

come back to ideas of morality, to see that in the twenty-first century it is impossible to apply principles such as “if there is no person there is no problem” or “those who are not with us are against us.”

The most amazing thing is that the Presidential Council for Civil Society Institutions and Human Rights works not only with the matter of de-Stalinizing the public conscience but also with other crucial matters including the judiciary and police reforms; defense of the family, motherhood and childhood; as well as problems of migration, etc.

But mass media does not pay any attention to these areas of the Council’s work. **Everybody is interested only in the problem of de-Stalinization, which in fact has nothing sensational to it.** This in general is a rather clear task, and the Council has been working with it for about half a year. Of course the time itself will slowly but steadily and inevitably do the work of overcoming the relics and rudiments of the totalitarian mentality, but it had better be done quickly since these rudiments are still being reproduced in new generations, and this is quite harmful for public health.

RJ *What is the reason for the totalitarian mentality to be reproduced in new generations born and brought up after the totalitarian state?*

It is connected to elements of totalitarian mentality being kept in the public conscience. Here we should consider that **there are people who exist without the stereotypes of the totalitarian mentality even in totalitarian societies.** For example, I have a lot of friends born and brought up in the USSR who are absolutely free of any totalitarian stereotypes. However, we can see these stereotypes in young people who were born in Russia after 1991. One of these stereotypes is that of dependency: the state owes me everything, but I owe it nothing. This stereotype is still very strong, especially in lesser-developed regions. Slow snail-speed development of such regions is just one of the many factors that connect it to preserving this stereotype in the public conscience. It should be fought against. But of course not with repressions but with calm discussions and explanations. It is going to take therapy not surgery.

RJ *Where will these therapists come from, and where should we be looking for them?*

There is no need to look for them. **There are already therapists in our society. There are many scientists, college and school teachers, journalists, writers, and actors, who understand the problems of Russian society very well.** The conscience of these people is absolutely free from any rudiments of the totalitarian mentality. But their efforts should be united and they should be helped. ■

Mikhail Fedotov was speaking with Ksenia Kolkunova

DE-STALINIZATION IS A SPECIAL-PURPOSE POLICY



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I am not a supporter of easy solutions such as making a diagnosis and treating a society in accordance with it. In my opinion, efforts should be directed at forming a modern system of values. This is exactly what the Russian society needs and strict boundaries for the activities of the political, business, and creative elite should be worked out on the basis of this system of values, which would allow us to resolve the problem of “stalinization” of the Russian society. The roots of this phenomenon lie in the fact that Russians at present deeply feel the existing social injustice, the vivid symptoms of which there are appalling social inequality, double standards in the behavior of many politicians, lack of personal safety, despotism of employers, and so forth.

It is evident that we cannot resolve these problems by using the liberal bolsheviks’ methods and by resorting to surgical intervention. A moral and ethical recovery of the public climate is required, along with the creation of a just social system based on

the principles of accessibility of education. Moreover, information of TV networks needs to be changed as they presently, instead of developing our youth, make them more primitive. Changes are also needed in the public climate that will result in bringing to naught the desire of old unhappy people, of the middle-aged, and also the youths, who extol and are nostalgic about the Stalin epoch. A qualitative change in the system will naturally draw people away from the wish for a “strong hand” leader, liberating them from the illusion that order can be instituted only by applying harsh measures. In other words, **de-stalinization is the formation of different, diverse policies that oppose the current ones.**

If the state and society do not strive for developing such policies, thus reacting to the existing social challenges, if they don’t cope with the resolution of the most acute problems, especially the ones related to despotism and injustice for the common people, then nothing will prevent the emergence of “social vivisection surgeons.” ■