

# Elections, Inauguration, and a Politics of Protest: New Contours of the Putin Regime

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“When we speak of difference, we are therefore speaking of resistance”<sup>1</sup>

On May 7, 2012 Vladimir Putin was officially inaugurated as Russia’s “new - old” president. Formally, the political future of Russia for the next six years is more or less settled. But this election result is a classic example of the difference between legality and legitimacy. Even with more than 60% of the vote, Putin’s presidency will significantly differ from the first two terms, since he is going to lead a radically different country with a much more demanding civil society, a wider range of political voices, and much stronger criticism of Putin’s promoted idea of “national unity”, which masks the power ambitions of the ruling elite.

In this paper I am going to analyze the evolution of the Russian domestic system through the prism of concepts borrowed from the critical / post-structuralist theories. *Academically*, the extrapolation of the European critical thinking to the sphere of political relations in Russia might be instrumental in uncovering a number of most important trends that are of primordial significance for understanding the dynamics of Russian political system. Arguably, the more or less traditional political science vocabulary of transitology and modernization seems to be insufficient for unveiling the nature and the mechanisms of the Putin regime. From a *policy perspective*, this topic is actualized by the more complicated relations between the Kremlin and its opponents in the aftermath of mass-scale protests following the December 4, 2011 and March 4, 2012 parliamentary and presidential campaigns.

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In this article, I will analyze the Russian political system through three premises. *Firstly*, politicization and depoliticization can be viewed as two different strategies of executing power, and the interplay between them constitutes an intriguing research puzzle. *Secondly*, I will describe the Putin regime as an explicitly depoliticized form of power, grounded in the combination of two different logics – that of sovereignty and governmentality. *Thirdly*, I will claim that the regime failed in its attempts to eradicate politics, and faces outbursts of grassroots and multi-faced politicization.

## The Troubles of a Police Regime

In spite of apparently convincing victory of Vladimir Putin, political crisis in Russia persists. The electoral campaign of March 2012, formally successful for the expected winner, has revealed the scale of the current crisis in the country. Here are its most notorious symptoms. Despite mass-scale protests, electoral fraud is still the pivotal part of the system of governance. The rhetoric of Putin’s campaign resembled a civil war discourse, with the clearly accentuated dividing lines between “us” and “them”. Nationalists with dubious reputation were allowed to speak in pro-Putin rallies on behalf of the Kremlin. Authorities even didn’t bother about disavowing the endless accusations in corruption. Dmitry Medvedev not only turned into a lame duck and lost the remnants of his authority, but as newly appointed prime minister became a questionable ally for those who have long-term political ambitions. Putin himself

demonstrated unusual incoherence, too often making controversial and mutually exclusive statements.

From a theoretical viewpoint, the concept of *de-politicization* denotes a ‘foreclosure’ of politics. In de-politicized environment, ideological and political conflicts are replaced by debating technologies of governance (economic, financial, and legal ones). The essence of depoliticization lies in the negotiation of interests, the attainment of compromises. For French theorists post-politics means pragmatism and references to the legal arguments that usually ignore the concrete constellation of forces. De-politicization envisages rational administration and negotiated consensus. In terms of Ranciere, “the State, as such, is indifferent or hostile to the existence of a politics that touches on truths. The modern State aims only at fulfilling certain functions, or fashioning a consensus of opinion”<sup>2</sup>.

In consonance with Ranciere’s vocabulary, one can dub the Putin’s regime a *police* type of power, having in mind that police is defined here as “an organizational system of coordinates ...that divides the community into groups, social positions, and functions”. Police, therefore, “separates those who take part from those who are excluded”<sup>3</sup>. It makes security institutions produce consensus on what is presented as undeniably “natural” state of affairs. For many states an intricate police apparatus is required for ensuring stability and hierarchy of social structures. Police has its own public dimension which was confirmed by the reaction of the regime to mass protests in the streets of Moscow: from the police perspective, “there is nothing to watch... Whereas political actors turn streets into stages, the police reestablish the smooth circulation of traffic”<sup>4</sup>.



In the meantime, as I have mentioned, the Putin regime encompasses a combination of sovereignty and governance techniques of power. In Judith Butler's reading of Michel Foucault, *sovereignty* "denotes the task of any state to preserve and protect its own territoriality"<sup>5</sup>. Of primordial importance is that sovereignty might be introduced "in the very act by which state suspends the law. In this way, the state extends its own domain, its own necessity, and the means by which its self-justification occurs...Sovereignty is exercised ... also in the self-allocation of legal prerogative", and might turn into "a lawless and prerogatory power, a 'rogue' power par excellence"<sup>6</sup>, since it "allocates to itself ... an indefinitely prolonged power to exercise judgments regarding who is dangerous" and who is not. This kind of sovereign power installs itself independently of existing legal frameworks, and readjusts law to its own purposes of extending its sovereign reach. Thus, sovereignty has to be understood as an "extra-legal authority that may well institute and enforce law of its own making". It is the sovereign power that decides what is norm and what is exception from it; thus, the sovereign has the ability to transgress the very law it represents. By doing so, sovereign power produces the obedient social subjects it needs for domination.

Against this backdrop, the Putin regime can be described as a depoliticized type of rule where the word 'politics' is mostly used either in a derogatory context, or to describe the evil intentions of unfriendly

foreign states towards Russia. The core element of the Kremlin's depoliticized discourse is the idea of Russia's "normality", which translates as its acceptance by the rest of the world without the need for significant commitments to domestic reform. In particular, the idea of sovereign democracy was originally meant not so much to differentiate Russia from the West, but to portray Russia as part (although a distinctive one) of the modern European political tradition. Yet this appeal of the Kremlin to supposedly universal practice implies – perhaps paradoxically – the inevitable denial of Russia's specificity: in Putin's interpretation, there is nothing unusual in the Khodorkovsky affair, in police intervention against street protests, in strong presidential powers, etc. However, with the realization that this type of discourse wouldn't work, the Russian elites "shifted their slogan from 'sovereign democracy' to 'modernization', (which – A.M.) exemplifies the post ideological character of the current regime"<sup>7</sup>.

Yet in fall 2011 it became evident that political dynamics is gradually coming back to Russia, and the French critical theory gives us one of the most effective tools to address the nature of this process. The proliferation of the multiple "islands of politicization" is the effect of two processes of profound consequences: the growth of un-institutional (i.e. skipping official/authorized channels) activity of the "multitude" (i.e. a horizontal/networking movement of political resistance), on the one hand, and the intensified fragmentation within the recently

unified "party of power", on the other. This process of double political dynamic (both outside and inside the regime) can be analyzed through the prism of mostly ideational factors, which include:

- The decreasing ability of the ruling elite to control and consolidate the dominating/hegemonic discourse and, concomitantly, to effectively convey relevant messages to social groups;
- The widening perceptual gap between the aesthetics of power (including its narratives, images and the meanings attached to them) and the aesthetical demands of the middle class;
- The shifting rationality of the ruling class, as exemplified by their changing attitudes to a number of pivotal procedural issues, including the recruitment of regional and municipal elites, the registration of political parties, etc.

Along the lines of Antonio Negri one can claim that with the complicating conditions of governance the machine of power "proved itself incapable of running its own mechanical dimension in a unitary manner"<sup>8</sup>. The Kremlin discourse remains overwhelmingly retrospective, marked on the one hand by a triumphalist glorification of Russia's military victories (especially in the Second World War), and on the other by a denigration and vilification of the pre-Putin decade of the 1990s as "the time of upheavals and disorder". It is against this background that Putin has constructed his narrative of Russia, but what worked pretty smoothly in his first and second terms in office is no longer credible. On the one hand, the pro-Putin narrative of distancing his rule from the notorious practices of the 1990s has started crumbling, as evidenced by the startling comeback of Sergei Mavrodi (convicted for fraud as the founder of the infamous MMM "financial pyramid") as a media celebrity, publicly promising to continue exactly as he did then. On the other hand, people in Russia have been increasingly eager to compare the situation today with neither the 1990s nor with bygone Soviet times, but rather with that of the most advanced countries of the world. This shift in perspective, influenced largely by globalization, has led to their questioning the legitimacy of the current regime.

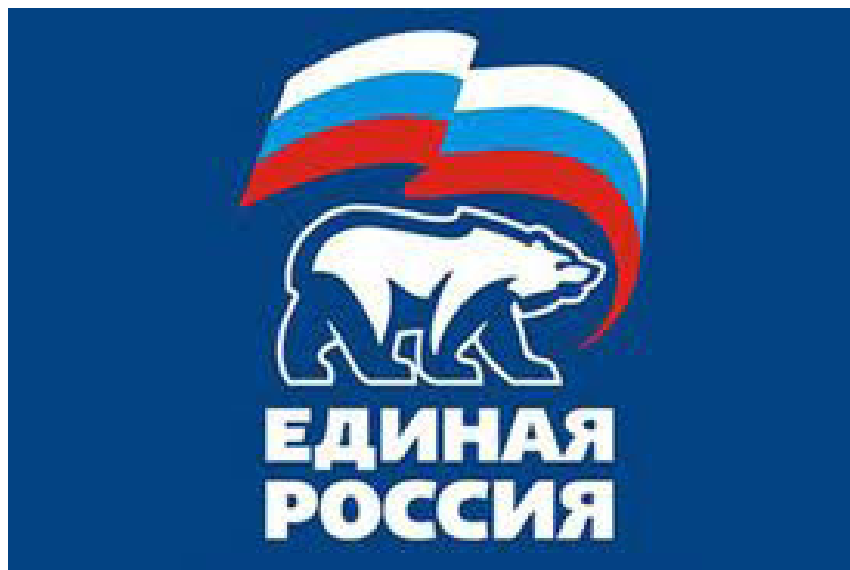
As a result of the high level of mistrust within society and dissatisfaction with the

Putin – Medvedev rule, the entire system of governance became increasingly dysfunctional. Although the immediate reason for protest was fraudulent vote counting, the problem with the regime goes much deeper, and concerns its structural ineffectiveness in delivering adequate living standards and providing social justice and security. It is these issues that triggered the fall in popularity of the former tandem and the public outcry against the governing elite. In this situation, the regime has lost its former ability to generate socially acceptable meanings and control the nationwide discourses, which makes the prospects for the ruling elite rather murky. It is hardly believable that the Kremlin has nowadays a clear policy strategy – its design is dependent on the changing situation and lacks clarity. Of course, the Kremlin will do its best at assuage the situation by making concessions to the opposition, however disperse it might be – including rehabilitation of popular elections of governors and mayors, registration of opposition parties, etc. But the third term of Putin will end up with deepening political crisis and will inevitably lead to gradual yet essential transformations.

## A New Wave of Politicization

The key to the current changes in Russian society is its growing – and by many unexpected – politicization. It is this return of political momentum that will provide the strongest challenge to the Putin power model in the next few years.

In this context, *politics* has to be understood as “the invention of new political subjectivities, (it) cannot be confined to the activity of government that maintains order, pacification and security while constantly aiming at consensus. On the contrary, politics is the manifestation of dissensus, the cultivation of an anarchic multiplicity that calls into question the authority and legitimacy of the state. It is in relations to such a multiplicity that we may begin to restore some dignity to the dreadfully devalued discourse of democracy”<sup>9</sup>. Political momentum is “articulated around an ethical demand ... in a situation of injustice and inspires the mood of anger, which (can be seen) as the first political emotion”<sup>10</sup>.



What makes the logic of politics different from the competing logics of management, administration, law and business is the idea of diversity that sustains the political momentum. Unlike in other spheres, in politics diversity is neither a hurdle nor a complication, but the very condition of its existence. Against this background, politicization is a process that creates and modifies political orders. In this vein, politics is an intervention in a situation of multiple alternatives with contested political roles, in which the key actors face choices that require mobilization of political wills rather than observance of existing institutional rules. As seen from the vantage point of the French critical theory, all genuine political changes are extra-institutional. For Ranciere, “a political movement always ... displaces the given boundaries”<sup>11</sup> (i.e. those established by central/sovereign authorities). Politics spells diversity, rejects finitude, summons “the infinity of the situation”<sup>12</sup> and is driven “by the welcome of the new, the unidentifiable, the unknowable”. Despite predominantly depoliticized nature of the state, it “reveals ... its excess of power, its repressive dimension”<sup>13</sup> whenever there is a genuinely political event, or “a flaw in the structure”, to borrow a phrase from Badiou. “What true politics undermines is the illusion of the bond, whether it be unionist, parliamentary, professional or convivial”<sup>14</sup>, he argues. Therefore, politics itself is “freed from its subordination to the state”, is “unbound from the state”<sup>15</sup>, whatever the form of regime might be. A “real politics” not only holds itself at a distance from the state; what is more important is that it “constructs this distance”<sup>16</sup>, and

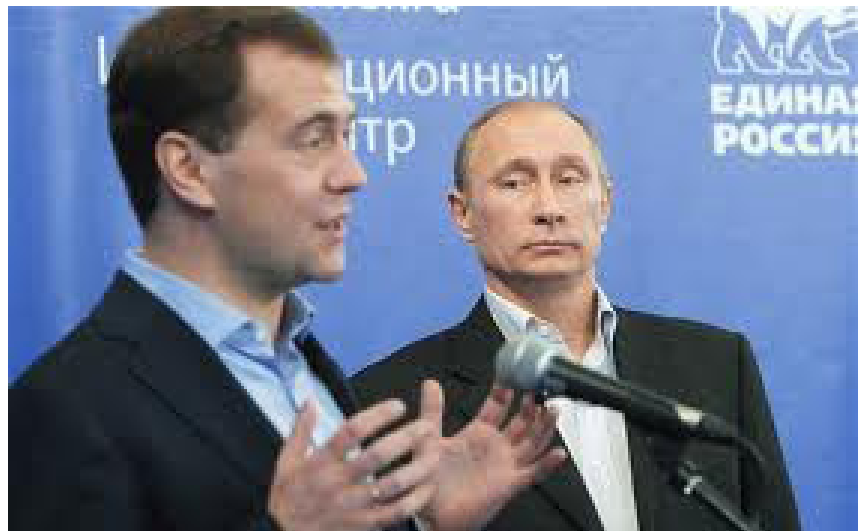
therefore determines the degree of conflictuality between the dissents and the officialdom. That is why politics “always shows up in moments of trial and turmoil”, and necessarily presupposes “rupture and disorder”<sup>17</sup>. In this context, one may argue, all public struggles and protests are inherently political, since they constitute an effective way of shaping the basic concepts that holds society together, including democracy, human rights, justice, solidarity, responsibility, etc..

The public protests that started in Moscow in December 2011 surprised many analysts who believed in the unshakable stability of the regime created by Vladimir Putin and the inherent passivity of the Russian population. Recent events proved both assumptions wrong. Civil society does have a voice in Russia and wants it to be heard, and this forced the regime into making significant changes – obviously not as radical as the opposition demands, but nevertheless moving Russia towards greater pluralism and public participation in politics. This led both foreign and domestic observers to predict the gradual decline in Putin’s power.

The “street opposition” to the regime began without a clear ideological message, but quite quickly became explicitly political. Though the immediate reason for discontent was the ubiquitous electoral fraud that ultimately allowed “United Russia” to preserve its majority in the Duma, the opposition raised a whole raft of issues that reached far beyond the technicalities of that particular event, including demands

for greater transparency, accountability, good governance, civil rights, etc. The breadth of these claims makes it clear that simply “reloading” the regime (finding a few scapegoats and making some cosmetic changes or minor concessions) will definitely not pacify the situation. The new political momentum in post-December Russia has created a clearly articulated public demand for a radical transformation of a whole system of political, social and economic relations which both pundits and ordinary people recognize as far from effective. This was already clear from the public debates on the concept of modernization in/of Russia, which Dmitry Medvedev deliberately and consistently tried to reduce to purely financial and economic issues, brushing aside the need to modernize Russian political institutions and the whole system of governance.

Entrapped in a post-political / post-ideological way of thinking, both Putin and Medvedev put the rise of the anti-government movement in autumn 2011 down to the negative effects of economic crisis. By the same token, Kremlin supporters tried to play down the legitimacy of the protests by citing purely material factors (the growing numbers of car owners, the booming shopping opportunities, etc.). Yet these counter-reactions missed the mark, since purely economic explanations of the new movement for change in Russia, triggered by post-December events, are totally inadequate. The roots of this widespread public discontent go back to September 2011, when at the “United Russia” party convention Dmitry Medvedev not only refused to run for a second presidential term, but instead offered the job to Vladimir Putin in exchange for securing his own appointment as the next prime minister. This clumsy job swap revealed two important points. First, in spite of all Medvedev’s weaknesses as President and his reputation as Putin’s puppet, a significant part of Russian society still perceived him as a moderate alternative to Putin’s hard-line policy of state centralization and anti-Western rhetoric. Medvedev’s voluntary self-removal from the presidential race symbolized for many the end of their hopes for modernization and a more liberal political regime. Secondly, Russians turned out to be very sensitive to overt manipulation of electoral procedures, as exemplified by the



clandestine agreements between Putin and Medvedev, as well as by the massive-scale vote fraud, widely covered on the internet and monitored by various social networks. It was around these issues that the political content of protests started crystallizing and maturing.

Of course, as with any unexpected and potentially far-reaching political developments, post-December events in Russia have fuelled excessive expectations and symbolic parallels with the ‘Arab spring’ and ‘colour revolutions’. These comparisons and their political meanings appear to have been exaggerated. The Putin - Medvedev regime has received a series of serious blows, yet it still has huge administrative potential and financial resources for survival. It will, however, be forced to transform itself, getting rid of the most obsolete political and managerial practices and opening up new opportunities for political competition. In the course of just two weeks, after the scale of the resistance movement became clear, Medvedev urged the partial restoration of direct elections for regional governors (which Putin abolished in 2004 under the pretext of a risk of national disintegration), while Putin promised the legal registration of the opposition ‘Parnas’ party. In short, despite its much discussed lack of strong leadership and internal splits, the spontaneous (and networking in many senses) anti-Kremlin movement will definitely influence the development of the Russian political system in many ways.

Another reference to Antonio Negri can be pertinent at this juncture: “difference/

resistance appears as the condition of possibility of the production of new subjectivities”<sup>18</sup>. Of course, it was naïve to imagine that the first green shoots of democratic politics could topple the regime in a matter of months, but the growing politicization of Russian society will undoubtedly have long-term effects. The large-scale political demonstrations that erupted immediately after the Duma election on December 4, 2011 exposed the deep crisis in the current model of governance. In a matter of days it became clear that the stability and national unity promoted by Putin as the core justification for his reign was a mirage, and that the nation was deeply split along political lines, seriously calling into question the “social contract” between the Kremlin and society. It became obvious that a “final organic community” (to borrow a term from Jacques Ranciere) which the Kremlin was eager to build, is a myth.

What is evident by now is that the Putin - Medvedev political regime faces deep political challenges from the increasingly active dissident groups, as well pressures from inside of the regime which has lost its coherence. The resistance groups are still in the process of gaining their political subjectivity and identity, but arguably its future will significantly differ from the more or less traditional party-building mechanisms. The resistance movement will most likely resemble what Hardt and Negri dubbed “the multitude”, a new type of counter-elite networked opposition to the hegemonic core, to a large extent enhanced by the newest technologies of immediate mass communication. The vitality of the resistance movement in Russia is sustained



not by economic but mostly by mental/ideational factors, including the sharp dissatisfaction with the public esthetics of the regime and, of course, the mass-scale election fraud.

Does a new political momentum augur a new chance for democracy in Russia? The answer to this question can be certainly affirmative should we accept that "democracy requires forgetting the shepherd, and separating the political community from any link to the Father"<sup>19</sup>. It is the demos that "is posited as the basis of political legitimation" in Russia, not as the product of sovereignty<sup>20</sup> – hence the slogan at anti-Putin rallies "We are not an opposition, we are the people".

In the meantime, the concept of democracy, as applicable to the protest movement in Russia, needs some rethinking. As Antonio Negri claims, nowadays "hardly anyone anywhere believes any longer in the virtues and possibilities of representative democracy (but) whenever people speak positively and hopefully of democracy, it is the other democracy that they have in mind ... that breaks with the concept of government of the One"<sup>21</sup>. For Negri, democracy is the expression of the multitude as a "nonorganic, differential, and powerful multiplicity"<sup>22</sup>. It is very likely that a similar vision of democracy may find numerous followers in Russia.

## Putin's Feebleness

In this situation, the Kremlin seems to be losing out, both politically and intellectually, to those whom it has tried to marginalize (such as the oil tycoon Mikhail Khodorkovsky, or popular blogger Alexei Navalny whose description of the "United Russia" as a "party of crooks and swindlers" is deeply imprinted in the public discourse in Russia). The decay of the ruling elites is clear in the evident lack of authoritative speakers for the Kremlin willing and capable of defending it against political attack and articulating new arguments. There is increasing evidence of Putin's inability to handle the growing range of public discourse and respond to it adequately: according to revealing first-hand accounts by two Brookings scholars, in the November 2011 Valdai Forum Putin often "repeated himself", was "mechanical", and

some of his statements were confusing and misplaced<sup>23</sup>. He refused, as he has before, to participate in presidential debates. On some occasions he even started to lose the ability to argue with opinions starkly different from his own, as at the meeting with military experts in Sarov at the end of February 2012, where Putin failed to challenge a statement claiming that U.S. anti-missile projects in Central Europe didn't threaten Russian security. Many of Putin's public pronouncements and appearances bring him public mockery (such as his driving a yellow "Lada-Kalina" car, which resembled a badly staged business PR stunt, or diving into the sea and miraculously resurfacing with two ancient amphorae which, as his press secretary admitted afterwards, had been secretly placed there for him by archaeologists) – a complete turnaround from the early and mid-2000s, when he enjoyed overwhelming popularity and respect.

The Putin discourse is nowadays in disarray and lacking in substance (regardless of whether the new President understands this or not). A new pro-Putin TV documentary series shown on Russian TV at the beginning of 2012 was called 'In the First Person', a title identical to that of a PR book about his 2000 campaign. The multiple commercial TV talk-shows portraying the degree of moral degradation and depth of corruption in today's Russia are in sharp contrast to the artificial optimism of the political elite. Attempts to explain away massive electoral fraud as mere technical irregularities are largely unconvincing.

The lack of trust and the crisis in communication between the elites and the rest of Russia are likely to be crucial issues that will continue to trigger protests in the future. In contrast to the 1990s, this time the street protestors were not jobless workers struggling to feed their families; nowadays the discontent is most widespread among Russia's nascent middle class, better educated and with a much wider world view and higher expectations and demands as to the quality of their governance. It is this group that are the largest users of the internet and social networking as their primary means of information exchange and social organization. Against this background, the protest movement reflects a new form of civil activism, whose political protest

is mostly post-material and law-abiding, a reaction against the arrogance of Kremlin rule, the lack of transparency, and the shrinking of public space. In fact, in origin it was an aesthetic (although very susceptible to politicization) gesture – an attempt to deny the ridiculous and clumsy practices of old-style bureaucracy, incapable of advancing a convincing prospect for the future, that seemed to have meaning for those social groups that are the most critical of the Kremlin.

Under these circumstances, the whole administrative system is increasingly going to experience political overloads for which it is ill-prepared. It is hard to predict the tempo and pace of the evolution (or degradation) of the Putin 3.0 regime. Yet at least two things are rather clear. First, the spontaneous civil protests from December to March did much more for Russia's "normalization", i.e. its transformation into a nation compatible with European norms, than both Putin and Medvedev did in 12 years. And second, the further development of Russia will be defined by the dynamics of the democratic politics of resistance, which, as Jacques Ranciere puts it, is a "dissensus from the police order"<sup>24</sup>. The politics of democracy needs some time to create its own space(s) of a "community of equals", but it is Russia's only hope of ultimate success.

## Concluding Reflections

What stems from this analysis is that, first, the price for the electoral victories – both in December 2011 and in March 2012 – was too high – for the "party of power", as well as for the whole country. "United Russia" kept a relatively low profile during the presidential campaign, which makes its strategic future obscure. In principle, it is imaginable who might play the key roles in other parties in the next electoral cycle. On the left flank we shall see people like Sergei Udaltsov; the "angry middle class" will split its sympathies between Alexei Navalny, Igor Kudrin and Mikhail Prokhorov (or, perhaps, a combination of some of them); and even "Just Russia" has some chances for rebranding, should Sergei Mironov resign in favour of much more attractive Oksana Dmitrieva. But the biggest question is who will play in the Kremlin's team in a couple of years from now. We

have not seen a single new face there for years, and they will unlikely to appear soon.

A second, and much more theoretical lesson to be drawn from the election story, needs a reference to the concept of “the sensible” introduced by the French political philosopher Jacques Ranciere. He predicted that in a post-political and post-ideological society the most dynamic sphere able to generate political impulses is the sphere of emotions, symbols, narratives, storylines, messages, perceptions, etc. In other words, what matters is not how much people earn or what kind of laws they have to observe, but what people feel about themselves and power. Any emerging political community, born out of a protest, is based on sharing something which is to be felt, seen, noticed, respected (or, vice versa, despised). The sphere of politics thus appears as a theatrical stage, he claimed<sup>25</sup>. Isn't it the right time for Russia experts to start reading Ranciere with a bit more of attention?

#### Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Cesare Casarino and Antonio Negri: *In Praise of the Common. A Conversation on Philosophy and Politics*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2008, p. 98.

<sup>2</sup> Jacques Ranciere: *Hatred of Democracy*. London & New York: Verso, 2006, p. 85.

<sup>3</sup> Jacques Ranciere: *The Politics of Aesthetics*. London & New York: Continuum, 2004, p. 3.

<sup>4</sup> Peter Hallward: “Staging Equality. On Ranciere’s Theatrocracy”, *New Left Review*, January – February 2006, p. 117.

<sup>5</sup> Judith Butler: *Precarious Life. The Powers of Mourning and Violence*. London and New York: Verso, 2006, p. 55.

<sup>6</sup> Judith Butler: *Op.cit.*, p. 56.

<sup>7</sup> Ivan Krastev: “Paradoxes of the New Authoritarianism”, *Journal of Democracy*, April 2011, Vol.22, N 2, p. 8.

<sup>8</sup> Cesare Casarino and Antonio Negri: *Op.cit.*, p. 48.

<sup>9</sup> Simon Critchley: *Infinitely Demanding. Ethics of Commitment. Politics of Resistance*. London and New York: Verso, 2008, p. 13.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 94.

<sup>11</sup> Jacques Ranciere: *Hatred of Democracy*. London & New York: Verso, 2006, p. 85.

<sup>12</sup> Alain Badiou: *Metapolitics*. London & New York: Verso, 2005, p. 142.

<sup>13</sup> Alain Badiou: *Op.cit.*, p. 145.

<sup>14</sup> Alain Badiou: *Op.cit.*, p. 77.

<sup>15</sup> Alain Badiou: *Op.cit.*, p. 73.

<sup>16</sup> Alain Badiou: *Op.cit.*, p. 119.

<sup>17</sup> Alain Badiou: *Op.cit.*, p. 100.

<sup>18</sup> Cesare Casarino and Antonio Negri: *Op.cit.*, p. 104.

<sup>19</sup> Solange Guenoun: “Jacques Ranciere’s Ethical Turn and the Thinking of Discontents”, in Gabriele Rockhill and Philip Watts: *Jacques Ranciere: History, Politics, Aesthetics*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2009, p. 177.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 102.

<sup>21</sup> Cesare Casarino and Antonio Negri: *In Praise of the Common. A Conversation on Philosophy and Politics*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2008, pp. 103, 108.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45.

<sup>23</sup> Fiona Hill and Clifford Gaddy: “Putin’s Next Move in Russia: Observations from the 8th Annual Valdai International Discussion Club”, available at <http://valdaiclub.com/politics/36021.html>

<sup>24</sup> Todd May: *The Political Thought of Jacques Ranciere. Creating Equality*. Edinburgh University Press, 2008, p. 176.

<sup>25</sup> See: Yves Citton: “Political Agency and the Ambivalence of the Sensible”, in Gabriel Rockhill and Philip Watts (eds.): *Jacques Ranciere: History, Politics, Aesthetics*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2009.