

RUSSIA AND THE INTERNATIONAL TRADE SYSTEM

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According to a medium-term forecast for development in the area of the international economy, business revival is cumulating momentum after the recession it experienced in early 1990s. It had a relevant effect on the world trade. In 1994 the average international trade turnover showed a 9.5 percent growth being a record figure in the last 20 years and by 3 times exceeding the increase in the international production. In 1995 the World Trade Organization estimated 8 percent increase in trade turnover as compared with a 3 percent growth in the world production. In 2002 the average international trade turnover showed a 6 percent growth. World Bank experts think that in the next 10 years an average increase in foreign trade will make 5 percent annually.

Oil markets showed a balance of demand and supply in 2002. Owing to small increase in the world oil consumption and practically unchanged supply situation no perceptible change of prices is expected. A trend of natural gas prices on markets in Western Europe was practically the same as the oil price dynamics.

As market relations develop, process of internal price structure formation continues in Russia and it gradually closes to the price system existing on world markets. In 2000 contract prices grew perceptibly, however, prices of a majority of energy resources lagged behind those on the world trade markets in terms of rates of increase. The outcome was a worsening balance between contract and world prices.

An important role in development of the international trade is played by the GATT/WTO which for more than 50 years tried to work out the fundamentals of a future world trade basing on principles of observance of the Agreement's general regulations aimed to keep up non-discrimination of individual states and to a gradual elimination of barriers slowing down mutual exchange of commodities. Since 1950 the world trade turnover has increased by 13 times.

Russia's accession to the WTO will make it possible to tap all measures existing within the framework of this organization in order to protect Russia's economic interests. At present direct or concealed discrimination of Russian producers and traders on markets of certain countries is among factors affecting Russian exports dynamics.

In the summer of 1995 the first round of negotiations between the Russian delegation and the WTO's Working Group on Russia took place in Geneva. Members of the Working Group apprised information on foreign trade regulations stated in the Russian Memorandum as exhaustive enough.

An outcome of the second round taking place from December 4 to 7 of 1995 was the completion of discussion of the Russian Memorandum on the foreign trade regime as concerns trade in goods. Besides, the first discussion on special annexes to the Memorandum embracing protection of intellectual property rights, trade in services and trade-related investment measures was held. At the same time, the WTO member countries have reserved the right to revert to a detailed discussion on three key issues: if state-owned trade organizations exist in Russia (Moscow denies this);

import licensing; subsidizing of external operations. However, even now they agree in principle that the Russian legislation is in accordance with the WTO's rules and norms in these areas of the foreign trade regulation.

There are no apparent opponents to Russia's accession to the WTO, since the world trade, especially in the area of trade in raw materials, cannot be regulated without participation of Russia. However, the admission of Russia may be surrounded by a number of additional obligations not directly following from the WTO requirements. Bilateral consultations held in Geneva have shown that Russia will face some complications in the course of tariff negotiations.

CONSUMER COOPERATIVES AS AN ELEMENT OF GLOBAL ECONOMY

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Consumer cooperatives are generally recognized to be the subject of market relations in the world practice of industrial activities division and cooperation.

Cooperatives exist in the same competitive environment as other companies. That is why they have to work efficiently and gain profit. The main principle and feature of cooperative movement is believed to be permanent care about its members. Management of cooperatives has to take constant care of the members' rights observance; establish new ways of service; to observe the time of the general meetings; inform members of the cooperative about results and perspectives of its activity.

Consumer companies use different forms of economic relations for realization of commercial functions including joint-stock companies (close and open), united businesses, filials. Cooperative companies cannot be replaced by joint-stock companies. The principle of cooperative societies is "one member is one voice". The principle of joint-stock company is "the number of voices depends on the share package".

Cooperative organizations may create unions of any level and give them plenary power according to their needs. The superior union is the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) founded in 1895. ICA is an independent association that unites, represents and serves interests of cooperatives all over the world. Nowadays ICA unites more than 230 national cooperative societies. It has a wide international recognition; it has been given consulting status "A" – a first category institute in the Economic and Social Council of OUN and some of its specialized establishments such as IOL, UNESCO, UNIDO, FAO. ICA has a development program directed on rendering assistance to cooperatives in different countries.

"Swiss model" of cooperative movement is called one of the most developed and efficient cooperative systems in the world practice. Studying of the Swiss experience is actual because it shows common tendencies of countries' development with social oriented economics, demonstrates ways how to survive in the cruel competition of the modern market.