

considered to be liberal. In this context, any German social democrat, representative of the Green Party or a member of Christian Democratic Union can be seen as a liberal. According to such approach, I am also a liberal, although Bjork is actually closer to me than Mill. Conservatism in this context is rather widespread within society and the echelons of power, except in its highest echelon. Traditionally, our government is one that is European in nature. Of course, it cannot be considered as classical European, but it is not the only one. **One can sometimes encounter conservatism at MSU in the form of antagonism towards the West, while in HSE this is highly unlikely.** In my opinion, that is an advantage, as we are speaking about what is virtually a purely negative program. It is pointless to see such a program as a continuation of Slavophilism or even to somehow relate it to Orthodoxy. To shorten this discourse, let's recall Alexei Khomyakov, for example, but not by reducing him to several word quotations, but as a real person who was alien to painful psychological complexes or narrowness. This is not to mention Vladimir Solovyov, who would most certainly be considered to be a 'heavy liberal'.

**RJ** *In the United States, members of the Republican Party send their children to specific colleges to pursue their studies. Is that correct? Do you agree that the movement towards the scientific explanation of various ideologies is a necessity for Russia? Do you think that maybe we should move towards turning universities into think-tanks related to various ideological directions? Would such a move help to structure the Russian political sphere?*

What we really lack is the variety of think tanks. We need independent expert centres with different orientations. **Universities are not a 'brain trust'.** Indeed, in the United States, there are universities that are traditionally more conservative or more liberal (I would like to recall that, in America, those who are considered to be liberals tend to be somewhat left of the centre, while market fundamentalists tend to be ultra-conservatives). Nevertheless, the strongest universities are rather politically neutral. They often tend towards a liberal trend, but this happens because the typical professor is also more liberal than the typical farmer, for instance. Just the same, even farmers also find those sharing the same ideologies as them within the same universities.

If we speak about Russia, under the current sub-marginal conditions of socio-economic education and political culture, it would be terrible if universities were to be transformed into collective agents of propaganda.

The structuring of the political realm will arrive at some level of stability only on the basis of the development of civil society from the grass roots. Unfortunately, this process is not occurring very fast, but it can nevertheless already be felt. What is important here is not to interrupt it and instead, participate in it. This also concerns genuine university self-administration as opposed to the actual 'privatisation' of some universities by some rectors, who in some cases even manage to pass them on to someone inside their own family. ■

*Lev Yakobson was speaking with Liubov Ulianova*

## DO NOT TRY TO TURN A PERSON AGAINST HIGHER EDUCATION



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Exclusively for RJ

**W**ith all its drawbacks, the educational system of Russia is good namely because it takes into consideration individuals' needs. Nowadays, the fact is that people attend universities and this means that this institution possesses real social weight. **Any attempts to turn a person against higher education are doomed to failure.**

The humanitarian dimensions of technologies, with due respect, cannot be taught in vocational schools or in technical schools. The so-called 'university-based abstract humanitarian issues' are something that occurs in practically any professional activity. We can find them even with respect to digging a hole in the ground. In this context, the working place of the foreman of the yard-keepers, a plant manager or a secretary happen to differ very little.

**It is a great illusion that higher education can be of no use to someone.** This is more-over the case for the country as a whole. It is another matter that it is important to thoughtfully establish the balance between the different levels of education, in order to more effectively link an individual with a suitable working place that he would be willing to occupy and can apply for. That is a separate task; however, it cannot be resolved according to a method of voluntarism – that is to say, it cannot be achieved simply by reducing existing levels of higher education.

If the national government is intent on increasing the prestige of some professions, huge resources will also need to be invested in the cultural sphere, not to mention increasing the salaries of museum attendants, librarians, teachers, doctors and engineers. If nothing is done in that regard, then everything will remain unchanged, just as it is now, when the production of lawyers and economists within society exceeds the needs of the market by several times.

In the post-industrial era, an individual with a solid humanitarian and economic education behind him has the possibility of finding something for himself in these or numerous other related fields. The most important core element of modern education is the ability to re-learn, to adapt oneself to new technologies, and to move somewhat like a boxer with respect to his attempts to avoid receiving a blow. This is the exact purpose of realising a Master's Degree programme. Therefore, everything depends not so much on the number of places of this of that profile at institutes of higher education with different specialisations, but is actually dependent on the quality of the education received by those occupying those places. The market will reasonably manage to absorb everyone who obtains a high quality rather than a slapdash education. ■