

BIOLOGICAL METAPHORS FOR SOCIETY'S PROBLEMS ARE DANGEROUS

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Russia tends to be diagnosed by many people within the country. However, here there is the problem, which can be formulated as it follows: what is to be considered as a norm and what is to be considered as an illness?

On the first day of his appointment to the post of Chairman of the Council for the Development of Civil Society, Mr. Fedotov announced that it is necessary to struggle with the so-called Stalinisation of the public consciousness. But what does he actually mean by de-Stalinisation and Stalinisation? By this does he mean a moral pediculosis or a spotted fever of Russian society? This issue remains open, of course, since one can still live while suffering from the first disease, even though it is displeasing, but the second disease happens to be fatal.

In my view, how we should understand what is meant by Stalinisation is a specific orientation towards a totalitarian type of thinking – for example, paternalism. It cannot be said that, over the last twenty years, the number of Russian people having a totalitarian type of thinking has declined. At the same time, we cannot claim the contrary either. The

Stalinisation of the consciousness was hardly such a huge problem to threaten the existence of our country. For the most part, Russia was genuinely ill with Stalinism, if we can consider this phenomenon as a disease. The apostasis of this illness occurred in the period 1953-1955. Since that time, during the last few decades, the country has been recovering slowly and calmly. Certainly, the recovery has seen some interruptions in terms of recurrences that pose no threat to the life of the country's social organism. Thus, any attempt to suggest that Russia is a structure that suffers from this disease is, to put it mildly, inadequate.

However, I am not a supporter of biological metaphors. Similar analogies are impossible here, because the country is not a bio-organism. As a result, there is no sense in considering the problems plaguing the country in the context of medical science. If we resort to using the metaphor of a disease, it is necessary to always shape the limits of this particular metaphor.

Nevertheless, this metaphor tends

viewpoint evidences that the country really is ill.

However, **frankly speaking, Russian society is not of the authoritarian type. It has outgrown Stalinism and is currently undergoing the process of recovery.** Society no longer needs to take medicine or get bed-rest; however, what it still needs is to spend time enjoying the fresh air and to stick to a particular diet.

The second point of view **the very fact that political doctors exist within a healthy society, as well as their prescriptions, is absolutely normal.** However, it is important that, within the healthy society, those viewpoints are considered to be private instead of any claims to be exclusive and the only possible opinion that cannot be refuted. The essence of authoritarianism is that, among the spectrum of all existing opinions, the one that is officially announced is declared as the only one that is even possible. As well, the general essence of policy is to impose this opinion on society as the only one that is suitable. This may be deemed as a political struggle within an authoritarian society. In

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to be quite popular. Public figures often take the opportunity to make diagnoses and suggest treatment options. Why do they do this?

I would emphasise two different viewpoints. The first is that **there are kind doctors who monopolise the right to treat society, which comprises a sort of confirmation for their viewpoints that an illness indeed exists.** What is rather typical of authoritarian societies is the need for an external diagnosis and treatment based on that diagnosis. That is to say, if Mr. Fedotov says that Russia faces the disease of Stalinism and needs to be cured, then wide support for this

other words, a patient within authoritarian society must take a prescribed medicine; otherwise he will be forced to take it.

In a healthy society, nobody cares about a human's intentions of suggesting some treatment for the problems that he has diagnosed for himself. Everyone has the right to propose a social panacea. However, society reserves the right to not take the medicine that it is offered. The growth in the number of doctors guarantees this right. The more of them that we have, the better. ■

Recorded by Kseniya Kolkunova