

WHO in Russia Embodies the Struggle for the Preservation of Mankind?



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Abstract. The paper provides an analysis of the main ideas of the article by S.Yu Glazyev “Russia is fighting for the preservation of mankind” (newspaper *Zavtra*, April 6, 2022), in which an important, actually central place is occupied by reflections on the role and significance of social consciousness and state ideology. However, the article pays little attention to the questions of WHO embodies the struggle, WHO the bearer of social consciousness is, and WHOSE INTERESTS should be expressed by the state ideology in modern Russia. In accordance with this goal, an analysis of the role of social consciousness in the historical destinies of peoples, the place and role of state ideology is carried out. The characteristics of the main classes and communities (strata) in modern Russian society and their worldview attitudes and orientations are given. Particular attention is paid to the precariat, which, in the author’s opinion, determines the face of modern Russian society. The conclusion is substantiated that worldview, ideological positions are not only a part of public life, but a certain penetrating component that concerns not only culture, but also all spheres of economic, social and political activity.

Key words: social consciousness, ideology, worldview, classes, precariat.

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Assessing the role of social consciousness

I agree with the main points expressed in the article and would like to dwell upon some fundamental ideas.

I find it very important that Sergei Yu. Glazyev highlights the following statement: “Within the framework of a new world economic order, wars are now going on for consciousness, for the minds of citizens of different countries and, unlike the war of the last century, the current war is a war, first of all, for the dominance in social consciousness”. And when he says that the third factor is ideology and its role and significance in the transformation of the world (in his opinion, monetary and financial problems rank third), this is also, in fact, a conversation about social consciousness, or rather, about that special part of it, which is represented by state policy and ideology that acquire paramount importance in addressing internal and geopolitical issues.

However, in my opinion, the significance and role of social consciousness have been felt throughout the whole recent history and not just the current situation. Let me remind you of a well-known fact that is not always given due attention. In the Bundestag election in 1932, the NSDAP (Hitler’s party) received 33.1% of the vote, and more than half of Germans voted for the Social Democrats and Communists. But since the coalition of supporters of socialism did not take shape, the post of chancellor was occupied by Hitler. And immediately there began an accelerated and a rather successful reformatting of the social consciousness of the German people, who were being fed with the fascist ideology, according to which the main thing in the life of society is not classes, as in Marxism, but belonging to a race, to a chosen ethnic group, to which, they said, the Germans belong. And it is this higher race that should rule the world. This direction in the policy of the German fascists proved to be successful, since after eight years, by

1941, most Germans were infected with the fascist ideology, which they clearly demonstrated during the hostilities on the territory of many states, but especially in our country. Some figures in the USSR could not believe this for a long time and claimed in their pre-war articles and speeches that German soldiers, being representatives of the working class, would never take arms against their brothers – Soviet workers who were building socialism, which most Germans aspired to. Reality refuted that delusion. The German army for the most part consisted of convinced fascists who showed themselves by bloody deeds both at the front and in the occupied territory.

Currently, the campaign to reformat the social consciousness of the Ukrainian population, especially after 2014, after the accession of Crimea to the Russian Federation, has been no less successful. Signs of an essential change in the social consciousness of Ukrainians appeared long before that, in the process of the collapse of the USSR, when nationalist ideas came to the fore, as S.Yu. Glazyev points out. I had a conversation with Academician of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine P.P. Tolochko, who told me that he had met with Russia’s ambassador to Ukraine Viktor Chernomyrdin twice and expressed his concerns that Russia had been neglecting the work with the population and youth of Ukraine, while the United States and its satellites had been spending huge amounts of money on grants and training in their countries, on the creation of appropriate public and political organizations, on the formation of pro-Western forces. Tolochko noted bitterly that Chernomyrdin had replied: “Do not exaggerate the situation. We give Ukraine gas and oil, which they cannot do without”. But history has clearly shown that you can do without them, you bet. Let us face it. The consciousness of many Ukrainians, especially young people, is poisoned by nationalist, anti-Russian and anti-Soviet propaganda.

To this we can add that the nationalist mood (and here Glazyev is right) is an important and, to a certain extent, decisive component of the policies and ideology of many post-Soviet countries (and not only them).

And other ideas that S.Yu. Glazyev (anti-Russian xenophobia, liberal ideas, English and American anti-Sovietism, hybrid warfare) also largely address the problems of social consciousness and its mobilization to achieve geopolitical goals.

WHO claims to be a leader in the Russian social consciousness?

Referring to the experience of China and India, S.Yu. Glazyev advocates the idea that Russia should realize the importance of working with social consciousness and the need to have a state ideology; thus, he leaves open the question of WHO will embody this need for a new ideology or, in the language of philosophy, who will be the subject determining the social consciousness and a supporter of state politics. In other words, for the successful existence of the state, it is necessary to have a social contract concluded between the state and the people; the contract is the criterion and guarantor of the existing system. We can agree with the author that such criteria that ensure the strength of ideological understanding are awareness of one's unity with the fate of one's people and country, guarantees of well-being, and a clear understanding and idea of one's future.

But how are these criteria really expressed in the minds of the main classes, communities and social groups that constitute Russian society?

Let me note right away that despite some liberal and postmodern statements according to which classes have disappeared and do not exist in the modern world, they still do: they have acquired a different form of expression and other indicators (criteria) of their existence compared to those features that the Marxist understanding endowed them with for a long time in the past. The real socio-economic situation has changed dramatically.

The former characteristics have lost the role they played in the days of classical capitalism. By the end of the 20th – beginning of the 21st century, new social strata appeared that occupied a specific place (especially the service sector), which led to a significant change in their role in social production and ways of obtaining public wealth. The problems of guaranteed work, social and everyday life related to achieving an acceptable level of well-being, health and confidence in the future have come to the fore.

In our opinion, the following classes (social communities) actually exist, which claim that they, being guided by their ideological attitudes, determine the face of modern Russian society.

First of all, it is the *ruling class* that possesses political and economic power in the country. This class is often called the elite, which, in our opinion, has no scientific and moral-ethical basis. By and large, it is focused on achieving those liberal values that are professed by the highest reaches of Western countries. They are joined by a cohort of service groups who, by word and deed, strive to prove loyalty to their masters. Many representatives of this class, especially the economic bloc, are closely connected with the West, where their wealth is stored and the banks they have created function. They often have the citizenship of these countries. It is clear that in many cases they are only nominal patriots of Russia, although they can make passionate statements, as well as the journalists of all stripes and colors who are in their pay. It is futile to expect that they will advocate for the state ideology. On the contrary, they react negatively to any regulatory role of the state, whether it is proposals for the introduction (revival) of strategic planning or the need for a state ideology. By the way, the official decision taken in 2018 on the implementation of strategic planning has not yet been implemented, because it is drowned in volumes of various developments, projects and recommendations. And the development of state ideology has been opposed by a set of long-known

spells: that it will be an attempt on democracy, on the suppression of human rights and freedoms, and even as a return of Stalinism. Therefore, most of them will not contribute to the normalization and necessary orientation of social consciousness.

There is another curious observation that I made when analyzing the oligarchs and their attendants. Most of these gatekeepers of business and power – inveterate liberals – virtually did not take part in real creative activity in the Soviet period. They did not work in production, practically never visited the Russian hinterland, had no business contacts with real participants in rough daily work, but they were regulars of metropolitan and chamber parties, all kinds of intrigues and claims to their specialness; they loved prestigious resorts and other places where they could get a pleasant rest. A smaller part of this group, although it was connected with production, was affected by another disease: they believed that in the Soviet Union they were not recognized as outstanding persons and were not promoted according to their “talent”. Therefore, all of them – the former and the latter – found a different way to move up the career ladder, first within the framework of democratic movements in the Soviet Union and then in government and business structures in post-Soviet Russia. But obviously, this particular group, having dissociated itself from the “cursed Soviet past”, has become a breeding ground for betrayal, corruption, and disregard for national interests. They have never represented and will not represent the interests of the people due to their careerist, purely personal selfish intentions.

Let me remind you of an interesting historical fact. When the first election to the State Duma was held in 1994, liberal figures represented by Gaidar’s Democratic Choice of Russia party, being confident of their absolute victory, organized a live broadcast on television on the day of voting about the current election results. You could see the faces of the participants of the broadcast when the first messages, starting from the Far Eastern

regions, shocked them: they were supported by an insignificant minority. At first, their comments were soothing – they said when it came to “real regions”, everything would change. And then there was Krasnoyarsk on the air, and the results were the same there. And they decided to stop the show, because the shock paralyzed them – how come people did not support their wonderful ideas that they carried out in their politics? It was at this time that advocate of liberalism Yu. Karyakin exclaimed: “Russia, you have become stupid!” They could not understand and even imagine why people responded with downright ingratitude to their eagerness to make a difference and improve the life in Russia. In the future, the attitude toward liberal figures only worsened, they did not get into the State Duma. The result of their relationship with the people can be described in the words of the poet and writer Naum Korzhavin: “Liberals believed that the people should love them only because they are liberals. But it didn’t work out. The people did not support them. And that’s why liberals started calling them redneck”.

All this points to the conclusion that the ruling class and its servants were not able and cannot express the main interests of social consciousness, and their ideology is a vestige of the fading historical past.

Speaking about the next social group, the so-called *middle class*, I can say it began to be used to name those people who had a guaranteed income that allowed them not only to meet basic needs, but also to claim additional benefits (bank accounts and securities, various types of housing, recreation, including abroad, payment for health preservation, providing their children with education abroad, etc.). However, it soon became clear that the middle class is very heterogeneous and its representatives have different opportunities to maintain their status and well-being. Therefore, supporters of this terminology have introduced strange and exotic names “upper middle”, “mid-middle” and “lower

middle” layers of this class. As for attempts to define their worldview, the content and essence of their social consciousness and orientation in life, sociological studies have shown that they represent a kaleidoscope of beliefs that cannot be brought to a single denominator. And the well-being of this class, especially the so-called lower middle class, turned out to be in question, which led to a significant reduction in the number of its representatives first in the crisis of 2008–2009, then in the crisis of 2013–2014 and, finally, during the pandemic. In reality, the liberals’ hopes that the middle class will form the backbone of the ruling regime, as is the case in the West, have not been implemented in Russia. In fact, this conclusion in Russia was not confirmed in any way – the middle class people were part of different political parties, a significant share of its representatives occupied a neutral position, which was especially evident by its (non) participation in most election campaigns.

One of the limited ideas about the middle class consists in an unsolvable question: what part of the population comprises this class. In the 2000s, some sociologists claimed that the middle class included up to 40–45% of the working population. According to RIA Novosti researchers, based on statistics from 2021–2022, only 11.5% of families belong to this class. Then a reasonable question arises: to what extent this class can express the social consciousness of the whole people and whether it can have a unified worldview, given its huge differentiation in income and different political orientations. And the definition itself is suggestive: according to researchers, the middle class is considered to be “working people with labor incomes that allow them to purchase expensive property (housing, cars), as well as having a relatively high level of current consumption” (at least two subsistence minimums per person after payment of mandatory taxes and loans (let me remind you that the average subsistence level in the Russian Federation since June 2022 is almost 14 thousand rubles per capita).

An attempt to consider the problem from the standpoint of the class division of society, which is based on grouping all people according to the principle of distributive (consumer) relations, does not help to find an answer to the question of who represents the Russian social consciousness. The ongoing attempts to characterize such social formations as bureaucracy, officialdom, power structures, business groups and others do not allow us to determine the role and place of each of them in terms of their impact on the stability of social consciousness, on their contribution to the formation of their own worldview.

A review of the currently prevailing ideas about the socio-class structure of Russian society and the main targets of classes still does not answer the question of WHO determines the essence and content of social consciousness in Russia and whose ideas, needs and interests should underlie the state ideology.

Who actually defines the face of modern Russian society?

To answer this question, in our opinion, it is necessary to consider the *social situation* of Russians and what *worldview orientations* exist in modern Russia.

As for the social situation, a more careful and thorough analysis of sociological data has led to the conclusion that the current socio-class structure of society is dominated by segments of the population, social communities and groups that exist in conditions of great uncertainty. Moreover, they consist not only of workers and peasants, but also employees, intellectuals, service sector workers and a number of other social niches. This uncertainty and instability of the social situation is due to the fact that, according to All-Russian studies conducted by the Russian State University for the Humanities in 2018–2022, a significant part of the population: a) do not have employment contracts (for example, up to 30% of all employed in construction and services); b) up to 10% has a limited term of

employment agreements (from 2–3 months to 1 year); c) have unstable wages, “envelope” wages, according to 28% of respondents; d) are deprived of social guarantees in whole or in part (there is no pay for vacation, sick leave, forced downtime, etc.; up to 40%); e) do not participate in solving the problems of their organization (up to 80–85%); f) do not see prospects in the future (up to 70%). In our opinion, the presence of these characteristics in the predominant part of the working population should be called the *precariat* (from Latin: unstable, non-guaranteed). Of course, these indicators of disorder and limitation relate to different socio-professional groups in different ways. Some workers have several named traits at the same time, while others have only one or two characteristics; this allows us to call them candidates for the precariat. However, in general, these layers and groups, according to various estimates, cover from 50 to 75% of the economically active population (Bobkov et al., 2018). It means that these communities and groups largely represent the face of the modern socio-class structure of Russian society.

But what are they?

To answer this question, it is necessary to know the reasons for the emergence of this class, how and in what way the groups of unstable and non-guaranteed labor were formed. In our opinion, they arose under the influence of two contradictory processes.

On the one hand, the developing economy requires continuous improvement of technological processes, which often radically change the production algorithm, meaning and principles of professional activity of the worker. And this, in turn, requires the restructuring and flexibility of the recruitment and use of labor, the involvement of specialists of a different profile and other qualifications and/or the retraining of the workforce. In such circumstances, the employer was often not interested in hiring workforce on a permanent basis. Objective conditions of the constantly improving

technological processes prompted the employer to resort to limited, short-term, temporary use of labor, which has become a characteristic feature of large enterprises (organizations) and medium and small businesses.

On the other hand, this objective need entails huge social costs, infringement of the rights and guarantees of employees: they are fired, transferred to a reduced working day; their wages are cut; they do not have a guaranteed paid vacation and sick leave. And most importantly – in fact, they are thrown to the mercy of fate. In real life, the principle so beloved by our liberals began to prevail: a person is responsible for their own life, and if they do not know how to get settled in it, let them blame themselves. At the same time, the employer and the state do not spend much effort to help such employees to get settled in life again, preserve and/or modernize their professional potential and social ties. But these people, who mostly have educational and professional potential, want to be useful to society, to maintain the previously achieved standard of living and quality of life, to have guarantees for their personal well-being and that of their children.

But since they form the relative majority of the country’s population, its face, it is they who determine the essence and content of social consciousness. Thus, we will take the next step and analyze the current worldview of the working Russian population (*Table*).

According to the analysis of the data, there are many ideological orientations in political and spiritual life in modern Russia. Two orientations, socialist and national-patriotic, prevail. These figures correlate with the approximate number of people we have described as the precariat. Moreover, in the real consciousness of people, these two orientations are often difficult to separate. As for the socialist orientation, it is obvious that even 30 years after the defeat of the Soviet Union, despite the crisis of the ideas of socialism and communism,

What are your political views? (%)

Views	Year			Sector					
	2018	2019	2022	Construction	Transport	Trade, consumer services	Industry	Agriculture	Science
Left (socialist, communist)	22.5	25.2	24.3	27.7	26.3	21.7	20.0	28.0	21.0
Right-wing (liberal)	14.5	14.9	16.6	13.7	18.0	13.0	23.0	13.7	28.0
Patriotic, national	36.8	24.2	32.5	26.0	26.3	20.3	29.7	18.7	29.0
Monarchical	1.2	1.2	1.3	0.7	2.3	0.7	1.7	1.0	2.0
Religious (Christian, Muslim, etc.)	5.0	9.1	7.3	8.3	6.3	12.7	4.7	11.7	2.0
Others (please, name what)	1.5	–	1.8	–	–	–	13.7	11.3	13.0
I don't have any	18.6	18.9	–	18.3	15.7	22.7	–	–	–
Did not answer	–	6.4	16.3	5.3	5.0	9.0	7.3	15.7	5.0

Source: All-Russian sociological surveys conducted in 2018–2020 in six sectors of the national economy and culture by sociologists of the Russian State University for the Humanities and the Center for Social Forecasting and Marketing (for more information, see: Toshchenko Zh.T. (Ed.). (2020). *Prekariat: stanovlenie novogo klassa* [The Precariat: the Formation of a New Class: Collective Monograph]. Moscow: Tsentr sotsial'nogo prognozirovaniya i marketinga.; Toshchenko Zh.T. (Ed.). (2021). *Prekarnaya zanyatost': istoki, kriterii, osobennosti* [Precarious Employment: Origins, Criteria, Features: Collective Monograph]. Moscow: Ves' mir.).

a socialist worldview continues to exist in modern Russia. This ideology is still there; moreover, it tends to be further preserved and spread even more widely. It continues to exist, as it embodies a century-old and even a thousand-year-old dream of a just state, as the Soviet Union, with all the ups and down of its development, was in the minds of these population groups.

National-patriotic views currently represent a number of rather diverse socio-political orientations – from the ideas of traditionalism, the values of previous generations to various kinds of social-democratic and moral-ethical attitudes. In one way or another, they all advocate the preservation of historical and national-cultural values, their multiplication, fostering loyalty to the country, supporting traditions and customs in the lives of modern citizens, considering them a binding and moral force. However, we should recognize that those who fled abroad with the huge amounts of money they had stolen from their own country, and those who live in the criminal world, and those who are ready to join this ideology for the sake of receiving various dividends – all of them don the clothes of patriots. However,

representatives of these groups are unlikely to be included in the sample of specific studies, so we can conclude that this group is dominated by people who embody the civic qualities of loyalty and devotion to their country, its culture and lifestyle.

We should note that the social foundation of socialist and national-patriotic ideas has changed: industrial workers, peasants, intellectuals, service sector workers – neither of them represent something unified and homogeneous. They are fragmented; they work in various socio-economic conditions mediated by various forms of ownership. In our opinion, the social base of leftist and national-patriotic orientations and ideas is made up of precarious strata, which include large social groups living in a state of uncertainty about the stability of their current and future situation. It is these groups that are interested in the realization of socialist and patriotic ideas, which they consider the personification of a just society. Representatives of these groups do not oppose the existence of private forms of ownership; they advocate the establishment of social (but not leveling off) equality and, as a desired goal, social justice.

If we look at the data in the table, we see quite limited and even insignificant support for liberal ideas. It is noteworthy that the liberal ideology, although aimed at such externally attractive values as the development of democracy and ensuring human rights, implies a focus on turning the state into a “night watchman”, on the absolute, unconditional responsibility of each person for choosing their life path and competitiveness for survival in the present-day reality. Moreover, it is openly proclaimed, for example, by V. Inozemtsev (2011), that the “new inequality” cannot be considered unfair, since it is based not on coercion, but on the result of the actions of creative personalities.

It is revealing that the social foundation of liberalism has significantly decreased over the years of existence of the new Russia. The people rejected the right-wing parties in their desire to seize legislative and representative bodies of power. Both former and existing leaders of liberalism, starting with E. Gaidar, have been debunked in public opinion. However, despite the lack of popular support, the economic ideas of liberalism remain at the state level. It was their existence and continued implementation at the official level that led (along with other factors) to the stagnation of Russia’s socio-economic development, the growth of social inequality, an increase in social tension, and the formation of the trauma society.

The limitations and even futility of the ideas of liberalism became obvious to the RF President when, in an interview with *The Financial Times* newspaper in June 2019, the role and importance of liberalism in the life of the whole world and individual countries was assessed as low. Moreover, the President emphasized that the problem is not so much that liberals and their ideas exist, but that “they aggressively impose their point of view on the overwhelming majority”.

The analysis of the social situation and worldview of Russians shows that it is their needs, value orientations and interests that the state

should proceed from when building economic and social policy. This is all the more important because, as sociological data show, most representatives of the precariat are proponents of a strong state; they advocate for strengthening Russian society and want to participate in its improvement.

And while such orientations and attitudes prevail in the social consciousness, the state ideology should be built precisely on these grounds that actually pursue such social and personal goals as the establishment of social justice, the possibility of a sustainable level of well-being and respect for human dignity. Otherwise, the state, represented by the precarious strata that constitute *a significant mass of the able-bodied population*, loses support from the *intellectual strata of society, owners of huge labor and creative potential, owners of educational and professional capital*.

Social significance of social consciousness

Speaking about the importance of the orientation of the state toward social consciousness, I would like to recall the following: the Bolsheviks won in October 1917 not as a result of a conspiracy, as liberal authors write, and not as a result of the Bolsheviks’ deceit or cunning, but as a result of the fact that the only party – the Bolshevik party – advocated what the majority of the people wanted: peace, factories to workers, land to peasants. That is why the Bolsheviks were supported during the civil war and foreign intervention; the people were inspired by plans for the reconstruction of society, from the electrification of the country and elimination of illiteracy to five-year plans for the development of the national economy. The fact that this course was correct was confirmed by the heroic and tragic experience of the Great Patriotic War. In this regard, taking into account and understanding the basic attitudes and orientations of social consciousness have been and will be the key to the existence of the corresponding political system and its ideology.

That is why the modern state ideology should be based not on some abstract wishes expressed by some wise person from above or from the outside, but on what the majority of the people want and strive for, and, of course, take into account the interests of other social classes and groups. That is, I emphasize, we need to decide on the main actor of the historical process, to know what is happening in its mind, and to build state policy accordingly.

I have written an article titled “The People Are Always Right, Even When They Are Wrong” (Toshchenko, 2020). Thus I wanted to express that one cannot ignore the orientations and attitudes prevailing among the people, even if they do not coincide or are at variance with the conclusions of the ruling strata who would like to lead the people to their goals. In such a situation, the urgent question is to understand why and for what reasons the people have different needs and interests. And only then will it become clear what has to be done in order to adjust the policy and actually ensure the existence of a social contract with the people.

In my opinion, the second reason pointed out by S.Yu. Glazyev – the monetary and financial front – in addition to the purely banking and financial characteristics has the most direct relation to the consciousness and the corresponding ideology. At the front, where liberal-oriented figures predominate, an economic policy is professed and pursued that is fully oriented toward the implementation of ideological attitudes that take into account the interests of only this group rather than the majority of people. And, judging by their real behavior, they are trying to

carry out their goals one way or another, by ignoring and manipulating, to force people to agree with their projects and plans. But in conditions when the precarious strata continue to increase, including at the expense of the middle class, it becomes increasingly obvious that without taking into account their needs and interests, it is impossible to achieve success in ensuring genuine economic, political, social and cultural independence. The economic policy carried out by the liberals in power and expressed in purely special terminology still remains an instrument of the struggle for the consciousness, for the imposed ideology.

In conclusion, we can say that the situation after February 24 highlighted the confrontation of various ideological orientations and attitudes, more specifically and clearly showing whose interests are reflected by the opponents and supporters of the ongoing special military operation. At the same time, attention should be paid to the fact that the majority of the people – almost 80% – support this action, while a relatively small group, especially those who have fled abroad (who have the means to live there), is a loud and narcissistic mass following the path of confrontation with the abandoned homeland.

All this ultimately allows us to draw the following conclusion: since the main features of social consciousness are represented by the majority of the people who have the features of a precarious social position, they should be taken into account to the maximum extent in the state policy and its ideology.

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