

Sacrum and profanum in the space of the Soviet totalitarianism

Recently the category of “sacral” is more often actualized in studies of scholars devoted to totalitarianism, although this fact does not surprise anyone. Sacral, as it is well-known, can be presented in different forms (e.g.: religion, myth, ideology, science, art), moreover it has ambivalent nature and can be transformed. Speaking about totalitarianism as about a political regime which is aimed at total control over all the aspects of a person’s life and society in whole means to simplify the nature of this contradictive phenomenon to the greatest extend.

Totalitarianism is not a social and political phenomenon. It’s a hermetic sacral space which is characterized by an enormously high level of symbolization, mythologizing, ritualization.

Totalitarian power deprived people of their individual features, and turned them into an “instrument” (Kh. Arendt) for achieving authority’s aims. Therefore totalitarian ideology denied a “categorical imperative” – a central concept of Kant’s ethics, as a person according to it cannot be **means of achieving an aim**, but a **person oneself should be an aim**.

Totalitarian models of society existed even in the archaic times. The first totalitarian state of the ancient world is considered to be the Third royal dynasty, which ruled a Sumerian city Ur (Mesopotamia) more than 4000 years ago. It had a precise state ideology which was characterized by comprehensive control and strict regulation of all the aspects of life. One can also mention a philosophic “school of lawyers” in Ancient China, the ideologist of which was Shan Yan (IV c. BC). The ideology of “legists” (they are called so traditionally by Europeans) had a demand for strict censorship, persecution of dissidents, and also encouraged denunciations of neighbours. One of the key political concepts of this ideology was “national unification” which made any pluralism impossible. Instead of that, legists stated anyone’s equality before the law and opportunities of career growth regardless of social background: a commoner could advance to the first minister. One should pay

attention to the fact that in many centuries the idea of the same “potential parity” of a new non-class society was declared in the Bolshevik “International” (“Who was nothing will become everything”). The famous treatise of Plato “The Republic” is also totalitarian. However history of totalitarianism itself started only at the end of the first quarter of the XX century.

An ideology claimed to be a religion, that is why secular underwent sacralization, and sacral on the other hand was declared to be the “opium for the people”. That is a very dangerous phenomenon, because transformation of religion into the ideological form leads to the crisis of centuries-old religious traditions and destroys spiritual potential of a nation drastically, which was clearly demonstrated by post-totalitarian societies.

Totalitarianism as sacral space is not static, because it has inner dynamics. Scholar M. Karpytskyi proves in his studies that the history of emergence, development, and decline of totalitarian states is connected with the change of correlation of the sphere of sacral and the sphere of secular. The scholar states that any totalitarian regime has 7 phases of development. “Pre-totalitarian” phase is characterized by balance between sacral and secular spheres (this stage matches the period of monarchy in Russia before 1917). The second stage is emergence of a totalitarian system. At this time there proceeds destroying of traditional values and intervention of secular content into sacral sphere: moral values are replaced by class values, so it ruins spiritual basis of the “old” society, and programs the construction of a “new” and “just” one. The third stage is strengthening of the totalitarian system.

Post-colonial studies in Ukraine refuted many totalitarian myths, and more of them may be refuted in the nearest future. It is impossible to build a new democratic society according to the European standard without rethinking the bitter lessons of totalitarian past, without making right conclusions out of it, which is why a thorough study of the ghosts of the past and creating an optimal model of farewell with the past is the priority of modern Ukrainian society.