

## **THE FALL OF TOTALITARIANISM AND THE QUEST FOR UNIVERSAL VALUES**

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Eastern Europe is now free from the bonds of totalitarianism; democratic groups in the USSR are trying to dismantle its structures. The monolith of the Eastern block countries has disappeared, and we are astonished to see instead a mosaic of social life; political and cultural pluralism is gradually gaining its force in Eastern European countries, a similar process is under way in the USSR, where the old totalitarian mechanisms of power are urged in a struggle to give way to the movement of renewal. The fall of totalitarianism is accompanied by the quest for the universal civilizational foundations and values.

Totalitarianism is hostile to the search of secular humanists and religious thinkers for the universal values because it sacralizes its own institutions of power, ideology, and rites. The representatives of the totalitarian state are creating the aura of pseudosacredness, intended to mask its real nature, using the resources of illusory consciousness.

The typical feature of the body of totalitarian society is the unity of state and party apparatus. The monster of the party-state, spreading its influence on the spheres of economy, social life, culture, appears on the stage of history. The pyramidal structure of society is created, whereby the power is emanating from one center, as a rule personified in the image of a dictator--Big Brother, having many close aids and regional leaders. The sinister results of the fascist and barrack-room communist totalitarian dictatorship are evident now. It is clear that barrack-room communist states are more stable than fascist. Only the scientific-technological revolution is able to undermine their foundations, to show that they are totally inadequate to answer the demands of the modern civilization. Eastern European countries and the Soviet Union know all the sufferings caused by the barrack-room dictatorship: totalitarianism ruined their economy, destroyed the civil society, violated democratic rights and liberties, created anomalies in the spiritual life--social apathy, immorality, pseudoreligious reverence before power, and cult of material things.

Totalitarian non-ideology is sacralized, pretending to work out the universal and the only right vision of history. Its authority is sanctioned by the party-state, which is beyond any kind of competition. That is why the totalitarian ideology is radically against all the opposite secular and religious doctrines, Big Brother, seeing and knowing everything, prevents spreading of their influence.

In Eastern European countries and the USSR, the party-state used Marxist ideology for its own purposes. Dogmatically understood, Marxist world view served as a platform for the rejection of universal human values, nourished fanatic consciousness for many years.

Was this interpretation of Marxism predetermined by its immanent contents or radically distorted by totalitarianism? The answer cannot be one-sided.

First, it is proper to mention that Marxism is the child of the general foundations of the European philosophy of the New Age. This type of philosophy is based on a set of premises:

- 1) reason is supposed to be capable to know the universe and to guide the human being in the endeavor to build a good society;
- 2) the universally accepted humanistic idea presupposes that the human being can never be taken as means but is the end in her/himself;
- 3) global progressive view of history necessarily conditions the absolute ideal of the coming future.

One can easily find all these premises with different accentuation in the works of the young and mature K. Marx. In general, Marx believed in the all-powerful abilities of reason, struggling with illusory forms and leading the human being with the help of revolutionary practice to the creation of the rationally made social order. Starting from the early works, marked by the influence of Feuerbach, he spoke about the self-value of the human being and humankind. This was a kind of Promethean humanism, rejecting the belief in the absolute. It is enough to take one more step and to proclaim that a certain group of people, social class is the bearer of the humanistic ideal, freeing all humankind, and the basis for the relativism in understanding values will be formed. And this step was taken by Marx in his philosophy of history. Trying to work out a universal vision of history, he believed in the inevitability, paving the way of the proletariat and its vanguard, the Communist Party. Revealing not only the influence of Hegel, but also of Christian sources, Marx wrote in his preparatory works to The Capital, created in 1857-1859, that humankind was moving step by step towards the kingdom of liberty. The leap to the "kingdom of liberty" is for Marx the transition to the utopian stage of the communist future, where the transparency of fiscal relations would mean the appearance of the "new man" and society, free from the exploitation, the market economy, the oppression by the state, the alienation and all the forms of consciousness, produced by it, including, certainly, religion. To help the glory of the communist future is the vocation of the state of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The European project is embodied in the works of Marx in the specific, but at the same time logically perfect form, reaching its own limit. It is evident that the totalitarian ideologies are not very much centered on the philosophical nuances of the legacy of Marx, rather, they are finding in it, what is useful for their own purposes.

The belief in reason appears to be in totalitarian non-ideologies the obedience to their dictatorship. The highway of history is, by definition, reflected in them and not subjected to any kind of doubt. Everything is known in advance from this point of view, and all the deviations must be flatly rejected as unnatural and unreasonable. Sacred texts of the

totalitarian ideology are embodied in the "new language" (G. Orwell) and are constantly reinterpreted by its means in the light of the political events. The totalitarian mono-ideology cultivates not only the illusory picture of reality but also the practical surrealism in social life. The mono-ideology is the surrogate of the religious consciousness, leading to the worship of the party-state.

The belief in the unison of the proletariat, nourished by the totalitarian ideology, turned out to be the glorification on the party-state. It is considered to be the absolute value, predetermining, what is Truth, Good, and Beauty. Atheistic humanism inspired in the reality of life of socialist countries the climate of real antihumanism beyond all boundaries. It is the result of the thesis, that the highest interests of the human being and humankind are expressed by the party-state.

The proletariat, glorified in thousands of books, interpreting the barrack-room communist doctrine, could not become in the totalitarian society a real master of its destiny; this role was a property of its originally postulated vanguard--the Party. Fyodor Dostoyevsky was a prophet, who predicted the rule of the "possessed," making possible the tragedy of the USSR and Eastern Europe. The party bureaucracy became the "aristocracy" of the totalitarian regimes, rightly called by the Russian writer A. Platonov "deputies of the proletariat." These "deputies of the proletariat" are not concerned with the total human liberation, proclaimed by Marx; they are much more close to the ideal of the universal suppression. In his novel Crimea Island, V. Aksenov shows the conversation of the representatives of the upper layer of the party bureaucracy, in which they come to the conclusion, that the tsarist ideal of "Russian Orthodoxy, autocracy and nationality" has become obsolete because Russian Orthodoxy is the product of the Judeo-Christian tradition alien to Russia. According to their opinion, the new slogan is more appropriate to the situation - "communism, autocracy of the party and nationality." This imperial spirit was governing until recently the destiny not only of the Soviet people but also of the Eastern European countries.

The ritual practice of the barrack-room communist regimes is oriented in the direction of forming a specific type of personality. Different meetings, demonstrations, jubilees, the systems of education, army service, and mass media are supposed to create a double-faced person--he/she is a dictator in relation to people, who are subordinated to him/her, and at the same time a victim of his/her superiors. Barrack-room communist regimes are cultivating poverty and using the mechanism of giving material advantages for obedience to create the necessary type of personality. According to their slogans, the spiritual abilities of the "new man" are the highest aim, but the real strategy of power, using different microstructures, is reducing the individual to the bodily level, diverting his interest from politics and highest values.

The decline of the barrack-room communist regimes was conditioned by the situation, which was created in the contemporary world under the influence of the scientific-technological revolution, and is characterized by the complexity of the economic, social, political, and spiritual factors. They are doomed by history, uniting different regions, countries, and people.

Now, when Eastern European countries have reached the stage of the pluralistic development and democratic forces in the USSR are struggling to dismantle the totalitarian system, the question of return to the universal human values becomes very acute. To destroy the fanatic consciousness, based on the reverence before the party-state, means to change the set of main values. We are witnessing the renewal of the influence of religion and secular humanistically oriented doctrines. The return to the universal human values meets, nevertheless, with serious obstacles.

It is evident, that the countries, entering the stage of post-totalitarian development, will be in some way influenced by the post-modernist situation, which is so typical for the spiritual life of the West. The post-modernist orientation appeared as a kind of attitude to negative phenomena in the evolution of Western civilization, as a reevaluation of the values of the New Age; the belief in the power of reason was lost; the growing alienation was the terrible results of the totalitarian rule; global problems, unknown to humankind before led to disillusion in the final glory of the traditional humanism; the global, optimistically inspired views on history collapsed, and the anti-utopian climate of thought is widespread. In the refined philosophical form these ideas were expressed after F. Nietzsche and M. Weber by contemporary thinkers - T. Adorno, M. Horkheimer, M. Heidegger, J. Derrida, M. Foucault, and others. In the mass consciousness, this post-modernist situation creates relativistic attitudes towards existing values and at the same time nourishes nostalgia for tradition.

The future of Eastern Europe and the USSR will be in this way or another connected with the process of modernization, having not only good results. That is why the post-modernist consciousness may have various contours, fluctuating from the pole of nihilistic revolt to the opposite pole of conservatism, of the return to the lost traditional roots of different communities.

The essential obstacle on the way to universal values is nationalism. The collapse of the Eastern block has considerably sharpened the national question; nationalistic particularism is the real peril not only for Eastern Europe but also for the Soviet Union. The examples of the confrontation on the national basis are multiform: the conflict between Czechs and Slovaks in Czechoslovakia, the conflicts between the republics in Yugoslavia, the question of the relations between Bulgarians and the Turkish minority in Bulgaria, the tendency to withdraw from the USSR exhibited by some republics, etc. In the past, national contradictions were suppressed by the totalitarian mechanism, imperial forces. They are appearing on the surface of the social life now, and although the will of the nations to obtain sovereignty is well understood, this process is in many cases dangerous for the transition to the post-totalitarian society in a number of countries.

The growth of nationalism is also often accompanied by the sharpening of religious contradictions. To the political conflict in Yugoslavia are added, for example, confessional relations between Catholic and Orthodox believers, in Bulgaria, between Orthodox Christians and Muslims. The rise of Islamic fundamentalism is evident in some of the republics of the USSR. The Armenian - Azerbaijani conflict is to some extent colored by this tendency. Russian nationalism, marked by the return to traditional belief

and opposition to other nationalities, is also rising. The most significant examples of it are "Memory" and "Motherland" societies, known for their uncovered anti-Semitism. It is proper to mention, that some representatives of "Memory" are even claiming the need to reject the Judeo-Christian tradition and to return to the paganism of the old Slavic people. It is not difficult to see in it a certain resemblance with the views of the European "new right" movement, expressed in the most philosophical form by A. de Benoist.

The danger of the alliance of nationalistic movements with religion is deeply felt in the USSR, where the process of the transition from totalitarianism to democracy is very painful. Many years ago K. Leontiev remarked that Eastern Europe is more close to the civilizational process than Russia, which inherited the role of Byzantium. The "byzantinism" is still alive not only in the right-wing nationalistic circles, but also in the official structures, nourished by the imperial idea. Both are appealing to religion. The right-wing organizations in Russia are for the restoration of empire, based on the principles of "Russian Orthodoxy, autocracy and nationality." The representatives of national Bolshevism are also moving in this direction after the collapse of the official party ideology. They consider it possible to maintain the influence of the party-state structures in Russia and in the whole Union, filling the gap of the ideological vacuum by the religious doctrine of the Russian Orthodox Church. The alliance of the right-wing nationalism and the national-Bolshevism is the most dangerous tendency of the contemporary situation. The Russian Orthodox Church is also tempted, being offered the opportunity to reinforce its own position in society in exchange of the support of this alliance. The realization of this tendency is perilous in the multinational state, where different religious confessions coexist, and, may facilitate the disintegration of the country.

A century ago, P. Chaadaev claimed that Russia and Europe should unite. This call for unity is still of vital importance today. It means the acceptance of the universal human values, the move in the direction of the world civilization. The recognition of the universal value of life, human gender, peace, personality and its liberty, non-alienable human rights, democracy, culture and its eternal basis--Truth, Good and Beauty; this is the foundation for unity of different countries and people. Religion and secular humanistic thought must cooperate in creating the spiritual climate for the tradition of Eastern European countries and the Soviet Union to the post-totalitarian, pluralistic society.

The USSR and Eastern European countries are bound together with economic, political and cultural ties. Their development after the collapse of Eastern block clearly shows that it is not very easy to break the traditional relations. Eastern European countries are trying to join the West, but this process is not going smoothly. In spite of their desire to become part of the West, the integration into the united Europe will take a lot of time and demands considerable changes not only in the economy and technology but also in politics and cultural standards. Under the present circumstances, their economy is oriented to a great extent to the Soviet market, and it would be unwise to break the existing relations. That does not mean the return to the past, which is impossible; imperial structures are completely inadequate to the new situation on the continent. It may sound

as a paradox, but Eastern European countries can become the part of the uniting Europe, using the opportunity given with the cooperation on the new basis with the Soviet Union. Such a cooperation may be in effect if the countries of the former USSR accept the way of democracy and abandons imperial thinking. It is also the premise of the unification of the USSR into Europe. Rejecting democracy and universal human values, the [states of the former] USSR can return to a new stagnation or even to a totalitarian rule. In such a state, it would be a danger to humankind. But this scenario seems not to be highly probable in the long run; it is impossible to restore the old administer-and-command system, the official ideology is dead, and democratic forces are gaining strength.

People of the nations, who suffered under the totalitarian rule, clearly understood from their own experience what it means to ignore the universal foundations of social life and culture. It appeared that the sacrifice of human freedom leads not only to the spiritual vacuum but also in the final instance to the shortages of elementary things needed for the physical survival of the individual. The restoration of the norms of the civilized life means today considerable changes in economy, politics, social life, and what is no less important--in the spiritual values, forming a human person. Stereotypes of the totalitarian, one-sided thinking are difficult to overcome. They are even stronger than the totalitarian system itself because people were formed for many years by the mono-ideology and ritual practice.

The acceptance of the universal human values demands the radical renewal of the value producing system and education. History of culture, philosophy, and religion must become subjects, the study of which can help in forming pluralistic models of thinking and at the same time the understanding of importance of the universal values.

The creation of the new spiritual atmosphere in the post-totalitarian society is possible through a dialogue of secular humanists and the representatives of different confessions. The pretention to express the only right position, which is the result of the totalitarian thinking cannot become productive for the construction of the pluralistic society. Ecumenical dialogue of religious leaders may be fruitful to exhibit different ways to the eternal problems and values. It can have a positive impact on the spiritual climate in Eastern Europe and the USSR. New unity is coming through mutual respect of existing cultural and religious traditions. Dialogical perspective is a sound alternative to the mono-ideology, the residues of which are still evident in the outbursts of political hatred, lack of the ability to find a compromise for the benefit of all sides involved in the conflicts, which are typical in the process transition to a free pluralistic society.

Understanding the illusions of the rationalism of the New Age, we must clearly see the need of the hermeneutical reason. It must be in search of the renewal of the humanistic perspectives in the contemporary world. Abandoning global schemes and utopias, it is necessary to retain the unity of the modern world and prospects for the future in the light of the universal human values. The fall of the totalitarian systems gives a good chance to Eastern European countries and the USSR to find their own place in the world community.