society: despite the fact that the share of the "poor and extremely poor" has decreased by 10 percentage points over the past 20 years (from 59 to 49%), it still prevails over the

share of people who consider themselves to be of "average income" (49% vs. 42%; Fig. 2). In addition, during all of Vladimir Putin's presidential terms (since 2000 and up to now) we can distinguish two time periods: if the share of the "poor and extremely poor" decreased from 69 to 41% in 1999–2008, then there have been no significant changes since 2009 (the share of the "poor and extremely poor" remains stable at 45–50%).

Table 3. Structure of the problems that Russians find most acute

Problems	1999		2007		2012		2017	
	%	Rank	%	Rank	%	Rank	%	Rank
Inflation	54.5	2	43.8	1	55.3	1	56.5	1
Low standard of living, poverty	57.1	1	40.4	2	43.2	2	54.2	2
Population stratification into the “poor” and the “rich”	21.3	9	31.0	4	37.5	3	39.0	3
Corruption and bribery	14.8	11	15.0	12	19.8	9	23.9	4
Economic instability, shutdown of enterprises	39.6	4	14.5	13	16.5	11	23.5	5
Social insecurity of citizens	32.5	6	26.7	7	22.3	8	21.5	6
Housing problem, low availability of housing	11.8	14	31.8	3	28.6	4	21.5	7
Poor quality of engineering infrastructure (utilities, roads, transport, etc.)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	25.3	7	19.3	8
Political instability	21.9	8	7.9	15	11.2	16	18.9	9
Growth of alcoholism	15.8	10	30.9	5	27.3	5	17.3	10

\* Ranked according to the data for 2017, the question has 23 answer options; the table presents only the top ten.  
Source: VoIRC RAS public opinion monitoring.

In the structure of the issues that people find most pressing, the three leading ones are “inflation”, “poverty” and “stratification of the population into the rich and the poor”; it is worth mentioning that the latter problem moved **from 9th to 3rd place** in the rating for the period from 1999 to 2017 (Tab. 3).

It is important to note that experts, describing the causes of inequality in modern Russia, argue that it was formed in the 1990–2000s<sup>22</sup>... “In post-Soviet Russia, the economy experienced a rapid financialization focused on the export of capital that had been generated in Russia, and on placing it in the most profitable nodes of the financial flows of the world community. According to the competent national assessment, over the past 30 years more than one trillion US dollars have been exported from Russia, of which about half circulates between the offshores and the Russian economy”<sup>23</sup>. At the same time,

<sup>22</sup> Bobylev S.N., Grigoriev L.M. (Eds.). *UN Sustainable Development Goals and Russia: a Report on Human Development in the Russian Federation*. Analytical center for the Government of the Russian Federation. 2016. P. 55.

<sup>23</sup> Lapin N.I. Formation of the social state – a way of successful evolution of society. *Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniya*, 2018, no. 8, p.7.

according to experts, we should not expect any positive changes in the search for a solution to this acute issue in the coming years: “Social differentiation in 2018 is growing compared to 2017. Taking into account the fact that the lower rates of growth of wages in the public sector are expected in 2019 in comparison with 2018, this may mean that **Russia has passed the lowest level of social differentiation in the last 12 years, and social inequality will grow again**”<sup>24</sup>.

**The third criterion of the social state (setting the goals by public authorities)** is the most important one, since it is the source of both the first and the second criteria. To evaluate it, we should again refer to the Constitution of the Russian Federation, which states that “...the only source of power in the Russian Federation shall be its multinational people” (Article 3). Nevertheless, there are great doubts that this constitutional norm is actually implemented in real life.

<sup>24</sup> Bashkatova A. A new social stratification is in store for Russians. *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 2018, November 7. Available at: [http://www.ng.ru/economics/2018-11-07/1\\_4\\_7347\\_russian.html?utm\\_referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fzen.yandex.com](http://www.ng.ru/economics/2018-11-07/1_4_7347_russian.html?utm_referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fzen.yandex.com)

*Insert 1*

Excerpts from the speeches of Russian President Vladimir Putin at the sessions of the Russian Popular Front

Excerpt	Date
<p>Now we must make the next, a bigger and much more responsible and hence much more difficult step. We must do in the civilian sectors – the industry, science, education, healthcare and infrastructure – what we have accomplished in the sphere of national defense. We need breakthrough achievements in all of the above sectors. Yes, much has been accomplished in the past few years, but this is not enough. People are expecting major changes.</p>	<p>November 29, 2018</p>
<p>The essence and the main mission of the Popular Front is to help people, to uphold the truth and justice and to protect our people. The aspiration to work for the common good and to care for the country's destiny and future is the most reliable foundation for successfully solving the tasks we have now ... I repeat: there is still much that needs to be done. Above all, for the sake of people's wellbeing and in order to overcome poverty and inequality. So far, the level of these problems remains, unfortunately, too high.</p>	<p>December 19, 2017</p>
<p>We must focus first, of course, on the most pressing issues for the people here, problems such as modernizing social infrastructure, upgrading the transport sector, and creating new jobs. At the same time, we must ensure competent distribution of financial resources and make sure that the money invested brings maximum returns... It is also extremely important to listen to people's views, understand which issues are of greatest concern in their eyes and obtain feedback.</p>	<p>October 26, 2016</p>
<p>Your support base is our people, our citizens, and this is certainly the best support base one could have. If everyone is busy divvying things up amongst 'their own mates and buddies', we will never get anywhere in terms of efficiency. In the consciousness of any responsible person, now I don't want to say the word "official" because it becomes some nominal word, there should be an understanding that there are certain rules which people should adhere to if they come to public or municipal service, and there is no need to think anything up and play cunning. You just have to live by those rules or quit the job. That's it.</p>	<p>November 27, 2015</p>
<p>Our program is outlined in the 2012 May Decrees and in the President's addresses to the Federal Assembly, and we will certainly move forward to implement all our plans and achieve our goals. Officials at all levels of government should work rather than look for excuses for their passivity. It is important that the Russian Popular Front ensure people's and civil control and monitor the implementation of all our tasks and decisions that were previously formulated.</p>	<p>November 18, 2014</p>
<p>The people of Russia are the true masters of their land. The interests of the people are national interests. The right of the people is to demand and to make sure that the power at all levels – from the head of state to the head of a rural settlement – felt and knew that people want. The Russian Popular Front should actually become a broad social movement, so that all citizens of the country have the opportunity to set their own goals, to achieve their implementation, to promote the implementation of those issues that sometimes sink in the bureaucratic swamp, to make their proposals, which will then become laws and state decisions...the most important thing is that this work should be alive, it should be directly connected with people, with their interests and with finding solutions to their problems.</p>	<p>June 12, 2013</p>
<p>Source: transcripts of Russian President Vladimir Putin's speeches at the meetings of the Russian Popular Front. Available at: <a href="http://www.kremlin.ru">www.kremlin.ru</a>.</p>	

*Insert 2*

Information on the results of the work of the Russian Popular Front for the period from August to November 2018

Information	Date
<p>ONF activists in Kaluga prevented inefficient spending of budget funds in the amount of 2.2 million rubles in Lyudinovsky District</p> <p>ONF activists made sure that hot water supply of apartment houses was restored in the town of Lytkarino (Moscow Oblast)</p> <p>ONF activists in Moscow ensured that heating was turned on in two apartment buildings in the city</p> <p>After the intervention of the ONF, the sugar factory in Livny reimbursed the damage caused to the environment in the amount of 1.9 million rubles</p> <p>After the intervention of the ONF, an organization that organized a dump in the city of Lyubertsy (Moscow Oblast) was brought to justice</p> <p>After the intervention of the Murmansk branch of the ONF, the certificate for maternity capital was returned to a resident of Monchegorsk</p> <p>Activists of the ONF achieved the elimination of piles of debris in the floodplain of the Moskva River in the town of Dzerzhinsky</p> <p>At the request of Amur ONF activists, the Prosecutor's office restored the violated rights of employees of a local hospital</p> <p>After the intervention of Kaluga activists of the ONF, sewage treatment facilities were built at a plant in Lyudinovsky District</p> <p>Thanks to the ONF in Arkhangelsk, the unperformed works worth 2.3 million rubles were excluded from the acts of acceptance</p> <p>ONF experts have achieved the elimination of two landfills in Novaya Moskva</p> <p>ONF activists achieved suspension of work of the enterprise which is illegally burning garbage in the Tula Oblast</p> <p>After the signal of the ONF, the office of the Federal Antimonopoly Service in the Tyumen Oblast revealed a case of price fixing</p> <p>After the intervention of ONF activists, a large-scale illegal dumping in the Kurgan Oblast was eliminated</p> <p>After the intervention of the ONF, a landfill in the area of Boynya railway station in Moscow was eliminated</p>	<p>November</p>
<p>In the Murmansk Oblast, the ONF eliminated a dump of construction waste</p> <p>Tomsk activists of the ONF ensured that 115 land plots were returned to state ownership</p> <p>Volunteers of the ONF project "Equal opportunities for children" opened more than 700 free hobby groups and clubs for children</p> <p>The ONF in Irkutsk promoted the creation of the largest "green shield" in Russia</p> <p>Due to the efforts of ONF experts in Moscow, a landfill in the area of Ochakovskoye highway was eliminated</p> <p>The ONF found a scheme of price fixing in the supply of food to social institutions of Saint Petersburg</p>	<p>October</p>
<p>After the intervention of the ONF, criminal proceedings were launched concerning the violations revealed in the course of area improvement in Chita</p> <p>The ONF helped journalists from Michurinsk to prove in court the invalidity of the claims of the municipality on the protection of business reputation</p> <p>On the initiative of the ONF, a scientific and educational center for the textile industry will be established in Ivanovo</p>	<p>September</p>
<p>After the intervention of ONF activists in the Kaluga Oblast, the material and technical condition of schools in the region was improved</p> <p>After the appeal of ONF activists, the purchase price of medical equipment in Norilsk was reduced five-fold</p> <p>After the intervention of ONF experts, Muscovites received an opportunity to move the terms of capital repairs</p> <p>In Kirov, a free workout section was opened in the framework of the ONF project "Equal opportunities for children"</p>	<p>August</p>
<p>Source: Official website of the Russian Popular Front, "Results" section. Available at" <a href="https://onf.ru/results/?page=4">https://onf.ru/results/?page=4</a>.</p>	

In his regular public speeches, Russian President Vladimir Putin stresses the importance of the role of public initiatives in addressing practical issues to improve life in each locality<sup>25</sup> (*Insert 1*). At the latest congress of the Russian Popular Front (ONF), which was held in Moscow on November 29, 2018, the President once again called on public figures to “actively engage” in the work on “control, support and participation” in solving urgent problems and summed up: “If this is the case – and I hope it will be – then we will really build the country we dream of”<sup>26</sup>.

However, first, the range of issues addressed by the ONF (despite their high significance for specific people) is far from the key problems of society associated with high levels of poverty, inflation and income-based stratification of the population (*Insert 2*). The elimination of illegal dumps, installation of wheelchair ramps, return of the maternity capital certificate to a particular

In order to compensate for the shortage of efficient decisions on the part of the State Duma, whose deputies, according to sociological surveys, are known to very few people, the Public Chamber and the Russian Popular Front were created. These organizations united all the authoritative, smart and strong people. But they have no actual power<sup>27</sup>.

person, arrangement of playgrounds...all this is important, but **all these problems would not exist if the domestic policy were organized effectively; and, most importantly, this does not solve the issues of raising the standard of living and improving the quality of life: the problem of social inequality, decent pensions and salaries, increasing the moral responsibility of officials, means of social mobility...**

The President should be engaged in the strategy, the government should be engaged in the economy, and the Bank of Russia – in the financial system. But the fact that the President, having delegated his duties, does not control their implementation to the proper extent and even puts up with the chronic sabotage of his own “May Decrees” is not so much a manifestation of humanity as a profound flaw of our entire system of governance. This is where the threat to our entire future comes from<sup>28</sup>.

Second, regular inspections that the ONF carries out concerning the implementation of the “May decrees” remain without attention, in particular, of the President. Otherwise, how can we explain the fact that even with the ineffective implementation of the May 2012 decrees (*Tab. 4*),

<sup>25</sup> See, for example:

1. “*Personally, I attach great importance to the establishment of partnerships between the executive power and civil society, to the development of institutions and structures of the latter, to the deployment of an active and tough fight against corruption*” (source: Putin V.V. Russia at the turn of the Millennium (program article, 1999).

2. “*It is necessary that all leaders of any rank, both in the presidential structures and in the Government, feel and understand that ordinary citizens closely monitor the results of our work and give their assessments. It is necessary to focus on the opinion of citizens... How much our society trusts the actions of the authorities, of course, determines on our overall efficiency and competitiveness*” (source: Live TV phone-in session with Russian President Vladimir Putin from April 25, 2013).

3. “*Initially, we planned the Civic Chamber of Russia, the principles of its formation and fields of its work in order to expand the base of democracy in the truest sense of the word, without any loud statements... It should not replace the Government or the parliament. It should have a niche of its own, which it has. It includes public oversight over executive and representative bodies of authority, expert analysis of immediate and more distant plans, assessing how these plans are implemented, and directly communicating with the people who are on the receiving end of the authorities’ efforts to improve life in our country*” (source: V. Putin’s speech at the meeting with Civic Chamber members, June 20, 2017).

<sup>26</sup> Transcript of Vladimir Putin’s speech at the Congress of the Russian Popular Front on November 29, 2018. *Official Website of the President of the Russian Federation*. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/59260>

<sup>27</sup> Will there be the next anniversary of the Constitution of Russia? (an interview with Professor S. Shakhrai). *Argumenty nedeli*, 2018, no. 49 (642), December 13. Available at: <http://argumenti.ru/society/2018/12/595669?typelink=openlink>

<sup>28</sup> Delyagin M. The liberals treat Russia like it were a cutlet – an object of consumption. *Electronic Newspaper “Biznes-onlain”*, 2016, November 9. Available at: <https://www.business-gazeta.ru/article/327971>

Table 4. Information on achievement of indicators on some orders established in the “May decrees” of the Russian President

Presidential Decree of May 7, 2012	President’s instruction	Fact*	Deviation
No. 596 “On long-term state economic policy”	“Improving the position of the Russian Federation in the World Bank’s Doing Business ranking from 120th in 2011 to 50th in 2015 and 20th in 2018”	35th place** (2018)	-15 units
	“Increasing the share of high-tech and science-intensive industries in gross domestic product by 2018 in 1.3 times compared to the level of 2011”	22.1% (2017)***	-3.5%
	“Creating and upgrading 25 million high-performance jobs by 2020”	15983.279 thousand units (2016)	-9.02 million
No. 597 “On measures to implement state social policy”	“Raising real wages in 1.4–1.5 times by 2018”	100.8% (2016)****	-56%
No. 598 “On improvement of state policy in the field of healthcare”	“Reducing mortality from neoplasms (including malignant neoplasms) to 192.8 cases per 100 thousand population”	196.9 per 100 thousand population (2017)	-4.1 per 100 thousand population
	“Reducing mortality from road accidents to 10.6 cases per 100 thousand population”	13.6 per 100 thousand population (2017)	-3 per 100 thousand population
No. 599 “On the measures to implement state policy in the field of education and science”	“Increasing expenditures on domestic research and development up to 1.77% of gross domestic product by 2015”	1.10% (2016)	-0.67%
No. 600 “On the measures to provide citizens of the Russian Federation with affordable and comfortable housing and to improve the quality of housing and utilities services”	“Until 2020 – providing affordable and comfortable housing to 60% of Russian families in need of improving their living conditions”	5% (2016)	-55%
No. 606 “On the measures to implement the demographic policy of the Russian Federation”	“To ensure an increase in life expectancy in the Russian Federation to 74 years by 2018”	72.7 years (2017)	-1.3 years

\* Data of the Federal State Statistics Service. Available at: [www.gks.ru](http://www.gks.ru).  
 \*\* Source: Doing Business 2018. The World Bank has published a ranking of countries on the ease of doing business. Available at: <http://novorusmir.ru/archives/31784>.  
 \*\*\* In 2011, the share of high-tech and science-intensive industries in gross domestic product was 19.7%. According to the President’s instruction, it is necessary to reach the level of 25.6% by 2018.  
 \*\*\*\* In 2012, the real accrued wage was 108.4% compared to the previous year.

and despite the flaws that ONF experts revealed<sup>29</sup>, the execution of the next “May decrees” was

<sup>29</sup> In mid-2016, the Government reported on the implementation of the “May Decrees” of the President: “About 70% of the total number of orders was executed and 88% – of the number of orders that had to be executed to date”. The assessment of the Russian Popular Front was as follows: “**Out of 162 of our conclusions on the Government’s reports on the removal of the relevant orders from control, we confirmed the expediency of removing only 24 orders from control. The numbers are such: we believe that 24 orders were actually executed, the rest were not, in varying degrees**” (source: Volkova O., Nikol’skaya P., Tkachev I., Mogilevskaya A. The promises of the third term: how the May Decrees of the President are being executed. *RBK Website*. Available at: <http://www.rbk.ru/economics/17/05/2016/573a034a9a7947d18967193a>).

entrusted to the same people – the Cabinet of Ministers, whose composition in 2018 has not actually changed?

“Experts note that the competence of the political elite – agents and leaders of change – is determined by the class of tasks and the horizon of planning; and this competence is confirmed by the significance of the result. The problem of the limit of competence of the ruling class in different political systems is solved in different ways: the composition of the elite varies, new people are admitted into it, the codes of action and ideas about reality are complicated. Or, in contrast,

certain measures are taken to simplify it. **Lack of diversity reduces the chances of development.** When suppressing the differences in opinions, the range of possibilities is narrowed, the quality of solutions is reduced, defects accumulate, and control dominates over management... Social deprivation results in an evolutionary impasse: vagueness of programs, degradation of management; society becomes archaic and is plunged into uncontrolled chaos”<sup>30</sup>.

...How can we characterize the reaction of officials to the decrease in turnout? E. Pamfilova commented on the situation with the turnout at a particular polling station in the Moscow region in Istra: “There is a certain amount of people who shall definitely come and vote. We will deal with that. It means these are active and responsible citizens who do care about what is happening in the country and the region<sup>31</sup>. Such a statement can be called at least strange; after all, when the opinion of 60% of citizens (who did not vote in the election on September 9) is ignored, then it is difficult to talk about any kind of orientation of the government toward national interests (the situation was the same when the opinion of 90% of Russians concerning the pension reform was ignored, too)<sup>32</sup>.

The same line can be traced in the relations between the authorities and the wider layers of Russian society. For example, on the eve of the 2018 gubernatorial elections, the Government rejected the proposal of the Just Russia party “to postpone a Single day of voting from September to October due to the fact that “September is an extremely unfavorable month for voting. Many Russians at this time have not yet returned from

vacation. In addition, gardeners and growers are working at their private subsidiary plots and do not think about the elections”<sup>33</sup>.

The initiative of the Communist Party to hold a referendum on the pension reform (perhaps the most outstanding event of the outgoing year, affecting almost all citizens of our country) was rejected with the wording: “Citizens need to have special knowledge to understand the content of this issue”<sup>34</sup>, in spite of the fact that the question planned for voting at the referendum was, in our opinion, absolutely clear: “Do you agree that the Russian Federation should not raise the age at which an individual is granted the right to receive old-age pension?”.

**Recently, we have seen how two camps are formed and distanced; they declare different views on the life of the country. In one camp there is the elite. In the other – civil society.** When Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev talks about our “strong economy of a rapidly developing country” and the growing real incomes of the population for the second year, and people try to figure out how much is left to live on after they have paid their loans and housing payments, the distance between these camps is growing. When officials say that the state does not owe anything to the people, call to pay for the repair of toilets in schools and sit on a diet and eat cheap pasta, and the taxes and the retirement age go up, the remnants of understanding between the parties vanish. Finally, if TV programs try to convince us that because of the workings of the evil West we need to tighten our belts, and the team of negotiators has long taken roots in this West, there emerges a misunderstanding between the government and the people, the misunderstanding that can be dangerous for the life of the country<sup>35</sup>...

<sup>30</sup> Neklessa A. Corrosion of the future. *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 2018, November 27. Available at: [http://www.ng.ru/nauka/2018-11-27/9\\_7449\\_future.html](http://www.ng.ru/nauka/2018-11-27/9_7449_future.html)

<sup>31</sup> Head of the Central Election Commission Ella Pamfilova voted at the gubernatorial election in Istra. *Nedelya v okruge*, 2018, September 9. Available at: <http://nedelya-v-okruge.ru/index.php/nedelya-v-okruge/4048-glava-tsika-ella-pamfilova-progolosovala-na-vyborakh-gubernatora-v-podmoskove-v-istre>

<sup>32</sup> *Raising the Retirement Age: the Reaction of Citizens*. FOM Press Release of June 29, 2018. Available at: <http://fom.ru/Ekonomika/14057>

<sup>33</sup> Zayakin A. The Cabinet of Ministers did not approve the transfer of a Single day of voting to October. *Ekspress-gazeta*, 2018, August 1. Available at: <https://www.eg.ru/politics/588579-kabmin-ne-odobril-perenos-edinogo-dnya-golosovaniya-na-oktyabr-062299/>

<sup>34</sup> The CEC explained the refusal to hold a referendum on amending the pension legislation. *RIA novosti*, 2018, July 27. Available at: <https://ria.ru/20180727/cik-objasnil-otkaz-v-referendume-po-izmenenijam-pensionnogo-zakonodatelstva-1525496602.html>

<sup>35</sup> Skorobogatyi P. The price of second citizenship. *Ekspert*, 2018, no. 50 (1101), December 10, p. 2.

This very revealing episode from the life of society and power in Russia, for obvious reasons, was not widely covered in the media, although in the middle of the year it seemed that **nothing could be more important than this referendum, which is, in fact, the only legal and legitimate opportunity of society to influence the Government’s decision, which was opposed by almost 80% of Russians**<sup>36</sup>. But over the past months, the media regularly covers the course of public voting for the choice of new names for Russian airports – a question that apparently does not require the population to have “special knowledge”...

In addition, in 2018, cases of openly disparaging statements and actions toward people by officials at all levels of government have become more frequent. These are, for example, officials who “illegally award themselves 39 times for a total of more than 108 thousand rubles and appoint themselves advisers to the municipal service of the 2nd, and then the 1st class”<sup>37</sup>. In addition, there are civil servants who “transfer municipal property to a private company, violating all applicable requirements and procedures”<sup>38</sup>. There are representatives of the authorities who suggest that mothers with many children should take their children to an orphanage for the period of mortgage payment”<sup>39</sup>. There are leaders of the so-called “elite youth” and “management reserve”, who at the age of

<sup>36</sup> *Raising the retirement age: the reaction of citizens*. FOM press release of June 29, 2018. Available at: <http://fom.ru/Ekonomika/14057>

<sup>37</sup> News of the Information Agency Ura.ru on November 15, 2018. Available at: <https://ura.news/news/1052359490> (talking about the head of the financial department of the Administration of Novocheboksarsk, Chuvash Republic).

<sup>38</sup> News “Moscow region today”, 2016, December 30. Available at: <https://mosregtoday.ru/sec/v-krasnodare-arestovali-chinovnitsu-podozrevaemuyu-v-prevyshenii-dolzhnostnykh-polnomochiy/> (about Deputy Head of Krasnodar O. Yakovleva).

<sup>39</sup> News of the network edition *Inkazan.ru*, 2017, December 19. Available at: <https://inkazan.ru/news/society/19-12-2017/sdat-detey-v-priyut-na-vremya-vyplaty-ipoteki-posovetovala-udachina-mnogodetnaya-mat> (about Children’s Rights Commissioner in Tatarstan G. Udachina).

27 become the head of the Department of Youth Policy, and having achieved this, lose a sense of control, saying: “The state does not owe you anything at all – your parents owe you. They gave birth to you, the state did not ask them to give birth to you”<sup>40</sup>.

Why the authorities say such things more often now, in 2018? The reason lies in the economic crisis, which has not ended. There is less money in the country, real incomes do not grow (and most often, they decrease). And here the question arises: should incomes fall in the whole society or only in certain groups (strata)? And it turns out that representatives of the ruling class, all sorts of “sovereign people”, do not agree that their income can fall. They are not ready to give up the level of consumption they have achieved. But, as already mentioned, the amount of money in the country has decreased and therefore the means to maintain their well-being can be taken only from ordinary people (taxable strata)... Of course, some officials will be punished, fired and ridiculed for such statements they say. But they will not stop saying this, because their task is to accustom people to the idea that “the state does not owe people anything”. If this idea is repeated a thousand times from different lips, then sooner or later people will get used to it. In any case, the government hopes for this very much<sup>41</sup>.

**Such careless statements of officials at least show an elementary loss of self-control, obviously, against the background of long-term impunity from the punishment for the policy they conduct corresponding to the degree of their moral responsibility (or rather-irresponsibility) before**

<sup>40</sup> Glatskikh O. Sverdlovsk Oblast (source: *Pionerskaya pravda*, 2018, November 8. Available at: <https://zen.yandex.ru/media/pioner/kak-chinovnica-olga-glackih-zaiavivshaia-chto-gosudarstvo-nikogo-ne-prosilo-rojat-detei-stala-direktorom-departamenta-molodejnoi-5be3eaed1c705900-a9fce9e6?&from=feed>).

<sup>41</sup> Shaburov A. “The state does not owe you anything”. Why officials changed their tone in communicating with the people. *Information portal of the town of Bakal*, 2018, November 22. Available at: <http://vbakale74.ru/power/5223-gosudarstvovam-ne-dolzno-pochemu-chinovniki-smenili-ton-v-obshchenii-s-narodom.html>

society. In other cases, such things are “revealed” due to the activity of public figures and law enforcement agencies. For example, after the mass investigative measures carried out in April and October 2018, large corruption networks were identified in the Sochi city administration; developers and officials were arrested, including vice-mayors, heads of departments...

**However, all this is the “tip of the iceberg”, indicating only how deeply the private interests are rooted in the system of public administration designed (in theory) to serve the people and protect the interests of society. This is not surprising, because the “patterns” of such behavior are set at the top, at the federal level.**

Here we can recall a notorious statement “There’s no money, but you hang in there!” by Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev himself<sup>42</sup> or German Gref’s suggestions to “send parents to assisted-living facilities”<sup>43</sup>... We can add to this a situation when on a wave of large-scale discussion of the pension reform, deputies of the State Duma decide to “start with themselves and to make amendments to the law on the status of the member of the Federation Council and the Deputy of the State Duma by abolishing pension preferences they have the right to receive”<sup>44</sup>, especially focusing on the fact that **“this draft law satisfies one of the main demands of modern**

**Russians – the demand for justice”**<sup>45</sup>. However, after the official adoption of the law on raising the retirement age<sup>46</sup> the deputies decide they may give up preferences voluntarily, that is if they want to<sup>47</sup>. Such cases, arising at all levels of government, lead to an appropriate response from society: thus, according to our research, for the period from 2011 to 2018, the proportion of residents of the Vologda Oblast who believe that they can not affect the situation in the country increased from 67 to 73%.

The problem of the economy does not consist in cheap oil or sanctions, but in the fact that all the activities of liberals in key positions in Medvedev’s government and Nabiullina’s Bank of Russia, as far as we can judge by their actions, is subordinated to the task of blocking the development of our country. And in general, because we tolerate them, they succeed ... Our “offshore aristocracy” includes the people who have all their assets and all their life in the West, and they govern Russia, if not like an occupied territory, then in the regime of external management, on a rotational basis. But this does not apply to the entire ruling party, but only to the liberal part of it, i.e. to the liberals in the opposition and in the government, who sincerely believe that the state should serve not the people, but the global business, and they want full subordination of Russia to the West<sup>48</sup>...

<sup>42</sup> A short expression derived from the phrase “... There is no indexation anywhere. It’s just that there is no money now. If we find the money, we’ll carry out indexation. You hold on there, I wish you all the luck, good mood and health”, which D. Medvedev said in May 2016 during a visit to Crimea in response to the complaint of a pensioner about the small amount of pension (source: information portal *Gazeta.Ru*, 2016, May 24. Available at: [https://www.gazeta.ru/comments/2016/05/24\\_e\\_8262629.shtml](https://www.gazeta.ru/comments/2016/05/24_e_8262629.shtml)).

<sup>43</sup> Interview with G. Gref on TV channel “Russia 24” on August 31, 2018 (source: news of Borisoglebsk, 2018, September 3. Available at: <http://bsk-news.ru/4742-german-gref-prizval-rossiyan-massovo-otdavot-svoih-roditeley-v-doma-prestarelyh.html>).

<sup>44</sup> It is proposed to abolish pension benefits for the deputies and senators (Secretary of the General Council of the United Russia party A. Turchak). News Agency “SaratovBiznesKonsalting”, 2018, August 21. Available at: <https://news.sarbc.ru/main/2018/08/21/221339.html>

<sup>45</sup> Zamakhina T. They started with themselves: State Duma deputies approved their own refusal to receive allowances to pensions. *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 2018, no. 7698 (235), October 18. Available at: <https://rg.ru/2018/10/18/deputaty-odobrili-sobstvennyj-otkaz-ot-nadbavok-k-pensiiam.html>

<sup>46</sup> On amending separate legal acts of the Russian Federation concerning the establishment and payment of pensions: Federal Law 350 of October 3, 2018.

<sup>47</sup> “A citizen who is entitled to a monthly supplement to the pension may refuse to receive it by submitting an application to the head of the federal executive authority. In case of voluntary refusal of the citizen to receive a monthly supplement to the pension, such supplements are not provided further” (source: On amending Articles 2 and 29 of Federal Law “On the status of the member of the Council of Federation and the status of the Deputy of the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation”: FL of November 12, 2018 No. 408. Available at: <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/Document/View/0001201811120024?index=1&rangeSize=1>).

<sup>48</sup> Delyagin M. The liberals treat Russia like it were a cutlet – an object of consumption. *Electronic Newspaper “Biznes-onlain”*, 2016, November 9. Available at: <https://www.business-gazeta.ru/article/327971>

Thus, the evaluation of the effectiveness of implementation of the key criteria of the social state shows that this provision of the Constitution of the Russian Federation is implemented imitatively rather than effectively. **“The social state is a half-forgotten constitutional principle of the Russian Federation”<sup>49</sup>. “The people of Russia, as before, do not live under the Constitution, but near it”<sup>50</sup>.**

However, this does not mean that in the quarter of a century since the adoption of the Constitution it has exhausted its validity and requires a radical revision. On the contrary, building a social state is a matter of the future, and so far we are only at the beginning of this path. “If social and income inequality is preserved, then it may in the near future lead to a significant decrease in the trust in all the highest authorities and in the level of self-sufficiency of Russian society. Neither authorities, nor business, including corporate-oligarchic business, are interested in it. For the sake of self-preservation they have to compromise with the majority of the population. **The main way to find such a compromise may be to form a social state based on Russian (general and regional) forms and methods taking into account its historically approved foreign forms and methods**”<sup>51</sup>.

**“Ignoring the norms of the Constitution is a question addressed exclusively to the representatives of the comprador elite, who consciously give priority to their private interests to the detriment of the interests of Russian society. And the question is also addressed to the “central**

**government – the President and Parliament, who possess the appropriate powers”<sup>52</sup>.**

...We in Russia often suffer from bifurcation, parallelism, duplication. We have only one state position that is not divided – it is the President... Neither efficiency, nor poor pensioners, nor bad education will change the Constitution, because if we want it changed, then it is necessary to change the policy of the government<sup>53</sup>.

The historical task that the President has to deal with today is to create conditions for the country’s effective transition to a new stage of development, which is certainly linked to the basic principles of the social state. To do this, it is necessary to show political will and make difficult, but long overdue decisions – about the law governing the convening of the Constitutional Assembly, about the responsibility of officials for actions that restrict the constitutional rights and freedoms of citizens, about the mechanisms of public control over the adoption of administrative decisions at all levels of government.

While such decisions have not been taken by the President, we cannot say that Russia has or at least plans to have a stable vector of moving toward the social state. And as long as domestic, including social and economic, politics is in the hands of those who view society solely as a source of replenishment of their own pockets rather than as “the only source of power in the country” (according to the Constitution), the future of the social state in Russia and the future of Russia itself will remain uncertain.

<sup>49</sup> Lapin N.I. The formation of the social state – a way of successful evolution of society. *Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniya*, 2018, no. 8, p. 6.

<sup>50</sup> Sheinis V. The Constitution-93: the way, results, and prospects. *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 2018, December 11. Available at: [http://www.ng.ru/ideas/2018-12-11/6\\_7460\\_ideas.html](http://www.ng.ru/ideas/2018-12-11/6_7460_ideas.html)

<sup>51</sup> Lapin N.I. The formation of the social state – a way of successful evolution of society. *Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniya*, 2018, no. 8, p. 7.

<sup>52</sup> Boldyrev Yu.Yu. How the liberals were selling Russia: “A rat will eat three beans and smell out a million”. *Moskovskiy komsomolets*, 2016, December 8. Available at: <http://www.mk.ru/politics/2016/12/08/kak-liberaly-prodavali-rossiyu-krysa-sest-tri-zernyshka-million-provonyaet.html>

<sup>53</sup> Will there be the next anniversary of the Constitution of Russia? (an interview with Professor S. Shakhry). *Argumenty nedeli*, 2018, no. 49 (642), December 13. Available at: <http://argumenti.ru/society/2018/12/595669?type=link>

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## Information about the Authors

Vladimir A. Ilyin – RAS Corresponding Member, Doctor of Sciences (Economics), Professor, Honored Scientist of the Russian Federation, Scientific Director, Vologda Research Center of RAS (56A, Gorky Street, Vologda, 160014, Russian Federation; e-mail: [ilin@vscc.ac.ru](mailto:ilin@vscc.ac.ru))

Mikhail V. Morev – Candidate of Sciences (Economics), Leading Researcher, deputy head of department, Vologda Research Center of RAS (56A, Gorky Street, Vologda, 160014, Russian Federation; e-mail: [379post@mail.ru](mailto:379post@mail.ru))