

Sante Maletta

FINAL CONCLUSION

1) From the theoretical point of view there is substantial agreement:

A) on the characterization of totalitarianism and its close link to modernity and

B) on the need and usefulness of a comparative approach between the various totalitarian regimes of the twentieth century

C) on the usefulness of the category of post-totalitarianism to characterize the Soviet bloc in the post-Stalin era;

D) on the presence in Europe of a 'strabismus', a difference of historical memory of Nazism and Communism and their respective horrors.

2. From the historical point of view we tried to document the above strabismus and to identify the reasons:

A) On one hand, we made reference to historical reasons intrinsic to the object:

- in the communist regimes there are no death camps,
- the difference between victims and persecutors is less clear than in the Nazi camps,
- the gulag is often not completely separate from the surrounding world: many prisoners of the gulag came home and somehow they received government support for their reintegration into society
- needless to say, some conference participants expressed their reservations especially on the theory that the gulag in the USSR and their counterparts in other communist countries have not been created with the purpose of extermination.

B) On the other hand, we highlighted the dynamic of the memory of European history

- The gulag is part of a political regime, the Soviet Union, which played a decisive role in the defeat of Nazism,
- the definition of genocide developed during the trials against the Nazi intentionally left out any reference to the assassination of political and social groups, and then could not be applied to communist experience,
- the gulag were closed by the communist authorities themselves who let them disappear and made it difficult to trace memory, by removing it.

3. A general agreement appeared in relation to the centrality of the figures of those who have resisted the totalitarian evil for the construction of a shared European memory

A) they belong to all social classes to all age groups and include both women and men, both believers and non-believers and agnostics, both liberals and conservative

B) resistance to totalitarian evil has been manifested in different forms, ranging from two borderline cases:

- there are those who actively helped the victims risking their own lives and those of loved ones;
- there are those who refused to participate in the totalitarian lie and the actions of this propaganda

- in any case, avoiding the temptation to ease any ranking of goodness, it was recognized that the trait that unites the resistant is the rebellion to injustice, in an attempt to defend his/her moral aspect: there is here a very close link between the call represented by the face of the other, the victim, and the defence of dignity attached to one's person
- the experience of resistance to totalitarian evil brings back moral conscience at the centre of the of public space: what every human being owns as intimate value may be, in exceptional circumstances, capable of immediate political effectiveness,
- the idea of reserving the term Righteous to those who have been officially recognized by Yad Vashem to avoid such a trivialization of the term seems to have enjoyed the favour of most of the conference participants.

4. Participants agreed on the centrality of the theme of resistance to totalitarian evil in terms of education:

A) the presentation of paradigmatic cases of resisters supports the process of identification as they are positive figures. Empathy is a key factor to enable the youth to understand the past and judge it, turning this into experience.

B) opinion is made possible by the fact that in comparison with these paradigmatic figures, the young man is forced to wonder: what would I have done instead?, this is a dynamic form of moral reasoning that supports the dialogue with oneself and with the others, imagination, empathy, reflective thought, and therefore achieves the more important educational goal: the formation of moral personality.