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## **Interview of the Chairman of the Investigative Committee of Russia to the Russian News and Information Agency RIA Novosti**



### **Mr. Bastrykin: the key success factor to national development of Russia is the younger generation upbringing**

*In the margins of the St. Petersburg International Legal Forum (SPBILF), Mr. Alexander Bastrykin, Chairman of the Investigative Committee of Russia, spoke about the shortcomings of the Bologna education system, the importance of children's moral education, and the importance of limiting the scenes of violence shown on TV. Mr. Bastrykin was interviewed for RIA Novosti by Darina Khanuna.*

**– While speaking at the St. Petersburg Youth Legal Forum, you raised a question of education. Your speech, without any exaggeration, turned up the attention of many people. We saw a lot of positive feedback on the internet. Tell us your thoughts on the problems and shortcomings of our modern education?**

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– The problem is that for the past 30 years we have been adopting and following the western values in many areas of our lives. It includes education too. When we joined the Bologna system, we adopted some entirely new approaches to the teaching staff training. A person with a degree in one area of study could join and complete the Master's program in a totally different specialty. I believe that the quality of education is suffering significantly in this case. It suffers even more if the area of study is a fundamental legal science. The western approach to education is to provide the educational services. Unfortunately, many educational institutions in our country have chosen this path too. The educational process begins to resemble a “feeding” of knowledge to people, followed by a formal diploma awarding procedure. Not to mention the quality of textbooks. The authors of many textbooks are people, who were educated in the west. As a result, such significant events of the Great Patriotic War as the Siege of Leningrad and the Battle of Stalingrad are usually missing in new textbooks. The role of the USSR in the victory over fascism is also greatly downsized. And this is just one example. As a result, our school graduates do not know the history of their nation and do not properly identify themselves as a part of the Russian society and culture. Instead, they absorb the traits, habits, norms of morality that are alien and strange to us. As a consequence, our national identity is being eroded under the influence of the factors I mentioned above.

**– Can we say that many negative events in our society in which young people are involved, are closely linked to the education system?**

– The desire to commit an illegal act is highly influenced by the environment in which a young person finds himself. But the way one adapts to such an environment and navigate through it depends on one's education and upbringing. We have already seen the examples of young people with insufficient knowledge of our history or indifference to the memory of those who died during the Great Patriotic War, who posted photographs of Nazi criminals on the Immortal Regiment website, desecrated monuments and memorials, and committed other disgraceful acts. A number of them were prosecuted in accordance with the article of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation "Rehabilitation of Nazism", while others were also held liable in accordance with the law. There are young people who, I repeat, due to insufficient knowledge and education and under the influence of a strong flow of distorted information available, can take a rash and contradictory position, or become an accomplice in a crime. Especially if we speak about juveniles. Now, during the special operation to protect Donbass, various social media platforms channels established and sponsored from abroad, provide negative and aggressive information in relation to the Russian-speaking population, citizens of Russia and towards our country in general. These resources are overloaded with false information which is often so nicely disguised that only those, who really understand the situation and have access to reliable data, those who know the history, can recognize a so-called fake. For children and teenagers, of course, these options are highly undesirable. But fake information is even more dangerous than insults, as it is intended to influence the minds of people. There are also those, who having no possibility or desire to understand the events, deliberately spread this distorted information to their friends, subscribers and followers in social media. But I want to remind you that such "influencers" can also become defendants in criminal cases if, for example, we speak about the spread of false information regarding the actions of the Russian Armed Forces. In other scenarios, examples of cruelty and antisocial actions may be copied by minors. And the line between disgraceful acts, administrative offenses and real crimes is a very thin one. Another

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example - informal youth groups originated in the West that promote violence in educational institutions. They pose a serious threat to our society. In 2020, at the initiative of the Russian Investigative Committee, the activity of one of the criminal movements was banned due to its extremist content.

That is why we always highlight the importance of teaching our young Internet users to navigate the environment, to analyze information and to study primary sources to avoid getting into trouble.

We must understand that formation of the right values and ideals in the minds of our children and teenagers is almost the only right way to save them from the problems I mentioned above. Not only parents and close family but also teachers, educators, public institutions should be involved in solving these problems. The right upbringing has to become an integral part of the whole educational process.

**– About education, elements of which system would you consider possible to introduce to educate the Russian youth?**

– We all remember that in Soviet times our education was fundamental and it was considered the best in the world. So why can't we go back to the good things that we already had? The former system involved the study of general disciplines, along with specialized disciplines and practical activities. The ideological component of course had an important place. There were student organizations, Komsomol, construction teams that taught life skills. And higher educational institutions provided specialists not only with a well-structured system of knowledge, but also with a developed sense of justice, patriotic views and ideas. This has no comparison with the Western format of education which resembles, as I said, a purchase of a product or service.

**– How do you build the education system in subordinate educational institutions? Do you follow these rules?**

– To train and educate future investigators, we have created a system of departmental continuous education. By the way, in 2020 the system has turned 10 years old! We have Cadet Classes and Corps followed by the study in the Academies of the Investigative Committee. We took the path of a specialist education, and after five years of training and obtaining diplomas of specialists in departmental universities of the Russian Investigative Committee, our graduates already have a good theoretical base and even have some practical experience, which allows them to enter the working rhythm quickly and investigate criminal cases effectively. Here we try to follow the traditions of our national education, which has a decade's long history.

**– You mentioned that education is not only about study-books, but also about upbringing?**

– That's right, I'm convinced of it. A complete schooling system provides not only theoretical knowledge, but a good opportunity to gain life experience. Keeping people in a classroom cramming theoretical material is not enough. It will be difficult for them to adapt to life and new conditions when they join the work force. And we do everything possible in our educational institutions to let students participate in public life. They are engaged in patriotic events, the study of history and of course in charity work, helping people. In this way, we give not only knowledge, but also nurture human values, strengthen spirituality, in their traditional sense.

**– Who exactly do your students provide help to?**

– For many years our students have been participating in patriotic activities, regularly visiting war veterans, helping with food deliveries during the pandemic, cleaning up monuments and memorials

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in various regions. Now, with the ongoing special operation I offered to organize assistance to the injured servicemen. And this proposal of mine has already been implemented. Our young generation has actively joined this process. For example, the St. Petersburg Cadets have made an agreement with the Russian Ministry of Defense hospital. In compliance with this agreement and with the consent of their parents, the cadets have the opportunity to voluntarily provide assistance to the military staff under treatment. They take walks with them around the territory, provide all possible physical assistance, moral support. This sort of communication is very interesting for our students. They are very involved in this, because this is a valuable life experience that cannot be gained through social media. Even here, at the Legal Forum, students from other educational institutions approached me expressing the readiness to join this initiative. Everything I said above contributes to the formation of character and personality values.

**– "Legal ideology" issues were also actively discussed within the framework of the legal forum, weren't they?**

– After the Constitution of Russia was amended, the family itself, traditional family values, social justice have been made a priority for us. Our legal education ensures the cultural and historical continuity of generations. Therefore, the key success factor to the national development of Russia is the education of our younger generation, including government support of the legal, moral and patriotic education, volunteer movements that involve representatives of civil society - all of this should be part of the educational process.

**– What do you think is needed for this?**

– In order to make it happen, we need to continue reforming our school system actively. We must strengthen its educational potential. It is necessary to raise the prestige of the teaching profession and develop standards that would meet modern requirements. Additionally, we need to take extra steps to protect our young people from the information that threatens their well-being, security and development. We also need to introduce restrictions on the depiction of scenes of violence, cruelty, various manifestations of immorality on publicly accessible federal channels, exclude various talkshows and reality shows that desocialize young people and promote destructive behavior. We also need to identify risk groups, conduct psychological testing of students in educational institutions in order to prevent delinquency among young people.

**– How acute is the issue of information security of children and teens today?**

It is no secret that social networks are now in great demand among young people, but the information in them is often unsafe for the mental health and physical development of children. At the same time, such qualities as gullibility and curiosity make them ideal targets for criminals. This is clearly evidenced by the fact that in 2021 a number of children who became victims of Internet crimes increased by a third (from 1,274 to 1,647). This year (data for the first quarter of 2022), such crimes were already committed against 471 minors (whereas in the first quarter of 2021 the number was 412).

**– What type do these crimes belong to?**

– The bulk of the Internet crimes committed against children are related to assaults on their sexual integrity and moral development. I mean when the communication of adults with children is of a corrupting nature. For example, the demonstration of pornographic materials, the offer to demonstrate naked intimate parts of the body, to take and send explicit photographs and videos. At

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the same time, victims are often too ashamed and reluctant to contact law enforcement agencies, which create additional obstacles in identifying such crimes.

**– One of the sensitive problems for our citizens is a problem of fair justice, objective preliminary and judicial investigation. These problems concern our citizens and they were also discussed at the Forum.**

– It is known that the modern Russian criminal process at its trial stage in part copies the Anglo-American model of pure competition. The court is given a role of a passive observer, when, after examining the evidence presented by the parties and listening to their opinion, the judge makes a decision based on the strength of the logical argumentation of the position of each of the parties. I emphasize that I always encourage the investigators of the Investigative Committee to search for the truth. But the procedural obligation to search for the truth in a criminal case should also be with the court, since it is the court that is obliged to ensure the fairness of justice.

I think it is also clear to you that a court verdict must be based on a complete, comprehensive and objective study of all the circumstances of the committed act. This approach has a historical basis. It existed in the Charter of Criminal Procedure of the Russian Empire of 1864, in the Code of Criminal Procedure of the RSFSR of 1922, the Code of Criminal Procedure of the RSFSR of 1960. We can only regret that the most important ideas and values of criminal justice, which determined the legal traditions of not only Russian, but also European criminal procedure, were not claimed by the compilers of the 2001 Code of Criminal Procedure. It is extremely unfortunate that the adoption of this code was an attempt to abandon our traditional values in favor of the Anglo-American model of the criminal process, which is alien to us, by forcefully planting it on the soils of our domestic legal system. As a result, the current Code of Criminal Procedure gravitates towards pure competition, in which the court is assigned a role of a passive observer of the confrontation between the parties, where the judge makes a verdict based on the evidence presented to him, and, in other words, in favor of the side that was more convincing. Basically, the truth is relegated to the background here, and the law does not prescribe to know it, but to resolve the dispute between the parties promptly.

Unfortunately, the draft law on undeniable truth was never considered by the State Duma. But we are not leaving this issue, and I hope that the principle of establishing the truth in a criminal case will return to our domestic criminal process and will find support from our legislators.

**– And if we are talking about the work of an investigator, what is the most important thing in it, in your opinion?**

– Today, considering the constant development of new information technologies, and, consequently, the improvement of criminal strategies, of course, the high professional competence of our investigators is important to us, as well as the competence of our forensic experts and criminologists. Additionally, it is necessary not only to know the law and observe it strictly, but also to have strong moral principles. Of course, the main trait of any investigator should be integrity - the presence of strong convictions, despite the obstacles and threats even to the personal well-being. This is what helps to resist modern evil. Without such qualities execution of the professional duty is impossible. Therefore, while training and selecting investigators in our institutions, we take into account not only their knowledge of the specifics of the professional activities, but also their moral and strong-willed qualities. Investigator is a key figure in criminal proceedings, and the fate of people depends on them

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sometimes. Therefore, it is necessary to develop a sense of justice and objectivity in the understanding of legal norms.

**– Alexander Ivanovich, what Universities did the investigators who work with you graduate from?**

– Most of our officers, who are over 30 years old, are the graduates of various universities. However, classical lawyers, as a rule, are not sufficiently taught the basics that will be useful in the profession of an investigator. They are not taught enough how to take fingerprints correctly, how to correctly draw up a protocol of an investigative action, how to interrogate a witness or examine a crime scene. They do not have the skills to work with forensic technology, even if they choose to specialize in criminal law. Classical law schools often lack the practical component, which is a key issue for young people choosing this profession.

But, despite this, the requirements we impose on them are the same as the requirements we impose on our graduates - legal proficiency, adherence to principles and determination to serve the Motherland and the Law. Because service in law enforcement agencies requires exceptional professionalism and the tasks that the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation face, oblige us to take care of the quality of education of our future officers.

In the Academies of the Investigative Committee, the main emphasis, of course, is made on specialized training for investigative activities. It is important for us to prepare a specialist who quickly adapts to the system and works productively. We have a strong staff of professors who have extensive practical experience, a good base, forensic equipment and a training ground. Therefore, studying in departmental universities is the most effective for training and re-training officers of different investigative units. The fate of people depends on the competent and skillful actions of the investigator. In the near future, the young graduates from our departmental educational institutions will be able to complete and cover the staffing needs of the department by at least 90%.

**– Could you tell me please, if there is any shortage of officers in the department now?**

– No, we do not have any shortage of officers. Despite the fact that our department is one of the youngest state structures, more and more young people are joining the ranks of the department, as the public prestige of our profession is increasing. Again, many graduates of law schools and higher educational institutions of the Russian Investigative Committee seek to enter the service of the department. But not every candidate will be accepted - we are setting very high standards to our future investigators, and the department has organized a complex multi-stage system of checks.

**– What piece of advice would you give to your future investigators?**

– The most important piece of advice that I can give to young people is to make up their minds and try to understand at the initial stage that working as an investigator is not a romantic job. It is serious work. They need to be prepared for the routine and very monotonous daily activities. Therefore, if the young people want to serve in the Investigative Committee, it would be useful to go through our schooling completely - from the Cadets up to the Graduates of the Academy of the Russian Investigative Committee.

The choice of this profession must be taken responsibly. And for those who have decided to connect their lives with investigation, I can only recommend to learn, learn and learn again in order to master all the intricacies of the investigative science.

In conclusion, I would like to note that caring for the younger generation today must be of

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paramount importance for our country. Our youth is the main potential of modern Russia. It will ensure the dynamic development of our country. Let's remember that even those who were forced to face the terrible conditions of the besieged Leningrad during the Great Patriotic War, took care of children, trying not only to protect and save their lives, but also raise a generation that is worthy of their ancestors.

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