

Section 1

CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS FOR FORMING A NEW GLOBAL PLATFORM FOR CULTURAL COOPERATION (science, culture, art, education, economics, law)

April 13, 2024

Stasov + Ushakov Conference Hall (Nevsky Royal Hotel)

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*

S. ATLAGIĆ, *Professor, Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Belgrade (Serbia)*

D. O. BABICH, *a columnist for the RIA Novosti News Agency, Member of the Union of Journalists of Russia*

J.-L. BACHELET, *writer, pianist, historian (France)*

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

D. A. DEGTEREV, *leading researcher at the Center for the Study of Problems of Transition Economy, Institute for African Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Doctor of Political Sciences, Professor*

K. F. ZATULIN, *First Deputy Chairman of the State Duma Committee of the Russian Federation for CIS Affairs, Eurasian Integration and Relations with Compatriots, Deputy of the State Duma of the Russian Federation, Director of the Institute of CIS Countries*

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. K. ISAEV, *Deputy Head of the United Russia faction in the State Duma of the Russian Federation, Deputy of the State Duma of the Russian Federation, Deputy Chairman of the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia, Candidate of Political Sciences, Professor at St. Petersburg University of the Humanities and Social Sciences*

A. M. KRAMARENKO, *Director of the Institute of Current International Problems of the Diplomatic Academy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Russian Federation*

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

V. K. MAMONTOV, *Chairman of the Board of Directors of the “Komsomolskaya Pravda” newspaper, General Director of the Moscow Speaks radio station, Director of the Smart Internet Foundation for the Support of Network Initiatives*

Al-Khattab Al-Ibrahimi Al-Cherifi Al-Idrissi MORAD, *His Highness the Prince of Sheriff, President of the Alliance for France party, writer, winner of the Literary Prize for Peace and Tolerance (France)*

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*

G. V. NAUMOVA, *writer, culturologist, President of the Miracles Association (France), Candidate of Philological Sciences*

M. OKOLI, *Professor of Ammosov North-Eastern Federal University, researcher at the Institute for African Studies and IMEMO of the Russian Academy of Sciences, President of the Nigerian Community in Russia*

J. OKRAY, *Vice President of the Marmara Group Foundation for Strategic and Social Research (Istanbul, Turkey)*

E. RAKHMATULLOZODA, *Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Tajikistan (1990–2001), Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary*

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

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

S. A. TSYPLYAEV, *Editor-in-Chief of the “Vlast” journal, representative of the President of the Russian Federation in St. Petersburg (1992–2000), Candidate of Physical and Mathematical Sciences, Actual 3rd class State Counselor of the Russian Federation, Member of the Council on Foreign and Defense Policy*

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*

V. A. SHAMAKHOV, *Scientific Director of the North-West Institute of Management of the Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration, Doctor of Economic Sciences, Professor, Actual 1st class State Counselor of the Russian Federation, Colonel General of the Customs Service*

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, today we will talk in more detail about the topics that were raised at the plenary session and during the panel discussion.

First of all, on behalf of the Organizing Committee of the Likhachev Readings, which I represent, I would like to say a few words about our traditions. We expect that participants review in advance the reports of their colleagues published on the scientific portal “Ploshchad D. S. Likhacheva”, and right here we will discuss them, without reading, as well as what has been expressed by others during the Readings. We need dialogue, not monologue.

In addition, I would like to note that the Likhachev Readings are being broadcast throughout Russia on the telecommunications Internet portal “Scientific Russia”. Only the announcements of the broadcasts of the plenary session, panel discussion and section 1 of the XXII Likhachev Readings were viewed by about 20 thousand people. Perhaps this is a small figure for the sphere of mass culture, but in any case, the attention of the scientific community to the Likhachev Readings is significant.

I give the floor to the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Russian Federation, Member of the Collegium of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, rector of the Diplomatic Academy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation Alexander Vladimirovich Yakovenko, who will lead the discussion.

A. V. YAKOVENKO: — The topic of our section is very interesting. We at the Diplomatic Academy and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs have recently been increasingly concentrating not so much on challenges, but on prospects. Because prospects determine both topics and challenges, and challenges induce prospects. It will be very interesting to look into the future from the present day. The topic is capacious, since it touches on almost the entire spectrum of humanitarian

cooperation, perhaps only without taking into account sports. We know what the situation is in this area: on the eve of the Olympic Games in France, the West completely politicized sport, leaving no chance for equal international cooperation.

Moreover, American elites, during the ultra-liberal revolution, turned against history and decided to cancel culture in an attempt to destroy the traditional identity of Americans themselves. We'll see what they get, at a time when everywhere in the world, and Russia is no exception, issues of identity are coming to the fore. In the United States, the so-called cultural wars, reminiscent of the "cultural revolution" in China, go on the rise. That is, there is active debate about what constitutes American identity.

The floor is given to the Chairman of the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia, Mikhail Viktorovich Shmakov.

M. V. SHMAKOV: — The topic of our section touches on aspects of cooperation throughout the world, but since the Likhachev Readings this year are focused on BRICS, I will focus on this association.

Russian trade unions perceive cooperation within the BRICS framework as an opportunity to deepen ties with our colleagues from other countries, developing and systematizing it without resorting to a formal description.

For 12 years now, the Trade Union Forum has been operating within the BRICS framework. It is a global trade union structure where information is exchanged on all important areas of life in the BRICS+ countries (about 20 states). We are now establishing closer relationships with our colleagues in all BRICS+ countries. Not all BRICS+ states are yet ready to cooperate in the field of trade union activities, but I hope that later, depending on the interests and agenda that we will promote, they will join this forum.

We are studying data showing which BRICS+ country is most comfortable for wage earners to live in. The competition of countries for a more decent life for the population is, on the one hand, a point of rivalry, and on the other, a uniting matter. In the area of protecting the rights of workers, the criterion of a decent life, which

includes the concept of “decent work”, comes to the fore. Of course, this is the most important issue — trade unions have been fighting for decent work for more than 150 years.

Discussions on the rights and interests of employees entail a discussion of the interests and behavior of the governments and elites of those countries that gather in formal and informal associations. Yesterday we talked about the confrontation or competition between the countries of the “Global West” and the “Global South”. This is at the same time the major problem — the desire of some to live at the expense of others, and it can escalate into war.

Despite various theoretical constructions, this happens constantly throughout history. Today we are seeing this conflict at a new technological level in science, technology, art, culture, education, economics, etc. It can spill out onto a battlefield. Currently two large conflicts are being fought, and many small ones in which new technologies are being worked out. The latter are developed in history when some attack, while others have to defend themselves with the help of advanced technologies.

Returning from military issues to cooperation, I would like to once again talk about our experience. We get information about what is happening in the BRICS countries and other states, including those in the West and East, from our colleagues who provide reliable data about the lives and interests, incomes and problems of wage earners.

Russia as a country-civilization must be a labor power. Some time ago, within the framework of other economic theories, it was stated that labor is not the most important thing in life; there are other ways of accumulating capital, for example virtual ones. This results in an increase in gross domestic product and shows that from the point of view of virtual capital, some countries are more successful, while others are less successful. But when life comes up against realities, for example the need to fight, it turns out that the amounts on virtual accounts cannot help in any way on the field of real confrontation. There metal is needed, as well as other products of

technological development, which in the real economy are transformed into products. And this is the only way to develop and win.

We believe that the BRICS Trade Union Forum, which has been operating for 12 years, is a platform for cooperation and mutual understanding. I am confident that with the further development of the BRICS coalition, we will be able to strengthen and expand this platform for discussing topics related to science, culture, art, education, economics and law.

A. V. YAKOVENKO: — Improvement of the quality of people's life is a serious topic that was also touched upon in the message of the President of Russia to the Federal Assembly. For other BRICS member states, this is a topic for discussion because they have different rates of development. Today, in terms of economic development, the size of the financial bubble has reached 75 %, while under normal conditions this figure is 10 %. The financial bubble, which is based on the monopoly of the dollar and the Bretton Woods system, will burst sooner or later.

The floor is given to the Director of the Information and Press Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation Maria Vladimirovna Zakharova.

M. V. ZAKHAROVA: — In relation to the topic of the section, I would like to highlight several points.

First: we are brought up on such concepts as “cooperation”, “interaction”, “cultural exchange”. Or, as the title of our section puts it, on a global platform for cultural cooperation. All this meant a positive agenda in the cultural sphere. This has been our cultural code for several generations. It acquired a special scope in the 20th century, including after the Second World War, when the world was on the verge of self-destruction. Having managed to find a balance of power and taking a step back, everyone drew their conclusions. Our country has greatly increased its desire to establish cooperation, strengthen interaction and develop a positive agenda.

Currently, a diametrically opposite situation has developed in the world, although Russia continues to adhere to a positive agenda, like the countries of the world majority. But at the same time, we see that countries that accumulate the most powerful levers for the implementation of humanitarian cooperation (mass media, digital platforms today become a way to conduct cultural policy) have completely different goals. This applies not only to the aggressive steps they take, but also to the terminological vocabulary.

The words “peace”, “friendship”, “love” are generally absent from the speeches of modern world leaders. Although both traditional modes of life, and modernist approaches are all about love, harmony, for everything good and against everything bad. But at the same time, this vocabulary is absent from the leaders’ speeches, as if it had become toxic and even marginal. Let me remind you that the word “friendship” was one of the most popular in the 1980s, but now it is generally not used.

These words and concepts which in politics can be considered as plans that determine the development direction, have been replaced by cancel culture in all its manifestations, including at the lexical level: cancel, prevent, restrain, etc.

Throughout history, Russia as a country-civilization and our people have tried to resist cancelation. Alexander Nevsky, the Order of whom A. S. Zapesotsky was awarded, was elevated to the rank of saints because he did not allow Russian culture to be cancelled. Our country and people have made this choice more than once in other periods, when the threat came from both the West and the East.

Sometimes cancelation transformed into genocide. Residents of Leningrad – Petersburg are well aware of this. Finally, in addition to the word “siege”, which is meaningful for us, the word “genocide” appeared, characterizing what was happening in Leningrad during the Second World War. Siege is our internal concept, although it has entered the culture of a number of countries that favor us. But for states that are not friendly to us, the word “siege” is an empty phrase. Therefore, the documents finally recorded the legal and sociocultural concept of “genocide”, which is understandable to everyone when describing what was happening in Leningrad. The

essence was the same — to stop the existence of our country. But every time we fought back.

Hence the second point I would like to talk about. Yesterday I entered into a debate with Mr. Zatulin regarding the fact that we definitely need to pay attention to external perimeters (trade, global logistics, transport corridors, geopolitical circumstances) and strive to establish a more just world order.

In this sociocultural context, with all the understanding of the importance of international cultural and humanitarian cooperation, in my opinion, first of all it is necessary to pay attention to the internal development. How can you go outside without the main factor — the education of Russian youth, without passing on the cultural code to future generations? All for nothing if children do not know a single significant fact about the Great Patriotic War, the siege of Leningrad (which only St. Petersburg children know about). How to bring this information to the outside? We will do our best in this direction. The most important thing is not to rely on the capabilities of our information work or external propaganda in a good sense, but to make every citizen of our country a promoter of their own culture. This is where the strength lies. We need to do this energizing the citizens of our country for a feat of arms. Every person must carry out this mission. Then the path to international cultural and humanitarian cooperation will be easier to pave. The people themselves must become a source of strength — cultural and humanitarian interaction.

A. V. YAKOVENKO: — Deputy Head of the United Russia faction in the State Duma of the Russian Federation Andrey Konstantinovich Isaev, the floor is yours.

A. K. ISAEV: — Dear colleagues! Although Alexander Vladimirovich urged us to pay attention to prospects rather than challenges, I will play the role of *Enfant terrible* and say that there are many more challenges than prospects.

From my point of view, we are at the beginning of a general world conflict, which is based on a clash of cultures, and it will gradually worsen. Therefore, it

seems to me premature to talk about the formation of a unified cultural platform in the world today. If the First World War unfolded as a conflict of bourgeois nations, the Second World War and the Cold War as a conflict of ideologies, then today's world conflict is a clash of civilizations and cultures. Although the West is trying to present this as a clash of ideologies, which is natural, since in the West the last "winning" ideology, liberalism, prevailed. They try to present the conflict as a clash of the values of victorious liberal democracy, which is odiously formulated in the famous work "The End of History and the Last Man" by Francis Fukuyama, with backward reactionary regimes and ideologies. But the Second World War destroyed fascism as an ideology, the Cold War destroyed the ideology of communism. I expect that liberal ideology in its most radical form, which dominates the West today, will also be defeated.

And yet the clash of cultures continues and worsens. And before we talk about the formation of a global platform, humanity will have to make a choice which path it will take. These two paths are clearly marked today. On the one hand, the G7, on the other, BRICS. The G7 is an ideologically uniform structure, strictly hierarchical, with its own commander, the United States of America, and a political officer, Great Britain. It is opposed by the BRICS organization, which is distinguished by a combination of different political cultures, implying different political systems. But within this union, Iran is not trying to turn Brazil into an Islamic republic, and Brazil is not trying to achieve Russia's transition to Catholicism.

The choice of one path or another, which humanity now has to take, will predetermine the possibilities of forming a unified cultural platform. The victory of the G7 will mean the spread of Euro-Atlantic civilization as the only possible and universal one. Under the guise of liberal ideology, they are trying to export to us the culture and civilizational values that dominate the West today. These values cannot be universal, since the culture and civilizational characteristics of each country are determined by its history and geography. In this regard, countries have different understandings of the meaning of human life, the relationship between the individual and society, society and the state, which is predetermined by the development history

of each country. If Russia was formed as an anti-colonial, essentially defensive empire over a vast space, the role of the state in it will never be the same as in those states that were formed as a federation of religious communities.

In this clash, as logic seems to suggest and Western ideologists repeat many times, the West must win. It is more economically powerful and ideologically united.

But if we analyze previous world collisions, we will see an interesting pattern. The First World War involved, on the one hand, a bloc of politically homogeneous continental powers — Austria-Hungary, Germany and Turkey, which was close to them; on the other, autocratic Russia, democratic France, semi-democratic Great Britain and a number of other countries which were very different. The “hodgepodge” team won. In the Second World War there was a similar picture: a homogeneous bloc of fascist powers, and against them were the liberal democratic USA and Great Britain, the communist Soviet Union, etc. The “mixed” side won. The Cold War: an ideologically united bloc of socialist states opposes the bourgeois West, which was joined by the sheikhs of the Persian Gulf countries, the Afghan Mujahideen, the apartheid regimes in South Africa and Southern Rhodesia, and Latin American dictators. And again the opponent who is distinguished by diversity wins. Perhaps this happens because history does not want to stop, and in case of uniformity, further development becomes problematic.

I believe that we have sufficient grounds for optimism and for the belief that the victory in the end will not belong to the homogeneous structure that the West now represents, trying to impose its model on the rest of the world. The diversity that BRICS represents will win. But we have to fight for this victory.

In conclusion, I would like to support Mikhail Viktorovich Shmakov’s point of view on the phenomenon of labor civilization. The entire Western civilization is based on the dominance of financial capital, as Rudolf Hilferding understood it: industrial and commercial capitals are subordinated to the banking one. It is the victory of banking capital that dictates the formation of a unipolar world. Banks produce one product — currency — and promote it. Therefore, a clash is inevitable, and any competition leads to the establishment of a monopoly, as Karl Marx taught.

The victory of BRICS will mean a reformatting of the world economy and the predominance of productive capital.

A. V. YAKOVENKO: — Director of the Institute of CIS Countries Konstantin Fyodorovich Zatulin, welcome.

K. F. ZATULIN: — Maria Vladimirovna reproaches me for not understanding the need to fight for a just world in the international arena. I'm not that simple. I just believe that problems need to be addressed not only in foreign policy, but also in one's own country. Therefore, I will risk touching on an issue that seems quite clear and resolved in our country, but in fact is not so. This becomes obvious not when authoritative experts gather at a round table, but when we try to plunge into the mood of the broad masses. I'm talking about the national question in Russia.

How does Russia differ from the Soviet Union in terms of nations? It differs in that in the Soviet Union a little more than half of the population were Russians, the rest were representatives of other nations within the Soviet Union, and before that the Russian Empire, and for tens and even hundreds of years they somehow coexisted within the same state. But in 1991, the Soviet Union collapsed and the Russian Federation appeared, in which at the moment about 80 % of the population is Russian, and only 20 % are other peoples. We have been saying since Soviet times that we have resolved the national issue in an exemplary manner, that we have not only a multinational, but also a multi-religious country and friendship of peoples.

In the 1970–1980s, everyone, from the CPSU Central Committee to university departments, believed that the national issue in the USSR was an issue of preserving small nations and developing national borderlands. This was, as we know, Lenin's plan at one time. But the Russian issue practically did not exist, since Russians make up the majority of the country's population. In fact, the most important thing in the national policy of the Russian Federation is the Russian issue. Why? One can fantasize whether Russia will exist as a state if national republics separate from it. (I believe that it should not, although we have witnessed how national republics broke

away from the common Soviet space, and currently they are new independent states.) But I cannot imagine Russia in which there are no Russians. That is why I, as a State Duma Deputy, in 2020 made a proposal to include a relevant amendment to the Constitution. My proposal was that the preamble of the Constitution should state that the Russian people, in alliance with other peoples, created the multinational Russian Federation.

The Constitution of the Russian Federation states that in order to amend the first or second chapter of the Fundamental Law, Constitutional Conference must be convened. This requirement does not apply to the preamble, however, at the insistence of the Chairman of the Constitutional Court of the Russian Federation Valery Dmitrievich Zorkin, they also did not edit the preamble in 2020 and all proposals, including mine, were postponed. In addition, my colleagues — the leaders of the group that collected the amendments — said that the Russian people do not need to be “stuck out”. At that time I even wrote an article “Let the Russians into the Constitution”, because there was no mention of the Russian people at all. It was only said that Russian is the official language.

I asked whether all proposals for amendments are shown to the President of the Russian Federation or does he receive those that have already been selected? I was assured that he sees all the amendments. This calmed me down. As a result, as you know, the Russian people were “let” into the Constitution: in the article on the state language it is written that the Russian language is the language of the state-forming people which is a part of the multinational union of equal peoples of the Russian Federation. True, the phrase “Russian people” has not appeared in the Fundamental Law, but this is an editorial matter.

Why am I telling you about this? Now our people find themselves in difficult circumstances caused not only by the special military operation, which makes many feel uncertain about the future, but also by the aggravation of the migration problem. There are many people trying to speculate on this topic. They demand tightening of migration policy, up to a complete retreat from Russia’s openness towards the former Soviet republics, primarily Central Asia, where the main flow of labor migrants

comes from. Indeed, migration from Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan is associated with certain problems — drug trafficking, the use of migrants to commit terrorist acts, as happened in Crocus City Hall, etc. As a result, we are now at a crossroads. In my opinion, the scale of the problem is not yet fully understood at the “top”, but the “bottom” understands it quite well. If you follow the logic that opponents of any cooperation with other nations build, then this is fraught with a surge of xenophobia, and I am not sure that it will be limited only to citizens of other states and will not create problems within the Russian Federation itself as a multinational country. It is critical.

Unfortunately, instead of really solving the long-standing problem, we often take seemingly logical, but essentially odious initiatives. Such as the new law, recently adopted in the first reading, which establishes a two-year requirement for being married to a Russian citizen to obtain not even citizenship, but a residence permit. It would seem like a small thing, but the enthusiasm that was shown in the adoption of this law suggests that we are going in the wrong direction, using the wrong means, and calling for the wrong things.

A. V. YAKOVENKO: — I invite Alexander Mikhailovich Kramarenko, Director of the Institute of Current International Problems of the Diplomatic Academy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, to speak.

A. M. KRAMARENKO: — Konstantin Fyodorovich, I understand your concern, but I must remind you that now many countries are at a crossroads, Russia in this sense is no exception. Our issue of a titular nation and the coexistence of different nationalities within one country is also not unique. Thus, in Great Britain there is no Parliament of England, although there are parliaments in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. And the English (though mostly of mature age) try to emphasize that they are English, and not British. Yes, we have to deal with the Soviet legacy, but this requires careful, balanced approaches.

And on the topic stated in the title of the section, I think we must proceed from the fact that the global empire of the West really exists, and we live in this empire. At the same time, BRICS has its own space of freedom, the opportunity to cooperate and expand ties. In general, regionalization will occur in global politics. There are already macro-regions within which countries will continue to develop and find solutions to common problems with their “neighbors”. Because global structures, such as the United Nations with its Security Council, UNESCO and other institutions, are controlled by the West, which is able to neutralize the initiatives of other participants and ensure that these institutions do not function as they were intended in their time.

In this regard, I would hope that BRICS will be an important association for developing ties in the field of culture and education. As Maria Vladimirovna rightly said, over the past decade and a half, cooperation within the BRICS framework has shown great progress. Joint documents are being adopted, forums are being held — this year alone, about 200 events are scheduled, including 20 at the ministerial level. Of course, there is the issue of creating an information pool of countries included in the association.

Of course, we are experiencing certain opposition from the West. Around 2010, Francis Fukuyama wrote in the New York Times that Western political thought has not yet overcome the objection to the equality of human dignity. This primarily concerns attitudes towards other cultures and civilizations, towards other religions.

One more point. Russian thinkers who were expelled from Russia in 1922 (the well-known “philosophers’ ship”) — Nikolai Berdyaev, Fyodor Stepanov, Semyon Frank, Yakov Bukshpan — in response to the first volume of Spengler’s famous work “The Decline of Europe”, wrote their own where they argued that nothing universal to mankind exists. Not only art, religion, morality have their own characteristics in each culture, but also such seemingly “objective” things as space, time, numbers and the like are different in each cultural era.

I think the establishment of equality of cultures and civilizations will take place within the framework of BRICS. This is a prototype of the future — not only political cooperation, but also cooperation that will come “from the roots”, taking into account

the original identity of cultures. And this will be a guarantee that the cultural and civilizational diversity of the world will finally find its worthy reflection in the political structure of the world, in the new polycentric world order.

A. V. YAKOVENKO: — Alexander Mikhailovich, thank you. I must say that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is actively working on issues that Russia has to resolve as the BRICS chair, including the cultural component of cooperation. Therefore, we will definitely present the ideas expressed here in the form of a special concept note on the development of cultural interaction between the BRICS countries. Among these ideas, not the least important is the issue of equality and respect for all cultures and civilizations.

Director of the Institute for African Studies Irina Olegovna Abramova, the floor is yours.

I. O. ABRAMOVA: — Dear colleagues, I want to speak not as the director of the Institute for African Studies, but as a Member of the Presidium of the Russian Academy of Sciences, because our meeting today is dedicated, among other things, to cooperation in the field of culture, science and education.

When someone sets a goal to destroy a country or society with minimal losses for themselves, the easiest way to do so is to start with education, health care and science. While we set ourselves great goals, the West is inventing more and more sophisticated tools. It would seem, what is the problem? We took the Western foundations of education and science development. In education it is the Bologna system, and in science it is the scientific citation system, the Hirsch Index. It seems like there is nothing to worry about, but in fact all this leads to the colonization of education and science, when professors and scientists work in the interests not of their country, but of the West. If you want to publish a work on a particular topic, you will one way or another send your research results to the journals that we have identified as the main ones, that is, American and Western European. Moreover, they themselves “inflate” the ratings, and we readily assess the results of our own science

not by the level of solving the issues of developing our economy or human capital, but by how unknown experts in the West assess them.

You see, this is simply a refusal to protect one's own national interests and goals. At the Russia-Africa Summit, the Minister of Science and Education of Mozambique said that Africans would like to set scientific goals for themselves, but they are not allowed to do this. And in Russia, let me remind you, the greatest achievements in recent years were in "closed" areas — the nuclear project and weapons development, because they did not fall under this system.

Unfortunately, the level of our science has fallen dramatically over the past 30 years, and largely because we are not working on what we need, but on what they need. Therefore, I believe that the most important task for the near future is to liberate the Russian education system and Russian science from colonial dependence.

I agree with Konstantin Fyodorovich: we must understand what to do within the country. But it is surprising that now, in the conditions of the Special Military Operation, the system of the Academy of Sciences has passed the so-called hundred-million grants, which determine the main tasks of our development. Despite the fact that a moratorium on publications in Scopus and Web of Science has been declared, a circular is coming from the Ministry of Education, which names publications in first and second quartile journals as the main criterion. How can it be?

This particular issue is an indicator of deep fundamental problems. What is the goal of science? What role does a person play in today's society? It is on the platform of BRICS and BRICS+ that we need to develop our own criteria for the development of national education and science, because the future of society will be based primarily on the achievements of science. Of course, if we want to develop.

Yesterday we talked about the financial system — about the need to gradually abandon the use of the dollar and create new financial instruments. Since 2018, we have regularly repeated that we need to return to clearing and other instruments, but all calculations still only use the dollar or euro. But all for naught — there is still no law.

M. V. ZAKHAROVA: — It is impossible to ensure that every step of a subordinate organization is monitored by a supervisory authority. Traffic rules exist so that drivers follow them themselves, control themselves, and only in case of violation of the rules do consequences occur.

A story happened in our region that illustrates what Irina Abramova is talking about. Scopus has supplanted our subordinate VAK journal “International Life” — it somehow “accidentally dropped out” from the list of journals publication in which gives points that measure the quality of printed work. And points mean, among other things, a salary. Of course, we restored justice, but, unfortunately, the points awarded for publication in our journal are not comparable with those of Scopus and other Western publications. There, it is a private system, and the level of influence and lobbying are completely different.

Why do we need laws regulating those activities? First of all, because we are talking about public funds here. Even if a university carries out some work privately, the basis for this work is still public, and the money that is paid for these publications ultimately does not come from private sources. It can be enshrined in the law, for example, that VAK publications are part of the scientific process.

A. V. YAKOVENKO: — Andrey Konstantinovich, your comment.

A. K. ISAEV: — The problem is that the basic laws related to the financing of certain areas are considered at the initiative of the government. The budget can only be adopted in the form in which it was submitted by the Government of the Russian Federation, and until 2014 the official course suggested integration into the Western scientific system. Since 2014, this course has been changing, but due to the inertia of the bureaucratic apparatus, changes are happening slowly.

A. V. YAKOVENKO: — We will fight with Hirsch. Floor is given to Valery Aleksandrovich Chereshev, Deputy President of the Russian Academy of Sciences.

V. A. CHERESHNEV: — BRICS was formed by five countries. There is a council on science and on young scientists within it. But recently the issue was discussed that it is very difficult for young scientists in BRICS to communicate, since it is a long way to fly to Brazil, China or India, and funds were allocated to solve the issue of communication, inter alia by our country.

We analyzed the number of publications in highly cited journals from 2019 to 2023. China published 5,273,707 articles, India — 1,482,682, the Russian Federation — 731,581, Brazil — about 700 thousand and South Africa — 198. That is, China, with 5 million inhabitants, published more than all other BRICS countries combined. Russia and China organized joint laboratories, centers, etc., and together they published 22,122 articles, which is 1 % of China's scientific output and 3 % of ours. That is, today joint cooperation is small and does not produce the significant results that it could.

We began to analyze why China is ahead in terms of the number of publications. There are innovation centers there, just like here, but there are more of them. The Chinese Academy of Sciences and the USSR Academy of Sciences were created on the same day, and the Chinese Academy completely copies the Soviet one — the same departments, regional orders, institutes. The only difference is that in the 1950s the Chinese removed the title of corresponding member, and in 1978 they separated social sciences into an independent Academy of Social Sciences. But our funding for science is 1.1 % of GDP, and in China it is 2.4 %. The United States and China are currently the world leaders by all indicators, and in terms of patents, China is twice ahead of the United States.

The Chinese are happy that they have such a developed Academy of Sciences, and they ask: why is your funding little? We explain that these are specifics of the current moment, etc. But we are glad that on February 8, at the celebrations of the 300th anniversary of the Academy of Sciences, the President said that the role of the Russian Academy of Sciences in the life of the country is fundamental and the Academy needs to be integrated into the process of adopting key government decisions. And when the law on the Russian Academy of Sciences reforming was

adopted, the entire Academy was against it — there was an understanding that the law that could stop the science development was wrong. It's good that there is an example from China — our system works great there, bringing dividends, real results and authority, and we have also begun to improve. Dmitry Likhachev was right saying that the past is the design of the future.

A. CROOKE: — It has been mentioned today that Russia feels the threat of the West, and St. Petersburg which remembers the siege, seems to be experiencing a second — global — siege again. I live in the West, but I don't speak in the name of the whole West, and many of us do not consider themselves related to these false Western ideas. People living in Europe and America are losing sight of the civil war and revolution that are currently unfolding in Western countries. Further on this all will continue to escalate, and it is still unknown who will become president of the United States, what will happen next, what this will mean for the country.

When we talk about revolution and counter-revolution, we miss the changing dynamics of the future. The West lost in Ukraine, this is the loss of its reputation and goodwill. The same applies to NATO, which is losing in the Middle East. This is already a huge mistake. The way China has now advanced indicates that the West is losing ground in trade wars, and reveals a deep economic crisis, a national debt crisis in both the United States and Western countries. This will change Europe and America. Which way, we don't know yet, because those who hate Russia hold the commanding heights. It's not allowed to be mentioned in the mass media, but you have to take it into account — when you talk about the collective West, you're talking about those who hate Russia because it challenges their values. A civil war is coming or is already underway in the West, and it is still difficult to predict who will win, what will happen to America and the countries of Western Europe. Now the image of the enemy has taken root in the minds of the collective West — this is Russia, and in Russia this is the collective West. But other times are coming.

A. V. YAKOVENKO: — I agree, these are completely uncertain processes, and we don't know much, but we have already seen the failures of the United States in Afghanistan, Libya, and other places, their losses. I hope that NATO will lose completely, it is a very dangerous period in Ukraine now. But we do not oppose BRICS to the collective West, but try to create an alternative, because we are looking to the future. Most international institutions and organizations are now almost completely controlled by the "Global West". And at the latest General Assembly vote on Ukraine, the majority of countries supported the resolution which puts us in a very bad position.

As for revolutions, those countries and organizations that ignore sanctions assist their occurrence.

S. ATLAGIĆ: — I will also talk about values. Many of my students don't even know what it is. Some believe that this is something that is desirable within a society, and perhaps contributes to the development of that society. This means that what is valuable to you may not be valuable to me. But there are universal, epochal, historical values, such as freedom, justice, well-being, etc. There is no other people at the end of the 20th century who doubted some of these values as much as the Serbs did in the 1990s. It all started not in 1999, when Serbia was bombed, but in 1991–1992, when the Croats and Slovaks, with the help of Germany, defeated Yugoslavia.

Russia, of course, must turn to itself, achieve economic and technological success, because this changes people's perception of it. But, on the other hand, it must be politically and economically present in the world. I have devoted my entire professional life to the study of propaganda and I tell my students that every person should become a propagandist for their culture. But I can't shake the impression that Russia doesn't promote its culture well enough. I see this in Serbia; despite the fact that the majority of our people adore Russia, more than 80 % of Serbs support what Russia is doing at the international level, and the pro-Western is a minority. In our public discourse, in conversations, BRICS is mentioned and written about, but, in my opinion, if Russia were not part of this association, it would not mean anything to the

Serbs. It's just that Russia means BRICS, and Russia means justice and freedom. And Russia is a value for us.

In a few days, the UN will consider an EU resolution accusing the Serbs of genocide in Srebrenica. And the Serbs have now turned to Russia again, which means Russia is a value for them. But it seems to me that Russia is not a value for many Russians. I often come to Russia, give lectures at universities, and I cannot come to terms with the fact that Russian or Russian-speaking students do not realize what a unique civilization and culture they belong to. And the first step that needs to be taken is the promotion of Russian culture within Russia itself.

D. A. DEGTEREV: — The hegemony of the West rests on structural power — the relationship of “control and influence” associated with the regulation of resources and the distribution of zones of influence, that is, it creates the rules by which everyone plays. This is the NATO security mechanism, IMF finance and loans, and in production it is the OECD and control over the creation and dissemination of knowledge. Last February, the US Joint Chiefs of Staff adopted the Joint Concept for Competing, a document on US strategy, in particular the need for a global approach to competition. In it, the space of international competition is formed by military forces, the formation or manipulation of the international agenda, and cognitive mental warfare, that is, influence through ideology, education, information, and innovation.

But the main thing, of course, is the formation of meanings and values. There are ratings of academic publishing houses, for example, the Sense Ranking of Academic Publishers, where the publishing houses of Cambridge, Oxford, etc. are among the first. That is, these are those who form, for example, the concept of democracy. And second-tier publishers consider democracy in Asia, Africa, etc. Naturally, there are no Russian publications in this hierarchy. The question here is precisely about the formation of meanings. Even the term “contemplative regional studies” is used when we simply study other regions without any applied aspect, since theory structures consciousness.

But not all theories are equally useful. Let's say there is a theory of internal colonization and, accordingly, internal decolonization, which justifies the decolonization of Russia. Let's say a conference is being held in the West, and if you are followers of this theory, then when applying for participation in the conference, in your affiliation you indicate not Russia, but Ichkeria, Cherkessia, etc. And in this regard, we learn a lot even from Africans, because they have richer experience in dependent development and have created conditionally safe theories that we can partially borrow.

Western countries dominate not only due to objective preconditions — we are now leaders in many areas, but due to the configuration of the network, all contacts go through Western structures, centers, bibliometric systems, through their publishing houses and international conferences. BRICS is an attempt to somehow change this system, form new centers and reconfigure the network.

There is a lot beyond Western social theories. At one time we conducted basic Soviet research on neocolonialism. By now, the most serious anti-colonial discourse was written in the Soviet Union, and it is 80 % topical.

Of course, very little is published in Russian. We need to cooperate in this regard. This is an issue of the capacity of BRICS publishing houses and the mutual recognition of our bibliometric entry systems, that is, the process is already underway, but it goes slowly. For example, the Chinese have begun to include our journals in their ratings. Many countries do not have their own ratings and rely on Scopus and Web of Science.

V. V. NAUMKIN: — Indeed, we have systemic problems in the orientation of the state and public policy. Everything goes heavily and slowly, different interest groups collide. This is reality, and we are fighting against it both in our parliament and in society. And we take some positions one way or another.

I am against dedollarization, I am an ardent supporter of dollarization. We have it, and the deputies present here do a lot to that end, for example Irina Olegovna. But there is an objective reality. And the other side of the issue is the extreme difficulty of

creating a single currency for any association. No one succeeds in it. There is a key trend — the strengthening of nation states; this is a common trend in the world. And you don't need to get carried away by some misleading ideas.

By the way, we are not doing enough to promote the Russian language and Russian culture. For example, in some even friendly country there is an organization that is engaged in the propagation of the Russian language, but look — there is a lock hanging on the door there all the time. And we need financial resources, which the state lacks, especially now. There are priorities that overshadow cultural integration and cultural imperatives.

But we must care about the attractiveness of what we do. And it's not just that our Russian journal has the same rating as some leading American one. It also has to do with financial resources, the level of scientific research, language issues, the propagation of the Russian language and Russian culture, which is loved and respected. And we see this happening. However, against this background, some countries fall out of our sight. Let's say Serbia is a nation that is friendly to us, but there is Bosnia and Herzegovina nearby, which, in my opinion, everyone has forgotten about. And we, on the contrary, are working on this, although we are the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences. This year alone we had several trips there, and joint programs. We have done a lot in terms of applied science, the ideas and proposals that we send, inter alia to your department. But currently this must be difficult in this mass of states to pay attention to each of them. Right sense of priorities in foreign policy and cultural cooperation is required. With regard to the unpleasant limitations associated with the system of priorities and ratings, something is being done, inter alia by the Academy of Sciences. But the Academy made a mistake by actually transferring the rights to disseminate the achievements of Russian science to the American publishing structure Pleiades Publishing. For now, they are mainly in the hands of our American partners, and it is not possible to change this immediately.

A. V. YAKOVENKO: — The floor is given to Professor Olivier Roqueplo.

O. ROQUEPLO: — I would like to comment on what my colleagues have said. Professor D. A. Degterev expressed the opinion that is consonant with mine, namely that every time we talk about something global, we note the strength of the Anglo-Saxon world. Since the 18th century, thanks to it, a global world began to be created, which affects all nations. BRICS should become the next pattern and break the monopoly of the Anglo-Saxon world on international communication.

Today I speak to you in English, but in the future, I hope this need will no longer arise. I am convinced that real exchange between cultures should be conducted in the native language. BRICS should use Russian, Chinese, Hindi, Portuguese, African national languages instead of English.

English as an international language of communication is associated with globalist culture. And this is the enemy of culture and civilization. Today, the globalist culture is destroying existing cultures in Europe. The generations that were born after me are completely illiterate and do not understand the world they live in.

However, there is a beacon of hope — BRICS. This organization continues to follow the idea of anti-colonialism, which originated in the Soviet Union and existed throughout the world through the ideology of communism, trade unions and labor organizations. In this case, we are talking not so much about ideology, but about the general humanistic anti-colonial movement, including cultural and scientific potential.

We must build a bridge between civilizations that will help people to understand each other better. India, China, South Africa, Brazil and the new BRICS+ members (Iran, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Ethiopia) all once faced the threat of colonialism. Russia was in the same situation — under the threat of colonialism, which existed for a long time.

I believe that science, art, culture, education are associated with the anti-colonial movement, so they need to be supported. There must be resources, centers for BRICS cultural activities. We are fighting for the cultural existence of all peoples

and civilizations. In my opinion, BRICS can become a humanistic organization or it can cease to exist.

A. V. YAKOVENKO: — This union at least offers equal rights and opportunities. From this point of view, BRICS is a humanistic organization where there is no hint of dictatorship: at the meetings of the participating countries, no one advances their agenda, sacrificing the interests of others. When Russia was part of the G8, it was a G7 group against one country. If we look at BRICS today, we will see that there is no pressure there, no attempts to block initiatives, but there is a desire to find a common denominator in the work. The BRICS countries have many things in common. As for the UN, here we see resistance from the West, which controls this organization. That's why now we are halfway there. There is a lot of work ahead — it is necessary to formulate a humanistic agenda that will suit all countries.

The floor is given to Jafar Okray from Turkey.

J. OKRAY: — First of all, I would like to thank the organizers of the Likhachev Readings for the opportunity to take part in the forum. I represent the independent foundation for strategic and social research Marmara Group, which was created 37 years ago by a group of businessmen, scientists, politicians with the goal of establishing a dialogue and communication, first in the Balkan region, and now in a wider area (we have friends in Austria, China and etc.). Our message is that peace at home means peace around the world.

Today, representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation M. V. Zakharova has expressed the idea of cultural genocide that is currently taking place. Yesterday evening we visited the theater where we watched a wonderful ballet. 99 % of the people in the hall were Russians. It reminded me of the times of the Soviet Union. The same thing is happening nowadays. I would like cultural events (plays, ballets, etc.) to take place all over the world.

I represent Turkey, which will find it difficult to join BRICS in the short term. Turkey is a NATO member and is quite close to the European Union. But I am

inspired by what BRICS, which has clear goals, is doing. For example, the issue of money transfers needs to be resolved. It is now difficult for Turkish businesses to do business with Russian companies due to the payment systems blocking; the same is for many BRICS countries. That's why a solution to this problem should be found, and everyone will benefit from it.

BRICS should be focused on the future and include as many African countries as possible, because Africa is the future. Today is the time for the BRICS countries, Turkey, and African states. The interaction should be beneficial both for us and for Africa.

A. V. YAKOVENKO: — I ask the Deputy Minister of Information of the Republic of Belarus Igor Ivanovich Buzovsky to speak.

I. I. BUZOVSKY: — I would like to say a few words about the challenges and prospects for the formation of a new global platform for cultural cooperation, BRICS. This refers primarily to geopolitical space. This also includes the approaches of individual states. But both a state, and the BRICS union, are not just a geopolitical space.

BRICS as an association will carry out a real mission when it gains an understanding of its member countries' mission which represents a certain historical cultural platform that consolidates them all. We must understand that the future is not just economics, but it's first of all geopolitics, philosophy, sociology, meanings, and only then economics. History confirms that as soon as we lose meaning, we lose understanding of the development of economic strategies, including theoretical ones.

Who will formulate the semantic component that we have consolidated today — the prospects for forming a platform for cultural cooperation manifested in culture, education, and art? Elites. V. V. Putin said that today it is necessary to rethink the concept of "elite", due to the fact that it has lost the meaning it should have. Elitism is not wealth, not success in the version in which liberal philosophy thinks of it, but trends that we must develop and mechanisms for identifying or

cultivating in society the best in education, science, and culture. In my opinion, this is the key task today. For this reason, public organizations, political parties, and the cultural sphere are focused on promoting the best, those who make up the elite heritage — the intelligentsia. Philosophers and intellectuals are often targets for opposing forces, and to this day we consider them almost marginal.

At the present stage, the theoretical component should be one of the determining factors in the development strategy of society, including the BRICS.

I will give one indicator to outline how Belarus is oriented towards the Russian Federation, civilization, people who are changing the global space and whom we want to follow. Creating strategies is a task that is also transmitted through books and publishing houses. The latter work today with the sphere that shapes meanings and the elite, so it should be concentrated in the hands of people who govern or plan to govern the state. A study conducted in Belarus among reading people by the Institute of Sociology of the National Academy of Sciences revealed that nowadays about 80 % of all literature in Belarus is from Russia (and about 85 % read paper books).

I perceive this indicator as a problem. Because concepts and meanings are transmitted through literature from the Russian Federation, and not always those that we consider priority. Today, this colossal problem underscores the need to work with the elites, the people who not only write, but also read books.

As you know, a pessimist is a well-informed optimist. Judging by what is happening and the emerging trends, now we have the hardest times, but it will not be easier later on. Therefore, we can say: “Blessed be the obstacles, through them we grow”. This tempers us, as today’s time has shown. We are becoming stronger, healthy forces are being consolidated.

If we talk about the future, here I want to argue a little with D. S. Likhachev. The future is determined, but we are going towards it in different ways. We are from different countries, we have different philosophical and cultural messages, and within BRICS we will move together on different paths. This future, I am sure, will be bright, because we are moving towards God, the light, which is what everyone gathered here sincerely strives for today.

A. V. YAKOVENKO: — Our friend from Tajikistan Erkinkhon Rakhmatullozoda, the floor is yours.

E. RAKHMATULLOZODA: — This is my first time participating in the Likhachev Readings and I consider it my duty to express sincere gratitude to our colleagues from the University of the Humanities and Social Sciences and A. S. Zapesotsky for creating excellent conditions, an atmosphere of benevolence, justice, equality and mutual respect, which, by a happy coincidence, turned out to be the main principles of the BRICS work.

The invitation to the Readings stated that the main topic of the forum was BRICS as a new platform for dialogue among civilizations. Presenting the positions of the countries that have joined the BRICS, especially recently, is of interest to our audience. Since I know a little less well how the political elite of the BRICS countries approaches the issue of membership in this organization, I decided to make a report on Iran's position on this issue.

This was facilitated by two circumstances. In January 2024, I was in Iran to establish partnerships between the Tajik state, our National University and relevant Iranian research institutions. Iranian colleagues proposed including the issue of jointly promoting the dialogue of civilizations on the agenda. I then said that this issue has not been discussed since the time when this initiative was put forward in the 1990s by the country's President Seyed Mohammad Khatami. Even articles by colleagues from MGIMO appeared about why the issue of promoting the dialogue of civilizations is not moving forward. I said that I would think about it, and in the evening I received an invitation to the Likhachev Readings, the topic of which was consonant with the dialogue of civilizations. The next day I replied to my Iranian colleagues: "Let's put this issue on the agenda".

Iran and Tajikistan have a lot in common — language, literature, history, etc. Therefore, I decided to present some aspects of Iran's position on the issue of membership in BRICS. Iran is a country with a rich culture, a unique geopolitical

position, which has established contacts and ties with almost all the BRICS countries, and with some of them for hundreds of years and millennia. Therefore, the issue of membership in BRICS was on their agenda and was a logical step on Iran's part. Especially since for many years, against the backdrop of pressure from comprehensive sanctions from Western countries, Iran has been increasingly actively looking for ways to cooperate with other states.

BRICS represents an attractive alternative to traditional Western partners for Iran. In this regard, the participation of this country in the work of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, where the BRICS countries play a leading role, has acquired particular significance. In such a situation, Iran's entry into BRICS was a predictable and logical step, which happened in January 2024.

I express the opinion of Iran's political science community, the country's intellectual elite. Many people see Iran as predominantly a theocratic state with little political pluralism. But, oddly enough, it is out there. There are pro-government, conservative, reformist forces operating in Iran — there are ongoing discussions between them, including on the issue of membership in BRICS. Iranian analysts point out that everything is not quite like that — it is much more complicated than we imagine.

A. V. YAKOVENKO: — On this note, I give the floor to Professor Vladimir Aleksandrovich Shamakhov.

V. A. SHAMAKHOV: — The BRICS global platform is associated with four main goals-terms: alternative, equality, traditionalism and sovereignty. Where sovereignty, as colleagues have already said, is not so much economic as it is semantic and value-based. Using the example of the five BRICS countries that created this organization, we see that they all followed the path of semantic sovereignty. And only after that did they acquire serious economic sovereignty, individually for each and for the five as a whole. Seeing this, other countries began to join BRICS.

Compared to the BRICS countries, there is no value sovereignty in the G7: the countries included in the G7 are dependent. Turkey is in a difficult position in this regard, as J. Okray has said today. It strives for value sovereignty, but cannot do this within NATO. Therefore, Turkey will have to choose.

Economic sovereignty is based primarily on semantic, and then on financial sovereignty. For a long time it was supposed that the economy is shaped primarily by finance. But now we clearly see that it is formed by meanings, and finance becomes a tool of development.

Dmitry Ivanovich Mendeleev formulated the concept of “moral economics”. For many it sounds unusual, but in fact it is absolutely correct. Today’s reality confirms this. Economics must be, above all, moral.

Speaking about the great Russian culture, St. Petersburg, ballet, let’s turn to the history of their formation. The culture that we are proud of was developed by merchants who later became factory owners: they opened museums, theaters, etc. Therefore, the thesis “If there are factories, there will be culture”, which Mikhail Viktorovich has voiced today, seems correct and fair to me.

BRICS today is not a state, not politics, not power, but first of all people, different communities, culture, history, traditions, etc. The diversity of cultures is important, but we also need to think about the fact that this community is largely determined by language, as our colleague Roqueplo has said. A common language is more important than a common currency.

Academician V. V. Naumkin proposed to join forces, including in this company. It seems to me that Alexander Sergeevich, together with his team, colleagues, friends, partners, is quite ready for the Likhachev Readings to be held not just once a year, but to work on an ongoing basis. Why don’t we create a club like Valdai or Izborsk ones? I propose to organize the Likhachev or Neva Club and ask you to consider this proposal.

A. V. YAKOVENKO: — The idea is interesting, especially since there are modern technical means that allow for an exchange of opinions. But the most important thing is the development of points of view and the projection of meanings.

M. V. SHMAKOV: — The Federation of Independent Trade Unions has a Fund of 100th Anniversary of the Trade Union Movement in Russia. We will help Alexander Sergeevich if such a decision is made.

A. V. YAKOVENKO: — I give the floor to Sergey Alekseevich Tsyplyaev, Member of the Council for Foreign and Defense Policy.

S. A. TSYPLYAEV: — Most often, we consider the following picture as a model of what is happening in the world: there is a state that is consolidated from the point of view of culture, politically, and to a large extent ethnically. There is a process of interaction, competition, and search for a common basis between states. However, the real picture is much more complex. We are entering a post-Huntingtonian world. There are no separate civilizations that conflict on the borders, but they are intermingled at tremendous speed, since representatives of all kinds of cultures and nationalities appear in each country.

The question arises: how to organize life and find a cultural basis during the great intermingling of peoples? Several positions are possible here. We cannot go to the extreme and say: “Let’s create mono-ethnic, mono-religious, mono-ideological countries”. The other extreme suggesting opening of all the gates is also wrong, since the speed of a human adaptation to new realities is related to the speed of generational change. As a recipe, apparently, illiberal ones will also be proposed, for example, restriction of migration (here we need to discuss the visa regime, the selection of the most interesting and suitable ones, etc.).

It is necessary to do everything within the country in order to exclude the actualization of what divides us, and to look for what unites us from the point of view

of the cultural foundation — common in different religions, ethnic groups and traditions.

The main task is to create a powerful culture that can become a “solvent” for those who fall into it. We need to invest in education and training of children. But the intermingling process cannot be stopped — this is the dominant feature of future decades and centuries.

The right set of methods and tools should be used. For example, one of the important points is maintaining the secular nature of the state. I consider the introduction of religious education in schools to be strategically short-sighted, since instilling the concept of division from childhood largely leads to a split of the country into warring factions that compete and do not mutually accept each other’s positions. The key challenge is how to create a powerful culture that will absorb and attract the best.

In the course of our discussion, we sometimes act from a position of fear in relation to the outside world, making attempts to close ourselves off from it. This is the position of the weak, because if we believe that we have something to present to the world, then we should not be afraid of openness and communication with other cultures.

We want to follow the example of China, but we do exactly the opposite. The first testament of Deng Xiaoping (1977) states: no country in the world, regardless of its political structure, is able to carry out modernization if it adheres to a closed-door policy. And China began to “open the doors” step by step. It is clear that thoughtless acceptance of absolutely everything is inappropriate, but mechanical isolation on the principle of “let’s close ourselves down” will also lead to no good. For example, the Chinese successfully apply the Bologna education system, although they did not formally introduce it. Will we be able to cooperate with China in the field of higher education if we build a sovereign system that has nothing in common with China’s one?

The position of representatives of the Russian Academy of Sciences which is, let me remind you, an imported structure, is somewhat surprising. At one time,

Peter I not only adopted the organizational structure, but also brought the first academicians from the West. Today, representatives of the Academy advocate the creation of our own, sovereign science. I am a physicist by training and studied mathematical methods of quantum field theory. We know how our genetics was destroyed several decades ago. They also wanted to destroy quantum physics, but it turned out that the atomic project would be impossible without it. By the way, in this example you can see how important international cooperation is in science. I would advise everyone to visit the Museum of the Foreign Intelligence Service — it clearly shows the contribution our intelligence made to the implementation of the atomic project. This was also an exchange of information with the West, although through such a “peculiar” channel.

There are also many questions regarding the organization of scientific activities. I worked in the structure of the Academy of Sciences, namely in Steklov Mathematical Institute. So, the researchers there, doctors of sciences, often did not understand what the neighboring laboratory was working on. How, in this case, can ministry officers assess the work of scientists?

In my opinion, the funds allocated for the development of science should be at the disposal of the Academy of Sciences. Nobody knows how to optimally manage them except for the scientists themselves. But this requires self-organization of scientists, and this is one of the functions of the Academy. Of course, financial control by the government is necessary, but now, since officials have to assess what they cannot understand, they are starting to come up with artificial methods of assessment. Scientometric research was not carried out at our institute, but everyone knew who was worth what. And our journals “Theoretical and Mathematical Physics”, “Journal of Experimental and Theoretical Physics” were translated into English and published in America (we then received checks).

A short comment on the speech of Konstantin Fyodorovich Zatulin. I objected to introducing any amendments to the preamble of the Constitution, including enshrining the special role of the Russian people. In my opinion, this is a sign of weakness, as if we are afraid of something in our own country, where we are 80 %.

What should the rest of the nations say in this case? Are they also state-forming? And if not, then what? State-destroying? Every time representatives of the Russian national movement say that it is necessary to draw the borders of the Russian land, I have a question: “Do you understand that this means dividing Russia into Russian and non-Russian? Are you sure that the non-Russian part will not demand sovereignty?”

Any idea that works to divide a single political nation into diversity can be explosive. The Russian people have nothing to be afraid of. We have a great history and a great culture, so we need not be afraid of foreign influences. No one will change us if we don't want it ourselves.

A. V. YAKOVENKO: — It's hard for me to agree that Russia is closing itself down and isolating itself. For example, RT and many other Russian media outlets were closed in Western countries on their initiative. Our journalists are not allowed to attend press conferences in the Élysée Palace, for example, while Western media correspondents continue to work in Russia; no new restrictions have been introduced against them. It is not we who are self-isolating, but it is they who are isolating us. Some things are being done on a bilateral basis.

What is happening in the cultural sphere? For example, our exhibition activities were traditionally focused on Europe; we paid unacceptably little attention to other countries. And how did it end? In Europe they began to close our exhibitions and seize our funds. We all remember how France refused to return our cultural values, how paintings were renamed in Great Britain, and much more.

Europe is trying to reduce contacts with Russia to a minimum. They stopped inviting us to conferences; in fact, all exchanges in the field of book publishing were closed.

Naturally, we try to find new opportunities and new markets in other countries. But such issues cannot be resolved in one day or even in a year — a major exhibition at the museum takes several years to prepare. We are trying to establish interaction

with different countries, but the West began to threaten them with new sanctions — not only for economic cooperation, but also for cultural one.

Many of the foreign participants of the Likhachev Readings came, as they say, at their own peril and risk, because currently visiting Russia is often dangerous. Notably, threats arise not here, but in their home countries. We all know the former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Austria, Mrs. Kneissl. I have great respect for this smartest woman, but in her homeland she was literally persecuted, cancelled just like Russian culture.

Contacts with Germany and France virtually ceased. The dialogue between the elites was interrupted, and we are now in a transition period when we need to build relationships with other countries, at least with those that are ready to accept us. This will continue until the West changes its position, and this will only happen when new political leaders and new parties come to power there. Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin directly says that we are open to interaction.

So there is no self-isolation. Another thing is that we are trying to protect our intellectual field from Western influence, which, in principle, works to weaken the country. But let's recall who was the first to introduce the law on foreign agents. This was in the 1930s in the USA, but now the West is "incriminating" us with a well-known law that was originally an American invention. What is happening now with the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations? The ambassadors of Western European countries here refused to come to a meeting with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation — is this the new norm? Thus, the entire system of diplomatic contacts may fall apart. And in the UK, when the Skripal incident occurred, we wrote more than a hundred notes that remained unanswered. Such a violation of international obligations and simply political rudeness have never happened throughout the history. Rules and foundations are breaking. The West talks about a world based on rules, but today these rules are interpreted one way and tomorrow another.

I repeat, no one in Russia advocates isolation; we are still open to cooperation. It's just that the period of transformation will take a certain amount of time necessary

to build new connections. I think that in a few years we will be able to switch to other forms of cooperation. In this sense, BRICS is a very good form of interaction, because the basis of this association is equality.

In fact, if it had not been for what happened now in Ukraine, then, probably, there would not have been a division of the world into a majority and a minority. Now any business is forced to take into account political pressure, threats of sanctions, etc. And that is why the idea of de-dollarization and the creation of a new international financial system based on the policies of the BRICS countries arose. Russia will not be able to implement this project on its own, but it is becoming an ambassador of the aspirations of many countries around the world. For example, states in the Middle East fear that, just as the gold exchange standard was abolished in 1971 under the Bretton Woods system, the circulation of cash dollars may also be abolished, because the US will never be able to pay off a debt of 34 trillion at current rates.

So Russia today is the most discriminated country in the world, both economically and culturally. But God forbid that we isolate ourselves, and I don't see any signs of self-isolation. Moreover, we are now even more open than before.

K. F. ZATULIN: — Indeed, the West is trying to isolate Russia, but we already hear that Russia should isolate itself from the rest of the world. Of course, this is not the policy of the country's leadership, but such ideas are present in the social process.

But I would like to answer Sergey Alekseevich Tsyplyaev. I explained in detail what my proposal was and what the result was. In my amendment I did not use the term "state-forming", but this was the wording that was adopted. You, Sergey Alekseevich, are absolutely right when you say that we need to look for the optimum. In my opinion, the optimum is that, on the one hand, we must respect the interests of the state-forming people, on the other hand, we must understand that this does not mean the right to xenophobia.

You say: "We, the Russian people, should not be afraid of anything". However, we are afraid, although we shouldn't be. And if not, then what is migrantophobia? If

we follow the path that you propose, we will lose the ability to be a unifier and a “solvent”. We lost territory and people due to the collapse of the USSR, and we will not attract them back if we constantly demonstrate a desire to isolate ourselves. How can you simultaneously create Eurasian unions and say: “We must immediately build a fence on the border”?

The agency responsible for migration policy made a mistake by opening the gates to everyone without proper control. For example, I believe that when citizens of Tajikistan become citizens of Russia, this does not meet the national interests of Tajikistan. But since 2007, we have been implementing a state program to promote the voluntary resettlement of compatriots, and within the framework of this program, citizens of Tajikistan were given the green light. The governor of the Kaluga region terminated this program in the territory he is responsible for. Why? Because it turned out that 63 % of those receiving citizenship in the Kaluga region are citizens of Tajikistan. Of course, this is too much — what do they currently have in common with compatriots? However, it would be overkill too to create such harsh conditions for them that they would stop coming to us.

M. V. ZAKHAROVA: — Sergey Alekseevich, I have a question for you. Alexander Vladimirovich gave some examples of Russia’s isolation from the West, and I could give many more of them — as a person whose visas were closed, accreditation was cancelled, and who now is not even allowed to fly over some countries. Perhaps I misunderstood you in some way?

A. TSYPLYAEV: — Everything that was said by Alexander Vladimirovich is absolutely true, can’t argue with that. The point is that we are prone to extremes. Either there is absolute openness — we take everything without reasoning, or on the contrary: “This is offered by the West, which means we don’t need it”. I call for a reasonable and effective approach. Let’s assess ideas and technologies regardless of the source: is it beneficial to us, does it meet our national interests, will it work for us? And not to proceed from the fact that “what is proposed by the West is bad”.

A. V. YAKOVENKO: — Mr. Okoli, you have the floor.

M. OKOLI: — First of all, I would like to thank the organizers of this wonderful forum for the invitation. I am glad to contribute to the work of the Likhachev Readings. In today's world, there is nothing more difficult, but at the same time more joyful, than openly and sincerely exchanging opinions, collaborating and working together to achieve a better life for all humanity. Everywhere and at all times this is the main goal of world politics and international interaction. Truth always triumphs sooner or later. There are very kind people living in Russia who believe in the power of persuasion, in the progress of humanism, in equal rights for everyone. Presently, the path to these worthy goals is especially difficult.

The spiritual values of the Russian people, which today unite them more than ever, are very clear to us, and we share them. Russians can rightfully be proud of their country and the contribution they make to the progress of world civilization and culture.

However, in many African countries a real information war is being waged against Russia. I had the opportunity to participate in the organization of several BRICS conferences in Nigeria, and they had a powerful resonance. Among the participants there were politicians and scientists, university professors from different countries, including Russia, many took part online. All mass media in Nigeria responded vividly to this event. They wrote about it in newspapers, showed it on television — everything in a positive way.

I have come to the conclusion that often a negative opinion about a particular country is formed simply due to insufficient or distorted information. Even among scientists, many do not understand the essence of what is happening in Russia, because they receive information mostly from Western sources. Something needs to be done about this.

A. V. YAKOVENKO: — It's not that simple.

M. OKOLI: — When someone wants to force you to believe a lie, this lie is repeated many times. The first reaction of the public is: “this is a lie”, but the “information” is reported on television, heard in interviews, and everyone thinks: “Someone paid these people well to say this”. Well, I must say that I organized and held the BRICS conference at my own expense.

And I would also like to say about the policy pursued by Russia in Africa. We recall with nostalgia the times when the Soviet Union took an active part in the development of the economy and humanitarian sphere of African countries. But Russia is not the Soviet Union; now there is private ownership of the means of production. When an enterprise receives an order from the state, it, as in all other cases, first of all thinks about how much profit it will receive. But in Africa, not everyone understands the difference between the USSR and modern Russia, so it is necessary to conduct explanatory work.

However, Russia has many advantages. For example, one export commodity that is in short supply in Africa and hinders development is electricity. In Russia, as Mikhail Viktorovich said, there is a unique nuclear reactor. If its output is high enough, then why not use it as an export item? I am sure that we could find many more such areas where we can organize successful mutually beneficial cooperation.

A. V. YAKOVENKO: — I think it would be very good if as many journalists as possible came from Nigeria to Russia so that they would tell Africans and the whole world the truth about what they see here. We will be very happy to host them.

And now the floor is given to Mr. Bachelet.

J.-L. BACHELET: — Since I am a musician, writer and playwright, I am interested in individual destinies, and the world of general ideas is alien to me. Therefore, when I see so many great specialists who know how to formulate their thoughts in terms of abstract concepts, it delights me. And, of course, I try to learn from you.

In France there is a legend about the famous philosopher Gustave Le Bon. When asked by a journalist what ideals he had fought for during the First World War, Le Bon allegedly replied: “What ideals? I joined the partisans when I saw German soldiers cutting roses in my garden”. That is, his own, very specific interests were infringed. Therefore, when I listen to discussions about the prospects of BRICS, it scares me a little because behind this abbreviation I see something abstract. This is like the notorious American dream, of which, as we know, several million people have become victims. And therefore I am grateful to Mr. Shamakhov for reminding: the goal of BRICS should not be power, but the well-being of people. In my opinion, this is the most important thing — to remember that behind any political decisions and structures there are individual destinies.

When I was a schoolboy, there were many foreigners in our class from Spain, Greece, Argentina, Central African countries, etc. Therefore, since childhood, I have had an idea of what a dialogue of cultures is, and I actively participate in it to the best of my ability. And I can say for sure: no matter how cooperation between the BRICS countries develops, it is necessary to think about the fate of people and undertake all actions with an open heart.

A. V. YAKOVENKO: — The next speaker is the writer, winner of the literary prize “For Peace and Tolerance” Mr. Morad.

Al-Khattab Al-Ibrahimi Al-Cherifi Al-Idrissi MORAD: — I listened with great interest to all the speeches, but especially those of Ms. Zakharova and Mr. Zatulin. I must say that I would be very happy if France joined BRICS. The West is very attentive to the development of cooperation among the BRICS countries, and I would like to present to your attention the Western view of this situation. We view BRICS as a geopolitical and economic coalition, but it still remains an informal club without a general secretariat. In an attempt to coordinate the policies and actions of all participants, decisions are made by consensus, but, in our opinion, collective influence should be strengthened.

The BRICS model itself looks like an alternative to the Western liberal model, so I hope that BRICS will find answers to many questions that the West cannot answer. The directions of BRICS development are determined by two groups of countries: Russia, China and Iran, on the one hand, India, Brazil, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, on the other. The second group retains common strategic interests with the West. The point of convergence is the reformatting or re-creation of international organizations such as the UN and the WTO. But there are still differences in economic interaction strategies, and the economic development of countries varies greatly.

We are very grateful to Russia for the Russia-Africa Economic Forum held in St. Petersburg in July 2023. As a result, a large number of agreements and contracts were signed in various areas — security, infrastructure development, transport, energy. However, we have to admit that, unfortunately, the dynamics of economic interaction have become more restrained due to the slowing economic development of China and South Africa.

I would like to remind you that the Francophone world is made up of just over 370 million people, of which 160 million are the African part: 47 % of the Francophone population in the world are Africans.

And most importantly, the world is changing. Major political leaders decide to change the world monetary system.

Yuri Ushakov, diplomatic adviser to Vladimir Putin, said on March 5 this year that BRICS is working to create an independent payment system that is built on digital currencies and blockchain. BRICS wants to create a single digital currency for the states of the association, which will provide it with a significant increase in trade exchanges and economic autonomy. This will also allow BRICS to avoid US sanctions that are based on the extraterritoriality of the US law. However, this will be very difficult, since there are many contradictions of different levels between the BRICS countries. But what is particularly important is whether independent businesses and local private actors within BRICS itself can be confident that digital payments will work. Today, the world of finance is waiting for the report that Russia

will present to BRICS in October, when it will chair the association. And it promised to propose measures aimed at improving the system. A month ago, the Americans also declared a digital war and released a central bank digital currency (CBDC), which is compatible with the SWIFT payment system. The future of international finance is now in Russia's hands, as a digital war has been declared between the US and BRICS.

A. V. YAKOVENKO: — There will be no war. We will create an alternative, fair financial system that will stand above any sanctions regimes and give all countries equal opportunities to trade. Because now, unfortunately, the United States, with the help of the financial system, is holding back the development of countries, not only Russia, but also China and others. This is a noose that needs to be gotten rid of.

The floor is given to journalist Dmitry Olegovich Babich.

D. O. BABICH: — The terrifying words “war”, “genocide” etc. may seem to be a hyperbole to many. Recently, the Polish newspaper Rzeczpospolita published a study entitled “Why are Russian planes still flying?” They were interested in how we get spare parts, because Boeing and Airbus stopped supplying spare parts since the beginning of the special military operation. The newspaper found this out thanks to an investigative group inside Russia. Who supplies us with these parts? I won't name companies or even countries, but it turned out that parts come to us from Muslim countries. And the newspaper called for these suppliers to be put in prison and sanctions imposed on them. And a very important thing — it tried to morally humiliate them by the fact that they receive money for these spare parts. Imagine, there are regions in Russia where food cannot be delivered other than by plane. We save people. And the people who sell us aircraft parts save people, but they are said to be bad, vicious, and subject to freedom deprivation.

It is obvious that here we are dealing with a truly totalitarian ideology. In fact, there are not two kinds of totalitarianism — Nazi and communist ones, there are

three. At the beginning of the 20th century there were nationalism, socialism and liberalism — normal post-Christian ideologies, quite successful at the very beginning. The world owes them a lot. But each of them had a bastard, that is, a primitive variant terrible for billions of people. For nationalism it is Nazi Germany, for the wonderful socialist ideas of the late 19th century it is the early Soviet Union and Maoism. And now we have reached the totalitarian version of liberalism, let's call it ultra-liberalism. These totalitarian regimes have one thing in common which was evident in this story with airplanes. They confuse a person's political beliefs and morality — if you are against our policies, you are not just mistaken, you are immoral. There is a whole campaign going on in the West stating that Ukraine is losing the war, it has few weapons, and the Russians are forcing them back. This implies: Republicans in Congress do not give money, which means they are scoundrels and are to blame for the deaths of these people. They are immoral people. This is exactly what the French, German, English and American press writes. It would seem that we should be happy about this — the victory of the Russian troops, we are advancing, they are retreating, they have few weapons. But in fact, it turns out that we are being drawn into this game.

Now regarding BRICS and anti-colonial discourse — who is bad and who is good. The West also has its own anti-colonial discourse, a whole theory that Beethoven's music is totalitarian and bad because it is not African, etc. We, of course, under no circumstances should get involved in this and repeat their expressions, assimilate vocabulary, even the word "anti-colonialism". Maybe we should find another word. Their anti-colonialism differs from ours in that it is totalitarian. It is typical for any totalitarian system (we saw this even in the early Soviet Union) that everything is politicized: sports, art, culture, education. You don't just ski, but at one time you did for the Soviet Union and socialism, now you do for the victory of liberalism throughout the world. Or they won't let you go skiing because you will be promoting the wrong political theory.

We differ from them in this. And thanks to this, countries that are geopolitical opponents, such as Saudi Arabia and Iran, which has applied for membership, can

coexist in BRICS. We need to keep this spirit alive. We will be more attractive because our culture of interaction within BRICS is as depoliticized as possible for everyone.

In pitting one people against another, the West uses a very simple trick. Everyone wants to protect the little one from the big one. This is little one, that is big one, David and Goliath. In 1967, when there was the Arab-Israeli war, the West said: “Israel is David. Look how small he is. The Arab armies are tens of times stronger against him. This is Goliath”. Now on the contrary, Israel is armed, it is Goliath. The population of Gaza is David. We need to move away from this principle: if it is small, it is not necessarily right. There are a lot of little ones who are wrong and cruel. For example, we saw this during the war in Chechnya. We must proceed from fairness and loss minimization. And culture is a very important point, it is a trump card in our hands.

A. V. YAKOVENKO: — I ask our guest from France, writer Galina Valeryevna Naumova, to speak.

G. V. NAUMOVA: — Yesterday and today, the name of Francis Fukuyama was mentioned several times. Both here and in the West they criticized his idea of the end of the world, the end of history. Their world and their history. I would say that this is indeed the end, but perhaps not of history, but of the Western dominance. Nowadays, everyone in the world is gradually realizing that the dominance of the West is coming to an end. And, no doubt, all the problems are related to this, including the current military operations in Ukraine. F. Fukuyama was a student of Samuel Huntington, who in the 1990s gave the classification of civilizations in his book “The Clash of Civilizations”. Therefore, the idea of our Russian civilization is not new. The West has long known that, according to Huntington’s classification, the Orthodox civilization, along with the West, the Islamic world, China and Latin American civilization, is one of the leading in the world. This explains why for so

many centuries a war has been waged against our values, in which the human factor is ultimately decisive. And we, Russia, as always, are called upon to save this world.

I have been working on the image of Russia abroad and in large international projects for 30 years. Latin America, Africa, Asia, China are those countries and cultures in which the enormous potential of spirituality and metaphysics, wasted by the Western world, has been preserved. The European Union will undoubtedly fall apart because it was founded on European values and on Christianity. None of them left. But for us, here in Russia, taking into account our generosity, incredible kindness and forgiveness, the view of a Russian person from there, from another world, is important. We need to learn to value ourselves, our culture, and have our own dignity.

According to Nikolai Mikhailovich Karamzin, our happy destiny lies in the incredible speed of development; we mature not in centuries, but in decades. We have many problems, not everything works out right away, especially in the field of education, which absolutely needs to start from a very young age and continue at universities. And it is necessary to gradually overcome secret and obvious love for the West, learning from our history. Love for Russia and the upbringing of the younger generation, humanity, justice and truth — these are the foundations that attract great attention and respect to us all over the world.

A. V. YAKOVENKO: — The floor is given to the representative of India Anil Trigunayat.

A. TRIGUNAYAT: — BRICS is a formation that is open to everyone. There is a place for everyone in BRICS, and India is a part of it. We are talking about cultural integration, civilizational and universal human values. We are not against the West, but today we see that there is much we cannot control. Geopolitical, georeligious, geotechnological competitions are now taking place all over the world. We don't know where this will lead us.

The creation of a new currency is truly real growth, because if financial instruments are used as weapons, then fertilizers, food, fuel can also be used as weapons. But there are countries that are trying to find an alternative. India is also trying to use unified systems for payments. Such payments are made with France and many countries around the world.

We also pay more attention to the East. This is where the main economic growth is expected in the near future. Before India became independent, it was under British rule. And today, more than 3 % of world GDP comes from India; in terms of this indicator, only China is close to us.

Every culture has its own value system, but at the heart of any religion, any culture is an individual. However, I often hear ambassadors and high-ranking conference participants talk about this, but after these words are spoken, nothing actually happens.

In BRICS we are trying to create a certain model. This is not a Western model, but it will allow others to come to us and communicate, and this is very important from our point of view. It is also needed to create a tool for interactive activities. BRICS needs its own secretariat, which will speed up the work process.

We need to learn to think. Everything we are talking about BRICS now was said back in 2010. The cooperation of the BRICS countries proves that different state development systems can coexist, and this is its strength. But we live in the real world, we first need to pay attention to our own behavior, and then look at things outside. Global security, global development and global cultural civilization. Without a transparent system, BRICS will lack the support that is necessary.

A. V. YAKOVENKO: — The floor is given to Vladimir Konstantinovich Mamontov, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the “Komsomolskaya Pravda” newspaper.

V. K. MAMONTOV: — If I were asked to formulate what BRICS is, I would answer the following. First of all, it includes the oldest, established world

civilizations, or those that would like to become one and are rapidly developing, I mean Russia. The wonderful people who invented gunpowder, invented porcelain and did everything they could, have now united in BRICS. At one time they were called third world and developing countries, but these are states with enormous civilizational wealth. For them, unification is an opportunity for peaceful coexistence and the sovereignty of each of them. And also a certain revenge that BRICS gives to Western civilization, which has ineptly failed to lead the world. The main question is: what should we take with us from the old world, and what should we mercilessly throw away? Throw away the mediocrity that is being shown to us. And the gigantic knowledge that the Western world, including Europe, carries — in no case.

A. V. YAKOVENKO: — Maria Vladimirovna Zakharova, you have the floor.

M. V. ZAKHAROVA: — Firstly, our colleague from France accurately noted the uniqueness of Russia as a platform for discussing all aspects of the today's problems. We hear people from those countries regimes of which, unfortunately, have declared a hybrid war on us, but we invite representatives of these states to discuss the full range of current issues. Hardly anyone can afford this, and it's hard to imagine when such a thing ever happened. This is a historical moment.

Our Italian colleague spoke interestingly about the upcoming elections in the so-called developed democracies. The uniqueness of the situation lies in the fact that we are also talking about the United States of America, a nuclear power with a huge military potential of all kinds of means of destruction that are out of international control, and at the same time no one knows who will come to the office in the White House. They have been saying for many years that this is the advantage of democracy, when it is not known how everything will end. And this is the beginning of chaos — the possibility of bringing to power any person in whom they invest money. This is a pig in a poke, a person who can be thrown away a month before the elections or brought into the leadership of the country that is already creating problems in the world. And no one even knows what challenges it will create for

itself and how they will later affect international relations. Therefore, I believe that this is not a plus for Western democracy, but a disaster.

Our guest from Serbia noted that everyone looks at values differently. I will offer the following option. How can those who want to defend values, but at the same time have different views on them, avoid quarreling? Firstly, it were values that Dmitry Likhachev dedicated his activities. Secondly, perhaps these are the very values that distinguish a person from an animal and are aimed at freedom of creation, that is, not at self-destruction.

And one last thing. Of course, not all Western initiatives should be rejected. But we must remember that historically many Western initiatives were free cheese in a mousetrap, and we must not repeat these mistakes. There have been so many experiments on the African continent with such initiatives, which later turned out to be neocolonialism or new enslavement of people. How many similar American initiatives have there been in the European Union that turned it into a hostage to Washington and London? Therefore, each initiative needs to be studied in detail and seen whether it poses a hidden threat to today's world. A hybrid war has been declared on us. What kind of wonderful initiatives are these that go in parallel with the increase in arms supplies and billion tranches to destroy us as a people, a nation, a civilization? I have never seen that, on the one hand, a country was fought with monstrous cruelty and ruthlessness, and on the other hand, useful initiatives were proposed to it. One can't believe this.

A. V. YAKOVENKO: — The cultural and civilizational component of BRICS today is perhaps more important than both the political and economic aspects. Because it unites a large number of states that would like the world to develop differently. The experience of the 20th century, unfortunately, was in many ways not very successful in terms of peace and development. Therefore, BRICS is an alliance of like-minded countries that are ready to unite their efforts for the purpose of development. We believe that the cultural component, together with the civilizational one, will prevail in the coming years.