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www.voprospolitolog.ru,
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E-mail: voprospolitolog@yandex.ru,
souzpolitolog@yandex.ru

Executive Secretary
Shkurina S.S.

Computer-aided makeup by
Antsiferova A.S.

Translated by
Chernyshova E.V.

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Review of the article by R. A. Suleymanov “On the Formula of the Russian Nation in Political Agenda»

Reviewer:

D. E. SLIZOVSKY

*Doctor of historical sciences, Professor,
Peoples' Friendship University of Russia,
Moscow, Russia*

We share the academic pathos and passionate appeal of the author – “... the formula of the Russian nation should be the subject of scientific debate and political analysis”. The author of the article under review enhances the relevance of the Russian nation as a political subject of modern Russia and as a political event, increases the height of its methodological and substantive importance by the inclusion of subjects of this topic in the political agenda. Although A. R. Suleymanov’s article does not reflect the whole range of domestic interpretations of the problem (here it would be appropriate to have ideas and provisions on the given topic, their fundamental scientific dispute with cultural and political approaches by such scientists and experts as N. P. Medvedev, V. A. Tishkov, etc.), however, the formulation of the subject, the selection of materials, the structure of presentation and their interpretation are quite representative, encourage intellectualism and theoretical reflections.

A prior knowledge allowed the author not only to put a number of questions, the answers to which explain why this problem has become so topical, but also to formulate a common understanding of what constitutes the Russian nation. The reader quickly learns that “the Russian nation is a collective category, which can be represented in the form of stable relations between citizens of the Russian Federation, representing various ethnic, cultural, religious and other social groups based on common territory, state and way of life.” That this is a product of our common centuries-old history, the milestones of which have left their mark on the political and/or civil identification of the inhabitants of Russia. And the author singled out three such general civil communities: “imperial nation,” “Soviet inter-nation,” Russian nation. Further lengthy discussions of a comparative nature between such categories as “Soviet man” and “Russian nation” allow finding in the text the content and peculiarities of both forms of political identification.

The author quite logically in the reasoning and analysis relies on the facts, political practices, opinions and statements of scientists, public leaders and politicians. In this approach, he follows, perhaps without knowing it, a stable and accepted in the scientific community logic, which, as is known, prevails in the discourse of the topic on the understanding of the nation that oppose, diverge or partially coincide with the views of the so-called “legislators” and “interpreters.”

In line with this theoretical construct, the references to the head of state V. Putin included in the storyline, along with the strategic decisions of the government to form the Council for interethnic relations under the President of the Russian Federation, to create the Federal Agency for nationalities, to adopt and approve the Strategy of the State National Policy for the Period up to 2025 become understandable. Finally, President Vladimir Putin's order to draft a federal law on the Russian nation. In fact, we must say that this political practice reflects the position and role of "legislators" legitimizing the strategy of finding the truth about how the Russian nation will be formed and how this category of political and social life will work as a way to construct the political process and new political subjects. In a rational form, this activity should answer the question of what kind of practices the Russian nation is. The questions of another group from the same series and on this problem belong to the "interpreters". The eyes of the interpreters are turned to the means of hermeneutics and historical sociology. This is more strictly a scientific form of learning about some important truths, which revolves around questions, what the nation is, what the Russian nation is, what its origins and nature are. Even more significant, we believe, is the need to find answers to such questions as: why exactly at the present historical and political moment in Russia the main subjects of politics began to "suddenly" speak about the Russian nation, whereas previously this question was not raised and was discussed only in the theoretical aspect; why, in some cases, nations do not arise without some special considerations and requests for their creation; and whether the statements and proposals on the creation of the Russian nation are opposed to any other forms of organization of the Russian society, and cannot they be caused by the aggravation of domestic political struggle in the country, or probably they are the reflection of some new forms of political struggle, still little known, or fundamentally new, but disguised under its existing forms and types.

In principle, for the theory and political practice of modern Russia, questions about the laws of civilization growth and modernization as the condition and ground for the transformation of ethnogenesis move to the top of the scientific discourse on the given topic. The remarks and statements of a number of Russian scientists remain quite obvious and relevant, they relate to the question as to whether it is possible to create the Russian nation artificially, deliberately. And then, the topics about the impossibility of solving this problem without the use of power and aggravation of political struggle will be quite topical. Or it is a natural process of development that should not be judged or viewed as an event. The creation and development of the nation then appears to be the moment of realization of natural-like manifestations and laws, acting in addition to and beyond the will of people.

Overburdened and ossified unresolved issues regarding the relationship between man-made intentions and plans for the creation of the Russian nation and its natural historic formation does not relieve the acuteness of the experienced moments in the life of modern multi-confessional and multi-ethnic Russian socie-

ty. Not all questions on formation of the Russian nation can be reduced to political questions. Nevertheless, the political nation and, in particular, the Russian political nation, even without a full list of signs of its existence, is able to influence politics and have political consequences. It may not always be possible to detect the nature of a political and political nation, and its influence on politics, if only to formally proceed from the adoption of the formula of political content in its traditional interpretation – “friend-enemy.” Intuitive and rational understanding of these transitions in the eventuality of the formation of the Russian nation allowed the author to analyze relations between the peoples of Russia, crises and risks in the structure of these relations, the loss and revival of traditional values, ideals.

It is reasonable that an appeal to the discussion of this problem expressed by the author in his the article, which has many explanations, allows us to state the possibility of its publication. One of them, in our opinion, is connected at least with the fact that the socio-political and economic development of modern Russia has the features of a socio-cultural trauma. After the cataclysm of the 1990s, Russian society has not overcome the crumbling of its consciousness and is still in a state of deep vertical and horizontal division. The social and cultural sets of ideas that formed its backbone and kept the society in a state of non-destruction were dismantled. “Dismantling” of the people and disintegration of society are some of the most important threats to post-Soviet Russia. Another basis for discussion is the necessity to overcome the interpretation of the issues on the basis of simplified concepts and stable archaic attitudes. The intellectual and governmental communities should stop introducing into the discussion topics that is void of dialectics or are not properly measured. After all, if there are calls for unity within the framework of the Russian nation, then such call does not move forward and is based solely on “mechanical” solidarity. Ethnocentricity dominates in the self-consciousness of the Russian ethnic groups and their representatives, they are unwilling to rise to the national level. Complex value categories do not fit into their cognitive structure. At the same time, hammered and passionate formula of the ideologues of ethnic groups often express the great ideals of every ethnic group and give them magical powers. And any attempt to turn some part of such ideas and moods to rational analysis is perceived as an insult to national feelings and sacred objects and is rejected with fanatical and selfish feelings and political zeal. At the same time, some ethnic groups in Russia are now in a state of vivacity and active optimism, other are in a state of despondency and social pessimism, but both need confidence and ideals for the future. And, it seems to reverse the general mood of decline today is more important than to give the correct recipes for the rehabilitation of the Russian society. Besides, it will be necessary to give not only ideals, but also an intellectual construction with features of the theory in order to strengthen influence of ideals, their appeal in protection of the theory and formula of the Russian nation.