

To the Social Pedagogues and Social Workers of the 90 ties who paved the way to the new profession in Russia.

"Be always willing to do the good", such were the words of the world famous physician and humanist Theodore P. Gaaz which served as the motto for many representatives of the business world of the past throughout their lives. To name only a few: the Morozovs, the Tretyakovs, the Soldatenkovs... And how many of those who didn't deserve to have been plunged into oblivion though they had worked hard to help people in need, to develop the national culture, science, education!

But the best national traditions of the business world remained alive and they are salient. Following suit of the former patrons of the arts and philanthropists the contemporary businessmen provide quite a few resources for the development of education, science, health care system, sports and culture of Russia. For example, Solodovnikov Centre," called after the names of the well known Moscow merchants - benefactors, helps to supply the capital's hospitals with the necessary medicaments. "Dyagilev Centre", established several years ago, has been keeping up successfully the world fame of the Russian ballet. There are also vivid examples of the ancestors' noble deeds continued by the heirs of the glorious families. Recently reestablished joint venture "The Perlovs' House" is actively involved in the revival of the Russian folk crafts and national cultural development.

The Director's name of the firm "Soc-innovatsiya" Alexander G. Dmitriev is closely connected with innovations in the sphere of nurturing, education, social protection of childhood and family. It was he who initiated philanthropy nowadays, it was he who was the first to support new and perspective trend in science and practical-social pedagogy and social work. His name is well known among scientists and practitioners of



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Russia - social pedagogues and social workers. The firm "Socinnovatsiya" sponsored the journal "Social Work", it financed the publication of the first series of social work curricula for higher educational institutions and brochures on domestic and international socio-pedagogical experience. He also sponsored summer camps for young social pedagogues in the Russian Centre for Children and Youth "Orlyonok". And the publication of this very text book became possible thanks to Alexander G. Dmitriev's philanthropy activity which is remarkable for its ambitious, coherent and dynamic character.

Businessmen's adventurous experience in the reviving Russia shows that patrons' of the arts activity and philanthropy are alive in Russia and they are gathering momentum.

And let the God does not permit this holy thread of the Russian tradition - "to be always willing to do the good" be broken.

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Social Innovation: Russian Experience of Business Enterprise

What is the firm «Socinnovatsiya»? It is a «giant of contemporary CIS which comprises 64 branches and services spread throughout the whole territory of the former Soviet Union.

A giant whose major, but not the only activity is a conversion of huge military-industrial complexes of yesterday's USSR into civil complexes of today's CIS», — writes journal «Manager» of February — March 1993.

It is «a development of YRC (Youth Residential Complexes) network where an idea of creation of happy youth settlements sprang up, where a comfortable life is being built with their own hands alongside walls and the roof», — remarks journal «Social Work» № 1, 1992.

It is a novative centre of international level whose activity is targeted not only at collecting social novations or carrying out expertise, but rather at organizing implementation, in other words at getting a «swift socially significant effect», — writes «Ecological Newspaper» № 8, 1991.

The firm «Socinnovatsiya» started its activity in 1989 as a state-owned scientific, consultative and implementing one under the umbrella of the USSR Ministry of Labour and Social Problems. For a short period of time the Firm's employees managed to unite and consolidate social innovators from the most diverse spheres of our life. Here people of various professions found understanding and a possibility to implement their creative ideas. They are: pedagogues and medical specialists, psycho-therapists and economists, architects and constructors, industrial, cultural and sports employees, those from social protection

sphere, social pedagogues and social workers, many scientists and practitioners overwhelmed by the ideas of social progress.

The firm «Socinnovatsiya» is a real embodiment of a fantastic idea generated by Alexander Gennadevich Dmitriev to create residentially a «ministry of happiness», well-developed social infrastructure for each neighbourhood where residents are engaged in self-government, self-organization, self-service and self-support.

Competence and erudition, friendliness and quickness, optimism and a talent of a businessman are exactly those characteristic features which helped A. Dmitriev's dream to come true, transformed the idea into reality. I sincerely believe, that those who know the work of the firm very well, have a distinct association: «Socinnovatsiya» is Dmitriev, and vice versa.

And what is the firm «Socinnovatsiya»? Is it a unique phenomenon in the world of modern business? Or perhaps, it is a revival of the Russian traditional business enterprise? Or multiprofile interrepublican centre for the development of educational, recreational, rehabilitation and technological systems? Is it an educational centre or an interrepublican exhibition of social novations in the sphere of construction, architecture, health care, education, ecology, dietology, aquaculture, all of them working for the benefit of the Firm's mainstream idea — creation and implementation of a complex residential system of social self-provision? I believe, the first, the second and the third. Most probably for us, contemporary human beings it is still difficult to understand the significance of such an original and unique phenomenon in the world of emerging market economy as the firm «Socinnovatsiya»?

For a short, nearly five year period of its existence, breaking through insidious reefs and typhoons of new economic relations, as many other firms have to do, the Firm not only survived, but did not concede to the pressure of adventurous «Russian style business», neither did it start selling articles of humanitarian aid, nor served as a broker of a mirage stock exchange. The Firm has never changed the course of introducing socially significant technology. More than that, today the firm «S.I.» proudly says: «We have developed not only a complex system of social self-provision for any collective of medium size, whether it is an enterprise, a residential microdistrict or other public formation, we offer an algorithm of a well-being, of a comfortable future for any family not necessarily an «elite» one».

«It is not in our power to make people happy, but we can teach them how to realize their potentials, how to create material conditions for being happy», — says the Director of the Firm. He goes on to say: «Happiness has two components: the first is a psychological one which depends on spiritual strength of a person, his spiritual quest, the second component consists in a social basis. It comprises a number of components. Here come the problems of physical health: nourishment, the way of life, physical exercises leading to tempering and strengthening one's body, including the lungs' capacity; problems of education, spiritual health, leisure time, cultural information and economic problems. To facilitate the solution of these problems, the creation of environment of

«social comfortness» — that is the task of the firm. We are not engaged in philanthropy in a sense which is common today. Alms are humiliating. We have to teach a person to live happily, to help him in search of ways, to inform him about his options, to set priorities in his situation».

A well-known parable about two ways of helping a starving man suits here well. You can bring either a fish or a fishing-rod in order to teach a starving man to fish. «Socinnovatsiya» has chosen the second way.

The Firm is entirely self-financing and self-providing. They can make money here and are always willing to share their experience and knowledge.

One of the Firm's first novations is a «Japanese roulette». Then comes a seminar for industrial executives, then a school for a market economy, a university for a businessman. Leading experts in economy are holding the seminar together with the Firm's employees. They help the participants to walk across the labyrinths of market relations, to avoid a large number of traps, to overcome extreme situations.

The Firm channels finances into different social novations: whether it is elaboration and installation of medical devices (for example, multifunctional apparatus for electroreflexotherapy «Ray-I» — a home doctor), or the development of a new trend in pedagogical science — social pedagogy, the Project «Young Social Pedagogues», sophisticated technology of square production (for the purpose of construction) out of various plant waste products.

A. Dmitriev finances such projects as «Psychological Traps on the Roads» whose author is a certain Dobrushin. (It is common knowledge, that many children die in road accidents or suffer from traumas). He allocates money to the elaboration of construction designs for invalids' houses (with a number of devices making life of disabled people easier), to the conversion of basements into different kinds of useful facilities, albums on nonstandard interiors of our standardized apartments, and those on utilization of decoration materials...

Thanks to marketing operations of «Socinnovatsiya» become popular, for instance, such construction material as cement blocks. They are portable, good at exploitation, not expensive. At the time when farming is developing and country housing is intensifying they are becoming necessary, and the fact that expenses are quickly repaid makes them very desirable for small businesses.

Among potential partners and purchasers of the Firm are administration heads of Russia and CIS regions, industrial executives and heads of social services. The Firm offers them most sophisticated technology, blueprints and sports equipment. For example, sports training facilities. They are quite original because the Firm's specialists supplemented them with one more function — rehabilitation and recreational one. A complete set of training facilities allows to install them in a gymnastic hall, in an office, at a hotel, in an apartment, in a school, in a kindergarten, in a physical therapy surgery of a polyclinic or a hospital.

The firm «Socinnovatsiya» carries out an intensive publishing activity. It is a founder and co-founder of some periodicals. They are: a

weekly journal «Press-Courier», a newspaper «Moscow Gazette», «Ecological Newspaper», «Windows of YRC-TASS», journal «Energy». The Firm is a co-founder of a radio station for automobile fans.

«We have never been in search for super profits, we have never saved money in stockings or banks. We earn it to invest in novations which are vital for people, but they never can afford them» — that is the credo of a Russian business world leader of the 90ties, the Director of the Firm «Socinnovatsiya» A. Dmitriev.

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