

IN THE BEGINNING WAS VIOLENCE:
NOTES TOWARD AN EARLY SOVIET GOVERNMENTALITY

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Abstract. In this article, I will address the following theoretical and historical problems. I would assume that Lenin, during the pre-revolutionary period, thought that \ violence was necessary for seizing the state power but later on, after taking it, his utopian ideals about the temporal exercise of violence has been disappeared. Lenin's idea about the necessary and temporal application of violence as an element of revolutionary constituent power was far from realization because, in his first decrees, he attempted to vindicate the terror and violence within the legal body of the state. One of the most provocative hypotheses would be that Carl Schmitt, despite his negative attitude towards both liberalism and bolshevism could have been the perfect theoretical ally for Lenin. Lenin's dream about the abolition of violence and the state has become fiction in itself. If there is certain parallelism or convergence between the messianic deactivation of the law and the revolutionary effacement of the old order, one has to ask the question "What kind of law can be installed and exercised in the post-revolutionary state?" "What becomes the law after the revolutionary fulfilment and how is it possible to conceive the law without the state?" In addition, in the second part of the article, I will argue that Lenin's political strategy was a certain form of Foucault's theory of the governmental paradigm of power and, in fact, this was the foundation of the Soviet biopolitical machine.

Keywords: violence, state, governmentality, revolution, Carl Schmitt, Lenin

REVOLUTION AS THE GREAT SEPARATION

The Soviet Union was a realization of utopia, the accomplishment of the Marxian dream, who could say if he were witnessed the revolution that it would be the final stage of historical development,

the end of history and the beginning of the post-historical era. Marx was wrong about history. There is no universal and necessary chain of events in it, and rather it is the horizon of pure contingencies, unintended and unforeseen consequences, where everything could happen. The triad of the divine nexus of God, man and the world has been replaced by another trinity, not the Christian one, but by revolution, state and the new man.

The early church historian and exegete, Eusebius of Caesarea, thought that the time before Christ was a preparation for the gospel¹. The Messianic event radically transformed the sense of the Judaic law for the fellows of Christ. The coming of the Messiah, his self-donation and accomplishment of the history of redemption already happened in Christianity, while in Judaism the arrival of a Messiah is always projected onto the future. However, the hope for the final redemption and expectation of the Messiah is still the same in both religions. One is waiting for the second coming of the Redeemer, another still anticipates His first and ultimate arrival. Anyway, the post-messianic world signifies the radical renewal and break-up with past. The revolution, too, despite its violence, marks the new beginning and radical overcoming of an old social and political order. The XXth century was the century of revolutions and the time span of the dark kingdom of the Soviet Union, which lays between the two revolutions: the October revolution of 1917 was the foundation and the beginning of that darkness, while in 1989 the so-called “velvet revolutions” broke that hermetic totalitarian world, after which the former Soviet Republics, especially in Caucasus region, have been engulfed by conflicts, chaos, internal political struggles and by civil wars. The post-Soviet era was the collapse of the order, which was based on the coercive and violent governmental machine of the Red State. Like all revolutions, the socialistic revolution of the proletariat could not be possible without radical transformations, first of all, within the complex set of ideas. Marx conceived history in teleological form as a necessary and gradual development towards the end, which ultimately should have to culminate in a classless communist society.

There is nothing new in this project because it repeats an eschatological logic of Christian theology. Karl Löwith, somewhat in Schmittian way, suggests that an idea of progress is the secularized version of eschatology². The progress does not necessarily lead towards the redeemed world, devoid from any oppression, coercion and social injustices, rather, if it is a secularized form of eschatology, it ushers us into the apocalyptic end. The real history does not start with the October revolution, as Marx anticipated it, rather it signals towards the end of history, or some kind of plethora of time, its fullness and excess. However, the end of time did not come abruptly, during the very first moments of the post-revolutionary world, when there was a time before the end. This end was deferred as the Jewish hope for Messianic arrival on earth; however, this end was much near. The post-revolutionary time was contracted, here and now, without future but for the future. The Russian poet Aleksandr Block, in his poem “The Twelve”, expressed the radical spirit of revolution, full with the call for violence, blood and world fire in which old bourgeoisie has to be wrapped:

To smoke the nobles out of their holes
we'll light a fire through all the world,
a bloody fire through all the world
Lord, bless our souls (Synyavsky 1990, 4).³

Here, for Block, the success of revolution is impossible without god's blessing, therefore, radical political transformation through violent collective action still needs to rely on God, who is no longer remote and transcendent, but became an immanent and latent force of revolution. That revolution developed into the state of exception for God, where his power has been debased. For Carl Schmitt, in the state of exception, the sovereign decision replaces the norm⁴, same happened to post-revolutionary God, who was suspended and replaced by the mortal figure of a secularized god, like the place of divine providence has been taken by the party. The Russian

dissident novelist and scholar, Andrei Sinyavsky, grasping this secret alliance between religion and revolutionary spirit wrote:

"All Power to the Soviets!" "Land to the Peasants!" "Peace to the Peoples!" Scanning these truly great slogans, however, one can see that they are mostly biblical and evangelical formulas transposed into the revolutionary vernacular. Minus the name of God, but in the name of man who will become God (Sinyavsky 1990, 5).

The spirit of revolution promising an absolute break with the past, exemption from the oppressed social condition and the realization of heaven-like political and economic order, repeated an apocalyptic narrative of the Bible, claiming the total renewal and the new beginning. Let me compare the famous biblical promise of Matthew that "so the last will be first and the first will be last" (Matthew 20:16) with communist liturgical acclamation:

No more tradition's chains shall bind us,
Arise, ye slaves, no more in thrall!
The earth shall rise on new foundations,
We have been nought, we shall be all! (Sinyavsky 1990, 5).

This verse demonstrates the transient rhythm of reversals when the old order is directly associated with violence, which has to be eradicated by revolution and, then, a new world has to be built. This enthusiastic dictum repeating biblical narrative realized later in the Soviet Union, when, who was nothing became everything. When Walter Benjamin analyzed capitalism in terms of religion, the same could have been done to communism which, despite the refutation and attack on religion, bore all characteristics of it.

VIOLENCE BETWEEN REVOLUTION AND THE STATE

The Revolution is a violent act steeped in blood. Soviet red mythology started with violence. The revolutionary violence, as a constitutive power, laid the foundation of the red state which transformed and maintained itself in the form of constituted power. For this purpose, it has to unremittingly reactivate and reproduce its

initial founding act. Walter Benjamin in his essay “Zur Kritik der Gewalt,” differentiated two forms of violence: mythical and divine, or pure violence. Mythical violence can be described by its relation to natural or positive law, in the context of means and ends, whereas divine violence is absolute self-manifestation and exists outside of the juridical system. Benjamin argues that the divine is not lawmaking or law-preserving violence, but it just deposes the law (*Entzetzung des Rechts*)⁵. In the sphere of a profane order, it has a revolutionary force or revolution itself is the embodiment of the pure form of violence.

The French philosopher Jacques Derrida thought, about that mysterious text of Benjamin, that these two forms of violence are genuinely contaminated with each other. Constituent violence is not a singular event. By achieving the desired goal, it does not cease to function, rather it is maintained and represented in the body of constituted power. Law-making violence keeps itself as a remnant or potentiality in the legal system, which was created by it. The pure violence disguised itself in the state monopoly, which is the only legal representation of it. Something that had no legal form continues its existence in the body of law. However, as potentiality, it keeps and maintains its own primordial extra-judicial form. This kind of violence is, at the same time, inside and outside the legal structure. In addition, it seems like to be that Law is a pre-condition of phenomena, which turns out to be an existential threat or destructive force for it. It bears in itself the self-destructive element.

Having begun by distinguishing between two sorts of violence, founding violence and preserving violence, Benjamin must concede at one moment that the one cannot be so radically heterogeneous to the other since the violence called the founding violence is sometimes “represented”, and necessarily repeated, in the strong sense of that word, by the preserving violence (Derrida 2002, 260).

As Derrida suggests, Benjamin’s text has a specific character. It is auto-hetero-deconstructive. It operates within the double strategy of externality and internality, meaning that Benjamin himself revised and reexamined the possibilities and conditions of his thought.

Considering Benjamin's thinking style through deconstructive lenses, he turns out to be like a *Pharmakon*, with its ambivalence and oscillations between Marxism at one hand and Jewish mysticism at another. What is the purity of violence, what does it mean, purity in itself? In the letter to Ernst Schoen Benjamin explained his own understanding of purity. It is noteworthy that this letter was written in 1919, before two years of the "critique of violence". Benjamin writes:

The purity of essence is never unconditional or absolute: it is always the subject to a condition. This condition varies according to the essence whose purity is at issue; but this condition never inheres in the essence itself. In other words, the purity of every (finite) essence is not dependent on it (Agamben 2005, 61).

In the case of pure violence, what has to be its condition if purity is not self-sufficient and autonomous and has only a predicative force which, in turn, needs some ground or condition? Purity is always contaminated because it needs something external, something that can determine it. However, if purity is conditional, therefore it is not purity at all. Agamben evokes the words of Benjamin from an essay on Kraus that "at the origin of creature does not stand purity (*Reinheit*) but purification (*Reinigung*)" (Agamben 2005, 61). Agamben proceeds and says that "the difference between pure violence and mythic-juridical does not lie in the violence itself, but in its relation to something external" (Agamben 2005, 61).

What can be the precondition of purity of violence, something that is external for it? Maybe the Law? At the origin of the new creature, whose name is Leviathan, is the revolution as a purification. What does it purify? The old regime, from the revolutionary perspective, did not have the right to be named as the sacred; rather it was overloaded with sins, without any hope and chance for repentance. Thus, at the beginning of the new monster stands the messianic force of revolution with its bloody violence, aiming at radical transformation and purification of life. However, the purification of an old, the undesired order and system of values

does not mean a radical break with it. The purified body continues its existence in a different, now purified form. One oppressive total state has been violently replaced by another, which, in contrast to the former, has an ambition of universal emancipatory revolution. In this context, one has to read the call for the unification from the end of *The Communist Manifesto* - “Workingmen of all countries unite” (Marx and Engels 1988, 243), which later on became an official motto of the Soviets. This unity, the promised heaven on earth, was not based on common blood or on the idea of nationhood but rather on a quasi-cosmopolitan dream about the universal proletarian solidarity. Carl Schmitt, during the Weimar Republic, in the same 1921 year, when Walter Benjamin published his “Critique of Violence”, wrote the book about “Dictatorship”, in which he made the distinction between the commissary and sovereign dictatorship and one year later, published his “political theology” which, according to Giorgio Agamben’s assumption, was a response to Benjamin’s critique of violence. It may sound bizarre, but Schmitt, despite his scorn of both, liberalism and bolshevism, could have been a perfect theoretical ally of Lenin. Now, first, let me discuss Lenin’s views about the state, violence and dictatorship and then explicate the strange familiarity of his ideas with Carl Schmitt, for whom the commissary dictatorship was a temporal technique of governmental functioning as a mean for restoring and reestablishing the suspended order. However, I think that Lenin’s ideas about dictatorship are structurally similar not to Schmitt’s commissary dictatorship but to its sovereign counterpart. In his “Contribution to the History of Dictatorship”, Lenin wrote:

The organs of authority that we have described represented a dictatorship in embryo, for they recognized no other authority, no law and no standards, no matter by whom established. Authority—unlimited, outside the law, and based on force in the most direct sense of the word—is dictatorship...The scientific term ‘dictatorship’ means nothing more nor less than authority untrammelled by any laws, absolutely unrestricted by any rules whatever, and based directly on force (Lenin 2012 351, 353).

The sense of Schmitt's commissary dictatorship is nearly the same, but as I have mentioned above, the conception of sovereign power is almost identical to the dictatorship described by Lenin. Commissary dictatorship suspends the constitution for the sake of its protection. Temporal suspension of constitutional order does not mean its final abolition, in contrast to its sovereign counterpart, which constitutes the zero degree of constitutional order, that is to say, the vacuum of the law for creating the possibility for the constitution still to come. According to Schmitt, the commissary dictatorship can be defined as follows:

In practice [in concreto] the commissary dictatorship suspends the constitution in order to protect it – the very same one – in its concrete form. The argument has been repeated ever since – first and foremost by Abraham Lincoln: when the body of the constitution is under threat, it must be safeguarded through a temporary suspension of the constitution. Dictatorship protects a specific constitution against an attack that threatens to abolish this constitution (Schmitt 2014, 118).

Sovereign dictatorship does not exercise its power with the right given to him by the constitution; rather, deciding on the state of exception, eliminates it. Commissary dictatorship cannot last permanently; it acts temporarily within the framework of an already existing constitution, as the technical governmental instrument provided by the constituted power itself. For Schmitt, “the dictatorship cannot be a regular office; and it cannot be a *munus perpetuum* [permanent office], either” (Schmitt 2014, 31). In contrast to commissary dictatorship, sovereign dictatorship holds an absolute and unrestricted constituent power over the law; it abolishes the old order for creating the new one. Sovereign dictatorship is the typical form of government in a post-revolutionary period when the new political body deliberately creates anomic conditions not for the reorganization, but for establishing the new order. Therefore, revolutionary power is law establishing, aiming at the radical renewal of the world and the eradication of the State, as Lenin deemed it. If Frederick Engels in

his “Anti-Dühring” thought that socialism established through revolution is “humanity’s leap from the kingdom of necessity to the kingdom of freedom” (Engels 1975, 270), Lenin, in contrast to the figure of his theoretical and practical inspiration, demonstrated that the much-awaited revolution does not bring freedom. Instead, it ushers the agents of that historical process into the unrestricted field of violence, which has been practised by State government out of the name of proletariat dictatorship. Someone may argue that Post-revolutionary violence was the temporal measure after which all revolutionary ideals could be realized. However, the Soviet power itself was violent. The entire governmental body of the state exercised unrestrictedly violence over their opponents and without juridical procedures. The right for self-defence against accusations was abolished and, in that situation, perpetrators slaughtered a myriad of victims. Lenin, in 1922, in the letter written to the minister of justice Kursky, shared his plans on the legalization of terror and violence. “Jurisprudence must not eliminate terror; to promise this would be to deceive oneself or to deceive others. It must vindicate and legalize it”. (Sinyavsky 1990, 63).

Revolutionary violence did not have the legal form as it was constituent power. However, as Derrida suggested, it has to live in an already constituted power. Therefore, violence, which was outside of the law, became inseparable or undistinguished from it. The inclusion of violence into the juridical order, as Giorgio Agamben interpreted it, was also the main battlefield between Walter Benjamin and Carl Schmitt: “While Schmitt attempts every time to reinscribe violence within a juridical context, Benjamin responds to this gesture by seeking every time to assure it—as pure violence—an existence outside of the law” (Agamben 2005, 59).

According to Andrey Sinyavsky, Lenin, during the pre-revolutionary period, thought that violence was necessary for seizing the state power, but later on, after taking it, his utopian ideals about the temporal exercise of violence has been disappeared. Lenin, in *State and Revolution*, following his utopian predisposition wrote: “The proletarian state will begin to wither away immediately after its

victory because the state is unnecessary and cannot exist in a society in which there are no class antagonisms” (Lenin 2014, 65).

However, as I have already stressed, his dream about the abolition of violence and the state has become fiction itself. If there is certain parallelism or convergence between the messianic deactivation of the law and revolutionary effacement of the old order, one has to ask the question “What kind of law can be installed and exercised in the post-revolutionary state?” Giorgio Agamben, in his remarkable contribution in the debate of Benjamin and Schmitt, asks a similar question: “And what becomes the law in a society without classes”? (Agamben 2005, 63). In this context, Lenin’s discourse anti-state reverberates. What becomes the law after the revolutionary fulfilment and how is it possible to conceive the law without the state? Here, again, I have to recall Carl Schmitt, who defines an essence of sovereignty through the concept of “decision” on the state of exception⁶. The sovereign, in the state of exception, suspends the force of law and stands above the legal order. The paradox of sovereignty consists in this strange interdependence of the law and decision because the sovereign decides on the state of exception due to the right giving to him by the constitution. What is this paradox? The legal order contains the self-destructive element, which can be reactivated by sovereign decision. The state of exception, according to the constitutional theorist Clinton Rossiter, can be finally reduced to two categories-*temporality* and *necessity*⁷. However, in Schmitt’s version, the God-like sovereign, who transcends the law and, at the same time, is included in it in the state of exception, replaces the norm by his decision. The theo-political image of one of the founding fathers of the Soviet Union is similar to Schmitt’s conception of the sovereign, who renders the law inoperative and unleashes violence. In the Soviet Union, the state of exception became the rule in which even the constitution was the representation of sovereign decision. As I have already underlined, Lenin wanted to reincorporate terror and violence in legislature, while Walter Benjamin aimed at the critique and deposition of state violence⁸. Benjamin shows that the law is

not alternative to violence; rather the state apparatus exerts its violence through the legal state organizations. One can interpret the role of the police in Benjamin's essay as having the structure of the Platonic *khora*, the so-called *third genus* (*triton genos*), which aporetically takes the part in the intelligible world of ideas as well as in the sensuous world of shadows. Police, like the *khora*, occupies the middle position between the law-making and law-preserving violence. Here's what Judith Butler wrote about the ambivalence of military power:

The fact that the military is the example of an institution that both makes and preserves law suggests that it provides a model for understanding the internal link between these two forms of violence. For a law to be preserved is for its binding status to be reasserted. That reassertion binds the law again and so repeats the founding act in a regulated way... This site of law's collapse would be the military, since the military seems to be the institution that is exemplary at once of preserving and enforcing law and thus the site where law might be arrested, cease to work, even become subject to destruction (Butler 2012, 72).

Benjamin's divine violence seems to be the messianic event abolishing the dialectics of mythical violence. Judith Butler, commenting upon Derrida's trenchant reading of the *Critique of Violence*, wrote that Derrida thought about Benjamin's text as a stimulus or wave against *anti-parliamentarian democracy* (Butler 2012, 77), which could not anticipate the same tendency in Fascism. Hannah Arendt also made some critical remarks about Benjamin's conception of divine violence. She thought that Benjamin underestimated the positive function of law as a binding force of the community. According to Butler: "She maintains that he failed to understand that the founding of a state can and should be an uncoerced beginning and, in that sense, nonviolent in its origins" (Butler 2012, 77).

Therefore, if we go back to our initial intention to find the common ground of two radically different thinkers, it turns out to be that Benjamin conceived the extra-judicial divine violence as a

revolutionary messianic power, which allies him with Lenin's conception of necessary and temporal violence during the revolutionary time. Within the context of mythical violence, this line of arguments seems to be similar to Lenin's effort to incorporate and legalize violence. Andrey Sinyavsky thought that Soviet power, as it was conceived at the beginning of the revolutionary movement, has become fiction:

Since it wasn't the soviets - the elected councils- that were running the country but the Party apparatus, gone the way of unlimited violence. So far, in fact, that Lenin's socialism was nothing other than a dictatorship plus technology (Sinyavsky 1990, 64).

The Communist party was something like divine community undertaking the governmental function of the state. The party was an all-encompassing body and there was nothing above it. The member of the party had to sacrifice himself for the commands of the party, which demanded unconditional loyalty and obedience. Giorgio Agamben, by distinguishing *Bios* as politically qualified life and *Zoe*⁹ - which is the life common for every creature, including the human being, did not examine the totalitarian ruling organization. *Zoe* or bare life represents the zero degree of the legal order, in which there is not legally guaranteed protection and the concept of human rights is absent. Exclusion from the party would signify transmission from *bios* to *Zoe*, in which life became desacralized and exposed to the threat of existential negation. The life outside of party means to live like an archaic figure of Roman Law - *Homo Sacer* - who was excluded from the *bios* and whose life was reduced to the bare life of *Zoe*, in which everyone could kill him without the fear of punishment¹⁰. In the Soviet configuration of power, those excluded from or just living outside of the party can be treated like *Homo Sacer*, whose production was dependent on the decision of the Soviet sovereign. However, at first glance, sacred remoteness and the transcendence of the party are delusional because it was not a homogenous, autonomic and egalitarian structure of governmental apparatus. The disenchantment of the world proclaimed by Max

Weber partially took place in the Soviet Union. The demythologization of the world and establishing the rational order fell under the spell of a new mythology. Violence was an intrinsic operative strategy for subjugation and control of the population. Without it, Lenin would not be able to find the place for socialism.

THE COUNTERREVOLUTIONARY SMILE AND THE SPIRIT OF GOVERNMENTAL UNFREEDOM

An early Soviet governmental power for preventing resistance and counterrevolutionary movements took absolute control over the public sphere which, eventually, has been turned into a chimaera. Zygmunt Baumann, in one of his lectures¹¹ regarding privacy and publicity, said that during the totalitarian regime, people were dreaming on publicity, while today, in the world of global capitalism and quasi-transparency of social and political institutions, we are dreaming about our own privacy, as someone constantly watches over us. The centre of power is empty as if we are the prisoners of a panoptic prison, who does not know whether someone watches upon us or not. Michel Foucault wrote that inmate of the prison is always an object of information and never the subject of communication. It was typical for the Soviet governmental logic aiming at the total control of people through surveillance and extracting *suspicious* information from them. However, Baumann's analysis is one-sided, because during an entire period of the Soviet dictatorship, apart from the removal of the open spheres of public interaction, private life too existed autonomously only at some degree. The freedom of both, public and private spheres, hinges on the fundamental assumption of individual human rights and private property, which the Soviet authorities eliminated. On October 27, 1917, Lenin – at that time Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars - issued a special decree for the closing of the bourgeois' newspapers, blaming them of preparing a counterrevolution.

Everyone knows that the bourgeois press is one of the most powerful weapons of the bourgeoisie. Especially at the crucial moment when the new power, the power of workers and peasants, is only affirming itself, it was impossible to leave this weapon wholly in the hands of the enemy, for in such moments it is no less dangerous than bombs and machine-guns... As soon as the new order becomes consolidated, all administrative pressure on the press will be terminated and it will be granted complete freedom within the bounds of legal responsibility, in keeping with a law that will be broadest and most progressive in this respect... The present ordinance is of a temporary nature and will be repealed by a special decree as soon as normal conditions of social life set in (Matthews 1989, 130-131).

Here, the ideological battle exhibits itself in its pure form. It is not enough to control an editorial board and the content of the bourgeois newspapers. Instead of editing the written text, the easiest way to solve the problem is to take control over the means of mass information. But this control implies its total annihilation. This decree was the first practical sign of the totalitarian regime in which the reduction of complexities and the creation of homogenous, docile society was the main goal. The Newspaper was for Lenin a more dangerous weapon than the real guns and bombs because the new order could not be established, primarily, without the creation of *Homo Sovieticus*. This anthropological experiment was for controlling and transforming attitudes and for reducing the possibilities of getting alternative information. It took the form of the monotheistic religion, in which one has to acknowledge and worship the transcendent God and believe the stories written in Holy Scriptures. The Soviet people had to read and believe in the only party-controlled newspapers. The most important in this decree is the reference to the *necessity* and *temporality* of these strict measures, which had to be cancelled after the founding of the normal social life. It is obvious that post-revolutionary Soviet social and political reality was far from normal, as well as decades following it. Michel Foucault would argue against that usage of the

term “normal”. Who defines normality? Only those in powers occupying the privileged positions on the top draw the line between normality and abnormality. The Soviet conception of normality was not a contingent theoretical formation; rather, this kind of normality meant the removal of differences and the construction of the homogeneous society. From this perspective, the revolution was the watershed between abnormal bourgeois past and the normal socialistic future. If temporality and necessity are inherent characteristics of the state of exception, yearly days of the newborn Soviet State was an exceptional situation, which has been prolonged until the very last moment of its existence. Here, again, in this decree, there is a strange interconnection of law and freedom. In the state of exception as a zero degree of law, there is a certain order, but this order does not have any connection with the law because it was an old one, now suspended. The post-revolutionary state of exception is the womb of the new law. Carl Schmitt aporetically formulated: “Because the state of exception is always something different from anarchy and chaos, in a juridical sense, an order still exists in it, even if it is not a juridical order” (Agamben 2005, 33).

How is it possible to assume “in a juridical sense” that in the state of exception there is an order, which is not juridical? Lenin, in his decree, skillfully eliminated the freedom of the press. The temporal suppression of “suspicious” newspapers corresponds to the state of exception which, after constituting the new law, will be inscribed in it. Lenin creates an illusion of “complete freedom”. In reality, it may sound weird, but the promised restoration of freedom was allowed only within the ultimate prohibition of it. It is obvious that Lenin did not intend to give back the most dangerous weapon in the hands of the enemy. It was freedom within the boundaries of “progressive” law. It was freedom without freedom, without choice and alternatives. Carl Schmitt’s sovereign deciding on the state of exception is identical to God, it functions analogous to him, but within the confines of time. The law is the weapon of the sovereign, who has become undistinguished from his decisions. Walter Benjamin, in his work *On the Concept of History*, wrote: “The tradition

of the oppressed teaches us that the "state of emergency" in which we live is not the exception but the rule". (Benjamin 2006, 392). The state of exception as the condition of anomie and the zero degrees of law became the rule. To put it differently, in the figure of the sovereign, in that case, Lenin, the state of exception is the rule and the rule is the state of exception.

It has always been a certain apparatus which stood outside society and consisted of a group of people engaged solely, or almost solely, or mainly, in ruling. People are divided into the ruled, and into specialists in the ruling, those who rise above society and are called rulers, statesmen (Lenin 1965, 477-478).

After reading this passage through Foucauldian lenses, the state would appear as a particular form of the art of government, which separates itself with its bureaucratic machinery from the entire society, as if it is a sacred community of governors standing above the people. Nothing remains from the idea of "proletarian democracy", which promised equality and eradication of coercion. This dialectics of equality and freedom leads towards the standstill, out of which there is no chance to constitute the balanced social order with maximum freedom and less inequality. The ideal social organization of utopic spirit of the Soviet ideology had to be the complete equality of all. In a society without private property and individual liberty, where the State owns absolutely everything, freedom could not exist. There was not a dialectical dilemma of equality and freedom, rather monopolization of state power by the sovereign, who planted the seeds of the red terror and made this vast land unlivable. There is a genuine and inevitable fracture within the governmental structure and the technique of Soviet power. The impossibility of proletarian democracy, as weird these words may sound, lies in the need of a master, whose main function would have been the management of the population. The revolutionary dream about the demise of the coercive power of Tsar (sovereign) and establishing classless society turned into a disguised form of slavery. Michel Foucault linked the birth of biopolitics to the paradigm of the pastorate, who takes care of the souls of individuals. Lenin was

a pastor, or something like *deus absconditus*, who governed the Soviet world like God, through constituting universal divine laws of providence. In this case, the theological concepts of *ordinatio* and *executio*¹² have been replaced by Lenin's decrees. Revolutionary hope for self-regulating and self-determining Soviet society turned out to be the new form of serfdom. In the Soviet Union, there was no place for an autonomous subject, with its hopes and dreams, anxiety and sorrow, who could have decided on his own. Autonomous subjects were a huge threat for the creators and governors of the red state. Instead of that conceptual remnant of the bourgeois world, there were only subjugated people. Neglecting freedom in favour of equality brings forth the delusive and quasi-egalitarian social order, out of which the "the group of people", specialized in the art of governing, detached themselves from the society.

These two notions can be mutually exclusive: in a society where all men are equal, freedom isn't possible. Because freedom elevates certain people over others and allows for differences between them. But equality without freedom makes everyone the same (Sinyavsky 1990, 78-79).

Michel Foucault, investigating the genealogy of governmentality, made an unusual point regarding the strategic importance of freedom for the state apparatus or sovereign. The governmental matrix of power activates itself by creating the delusional sense of freedom as a horizon of multiple potentialities. Why the governmental body needs freedom, which turns out to be just an illusion of it? Power cannot realize itself as a coercive and punitive instrument without making room for freedom, but this is not the pure and ideal form of even positively defined freedom because it is already set up in the context of the governmental plan. So, one is free to some extent within the limits of governmental providence. This is a transcendental illusion of freedom as if one's freedom of speech, expression and choice of alternative strategies of action is ultimately assumed. Without making this delusional impression of freedom, governmental power would remain idle. Such freedom is

necessary for totalizing unfreedom and the effective management and control of the population.

This explains, finally, the insertion of freedom within governmentality, not only as the right of individuals legitimately opposed to the power, usurpations, and abuses of the sovereign or the government, but as an element that has become indispensable to governmentality itself...The integration of freedom, and the specific limits to this freedom within the field of governmental practice has now become an imperative (Foucault 2007, 353).

I do not think that Foucault's original thesis about freedom is relevant for the early Soviet dictatorship. The existential category of subjective freedom could not find its realization in objective social unfreedom. Lenin's governmental apparatus did not make even an illusion of minimal freedom for making itself operative punitive power. In the wake of the October revolution, on December 7, 1917, Lenin created the special governmental structure known as *Cheka* for coping with possible counterrevolutionary threats. The main function of this special police force was the detection and prevention of potentially dangerous organizations. Living under the constant fear of being blamed as a suspicious counterrevolutionary person may have produced a self-regulatory mechanism of action and social prudence. The old Cartesian formula of *cogito ergo sum* has been replaced by *incognito ergo sum*. Self-concealment is the justification of one's existence. This fundamental desire of withdrawal from the outer space of appearance into the unobservable and uncontrolled inward dimension of existence constitutes the figure of contracted and oppressed subjectivity. Living in this self-contraction, in the mode of *as if*, reveals the genuine fracture within the subject itself. People, reduced to what Giorgio Agamben calls the bare life, ought to control even their facial expressions in order to reproduce the biological life, undistinguished from creaturely life. Andrey Sinyavsky recalled a popular anecdote at that time:

There's more than a grain of truth in the old expression that so-and-so was

arrested or shot because he "smiled counterrevolutionary." The merest hint of scepticism, of doubt, of irony, of humour, had become a crime (Sinyavsky 1990, 74).

The Soviet regime installed such a strong sense of fear that one had to measure every action in advance. Usual, daily routine and interactions became dangerous. This all-mighty state power, controlling every aspect of public life, including mass means of communication, surprisingly allowed a few ideologically suspicious authors to publish. The historian of Soviet Union, Peter Kenez, underlined that alleged weakness of yearly Soviet government and, on this basis, explained the leak in the public press of texts of undesired authors:

During the beginning stages of NEP, authors such as D. S. Merezhkovskii, N. A. Berdiaev, S. L. Frank and V. Loskii were published in Soviet Russia. In retrospect, it is clear, however, that such liberalism was born of weakness and an inability to control rather than any respect for freedom of speech (Kenez 2006, 70).

The inability of control is itself weakness; however, this gave the chance to these authors to publish their texts. Such kind of exceptions took place during the last years of Lenin's life, while in the Stalinist era publishing something without matching the standards of socialistic realism could not be possible without subsequent sanctions. As a result, all four authors (Merezhkovskii, Berdiaev, Frank and Loskii) ended their lives in migration. This era, following the interregnum after Lenin's death, was the age of unprecedented crime and the total editing of the new communist world, with the main editor in chief, Joseph Stalin.

NOTES

¹ See: Eusebius of Caesarea: *Praeparatio Evangelica* (The Preparation of the Gospel), Translated by E. H. Gifford (1903)

² See: Karl Löwith, *Meaning in History*, Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press, 1949. P; 2.

³ «Мы на горе всем буржуям/Мировой пожар раздуем, /Мировой пожар в крови —Господи, благослови». I quote Aleksandr Blok's "The Twelve" from the following source: Андрей Синявский, Основы Советской Цивилизации, Издательство «Аграф». 2001. P. 9. In addition, rely on its English translation indicated in references.

⁴ See: Schmitt Carl, Politische Theologie: Vier kapitel zur Lehre von der Souveränität. Berlin: Duncker & Humblot. 2009.

⁵ See: Agamben Giorgio, State of Exception. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. 2005.

⁶ For Schmitt "Souverän ist, wer über den Ausnahmezustand entscheidet (Schmitt 2009, 13).

⁷ I am relying upon Giorgio Agamben's discussion of this theory in his "state of exception".

⁸ See: Benjamin W. Gesammelte Schriften. II.I. Zur Kritik der Gewalt, Frankfurt am Main. Suhrkamp. 1991

⁹ See: Agamben G. Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life. Stanford California: Stanford University Press. 1998

¹⁰ See: Agamben G. Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life. Stanford California: Stanford University Press. 1998

¹¹ Zygmunt Bauman, "From Privacy to Publicity: the changing mode of being-in-the-world".

¹² Discussion of executio (execution) and ordinatio (ordaring) within the context of theological genealogy of power in Giorgio Agamben's philosophy can be found in following source: Matiashvili, Lasha. 2018. "The Mystery of Power in the Philosophy of Giorgio Agamben". *Brolly* 1 (2), 56.

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