

Political Myth in Communicative Practices of Political Philosophy of the first third of the XX century in Germany

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Abstract—The difficulty of identifying a political myth and clarifying its content is rooted in the essence of this product itself, which exists only in the consciousness of the individual and the mass, and is singled out through reflection. The myth revival, its involvement in social communications, the inclusion of myth in the ideological formations in the first third of the twentieth century was due to participation of the "crowd" in the politics, access of politics into the streets. Reliance on the myth in ideology and the emergence of a political myth unites scattered individual groups in political parties, helping the process of distinguishing "friends" from "foes". The first third of the twentieth century was associated not only with the participation of more and more masses of people in politics (the growth of the protest movement in Europe), but also with the First World War - the first social catastrophe of the new century, which forced huge masses of people into direct political actions. The results of the war divided Europe, brought a sense of catastrophe and loneliness to Germany. Consequently, various political parties, associations and philosophical circles, clubs and unions directed their efforts on "recreating" the ideological unity of the nation.

The most striking instance of political spin and one of the most influential philosophical currents engaged in the "revival" of the German nation of the German people were such representatives of the Prussian conservative revolution as Oswald Spengler and Arthur Moeller van den Bruck. They created the myth of a single Empire with mythical "Prussians" standing against internal enemies from within the empire, moral and professional renegades, as well as against enemies from without: - European powers that have lost their state ideals in favor of lucre, petty narrow-mindedness, money dictatorship and lack of politics. The twentieth century was the beginning of political spin in modern, developed Western societies, where there is a political structure governed by the legal framework, but not by blood feuds and race customs.

Keywords—*myth; classical myth; political myth; political ideology; social communications; mass consciousness; archaic forms; archaic structures; Prussian conservative revolution; empire (Reich); political technologies*

I. INTRODUCTION

Having freed from the superstitions and prejudices of the past, having built a regulated economy and politics, having mastered the rational criticism of religion, people forgot about

the myths that interfered with them and connected them with the past (but the myth has not forgotten the person). Fluid and many-sided, like Protei [1], the myth was saved in the forms of mass consciousness until the twentieth century — in political theories and practices of political struggle, protest ideologies and support ideologies, helping people to turn complicated historical processes into natural, eternal, simple and clear [2].

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the myth did not ordinary return to mass consciousness. In 1906 G. Sorel declared [3] about the necessity to operate with a "skillfully created" myth at a time of preparing to the general strike in France. According to Sorel "myths must be judged as a means of acting on the present (in fr. "Il faut juger les mythes comme des moyens d'agir sur le present")" because the myth much stronger than other theoretical constructions can affect a person. If Sorel speaks about the future, foreseeing the inclusion of myth in politics, then Cassirer ("The Myth of the State"), as turns back, analyses the already established practices of using myth as a political technology in the most difficult period for Europe between the two world wars. Cassirer explained the appeal of man to the myth as the defeat of rational thinking, when social conditions make rational understanding of what is happening impossible.

The myth that exists as the fixation of universal and sustainable relations of a person and the world in particular-sensual images, as narration, word, communicative system and generalized experience of the kind (or community) replaces rational forms of consciousness during the periods of social frustrations, actualizes the archaic structures of the organization of reality, and how myth comes to life as the image of "organized" reality. Describing the presence of archaic forms in the mass consciousness, under the conditions of a cult of reason and science, Sorel and Cassirer explained this relevance of myth and the transformation of myth into the most important ideology element, "consumed" by masses, when masses, having abandoned reasons, rational explanation of reality, refuse many of their freedoms as well, in conditions of dangerous chaos of sociality that seem dangerous and heavy.

The political myth endows a confused person with certainty, confidence, faith in power, knowing what is “right”. But if the classical myth is more a product of unconscious human activity, then political mythology is a product of conscious, purposeful and delicate activity of myth-makers, the true weapon of the ideology. The political myth replaces monotheistic religion for the European man of the 20th century, it is simpler in all senses: intellectual reflection, behavior, morality - their explanation is simple, unambiguous, without semitones. The political myth, as well as the classical myth, lays on “ancient trails” that “emerge” in the minds at certain historical periods, the myth with its constant presence demonstrates us that the interpretation of the name, image, event, action is changed, but the “empty capsule” is saved, filling with new content.

II. PROBLEM STATEMENT

The return of the myth, the transformation of the myth into a political one, its mastering by ideology was purposefully (from above) and spontaneously (from below): wars and revolutions contributed to this archaization of consciousness, which turned to archaic forms already realized in culture. It should be noted here that the apparent complexity and unclarity of the notions “myth (classical myth)” and “political myth”, existed because those who work with political ideology and those who work with classical myth do not ever interact, they exist as parallel non-crossing knowledge areas. This important “difficulty” was fixed by Christopher G. Flood [5]. The political myth has become a bearer of ideological functions: political events are presented in the interpretation needed to the mythmaker, the myth[5] tells about political events and political leaders, political history and political systems.

The instrumental nature of political myths allows the consumer to avoid the unnecessary and complex rationalization of the surrounding world. Replacing rational forms of the world organization in human consciousness with non-rational ones, rejecting a rational view of the world and turning to myth [5], involves conscious efforts of philosophers and politicians to control the archaization of consciousness.

The concepts of “truth”, “correctness”, “recognition” are not demonstrated openly by the builders of the political myth, but is an important its scaffold: recognizing the “right”, the reader agrees with the content of the myth, including himself in “his”, accepting the political truth of the mythologist, indicated to him “enemies” and “untruth”. The reconstruction of the Spengler’s political myth content presents the reader the typical mythical pictures of Germany created by the philosopher: the profane time (having come to Germany after 1918 – and that was temporary) has been inscribed and is a continuation of the sacred times of Great Prussia, its honor, chivalry, service and duty, events that fill this sacred time, the prime cause of Deutschland birth and prosperity in the past, a model for the present and a prospect of the future, where the good will finally triumph over the evil.

The universality and non-historical nature of the theoretical constructions offered by Spengler, together with such typical oppositions between “we” and “they”, “good” and

“bad”, “hero” and “coward”, “warrior” and “deserter”, fits well with the created to them the imperial myth: the golden age will be restored and the honest and kind emperor will be the main official for his honest and kind Prussian. Spengler’s anti-liberalism, anti-Semitism intensified after the 1918 revolution, together with the stressed poetization of the conservative imperial past, the rejection of “bourgeois” power of money, should have generated a sense of agreement with the project proposed by Spengler, whose mythical character the reader always “knew”.

III. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The political myth as a political technology and political ideology appeared in the twentieth century, a century of catastrophic social changes caused by humanitarian disasters. The most striking instance was Germany after 1918. Although practical efforts were made to create a political myth in Germany before the First World War, but the program of “uniting” the German nation to strengthen the German Empire in the ideology of the Prussian conservative revolution had been shaped after November 1918.

Germany trapped its tragic defeat in the war with the “betrayal” of European countries. The years from 1914 to 1933 for the German Empire, the Weimar and the post-Weimar republic were the years of emotional transitions: from the “defensive war”[6] of Germany and the ideology of the “young peoples deprived of their territories”: “The war promised us everything: greatness, strength, triumph (in german: “Der Krieg mußte es uns ja bringen, das Große, Starke, Feierliche”)). After November 1918 ideas were [7] the following: “We have not a Motherland any more that we could be proud of (in german: “Mir hatten sein Vaterland mehr, auf das mir stolz sein konnten”)), and in 1933 [8]: “He whose sword compels victory here will be lord of the world. The dice are there ready for this stupendous game. Who dares to throw them? (in german: “Wessen Schwert hier den Sieg erficht, der wird der Herr der Welt sein. Da liegen die Würfel des ungeheuren Spiels. Wer wagt es, sie zu werfen?”))”.

Moreover, the political, economic and social changes in Germany in 1918-1932 were catastrophic: the November revolution, the Kaiser’s abdication, the Peace of Versailles, huge contributions, and reparations, the of the occupying forces and the ban on a large army, the loss of colonies and territorial losses, heavy casualties (primarily the working population), the demographic bias (the number of women of working and fertile age exceeded the number of men of the same age by 2 million people), economic crises (1918-1920, 1930-1932), unemployment in the country at peak values reached from 30 to 44%, military coups – left and right, impoverishment and ruination of large number of burghers and farmers, political instability [9, 10]. The demographic imbalance was dangerous not only for the restoration of the Germany population, but it also determined the moral situation in the country, influenced people at the household (more than a million orphans and more than 300 thousand widows) and everyday levels [9, 10].

The feeling of the Germany end created in the country if not a general spiritual atmosphere, but, in a certain sense, a

general feeling of continuing horror and hopelessness, with complete disunity of people, their exclusion from social life. It is difficult to understand at what extent Mueller van den Bruck and Spengler were involved in materialization of the ideas of the "Prussian Conservative Revolution" in the NSDAP Doctrine, which they talked about, as van den Bruck was no longer alive by 1929–30 (although A. Rosenberg directly referred to him), and Spengler began to deviate from the political activities, when NSDAP offered the Fuhrer state instead of "rotten democracy."

By the beginning of the 20s, there were quite a few German ideologists of "what to do?" and "who is to blame for?", but the first one in terms of the idea significance and timeliness of prophecies was Oswald Spengler, who suggested the communicative practices of "educating" a united Prussian nation. The search for an ideology, capable of unite the Germans after November 1918, began after Spengler published Political Works ("Political Duties of the German Youth", "New Forms of Global Politics", "Tasks of the Nobility", "The Relationship of Economy and Tax Policy since 1750", "The Contemporary Relationship between World Economics and World Politics", "Toward a Developmental History of the German Press", "On the German National Character") and "The Right of Young Nations", "The Third Reich" by Moeller van den Bruck, which turned out to be too complicated as "approved" for officially accepted ideology of myths, their ideas were simplified and transformed into racially oriented myths, serious efforts were made to simplify the consumer himself (the "Gedanken" pocket book, compiled from Spengler's quotes and distributed to German soldiers).

The ideological labeling as the basis of the political myth, having described in the publications of Spengler and van den Bruck, was consisted of several interconnected semantic blocks: The History of the Empire, "the Prussians", "Our Great Leaders". The "History" of the empire included an understanding of what the Prussians were then (1920–26), what they were in the past (unity of "blood and soil", "throne and altar") and what they should become in the restored empire (Reich), what should be done for that purpose [8].

The glorious history of the German nation was counterposed to the history of other European nations, which having lost the high meaning of the state under the pressure of mercenary bourgeoisness and narrowness, unauthenticity of unity. "Prussians" were defined in this mythological paradigm as "our nation", possessing valour, honor, ingenuousness, "we" are "disinterested servicemen". "Our great leaders" are the leaders of the past, the great emperors of the great empire (Staufens, Frederick the Great, Bismarck) – they "disapproved" to the "whistler and drummer" – the leader of the NSDAP.

The political myth was hidden behind the mythologized past, turning it into a way of moral evaluation of the present; "Our" unity with the past ennobles our goals and defines "our" important place in the future: "Spengler was a prophet of evil; the new political leaders wished to rouse in their adherents the most extravagant hopes. Spengler spoke of the decline of the West; the other spoke of the conquest of the world by the German race. Obviously these are not the same

things. Nor was Spengler personally an adherent of the Nazi movement. He was a conservative, an admirer and eulogist of the old Prussian ideals; but the program of the new men made no appeal to him. Nevertheless the work of Spengler became one of the pioneer works of National Socialism" [4].

If Cassirer attributes the main role in the creation of a political myth to the first volume of the "Decline of the West", as a multi-level organized system of the "concept of history" aimed at the future (for Cassirer, deterministic historical conceptions with "predictive" functions, "true functions" about the past and the future referred to the sphere of political mythology), then for ideologists who were engaged in rebuilding the Empire as the Third Reich, the most significant were Spengler's political publications, from which it is possible to "extract" certain separate, not narrations but simple, catchy and remarkable drawings and images. Spengler himself did not need that primitive and crude form of consciousness archaization, purposefully built up in Germany since 1923. He rather relied on the "traditional" upbringing, a return to the pre-Weimar ideology, which, actually, had never been in the form, it was represented by Spengler, and which needs to be "restored". The ideologists of the Prussian conservative revolution, fully turned to this beautiful never existing past, have improved that past, turning it into a myth.

IV. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

In order to understand the place and role of the political myth in the communicative practices of society, it is necessary to consider the events happening in Germany between wars – new communication technologies, created by Spengler and van den Bruck in the political philosophy of the Prussian conservative revolution, began to transform the communications themselves. Spengler and van den Bruck are people of the word and text, they see only verbal: written and speech communication possibilities for themselves and for readers reconstructing the past of a great empire, honor and duty of the Prussians with the emperor's serving to people and soldier's truth. But their followers, A. Rosenberg, E. Kriek, J. Goebbels and others did not use the text more, but they used "material means" of communication: media, mass events (meetings, party conventions, sports competitions) as rituals, material symbols of a myth – banners (the famous Banner of Blood), portraits of leaders; the text becomes not the main thing, speech ceases to be just the text, it becomes a ritual and acquires sacredness – the main quality of mythological manipulations.

Verbal communications, having become technologies, start modifying according to Spengler: the mythologization of rational knowledge, especially historical knowledge, accomplished by the philosopher in "The decline of the West", on the contrary, becomes the demythologizing, remythologizing activity of the myth author about a previously united Germany and its "golden age" – now it is not the myth about Frederick the Great but the history is being written, "as it was in reality", the history transformed into a myth, which he named as a scientific knowledge.

V. FINDINGS

Simplification of the complex and controversial mythological cosmos, built by the ideologists of the Prussian conservative revolution, its preparation for political leaders, and bringing it to mass consciousness is implemented by “political” philosophers, ideologists and experts at the last stage of the myth production, which further simplifies it. Further the “writers” and journalists join this process. The ideology that simplifies the myth itself exists, first of all, in the form of a myth, either evident or scientized. Spengler and van den Bruck prepared a system of political philosophy for ideologists and leaders who will “bring” their ideas to the masses.

Political ideas are focused on propagandist texts, overgrown with ceremonies and rituals, become attributes of life, materialized in art and architecture. Nonverbal and verbal communications interact with and strengthen each other, politics penetrates everything, especially in a totalitarian state, where ideology is a tool, communication is the method this tool works. Depending on the intellectual level, education and ideological preferences of the “consumers” in the ideological space of the Prussian conservatism of the Weimar period (before the NSDAP became the ruling party), it is possible to find or construct an ideological system, if not for everyone, then for separate groups and parties .

On the one hand, the circles of intellectuals who returned from the war (E. Jünger, Moeller van den Bruck [11]) – create a political philosophy for people of their kind: “conservative Prussian revolution” as a movement back to the best years of the second Reich, to Wilhelm II, rejecting both socialist and Nazi ideas. On the other hand, parties and unions associated with the supporters of “Mein Kampf” by A. Hitler and H. S. Chamberlain’s “Aryan World View” create a complex of myths and meanings of national socialism for the crowd that came out street and entered politics after the first World war, when it is more necessary a simple “newspaper” text, short and action-oriented (also simple), referring to nonverbal symbols and images, modern and “historical” – arias, race and blood (contrary to Spengler’s “blood and soil”), “Fallen heroes”, lance of Longinus, beauty and clarity of physical labor.

The NSDAP ideology has incorporated many myths and images into its ideological space, rather than ideas created by the ideologists of the Prussian conservative revolution, but the national-socialist mythology should have been simple, vivid and unambiguous. And if Spengler and van den Bruck believe that the character traits, morality of the Prussians are inherited from their ancestors, tied to historical roots and ethnicity, then the NSDAP ideologues directly talk about the purity of the race, its physical, and the moral superiority arising from it. Political concepts of the ideologists of the Prussian conservative revolution supplanted propaganda speeches “In it (in the language) everything was speech, everything inevitably became an address, an appeal, a driven shout (in german: “alles in ihr war Rede, mußte Anrede, Anruf, Aufpeitschung”) [12]”.

A very short period of life of the Prussian conservative revolution displayed that intellectualized ideology and political philosophy in the twentieth century have no sense

because they are not designed for large masses of political active “consumers”, as suggested too complex philosophical myth. At a time when “LTI (LTI in the language of the third Reich) is poor and miserable ... Its misery is fundamental, as if it has vowed poverty (in german: “Die LTI ist bettelarm. Ihre Armut ist eine grundsätzliche; es ist, als habe sie ein Armutsgelübde abgelegt”) [12]”, we need “...a language that composes and thinks for you (in german: “...Sprache, die für dich dichtet und denkt”) [12]”.

VI. CONCLUSION

The political myth widely used in political ideology is not aimed at creating a holistic cosmos (the mythic world), embedding an individual in the profane time, continuing sacred time, as in a classical or traditional myth. A man of the twentieth century, as an individual and as a carrier of mass consciousness, does not have a systematized and structured picture of the social and natural world. The world, purposefully built by political ideology in the minds of masses using mythological constructs, which are not always interconnected random representations: scientific, popular science, religious, ordinary and mythologic.

The political myth, which is actively involved in designing the image of the social world, is not aimed at forming a system, it creates an array of verbal and nonverbal images generated by political reality, stamps and symbols that are ambiguously read, and important for the myth to recognize “friend or foe” in modern political mythology is blurry and agile. In the political myth “legendary history” and “historical legends” are indistinguishable.

The mechanism of introduction, existence and death of a political myth differs from the mechanism of introduction, existence and refutation of rational constructions: scientific and religious (in monotheistic religions): a myth, including a political myth, is not refuted by rational arguments, it is forgotten, goes away, because the meaning goes away and the value of its content dies, an image or an action, activating the myth, the value of myth content dies for a society, further, the capsule is filled with another content, another political myth appears – myths do not die, doing an important function in society – to be an interpreter of values, norms and societal goals for an individual written in this society.

The myth puts moral standards into the mind of a person to approve the behavior of individuals and the community as a whole, it gives confidence that the mythical “we” know the right goals and the right actions, “we” are able to distinguish good from evil, offering hope that hard times will pass and the ancient glory and (“our”) good will win. The myth provides clarity in the main issues: moral and ethic - free a person from the responsibility of making an independent choice, making this choice automatic. The political myth flourishes in the dark and difficult times of the state, growing out of economic, social and political problems, and weakens in conditions of relative prosperity.

The modern political myth allows us to simplify and mass political ideology, to join its contradictory elements, smoothing them out, and the more massive the political organization or party for which the ideology is “created” will

be, the lower the educational and cultural level of the “consumer” and the weaker the democratic and liberal tradition are, the easier it spreads and takes root. The modern political myth is the result of conscious efforts of political ideology, their distribution is based on the latest political technologies.

The political philosophy of Germany in the first third of the twentieth century and its further transformation (and deformation) into the N.S.D.A.P. myths (NSDAP) proved that ideology can mythologize any significant topic, event, person, if it can be significant in the eyes of the community, and the extensive use of myth in ideology turned the myth from a word, a narration into a signal endowed with a certain meaning.

Implementing his communicative practices, Spengler developed a system of constructing a “national idea”, having created both informative and supporting strategies for “restoring” the future Germany (Reich), relying on a “sacred” past, in which there is no border between history and historical myths, real and “desired” events. Spengler described Frederick the Great, powerful and bright (as it was) Germany, saw the spiritual integrity of German people, growing out of blood and soil, honor and morality. Spengler offered “Prussian socialism” as a moral Reich. Myths and archetypes revived in the political philosophy of the Prussian conservative revolution unite van den Bruck and Spengler [13].

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The restoration of Germany, through actualization of the memory about its great past as an example in Spengler's “political works” and van den Bruck's “the Third Reich” according to the tasks of political myth, is reconstructed back, the past is being built based on the tasks of the present. Starting a positive work on recreation of Germany, they began with the construction of an ideology and the result was a political myth. The ideological primacy, the beginningness of

construction defined essential: the idea of history, the idea of political power, the idea of a political leader, the idea of ethical tradition and the idea of the image of the future, utopia or futurological forecast. The most important are the future prospects and the idea of political power. If Spengler is better at predicting, then van den Bruck is interesting with his idea of power. And here the reader encounters not only the myth, but with the powerful villains of the myth. We should say that after November 1918 and, especially, the Versailles peace, anti-semitism had been intensified in Germany. Spengler and van den Bruck linked the Jews to the defeat of Germany in the war, to the unsuccessful terms of Versailles, and the destructive ideology created by Marx, cosmopolitan, selfish, hating, revengeful, not meeting the interests of not only Germany, but also marauder Europe. And the created national myth should replace the myth that was strong at that time in Germany - the class myth, which spoke about the eternity of the struggle of countries and nations against Germany, which was right. This myth was the way and means of changing the “broken” reality.

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