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INFLUENCES AND EFFECTS OF SECTS OR NEW RELIGIOUS TRENDS ON THE LIFE OF WESTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

This article is dedicated to the description of the impact of sects or new religious trends on the politico-social life of Western European countries. The main attention was paid to the role and activities of sects or new religious trends in a contemporary society in the context of globalization. Also several types of classification of sects were considered from historical, psychological, cultural, intellectual points of view. The functioning of these organizations was explored with accordance to the particular period of time in the history of these countries. The important documents which were adopted as the inseparable part of activities which were directed to combating harmful effects and regulation or stabilization of the general problems occurred due to the activities of sects were examined and described. Works of international and local organizations which are responsible for regulating situation established around these organizations were critically reviewed. Not only religious aspect of these organizations but also economic, political, social, psychological aspects were described with the assistance of exact facts and real situations. Resolute and uncertain decisions or actions against the real threat which was caused due to the activities of the sects were portrayed on the example of particular countries. The main goals and objectives of sects which are usually hidden under the veil of religiosity and moral demands were exposed in their full and real essence. Also difficulties and obstacles which occurred while the adoption of strict measures against the sects because of the secular nature of Western European countries were described.

Key words: sects, new religious trends, classifications, violence, psyche, reports, recommendations, laws, measures.

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Секталардың немесе жаңа діни қозғалыстардың Батыс Еуропалық мемлекеттердің өміріндегі ықпалы мен әсері

Бұл мақала секталардың немесе жаңа діни қозғалыстардың Батыс Еуропа елдерінің саяси-әлеуметтік өміріне ықпалын сипаттауға арналған. Негізгі назар қазіргі қоғамдағы жаһандану үдерісінің контекстіндегі секталардың немесе жаңа діни қозғалыстардың рөлі мен қызметіне аударылды. Сондай-ақ секталардың жіктелуінің бірнеше түрі тарихи, психологиялық, мәдени, интеллектуалды тұрғыдан қаралды. Бұл ұйымдардың жұмыс істеуі осы елдердің тарихындағы нақты уақыт кезеңіне сәйкес зерттелді. Зиянды әсерлермен күресуге және секталардың қызметіне байланысты жалпы мәселелерді реттеуге немесе тұрақтандыруға бағытталған қызметтің ажырамас бөлігі ретінде қабылданған маңызды құжаттар зерттеліп, сипатталды. Осы ұйымдардың айналасындағы жағдайды реттеуге жауапты халықаралық және жергілікті ұйымдардың еңбектері сыни түрде қаралды. Бұл ұйымдардың діни аспектілері ғана емес, сондай-ақ нақты фактілер мен нақты жағдайлардың көмегімен экономикалық, саяси, әлеуметтік, психологиялық аспектілері сипатталды. Белгілі бір елдердің мысалында секталардың қызметі себебінен туындаған нақты қатерге қарсы шешімдер мен іс-әрекеттер көрсетілді. Діни көзқарастар мен моральдық талаптар артына жасырылған секталардың негізгі мақсаттары мен міндеттерінің толық және шын мәні

суреттелді. Батыс Еуропа елдерінің зайырлы сипатына байланысты секталарға қарсы қатаң шаралар қабылдау кезінде туындаған қиындықтар мен кедергілер де сипатталды.

Түйін сөздер: секталар, жаңа діни қозғалыстар, жүйелер, зорлық, психика, есептер, ұсыныстар, заңдар, шаралар.

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Влияния и эффекты сект или новых религиозных движений в жизни стран Западной Европы

Эта статья посвящена описанию влияния сект или новых религиозных движений на политико-социальную жизнь стран Западной Европы. Основное внимание было уделено роли и деятельности сект или новых религиозных движений в современном обществе в контексте глобализации. Также было рассмотрено несколько типов классификаций сект с исторической, психологической, культурной и интеллектуальной точек зрения. Функционирование этих организаций изучалось в соответствии с конкретным периодом времени в истории этих стран. Были рассмотрены и описаны важные документы, которые были приняты как неотъемлемая часть деятельности, направленной на борьбу с вредными последствиями, а также на регулирование или стабилизацию общих проблем, связанных с деятельностью сект. Были критически рассмотрены работы международных и местных организаций, которые отвечают за регулирование ситуации, сложившейся вокруг этих организаций. Не только религиозный аспект этих организаций, но и экономические, политические, социальные и психологические аспекты были описаны с помощью точных фактов и реальных ситуаций. Решительные и неопределенные решения или действия против реальной угрозы, вызванной деятельностью сект, были изображены на примере конкретных стран. Основные цели и задачи сект, которые обычно скрываются под завесой религиозности и моральных требований, были раскрыты в их полной и реальной сущности. Также были описаны трудности и препятствия, которые возникали при принятии строгих мер против сект из-за светской природы западноевропейских стран.

Ключевые слова: секты, новые религиозные движения, классификации, насилие, психика, отчеты, рекомендации, законы, меры.

Introduction

In the context of the spiritual and worldview crisis that Europe has been experiencing in recent decades, there has been a catastrophic growth in the activity of various non-traditional religious movements and sects that are destructive. Most of them appeared in the USA in the late 1950s – early 1960s, and then began to spread gradually and unnoticed across Europe. The total number of people affected by sectarian movements is very difficult to establish due to the complex structure of the sects, but it is significant that the number of “professional” sectarians, that is, team leaders, according to Western sources, exceeds the number of priests, pastors of traditional churches by 1.5-2 times.

Up to a certain period of time, new religious groups did not attract much attention either from researchers, from society or from power. They were all treated with surprise, but tolerant, as the law guarantees everyone complete freedom of religious belief. But in the 1970s the first reports appeared about group suicide by sectarians or murders issued for sui-

cide, then followed the growing of complaints about the use of different types of violence against ordinary members of organizations, including violence against the psyche. In European society active discussions began, at the center of which the question was raised about the destructive nature of new organizations and the need to ensure the protection of the individual from manipulation of consciousness. Thus, the first characteristic of the sect in the modern sense of the word is their harmfulness (Bousquet, 2008).

Since the 1980s the problem of sects in Europe has begun to be taken seriously, but since the 1990s it has become the most acute. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, religion in Europe acquired a different status, the sectarian movement began to develop actively. Eastern European countries have become a testing ground for the missionary activity of all new religious movements. They began to move to an active phase of their existence in the Western European countries. New religious movements possessed ever-growing and fairly stable financial and economic opportunities, which they actively used to penetrate political structures.

The methodology of the research

The problem was presented in all its glory before the European authorities. In 1992, at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, members were concerned about the growing activity of sects and new religious movements. As a result, special Recommendation No. 1178 on sects and new religious movements was prepared and adopted. Certain concrete measures began to be taken. The society began to consider the problem of sects from different sides. Discussions and debates began, various surveys and social events were held, and sociologists, historians and psychologists began to analyze various aspects of this phenomenon. But the attempt to develop a certain state system in this issue met with serious difficulties.

To combat this phenomenon at the state level, it is necessary to identify specific evaluation criteria, concepts, and to give a universally recognized definition. Sects are, first of all, a spiritual phenomenon. Therefore, their evaluation should be carried out from a moral point of view. This is quite possible and feasible in confessional societies, where a deviation from orthodox teachings entails the establishment of the concept of sin. But in European society with its liberal standards, intolerance to moral vices is considered as a lack of tolerance (Mchedlov, 2004: 203).

The question cannot also be fully disclosed from the legal point of view. Since the principle of secularism, fully perceived in Europe as the most correct establishment of state relations, excludes the possibility of interference in the personal spiritual life of a person. Consequently, any attempts to give any legal definition to the concept of "sect" are perceived as breaking the boundaries of the principle of secularism. From the legal point of view, it is also impossible to distinguish a church from a sect and to work out certain criteria for distinguishing religious trends.

Sociologists also find themselves in a difficult situation when considering this problem. The development of a definition for the concept of "sect" and the classification of new religious trends causes difficulties and heated discussions. In the scientific environment of Europe there is no single and well-designed approach to the study of new religious trends. The methods of different authors depend on their personal beliefs, world views and political positions. Therefore, in the European scientific community the very use of the term "sect" is often put under the question.

The main part

The word "sect" is taken from the Latin language: the verb *sequi* means "to follow" and the verb *secare* means "to cut". The etymology of this word shows us two frequently encountered ways of forming sects and new religious movements. Sects can be formed around a charismatic leader, members follow him, along the path he has paved. Either sects are formed as a result of a split in a recognized religious movement, or members of the sect are cut off from orthodox teachings. Some sects appear when mixing these two ways. In ancient times this word was designated by philosophical schools of zealous supporters of a certain doctrine and who wanted to keep it as a secret from others. In Christianity, this term has acquired a negative significance. This word was applied exclusively to heretics. And in many European languages the word "sect" served to indicate other's religion, the religion of the enemy (Lenoire, 1999: 26). Some founders of modern sociology adhered to a different approach and opposed this word to the word "church". They explained their approach by the fact that the sect and the founders of new religious movements most often adhere to oppositional views in relation to the official church institution. But this approach is acceptable only within the framework of traditional Christian society. And in a secular society where there is a free market of religions that cannot be controlled, such a definition given to sects does not correspond to the main values of society. Therefore, in the academic environment, the word "sect" is often replaced by tolerant statements. Sociologists and religious scholars at the present time use such concepts as "non-traditional cults", "alternative cults", "new religious movements". But these terms, at the same time, enable the sects to make their demands for recognition them as religious associations, which gives them tax and legal benefits. But the problem is that many of them pursue non-religious, but rather commercial, destructive goals.

From the above-mentioned concepts, we can conclude that European researchers do not proceed from moral and doctrinal concepts, but from formal signs. Among them there are also active defenders of new religious movements. For example, when in France in 1995 the report of the parliamentary commission published a list of harmful sects, the director of the Sociology of Religion and Secular Society Jean Bobero said that the publication of this list is incompatible with real respect for the principle of secularism.

In 1995 and 1999 two reports of parliamentary commissions (“Sects in France”, “Sects and Money”) were presented in France, whose authors, recognizing the complexity of the situation and not hiding their choice, emphasized the danger posed by sects, encroaching on individual freedom and public order. They put forward several main features of the sects: the destabilization of consciousness, the excessive nature of financial claims, the imposition of a rift with the previous environment, the attempt on physical health, the recruitment of children, any antisocial statements, the violation of public order, the concealment of incomes, the attempt to penetrate the power structures (Assemblée nationale, 2008). In accordance with these signs, the definition of the sect was put forward in the report: “A group striving by psychological destabilization to obtain from its members unconditional devotion, a reduction in critical thinking, a break with generally accepted attitudes (ethical, scientific, civil, educational) and posing a threat to individual liberties, health, education and democratic institutions” (Assemblée nationale, 2008). The French group of the Association for the Protection of Families and Individuals, based on recognized criteria, defined the sect as “a group in which consciousness is manipulated, which induces indoctrination, consciousness control, mental violence, person disruption in physical terms (malnutrition, lack of sleep) and in mental terms (distortion of the personality and its behavior), in intellectual terms (limiting the field of knowledge to the boundaries of the sect), in social terms (hostility to the social system), in family terms (separation of parents from children, separation of families, divorce) (Definition d’une secte selon l’ADFI d’Aquitaine, 2010). Later reports on the activities of the sects were also prepared by the parliamentary commissions of Belgium (1997) and Germany (1998), in which the definition of harmful sects was based on the same criteria as in the French document. But the provisions provided in the reports are not a legal definition of sects, it is only a concept. Based on this concept, it is possible to use the current legislation for administrative investigations, attracting tax services, inspecting schools and instituting cases for abuse and financial fraud, ignoring the labor code and etc.

The classification of sectarian groups

Sectarian groups are very diverse in their ideology, cultural impact, level of danger and pernicious nature. Therefore, the process of their classification is very long and difficult. In the

abovementioned French report a typology of sects was drawn up divided into 13 groups according to their objectives:

- Alternative – the creation of an organization that differs radically from society and generally accepted human relations;
- Apocalyptic – predict a close planetary cataclysm and offer their adepts the means to avoid them;
- Evangelical – the extreme manifestations of the Reformed churches, where the pastor plays the role of guru;
- Healing – offering therapy that uses irrational or unscientific techniques;
- Neo-pagan – offering to restore the disappeared pagan cults;
- New Age Movement;
- Occultists – practicing occult sciences (astrology, alchemy, magic);
- Eastern – deviations from the eastern religions;
- Pseudo-Catholic;
- Psychoanalytic – acting on the subconscious with the help of parapsychological methods;
- Satanic – prediction of the coming of the kingdom of Satan and propagandizing the black masses;
- Syncretic;
- Ufological – entering into contacts with extraterrestrial civilizations.

But it is very difficult to attribute a particular sect to one of these groups, since their teachings are often a mixed type of all of the above descriptions. In total, 178 movements were listed in this report. This classification was given on the basis of the most general and visible provisions, therefore does not exclude other variants of classification.

Another widespread classification was put forward by the French scientist Trusljar, who divides sects into five groups:

- Chiliastic sects that are awaiting the end of the world (Adventists, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons), Jehovah’s Witnesses);
- Sects of Eastern origin, syncretic (Krishna Consciousness Society, Unification Church (Mooniets), Scientology, Transcendental Meditation, sects that originate from yoga and Buddhism);
- Gnostic, occult and esoteric sects, practice initiation, spiritualism, astrology, black magic for the sake of salvation, whose numbers are growing most rapidly in recent years (Theosophy, Universal White Brotherhood, Rose and Cross, Grail);
- Sects of healers and clairvoyants, declaring themselves Catholic, whose activities are aimed at attracting traditional Catholics;

– Small sects that easily adapt to the spiritual needs of their members, and achieve complete subordination of consciousness under the guise of achieving physical health and hygiene.

Another type of classification was created in accordance with the main doctrinal ideas of the sects under consideration:

– Neo-Christian – seeking to change Christian dogmas (Church of Christ, Mormons);

– Eastern – modernizing different versions of Hinduism and Buddhism (Krishna Consciousness Society, Aum Senrique, Transcendental Meditation);

– Syncretic – offer various options for salvation (Scientology, Unification Church);

– Neo-pagan –reviving pre-Christian beliefs;

– Satanic – preaching the worship to the forces of evil (the Church of Satan, the Society of Satan);

– New Age – unites many occult-mystical teachings and schools (Yablokov, 2004: 645-646).

The general drawback of these classifications is that they distribute sects to certain groups according to information provided by the sects themselves. And their real essence often remains under a veil of guesswork. The trends that impersonate Christian teachings can borrow various elements of shamanism, Shintoism, Confucianism. And eastern sects can show open sympathy for the ideas of Western philosophy and culture. Therefore, the creation of classification is very difficult and in the West there is still no single model and a unified approach (Nokin, 2000).

Sects can take different forms in accordance with the spheres of their activities. Some of them reject this world, preferring thorough preparation for the apocalypse in conditions of isolation from society. Others preach a harmonious life on this earth, focusing on psychological health and longevity. But there are general characteristics of sects that help define the trend and the community as a sect. Aforementioned famous French scientist Trusljar distinguishes three main characteristics of the sect:

1. The sect is headed by a guru and an unquestioned authority. Only through him ordinary members of the sect can contact God, since he has a special connection and secret revelation given and known only to him. Guru is not only a charismatic person who knows how to lead people, but also a savior, with special ties to the deity. He alone or together with selected people exercises strict control over the spread of knowledge. It forms rules, laws and punishments. The investigators of his teaching must completely submit to his wishes.

2. The sect necessarily has its own doctrine, which is proclaimed as the only correct teaching

on the path to salvation and harmonious life. It is formed by the founder and does not tolerate any criticism and questions about the attitudes. This doctrine is expressed in a language that does not lend itself to theological interpretation. Often this doctrine is a syncretic model of a religious text, but at the same time pretends to be absolutely correct. The sectarian, refusing free will, fully obeys the requirements of the guru and the sect. The sect is a vicious circle, with its prohibitions and laws, in which ties are broken both with God and with the outside world.

3. Sects have a rigid organization. The sect for sectarians becomes a “real family” and an “ideal society of the saved”. Around the guru is created a circle of those who close to him, which has a strict hierarchy. The sect itself lives according to the rules of iron discipline. Criticism in any form is not perceived by the founder or members of the sect. The whole life of the sectarian proceeds within the sect, all connections with the outside world are broken, which is presented as the abode of evil, chaos, hatred, where people are consumed by material consciousness and selfishness. Guru replaces parents and relatives. The sect is described as a world of goodness and harmony, and everything else outside the sect is associated with evil and war. The sectarian, stuffed with this ideology, is simply afraid to leave the sect, because he can lose the main and only possibility of salvation. And if you think about the fact that when an adept enters a sect he breaks all ties with his former surroundings, you understand that he simply has nowhere to return.

The sect cannot be called either the Church or the religious community, because the sectarians are not connected on the spiritual level voluntarily, but rather by subordinate connections. Submission to a guru or leader takes place in the form of complete psychic, physical, material dependence and loss of individuality. Many Western scholars emphasize that sects possess special authoritarian behavior, special, sophisticated methods of brainwashing and consciousness control that allow them to conduct active proselytizing activities, to which Western Christianity was not ready to confront and at the same time they admit that in fact we are talking about the mafia structures.

We did not consider it important and necessary to describe in full details the teachings and principles of sects and new religious trends. Since the aim of the article is not to acquaint the reader with the sects, but rather to describe the religious situation in Western Europe, emphasizing the role played by

sects and new religious trends in the socio-political life of certain European countries.

The Church of Scientology is the most massive sect, which has a rigid, hierarchical organization and large financial resources. Scientologists use the perfect system of control over consciousness with the use of the most sophisticated psychological techniques, therefore it is considered as the most dangerous sect in Europe. There are several centers of Scientology in Europe: 11 in Italy, 7 in Germany, 7 in the United Kingdom, 5 in France, 5 in Switzerland, 3 in Denmark, 3 in Spain, 3 in Sweden, 1 in Austria, 1 in the Netherlands (*La Scientologie / La Scientologie et la Dianetique de Ron Hubbard*, 2010).

Well-adapted to the new cultural environment, the Unification Church in 1997 was renamed as the World Association of Families for World Peace and Unification. In Europe, they are most active in Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland, France and the United Kingdom (*Association du Saint-Esprit pour l'unification du ehristianisme mondial*, 2010).

Until the late 1990s the number of sects grew very rapidly; they easily found adherents, since people were unfamiliar with the methods of their work. After their activities became the focus of society's attention and the authorities began to take certain measures, the situation with the sects stabilized, but a new problem arose, the sects began to change, evolve and adapt to new conditions. They began to change the methods of enslaving the person. It manifests itself in two processes. Firstly, sects depart from their specialization; there is a rapprochement and synthesis of all sectarian forms. Secondly, the sects began to spread their teachings in less open ways; they began to hide behind different spheres of everyday life. Due to these changes, a paradoxical phenomenon is observed – the sectarian movement expands its horizons, but official data show a decrease in the number of adepts. Sectarianism changes the form of its activity so that, with superficial observation, the terrible consequences of their activity are not so obvious (*Krivelskaya*, 2009).

In today's society sectarian ideas have ceased to be perceived as something alien and have become part of the everyday life of a European. Society does not disassemble in detail their teachings, but actively borrows their language, way of thinking. The words "chakra, aura, cosmic thinking, titans, era" from the New Age vocabulary are no longer incomprehensible terms, but full participants in the vocabulary of an ordinary European. Sectarian ideas are consumed and changed very quickly. This is

because the boundaries between sects have become less strict and more mobile. Within the framework of one sectarian doctrine, various religious ideas are now being integrated. We are talking about apocalyptic sects, ufological movements, various healing organizations, penetrating into the field of traditional medicine and pharmacology. Among young people, the popularity of Satanism is growing. Their activities are manifested in the form of desecrations, abuses, black mass, human sacrifices, and suicides. The ideas of Satanism are actively disseminated through the Internet, mostly by famous people, that is, the propaganda of sectarian ideas of a particularly dangerous nature is conducted openly (*Fouchereau*, 2001:26).

The contingent of entering sects also suffered fundamental changes in recent years. If before the 1990s the sects were recruiting young people seeking to find their place in society, then in the early 2000s the sects began to work with middle-aged people who wanted to find their own self, to understand their own essence. And now they are actively conducting recruitment among elderly people who want to find a cure for their ailments or just calm in this bustle. Among potential clients of sects it is possible to note also the unemployed and immigrants. Transcendental meditation develops special programs for the unemployed, and Jehovah's Witnesses actively work with migrants from the Maghreb countries.

When building their organizational structures, they pursue the goal of achieving full invulnerability. Hence, features characteristic for many sects appear: extreme flexibility, mobility, the ability to transform, impersonate other organizations. They can easily change the name and type of activity; relocate the main office to another country where they are not yet pursued by laws and power. The impenetrable, closed nature of their structures makes the analysis and study of sects extremely difficult. The organization of the sect is difficult to identify and understand, since it is two-level. On the surface we see associations that have cult and esoteric purposes, and after looking deeper, we open up a network occupied with activities of a completely different kind. The main goal of them is to achieve public recognition, while at the same time maintaining the secret nature of the essence of the sects. Sects have a pyramidal structure of leaders, which allows the guru to keep under strict control the activities of the sect. Between the gurus and ordinary adepts several levels of effective "filters" are built, which help the elite to separate themselves from the base of the organism.

Sects are a transnational system that has a head office and branches in different countries. The branch at the national level consists of three strata. The first is engaged in the dissemination of the exercise, the second is uniting organizations of an economic nature, and the third is responsible for real estate and consists of legal entities that provide legal support in all matters of the sect. All these associations and institutions are united in a closed network. The overwhelming majority of sects have a foreign center in the US, Japan, and India [Annual Report, 2000]. In Western Europe, in France, the main offices of the sects the Humanist Movement and the Movement of Raelits are situated. The foreign center supports legal and financial relations with its European branches, carries out the transfer of funds for various purposes.

The presence of common characteristics in the organizational structure and their concerted actions provide the basis for talking about the structure between sects. Some organizations openly perform the function of coordinating their activities. For example, the Center for the Study of New Religions has been actively engaged in the protection of sectarian movements for many years. In 1992, on the initiative of the Scientologists, the Moon sect and the Raelits Movement, the International Federation of Religions and Philosophical Minorities was created to bring together various new religious movements and protect freedom of conscience and religion, fighting for respect of human rights against injustice, intolerance and any form of discrimination. The constitution of this organization provides the creation of an Ethics Committee, which should assess the facts of discrimination and propose appropriate recommendations.

Another important aspect of the activities of sects is the financial and economic. In this area, they are achieving the greatest success, and religious teachings are taking second place. In the French report "Sects and Money" in 1999 it was stressed that this trend expresses the essence of the evolution of sects in recent years. But it is this aspect of the activities of sects that presents the greatest difficulty for researchers because of their secrecy and flexibility. Large sects have enormous resources, which can several times exceed the capabilities of individual states. The income of organizations has various sources. The first of them is donations. In order to become a member of the organization, you need to pay an amount of 7% of the income of their members. Members of the Mormon sect are required to pay 10% of their income. Jehovah's Witnesses and Hare Krishna's use the principle of reciprocity –

a gift for a gift, a member of a sect, receiving a gift, must give more than this gift is worth.

The second source is entrepreneurship. Sects create a wide network of various goods and services. They often have their own publishing house, pharmaceutical enterprises, and food production enterprises. Scientologists also have an extensive network of bookstores. Sectarian organizations create their travel agencies for pilgrimage. The main reason for high productivity and income is the free workforce of the adepts. Scientologists, who are not able to pay for their further education, work free of charge to be able to pay for their enlightenment. In the publishing centers of Jehovah's Witnesses, workers are not paid; they only work for pocket money. Here you can already talk about forms of voluntary slavery. Sects have large commercial structures in the industrial sphere, in the banking sector, in the insurance sphere, in the hotel sphere. Sect The transcendental meditation of Maharishi Yoga since October, 2002 released in the Netherlands its own coin "raam mudra" in an amount equivalent to 100 million euros. For 1 raam people gave 10 euros. The most interesting thing is that the country's financial authorities had not taken any measures with regard to this. Commercial activities allow the sects to create large property wealth. They have a large share of real estate. For example, Jehovah's Witnesses have real estate in France worth 150 million euros.

Developed and huge financial structures allow the sects to exert a tremendous influence on society, on the ruling structures. But their main task is to achieve public recognition and obtain the status of a non-profit organization or a religion that would allow them not to pay taxes. Therefore, sects try to push their cult activities to the fore, leaving their commercial side in the shadows. And the sectarian movements, which deny their religious character, try to achieve recognition in the political life of the state, which gives them an audience and a platform for the dissemination of their teachings. Transcendental meditation created on its basis political parties in 35 countries under the general title of "Party of Natural Law". The first one was formed in the UK in 1991. They propagandize the ideas of their leader Maharishi Mahesh Yoga, who believes that they must manage all the affairs of the world, because only they can lead them in accordance with natural laws. And having appropriated to itself the status of religion, sects can speak about discrimination of religious minorities in case of persecutions from the government structures (Lanvaux, 2004: 228).

The problem of control over people's consciousness today is extremely important. Western

society was fed up with material values, and now the religious market is trying to meet the demands of people which are being formed artificially. A person turns into a simple mechanism for consumption. The information revolution provides unlimited opportunities in this plan. Modern information technology, turning consciousness into the main object of its impact, is an excellent means of forming such a perception of reality, which fully meets the interests of those who want to establish control over people and their worldview. The impact on the consciousness of people brings certain structures a huge profit. A clear manifestation of this activity is public relations (PR). Unlike advertising, which customizes the product to the client's tastes, the PR pushes the customer's preferences for the already existing product, that is, like propaganda, it is engaged in the formation of public consciousness (Delyagin, 2000: 57). The use of techniques by the sects to control people's consciousness is manifested in such tendencies:

- Methods of isolation and full attachment to the “family”, leading to a clear division into those who have a right to exist and those who do not have it. The sect represents itself as the “elite” society.

- Within the cult society itself, which is a society of the “elite”, there is a clear division into the elite and subordinate adepts, that is, to higher and lower members.

- The sect does not accept the spirit of collectivism and solidarity, encouraging individualism and rivalry among its adepts (Sheinov, 2005: 208). For example, in one of the books published by Scientologists, the sociologist Reggie Derikuber, describing their outlook, writes: “The applied religious philosophy reproduces the values and ideals of a liberal society: individual success, the moralization of competition between people, in order to avoid wildness, affirm the influence of the economy, science and techniques that ensure prosperity, faith in the constant progress of civilization”.

At the beginning of the 20th century, Sombart, analyzing the psyche of the “economic man”, compared it with the child's psyche, in the sense that it greatly simplifies psychic phenomena, giving estimates that represent an extraordinary reduction of all spiritual processes to their simplest elements (Zombart, 1994: 134). Among the complex of values inherent in this psyche, he singled out 4 elements: sensory magnitude (quantitative evaluation), rapid movement (speed), new, and sense of power.

Using the structures created by them, the sects are now seeking penetration into all spheres of

socio-political and economic life. First of all, they are directed to the place where the basic values are formed and the overall way of life of the people is determined – education, science, culture, informatics, health. Further, they actively integrate into the business environment, coming into contact with the business world, which borrows and distributes their methods and techniques. Finally, there is a purposeful recruitment of political figures, through which lobbying for the interests of sects, penetrating them to the level of power institutions would be possible.

Sectarian organizations in Europe enjoy open support from American groups and organizations. For the equality of non-traditional religions, the Institute for Religion and Democracy, known for its extremely conservative position, has been fighting for more than 20 years. It is interesting that the thoughts of its director Diana Knipperers are surprisingly in tune with the ideas of Scientologists.

In the 1990s the question of sects in Europe moved from the stage of the “disturbing social phenomenon” to the “state security problem that came to the fore”. Back in 1992 at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe concern was expressed about the growing activity of sects and a special Recommendation No. 1178 on sects and new religious movements was drawn up and published, which views sects as a social problem. In 1994 the decision of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Council of Europe “Sects and new religious movements” was adopted, and in 1996 was adopted the Ordinance on sects in Europe. The Council of Europe's unanimous decision of June 22, 1999 adopted Recommendation No. 1412 stating that it is necessary to establish a European organization to monitor religious, esoteric or spiritual groups, and in each country separately – state organizations to assist victims of destructive cults. The Assembly called on its members to support the creation of independent state or religious information centers about sects. In addition, it proposed to include information on the history and philosophy of important schools of thought and traditional religions in the general school curriculum, to use normal criminal and civil law procedures against the illegal activities of destructive sects and to support the creation of non-governmental organizations to protect the victims of sectarianism.

These decisions reflected a turning point in the attitude of the European public and government towards new religious movements. But not all European countries have actively begun to introduce anti-sectarian activities. The peculiarities

of the political system, the political climate, the nature of church-state relations, the scope of the activities of sectarian organizations, the existence of authoritative defensive anti-sectarian associations that can bring to the government all the danger of sects activity played a role here. By resoluteness of positions, we can identify a number of states that are usually called a group of “strong” countries. Here, a clear distinction is made between sects and religions, and a number of ministries have established centers for collecting information on sects and explaining the harmful effects of their activities, where the authorities recognize the importance of anti-sectarian organizations that provide assistance to those affected by sects. These countries include Germany, France, Austria, and Belgium. Other states take an indefinite position on this issue. They are afraid to separate sects from religious movements in order not to violate the principle of religious freedom, and anti-sectarian defense organizations are acting independently, without the appropriate support of the government.

Because of its strong secular tradition, French society turned out to be the most active in counteracting the sectarian offensive. France, as already mentioned, became the first country to officially formulate the criteria of sects as a harmful organization and began to fight them at the state level. In July 1995, at the suggestion of Deputy Jacques Guillaud, Parliamentary Commission was set up to investigate the activities of these organizations. In 1998 an inter-ministerial mission to combat sects was established. The “brain center” of this organization is the Board of Directors, consisting of 19 qualified specialists, and an operational group is engaged in practical activities, which includes representatives of various ministries. In 1998 a law was enacted to strengthen school control over children in order to prevent sectarian proselytism (Kent, 2001:56). In 2000 the Inter-ministerial Mission prepared a report on the activities of the sects, which defined the sect as “an association with a totalitarian structure that claims for or not for religious purposes, whose behavior infringes on Human rights and social equilibrium”. The sects were divided into three categories. The first is the most dangerous “absolute sects, rejecting the norms of democracy and propagandizing anti-culture, based on the primacy of the elite, seeking to dominate the rest of humanity, and in some cases – to the open statement of racism” (Fournier, 2002: 36). The second group is sects with a strong organization, operating within the framework of legality. The third group is “movements whose philosophical and religious

bases are not questioned, but whose individual forms of behavior pose a threat to freedom, human rights, and constitutional principles and laws”.

France did not limit itself to calls for action; it went on the adoption of important legislative acts. In 2000 the country adopted a law on the manipulation of consciousness, which is regarded as a criminal offense for which a prison sentence of 3 to 5 years or a fine of 300 to 500 thousand euros is threatened. And on May 31, 2001, almost unanimously, the National Assembly passed a law allowing courts to dissolve any movement recognized as a sect whose members were convicted of crimes such as fraud, abuse of trust, illegal medical activities or dishonest advertising (Zabelina, 2010).

In Germany, discussions about sects and the first attempts at opposition began in the mid-1980s. In the early 1990s the critique of society was directed against the Unification Church of Moon. Moon himself was declared in Germany as *persona non grata*. But the culmination of political activity was the creation by the Bundestag in 1996 of the Commission for the Investigation of the Activities of the Sects, which prepared in 1998 a report containing a set of recommendations for counteracting the dangerous activity of these organizations (Nolte, 1996: 42). The findings of the commission were influenced by the events that occurred in the country in 1997 and were associated with attempts to strengthen the activity of the two sects – Jehovah’s Witnesses and Scientologists. This year the German Supreme Court refused to grant Jehovah’s Witnesses the status of a “public law corporation”. The court ruled that “a religious community that does not show proper loyalty to a democratically organized state for stable cooperation cannot claim recognition as a corporation of public law” (Allemagen: aspects juridiques et politiques, 2008). The prohibition of Jehovah’s Witnesses to their adherents to participate in the elections was viewed as a lack of loyalty. The Bundestag commission proposed to supplement Article 140 of the Basic Law with the provision on the need to respect the law and loyalty towards the state from the religious community, but this proposal was supported only by the Social Democratic faction of the Bundestag and as a result was not approved.

In June 1998 the Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry issued its report. It was announced that freedom of religion is limited if their exercise threatens the fundamental rights of others, and first of all the right to life and integrity of the human body, which are higher than freedom of religion. Since the state must protect the social peace, it has the right to intervene in the event of violation of human rights and attempts

at public order, good morals and fundamental values. The Commission spoke in favor of the creation of a federal state fund to subsidize private defense associations, the introduction of criminal liability for registered legal entities, the adoption of measures to protect victims of sectarianism, and the strengthening of state responsibility. An important consequence of this report was the refusal of federal governments to view Scientology as a religious community: the Federal Labor Court recognized them as a commercial entity that does not have a relationship with religious organizations, with subsequent deprivation of all their privileges. At the same time, the Bavarian authorities decided to prohibit the Scientologists from accepting civil service, the same laws were then approved by other German lands, and the Ministry of the Interior of North Westphalia demanded that this sect be banned. At present, the main concern of protective organizations is to achieve regulation of the activities of psychological groups engaged in providing “health-improving” services. In the opinion of the Commission, in order to ensure real protection of the individual, it is necessary to adopt an appropriate law that would control the activities of those services that offer commercial methods for assisting in life.

In 1997 in Belgium a special Parliamentary Commission published a report that defined harmful sectarian organizations and contained a list of all the 186 groups mentioned during the discussion. In 1998 the parliament approved the creation of a Center for Information and Opinion on harmful sectarian organizations whose task is to study these movements, propose appropriate legislative measures, conduct public awareness work and inform about its rights (International Act, 1998).

In Austria, another “strong” state, in 1998 the Federal Bureau for the cults was established as an independent institution of public law, which collects information and develops documents on the harmful activities of sectarian organizations. The Bureau is a religiously neutral organization and is controlled by the Federal Minister for the Environment, Youth and Family Affairs. The need for information on the activities of the sects will grow very rapidly, since sectarian methods are applied in the field of esotericism, in the economy, and in many other spheres of society as a whole. The demand for freedom of religious belief cannot be an excuse to prevent information about the methods and practices of these organizations, since it is about physical and mental health.

Due to the prevailing ideological pluralism in Great Britain, non-traditional cults operate in the country quite freely. British sects were not

the cause of collective suicides, violations of public order, high-profile scandals. Therefore, the authorities do not see the need to introduce special legislation to control the activities of these movements. However, the situation with the sects is successful only externally. Tom Saccqueville, former Home Office minister, said: “The English government did not take a critical position on the activity of the sects. However, they are mocking our laws and having large financial means; they do not stop before being engaged in slander. And the media, on the advice of their experts, are very cautious in this matter. This partly explains the vacillating position of politicians who are not so much guided by their own ideas about good and evil as they are interested in maintaining good relations with the media. When it comes to sects, they approach this problem solely from a legal point of view, considering that the majority of adherents are adults who are responsible for their actions and, apparently, through imprudence, have associated themselves with a religious organization”. However, the authorities denied Scientology the status of a charitable organization, and Moon was declared as *persona non grata* (Aries, 2003: 80).

In Italy, the approach to sects is quite flexible, for which it was praised by the UN Commission on Human Rights. There is no organized structure to fight sects, as in France and Belgium, and associations created for awareness-raising work do not enjoy the support of the Ministry of Family and Social Solidarity. In 1998 a special report was prepared on “groups of alternative religiosity”, which stated, *inter alia*, that there were 137 new religious trends in the country uniting 83,000 people, and that a permanent structure should be created to monitor the activities of these organizations. Such a structure does not exist yet, and such a dangerous sect as Jehovah’s Witnesses is recognized in the country as a religion.

In Spain in 2000, there were up to 200 destructive sects, among which the extreme right and neo-Nazi groups are particularly active, for example, the “International Third Position”, which maintains close ties with the far-right European organizations. In 1989 the parliament made certain proposals aimed at strengthening control over new religious organizations, but neither prosecutors nor judges were even informed. In recent years, Spanish parliamentarians have expressed increasing concern about this, suggesting the creation of appropriate organizations and programs of action, but so far no major measures have been taken.

Conclusion

Briefly summarizing the abovementioned, we must abolish that the measures currently being taken at the state level aimed at protecting society from disruptive manifestations of sectarian activity cannot prevent the main thing – the continuing deepening of philosophical pluralism and the erosion of moral guidelines, which is exactly what sectarianism parasitizes. Analysis of the latest trends in its development allows us to conclude that sects are by no means a peripheral phenomenon. It is increasingly obvious that they are used as the main mechanism for the real confirmation of the synthetic New Age religion and its penetration into the consciousness of the broad strata of the population, but primarily in the consciousness of the elites. And the assimilation of the ideology of sects is not through a formal entry into these organizations, but through the formation of a single picture of the world outlook and complete unanimity. And while the devastated ecumenism of Western Christianity loses the last crumbs of the apostolic heritage, all forms of modern sectarianism acquire a single pseudo-Christian foundation, turning society itself, as I.A. Adlivankin, into the spiritual “megasect” (Adlivankin, 2004: 28).

Nowadays the activity of destructive movements acquires the most dangerous, sophisticated forms. Being a transnational spiritual

business corporation, the sect fits perfectly into the development conditions created by the process of globalization itself (Kunde, 2002: 92). Using the new rules established by supranational structures and making a person extremely vulnerable and defenseless, sects are being introduced into key areas of human activity, and it is extremely difficult to confront it. If it is possible to expose a psychotherapist-quack or a mediator teacher, then no power can fight against the modern management system. With the expansion of integration for sects, new opportunities and a new field of activity open up; their influence on social and political processes grows. The greatest danger in this case is the cooperation of heterogeneous sectarian entities among themselves and their subsequent link with the structures of state administration.

Pretending for the status of religious associations, sects use the secular principle of organizing Western society, which guarantees non-interference of the state in the affairs of religion. However, their frankly mundane activities undermine the very essence of this principle. The problem is very acute for the authorities: either further ignoring the spiritual sphere of life, leading to strengthening the position of the occultism working to undermine the foundations of society, or the state’s refusal to take ethical neutrality in order to prevent the disintegration of society, which requires a rethinking of the very concept of secularism.

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