Totalitarian Communication. Hierarchies, Codes and Messages. Konstanz: Kirill Postoutenko, University of Constance; DAAD, 04.06.2009-06.06.2009.

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The interdisciplinary workshop on totalitarian communication at Constance University was organized by Kirill Postoutenko and financed by the DAAD. It featured participating scholars from various disciplines and all over Europe (including Russia). Several students and scholars used the opportunity to visit the open workshop and participated in the discussions. Papers were given to the participants in advance. They were comprised of theoretical considerations as well as of empirical studies investigating diverse phenomena and historical cases. This allowed for a stimulating and well informed debate that laid the groundwork for a further collaboration on totalitarian communication. Papers were also available to the visitors as the speakers were urged to deliver short statements in order to leave more space for debate.

ALEXANDER HANISCH-WOLFRAM (Feldkirchen) proposed an understanding of totalitarianism as a phenomenon of social engineering. Specifically, he addressed propaganda as a technique of totalitarian communication. According to Hanisch-Wolfram, propaganda can be understood as a discourse that is designed to create a collective identity encompassing nearly all aspects of life. Furthermore, the discourse of propaganda works on five different dimensions to deliver its message, including the use of myths and rituals as well as of signs and symbols. Furthermore, propaganda is characterized by the construction of an

enemy "other", the invention of a common history and personalization as a strategy to reduce complexity. Therefore, the cult of the leader is an essential part of totalitarian propaganda. In his historical case study Hanisch-Wolfram applies this theoretical framework on the authoritarian Austrian regime (1933-1938) and the Vichy regime in France (1940-1944). He analyzed the speeches of the respective political leaders and focused on the propaganda dimension of myths. Both speakers evoke the notion of a golden age before the French revolution and promise its restoration. A characteristic feature of the Vichy-leader Petain was his personal myth about his "sacrifice" for France. Hanisch-Wolfram concluded with a typology of propaganda myths and further suggestions for the research of propaganda as discourse. The discussion afterwards focused mainly on his definition of propaganda via collective identity and the differences between totalitarian and non-totalitarian modes of creating collective identity. First of all, the intrusion of the political into the private was highlighted as characteristic feature of totalitarian communication. Also, the notion of a "total collective identity" was brought up, though it remained questionable, if it could be applied to the highly differentiated group belongings in totalitarian societies.

DMITRI ZAKHARINE (Zurich) tried to grasp totalitarianism as a phenomenon of societal de-differentiation. Using the structural-functionalist

theory of Talcott Parsons he characterized totalitarian communication as transgressive and blurring the boundaries between different societal subsystems. Not only did Zakharine show how the boundaries between politics and family were publically conflated in the Stalin era, according to him also the contemporary Russian society is characterized by a fusion of entertainment and politics. Of crucial importance to him for both cases is the issue of gender. Women in their traditional roles representing family and sexuality are used to de-politicize and spice-up politics. The discussion afterward focused on the question how this notion of totalitarian communication could be applied to other cases as Schwarzenegger's California or Berlusconi's Italy.

JEAN CHALABY (London) borrows his definition of totalitarianism from Raymond Aron, who defined it as political monopole with an ideology and state-controlled media that politicizes all professional activities and individual errors. Therefore, totalitarian communication is not so much characterized by conflation and blurring of boundaries (as for example in Zakharine's contribution), but by the political control of non-political spheres. Chalaby proposes a typology of regimes based on the independence of the public sphere from the state. In totalitarian regimes, the state is basically in control of the media. Interestingly, totalitarian communication is often explicitly normative and pedagogic. Moving on to authoritarian, statist, and liberal forms of public communication societies become freer and more democratic. Authoritarian communication is characterized by little autonomy and censorship; statist regimes are still in control of crucial parts of the media market and rely mostly on self-censorship; liberal public spheres are completely autonomous. In the latter politicians are vulnerable to scandals and have to invent new techniques, precisely because they have lost direct control over the media. Chalaby's case study of de Gaulle's France as statist regime shows how the political leader refused to liberalize the media market in order to keep the national television as a tool to promote the French collective identity and social cohesion. The author understood his typology explicitly as normative, which led to an interesting debate.

LORENZ ERREN (Moscow) presented his research on the communication practices of the Stalinist regime, thereby complementing Chalaby's paper with another case study. Erren focuses on *obshchestvennost'*, best translated as public assembly or participatory public sphere, the totalitarian version of a liberal-democratic public. According to *obshchestvennost'*, every proletarian should be able to express critique in the party as well as at his working place. Before 1928, Stalin's "Great turn", *obshchestvennost'* was not of big importance. Only afterwards it was implemented in factories and used to expose "bourgeois activists" and "saboteurs". Erren's study also confirms Chalaby's claim that totalitarian communication was openly pedagogic aiming at the creation of the new man.

JOHN RICHADSON's (Loughborough) contribution deals with the circulation of fascist ideology in the liberal public sphere of Great Britain in the early thirties. He investigates several issues of the daily newspaper "Reality" published for petit bourgeois audiences. Many articles can be characterized as populist and racist. There are anti-union and anti-socialist articles as well as voices of admiration for Mussolini's Italy and support for the British fascist movement. Anti-Semitism is also found here, ranging from economic clichés to open threats of violence to the British Jews. Most interestingly, Adolf Hitler, though not yet in power in Germany, is seen as a pattern to follow in dealing with the domestic Jews.

ARISTOTLE KALLIS (Lancaster) researched architecture as a material form of totalitarian communication as well as totalitarian architecture discourses. Starting with the famous encounter of the German and Soviet pavilion at the World Exhibition in 1937, he was able to show

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that architecture was part of a wider debate about 'art' and 'culture'. This was especially true for the Italian *cultura fascista* in the early thirties. Here, art and culture were dominated by ideas of a hegemonic pluralism and universal fascism. Mussolini's project of a new Rome was presented to Hitler on his visit in 1938, who afterwards engaged in a project that should outrun Mussolini's Rome. Kallis uses a concept of totalitarianism as political religion that is supported by his analysis of fascist architecture. Architecture not only used religious forms, also the architects themselves, Alfred Speer as well as Antonio Munoz, presented their works in a prophetic way as inspired by the genius of the leader.

NANNI BALTZER (Zurich) focused also on the more material qualities of totalitarian communication. She showed how the Fascist regime in Italy used installations of light to create a totalitarian kind of mood. At the market place of Milan the fascists used a light projection to create a face of Mussolini on the cathedral. Here, the presentation hinted at the problematic relation of politics and religion in totalitarian regimes. Baltzer showed in the discussion how the fascist leader drew upon religious symbols and rituals, but using them in a distinctive style.

WERNER BINDER (Constance) dealt in his presentation with torture as a practice used to inflict pain, to produce speech acts and to reproduce social hierarchies. After discussing the practice of legal torture in Antiquity, mediaeval and early modern times, he argued that contemporary torture in totalitarian and liberal-democratic regimes served a political function. Despite this similarity, the case study of Soviet torture under Stalin and American torture in the War on Terror showed significant differences. Stalin's torture was ubiquitous and a potential threat to every citizen, whereas the liberal-democratic torture is usually confined to non-citizens. Furthermore, Soviet torture was not only used to destroy dissident subjectivities, but as the Moscow trials showed to pro-

duce public legitimacy and objectivity. Soviet torture produced speech acts that objectified totalitarian ideology and state power. The very fact that people were being tortured had no place in the Soviet legal system and therefore had to be kept secret. Therefore, communication on torture was confined to gossip and rumor. Contrary, the use of harsh interrogation techniques in the War on Terror was no secret at all, though the American government refrained from calling it torture. It was not about ideological truth in a strict sense, but about information. It was suggested in the discussion to take the different torture practices into account as well as to look at the use of torture by authoritarian regimes.

KIRILL POSTOUTENKO's (St. Petersburg/Constance) contribution also dealt with the phenomenon of propaganda, though from a more linguistic and formal perspective than Hanisch-Wolfram's study. By conducting a content analysis of Hitler, Mussolini and Roosevelt speeches, before and during the war, he tried to contrast the public communication about those leaders with their actual speech performance and self-presentation. The quantitative text analysis distinguished how often the political leaders addressed themselves or other institutions (for example the party), how often they used singular (I-Me-My) and plural (We-Us-Our) self-references, and how often they referred to activity (I-We), presence (Me-Us) and possession (My-Our). There were distinct stylistic patterns for each speaker. Three findings of this study were especially interesting and therefore subject of the subsequent discussion. First of all, the language patterns of Hitler and Roosevelt are much more similar to each other than to those of Stalin. Second, though Stalin was ubiquitous in the public discourse, he rarely referred to himself in the first person. Last, but not least, the singular and plural self-references remained for Mussolini and Hitler very stable, whereas Roosevelt's self-references shifted to the plural once the war started. One possible interpretation proposed in the discussion would suggest that the totalitarian

regimes are in a permanent state of war, whereas the democratic discourse is more flexible.

In addition to the variety of empirical studies offered, there were three overlapping theoretical interests that have to be highlighted: First of all, the differentiation and de-differentiation of totalitarian societies, namely the relation of politics and state to the public sphere, the private sphere, family and religion. Second, the materiality of totalitarian communication seems is of further interest, whether as embodied in architecture, the use of light in public spaces, the tortured body or the presence of the leader. Third, propaganda as genuine form of totalitarian communication seems to be a promising subject of further research, whether by means of discourse analysis or by linguistic analysis. Further clarification is also needed with respect to the differentiation of totalitarianism and authoritarianism. Another question raised in our final discussion is the concept of totalitarian communication itself. Should it be restricted to communication in totalitarian regimes or are there forms of communications in other contexts that could be qualified as totalitarian?

Conference Overview:

Section 1: Hierarchies

Lorenz Erren (German Historical Institute in Moscow): Stalinist Rule and Its Communication Practices. An Overview

Aristotle Kallis (Lancaster University): Monumental Propaganda in Rome and Berlin between 1922 and 1943. Communicative Aspects

Section 2: Codes

Nanni Baltzer (University of Zurich): Duce on the Street. Illuminations in Fascist

Dmitri Zakharine (University of Zurich): State Media and Media State. Audio-Visual Projects of Totalitarianism

Section 3: Networks

Jean Chalaby (Open University, London): Public Communication in Totalitarian, Authoritarian and Statist Regimes. A Comparative Glance

John Richardson (Loughborough University): The Newspaper Reality and the Circulation of Fascist Ideology in Great Britain before the WWII

Section 4: Practices

Werner Binder (Constance University): Torture in Liberal Democracies and Totalitarian States. Communication and Imagination

Section 5: Messages

Alexander Hanisch-Wolfram (Protestant Academy in Carinthia, Feldkirchen): Totalitarian Propaganda and the Discursive Construction of identity: A Comparative Look at France and Austria

Section 6: Actors

Kirill Postoutenko (Smolny Institute, St. Petersburg / Constance University): Performance and Management of Political Leadership in Totalitarian and Democratic Societies: Soviet Union, Germany and United States in 1936

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