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Trying to Remain Moral Amid 'Dom 2'

By Alexei Pankin

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President Vladimir Putin deeply offended me last month.

On June 19, the Federal Communications Agency suggested that the Pyatnitsa television channel stop airing its "Vacation in Mexico" reality show. To give you an idea of the intellectual value of this show, in a recent episode a young woman was given 300,000 rubles ($9,000) for stripping naked in a public square.

On June 27, the show was cancelled. That same evening, a few of the program's supporters

staged a picket line outside the TV channel's offices. After that, the channel's management announced that the show would be reinstated, but now without bad language, sex or drinking. The Federal Communications Agency, the country's media regulator, agreed.

It was a fitting symbol of the conservative reformation that has swept the country. The changes started after the State Duma elections in 2011 that then-President Dmitry Medvedev referred to as the "cleanest" in Russia's history. In other words, they best represented the will of the majority.

This reformation includes President Vladimir Putin's call for reindustrialization, his focus on social spending, the ban on Duma deputies and officials holding overseas accounts, laws to protect against offending religious feelings and the bans on homosexual propaganda and bad language in the media. Some of this conservative reformation has been rational, while other parts have been odious or obscurantist. But taken together, it is all a protest against a perverse liberal ideology that justifies conspicuous consumption and gaining wealth by any means possible.

The authorities seem to make concessions to public opinion, while at the same time committing defiantly ultra-liberal, anti-social behavior.

For example, Putin talks about the new industrialization, but then he appoints Alexei Ulyukayev, an associate of Yegor Gaidar and Anatoly Chubais, as the new economic development minister. In other words, he appoints the very person who was directly responsible for the country's de-industrialization. Or else Duma speaker Sergei Naryshkin constantly repeats "Russia should not repent for Soviet history," even while the press leaks information about the authorities' intention to transfer the ashes of Soviet-era historical figures from Red Square to a new memorial cemetery in Mytishchi, just outside Moscow. This move is very much in the spirit of the liberals' pathological desire to eliminate memory of the Soviet era, which was both great and tragic at the same time.

According to polls, viewers have called for moral censorship of television. Catering to this conservative electorate, Putin said recently that the government would only support domestic filmmakers once the Russian film industry adopted an ethics charter regulating content. At the same time, however, television executives have decided to keep "Vacation in Mexico" on the air, while bawdy reality show "Dom 2" on TNT and talk show"Pust Govoryat" on Channel One have been on the air for years and remain popular with the less conservative members of society.

What a paradox: The Putin-hating, marginalized liberals can be very happy with their government, but the average Putin supporter who is repulsed and frightened by "it girl" Ksenia Sobchak, who takes part in street protests and hosts the semi-pornographic "Dom 2," feels betrayed by the same leadership.

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