WORKING WITH THE IMAGINARY IN THE FASCIST AND COMMUNIST SOCIETIES AND OVERCOMING SOCIAL HETERONOMY IN THE THEORY OF C. CASTORIADIS

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Abstract: The article raises the question of fundamental identification and difference between the totalitarian regimes of fascism/Nazism and communism, followed by a discussion of their status in the first period of the post-Soviet political transit. The main arguments in favour of identifying both types of totalitarianism and marking fundamental moments of distinction were reflected in the polemic of A. Besançon and L. Kołakowski. Criticism of the totalitarianism of fascist and communist types in the works of the French philosopher of Greek origin Cornelius Castoriadis allows seeing the features that connect most totalitarian regimes despite the difference in their ideological programs, which can represent a certain threat even for modern societies. It also highlights those points of the Russian (Soviet) project of Communist society that allow differentiating between the Nazi and Communistic types of the Imaginary. Finally, the article considers the main types of public heteronomy, characteristic of totalitarian and authoritarian regimes, as well as the neoliberal model of consumption society. According to Castoriadis, they are contrary to the ideas of social emancipation, replacing it with their principles of (pseudo) rational domination, against which his own project of collective social autonomy stands.

Keywords: Castoriadis, fascism, communism, heteronomy, totalitarianism

Introduction

The twentieth century in the history of humankind is viewed as a time of triumph of totalitarian societies. Communism and fascism, despite the difference between their ideological structures, often induce their general conceptualization as totalitarian regimes within political theory. Indeed, such elements of the structural organization of communist and fascist societies as a systematic policy of repressions and violence against political opponents, terror against civil society and struggle with any manifestations of dissent, militarization and search for enemies outside and inside the state — look like common features of all totalitarian regimes. And to a certain extent, this can disregard the difference between communism and fascism in terms of influence on society. Therefore, discussions emerge from time to time among researchers of contemporary totalitarianism about the essential resemblance of the fascist and communist policies and the possibilities of their closer comparison not only as totalitarian regimes.

The other side of these discussions is a general accusation aimed at left-wing intellectual projects and movements of being totalitarian by nature in terms of their ideas, which is supposed to be confirmed by the history of the communist states of Europe and the world. To answer the questions, whether there is still a fundamental difference between such forms of totalitarian societies as communist, Nazi and fascist, and whether belonging to the left ideology automatically means being totalitarian by nature, it is important to consider the arguments of the most prominent representative of post-Marxism — the French thinker of Greek origin Cornelius Castoriadis, in the scope of his project of collective social autonomy.

1. The differences and similarities between communism and fascism: on the margins of the post-Soviet debates

Against the background of the collapse of the USSR as the most influential communist state in 1991, as well as due to the disappearance of the block of socialist states in Europe and the beginning of the post-communist transition, there emerged very revealing discussions among European intellectuals about the legacy of the communist regime and its comparison with the crimes of another totalitarian system which was destroyed and condemned in the middle of the 20th century. Among others, the polemic between the French political scientist and sovietologist Alain Besançon and the Polish ex-Marxist philosopher and publicist Leszek Kołakowski, which took place on the pages of the Polish Russian-language monthly "New Poland" in 1999 (Nazism i communism, 1999), can be considered as a very characteristic feature.

A. Besançon's arguments in favour of a closer identification of both regimes in history boil down to the fact that their historical and

ideological difference is explained by imperfect European politics of memory rather than their essential dissimilarity. The crimes of fascism and Nazism, according to the French thinker, are simply more obvious and pronounced compared to the crimes of the Soviet regime which also killed millions of its citizens, but did it less conspicuously and on the periphery of European politics, thereby causing a certain "amnesia" about itself. We are constantly reminded of the crimes of Nazism by Jewish society which internationally promotes the policy of recognizing the criminal nature of the Holocaust and commemorating the victims of fascist policies. It should be noted that, at the same time, Soviet communism, although it also killed many Jews and shared everyday anti-Semitism to a certain extent even at the state level, never came to "the solution of the Jewish question", the core of its home policy. The civil society and counter-elites of the post-Soviet countries were so demoralized and weakened during the existence of the communist regimes in Europe that after the collapse of the system they did not have the power to raise their voices for the final condemnation of the crimes of Stalinism and communism. At the same time, Western societies were unable to cope with two threats at once, so they reduced their perception of the danger of communism, directing all their efforts to the destruction of Nazism.

Apart from the distorted European politics of memory, Alain Besançon refers to two more arguments that are on the ideological plane. On the one hand, he considers it a political error that fascism and communism are placed on different poles of the ideological spectrum ("right" and "left"), while their ideologies are much closer. To be fair, the ideology of German National Socialism does, at least at the level of rhetoric, seem closer to the "left" than the "right" pole, although the exemplary Italian fascism was predominantly the right-wing conservative type of discourse and practice. On the other hand, Besançon insists that "the greatest achievement of the Soviet ideologues was that they spread and imposed their system of classification of political regimes: they opposed socialism to capitalism, and they identified socialism with the Soviet system" (Nazism i communism, 1999: 15). As a result, we can hypothesize that the author sees the ideological closeness of communism and fascism in the fact that they do not fall clearly into the defined framework of the "right"-"left" dichotomy and probably form some other hybrid ideological focus.

His opponent, philosopher and publicist Leszek Kołakowski does not deny that "both systems were similar according to many and at the same time very important parameters" (Nazism i communism, 1999: 17–18), but insists that the differences between the systems should not be ignored, and they are quite obvious. So, Kołakowski does not agree with Trotsky's idea about the different "class nature" of Bolshevism and Nazism which simultaneously preserve their external authoritarian similarity, but he claims that the difference lies in the very idea of communism, which is significantly distorted by the Soviet ideological

system. This idea, he believes, in itself attracts those people who strive for the truth and believe in humanity and the principles of building a society of justice, and this, in his opinion, explains why, on the one hand, so many critics of communism remain faithful to socialist ideals, clearly emphasizing the criminal nature of the Soviet totalitarian machine, and on the other hand, there are so many of those who were able to rejoin the work of building a socialist society, returning to the system from the Stalinist camps and remaining loyal to the ideal. In contrast to the adherents of the ideas of communism, former Nazis have nowhere to evolve except towards a complete rejection of their former views. "Communism was a descendant of the Enlightenment, albeit a degenerate one, while Nazism was an ugly bastard of romanticism" (Nazism I communism, 1999: 18) — Kołakowski insists polemically.

Another important difference between the communist and the Nazi regimes, as Kołakowski believes, is their attitude to deception: "communism was the embodiment of falsehood, a monumental lie, almost sublime in terms of its scale" (Nazism i communism, 1999: 16). While the fascist totalitarian system declared the supremacy of a certain race or nation, it also carried out policies that fully corresponded to these views, and therefore did not require a major deception of society, more or less openly manipulating the chauvinism and xenophobia of the masses. At the same time, the communist type of totalitarianism disguised itself as internationalism and humanism, equality and justice, freedom and the struggle for peace, although in practice it rather realized the complete opposites of these values, in accordance with the popular slogans from G. Orwell's novel: "War is peace!", "Freedom is slavery!" and "gnorance is strength!" Bolshevism, although it was initially a terrorist regime, Kołakowski continues, was forced to hide under the mask of universal deception, which reached its climax in the period of late Stalinism. It is noteworthy that here Kołakowski refers to Castoriadis's ironic statement that the very name of the communist state — "the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics" — is a quadruple lie.

The next distinction that Kołakowski makes is more polemical, as he claims that the "ideological authenticity" of communism allowed it to be more productive and creative in the field of culture, producing a large number of worthy works in various genres of art, while Nazism brought "only destruction and vandalism". The statement is polemical regarding the controversy surrounding the general issue of Nazi aesthetics: "Olympia" by Leni Riefenstahl, paintings and sculptures in the genre of "romantic realism" by Adolf Ziegler or Arno Brecker, the opera "Carmina Burana" by Carl Orff staged in 1937, etc. This, to a certain extent, can be considered an ideological manipulation on the part of the Polish philosopher, taking into account completely different terms of existence of both systems. Moreover, the love for modernism and realism in both regimes seems to have been mutual. Technological and industrial progress was also equally demonstrated by both regimes,

although this again could not be so much their merit, but a certain trend that captured all European nations at the time.

Kołakowski's main thesis is that we should not equate within the single concept of "communism" the socio-political and socio-cultural situations that existed at the same time in the Soviet Union, the countries of the Warsaw Pact or, for example, "red" Cambodia, because "communism" here is rather a generic concept, which does not remove the question of the variety of types of communist societies. The same applies to the differences between communism and Nazism: they undoubtedly exist, although they share a common belonging to a totalitarian type of regime.

What is important for Kołakowski, he recognizes a partial capacity of communist regimes for limited internal evolution and even the presence of elements of self-criticism (as, for example, Khrushchev's well-known report), but he emphasizes that, objectively, the communist ideology is incompatible with freedom of speech and any significant liberalization of public life. In addition, one of the important observations about the structure of the communist society is its inhomogeneity (it cannot be said that the party and its apparatus, as an ideological monolith, remained exclusively the conductor of the communist idea) that, according to Kołakowski, can partially explain "strange and unexpected" election successes of post-communist parties in most countries, which has left the "empire of Evil". Although, to be fair, this partial success of parties that have retained a certain connection with the communist ideology in the post-communist space can also be attributed to the lack of consistent processes of decommunization and systematic condemnation of the crimes of communism, at least in the countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia.

Thus, the general similarity between fascist (Nazi) and communist regimes, as well as their shared criminal nature, is not denied within the polemic, although there is a dispute about the number and quality of those differences that nevertheless make these regimes different. In this regard, we can turn to the argument presented in this context by the famous French researcher of Greek origin, Cornelius Castoriadis, who in his life not only had the opportunity to come into contact with the ideological and repressive practices of both systems, but also tried to find an answer to these questions: where does a repressive society come from? and what do we need to develop a project of social autonomy that opposes both fascist and communist versions of totalitarianism?

2. Similarities and differences of totalitarian systems in the theory of C. Castoriadis

Since he was 13 years of age, Cornelius Castoriadis became fascinated by the ideas of Marx and interested in politics, and at the age of 15 he

was already an active member of the communist youth movement, and later a member of the Communist Party of Greece during the autocratic rule of General Metaxa and the fascist occupation of the country. However, he quickly joined more radical, Trotskyist circles which nevertheless forced him to seek refuge in France, where he lived and worked until the end of his life. Becoming gradually disillusioned with the Stalinist version of communism, as well as with its more radical Trotskyist or Maoist interpretations, Castoriadis, who became one of the theorists of Western post-Marxism, offers his own project of collective autonomy and emancipation, harshly criticizing the totalitarian practices of both the Soviet communist ideology and the right-wing Nazi and neo-Nazi populism. However, his attitude to both systems also reflects the dynamics of fixing both elements of similarity and significant differences, as well as the previous polemic of Kołakowski and Besançon.

As Cornelius Castoriadis points out: "Communism and Fascism *are not* as a matter of fact two ways, as monstrous as they are, of resolving the problems of the modern age. Both destroy the societies they seize hold of and can endure only so long as their combination of lies and terror can hold up" (Castoriadis, 2010a: 242). What unites both regimes is slavery, into which society collapses, as well as other signs of totalitarianism, first of all, "the distinction between the public and the private is abolished, the private sphere of each citizen is absorbed by the established power, and the public sphere itself becomes the secret and 'private property' of the dominant group" (Castoriadis, 2010a: 242). At the same time, the threat of communism, from the cosmohistorical standpoint, is considered by Castoriadis to be more dangerous, since Nazism will limit its project to an appeal to one nation and its global ambitions for domination, which inevitably leads to its defeat, while communism reaches a more universalistic goal and can be adapted by every society, expanding its influence to new regions.

Nevertheless, in order to be able to compare both regimes, let alone talk about their probable commonality, one must first analyse the understanding of the reasons for the emergence and nature of each of them in the version of Castoriadis. The thinker does not agree with Roland Barthes' well-known statement that a kind of natural fascism is simply in the language, to the extent that each language is a conductor of direct or indirect authoritarianism, since the roots of social heteronomy and violence should be sought not at all in language, which, after all, is a means to reach agreements between people and is what "liberates me" (Castoriadis, 2003b: 28).

Castoriadis sees the historical reasons for the emergence of fascist and Nazi impulses, which later pervaded societies, in other things. It is widely believed that fascism arises as a result of a crisis, but it is clear that a crisis alone is not enough for this. "There needs to be a capacity to believe and an unleashing of passion, each one connected to the other, each one nourishing the other" (Castoriadis, 2003c: 40),

emphasises Castoriadis. This statement somewhat echoes François Lyotard's well-known idea that the era of grand narratives was possible only in times when people were ready to enthusiastically embrace a new ideology and support it with the energy of their emotions (Lyotard, 1984). Based on this, the functioning of a fascist society requires people to be willing to die and kill for an Idea, the belief in which is dogmatic, and rage and obsession are made far more important social virtues than reasoning or pragmatic calculation. To a certain extent, this relationship of belief and civic pathos may be characteristic of both fascist and communist societies, but the desire for open expression of one's emotions is often much more pronounced under a fascist regime.

However, almost contrary to the previous statement, Castoriadis warns of the threat of growth, including neo-Nazi and generally authoritarian movements in societies that may be gripped by panic or consist of an apathetic population (Castoriadis, 2003e: 116). Such impartiality and inability to manage one's own emotions soberly can often lead to a desire for a "strong hand" and a simple solution to complex socio-political and crisis situations. The question that remains open, however, is this: Is the presence of a crisis in civil society and the absence of natural immunity against authoritarianism sufficient for the rise and consolidation of a fascist society or a social organism prone to febrile or epileptic reactions is needed for the proper functioning of the virus of Nazism?

What unites all totalitarian regimes, bringing communism and fascism together, is the already mentioned desire to establish a regime of total slavery and "(pseudo)rational (pseudo)mastery", says Castoriadis. Every totalitarian regime is "the extreme, the delirious form of this project of total mastery" (Castoriadis, 2003d: 226). Its intention to completely subordinate each person is exhaustively depicted in G. Orwell's well-known dystopia where the totalitarian triumph of Big Brother over the will and freedom of Winston Smith is achieved not when the hero agrees that 2 + 2 does not equal 4, but when he convinces himself that he really loves his master, that is, he has completely internalized the program of mastery. And although every totalitarian regime is doomed to an early death, this does not guarantee the impossibility of its return later. Totalitarianism of this kind can arise in those societies where the demand for total mastery can be actualized again.

According to Castoriadis, authoritarianism is possible where a "crisis of democracy" can be observed, which he sees even in the postwar world. First of all, the corruption of democracy begins with the destruction of its ethos: "responsibility, shame, frankness (parrhēsia), checking up on one another, and an acute awareness of the fact that the public stakes are also personal stakes for each one of us". Castoriadis speaks of the shamelessness of all anti-democratic regimes. The presence of such a civic and political virtue as shame (shame, αἰδώς) is important for politics to remain a sphere of responsibility, and "the

absence of shame is *ipso facto* contempt for others and for the public" (Castoriadis, 2003g: 6). It is the absence of shame, from the point of view of Castoriadis, that characterises such regimes as fascism and communism. The feeling of shame, in turn, is responsible for weighing one's own and other people's words, striving to be responsible for what is said and avoiding manipulation. A sense of shame is usually something that is completely absent in the regime of state propaganda: it does not hesitate to say mutually exclusive things, contradict itself or falsify facts[1]. A long practice in shameless speech and action leads to another mark of the totalitarian regime — the corruption of meanings and mental mechanisms under the influence of totalitarian hoaxes: if for fifty years it has been said that the Stalinist regime is an advanced form of democracy, writes Castoriadis, it is not surprising if the bearers of such ideologies begin to believe that the same "Athenian democracy (or self-management [*autogestion*]) is equivalent to totalitarianism" (Castoriadis, 2003g: 8). Such a destruction of meanings in some ways corresponds to the practice of violating the "correctness of names", which the ancient Chinese sage Confucius spoke about. When things begin to be called by their wrong names, the common space of meaningfulness is destroyed[2].

The importance of book-review criticism is driven by the mechanisms of public criticism: when this sphere begins to decline or becomes an ideological appendage to the political strategy of power, the institution of public authority and thinking begins to crumble. Within authoritarian regimes, it is not that criticism itself disappears, including literary criticism as a separate institution, but it ceases to solve social problems and becomes a tool for imposing certain ideological dogmas and a means of fighting against dissenters, actually ceasing to be criticism and turning into a tool of repression. However, Castoriadis considers an even more significant feature of the "crisis of the epoch" and the transition to "pathetic times" — "its impotence to create or to recognize the new, has been reduced to rehashing, remasticating, spitting out, and vomiting up forever a tradition it is not even truly capable of knowing and bringing to life" (Castoriadis, 2003g: 8). Although the totalitarian regimes of the 20th century gave birth to modern forms of life and art (although the real source of their birth may have been the revolutionary pathos that preceded the later reaction), they very quickly collapse to pave the way for the most banal and fruitless attempts to return to the romantic times of the "Teutonic ancestors", "imperial Rome" or idealized "simple people's life", the culture of "Aryan" art, "romantic" or "social" realism, whose works can

1 More details on how authoritarian and totalitarian regimes use similar techniques for propaganda purposes can be seen in (Ellul, 1973). I also touch upon this topic in relation to modern politics here (Barkouski, 2018).

2 I also wrote more about the politics of changing names and other ways of post-political domination of the consciousness of the masses here: (Barkouski, 2016)

often be considered as evidence in favor of the cultural "secondary nature" of totalitarian art. Clearly, Castoriadis means not only culture in the broad sense of the word, but also forms of social life which are very quickly cemented and reduced to rigid and ugly forms imitating a turn to traditions, but in fact only helping to support the structure of authoritarian rule.

What is also important to note among the general characteristics of totalitarian regimes, both communist and Nazi, is their specific attitude to the idea of truth: it is no longer possible to "ground it rationally". That is, not only truth itself, but even the establishment for its acceptance turn out to be corrupt: it is impossible for the supporters of these ideologies to prove the paradoxical or deceptive nature of their arguments, because nothing can force them to recognise the existence of any objective arguments or positions that differ from their views. "No more than you can ever, faced with a sophist, a liar, or an imposter, 'force him to admit' the truth (to each argument, he will respond with ten new sophisms, lies, and impostures), can you 'prove' to a Nazi or a Stalinist the preeminence of liberty, equality, or justice" (Castoriadis, 1984: 195). Similar manipulations of the concept of truth are demonstrated today by the current Russian or Belarusian authorities, who are trying to hide the objectivity of some high-profile event at the international and political level under a large number of fake reports and paradoxical versions of interpretation, as it happened, for example, with the crash of the Malaysian passenger Boeing over the territory of Donbass in 2014 (Mölder and Sazonov, 2019) or the forced landing of the Ryanair aircraft on the territory of Belarus in 2021 (Darmanin and Kuznetsov, 2022), or in the form of outright lies under the guise of truth from official persons of the Russian Federation in advance of the Russian intervention in Ukraine in February 2022 (Bort, 2022). Similarly, the Stalinist and Nazi regimes once refused to recognize their own aggressiveness and violence, "explaining" their military campaigns and interventions solely as provocations against them or as their attempts to prevent "conspiracies" on the part of their victims and their allies[3].

The destruction of the authority of truth is necessary for a totalitarian regime in order to control its own population and to instill in it the idea of the "fairness" of the political course pursued by the totalitarian state. It is not accidental that in G. Orwell's dystopia the Ministry of Truth is engaged in direct propaganda under the slogan "Ignorance is knowledge", and the rewriting of history according to the "truth" of a historical moment is placed at the core of the state ideology. Distortion of history and propaganda manipulations are a certain ideological base of a totalitarian society, both in the past and in the

3 An example of this is the Nazi operation Gleiwitz (Kuzniar, 2015) and the incident at the beginning of the Soviet-Finnish war (Nenye et al., 2015).

present. According to Castoriadis, you will never be able to "deduce" the socialist idea from a certain demand for truth or place it in an "ideal communicative situation", because, as the thinker observes, it seems that the very idea of truth and the idea of liberty do not simply coexist in parallel with each other, but create a close connection and "have no meaning, ultimately, except together". It is difficult for a slave to hold on to the truth, because his "freedom" to speak the truth will always depend on the will of his master. A rational debate with representatives of the ideology of Nazism or Stalinism is impossible for three reasons. First, you will never be able to prove to them the validity of your maxims (their value base). Second, they will not simply argue with you in this manner[4]: "Nazis and Stalinists do not discuss, they just draw their guns" (Castoriadis, 1984: 215). Third, our statements lose relevance for us only because we are used to giving more or less certain content to the terms like "person", "humanity", etc., which does not always coincide with the definitions of these notions by representatives of certain ideologies. Today this is made extremely clear in discussions about the concepts of "democracy" and "Western values" held by representatives of autocracies around the world.

However, for Castoriadis, the problem of totalitarian regimes, such as Stalin's communism or Nazism, lies deeper than ignoring basic values or the attitude to truth: it is their attack on the "species essence of man", as defined by classical Marxism. The accusations against modern totalitarianism by Castoriadis sound even stronger than against traditional Marxist criticism of the capitalist state and society, because the "crisis" or "death" of capitalist society at certain stages of its revolutionary transformations did not lead to the automatic rejection of the system of exploitation, but the latter transformed into other forms. It is in the totalitarianism of the 20th century that the exploitative strategy of the capital reached its greatest clarity: "We have seen that during capitalism's period of decadence and organic crisis this state of things changes and that, in particular, the victory of fascism allows capital to dictate imperatively to the workers their working conditions", and hence, the long-term effect of the victory of fascism, in particular, "the transformation of the proletariat into a class of modern-day industrial slaves" (Castoriadis, 1988d: 136-137). However, the position of the majority of the proletariat in Stalin's time also looks similar to the above diagnosis, although for slightly different economic and ideological reasons: "Communism in its realized state represented a monstrous hijacking of the revolutionary workers' movement. It placed in power

4 Anti-Soviet culture attributes to the famous Czech communist and internationalist of the 1930s, K. Radek, a joke, a wordplay in the Russian language, difficult to convey in translation, which is apt in this context: "It is impossible to argue with Stalin: you give him a citation, he gives you an exile" (in Russian, "ссылка" means both an "exile" (as punishment) and "citation" of a literary source) (Gordon, 2022).

a new dominant class, the bureaucracy of the Party-State, which exploited and oppressed the population as no other regime known in history has done" (Castoriadis, 2010a: 243).

What exactly coincides with the "economic logic" of capitalism, fascism, and even Stalinism, and what Castoriadis himself strongly disagrees with, is the construction of a certain hierarchy of labor relations, when more "scarce" and advanced work requires, they say, higher pay, which becomes the foundation for social inequality and labor discrimination, denying in the long run the very idea of a classless society. Castoriadis sees this as a contradiction to the ideas of Marx and early Lenin and observes that today any most advanced labour has sufficient "raw material" for production, meaning a large number of skilled and trained workers to perform it (Castoriadis, 1988d: 149-150).

When Castoriadis tries to offer a diagnosis of the communist regime that was established in Russia after 1917, he does not refrain from harsh assessments: "the Russian Revolution had led to the instauration of a new type of exploitative and oppressive regime in which a new ruling class, the bureaucracy, had formed around the Communist Party. I called this regime total and totalitarian bureaucratic capitalism" (Castoriadis, 2003f: 125). This is not a "degenerated workers' State", as Lev Trotsky once called it, but, the researcher believes, its complete opposite. Calling the Stalinist regime a system of bureaucratic capitalism, Castoriadis criticises, however, the popular theory of "state capitalism" and considers it not very appropriate in the case of the USSR, basing on 4 main arguments:

> "(a) the instauration and stabilization of this regime (which normally ought to have been the product of an overdevelopment of capitalism) not in the advanced countries (the United States, Germany, England) but in a backward country; (b) the absence of almost any connection between today's bureaucrats and former capitalists; (c) the way in which the bureaucracy came to power; and (d) the Russian policy in the glacis, a policy of assimilation that in its first phase totally dispossessed the capitalists (which would be absurd if the regime to be set up were State capitalism)" (Castoriadis, 1988c: 54).

On the other hand, continues Castoriadis, "in order to fulfill the requirements of its economic policy (which depends upon continuous State growth), and by carrying out its social policy (which requires a large base of support against both the bourgeoisie and against the proletariat), it actually prepares for the triumph of new strata that are to form its political and economic bureaucracy" (Castoriadis, 1988b: p. 63). Stalinism, like fascism, engages in political mystification and fights with the trusts allegedly for the rights of the deprived, the workers, generally the "middle class" who were exploited, but in fact, they rather enter into a new historical alliance with the petty bourgeoisie, generating a specific social stratum in the position of new exploiters.

In general, analysing the roots of Russian communism and especially the model built in the 1930s by Joseph Stalin, Castoriadis sees here a greater influence of the imperial legacy of the Russian state on its politics in those years than the actual ideas of Marxism: "What remains, therefore, is this very deep-rooted tradition, anchored in people's souls, of obedience to the authority of the czar or his successor" (Castoriadis, 2010b: 231), he writes, which all Russian reformers, starting from Peter I, Catherine II, Alexander II, Stolypin and Gorbachev himself failed to overcome. What Stalin did in fact, he replaced the previous religious imaginary with a totalitarian one, so that instead of the ideas of Caesarism, the idea of the "laws of history" embodied in him came to the fore with a similar effect. In his criticism of Soviet Communism, which he sometimes calls the "Russian-Communist Empire", Castoriadis has been quite consistent since 1945. This is partly due to his personal disillusionment with the Communist Party of Greece, of which Castoriadis was a member for a short time, and which appeared to him to be a "chauvinistic and a totally bureaucratic organization" (Castoriadis, 2003f: 125), or a totalitarian micro-community. Considering the fact that the Communist Party of Greece at that time was led by a conscious Stalinist Nikos Zachariadis, who adopted many management tools from the experience of the Soviet bureaucracy, this forced Castoriadis to critically assess the pseudo-Marxist nature of the communist movement in the USSR.

Castoriadis draws attention to the fact that Stalin's communism and its descendants received technical and ideological means of terror, interference in people's daily lives and manipulation of their consciousness, which are incomparable in the historical perspective. He succeeded in subordinating himself and destroying the international labour movement, "subordinating it to Russia's imperialist policy", corrupting and prostituting the ideas and vocabulary of the revolutionary movement, discrediting the ideas of social transformation and making the capitalist regime a "paradise on earth" for the mass consciousness, which disoriented itself and weakened the left movement to a great extent after the fall of the Soviet totalitarian system. Soviet communism changed the original impulse of Marxism and replaced it with its own orthodoxy. And where there is orthodoxy, there arises a dogma and the keeper of this dogma (a new faith) — the own Church in the form of the Communist Party and its instrument of maintaining purity, modern inquisition — in the form of the KGB. Thus, the Marxist ideal of emancipation in the USSR is replaced by the secular confession of communism, "a mystificatory and pseudoreligious messianism" (Castoriadis, 2010a: p. 246), which requires more faith and devotion from its followers than the presence of a critical mind or aspiration for justice.

The worst thing that the Soviet communist system did in anthropological terms was that it gave birth to a new type of person whom Castoriadis calls the "disciplined individual", who in some ways resembles a cadaver, "both enthusiastic and passive". In practice this

anthropological mode fell into two main types — "the cynical, lying, manipulative bureaucrat obsessed with power, and the regular citizen, apathetic and fearful, who flees all responsibility and who cheats as much as he can in order to preserve for himself a miserable niche in which to live" (Castoriadis, 2010a: 244)[5]. In each case, it killed all elements of the democratic — if they ever existed in the Soviet system — from the very beginning. For Castoriadis, this explains the reasons for the rise of chauvinist and nationalist ideas in the post-Soviet countries, because they are based on this collapse of the communist man.

Another witty observation by Castoriadis is a statement that can be connected to the previous description: there is the thirst in communist regimes (not only in Soviet Russia) for perverse and pathological forms of culture in their undisguised discrimination of the beautiful. Castoriadis defines it as a society based on "affirmative hatred of beauty", that is, the inability to create beauty and even consciously resist it (Castoriadis, 2010c: 90)[6], which can be compared with the ancient Greek idea of the obligatory connection between the aesthetic and moral qualities of a person, the ideal καλοκαγαθία. The corruption of morality and its replacement with the principles of loyalty to the party discipline and conformity to the party line is combined here with the support of forms of cultural life that not only parasitize on the forms of beauty, but also give rise to the communist kitsch, faded and dull late-Soviet aesthetics: the vagueness of the art of socialist realism, the bulkiness of its architecture, excessive pomp theatrical parades and performances.

Totalitarian suppression of society and ideological manipulation, according to Castoriadis, are not an accidental feature of the Soviet communist or Nazi society, but a natural effect of the activities of the state ideological Apparatus. In his famous work "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses", the French Marxist researcher Louis Althusser emphasizes:

> "Given the fact that the 'ruling class' in principle holds State power (openly or more often by means of alliances between classes or class fractions), and therefore has at its disposal the (Repressive) State Apparatus, we can accept the fact that this same ruling class is active in the Ideological State Apparatuses insofar as it is ultimately the ruling ideology which is realized in the Ideological State Apparatuses, precisely in its contradictions. Of course, it is a quite different thing to act by laws and decrees in the (Repressive) State Apparatus and to 'act' through the intermediary of the ruling ideology in the Ideological State Apparatuses" (Althusser, 1994).

5 This assessment of Castoriadis correlates in many respects with the description of the "red man" made by the Belarusian writer, Nobel laureate Sviatlana Alexievich in her documentary novel *Secondhand Time. The Last of the Soviets*.

6 Castoriadis covers this topic in more detail here (Castoriadis 1982).

Therefore, it is impossible, Cornelius Castoriadis continues in the same vein, for the goal of totalitarian rule in society to be an "external" phenomenon in relation to the Apparatus or for the Apparatus to be simply a "means" to achieve some other goals through it. This aim itself brings together this Apparatus and keeps it in motion: "it is conveyed through its very mode of being, inscribed in its daily life and functioning; it is constantly nourished by the external and internal activities of the organization, at the same time that it nourishes them" (Castoriadis, 1993a: 284). It is for this reason that even before the moment of their actual domination in the state, the Communist and Nazi parties carried a totalitarian impulse in their core, were "totalitarian microsocieties". In the Soviet Union, Castoriadis points out, the Summit of the Central Committee of the Communist Party actually established its totalitarian power in the country by first exercising its complete domination over the Communist Party as a mass organization, and this "embryonic realization of unlimited power" over the whole society became possible precisely because of the victory of the bureaucracy over the democratic structure of the party organization (Castoriadis, 1993a: 285).

3. Different types of social heteronomies and their opposition to the project of collective autonomy

Based on the previous arguments, one might think that, in fact, there are no significant differences between different types of totalitarianism, and in this regard, for Castoriadis, the difference between fascists and Communist-Stalinists is completely irrelevant. But it is not quite so. According to Castoriadis, at the base of the totalitarian Russian communism represented lies magma, the main principles of which are the following: 1) the ugly twisted principle of emancipation, 2) the "rational"-capitalist principle of managing society and the economy, 3) the religious principle in the "orthodox", a theocratic form, where church dogma was replaced by "ideology" which for most of its adherents actually did not fundamentally change anything (Castoriadis, 2003a: 380). These principles are not a recipe or elementary composition, but they formed a certain recognizable "spirit" or "style" of this regime. The idea of freedom and emancipation of society remains at the core of the communist image, Castoriadis thinks, sharing the beliefs of Leszek Kołakowski: this initial impulse of freedom within communism compels, in his opinion, even permanent opponents of the communist bureaucracy, who were disappointed in the project of the USSR as a communist state, or later social democrats to do it or share the radical ideas of Marxist-Bolshevik messianism. Nazism, or fascism, in this sense never stands for a universal formula of liberation and therefore, together with the disappointment in its institutional form, does not lead to its replacement by some other Nazi ideal: in this sense, the slogans "Forward to the victory of communism!" and "Germany

above all" have a completely different symbolic dimension and historical contextualization.

The problem of the communist system lies in the initial unrealistic model that is chosen for the construction of the state. In his most famous work Cornelius Castoriadis points out:

> "If by communism ('higher phase') is meant a society in which all resistance, all depth, all opaqueness would be absent; a society that would be purely transparent to itself; in which everyone's desires would spontaneously harmonize with everybody else's, or, in order to harmonize would require merely an airborne dialogue which would never be weighted down by the gum of symbolism; a society that would discover, formulate and realize its collective will without having to pass through institutions, or in which institutions would never pose a problem — if this is what is meant, then we must clearly state that this is an incoherent reverie, an unreal and unrealizable state whose representation should be eliminated. This is a mythical formation, equivalent and analogous to that of absolute knowledge or of an individual whose 'consciousness' has absorbed his entire being. No society will ever be totally transparent, first because the individuals that make it up will never be transparent to themselves, since there can be no question of eliminating the unconscious" (Castoriadis, 1987: 111).

The Nazi imaginary is much more consistent in its desire for absolute domination, which, however, is disguised as good for the nation or the people's state — in its ugliness and absurdity, it remains, nevertheless, uncontroversial. According to Castoriadis, the triumph of fascist and Nazi ideology in the countries that were in the position of European losers — with the absence of foreign colonies and the opportunity to transfer part of the burden of their economy to them, was almost historically inevitable. This occurs at a time when "the whole of economic development between 1930 and 1939 is characterized by the increasingly important economic role played by the State qua supreme organ of coordination and management of the national capitalist economy, and by the beginnings of an organic fusion between monopoly capitalism and the State" (Castoriadis, 1988a: 83). The Nazi and fascist imaginary mystifies and manipulates the consciousness of the masses in an attempt to revolutionize the "middle class" and direct it completely to support the cult of the State and the centralized military economy, which must become the national salvation and the main national interest — an idea in itself extremely reactionary-capitalist at its core. The origins of Nazism and fascism should be sought not in the idea of freedom and emancipation, but in the idea of national superiority and competition of states, in something like corporate competitions, where nations defend the colours of their team in a global competitive struggle.

Does this mean, however, that the totalitarian projects of communism or Nazism/fascism are tightly bound to a specific time and historical-national and economic context, and that they are impossible to repeat today? The answer to this question is complex. On the one hand, as stated earlier, for the emergence of real totalitarian societies, one political or economic crisis is not enough, an appropriate degree of faith and liberation of feelings is needed, which today seems quite unlikely in most developed Western societies. Therefore, most of the ultra-right or ultra-left parties remain completely marginal and are puppets of more significant political and economic forces. On the other hand, certain elements characteristic of probable new totalitarian regimes can be found even now, according to Castoriadis. He pays particular attention to the new "green movement", or the activities of eco-organizations. He is confused by the fact that behind the very idea of "ecology" there is no clear political project, and this makes the idea of political future ambivalent:

> "The effort to take these things into account has to be integrated into a political project, one that of necessity goes beyond 'ecology' alone. And if there is no new movement, no reawakening of the democratic project, 'ecology' can very well become integrated into a neofascist ideology. Faced with a worldwide ecological catastrophe, for example, one can very readily see authoritarian regimes imposing draconian restrictions on a panic-stricken and apathetic population" (Castoriadis, 2003e: 116-117).

To prevent such a threat, Castoriadis himself considers it necessary to include environmental demands into the framework of a radical democratic project, "that the reappraisal of present-day society's values and orientations, which is implied by such a project, be indissociable from the critique of the imaginary of 'development' on which we live". The reluctance of environmental organisations to be "neither with the left nor with the right" often leads them to political indiscernibility and fixation exclusively on the solution of environmental issues without taking into account the whole complex of necessary social transformations, which often turns them into forms of lobbying or radical activist movements with anti-capitalist pathos, but without a transparent program of action. Castoriadis is quite skeptical about the success of the "Green" party even in Germany, since having completely integrated itself into the existing parliamentary system and quickly rid of the principle of rotation and recall of its deputies, as an eco-movement it has almost completely lost its meaning, actually turning into a centrist party of measured reforms. But the non-systemic environmental movement which can rely on the fact that a large-scale environmental disaster will open the eyes of society, is also historically incorrect: "An ecological catastrophe, for instance, could very well lead to a series of quasi-fascist dictatorships — 'The holiday is over.

This is your ration for the coming month: ten liters of oxygen, two gallons of petrol, etc. That's all'" (Castoriadis, 2010d: 219).

Castoriadis tends to raise the question about the origins of the "underlying fragility built into the psychopolitical personality of Western man", which originates from the revolutionary events in France in 1789, or maybe earlier, and is connected with the struggle against injustice, absolutism, oppression of freedom to give birth, in the 20th century, to masses of people enthusiastically willing to join totalitarian movements, carry out furious party propaganda and ugly large-scale repressions and to organise concentration camps for dissenters. Even the events of the revolutionary May of 1968 in France not only gave birth to a movement of resistance to bureaucracy, authoritarianism, pseudoknowledge, etc., but also added many new members to the clearly totalitarian (Stalinism, Maoism) or potentially totalitarian (Trotskyism) movements from a number of civil activists of the French revolutionary events (Castoriadis, 1993a: 298).

Castoriadis also sees signs of a totalitarian mindset in the so-called "new democracy" program in post-war France, inspired by the French Communist Party. Their main theses aimed at the middle class still contain the same totalitarian message, he notes, exporting Stalinism to Western countries: 1) the fight against trusts as a global evil that provokes economic crises and the rise of fascists to power; 2) calls for "people's democracy" and reliance on the proletariat as the most progressive social class in building democracy; 3) ensuring social stability through the transition to a planned economy; 4) involvement of middle-class members as cadres of the new society (Castoriadis, 1988b: 62-63). It is clear that we are talking about "democracy" in the same sense, meaning the concept of democracy has long covered the authoritarian regimes of the 20th and 21st centuries around the world. But the typical path to totalitarianism is shown here as finding an exaggerated enemy and mobilizing society to fight against them, idealizing certain forms of social, political and economic life as a means of solving complex problems of the present, and aggressive recruiting of new supporters.

Thus, signs of a totalitarian society can be found in the new world even after the destruction of the most obvious states which are systemic carriers of the ideas of fascism — Nazism and communism. But does this mean for Castoriadis that there is no alternative to the dilemma of choosing between a totalitarian society and a liberal one, as suggested, for example, in K. Popper's famous work *The Open Society and Its Enemies* (Popper, 1994)? In fact, what unites authoritarian and totalitarian regimes with conditionally liberal-democratic regimes in the concept of Cornelius Castoriadis is their heteronomous character, which he tries to contrast with his own project of social and political autonomy. But what exactly is a heteronomous society? Castoriadis clarifies:

> "Heteronomy has been confused, I mean identified, with domination and exploitation by a particular social stratum. But domination and exploitation by one particular social stratum is but one of the manifestations (or realizations) of heteronomy. The essence of heteronomy is more than that. You find heteronomy in primitive societies, actually in all primitive societies, yet you cannot really speak, in such societies, of a division into dominant strata and dominated strata. So, what is heteronomy in a primitive society? It is that people strongly believe (and cannot but believe) that the law, the institutions of their society have been given to them, once and for all, by somebody else — the spirits, the ancestors, the gods, or whatever — and are not (and could not be) their own work" (Castoriadis, 2003b: 25-26).

In other words, we are talking about the subordination of the system of social control by certain political forces which assume the sole responsibility and right to speak on behalf of society and to prove laws and principles to public life on their own. This clearly manifests itself in totalitarian societies which are imbued with the idea of mastery, which is completely incompatible with the idea of autonomy, because autonomy, according to Castoriadis, primarily contains the idea of "self-limitation", which automatically nullifies the transition to the dominance and mastery of a single force in society and also cancels the desire for its arrival. It is also incompatible with the corporate principle adopted in business communities, since, according to the author, it contains in its inference the same totalitarian impulse, which does not allow it to be extended to the construction of society as a whole and allows itself to be criticized in relation to economic life.

According to Castoriadis, what the early Marxists and the later supporters of Marxism-Leninism were wrong about in their uncritical acceptance of the development of capitalist practices, is the idea of the development of productive forces as a universal measure for all phenomena, the very principle of production as the social norm that should, when necessary, give birth to a new social order, as well as ideas of endless technological progress, which nevertheless formed ideas about the world that undermined the foundations of the project of collective autonomy (Castoriadis, 2003d: p. 226). Castoriadis also considers the short-sightedness, or "paradoxical blindness" of Marx himself as the fact that he allegedly does not notice the bourgeois roots of all those phenomena that he considers to be natural components of the society described by him, so that the very idea of the bourgeoisie and its culture can be seen as the natural core of the Marxist social project "and the few hints he provides makes one think that he saw 'communist society' only as an extension and enlargement of this same culture" (Castoriadis, 2003i: 284). Castoriadis considers Marx's "catastrophic illusion" to be the non-imaginary "laws of the historical process", which give rise to belief in some objective "social theory of change" and, as a result, lead to communist orthodoxy and dogma, while the roots of

real collective autonomy must be sought in spontaneous and horizontal activity of masses.

Thus, the heteronomy of totalitarian societies lies in their tendency to build closed structures of domination, or rather "(pseudo)rational (pseudo)mastery", totalitarian parties as totalitarian micro-societies, which turn inside out even the idea of freedom and emancipation, from which followers of communist ideology initially depart. Castoriadis also sees the roots of the problem, as Hannah Arendt did in her time (Arendt, 1951), in the totalitarian society's destruction of the private/intimate sphere and its placement in the plane of the agora — public/private and even more so, the ecclesia — public/public sphere. Communist regimes tried to make their population necessarily "happy", while "happiness" (poverty alleviation, or other incarnations of this approach) should not be the subject of politics, because the real subject of politics is "freedom" or liberation, according to Castoriadis (Castoriadis, 2010e: 101). Addressing Richard Rorty's dilemma: what should a society be like — "without poverty" or "good to Socrates' existence", Castoriadis emphasises that absolutely no society will ever be as favourable as possible for the existence of Socrates who need freedom of opinion and critical thinking. Rather, the ideal that he himself recognizes as the ideal of a "free society" is precisely such a society that must create a project of social autonomy, producing an environment conducive to the existence of a new Socrates.

In turn, Castoriadis sees the roots of the heteronomy of Western liberal "(pseudo)democracy" in the creation of a conformist consumer society, which is governed by the principle of political apathy and is not very interested in active political life. Being the editor of the magazine "Socialism or Barbarism" for a long time, Castoriadis defines the latest barbarism not as fascism, a declassified society or a return to the Stone Age, but as the state of his contemporary societies, both in the West and in the East:

> "It is precisely this 'air-conditioned nightmare', consumption for the sake of consumption in private life, organization for the sake of organization in collective life, as well as their corollaries: privatization, withdrawal, and apathy as regards matters shared in common, and dehumanization of social relationships. This process is well under way in industrialized countries, but it also engenders its own opposites. People have abandoned bureaucratized institutions, and ultimately they enter into opposition against them. The race after 'ever higher' levels of consumption and 'ever newer' consumer objects sooner or later condemns itself by its very absurdity" (Castoriadis, 1993b: 46–47).

The project of collective autonomy, proposed by Cornelius Castoriadis, must be a response to the heteronomy that was generated and sometimes continues to be generated by totalitarian regimes of the communist or Nazi-fascist types, despite the difference in the sources

of their origin and the key principles of the construction of heteronomy, as well as to that version of the heteronomous society that modern practices of over-consumption and social apathy give rise to, which correspond to the policies of neoliberal societies. At the same time, we must understand the difference between these types of heteronomy and lack of freedom in order to be able to find an appropriate civil response to them, according to the famous thinker.

Conclusion

Thus, with the collapse of the Soviet system and the beginning of the post-communist transition in Eastern Europe, discussions arose about the crimes of the Soviet system and their general similarity to the legacy of Nazi totalitarianism. In the version of the French political scientist Alain Besançon, the definitions of classical political science about the difference between communism and fascism, the distorted politics of memory regarding communist crimes in the history of the 20th century, and the similarity of their repressive social practices, mass genocide and state interference in people's private lives require critical revision. At the same time, however, elements of essential distinction were also noted, which, according to the Polish philosopher Leszek Kołakowski, can be reduced to the distortion of the original humanistic and socialist pathos in the Soviet version of communism, a more systemic level of social deception, the "poverty" of Nazi aesthetics compared to the wealth of culture behind the times of communism, the inhomogeneity of the promotion of its ideology among the masses.

The French philosopher and political scientist of Greek origin, Cornelius Castoriadis, who strongly criticises both versions of totalitarian society and offers his own version of the project of social emancipation which would overcome the principle of social heteronomy, offers to look at the similarities and differences of these historical totalitarianisms in their essential basis. Despite the fact that in the historical perspective, Castoriadis considers the threat of communism to be more significant for humanity than Nazism or fascism due to its universalist nature, he believes that communism and Nazism really have a number of common features that unite them within the totalitarian form of social relations. This is the systemic slavery in which the workers in both systems find themselves, the destruction of the sphere of privacy, the emphasis on (pseudo)rational total domination over history and society, the corruption of meanings and the sense of shame (of the moral mode of existence), the barrenness of ideas and images, the manipulation of the concept of truth and tendency to sophistical exaggerations, general degradation of the "species essence of man".

At the same time, Castoriadis notes the rooting of the project of Russian communism, especially Stalinism, in the earlier ideas of

Russian imperialism, its reliance on a new social ruling class — the bureaucracy, which also continues the processes of exploitation of the masses, the mystification of the idea of communism and mixing it with a religious type of belief, which led to the dogmatization of the idea and the emergence of the institution of secular inquisition, the creation of a new anthropological type — a disciplined individual who is located in the gap between cynicism and apathy, the distortion of the canons of aesthetics and the creation of ugly forms of the "beautiful". But both communism and fascism, along with Nazism, were guided, according to Castoriadis, by the common desire in their core, the party apparatus, for unlimited mastery as an implementation of the principle of totalitarian micro-society, which turns its own ideology into a state Ideological Apparatus.

Castoriadis consistently criticises those types of heteronomous social projects that are implemented in modern totalitarian societies and the neoliberal projects of consumer society, offering an alternative to them in the form of his own project of collective autonomy. The historical "style", or "spirit", of the communist system was determined by such features of its totalitarianism as a twisted principle of emancipation, a "rational"-capitalist principle of management, a religious principle of interpreting one's own ideology. Its utopianism lies in the concept of an absolutely transparent community, harmonised at the level of its individual and social desires. The Nazi imaginary, which tries to exploit the enthusiasm of the masses, does so in the interest of a reactionary-capitalist policy of state competition and the desire for world domination. Nevertheless, this totalitarian impulse does not disappear in historical times and can be, according to Castoriadis, revived in recent history with appropriate moods in society caused by manifestations of a crisis, such as an ecological one.

Castoriadis critically assesses the "psychopolitical fragility" of Western democracy and the desire for emancipation, which often turns into projects of total dehumanization, repression and lies. The project of social autonomy is possible where there is an awareness at the level of society that social institutions and ideas are the product of a specific historical social struggle, and not a monolithic social form brought down "from above". The modern version of consumer society, in turn, bears the mark of "barbarism", which, for Castoriadis, comes down to the processes of privatisation, escapism and apathy, as well as the dehumanization of public relations. Therefore, in order to move towards social emancipation, we must distinguish different types of social heteronomies, which have their own unconditional distinctiveness, in their desire to replace social development with the project of their (pseudo)rational mastery. At the same time, the criminal and totalitarian nature of communist ideology and society, especially during the Soviet era, should not be an accusation against any "left" perspective, which, after all, is the project of collective autonomy of Cornelius Castoriadis himself.

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