

Plenary session
DIALOGUE OF CULTURES AND CIVILIZATIONS
IN THE NEW EMERGING REALITY

April 12, 2024

*A. P. Petrov Theater and Concert Hall, St. Petersburg University of the Humanities
and Social Sciences*

DISCUSSION

Speakers:

A. S. ZAPESOTSKY, *Rector of St. Petersburg University of the Humanities and Social Sciences, Corresponding Member of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Member of the Presidium and Deputy Chairman of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Academician of the Russian Academy of Education, Doctor of Cultural Sciences, Professor, Honored Scientist of the Russian Federation, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the St. Petersburg Intelligentsia Congress*

I. O. ABRAMOVA, *Director of the Institute for African Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Member of the Presidium of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Corresponding Member of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Doctor of Economic Sciences, Professor*

I. I. BUZOVSKY, *Deputy Minister of Information of the Republic of Belarus, Candidate of Sociological Sciences*

O. Yu. VASILYEVA, *President of the Russian Academy of Education, Academician of the Russian Academy of Education, Doctor of Historical Sciences, Professor*

E. G. DRAPEKO, *First Deputy Chairman of the State Duma Committee of the Russian Federation on Culture, Deputy of the State Duma of the Russian Federation, Candidate of Sociological Sciences, Honored Artist of the RSFSR, Professor of St. Petersburg University of the Humanities and Social Sciences (1994–1999)*

M. V. ZAKHAROVA, *Director of the Information and Press Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Russian Federation, Candidate of Historical Sciences*

A. CROOKE, *Founder and Director of the Conflicts Forum analytical center (the UK)*

A. S. MAKSIMOV, *Chairman of the Committee on Science and Higher School of St. Petersburg*

V. V. NAUMKIN, *Scientific Director of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Academician of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Doctor of Historical Sciences, Professor*

M. B. PIOTROVSKY, *General Director of the State Hermitage Museum, Academician of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Doctor of Historical Sciences, Professor, Honorary Citizen of St. Petersburg, Honorary Doctor of St. Petersburg University the of Humanities and Social Sciences*

O. ROQUEPLO, *Professor at Sorbonne University, Doctor of Historical Sciences, Doctor of Political Sciences (France)*

N. V. STARIKOV, *writer, journalist, politician*

A. TRIGUNAYAT, *Ambassador of India to Jordan and Libya, High Commissioner to Malta (2012–2016), Honorary Fellow of the Vivekananda International Foundation Think Tank*

V. A. CHERESHNEV, *Deputy President and Member of the Presidium of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Academician of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Scientific Director of the Institute of Immunology and Physiology of the Ural Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Doctor of Medical Sciences, Professor, Honorary Doctor of St. Petersburg University of the Humanities and Social Sciences*

M. V. SHMAKOV, *Member of the State Council of the Russian Federation, Chairman of the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia, Professor Emeritus of St. Petersburg University of the Humanities and Social Sciences*

A. V. YAKOVENKO, *Rector of the Diplomatic Academy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian*

Federation (2005–2011), Ambassador of the Russian Federation to the UK (2011–2019), Doctor of Law, Professor

A. S. ZAPESOTSKY: — Dear friends, according to the established tradition, we open the Readings with a speech by Mikhail Borisovich Piotrovsky. The fact is that after the passing of Dmitry Sergeevich Likhachev, Daniil Granin and I addressed the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin with a letter in which we asked to perpetuate the memory of the outstanding thinker and philosopher. In 2001, Vladimir Vladimirovich issued a Decree in which he instructed the St. Petersburg Intelligentsia Congress (Daniil Alexandrovich Granin and I were among its founders) and our University to hold International Likhachev Scientific Readings (previously, we annually held Science Days which were founded by Academician Likhachev). The Chairman of the Congress is Mikhail Borisovich Piotrovsky, so it is quite natural that the first word at the Likhachev Readings belongs to him.

So, the Director of the State Hermitage, Honorary Doctor of St. Petersburg University of the Humanities and Social Sciences Mikhail Borisovich Piotrovsky is invited to the podium.

M. B. PIOTROVSKY: — Dear friends, it is a great honor for me to open the next Likhachev Readings and a great pleasure to see you again in this hall. Many thanks to everyone who supports the spirit of the Likhachev Readings, the memory of the personality and legacy of Dmitry Sergeevich and the atmosphere of intellectual activity that he created and which continues to live within the walls of this wonderful University.

One of the most important documents developed by Academician Likhachev together with scientists from St. Petersburg University of the Humanities and Social Sciences is the Declaration of Cultural Rights. Today, in many aspects, it has become even more relevant than in the years when it was created.

Nowadays, there are military actions in many regions worldwide, due to which culture also suffers. In addition, there is a powerful global trend called “cancel of culture”, and the cancellation of Russian culture has become a part thereof. Museums are declared unnecessary and harmful, and the right to cultural borrowing is considered aggression, and not a lever for the development of culture. In this context, although the Declaration I mentioned has not yet become a regulatory document, it can become a powerful intellectual argument, which is why we must speak even louder about the rights of culture.

Dmitry Sergeevich Likhachev devoted a considerable part of his life to the protection of cultural heritage. Today, this activity is no less necessary than before — both because of the situation in the world in general, and due to the fact that we have to protect, for example, monuments of Christian culture in the Middle East, in particular in Syria. Here, in St. Petersburg, a heated debate continues about the new law regarding zones for the protection of cultural monuments. This law is of great importance not only for our city, but also for the whole of Russia, and for other countries, because all over the world they are currently thinking about how to preserve cultural heritage and at the same time not to erect barriers to the further development of the human environment, do not interfere with the coming of the future.

Not so long ago, the concept of cultural sovereignty became relevant in the global cultural life. What is it about? A multipolar world means not only the political sovereignty of countries, but also the sovereignty of cultures, which, nevertheless, must be combined with the global cultural unity. Such unity is necessary so that in further development the peoples of the world build their relations on the basis of mutual respect and understanding. On this path we need appropriate theory and philosophy, and for practical implementation we can turn to the experience of the Soviet Union, the United States of America, the European Union and other multicultural associations. It is clear that previous practices require rethinking taking into account new realities, and now the necessary solutions are being developed. I believe that our discussions within the current Likhachev Readings, for instance on

further economic and cultural cooperation of the BRICS member countries, will contribute to this. In Russia there are matrices that allow you to put forward your proposals and practices. One of these matrices is a museum. For example, the Hermitage, a real encyclopedia of global culture, written in Russian, is a clear example of the combination of national and world values. Also, yesterday I watched the new version of Alexander Nikolaevich Sokurov's film "The Sun". The film, as before, shows the life of the Japanese Emperor Hirohito in the last days of Second World War, just before the surrender, but the updated film has largely become an educational work about different cultures and cultural sovereignty, the consequence of which can be the unfolding or, conversely, cessation of military actions.

At the Hermitage we have recently implemented two projects that, we believe, Dmitry Sergeevich Likhachev would approve. The first is an exhibition of the artistic heritage of the Old Believers of Pomerania. This is a grandiose exhibition dedicated to the Vygov Old Believer Hermitage, the largest spiritual and cultural center of Pomerania. Among the exhibits, there are various types of Vygov art: icons, handwritten books, copper castings, wood carvings, etc. Academician Likhachev highly valued the spiritual history of pre-Petrine Russia. The second project is also an exhibition shown both in St. Petersburg and in Moscow; we prepared it together with our Moscow colleagues. This time, the exhibition is dedicated to the "Salons" of Denis Diderot, which is already related to the era of Enlightenment and world culture, which was also very important and valuable for Dmitry Likhachev. So, we are trying to do in all directions what would be interesting to one of the greatest Russian scientists and humanists.

I wish us all successful Likhachev Readings, interesting ideas and fruitful discussions.

A. S. ZAPESOTSKY: — Dear colleagues, several video cameras are installed in this hall, and a live television broadcast on the federal channel "Scientific Russia" is now going on. Of course, the audience of this channel is smaller than those where pop stars perform. But we are interested not so much in quantity as in quality. The

vast majority of viewers of “Scientific Russia” are doctors of science, and live broadcasts of forums of such a level as ours commonly attract 10–20 thousand people to the screens, and tens of thousands more will watch it in the recording. Of course, among them are not only doctors of science, but also candidates, graduate students, and simply people interested in science.

On behalf of one of the founders of the International Likhachev Scientific Readings — the Russian Academy of Sciences — I give the floor to the Deputy President of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Academician of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Honorary Doctor of our University Valery Aleksandrovich Chereshnev.

V. A. CHERESHNEV: — Dear colleagues, participants of the Likhachev Readings, let me greet you on behalf of the Presidium of the Russian Academy of Sciences and its President Gennady Yakovlevich Krasnikov.

Today is the 12th of April, Cosmonautics Day in Russia. On this day in 1961, for the first time in the history of mankind, a manned space flight was performed, which is an evidence of the enormous successes of domestic science, including scientists of the USSR Academy of Sciences, the legal successor of which is the Russian Academy of Sciences.

This year, the Likhachev Readings are dedicated to the BRICS international association as a space for cultural dialogue. In this regard, I would like to say a few words about how our cooperation with our colleagues from China, one of the BRICS countries, is progressing. Today China is a superpower. A year and a half ago, in October 2022, the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of China took place, at which the country’s leadership proclaimed two new tasks. The first is that by 2035 China should become a leader in the innovation process, the second is that by 2050 it should become the largest scientific and technological power by most indicators. No one doubts that this will happen.

This autumn marks the 75th anniversary of our diplomatic relations with the People’s Republic of China, which were established in 1949. Almost simultaneously,

the Chinese Academy of Sciences was created, and the Chinese took the experience of the USSR as the basis for organizing science in their country. In organizational terms, the Chinese Academy of Sciences has actually become a copy of the USSR Academy of Sciences — president, vice-presidents, branches, regional divisions, etc. But these days we note a “small” difference: if in China 2.4 % of GDP is allocated to science, then Russia has only 1.1 % of GDP. So, the comparison here is not in our favor. But we cooperate, and work together in many areas. In recent years, Chinese science has become a world leader. We hold joint conferences and congresses and create research centers. Thus, the Russian-Chinese Science and Education Center has been operating for four years. The coronavirus pandemic prompted us to join forces, and together we studied prevention methods and new treatments.

Nevertheless, the main thing now is to ensure a safe future for humanity. Meanwhile, all forecasts indicate that the 21st century will most likely become the century of viral infections. The reasons are environmental problems, unprecedented anthropogenic pressure, and air pollution. Fires and floods, in addition to direct damage, have long-term consequences. Thus, when large areas are flooded, the microflora of animals and plants passes to humans. If previously it took 100 years for an infection to turn from zoonotic to anthroponotic, now this happens within a few years. Zoonoses, anthroozoonoses and anthroponoses threaten human health and life. Well-known examples are HIV and COVID-19. HIV has been known for more than 90 years, but coronavirus has become an absolute anthroponosis in just 20 years.

Humanity must show determination and take certain actions to avoid further deadly threats posed by the virus. Therefore, currently many people remember the teachings of Academician Vernadsky about the noosphere. From the technosphere that mankind has created over the past 250 years, we must return to the biosphere. Dmitry Sergeevich Likhachev said that the past is a blueprint for the future. Therefore, we must learn to look at the past in order to take positive and useful things therefrom and henceforth not make mistakes that we made out of ignorance.

Vasily Nikitich Tatishchev, an outstanding Russian statesman and political figure, a member of Peter I’s circle, who wrote “Russian History”, asserted three

centuries ago: “All actions arise from intelligence or stupidity”. Therefore, he came to the conclusion, “teaching” and “enlightenment” are necessary. And we always come to St. Petersburg with great interest and joy to take part in the Likhachev Readings at the University of the Humanities and Social Sciences: they are invariably imbued with enlightened reason. This important and wonderful tradition was started by Dmitry Sergeevich Likhachev and successfully continued by Alexander Sergeevich Zapesotsky.

A. S. ZAPESOTSKY: — Thank you, Valery Aleksandrovich. The floor is given to member of the State Council of the Russian Federation, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of our University Mikhail Viktorovich Shmakov.

M. V. SHMAKOV: — Good afternoon, dear colleagues! The Likhachev Readings, which are held at St. Petersburg University of the Humanities and Social Sciences for the 22nd time, invariably attract the attention of the entire country and the President of Russia. Therefore, let me read out Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin’s greeting to the participants of the XXII International Likhachev Scientific Readings.

“Dear friends,

I greet you on the occasion of the opening of the XXII International Likhachev Scientific Readings. Your meetings, which annually bring together famous scientists, cultural and artistic figures, politicians and diplomats from various countries in St. Petersburg, provide a good opportunity for meaningful, constructive discussions. Moreover, the agenda of the Readings invariably includes a wide range of issues relating to the main trends in the development of modern society — both at the national and international levels.

The current Readings are dedicated to the place and role of BRICS on the world stage. The choice of such a topic is especially relevant in light of Russia’s chairmanship in this authoritative and influential association, which ensures effective joint work of participating states in many areas based on the principles of equality, respect and mutual consideration of interests.

I hope that you will thoroughly discuss the prospects for the development of BRICS at a high expert level, and that your ideas and initiatives will help us to develop new forms and areas of mutually beneficial multilateral cooperation — for the benefit of our countries and peoples, in the interests of building a more just, safe and prosperous world order.

I wish you fruitful communication and all the best”.

Even 10 years ago, we talked about the transition to multipolarity as a possible and most likely trend in the development of the entire human community. Today this is the reality with which we have to correlate all our decisions and actions. The transition to a multipolar world is accelerating and intensifying, and one of the most important factors in this process is the military operations that are taking place today in different countries. The hotbeds of conflict are localized in Ukraine and the Middle East, and we hope that they will not escalate into a large-scale world war.

Meanwhile, a number of states recently celebrated a milestone — the 120th anniversary of the formation of the Entente — the first ever military coalition of several countries. Today there is also a serious division into coalitions. 54 states oppose Russia and wish us defeat on the battlefield, but the rest, and their majority, even if not support our country in this confrontation, then at least do not agree with the confrontation that these 54 countries are imposing on us. Their hostile attitude towards Russia which has become the cause of many wars over several hundred years, pursues the same goals: to continue their colonial policy, “take away and divide”. In the past 30–50 years, we treated their possible aggression as a theoretical assumption, but today we are faced with it in practice. Unfortunately, for our country, what is happening is a deadly threat, and we have no other way but to win and defend our sovereignty and right to life.

As for BRICS, it is indeed a growing and already very powerful center for the development of the world economy and politics (this year under the chairmanship of Russia). Trade unions in our country are taking an active part in the preparation of the XII BRICS trade union forum which will take place in September this year in Sochi. We have a special responsibility for carrying it out according to the planned program.

But the main thing is that we are on the verge of creating a large international trade union alliance, BRICS. It is likely that this alliance will unite trade unions from all 10 countries currently included in BRICS, as well as, possibly, those that would like to join this international organization in the near future. So, we have a lot of work ahead of us, and I am confident that we will succeed.

A. S. ZAPESOTSKY: — Thank you, Mikhail Viktorovich. Dear colleagues, I remind you that one of the co-founders of the Likhachev Readings is the Russian Academy of Education. It is with great pleasure that I give the floor to the President of RAE, Professor Olga Yuryevna Vasilyeva.

O. Yu. VASILYEVA: — Dear colleagues, following a good tradition, this year the St. Petersburg University of the Humanities and Social Sciences again hosts leading Russian scientists, specialists, public figures, politicians and diplomats. The Likhachev Readings are not only the coordination of common approaches to the problems of the development of civilization and the dialogue of cultures, but, primarily, practical assistance in the development of higher education in our country. It has become a platitude that we live in a rapidly changing world, and the speed of change is increasing year by year. But in this frantic pace of life, we began to understand more and more clearly that the most important thing for us is to preserve our identity and traditional values. As a natural consequence, the education system comes to the forefront, which, starting from kindergarten, plays a leading role, first of all, in the socialization of the younger generation, future citizens. Education is more closely connected with the civilizational model of society than all other spheres of life, which is why approaches to the targets of educational systems in various countries at different historical stages differ so much. We know that civilizations can collapse, but if the values and traditions of education remain intact, then revival becomes possible. History knows other examples when civilization perishes precisely because, despite the general apparent prosperity, value guidelines that always underlie education are lost. Therefore, today, more than ever before, we must

consider the domestic education system primarily from the point of view of historical experience and the goals that we set for the country. This means that we must approach with caution those innovations that are based on principles that are alien to us.

The most obvious example of our mistakes in education is the transition to the Bologna system. I remember a forum held several years ago by lawyers in the field of education. Truly highly qualified specialists took part in it, and I asked them the question: “When we began to introduce the Bologna system into our education, was this decision given a qualified legal assessment?” It turned out that no, there was no such assessment, but the most surprising thing is that it does not exist today.

Now we are reviving our traditional education system, which has worked successfully for many decades. By the way, I would like to remind you that before European countries began to join the Bologna process, the Association of European Universities objected and put forward arguments against this. We must draw conclusions not only from our own, but also from other people’s experience, that is, make carefully thought-out, balanced strategic decisions that will contribute to the improvement of the Russian higher education system. Such decisions are vital for us.

The urgent tasks of higher education today are the training of highly qualified personnel who will meet the long-term needs of the country, primarily economic ones. In May 2023, the President of Russia signed a decree on the implementation of a pilot project for a gradual return to the traditional model of higher education. The transition period will last until 2026, that is, for three years.

Let me remind you of the key points of the project. The bachelor’s degree program is being replaced by basic higher education with a duration of study of four to six years, depending on the needs of the industry. We must turn to past experience, which contains brilliant examples of success. Thus, in the USSR, the training of teaching staff for secondary schools was carried out by teacher institutes in which training lasted four years and six months; in some specialties — four years and eight months. And only starting from 1958, when a graduate of a pedagogical university

acquired two specialties in his/her diploma, the period of study increased to five years, and then to five and a half.

The master's degree program is being transformed into specialized higher education. On the one hand, our students at this time have the opportunity to enter science, on the other hand, they acquire skills and knowledge that are in demand primarily in economics. The duration of training is from one to two years, and only in medical specialties it is longer. Now we are at the stage of searching for an effective structure of our national higher education system, which, naturally, also faces the task of modernizing the content.

The organization of higher education at all its stages must be treated very responsibly. Thus, the training of engineering and technological personnel, all its components — fundamental, practical and educational — must be supported by connections with the employer. We must ensure high level of professionalism of university graduates, and most importantly, instill high civic responsibility in them.

The Russian Academy of Education is the successor to the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences of the RSFSR, which was created in October 1943. More than a year and a half remained before the victorious May, but the country understood that it was necessary to prepare highly qualified people — teachers for all sectors, primarily for the economy. A full-fledged revival of the activities of the “big” academy occurred in 1946, after Stalin's famous speech within the walls of the Bolshoi Theater, in which he emphasized the importance of science and announced the focus on the nuclear industry development. However, such development required specialists, and they had to be trained, which is why the education system became the most important priority of the state policy.

In memory of the president of one of the leading Russian universities, Lyudmila Alekseevna Verbitskaya, who headed St. Petersburg State University for many years, this year the Russian Academy of Education established the “Mentor in Science” medal to be awarded to our colleagues from all fields of knowledge who work with students and postgraduate students for at least 10 years. Thus, within the framework of the state assignment, we were actively involved in the process of

educational activities in higher educational institutions. We consider this approach to be competent, because education is not only a science, but also, to a great extent, an art. Only by combining our efforts can we together achieve the results we talk about so much.

In conclusion, I would like to once again thank Alexander Sergeevich Zapesotsky and this wonderful University for the opportunity to take part in the scientific readings and once again emphasize that today in the domestic educational policy, with our original guidelines, we must unite the efforts of practitioners, scientists, mentors, psychologists in order to strengthen the very positions to which we are currently moving, and most importantly, to translate all our intentions into reality, because the future of Russia depends on the young people who are now receiving education in our universities.

On March 14, the Presidium of the Russian Academy of Education decided to award Alexander Sergeevich Zapesotsky with the Cyril and Methodius Medal of the Russian Academy of Education. It is awarded for special merits which we have formulated as follows: “For significant contribution to the development of scientific and educational activities”. Dear Alexander Sergeevich, I ask you to accept this award which is important for us.

A. S. ZAPESOTSKY: — Dear friends, I am very pleased to receive the Cyril and Methodius Medal of the Russian Academy of Education. Although I am already a holder of a number of high awards of the Russian Academy of Education (K. D. Ushinsky Medal, Gold Medal of the RAE, etc.), this medal is of particular importance for me.

The fact is that in the early 1990s, during a very difficult period for the country and higher education, employees of our University approached me with an unusual request, namely, to consecrate St. Petersburg University of the Humanities and Social Sciences. I was raised by a pioneer organization and the Young Communist League, worked for a long time at the State Optical Institute where I was engaged in the development of defense space technology, and generally understood the laws of the

physical structure of the world. And when I was offered to consecrate the University, I personally was not ready for this, but I followed the advice because I saw how difficult life was for people.

We invited a wonderful man to consecrate the University. Later I became friends with him, and later on I baptized my daughter and grandson with him. It was Father Bogdan, the dean of the St. Nicholas Cathedral. After the touching consecration ceremony which took place on May 24, 1992, the university's affairs improved: we completed the construction having invested 30 million dollars earned by St. Petersburg University of the Humanities and Social Sciences in the 1990s.

The path of our educational institution to the University that it is today began in 1926, when it was founded by trade unions. In 1948, Joseph Stalin being the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR, signed a decree that granted our trade union university the right to issue state diplomas. I must say that the more I think about the figure of Stalin, the more I understand his special significance and greatness in the Russian history.

The date of May 24 was not chosen by chance. This is the day of the founders of Russian writing, Saints Equal-to-the-Apostles Cyril and Methodius, an all-Russian holiday. At the suggestion of Academician D. S. Likhachev, since 1993 we have been celebrating this day as the beginning of a new stage in the life of the trade union university — in the status of a University. In accordance with the Likhachev's concept, the celebration program necessarily includes an exhibition of scientific works of our team and a scientific conference which Dmitry Sergeevich thought of as "Science Days at St. Petersburg University of the Humanities and Social Sciences" (later renamed into Likhachev Readings). That is, we have found our way uniting believers and non-believers.

I consider it my duty to say that not only the Russian Academy of Education, but also the Russian Academy of Sciences did not ignore the merits of our institution. Recently, the President of the Russian Academy of Sciences G. Ya. Krasnikov noted our achievements with a Certificate of Honor from the Russian Academy of Sciences.

Now I would like to invite to the podium a representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, which is a co-founder of the Likhachev Readings, a Member of the Board of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, the rector of the Diplomatic Academy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Professor Alexander Vladimirovich Yakovenko.

Before Alexander Vladimirovich begins his speech, I would like to say a few words about him. A. V. Yakovenko has been collaborating with our University for more than 20 years, since 2003. During this period, he held various positions: he was Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation (2005–2011), Ambassador of the Russian Federation to Great Britain (2011–2019), and is now rector of the Diplomatic Academy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. In order to participate in the Likhachev Readings, each time he had to write a special note to the minister in order to be released to Russia. If he could not attend the Readings, he participated in them remotely, sending his reports. That is, Alexander Vladimirovich did not betray the Likhachev Readings in any of his positions. And we are glad that today he is here in person.

A. V. YAKOVENKO: — Dear friends, the Likhachev Readings have always been related to foreign policy and diplomacy. That is why in those distant years when this forum was established, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs took an active part in this important undertaking.

But Alexander Sergeevich did not mention one more important point. Since 2008, together with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, the Diplomatic Program of Readings “International Dialogue of Cultures” has been carried out, within the framework of which ambassadors of foreign states speak expressing their views on the most important issues of our time. Foreign ambassadors accredited in Moscow fuel the intellectual thought of this scientific forum.

In light of the theme of the XXII Likhachev Readings — “BRICS as a new space for dialogue of cultures and civilizations” — one can recall how many future

BRICS members presented their ideas on this platform. And we at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs benefited greatly from this intellectual contribution.

In my speech I will highlight two thoughts that are one way or another related to foreign policy.

The first one is that on March 31, 2023, Russian President V. V. Putin approved the new Concept of Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation. The main thing in this concept is that for the first time Russia was defined as a distinctive state-civilization. If translated from the language of foreign policy into normal Russian, this means that we will no longer integrate into the Western coordinate system — something that we have been doing for 30 years, succumbing to a certain romanticism. We thought that the West would change and as a result a more equitable system of international relations would be created. But this, unfortunately, did not happen. And everything that we see today in Ukraine is evidence of this.

I must say that the Foreign Policy Concept pays great attention to the dialogue of cultures. I also want to emphasize that we do not reject the European heritage. The concept clearly speaks of the deep historical ties of Russian culture with traditional European culture, which is by no means the same as Western civilization or Romano-Germanic Europe.

The second thought is directly related to foreign policy and international relations — the world today is divided into two parts: the global majority (about 140 countries) to which Russia counts itself, and the global Western minority (about 50 states), mainly NATO countries, the European Union, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, etc.

What is the difference between the politics of the global majority and the minority?

The first difference is the attitude towards international law. The global majority favors the development and compliance with international law. This means that agreements must be developed jointly and everyone must follow them. As for the world minority, the Anglo-Saxon formula was invented — a world based on rules. Its essence lies in the fact that a small group of Western states invents rules that are then

imposed on other countries. The rules can change at any moment, as we can see in many examples nowadays.

The second difference is the attitude towards private property. The paradox is that the countries of the international majority advocate respect for private property rights. While the global minority — Western countries — do not respect this right, which is manifested in the expropriation of assets not only of our country, but also of Afghanistan, Syria, and Venezuela. They can take away money at any time, not only from the state, but also from individuals.

The third difference is the attitude towards traditional values. The world's majority countries respect traditional values. They may be different, but the basis is always respect. While Western countries, unfortunately, do not show such respect. And what we are seeing today in Western Europe is, by and large, a bacchanalia.

These elements are important for Russian foreign policy. And the issues that are being discussed today within BRICS are a reflection of these trends. I look forward with great enthusiasm to the BRICS summit in Kazan this year. From my point of view, the key issue that will be discussed there, in addition to political aspects, is the creation of an alternative financial system in the world. The topic is not a simple one, but it is at the heart of the big changes that can happen.

A. S. ZAPESOTSKY: — Our guest from Belarus will continue the speeches. I must say that the Belarusian delegation at these Likhachev Readings is the largest: seven people take part in the forum, primarily from the Belarusian State University with which St. Petersburg University of the Humanities and Social Sciences entered into a cooperation agreement many years ago. The floor is given to the Deputy Minister of Information of the Republic of Belarus Igor Ivanovich Buzovsky.

I. I. BUZOVSKY: — Dear participants of the Likhachev Readings, it is a great honor for me and my colleagues to be present in this hall and to participate in all the events of the Likhachev Readings.

I would like to voice several theses that are fundamentally important to me within the framework of the stated theme of the plenary session “Dialogue of cultures and civilizations in the new emerging reality”.

Recently, within the framework of the education system of Belarus, we conducted research (this is the norm for our educational process) on the value component, which conceptually reflects the situation not only in the Republic of Belarus, but throughout the entire former post-Soviet space.

Analysis of the educational process allowed us to draw conclusions about how the educational process is organized in the system of higher and secondary education. The results are depressing. Let me give you one indicator: 43 % of parents showed a misunderstanding of the educational tasks and goals that are implemented in the education system, that is, in fact, a misunderstanding of the categories that we define as values.

The Belarusian State Economic University, which conducted the study, presented it as a matrix that reflects the entire civilizational system and poses tasks not only for the education system. This study can be projected onto all socio-political processes that are currently taking place. In conditions of civilizational confrontation, we need to jointly analyze and form common categories. The unity of understanding and the formation of a common axiological matrix is, in my opinion, one of the key components that we need to discuss.

Even when we understand problems such as environmental threats, resource depletion, and overpopulation, we can choose wrong strategies that lead us to dead ends. The awareness that the economic, technological, material components relate to means, not ends, should be a priority.

Today, speaking about BRICS, we note first of all the economic component of this association, its effectiveness, which basically is not disputed. But the deeper we dive into economic strategy, the more we realize that we need a value-based, meaningful development strategy that will allow us to consolidate efforts not only and not so much in achieving economic indicators, but also in uniting society and civilization in order to withstand the confrontation.

At the same time, I would like to note that this strategy does not mean refusal or struggle, so that the consolidation of international formations does not turn into a struggle against something. This is the key message that I try to voice from different platforms — we must fight not against, but for. We need to develop a strategy and targets that will allow us to consolidate. This strategic task is one of the key ones. I see the way out of the crisis not in abandoning scientific and technological development and improving economic strategies, but in giving them a humanistic dimension.

In fact, these tasks also correlate with today's holiday — Cosmonautics Day. For the Republic of Belarus, it became significant thanks to the great Russian science and the implemented strategy of relations between our countries and was marked by the flight of the first Belarusian female cosmonaut M. Vasilevskaya to the ISS as part of an international crew. I am grateful to the entire scientific community, primarily to those who contributed not so much to the economic component, but to the value component that we are talking about.

I am also grateful for the opportunities provided by the Likhachev Readings platform, where we can share our thoughts and work in a single information field.

A. S. ZAPESOTSKY: — Dear colleagues, today the Chairman of the Committee on Science and Higher Education of the Government of St. Petersburg, Andrei Stanislavovich Maksimov, who has been associated with St. Petersburg science for many years, and has been working with scientific institutions and universities, is taking part in the work of the Likhachev Forum. President of the Russian Academy of Sciences G. Ya. Krasnikov spoke warmly about this person, which speaks of the authority of our scientific community and those who support it with their highly qualified leadership administrative work.

A. S. MAKSIMOV: — Dear Alexander Sergeevich, presidium and participants of the congress! Thank you for your kind words; I work for the benefit of St. Petersburg and the city's system of science and professional education. Today I

have an honorable and significant mission — I would like to announce the greetings of the Governor of St. Petersburg Alexander Dmitrievich Beglov to the participants of the XXII Likhachev Readings.

“Dear friends,

I am glad to welcome the participants and organizers of the XXII International Likhachev Scientific Readings. The large-scale forum is once again becoming a popular discussion platform for discussing current humanitarian issues that are significant for the present and future of Russia. It occupies a strong place in the calendar of socially significant events of our city and country and annually brings together over one and a half thousand domestic and foreign researchers — specialists of the highest professional level.

Holding Readings is a wonderful long-term tradition that is carefully preserved and developed by St. Petersburg University of the Humanities and Social Sciences. This year, the focus of everyone’s attention is the important role of the BRICS interstate association in the modern world order. In this regard, the statements of the outstanding scientist and educator Dmitry Sergeevich Likhachev about the role of the Russian culture in the global space acquire special value and resonance. I am confident that the Likhachev Readings 2024 will become an effective tool for maintaining a broad humanitarian dialogue and a continuation of the important educational mission.

I wish you successful and fruitful work”.

I would like to say a few words on my own behalf. I listened with pleasure to the speeches of outstanding scientists, politicians and diplomats. The relevance of the Likhachev Readings dedicated to BRICS is also evidenced by the fact that today the issue of education is being considered in a new light. In this regard, the words of Dmitry Sergeevich Likhachev come to my mind: “Humanitarization of education is the path to the humanization of society”. I hope they will serve as guidelines to today’s congress, and together we will implement them. I wish you success!

A. S. ZAPESOTSKY: — Dear colleagues! I think everyone present understands the difficult situation in which the International Likhachev Scientific Readings are being held after the outbreak of hostilities in Ukraine. For many years we have been building relationships with scientists around the world. Since the early 2000s, since the presidential decree on holding the Likhachev Readings, our forum has been visited by representatives of 58 countries. A significant proportion of the total number of scientists who took part in the Readings were representatives of the Western world (the USA, Western European countries, Japan, Australia, etc.). We spent a lot of effort establishing relationships with these scientists and maintaining contacts, conducted joint research, and published materials from the Readings, which also reflected the position of the West.

Now the situation has changed, and creative and scientific contacts have ceased. As Chairman of the Organizing Committee of the Readings, I maintain close remote relationships with almost all the main participants of the Readings, but it is becoming increasingly difficult for them to do this. This year, not a single scientist came to us from Germany, where the toughest stance can be traced and even a recommendation was published not to travel to Russia. In Germany, they recreated the situation of 1930–1945 — a terror for thinkers when a scientist cannot express what he/she thinks on a wide range of issues without the risk of going to prison. Goebbels' ideas turned out to be much more tenacious than the world thought in 1945.

Two of my wonderful friends — one from Poland, the other from the Balkans — at the very beginning of the special operation sent me letters in which they tried to officially disassociate themselves from contacts with Russia, at least for the period until all this is over. One of them is from the university where I was awarded an honorary doctorate degree. I am an honorary doctor of five foreign universities, but none of them have officially rejected me in this capacity, although I am mentally prepared for this.

I have all the more respect for our friends who, maintaining independence, free-thinking and loyalty to the ideals of science, attended the Likhachev Readings

this year. First of all, I would like to note a number of scientists from France who presented their reports and came to St. Petersburg. These are the writer, pianist, historian Jean-Louis Bachelet, His Highness the Prince of Sheriff, President of the Alliance for France party, writer Al-Khattab Al-Ibrahimi Al-Sherifi Al-Idrissi Morad, outstanding French economist Jacques Sapir. We are very grateful to them for their participation.

Now I would like to give the floor to another representative of France — Olivier Roqueplo, Professor of the Sorbonne University.

O. ROQUEPLO: — Dear friends, dear colleagues! The history of the twentieth century can be called the history of the struggle not between communism and liberalism, but between colonialism and anti-colonialism. This fight continues to this day. The colonial world today is represented by the G7 countries. Anti-colonialism is the BRICS+ countries. The West does not understand the cultural significance and dimension of BRICS precisely because it is still colonial. The Russian special operation is part of the struggle between colonialism and anti-colonialism.

What are the differences between the colonial and anti-colonial worlds? They are associated with the ancient archetype of “kings of the world”. Historically, there were civilizations, such as Russian, Arab, Chinese, Indian, which were traditionally ruled by emperors, but at the same time these rulers recognized the sovereignty of other sovereigns. This made it possible to think about joint actions. At the same time, some other civilizations did not recognize the rulers of other countries already in ancient times. Thus, in the history of the West and Japan we will not find the archetype of “kings of the world” among the Italians, Germans, peoples of Northern Europe, etc.

On one side there are the Eurasian and African civilizations which since ancient times have had a collective style of thinking, that is, an image of the real world and world order. On the other side there are Western Europe, the USA, Japan, which recognize only one center. This is colonialism.

It seems to me that the significance of BRICS+ lies in the fact that this union of states can and should establish a real world order based on the fundamental values of ancient cultures after 250 years of colonial chaos and terror in all continents.

A. S. ZAPESOTSKY: — Today in this hall there is a person who is more popular in our country than many film stars, although she does not act in feature films, but performs state duties, representing the position of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation in the public space. This is the Director of the Information and Press Department of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Russian Federation Maria Vladimirovna Zakharova.

M. V. ZAKHAROVA: — Dear colleagues and friends! I would like to begin my speech by congratulating the citizens of Russia and other countries on Cosmonautics Day, which our country celebrates by giving a gift to all humanity. This is not a figure of speech, not a desire to embellish reality. On the eve of Cosmonautics Day, a fundamentally new heavy lift space launch vehicle “Angara-A5”, the first developed in Russia after the collapse of the USSR, was successfully launched. For the first time, the Vostochny cosmodrome was used for these purposes. Our country has confirmed its status as a great space power.

There is a wonderful Russian proverb: “In the carriages of the past, you can’t go anywhere”. And no matter how much we remember the great predecessors — Korolev, Gagarin and the entire Soviet people, new achievements are needed. And now we saw them.

The second thing our country has confirmed is its focus on the peaceful exploration of outer space. This great achievement which should not be forgotten is directly related to the discussed agenda of the Likhachev Readings, namely, intercivilizational dialogue, the future of our planet. We must remember what the first cosmonaut Yu. A. Gagarin dedicated his flight to, what Soviet science and our state dedicated the space discovery to.

Having been the first in space, did our country and people begin to post advertisements with price tags, talking about how much it would cost to visit outer space, given that we were the leaders? Has space been politicized and declared a zone of geopolitical competition? Was it stated that since the Soviet Union was the first in space, it would dispose of it and, as they say now, weaponize it, that is, place types of weapons of various classes in outer space? Nothing like this.

Despite the fact that space exploration took place in the first decades after the Second World War, which affected our country like no other in the history of mankind, the Soviet Union had the right to all of the above. But our country said that space will not become an arena for an arms race or competition to demonstrate dominance over other states. It was stated that this was a territory of peaceful development and scientific research.

After the flight, the first cosmonaut Yu. A. Gagarin, a man with a radiant smile, travelled all over the world, talking not about the exceptionalism of the Soviet Union, but about the knowledge and emotions that he had received. He did not divide countries into those that threatened the USSR and those who wished well and expressed their solidarity with the position of our country. He talked about the great achievement, the mission that the people entrusted to him, that we have another attempt to build the future of humanity on the basis of peace, friendship, mutual respect, understanding and synergy of efforts — scientific, humanitarian, cultural ones. Today we see what this was later turned into by a number of countries.

The demonstration of the achievements of Russian science, in particular, the “Angara-A5” rocket is now orbiting the planet before our eyes, is taking place against the backdrop of fundamentally important discussions. And no longer theoretical, but having practical implementation, conducted not only in our country, but at the suggestion of our country on the entire planet — discussions, philosophical reflections and analysis of how to preserve civilization, traditional spiritual and moral values, morality and ethics for the future generations so that the planet does not reach a dead end.

When this discussion was just beginning, including at the Likhachev Readings, we were told: “You are turning back the Middle Ages”, that traditional values and development are incompatible and only Western progress ensures scientific achievements and their application in the interests of humanity. But it turned out that everything was compatible. Moreover, one cannot exist without the other.

Science can and should move forward and make discoveries only on the basis of true values. And we have already arrived at that holy of holies that give an idea of our universe and the essence of man.

I would like to say one more thing. Over the past decades, dozens of international conferences on various topics have been held every day in the world. All of them are not just broadcast online with the help of modern information and communication technologies, but also preserved for future generations and instantly translated into various world languages. This suggests that the analysis of these scientific conferences and international symposia, primarily those related to geopolitics, international relations, movement towards the future, is the evidence of what each country has come to this truly critical point in the development of our planet today. Those planning to study the Munich Security Policy Conference will find evidence of how a number of countries have done their best to lead the planet to the current times of crisis. And those who look into the past of the Likhachev Readings, read the printed reports, watch the broadcasts, will understand that our country and those who supported it in this did everything to preserve civilization.

A. S. ZAPESOTSKY: — Dear colleagues, Mikhail Viktorovich Shmakov asked to speak to report urgent information from the Kremlin, which he has just received.

M. V. SHMAKOV: — Dear comrades, dear friends! Here is an urgent decree of the President of the Russian Federation: “For merits in scientific and pedagogical activities, training of highly qualified specialists and many years of conscientious work, to award the Order of Alexander Nevsky to Alexander Sergeevich Zapesotsky,

rector of the non-state educational institution of higher professional education “St. Petersburg University of the Humanities and Social Sciences”. Vladimir Putin. Moscow. Kremlin. April 12, 2024. Alexander Sergeevich, we congratulate you.

A. S. ZAPESOTSKY: — Dear friends, I’ll say simply: I serve Russia and Russian trade unions. As you understand, the restructuring of our University in the context of a sharp complication of keeping contacts with Western scientists — I cannot use the phrase “import substitution” here — was accompanied by the need to sharply intensify scientific relations with the rest of the world. They were already very active, but currently even more has been done. Today, representatives from 19 countries of the world take part in our Readings. And I am very glad that not only me, but also other major Russian scientists and institutes of the Russian Academy of Sciences were involved in attracting new participants. I would especially thank Alexander Vladimirovich Yakovenko, rector of the Diplomatic Academy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, who recommended us so many bright and strong scientists that, in addition to the Likhachev Readings, we will be able to invite them to give lectures to our students. The Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences provided enormous assistance. The scientific director of this institute, a unique orientalist by world standards Vitaly Vyacheslavovich Naumkin is present here. If the United States of America had such specialists, they probably would not have invaded Iraq, started a military conflict in Afghanistan, etc. Academician Evgeny Maksimovich Primakov once warned them against rash steps in relation to the East. I would like to thank Academician of the Russian Academy of Sciences Vitaly Vyacheslavovich Naumkin for his active work in forming the list of participants in the Readings and give him the floor.

V. V. NAUMKIN: — In the Middle Ages in the East, comparing three nations or three groups of peoples, they said: the Chinese know how to work with their hands, the Europeans work with their brains, the Arabs speak the language. But I

believe that today our multinational people, as it has already been said here, have all three, and our new space achievements are an indicator that we can do everything.

I also want to emphasize the importance of the Arab world, which I have been studying all my life. It is no coincidence that the medieval thought that I conveyed highlights the beauty of the Arabic language, of which its speakers are very proud, just as we are of ours, Russian. There has been a lot of talk here about the “Global South” and the “Global West”, and I would like to point out several lines of interaction and how today BRICS acts as the embodiment of the idea that I spoke about — that we have everything. And this is exactly what the special structure that BRICS is shows. And BRICS is not a military bloc, not a political alliance, but a structure that presupposes sovereignty, independence, and freedom of action for each member of this organization. It is no coincidence that, to the surprise of our opponents, it includes countries that are sometimes not on the best terms with each other and compete, which is, in general, normal. Not only such states as Iran, on the one hand, and the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, on the other, receive an incentive to interact through BRICS; third countries that are members of this community also act as conciliators for these states when finding common platforms for their actions. This applies in particular to China. And it is absolutely clear that membership in BRICS does not imply a violation of any international obligations undertaken or that such obligations, with the exception of certain ones, do not exist at all. There is no exclusivity here, but a common desire for broad cooperation.

In addition, it should be noted that the BRICS organization is a mechanism that helps to regulate and overcome conflicts — we have been convinced of this more than once, and I think this trend will continue. Furthermore, BRICS has great potential to facilitate balancing in relations between such global partners as Russia, China and India, where there are also some issues. I think this is a very important point even for those who want to simultaneously maintain certain relations with the states of the “Global South”, and interaction with the collective West, and with countries such as, in particular, the United States, if this suits their interests, and no one imposes anything on them. And this is the peculiarity of Russian politics.

Also, an essential element for analyzing the development prospects of this alliance is the optimization of priorities in cooperation with individual BRICS states on a bilateral track, including with new partners, in order to achieve the greatest benefits in ongoing projects. And when we discuss the negative sides of aggressive globalism, which opposes state-majesty and sovereignty (which was already mentioned here when our French colleague spoke about colonialism and its legacy), we should also note some positive understanding of the opportunities that international cooperation provides on a global scale. We scientists need to have a deep enough understanding of issues such as, say, demographic policy and the policy of all kinds of global interaction in various fields in order to succeed in solving emerging problems.

A. S. ZAPESOTSKY: — I invite to the podium the Deputy of the State Duma of the Russian Federation, Honored Artist of the RSFSR Elena Grigorievna Drapeko. She worked as the Chairman of the Committee on Culture and Tourism of St. Petersburg, then as the dean of our Faculty of Culture, and is now the First Deputy of the RF State Duma Committee on Culture.

E. G. DRAPEKO: — Dear colleagues, I want to share with you the sorrows that today overtake our power structures and require your help and support. Our colleague from Belarus spoke about a certain unified ideological matrix that would need to be derived. At the previous Likhachev Readings, I allowed myself to present the stance of a number of our scientists and philosophers who believe that this matrix has been taking shape over the last, let's say, thousand of years in the space of Russia, among the Russian people, and is embedded in our epos. And the values that our ancient ancestors professed and outlined in the folk epic are still preserved by the peoples living in this territory. We, like our heroes Ilya Muromets and Alyosha Popovich, consider the holy things that we recognize, such as the Motherland, faith, honor, dignity to be the main values. We still admire the feat that our ancestors accomplished. The essays on comparative axiology that I cited as examples show that

the West has a completely different system of values, which also developed over the centuries. Their epics speak of a different hierarchy of values.

I would like to note two important points. First: there is a presidential decree on the traditional spiritual values of the Russian Federation. And we, as politicians and deputies, are ordered to implement these values into Russian legislation. This means that we must incorporate this value system into the Criminal, Civil and Family Codes. The decree names the values, but doesn't hierarchize them. And we were faced with the question: what is more important — the right to life or the defense of the Motherland? Is it possible to demand to give one's life to defend the Motherland? Today this is extremely important for us in the context of the special military operation and the international tension that has developed around us. This issue is being discussed on our platforms. We have created two commissions, and I work in both. One of them is under the State Duma, it is headed by Vice-Speaker of Parliament Anna Yuryevna Kuznetsova. The second one is under the Government of the Russian Federation, headed by Tatyana Alekseevna Golikova. The topics of their discussions are virtually the same — traditional spiritual values and their reflection in our regulatory framework.

The second point I would like to note is that we have had periods of fascination with the West and bitter disappointment in it. This could be due to the fact that, among other things, we did not agree in our assessment of some basic principles. This does not mean that we are better and they are worse, it means that we are different. And when they began to break the Russian cultural code, the code of our people, and rebuild it according to the Western model, our people began to die out. Why? Because for a thousand years we believed in one thing, and then we were forced to believe in another. I once discussed with one professor who said that Russians have been going in the wrong direction for 500 years. And even then, many years ago, I told him that, probably, we had chosen Iasi law, not Roman law, because we were different. Comparative axiology also shows that we are different. And today, in order to avoid the same fascination with and then disappointment in our eastern and southern neighbors, we must understand in what ways our value systems coincide and

in what ways they do not. We need this in order to negotiate with them and reach agreements — we must know with whom we are conducting such negotiations. These issues are backbone, and today they are extremely important for the authorities and for the formation of our society which of course is beginning to change.

A. S. ZAPESOTSKY: — Dear colleagues, let me invite to the podium the famous Indian scientist and diplomat Mr. Anil Trigunayat.

A. TRIGUNAYAT: — It is a great honor for me to be invited to the prestigious Likhachev Readings in St. Petersburg, the cultural capital of Russia and one of the most beautiful cities in the world. I was lucky to work in Russia in 1999–2002 and 2010–2012.

BRICS formation is a new look at the world and the dialogue between civilizations. The oldest civilizations of the world are presented in this dialogue: India, Russia, China, the Arab world, Mesopotamia. Their ancient culture teaches that attitude towards people should always come first. In India, there is a well-known appeal to the universe, written in Sanskrit: “Please bless the whole world and everyone in this world, so that no one has any problems”. This is the goal we should all strive for, and we are trying to promote this idea through diplomacy and other means.

During the year that India presided over the G20, we tried to work under the motto: “The whole world is a big family”. By the word “world” we mean not only humanity, but also the rest of living nature — animals, plants. Many of them need our protection. But, unfortunately, even in the BRICS countries there are certain problems that require solutions. In order to approach them, we must first understand whether we believe in the power of argument or whether we consider the disputes themselves, the clashes of opinions to be more important to us.

There are geopolitical tensions even among BRICS members. But we still must develop joint solutions, based on the fact that the world should be inclusive and not exclude anyone. We must strive for cooperation and avoid conflicts, look for general

rather than local ways to resolve problems, and smooth out ideological differences. We must be open for the well-being of the whole world. It is necessary to listen carefully to each other.

In this context, it is important that the Likhachev Readings focus on civilized dialogue. Now the world is witnessing a confrontation of civilizations. The West did not have such an ancient history as the East, which largely explains the approaches of Western states to modern problems. Scientists and politicians must understand and take this into account. We also need to be aware that the values of one civilization may not work in relation to another. For example, in India, when the question “why” is asked, the answer must include a way to make things as good as possible for everyone. And this answer should not come from a desire for dominance. Domination cannot be the basis for dialogue, and dialogue is something that the modern world urgently needs, because now there is a lot of denial and readiness to undermine the world order. We must overcome this. The global landscape is changing, so we will see this actually happening in the near future. India offers some principles that will help take certain steps along this path. We must respect each other, take into account mutual interests and be attentive to each other’s global goals.

A. S. ZAPESOTSKY: — Dear colleagues, let me invite to the podium the outstanding Russian scientist, Professor Irina Olegovna Abramova.

I. O. ABRAMOVA: — I would like to comment in a few words on what previous colleagues said. Maria Vladimirovna said that the West is considering its own version of progress. In my opinion, the Western version of technological progress completely excludes man as such from its concept. It is absolutely unmanned. A person is not needed, they need artificial intelligence and people who will carry out certain commands. What is needed is unification, not diversity. And diversity is precisely the global majority. This was heard in the previous speech of our colleague from India. We have global challenges and we must solve them. But we are all different and must take this diversity into account. BRICS+ allows us,

while maintaining diversity, to approach the solution of common, and humane tasks. Why? Just because the global majority is really a majority, countries where the most part of the world's population lives, which are developing and want to make the future for their population beautiful, interesting, diverse, and not the same.

I was also very glad to hear our French colleague say that the 20th century was a century of struggle not between communism and liberalism, but between colonialism and anti-colonialism. What is happening today is in fact a clear manifestation of the colonial approach in everything. Traditionally, colonialism is a relationship of political oppression and subjugation of nations. Think about it: with the formal acquisition of sovereignty, have we gained real sovereignty, or are we still in the paradigm of this subordination? We looked at the West for a very long time and thought that this is “a city on a hill” and we need to do everything the way they want. But it turned out that this was wrong. And here humanitarian and traditional values, and first of all, the education that we will give to our children and our colleagues around the world, play a huge role. For example, in Africa — the continent I study — 60 % of the population is under 25 years old. And a lot in our development depends on what kind of education this population receives. Education is everything to us.

There is a well-known phrase by US President John Kennedy, which is also associated with today's holiday — Cosmonautics Day. After we were the first in space, he said that the Soviet Union won the space race at the school desk. Others clarify that he said that it was the Soviet education that had won. But this is precisely the question. Our future depends on what kind of education we, our children, the children of the countries of the world majority, receive. It is necessary that this education be humane, diverse, and reflect global interests, because many problems can only be solved together, and at the same time this amazing culture and diversity that are inherent in absolutely all countries. There are more than 2 thousand languages in Africa alone! Just think about it. And we must preserve this diversity.

A. S. ZAPESOTSKY: — The floor is given to Mr. Alastair Crooke from Great Britain, the founder of the Conflicts Forum analytical center.

A. CROOKE: — I'll start from afar. In 1451, a Roman was walking around Rome and fell into a deep hole. It turned out to be an ancient Egyptian temple with beautiful decorations, ornaments depicting various living creatures, birds, and animals. The Roman fell into the castle of Emperor Nero who portrayed himself as a pharaoh in the form of the god Ra, traveling between the real and immaterial world. But then it was completely forgotten, buried, covered with earth, and until this man fell in, no one knew that Nero's palace was there. The effect of this discovery was like an electric shock. Later, various researchers, including great artists such as Michelangelo, who then lived in Rome, descended down the rope, frozen with fear, delight, anticipation, to look at these beautiful treasures of ancient culture, to become familiar with them, because it was another civilization, literally another universe.

Then the Renaissance began. And then the text of the Corpus Hermeticum known since ancient times, accidentally surfaced. It is believed that it was written by the ancient sage Thoth. It was translated in 1471. This is what you might call multipolarity. This news swept across Europe, and it seemed that it could defuse the situation at a time when there was a threat of war between Protestants and Catholics. Tension in society arises at different stages of history. Today, many people talk about cancel of culture. We can say that this also happened in 1471, when the Inquisition was in full swing. And 10 thousand Western Europeans were declared heretics because their narratives at that time were politically incorrect, and they were burned at the stake. This further led to nihilism, etc. In any case, we can say that this bubble burst, and the Hermeticists were discredited.

Today Western Europe is again engulfed by imposed dogma, eschatological dogmatism. And I want to emphasize that in Western countries there is currently a civil war and a cultural revolution happening at the same time. These phenomena are historically intertwined, sometimes there is a bias towards violence, sometimes towards a cultural revolution. It is quite unusual and, perhaps, the inhabitants of these

countries do not notice that they are having a revolution. Some say: “Everything is fine with us, what are you talking about”. And others are well aware that a revolution is really taking place. We must understand what is happening now. Imagine February 1917, and then you will understand what we in Europe feel today: like your premonition of the February revolution, and this revolution itself. This is, one might say, epistemological enmity and hostility. The West has become hostage to this kind of thinking. It simply hides its head in the sand and does not want to see another reality.

But now the process is still underway. We do not know how this revolution that is sweeping the whole world will turn out. In Russia and China, everything is also moving into other areas. America is probably going to continue to wage trade wars with China and dominate Europe, but there are a lot of difficulties. The BRICS path is also not an easy one, because the unification faces great political confrontation. But there is currently both diplomatic and economic collapse in Europe. The West has driven itself into this corner and found itself under a historical siege. This siege is simply unprecedented in the world. And what Russia and other BRICS countries are doing now is partly a peaceful revolution. They want to bring multipolarity to this world. But the West cannot come to terms with this, because it is the same as the fall of Constantinople. The Western civilization is accustomed to something completely different. And now Russia dominates. Now there are also battles for traditional values. We are experiencing a revolution, but also a counter-revolution. All this has been described since ancient times and is embedded in our cultural code. Counter-revolution also suggests traditionalism.

The new values — what we see now — are intended to drive a stake into the traditional culture, into what the BRICS countries have in common in terms of moral values. But we must survive all this. History also teaches us that if revolutions begin, it is impossible to return to previous positions, just as it is impossible to enter the same river twice. I want to say that as a result of all this, what is now so lacking in the Western world and what is so important for BRICS will develop. BRICS should not turn into just another political bloc. It must conquer moral and cultural space. It’s

very difficult now — look what's happening in the Middle East. Everything is turned upside down, and moral norms and values are destroyed. It is important to put everything back in its place, to turn it from head to foot. Thank you very much.

A. S. ZAPESOTSKY: — Let me invite to the stage the famous St. Petersburg writer Nikolai Viktorovich Starikov, who in recent years has been paying a lot of attention to international issues.

N. V. STARIKOV: — Today we have gathered to discuss BRICS as an important alternative to what the West has built, but currently is destroying. I would like to focus on one illustrative example. All that the West has been telling us for many years and continues to tell us is that there is supposedly some kind of competition: market, ideological ones, and this is the reason and method to grow the best. In fact, there is no competition, neither politically nor economically. Why does the West dislike this BRICS organization so much and try to weaken it, split it, and use it for purposes completely different from those for which it was created? Simply because it is the most serious alternative. And most importantly, it has already produced a definite and significant result. As soon as the special military operation began and all the sanctions, pressure, insults and threats against our country started to increase, the West probably harbored hopes that Russia's BRICS partner states would join the sanctions, get scared, waver, and not actively interact with it, will be shunned. But none of this happened. Therefore, what BRICS was created for has already worked out. An example that gives us an understanding of how this whole system works is sports. Just recently, two Russian pranksters called the head of the International Olympic Committee, Mr. Bach, and he, with Bolshevik, so to speak, outspokenness, stated that he strongly, even to the point of threats and promises of problems, does not recommend African athletes to participate in the games that Russia is holding. One would think, where is the International Olympic Committee which does not allow Russian and Belarusian athletes to take part, and where are the games organized by Russia? What difference does it make to him? Let there be

games like this and that. We are not holding alternative Olympic Games. But he understands that the worst thing that cannot be allowed is the alternative.

We are talking about sports. Can you imagine how afraid they are of the alternative when it comes to owning the world, supremacy, domination, a world that is based on the very rules that no one has seen, but which everyone must follow. The tools there are on a completely different level. So, the main thing I wanted to say is that BRICS is precisely the structure that provides an alternative. And the alternative frightens the West to no end. And it's not just about China, economic growth or Russia's military power. It's not even about meanings. We are talking about the very existence of an alternative. Because in the West it's the other way around. If it talks about a wealth of choice, it means that choice does not exist.

A. S. ZAPESOTSKY: — Dear colleagues, our discussion is coming to an end.

In conclusion, a few words about freedom. I have a wonderful friend in Switzerland, Bruno Degardin, a very strong financial analyst who advises a large number of people with enormous capital and sends amazing analytical reports on his research to our University. He is quite skeptical about BRICS and believes that it is untenable and nothing good will come of it. I invited him to St. Petersburg to talk about all this in a calm atmosphere at the Likhachev Readings. They are scared in the West that something is wrong here. He says: "Of course, I would come, but I would feel uncomfortable because I have an alternative point of view". We in turn explain to our students: in order to get an "A", answering each question on each exam they must give three alternative points of view from scientific or popular science literature. Then comment on them and give their own opinion. Our students know that in a civilized society it is customary to discuss alternative opinions. It's very sad that this happens. Therefore, we hold open discussions in which all major scientists who want this participate. Thank you all for your opinions.