

Zh. T. Toshchenko<sup>2</sup>**IDEOLOGY: OBJECTIVE REALITY OR ARTIFICIAL CONSTRUCT?<sup>3</sup>**

One of the concepts compromised during the collapse of the USSR and at the beginning of construction of the new Russia was “ideology.” There were quite a few of those who considered it indecent to utter, not only in scientific polemics, but also in everyday communication. Notably, in the speeches of some pseudo-avant-garde politicians, and consequently in their periodicals, derogatory and insulting judgments were made about the ideology itself and those who used the word or tried to understand its essence and semantic foundations.

In my view, this attitude toward ideology was largely because it was associated with the widespread notion of “socialist (communist) ideology” at the time. And since so-

cialism (communism) was rejected, the word “ideology” was also renounced. This rejection also revealed the second aspect of this attitude toward ideology: the so-called functional illiteracy, which completely ignored the fact that various worldviews continue to exist (and not only in Russia) regardless of anyone’s wishes.

**Brief historical overview  
(Ideology as an indispensable attribute  
of societal development)**

The concept of ideology appeared from the late 18th to the early 19th century as a product of understanding the existing phenomena in the spiritual, cultural and socio-political life of the society. The concept was scientifically introduced by the French Enlightenment philosopher Antoine Destutt de Tracy (1754–1836). In his concept, ideology is presented as a set of ideas, designed to systematize the achievements of various, primarily social, sciences. He regarded ideology as a socially useful form of knowledge that should be as accurate as the natural sciences. In “The System of Ideology,” published in 1804, he outlined his idea of ideology as a doctrine of the general regularities of the origin and functioning of ideas in the development of the society.

In further literature, the process of understanding the concept of “ideology” is usually associated with the names of K. Marx and F. Engels, who helped introduce the term “ideology” into wide circulation, both in science and in political life. This conclusion is associated with their work “The German Ideology,” in which they defined ideology as “political thinking created in the interests of certain so-

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<sup>3</sup> See in more detail: *Тощенко Ж. Т. Общество травмы: между эволюцией и революцией (опыт теоретического и эмпирического анализа)*. М.: Весь мир, 2020.

cial groups,” as one of the forms of transformed consciousness.<sup>1</sup>

It must be mentioned, however, that this work was not known to contemporaries: it was first published a century later, in 1932, in the Soviet Union. It is therefore only natural that the explanation of the concept of “ideology” is associated with the “Manifesto of the Communist Party” which explained it as a special concept and substantiated its practical use. The manifesto drew attention to the way ideas are constructed by various political forces and representatives of the ruling bourgeoisie in order to ensure their class and group interests. As a result, the dominant, i.e. bourgeois ideology, is not a projection of interests of the society as a whole, but only of a part of it: the capitalists. They believed that a proletarian ideology, the worldview of the working class, must have arisen as a counterbalance to bourgeois ideology and become an effective force.<sup>2</sup>

Later, as social thought evolved, the concept of “ideology” was supplemented and refined by many scientists and political figures. While I don’t have an opportunity to analyze this process in detail right now, I will highlight the work by K. Mannheim, “Ideology and Utopia” (1929). In this work he polemicalizes with K. Marx, insisting that, beyond classes, ideology can also represent the way of thinking of people who seek to preserve or permanently reproduce the way of life they approve.<sup>3</sup>

At the end of the twentieth century, a significant contribution to the understanding of ideology was made by the founders of the Frankfurt School T. Adorno and M. Horkheimer, who developed the concept of a “critique of ideology” (“Dialectic of Enlightenment,” 1947). They made a distinction between the “free ideology” of a subject and ideologies in different areas of social life (such as politics, economics, or religion), emphasizing that the ideologies of different eras are products of historical processes.

The attempt by European Marxists (Antonio Gramsci, Georg Lukacs) to cover the entire diversity of approaches in terms of science and political action is also of interest. Among contemporary interpretations, noteworthy is the assertion of Willard Mullins that ideology consists of four basic characteristics attracts attention: it must dominate cognition; be capable of guiding value judgments; serve as an instruction to action; and be logically coherent.<sup>4</sup>

### So what is an ideology?

In the twentieth century, two main points of view gradually emerged in the debate over the essence of ideology.

One of them was reflected in the works of Soviet social scientists and boiled down to the assertion that ideology is a set (and even a system) of theoretical views that are developed by specialists and that reflect the objective needs of social development, designed to express the interests of the workers.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Маркс К., Энгельс Ф. Немецкая идеология // Маркс К., Энгельс Ф. Соч. 2-е изд. Т. 3. С. 60.

<sup>2</sup> Маркс К., Энгельс Ф. Манифест Коммунистической партии. М.: Госполитиздат, 1959. С. 46–56.

<sup>3</sup> Манхейм К. Идеология и утопия // Манхейм К. Диагноз нашего времени. М.: Юрист, 1994.

<sup>4</sup> Mullins W. A. On the Concept of Ideology in Political Science // American Political Science Review. 1972. Vol. 66 (2). P. 498–510. DOI:10.2307/1957794.

<sup>5</sup> Биккенин Н. Б. Социалистическая идеология. М.: Политиздат, 1983; Москвичев Л. Н. Теория «деидеологизации»: иллюзии и действительность. М., 1971.

Another view sees ideology not only as a theoretical and political understanding of class interests, but also as an infinite set of ideas through which people perceive their world, their own interests, value orientations, and understanding of the world around them, their country, and their immediate environment. And since perception is varied, diverse, and can reflect different worldviews, there are many ideologies that are in a state of constant interaction, rivalry, and even confrontation.<sup>6</sup>

Analysis of the processes taking place in the world suggests a conclusion that *ideology is a set of views and ideas in which economic, political, social, spiritual and moral relations are perceived and evaluated from the perspective of interests that are important and significant for a given subject in order to implement them*. Ideologies developed by political forces (the state, parties, mass movements) contain goals (programs) of their activity, aimed at consolidation or change (development) of public relations based on the worldview positions, which are reflected in value orientations, attitudes and interests. In all its diverse manifestations, ideology is: a) not just knowledge, but also its evaluation; b) knowledge that is related to what is valuable, important (what should be aspired to) for those who adhere to a particular ideology; c) understanding *how* to achieve the proclaimed goals, which inevitably leads to a struggle of worldviews, their constant comparison and defense in the course of a political and (or) social struggle. In this regard, K. Marx’s conclusion will be relevant: “Ideas become a material force when they take hold of the masses.”<sup>7</sup> In the meantime, implementation of these ideological and political goals, as history shows, provided a fairly high level of organization and consistent action of the carriers of these attitudes.

### In search for an ideology

Ideas are a special, peculiar and specific product of social being. They are born, mature, and often start living a life of their own. Many of them remain just a fleeting spark, while others serve particular social and political forces for a limited time. Among this flow of ideas, only a few are not just a reflection of the political and spiritual meanings of individuals or groups and associations, but are also embodied in the real life of states, nations, and the entire humankind.

Despite these differences in the interpretation of the origin of ideas and their role in the life of mankind, most researchers agree that no country, society or state can exist without an ideology. The most striking manifestation of the existence of many ideologies are political parties that express the aspirations and perceptions of the social base they represent (or claim to represent).

Consequently, in the surrounding world, regardless of the specifics of different societies, ideology is a necessary element of their existence. And if there is no such certainty, then the society fully loses the strategic goal of its own existence and existence of the state. Otherwise there is a spiritual vacuum that only separates the participants in this socio-historical process.

<sup>6</sup> Волков Ю. Г. Образы идеологии и гуманизма в современной России. М.: Кнорус, 2016; Макаренко В. П. Главные идеологии современности. Ростов н/Д.: Феникс, 2000.

<sup>7</sup> Маркс К., Энгельс Ф. Немецкая идеология // Маркс К., Энгельс Ф. Соч. 2-е изд. Т. 1. С. 416.

An example of this is our Russian reality. Russia's modern official policy regarding ideological issues appeared to be absurd. The contemporary spiritual and moral sphere of the Russian society was traumatized largely due to the fact that the Constitution of the Russian Federation states that there is no state ideology in Russia. In renouncing the *state ideology*, the “creators” of the Russian Constitution have completely ignored the fact that no state that has ever existed or still exists can do without an official ideology, while recognizing simultaneous existence of other world-views and orientations. Newly emerging suggestions that this article of the Russian Constitution should be amended met with fierce resistance from (neo-)liberals, frightening everyone with possible revival of Stalinism, appearance of a new Gulag, and similar horrors. From the same positions, intense de-heroization of national history takes place.

Renunciation of official ideology has resulted in a tremendous trauma to public consciousness, because the previous reference points have been lost, and new ones have not yet been formed. The former unifying ideas that are (or should be) an indispensable attribute of any effective government that wants to maintain statehood have been lost.

I would like to mention an interesting fact – on July 1, 2021, at the centennial of the Communist Party of China, they said that “in no way should we go the way of the USSR

with its openness, ‘glasnost’, historical nihilism, denigration of the history of their country, and revision of the role of the founders of the Chinese state.”<sup>1</sup>

The lack of a state ideology has become one of the vices of the emerging Russian statehood. As a result, in 1990s there was a boom of initiatives, from citing the “Orthodoxy, autocracy, nationalism” formula by Uvarov (the Russian government's minister of education of the mid-nineteenth century) to endless search for magic universal slogans. But this search was doomed to failure from the start: all these ideas belonged to individual truth-seekers, scientists, politicians, or simply ambitious personalities.

### Contemporary Russian ideologies and its subjects

So who is the creator, carrier and implementer of ideology? What is the criterion of its significance and sustainability in the process of historical development? Under what conditions do ideologies become nation-wide, adopted by major classes, determining the future and destinies of millions of people? The history of the development of revolutions is a clear example of the transformation of ideas into a material force.

If we consider the current situation in Russia, there are many ideologies in the real political and spiritual life, and the main ones are as follows (see table).

Table

What political views do you adhere to?<sup>2</sup>

| Views                                   | Year |      |      | Sectors      |           |                          |          |             |         |
|---|------|------|------|--------------|-----------|--------------------------|----------|-------------|---------|
|   | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | Construction | Transport | Trade, consumer services | Industry | Agriculture | Science |
| Left-wing (socialist, communist)        | 22.5 | 25.2 | 23.0 | 27.7         | 26.3      | 21.7                     | 20.0     | 28.0        | 21.0    |
| Right (liberal)                         | 14.5 | 14.9 | 21.6 | 13.7         | 18.0      | 13.0                     | 23.0     | 13.7        | 28.0    |
| Patriotic, national                     | 36.8 | 24.2 | 25.8 | 26.0         | 26.3      | 20.3                     | 29.7     | 18.7        | 29.0    |
| Monarchical                             | 1.2  | 1.2  | 1.6  | 0.7          | 2.3       | 0.7                      | 1.7      | 1.0         | 2.0     |
| Religious (Christian, Muslim, or other) | 5.0  | 9.1  | 6.1  | 8.3          | 6.3       | 12.7                     | 4.7      | 11.7        | 2.0     |
| Other (write)                           | 1.5  | –    | 12.7 | –            | –         | –                        | 13.7     | 11.3        | 13.0    |
| None                                    | 18.6 | 18.9 | –    | 18.3         | 15.7      | 22.7                     | –        | –           | –       |
| No response                             | –    | 6.4  | 9.3  | 5.3          | 5.0       | 9.0                      | 7.3      | 15.7        | 5.0     |

First, socialist ideology continues to exist in contemporary Russia, despite the crisis of the ideas of socialism and communism. This ideology has not disappeared and, in fact, tends to persist and spread even further.

The socialist idea continues to exist because it embodies the age-old and even millennial dream of a just state, which is what the Soviet Union was in the minds of these groups, notwithstanding all the twists and turns in its development. However, the social base of these ideas has changed (which the leftist parties have not yet fully realized): it is no longer the working class that represents the leading political and

social force – it is fragmented, working in different economic and financial conditions provided by different forms of ownership. In our view, the social base of leftist ideas is the precariat (from the Latin “unstable, precarious, insecure”), which consists of large social groups living in a state of uncertainty about the stability of their present and future situation. These groups are interested in implementing socialist ideas, which they see as a model of the just society. Moreover, these groups do not reject the existence of private forms of property, advocate social (but not egalitarian) equality, and view social justice as a desirable goal.

Second, there is a certain influence of liberal ideology, which is aimed at such outwardly attractive values as the development of democracy and ensuring human rights, but in a rather specific interpretation. It implies a focus on the existence, development and functioning of private property, transformation of the state into a “night watchman,” the absolute, unconditional responsibility of each individual for

<sup>1</sup> Cited from: Карнеев А. Н. Примеряющая мантию сверхдержавы XXI века // Независимая газета. 2021. 1 июля.

<sup>2</sup> Source: data from all-Russian sociological surveys conducted in 2018–2020 in six sectors of the national economy and culture by sociologists of the Russian State University for the Humanities and the Center for Social Forecasting and Marketing (for details see: Прекариат: становление нового класса : кол. моногр. / под ред. Ж. Т. Тощенко. М. : Центр соц. прогнозирования и маркетинга, 2020 ; Прекарная занятость: истоки, критерии, особенности / под ред. Ж. Т. Тощенко. М. : Весь мир, 2021).

the choice of his life path, his competitiveness in surviving in the current Russian context. Moreover, it is openly proclaimed, for example by Inozemtsev, that the “new inequality” cannot be considered unjust because it is not based on coercion, but on the activity of creative individuals.<sup>1</sup>

It is indicative that the social base of liberalism has shrunk considerably over the years of existence of the new Russia. The people rejected right-wing parties in their quest to take over the legislative and representative branches of the government. In public opinion, both former and current leaders of liberalism, starting with Yegor Gaidar, have been debunked. However, despite the lack of popular support, the economic ideas of liberalism continue to exist at the state level. It was their existence and continued implementation at the official level that led (along with other factors) to the stagnation of Russia’s socio-economic development, growing social inequality, increasing social tensions, and the formation of a society of trauma.

It is telling that the limitedness and even perilousness of the ideas of liberalism became evident to the president of the country as well when, in an interview with the *Financial Times* in June 2019, he made a scathing comment on the role and importance of liberalism in the life of the world and individual countries. Moreover, the President emphasized that the problem is not so much that liberals and their ideas exist, but that “this part of society quite aggressively imposes its point of view on the vast majority.”<sup>2</sup>

Third, in the 2000s, a conservative patriotic ideology began to take shape, which is currently embodied by a number of rather disparate sociopolitical currents – from adherents of the ideas of traditionalism and the values of previous generations to all kinds of ethnic, nationalist and confessional organizations. Although in one form or another, they all advocate for the preservation of historical and national cultural values, their augmentation, fostering loyalty to the country, support for traditions and customs in the life of modern citizens, these organizations can only conventionally be called a consolidating and moral force, since patriotic garments are worn also by those who fled abroad with a bunch of money stolen in the country, those who live in the criminal world, and those who are ready to join this ideology for the sake of various dividends that it offers. A practical question emerges: can an oligarch be considered a patriot if he keeps all his capital abroad?

Numerous parties and movements play on the field of patriotism – from United Russia to the Liberal Democratic Party and various specific associations advocating a unique development path for Russia. Disparate nature of these powers is exacerbated by the fact that conservative and patriotic ideas are interpreted and implemented differently by different political forces, which often leads to inconsistencies and sometimes clashes.

Fourth, an attempt is being made to introduce religious fundamentalism and even monarchism as an all-Russian, or state, ideology. This attempt is realized through the proposals of ambitious politicians who, in their desire to assert themselves and stay afloat, offer their vision of the worldview of Russians and methods of its formation. For example, in 2013 the notorious Duma deputy Ye. Mizulina proposed the idea of reflecting in the Russian Constitution that Orthodoxy is “the foundation of Russia’s national and cul-

tural identity,” in place of the absent “state ideology.”<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately, the updated Constitution contains the word “God,” which in fact contradicts another provision of the Constitution: that Russia is a secular state.

However, it is impossible to go back to the past, which has been repeatedly proven by historical experience. Attempts by the Russian Orthodox Church to enter the desired trajectory of introducing the canons and dogmas of Orthodoxy into the minds of Russians have met with passive, low-key, and at times overt resistance.

Lack of a strategic goal in the state and society in the form of an ideology gives rise to various specific debatable ideas about the “militarization of consciousness”<sup>4</sup> or transformation of the middle class from a pillar of society into a source of its division and destabilization.<sup>5</sup> There are also obsessive and confusing attempts to construct and affirm a “conciliar veche morality,” or to prove that the future was predicted by Apostle Paul.<sup>6</sup>

The state of Russian society as a society of trauma generates such substitute worldview forms as quasi-, pseudo-, counter- and paracultures that parasitize on people’s expectations and hopes, which is caused, on the one hand, by their uncertainty about their position in the existing society, and on the other hand, by transformation of culture into a business culture, a means of profit, through indulging the base tastes of a part of the population, among other things. This state contributed to flourishing of the manipulations of various mystical personalities.

On top of that, propaganda of personal qualities of man – honor, dignity, diligence – has disappeared from the political and ideological discourse of the acting political authorities. They have been forgotten or compromised. The official propaganda does not provide examples of people who would epitomize the best qualities of man, who could become a model of behavior for others. Depletion of moral character is yet another sign of ideological impoverishment in a society of trauma.

Thus, the analysis of the opportunities for consolidation of the Russian society shows that it is under threat in the situation of existence of various ideologies, usually reflecting the interests, value orientations and attitudes of different social classes, communities and groups without any attempts of the state to coordinate and harmonize them. The actual situation suggests the need to formulate a strategic goal of Russia’s development, which finds its expression in the state and society ideology, with a clear indication of the means and methods of achieving it. Without such an ideology, Russia cannot fully recover from its traumatized state.

### Is there a perspective?

Ideology is essential not only for political organizations and movements, but also for any state; this fact is increasingly recognized around the world. Attempts to view modern societies as de-ideologized have been rejected by the very course of historical development and have become a thing

<sup>3</sup> Версия. 2018. № 49.

<sup>4</sup> Ципко А. С. Милитаризация сознания убивает инстинкт самосохранения и делает смерть сакральной // Независимая газета. 2019. 4 июля.

<sup>5</sup> Щипков А. Протестная рента. Средний класс, призванный консолидировать общество, его раскалывает и дестабилизирует // Независимая газета. 2019. 8 июля.

<sup>6</sup> Асопов Н. В. Современная политическая культура России как элемент гражданского и религиозного типов общества // Социально-гуманитарные знания. 2019. № 2. С. 39, 46, 49.

<sup>1</sup> Иноземцев В. Кризис великой идеи // Свободная мысль. 2011. № 1. С. 17–28.

<sup>2</sup> Cited from: Коммерсантъ. 2019. 1 июля.

of the past. These ideas were developed in the works of Western scholars (R. Aron, D. Bell, S. Lipset, etc.), who argued that developed countries had progressed beyond the social state that required ideology, and had entered a new "non-ideological" era. The "End of ideology" was proclaimed. In fact (and reality has confirmed this), this concept expressed a scientist-technocratic illusion, as if all the problems of the modern society could be resolved exclusively by "technical" means, without participation of the masses, class struggle, etc.

However, the logic of modern historical development has once again demonstrated that no state can do without an official ideology to show its citizens what kind of a society is being built, what goals and ideals it pursues, how personal and public interests will be linked, and by what means this will be achieved. In other words, the de-ideologization century did not come true. As the real historical process shows, ideology returns in spite of everything; moreover, it has evolved into various forms of information warfare.

The policy of the Chinese Communist Party is an example of successful implementation of ideology: the Chinese people are provided with a clear concept of prospective and current (near-term) goals. The future is construction of the "Chinese" kind of socialism, while the goal, which should be attractive to every Chinese person, is implementation of the Chinese dream: to ensure a per capita GDP level of 12 thousand dollars (as officially stated – to reach the level of average wealth of developed countries). Such a combination of public and personal interests has become the unifying force for China, ensuring implementation of the established goals. They will be achieved, which is evidenced by the momentum of China's successful development. While in 1990 Russia's GDP was three times larger than that of China, 25 years later China is six times better at it than Russia.

#### **So what should be the basis of Russia's state ideology?**

First of all, *in our opinion, we need a clear and unambiguous definition of the strategic goal of development and the means of achieving it.* This strategy should be reflected in state documents and integrated into the public consciousness, people's understanding of what the country's population seeks and wants to achieve (obtain) in the long term.

Moreover, this goal will inevitably take the form of an ideology, a spiritual and moral compass, so that the majority of the country's population would understand what kind of a society is to be expected in the future.

Secondly, the state ideology is inconceivable without ensuring social consolidation of the society, which cannot be achieved unless the strategic goals of development are constructed not only "top down," but also "bottom up," with direct participation of people, taking into account their value orientations and attitudes. And what does this mean at the present stage of development of the Russian society? Sociological research shows that the *desire for social justice, stable social situation, and sustainable guaranteed future* comes to the forefront. These goals are revealed through sociological surveys in the general population and most social groups. The fact that these needs are not being fulfilled is evidenced by the data from the Levada Center: over the past 20 years (beginning in 2000), the opinion that the country is heading down the wrong path has ranged from 40–50%.<sup>1</sup> How does this correlate with the high level of trust in the country's president, reaching 80% in some years? In our view, this contradiction is understandable: trust in the president is formed personally as to a man who governs the country, whereas the negative assessment is correlated with the basic foundations of the structure of personal life and the opportunities that people can use in their interests, the interests of the family and kin.

Thus, ideology plays a crucial role in strengthening or disorganizing the life of the state, society, social institutions and the entire population. However, the existing timelessness in the spiritual and ideological sphere only increases the traumatic impact on human potential and social capital. The new challenges that have arisen for the society because of the need for a worldview certainty require an urgent solution to the problems of well-being of Russians, humanization of their labor and social activities, creation of opportunities for self-fulfilment and real participation in the construction of a new society.

Hence the conclusion: the ideology of the Russian state must be based on what people want, what the population aspires to. And then the official ideology (if I am allowed to fantasize) can boil down to such goals: *Justice. Dignity. Trust.*

<sup>1</sup> Независимая газета. 2020. 30 нояб.