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LEFT-WING IDEOLOGIES IN THE MODERN SOCIO-CULTURAL SPACE OF RUSSIA AND THE WEST

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Abstract

Modern world challenges the man in some new global ways. Thus, the people's need in ideologies showing the ways of living is still strong. The left-wing discourse – the ideas of social justice, equality, the elimination of class division and restrictions on private property – is one of the most popular ideological layers today. Many researchers turn their attention to the modern left-wing agenda, but most often approach it from economic, political, sociological or historical positions. Within the framework of this study, based on the works of various scientific fields, a generalizing axiological, semiotic and structural and functional assessment of the left-wing ideological spectrum in its semantic contents, mythological and religious manifestations, media and artistic forms and socio-cultural influence is carried out. The result of the research was the formation of a general picture of the phenomenon of left-wing ideological discourse, which in the mechanisms and principles of its existence is comparable to mythology and religious trends, and in propaganda methods and approaches is based on emotionality, aggressiveness, a "black-and-white" vision of the world and ineradicable conflict. At the same time, the collectivist, humanistic motives of left-wing ideologies, their practical orientation (although also controversial) and the use of a scientific and philosophical base are also emphasized.

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1. Introduction

The end of the XX – beginning of the XXI century is the era of global, significant transformations of human civilization (Usmanova, 2020). The collapse of the Soviet Union, the largest socialist state in history, the victory of the Western bloc led by the United States in the Cold War, the formation and strengthening of China and the United States as the main figures of globalization of the 21st century, the triumph of the capitalist system and corporations on the world political arena against the backdrop of newly flaring socio-economic crises (Galazova, 2018) - all this today revives the interest of the broad world masses in the so-called "left" ideological trends: communism, socialism, a number of anarchist, liberal and democratic trends. And this affects both the public mood and the prospects for practical transformation of the social environment.

In a general sense, all these movements are united by the emphasis on the idea of social equality (Danilova, 2018), on antagonism (to one degree or another) in relation to the class division in society, the conflict between the least and most privileged social strata, as well as on the restriction of private property (Sychev et al., 2019). Astakhov and Rostov (2020) assess the modern European left-wing movement, and write: "... Despite the presence of serious problems within the left movement, the demand for social justice remains high" (p. 113). This, in their opinion, suggests that the future may be preparing us for the appearance on the socio-political scene of new personalities and associations that will address the fundamental needs of society.

2. Problem Statement

The economic, political and social conditions in which human civilization finds itself today are characterized by a number of serious problems, on the basis of which the international community is interested in left-wing ideologies. The response to this interest is various propaganda initiatives in different socio-cultural sectors. The uncertain bias of these initiatives, as well as their controversial impact on mass consciousness and public sentiment, justify the relevance of studying this socio-cultural field.

The key theoretical problem of the study is that a great number of works are already devoted to left-wing ideologies exploring them from political, economic, social and historical points of view. However, it seems difficult to find a sufficient number of sources that would consider the left-wing discourse in terms of its axiological and semantic contents and would directly cover the topic of its internal organization (structure) and the role (function) that this discourse performs in the modern socio-cultural space, on the example of products of modern mass culture.

3. Research Questions

This study provides answers to the following questions:

1. What values, symbols, images and other semantic constructs are contained in left-wing ideologies?
2. What is the prerequisite, the reason for the emergence of a social order for ideas of this kind?

3. What forms and genres of socio-cultural activity are the most popular in the propaganda of left-wing ideologies today? What is the difference between them?
4. What mechanisms and principles work in the field of mass dissemination of left-wing ideas?
5. Is it appropriate, based on the definitions of these mechanisms and principles, to compare left-wing ideologies and their propaganda with mythology and near-religious trends?
6. What are the positive and negative consequences of the propaganda of left-wing ideologies for society?

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to define the left ideological and propaganda system as a single, integral socio-cultural phenomenon with its axiological basis and main meanings, with its specific structure that exists according to certain mechanisms and principles and performs definite socio-cultural functions.

5. Research Methods

In order to determine the key semantic and value contents of the left-wing ideologies in the modern Russian and Western cultural space, a semantic and axiological analysis of current socio-cultural practices was carried out (Danilova, 2018; Sychev et al., 2019).

The method of comparative study and analysis of scientific and philosophical literature made it possible to determine the historical (Lane, 2020; Morozov, 2017) and socio-political (Natarajan et al., 2021; Shkaratan, 2018; Usmanova, 2020) prerequisites for the actualization and popularity of left-wing ideologies in the modern cultural space.

Using structural and functional and comparative methods, the mythological and near-religious nature of the modern left-wing ideological and propaganda environment was revealed (Chubarov & Sechenova, 2019; Devlin, 2021; Zanussi, 2017).

6. Findings

Demand creates supply, and numerous left-wing ideological products are becoming the answer to the popular need to reveal the themes of social justice, equality and class confrontation in the mass media and art (Cortes, 2019). This is the content of many channels in different languages of the most popular YouTube video hosting in the world: "Dmitry Puchkov", "Konstantin Semin", "Vestnik Buri", "Bad Signal", "Prime Numbers", "STATION MARX", "Diary of a Deputy", "Zoe Baker", "anactualjoke", "azureScapegoat", "Chomsky's Philosophy" and many others; world hits of mass cinema: "The New Order" (Spanish "Nuevo orden", 2020, dir. Michel Franco), "The Joker" (English "Joker", 2019, dir. Todd Phillips), "Parasites" (cor. "기생충", 2019, dir. Pon Joon Ho), "Through the snow" (English "Snowpiercer", 2013, dir. Pon Joon Ho), "District No. 9" (English "District 9", 2009, dir. Neil Blomkamp), "Land of the Dead" (English "Land of the Dead", 2005, dir. George Romero) and others.

Obviously, such sentiments and ideas are expressed in various public actions (rallies, strikes, trade union activities, the formation of socio-political movements, etc.) and are not deprived of the attention of the international scientific community. For example, Magun (2019) notes in a significant part of modern left-wing views "certain forms of Marxism with many of its birthmarks, in particular, the belief in the transience of the state and extremely vague ideas about the future" (p. 141).

During the course of the research, an explicit, extensive left-wing discourse is revealed, within the framework of which the propaganda of relevant ideas, symbols and meanings, related socio-political activities or speculation takes place. The latter are both philosophical in nature (for example, the works and speeches of the Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek, whose representation and attitude to left-wing (in particular Marxist) ideas are the object of criticism and controversy in scientific, philosophical and ideological circles (Scruton, 2017), and media propaganda (when left-wing rhetoric is used to realize someone else's goals and interests).

The reasons and prerequisites for the increasing mass interest in the left-wing perspective in the perception of global civilizational processes, in the assessment of world political, economic, social and cultural situations are the aggravation of certain problematic issues (Morozov, 2017). This is the social stratification noted by the public, ideologists and researchers (the increase in the gap between the "rich" and "poor") in society, and the imbalance in economic production and consumption between countries (the pronounced division of countries into "rich" and "poor"), the imperialist, aggressive and expansive nature of the foreign policy of the world hegemons (represented by both states and corporations).

One of the consequences of this situation is the exploitation of other peoples by some peoples (for example, forced labor in the "third world" countries (Natarajan et al., 2021)), local and civil wars unleashed by economic and political forces, social conflicts within individual countries generated by large differences in the privileges of some social groups against the background of others (Shkaratan, 2018), in the possession of the most affluent citizens with special rights, which creates a sense of injustice, alienation and hostility among the masses, incitement by certain groups of interethnic, racial, interethnic and interreligious hostility for their own political and economic purposes.

In the context of this article and for the study of the left-wing semantic space as a whole, the identified problems should be considered, first of all, not as proven and immutable truths, but as components of the worldview of the masses, meaning-containing constructs of their reality perception, in some way their socio-political mythology. Within the framework of this approach, we can note several key elements (mythologies and "rituals") that form the left-wing ideology and are used in left-wing propaganda.

The first element. Capitalism as the root cause of current world problems and the main enemy at the level not only of life and practice, but also at the level of theory, as well as imperialism and fascism as mandatory forms of the development of capitalism (Lane, 2020). Every ideology needs an antagonist to unfold and be motivated in the context of striving for victory over him. An important feature of this mythologeme is that formations declared hostile, such as capitalism, are presented by left-wing ideologists as "divorced" from human nature. In the sense that, according to left-wing propaganda, for the transition of the world order to a qualitatively new level, it is enough to change the capitalist form of politics and organization of society to, for example, socialist and then communist, simply following the

theory stated somewhere as an immutable truth, without going into details of how the nature of man is arranged, who theorizes all formations and tries to implement them. Global crises, global injustice, class and international exploitation are designated as natural products of capitalism, inherent in its very nature.

Chubarov and Sechenova (2019) note that "when left-wing theorists start writing about economics, they involuntarily turn into medieval warlocks: whatever subject they touch, everything instantly turns into "capitalism" (p. 276). The concentration of attention on abstract systems, which in many respects do not go beyond theory, while ignoring the anthropological foundations of the existence of the human species and its civilization, makes the worldview vague, obscure, blurred, not conducive to the fundamental study and understanding of the surrounding reality.

The second element. The rooting and constant use in propaganda of special words-designations, with the help of which the worldview is divided into "friends" and "strangers", into "allies" and "enemies": "proletariat/proletarian", "capitalist/capital", "bourgeoisie", "oligarchs", "reaction/reactionaries", "opportunists", etc. Thus, the thinking of the masses is sharpened to certain patterns, stereotypes and labels, which simplifies ideological work with the masses and generalizes them in a single semantic field.

The third element. The resumption of the personality cult (Devlin, 2021) and the "iconization" of the images of various political figures and left-wing theorists (Karl Marx, Vladimir Lenin, Joseph Stalin, Leon Trotsky, etc.). Criticism of cultivated personalities (who become more characters in the pantheon of left-wing mythology than something real and mundane) is often perceived by supporters of ideologies extremely restlessly and even aggressively. The reliance on leaders here goes against the principle of the primacy of collectivity, promoted at first glance, and the abolition of individualism and the designated personality cult.

There is a clear mythological worldview system in everything described above, where there is "good" and "evil" (at the level not only interhuman and historical, but also natural), a clear and unambiguous division into "friends" and "enemies" (which are determined not by life experience and personal clashes, but by opinion leaders – usually through art and media), as well as the worship of "icons". For this reason, the described phenomenon even crosses the line between mythology (Zanussi, 2017) and the near-religious approach.

However, the described processes of left-wing ideology and propaganda are mainly characteristic of the media and the social environment on the Internet. In mass art (for example, in cinema), the left agenda does not manifest itself in such detail, clearly and deeply, and is limited to the simplest motives and plots in the spirit of "the rich against the poor" – without a serious study of the causes and consequences of all problems and conflicts at the level of social, economic, political and cultural functioning of human society. Perhaps it is just mass commercial art that is a vivid example of the exploitation of left-wing themes.

Nevertheless, one should not perceive the mythological and near-religious manifestations of left-wing ideologies as something exclusively negative. Of course, such processes involve the suppression of critical thinking, excessive fanaticism and other negative effects. But on the other hand, the masses need positive, inspiring historical "characters" as role models, they need a rallying, collectivizing worldview, a common direction of development and creation, they need a mission in which people could unite,

regardless of external (racial, sexual, etc.) differences. All this, provided that it contains humanistic foundations, gives people the meaning of life, allows them to find their place and role in the world. And left-wing ideologies are often evaluated positively in this way.

On the other hand, everyone remembers from well-known expressions in which direction the road paved out of good intentions goes, and what one should divide in order to rule. The constant intimidation of the masses by the coming world wars and famine (as direct and obligatory consequences of the "market", "capital" and other ideological antagonists of the leftists), the gloomy corporate-fascist future, the incessant fanatical (according to the principle "who is not with us, is against us") division of society into enemy "capitalists", "bourgeois", "opportunists", "reactionaries", "liberals", etc. – all this awakens a storm of various emotions in people, from fear to hatred and despair, sets them against each other, but rarely motivates them to socially constructive activities. If such practices encourage people to do something, it is more often street pandemonium, unrest and scuffles for the sake of someone's private interests than more productive forms of improving society. Therefore, the ambiguity of the propaganda of left-wing ideologies and public actions based on them is still an open question and more relevant than ever.

7. Conclusion

The result of the study was the conclusion that the left-wing ideological direction is, in a general sense, a set of worldviews of a mythological nature, in some aspects acting on religious principles. Mythological in this system is the coexistence of the rational (social, political and economic prerequisites in history and their theorization) and the irrational (almost blind faith in the truth of the transmitted ideas, stories told and descriptions of key characters for a particular movement). Exploiting various scientific and philosophical theories from social, humanitarian and economic fields, this ideological direction relies in its propaganda on emotions, on the formation of a belief among the masses comparable to religious faith in the existence of a higher good and deep evil, which are expressed in socio-economic formations: "socialism", "communism", "anarchism", "capitalism", "imperialism", etc.

In other words, the emotional and semantic basis of such ideologies is a social conflict, a deadly, not assuming a peaceful outcome, hostility of social classes. The result of this hostility should be the realization of the main values and ideals, such as: social equality and justice, the abolition of class and international oppression, the social (as opposed to private) foundations of the world economy, a collective-oriented ethics (as opposed to an individual-egocentric). The main areas of dissemination of left-wing ideas today are the mass media (especially the Internet) and mass art (for example, cinema).

The declared humanistic principles (collectivity, unity and mutual assistance, freedom, equality and fraternity of all people) and the orientation towards their practical implementation (in politics and public actions) go hand in hand with the mythological (i.e., largely irrational) nature of world perception, with religious fanaticism, intransigence and aggression. All this makes the left ideological direction ambivalent, ambiguous, consisting of contradictions. Therefore, it is difficult to give an unambiguous assessment of this direction now. But it is possible to conclude with confidence about the relevance and necessity of its further research.

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