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The Left's Broken Clock

By Boris Kagarlitsky

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Someone once likened the political positions of the extreme left with a broken clock that never shows the right time. But as everyone knows, a broken clock shows the correct time with astronomical precision twice every 24 hours, something a functioning clock can never do because it is always at least a little bit fast or slow.

In a similar manner, the radical left's ideological clock was right on the spot during the recent period of political turmoil. They cried out for a change of leadership and for the masses to arise and boycott the elections. And when tens of thousands of people turned out for demonstrations, which caused the politicians to shake with fear, our national leaders suddenly became supporters of moderation and compromise.

That ideological shift reflects changes in society. Not long ago, the opposition could make any statement, no matter how extreme, and rest assured that it would have absolutely no effect on the country's political life. Now, they realize that the time for children's games has ended and that matters should be handled with greater maturity.

But it is not enough to simply switch toys to become a true adult. A serious attitude toward politics means taking responsibility for your words and actions and having the ability to analyze problems, develop a program of action and work systematically with your electorate. It must be understood that there are no miraculous one-time solutions, and that it is useless and even dangerous to grasp at the first opportunity presented. Sound principles and consistency are of value not only among radical youth, but also in politics.

The newly matured radical youth are approaching the idea of political pragmatism with the same infantile and irresponsible attitude that they previously applied to the idea of revolution. The December State Duma elections and the upcoming presidential election provide radicals of all stripes with numerous opportunities to prove their pragmatism and maturity.

As officials experience a disastrous loss of reputation, they suddenly become interested in dialogue with informal political groups, the existence of which they barely acknowledged until recently. The result is that both sides are rushing into each other's arms. The only problem is that there is no consensus among the radicals who have come to their senses concerning which of the corrupt members of the political elite to adopt as a patron.

While well-known anarchist writer Dmitry Zhvania fills the Internet with calls to collaborate with Just Russia head Sergei Mironov, Left Front leader Sergei Udaltsov has signed an agreement with Communist Party head Gennady Zyuganov. Every new statement in this process is accompanied by a fresh scandal.

Meanwhile, other less influential radicals run back and forth between the two opposition candidates deciding which is offering the best terms, and those who lose out stare dully at the hour hand on the broken clock and curse the conciliatory mood and the general decline of morals in society.

Unfortunately, it seems these people will be lifelong juveniles — some charming and cute, others aggressive as teenagers so often are. In either case, however, they will never grow up.

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