

An example: paying rent for land removes the financial basis of land speculation. This leads to compact cities rather than the urban sprawl that characterises the modern city, which eat up fertile food-growing land and creates the kind of transport system that pollutes the air.

The historical lesson: if you have a rational social and economic policy, you also have a rational ecological policy. We can put it the other way round: you cannot have a rational ecological policy if it is not also a rational social and economic policy.

Question: will the CIS members adopt the rational policy? No. Why? Because you want to copy the system of property rights and taxation that we employ in the West.

Conclusion: history shows that the great civilizations disappeared as a result of ecological crises. We need not suffer that fate. We know what is the correct policy, and how to implement it. But the people who control society are the ones who control land. They make money from the practices that have, as side effects, the destruction of ecological security. So they will continue to put our societies at risk.

China and members of the CIS have the best political opportunity to adopt the correct policies. This is because you abolished the power of the landlord class. But today you are challenged by the ideological power of the West. Russia, in particular, is being forced by western financiers to adopt the system of public finance that encourages damage to the environment.

But the pressure to privatise rent is not coming exclusively from the West. There are internal pressures from the bureaucracies to create monopoly control over land. This monopoly power was described by Winston Churchill in 1910 in these terms: "Land monopoly is the mother of all monopolies". It is the main weapon used by landowners to abuse the community and the environment.

The optimum solution involves the restructuring of taxation. It involves reserving the rent of land as public revenue and removing taxes from wages and profits. This one tax policy simultaneously provides the maximum incentive to invest in the production of new wealth and reduce damage to the environment.

Western politicians pay lip service to the need to create

new jobs, increase productivity and protect the environment. In practice, they promote tax policies that have the opposite effect.

In Russia, the laws and decrees that define payments for the use of land transfer the largest part of rents to private users. The people who benefit include the so-called "managers" in the public sector. This is larceny on the grandest historical scale.

Unless you have the wisdom to challenge the West's philosophy of taxation, and the courage to adopt the correct policy, you are all wasting your time today. You might as well retire to your dachas, enjoy your private lives and not worry about ecological security.

DECLARATION on the Philosophic and Moral Basis of Property in Land:
see p.16

МЕЖПАРЛАМЕНТСКАЯ АССАМБЛЕЯ
ГОСУДАРСТВ-УЧАСТНИКОВ
СОДРУЖЕСТВА НЕЗАВИСИМЫХ ГОСУДАРСТВ

Межгосударственный экологический Совет
государств — участников
Содружества Независимых Государств

МЕЖДУНАРОДНАЯ НАУЧНО-ПРАКТИЧЕСКАЯ КОНФЕРЕНЦИЯ

Проблемы охраны окружающей среды
в государствах Содружества