

Ralph Jessen, Hedwig Richter (eds.)

VOTING FOR HITLER AND STALIN



Elections Under 20th Century Dictatorships

campus

Voting for Hitler and Stalin

Ralph Jessen is professor of modern history at the University of Cologne, Germany. *Hedwig Richter* is a postdoctoral research assistant at the University of Greifswald, Germany.

© Campus Verlag GmbH

Ralph Jessen, Hedwig Richter (eds.)

Voting for Hitler and Stalin

Elections Under 20th Century Dictatorships

Campus Verlag
Frankfurt/New York

© Campus Verlag GmbH

Printed with a subsidy by the Bundesstiftung zur Aufarbeitung der SED-Diktatur
and the Fritz Thyssen Foundation

Bibliographic Information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek.
The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie;
detailed bibliographic data are available in the Internet at <http://dnb.d-nb.de>
ISBN 978-3-593-39489-3

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any
means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage
and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

Copyright © 2011 Campus Verlag GmbH, Frankfurt am Main

Cover illustration: *For the people's happiness!* Poster by Viktor Semyonovich Ivanov, Soviet political
agitation art, 1950, Russian State Library, Moscow. © culture-images/fai

Cover design: Campus Verlag, Frankfurt am Main

Printing office and bookbinder: Beltz Druckpartner, Hemsbach

Printed on acid free paper.

Printed in Germany

For further information:

www.campus.de

www.press.uchicago.edu

© Campus Verlag GmbH

Contents

Introduction

Non-Competitive Elections in 20 th Century Dictatorships: Some Questions and General Considerations.....	9
<i>Ralph Jessen and Hedwig Richter</i>	

I Legitimacy

The Self-Staging of a Plebiscitary Dictatorship: The NS-Regime Between “Uniformed <i>Reichstag</i> ”, Referendum and <i>Reichsparteitag</i>	39
<i>Markus Urban</i>	
Popular Sovereignty and Constitutional Rights in the USSR’s Supreme Soviet Elections of February 1946	59
<i>Mark B. Smith</i>	
Integration, Celebration, and Challenge: Soviet Youth and Elections, 1953–1968	81
<i>Gleb Tsipursky</i>	
Mass Obedience: Practices and Functions of Elections in the German Democratic Republic.....	103
<i>Hedwig Richter</i>	
Elections in Modern Dictatorships: Some Analytical Considerations	126
<i>Werner J. Patzelt</i>	

II Discipline

- The Great Soviet Paradox: Elections and Terror in the Unions,
1937–1938 147
Wendy Z. Goldman
- Plebiscites in Fascist Italy: National Unity and the Importance
of the Appearance of Unity 173
Paul Corner
- Works Council Elections in Czechoslovakia, 1948–1968 186
Peter Heumos
- Faking It: Neo-Soviet Electoral Politics in Central Asia 204
Donnacha Ó Beacháin

III Dissent and Loyalty

- Elections, Plebiscitary Elections, and Plebiscites in Fascist Italy
and Nazi-Germany: Comparative Perspectives 231
Enzo Fimiani
- “Germany Totally National Socialist”—National Socialist
Reichstag Elections and Plebiscites, 1933–1938: The Example
of Schleswig-Holstein 254
Frank Omland
- Elections in the Soviet Union, 1937–1989: A View into
a Paternalistic World from Below 276
Stephan Merl
- “The People’s Voice”: The Elections to the Supreme Soviet
of the USSR in 1958 in the Belarusian Capital Minsk 309
Thomas M. Bohn
- Contributors 337
- Index 341

Introduction

Non-Competitive Elections in 20th Century Dictatorships: Some Questions and General Considerations

Ralph Jessen and Hedwig Richter

Elections make the difference between a democracy and a dictatorship. Not the only difference, of course, but nevertheless a decisive one. Any acceptable definition of a democratic order includes the following: universal suffrage, a secret ballot, and competing candidates. These are the essential prerequisites for the legitimization of a political regime. Regardless of all critical considerations concerning limits of representation which could hamper democracy, the elitist isolation of the political class, or the socially, economically or culturally biased structure of the electoral system, elections are considered to be a cornerstone of popular sovereignty.

However, despite this, elections were and are not limited to liberal democracies. In fact most of the 20th century dictatorships put a great deal of effort into arranging general elections and referenda. For example, the Soviet government along with other governments in the Eastern Bloc countries regularly called their populations out to vote in general, equal, direct and secret elections. No effort was spared in enticing the voters to the ballot box. During the 1960s millions of Soviet citizens came together in hundreds of thousands of election meetings to take part in the elections for the Supreme Soviet. In Moscow thousands of shows, dance performances and concerts were put on in order to entertain the voters. In the polling stations play areas and buffets were set up. Around 15 per cent of the total population took part in the Soviet election campaigns as agitators and canvassers (see Tsipursky, Bohn, Smith, Heumos in this volume; Jacobs 1970, 62–68). Of course, with regard to influencing the composition of the parliament, or even the government, all of this remained quite meaningless. Yet, why did dictatorships stage these “elections without choice” (Hermet et al., 1978) if their function as “institutionalized procedures for the choosing of office holders by some or all of the recognized members of an organization” was not being fulfilled in the slightest (Rokkan 1968, 6; see also Lipset and Rokkan 1967)?

Why did political regimes, which were radically opposed to liberal democracy, imitate one of the crucial features of that antagonistic system? This is the main question which this volume of essays seeks to answer, and it is based on the assumption that fake democratic elections cannot simply be dismissed as trivial propaganda phenomena, but rather are a source of valuable insights into the functioning of dictatorships in the 20th century.

20th Century Dictatorships

Juan Linz distinguishes between democratic, authoritarian and totalitarian regimes (Linz 1975, 2000). This typology has been adopted by many political scientists and historians—despite the fact that the different types of *authoritarian* regime make it difficult to bring them all under one common term, and also despite the criticism of different aspects of the theory of totalitarianism. For as much as one might regard the term totalitarianism as problematic given its normative connotations, its fixation on the structures of a regime, and its relative blindness to social and cultural practices, a typological classification of the main different types of dictatorship is essential (Jessen 1995; Bessel and Jessen 1996). This is even more so the case in respect to elections.

Political scientists dealing with this topic have quite rightly highlighted the close relationship between the form and function of the elections, and the type of political regime. In this respect the determining classification criteria are institutionalization and the practice of political competition. Thus, Dieter Nohlen distinguishes between competitive elections in democratic systems, semi-competitive elections in authoritarian systems, and non-competitive elections in totalitarian systems (Nohlen 2009, 26 ff). Steven Levitsky and Lucan A. Way have also arrived at a similar trichotomy in their differentiation between democracy, competitive authoritarian regimes and closed authoritarianism (Levitsky and Way 2002, 2010). Others have put forward even more strongly differentiated typologies (Howard and Roessler 2006; Smith 2006).

For political scientists, an interest in elections which take place within non-democratic frameworks has mainly been directed at *authoritarian* regimes. These regimes were the focus of the pioneering 1978 study “Elections Without Choice” by Guy Hermet et al. Furthermore, the develop-

ments following the downfall of Communism in Europe have led to an even greater focus on this area. The “Third Wave of Democratization” (Huntington 1991) after 1989 resulted in stable democracies in only a few Central and Eastern European countries. In most of the post-communist states, different types of authoritarian regimes have established themselves—regimes which attempt to legitimize themselves by means of elections without there being any hope of fair competition (Wilson 2005). This links the neo-authoritarian regimes of the post-communist world with many states in Africa and Asia. Whether the latest upheavals in the North African and Arabian areas will result in a fourth wave of democratization, as some commentators have been quick to hope for, remains to be seen (Olimat 2008; Grand 2011). However, skepticism would seem to be advisable.

Andreas Schedler has drawn the conclusion that the counter-movements to the Third Wave of democratization have not produced different forms of “defective democracies”, but rather a new type of regime, namely that of “electoral authoritarianism”. Moreover, the relative stability of this new type of regime is not due to the suppression of elections, but rather the effective manipulation of the electoral system (Schedler 2002, 2006 a, b). Although elections in this type of regime feature a minimum level of inclusion, pluralism, competition, and openness, the rules of free and fair elections are breached so systematically that they become instruments wielded by the authoritarian elite to control and direct power (Schedler 2006 b, 2–6).

While political scientists are mainly interested in current phenomena of “electoral authoritarianism”, this volume follows a different course. While it does take inspiration from current problems, the essays mainly focus on issues arising from historical research. Furthermore, the volume focuses on the *totalitarian dictatorships*—in particular those in fascist Italy, National Socialist Germany, and the communist states between 1917 and 1991.¹ Despite significant differences, these dictatorships had some common features: they presented themselves radically modern, anti-traditional, and

¹ Due to the lack of a better alternative, here the term *totalitarian dictatorships* will be used in order to distinguish these regimes from the *authoritarian* dictatorships of the inter-war and post-war periods, as well as from the *neo-authoritarian* regimes of the present. The more open and normatively less loaded term “modern dictatorship” (Kocka 1999) is not appropriate here since the *neo-authoritarian* regimes of recent times cannot be labeled as either pre-modern or post-modern, but in fact also belong to *modernity*.

oriented towards a utopian concept of a *new society*. They were based on a strictly anti-liberal and anti-pluralist model of politics and society. This model was connected to an ideal of homogeneity and purity, based on the collective exclusion of *objective enemies*, as Hannah Arendt put it (Arendt 1951). Those included in the *Volksgemeinschaft* or *socialist society* would be integrated into a kind of *dictatorship of consent*. Under these regimes elections corresponded to the category of “zero-competition election” (Smith 2006). While elections in authoritarian and neo-authoritarian regimes served as an instrument of “non-democratic access to power” as Andreas Schedler aptly defines it, in *totalitarian* dictatorships their primary function was as a means for the “non-democratic exercise of power” (Schedler 2006 b, 6). Whether their function extended beyond this, still remains to be considered.

State of Research

Elections in the *totalitarian* dictatorships of the 20th century are not a prominent theme in historical research. Since they so clearly break the rules of fair competition, it seems obvious that they should be discounted as insignificant propaganda events. Secret police, violence, and terror as the instruments used in the safeguarding of power appeared to be much more worthy of attention. Moreover, the fact that elections and plebiscites took place under Fascism and National Socialism only in the 1920s and 1930s, while in the communist European regimes they were of significance up until 1989, has led to an asymmetric division of academic interest. While the elections in the right-wing dictatorships of the first half of the 20th century have been a focus of *historical* research, the elections which took place under Communism usually were the subject of research conducted by *political scientists*. Both disciplines use different approaches, methods and sources. Whereas after 1945 historians were able to analyze the surviving documents from the fascist era, until 1989/91 political scientists and historians had only a few sources at their disposal relating to elections in the communist sphere. The situation only began to improve after the collapse of Communism in Europe—however, still today there are significant differences among the post-communist states.

With regard to the significance of elections for the Nazi dictatorship in Germany, there are two factors which have been of particular interest for

historical research, but which are not dealt with in this volume. The first is the important question of the origins, motivations, and social structure of the *Nazi voters* in the *Weimar Republic*—it is to these voters that the NSDAP owed its spectacular successes at the ballot box during the chaotic years at the end of the first German Republic (Chrystal 1975; Childers 1983; Falter 1991). The second is the 1935 referendum in which the inhabitants of the Saar region, which had effectively been under French administration since 1920, voted overwhelmingly in favor of annexation to the *German Reich* (zur Mühlen 1979; Paul 1984). In both cases these were not elections under a dictatorship, but free elections which heralded the rise of the NS movement and the initial popularity of the regime.

A special role was also played by the elections to the Councils of Trust which were introduced by the Nazis—in 1934 and 1935 workers were called on to take part in these elections. They have mainly been regarded as a test case for loyalty or political resistance among industrial workers (Zollitsch 1989; Rüter 1991; Frese 1992). By contrast, the referenda of the 1930s, which have been examined in detail by Otmar Jung, were aimed at the whole German population. There were three referenda in which the regime sought to link demonstrations of power in foreign policy with domestic plebiscitary approval. In one instance, during the referendum in 1934, Hitler had his usurpation of the office of the state president sanctioned by the people (Jung 1995; 1998). Up until now, the three Reichstag elections which the NS regime held in November 1933, March 1936, and April 1938 using one-party lists have attracted less attention than the sensational referenda. As well as Jung's work, which, however, does not deal with the elections as a focal point, the regional study conducted by Frank Omland should be mentioned here—his study is also represented by an article in this volume (Jung 1995; 52, 87; Omland 2002, 2008). With respect to Italian Fascism, although there have been some studies on the plebiscites held under Mussolini's dictatorship, in general these have been less frequently studied than those in Germany (Fimiani 1997; Dal Lago 1999).

However, recently there has been increased interest in investigating the extent to which the German population supported the NS regime, as well as how the loyalty of the people can be measured, and which instruments the dictatorship employed in its attempt to consolidate the apparent consensus between the people and the leadership. Examples include the controversial thesis of Götz Aly on the direct or indirect participation of

large sections of the German population in the plundering of the occupied territories during the war, and also the work of Robert Gellately on denunciation. Further studies include David Welch on propaganda, Markus Urban on the rituals of consensus at the Party congresses, and the latest work by Paul Corner on *Popular Opinion in Totalitarian Regimes* (Aly 2005; Gellately 2001; Welch 1993; Urban 2007; Corner 2009). Up until now, elections have barely been discussed within this context. Therefore, it seems appropriate to link the staging of elections and plebiscites more closely to the general question of the nature of the dictatorship than has previously been the case.

The studies that critically examine the practice and function of elections in the Soviet Union mainly stem from the period before 1991. They were mostly conducted by American or Western European political scientists, and were based on officially available information or on interviews with immigrants. This limited the validity of these studies, as did the political framework of the Cold War. As well as describing the history and structure of the electoral procedures, some of these studies are concerned with ascertaining the functions of “elections without choice”, and in particular the contribution these elections made to the legitimization of communist dictatorships (Pravda 1978; Zaslavsky and Brym 1978; White 1985). Furthermore, the local elections in the Soviet Union have attracted the curiosity of western researchers in particular. In contrast to the heavily ritualized nature of the national elections, the suggestion is that in these elections there was a certain leeway for political participation, although the various studies have not reached a definite conclusion on this (Swearer 1961; Jacobs 1970; Friedgut 1979; Hahn 1988). In the search for indicators of non-conformist voting, western observers have focused in particular on non-voters since the end of the 1960s. They started with the plausible assumption that in the light of great pressure to participate in elections, electoral avoidance could be a strong indicator of divergent political opinions (Gilison 1968; Karklins 1986; Roeder 1989). But despite the subtle interpretation of the narrow source base, the insights provided by these observations were limited.

After 1991, political scientists rapidly lost interest in elections which had been conducted under the communist dictatorships. Furthermore, also to historians other topics seemed to be more important than the elections held under Stalin and his successors. However, some studies have already shown the potential insights which can be gained from historical research

which analyzes elections as phenomena of the interaction between the dictatorial state and society, and not only with regard to their political instrumentalization. These studies include J. Arch Getty on the elections of 1937, Wendy Z. Goldman on the parallel *Campaign for Union Democracy* or Jan T. Gross on the elections in Soviet-occupied Eastern Poland in 1939 (Getty 1991; Goldman 2007; Gross 1986; Fitzpatrick 1999).

Studies that examine the Soviet-dominated states of Eastern Europe between 1945 and 1991 highlight three main strands of research: firstly, the elections in the period between the end of the war and the establishment of the communist dictatorship. In a still unstable interim situation these polls at first provided certain opportunities for non-communist votes to count—for example, at the local elections and the *Landtag* elections in 1946 in the Soviet Occupation Zone in Germany (Tuller 1997; Creuzberger 1999). However, only a short time later manipulated elections provided the communist takeover of power with apparent democratic legitimization (Onisoru and Treptow 1998; Zimmermann 2002).

Studies on national variants of non-choice suffrage since the end of the 1940s form the second strand of research. Although the details differed in the various Eastern Bloc countries, nowhere was there the possibility that the Communist Party would be in danger of defeat at the ballot box (Wiatr 1960; Jedruch 1982; Roman 1987, 2007; Löw 1998; Kloth 2000). However, the tightening of the electoral process in Poland after the crisis of 1956, and the great significance which the Communist Party in Czechoslovakia accorded the elections in 1971, which were the first after the suppression of the Prague Spring, both show that elections were not a routine event (Drygalski and Kwasniewski 1990; Jedruch 1982; Dinka and Skidmore 1973).

The third strand of research centers on the issue that even in the context of a dictatorship, elections could become a factor in system change. In Poland and Hungary limited changes in the electoral process in the 1980s promoted the erosion of the Communist Party's monopoly on power (Racz 1987; Lewis 1990), while in the German Democratic Republic, the stubborn adherence of the SED to elections without choice and the blatant manipulation of the local elections in May 1989 stimulated the protest against the regime (Broßmann 1999; Kloth 2000; Herz 2004; Bienert 2008).

Research Perspectives

This volume brings together historians and political scientists with their respective approaches, ideas, and methods. Fascist Italy, Nazi Germany and the communist regimes in Europe are in the historians' realm now. However, it is of great advantage that political scientists are still interested in elections under modern dictatorships, offering a more systematic perspective, clearly defined categories, and an analytical approach to dominance, collective obedience, political rituals and symbols. On the other hand, it is necessary to historicize and to contextualize our topic. What elections and plebiscites actually meant for the people at the time, and what they meant for the exercise of dictatorial power depended upon specific historical circumstances.

When it comes to dictatorial means of dominance, many historians as well as political scientists tend to concentrate on political institutions and organizations such as the state bureaucracy and the ruling Party, mass organizations, secret police forces, or mass media. With respect to elections, this perspective highlights the staging of the polls, the legal framework, the ideological context, the ways to enforce the notorious 99 per cent turnout, and also the faking of the results. It is in the very nature of dictatorship that power is concentrated in the political center, and society is controlled from above. So a top-down perspective on official narratives, intentions, structures, and practices is self-evident and has been the subject of several studies. However, we also need a bottom-up perspective. Although the political agency of individual citizens—not to mention the agency of collective actors—under dictatorial auspices was extremely restricted, it was not meaningless. In our case, with respect to voting, every single citizen to some degree was actively involved in a political ritual—they had to act or react, to take part, or indeed refuse to do so. What exactly does the overwhelming participation on polling day indicate? Compliance? Resignation? Indifference? How did voters use the remaining scope to act—staying away from the polling station for instance, or using the voting booth or actively taking part in the nomination process? Even under a dictatorship elections were a ritual of interaction between state and society. The perceptions, options, and strategies of voters are of crucial importance if we are to try to estimate the impact of the whole voting process on the stability and legitimacy of the regime. A comprehensive

picture needs a combination of top-down and bottom-up research approaches.

Although the outcome of elections and plebiscites in a non-democratic environment rarely caused any surprise, historical reconstruction has to look below the surface. Analytically it is useful to distinguish between at least three general dimensions: firstly the institutional sphere of dictatorial domination. This dimension obviously not only includes legally defined bodies such as parliament, government, parties or *national fronts*, as well as the state administration, regulations on how to nominate candidates, the electoral law, and the organizations and bodies directly involved in the electoral process. It also includes the extra-legal, informal structures of dominance—the Communist Party for instance, claiming supremacy over all other political actors—politically controlled mass media, and secret police forces all belong to this dimension. This institutional sphere of “polity” usually attracts the greatest amount of attention from researchers when it comes to elections in dictatorships.

Secondly, we have to deal with dictatorial dominance as social practice. When thousands of Party activists went from door to door during a canvassing campaign, talking to virtually every potential voter, trying to persuade him or her, harassing him or her to go to the polls, elections as an instrument of exercising power materialized on the level of face-to-face interaction. The same occurred at pre-election meetings and of course during the act of voting itself. In many cases these were highly ritualized acts of communication, but ritualized interaction is also meaningful. Face-to-face contact with a representative of the ruling Party may foster obedience, but could also be an opportunity to grumble, complain, or even to bargain. Election campaigns and the polls themselves produced thousands and thousands of occasions of direct social interaction and communication—we need to distinguish this process analytically from the institutional structure.

A third dimension is that of the “culture of voting” in a dictatorial environment. In their plea for an “historical ethnography of voting”, Romain Bertrand and his co-authors in 2007 put forward the argument that the institutionalization of the secret ballot produced different “cultures of voting” (Bertrand et al., 2007). They did not bother about elections in dictatorships, which typically did not have a secret ballot, but they also made an interesting point for our case. The question of the cultural dimension leads to the issue of the meanings different actors ascribe to the electoral

procedures and to the socio-cultural embeddedness of voting techniques and practices. Also an election without choice—to take an example—idealized the isolated, individual, rational citizen, disengaged from loyalty to the family or local commitments. Irrespective of the manipulative setting, elections were very modern political technologies which stood in sharp contrast to more traditional procedures of collective decision making. Also the meaning and relevance of the *private* and the *public*, of the *secret* and the *visible* were dramatically affected by elections which pretended to be *free* but in reality were strictly under surveillance.

A cultural history perspective on elections in dictatorships also promises to be a rewarding one because the stability and legitimacy of political institutions are created not least by symbolic representation (Stollberg-Rilinger 2005; 2008; Chartier 1988; Vorländer 2005; Biefang 2009). Although historians were inspired by the *cultural turn* of the recent decades, and developed new areas of research within an extended concept of politics as a socially and discursively produced practice, research into elections has remained relatively untouched by this. At the most one will find examples in studies on the 18th and 19th century—for example, in the innovative work of Frank O’Gorman, who investigated the symbolic dimension of elections in England (O’Gorman 1989, 1992, 2000; see also Vernon 1993; Bensel 2004). Also inspiring is the work carried out in Early Modern Studies. In view of the completely different electoral practices in the pre-modern period, research on this period developed a much broader understanding of the issue, and questions relating to materiality and performance were integrated into the analysis much earlier (Stollberg-Rilinger 2001). Although cultural history approaches have been employed in the analysis of elections in the 19th and 20th centuries by authors such as Malcolm Crook or Thomas Mergel, they have not yet been used to analyze the features of elections without choice (Crook and Crook 2007; Bensel 2004; Anderson 2000; Kühne 1994; Mergel 2010; 2005).

The advantages of employing a cultural history approach are threefold: first of all, a “cultural” and “historical-ethnographic” approach can lead to a certain level of “alienation”. Thus, rather than simply judging elections held in dictatorships against the western-democratic standard paradigm, and thereby condemning them, we are led to question their system-specific function and the significance ascribed to them by the different participating actors. This draws attention to the question as to whether all elections, including those taking place within a liberal-democratic context, in fact

always contain elements of discipline. Thus, individual, secret ballots can be seen as de-legitimizing alternative forms of collective political expression such as demonstrations, petitions, street protests, or the traditional *charivari* (Bertrand et al., 2007b, 12). A more detached approach also provokes the question as to why dictators, who believed in a whole new world, fell back on the western-democratic *Australian Ballot*, adopting its procedures such as uniform ballot papers, ballot boxes, voting booths etc., and did not use corporate forms of voting systems or indeed open acclamation.

These considerations lead to the second point in favor of using a cultural history approach, namely that it facilitates the assessing of elections and voting from the viewpoint of performance and materiality. The fact that on election day almost one hundred per cent of the electorate made their way to the polls was a powerful symbol of consensus and demonstrative proof of loyalty, even if many only did so reluctantly and involuntarily. The interpretation of elections as a ritual opens up a view on the way dictatorial systems function because “rituals assert normative standards of belief and behavior and thus the boundaries of what may be deemed socially and politically acceptable” (O’Gorman 2000, 164; see also Edelman 1964; Land 1981; Rytlewski and Kraa 1987; Bizeul 2000; Crewe 2006). Looking at it in terms of materiality, however, it becomes clear to what extent power is exercised, distributed or denied by means of ballot papers and the ballot box. Ballot papers or voting booths may indeed be constructed by people and represent social value systems, but to refer to Latour’s terminology, they can also be analyzed as “actants”, which develop their own dynamics (Latour 1995, 14; see also Schatzki 2003, 89).

The inclusion of materiality and technology into the approach can be linked to Foucault’s concept of power, which then leads to the third point in favor of a cultural history approach. As with Latour, in Foucault’s theory material objects are allocated a role in social practices: architecture, machines, bodies, technology or the gaze can create power relations (Foucault 1977). This complex concept of power also includes the observation of interaction from *above* and *below*. Therefore, power is to be interpreted as social interactions among those who rule, as well as between the rulers and the ruled, between discourses, objects and structures. For all the importance that political pressure and coercion played in the elections in dictatorships, they were productions whose impact was due to the fact that all the participants played the roles to which they had been allocated.

Fields of Study

From these initial considerations, three different research areas can be identified which thematize the two-way interaction between the ruling powers and the population, albeit in different ways. In the following, these three areas will be linked to empirical observations and theoretical deliberations. The first relates to the legitimizing effect of the elections, the second to their disciplinary function, and the third to how the electorate reacted to the imposition of elections without choice.

Legitimization and Ambivalent Modernity

Elections should also serve to legitimize authority in dictatorships. They are suitable for this task because first of all, unlike almost any other *political technology* they symbolize modernity. Since the “first wave” of democratization (Huntington), they have become an indispensable prerequisite if a state wishes to present itself as *modern*. Already in the 19th century, and then after the First World War, in the perception of most of the political public, elections and democracy became linked to *modernity*, the *cultural state*, and *civility* (Bryce 1921, 3–14; Kaisenberg 1930, 161 f.; see also Brandt 1998, 68; Lipset and Lakin 2004). Even the anti-liberal, totalitarian systems could not avoid this logic and connected their official master narrative of unity between people, state, and ruling Party to the claim that this unity was manifested in elections and plebiscites.

The orientation towards western symbols of modernity went so far that dictatorships as a rule maintained the complex system of the *Australian Ballot* or even, as was the case with Stalin, introduced it for the first time. When Stalin established the new Soviet constitution with its general, equal, direct and secret voting system, the effect this step had overseas played an important role in his calculations (Getty 1991, 19; see also the article by Merl). In fact Stalin’s constitution and its apparently *modern* electoral system was met with euphoria among some western intellectuals (see Smith; Bayerlein 2009). Theoretically the constitution meant universal suffrage—for each worker, peasant and Muslim woman in the huge domain of the Soviet Union, and even for the clergy who had been disenfranchised after the revolution. Andrei Vyshinskii (1883–1954), the infamous chief pro-

secutor in the Moscow show trials of 1936–1938, pointedly described this claim to modernity as follows:

“Never in a single country did the people manifest such activity in elections as did the Soviet people. Never has any capitalist country known, nor can it know, such a high percentage of those participating in voting as did the USSR. The Soviet election system under the Stalin Constitution and the elections of Supreme Soviets have shown the entire world once again that Soviet democracy is the authentic sovereignty of the people of which the best minds of mankind have dreamed” (quoted from Smith in this volume).

Even the Italian Fascists also celebrated themselves as having the most modern form of popular government: the fascist minister and follower of Mussolini, Giuseppe Bottai (1895–1959), asserted that Fascism would be more democratic than all the traditional democracies because it had eliminated the distinction between the elite and the masses. The influential newspaper *Corriere della Sera* declared in 1939 that: “the fascist regime is the most democratic regime that exists because it has *total* consensus” (quoted from Corner in this volume).

Secondly, in addition to their meaning as a *symbol* of modernity, the political *technology* of general and equal elections was able to contribute towards the loosening of traditional connections and individual loyalties, despite all the dictatorial limitations. It was also able to establish the concept of individual citizenship and legitimize central state power. This factor is mainly seen in countries that had no electoral tradition that predated dictatorship, such as the Soviet Union. As we can see in 19th century Western countries and in the case of contemporary China, un-free elections could also have modernizing effects (Lu and Shi 2009; Anderson 2000; Arsenschek 2003; Bensel 2004). Like elections that take place under democratic conditions, non-choice elections are based on the model of an individual, equal citizen, who takes part in public affairs by using his or her right to vote. In societies without a tradition of universal and free suffrage this modern political technology—even in its non-democratic version—could marginalize and de-legitimize traditional patterns of inequality, local mutualism, tribal loyalty and collectivism (Goldman 2007; Gross 1986). The introduction of female suffrage in the Muslim territories of the USSR probably had a modernizing effect, irrespective of its non-democratic character.

The third aspect is that dictatorial regimes were able to confer increased legitimacy upon themselves by maintaining that they were upholding exist-

ing electoral rules and procedures. In Italy and Germany before the Fascists and National Socialists established their regimes there had been a long tradition of elections and suffrage stretching back to the 19th century. Over several decades the population had been able to gain experience of this political technology with the result that elections belonged to the *normal* and *necessary* elements of politics which could only be changed with great difficulty (Bryce 1921, 46; Kühne 1998, 59). Under these circumstances, the abolition of suffrage, or even a fundamental modification of it, would have endangered the claims to legitimacy of the regime. The German National Socialists, who were at great pains to achieve the appearance of legality in the establishment of their dictatorship, may well have destroyed the democratic content and the fundamental rights contained within the *Weimar* constitution, but they retained the *Reichstag* elections and turned them into an instrument for the staging of *Führer* plebiscites (Ormland and Urban, this volume). Even in the Soviet Occupation Zone the *Sowjetische Militäradministration* and German Communists at first allowed competitive regional elections in a concerted effort to legitimize the conversion of the political system. Shortly afterwards, however, these elections were transformed into a single-list system with some pseudo-pluralist elements (Bienert 2008; Kloth 2000, 75–95; see Richter in this volume).

A fourth aspect is that the potential legitimizing power of dictatorial elections depended not only on the historical context but also on their tactical deployment by governments. Hitler, for example, staged plebiscites during the 1930s in close connection to successful political coups, and thereby strengthened the general sense of euphoria. Stalin launched the new constitution of 1936 and the new universal suffrage in 1937 during the darkest years of mass terror, and thus focussed attention on the apparent modernization potential of Communism. In post-Yalta Europe after 1945 free elections became a test case for self-determination and immediately a crucial Cold War issue (Wright 1961).

The fifth aspect is the question of whether elections in dictatorships contributed to the legitimization of power, taking the context of the election campaigns into consideration—campaigns that the communist regimes in particular put much effort into staging, and which almost became more important than the act of voting itself (Ó Beacháin, and Bohn in this volume; Dietrich 1966, 816). In countless election meetings a majority of the electorate was addressed. This was, without doubt, a rather asymmetric form of communication in which the ruling Party put much

effort into preaching its ideology. Indeed these meetings sometimes provided the opportunity to express dissatisfaction and put forward complaints, even to the point of becoming informal negotiation processes (see the article by Richter; Nohlen 2009, 36). However, they were primarily part of a huge mobilization process in which many thousands of Party members and functionaries were able to demonstrate their enthusiasm and loyalty, and thus became active participants in the political performance. As is the case with other forms of mass mobilization such as political celebrations, Party conventions, and demonstrations, election campaigns activated the rank and file of the ruling Party and gave them a feeling of importance as well as a sense of being closely connected to the regime.

The sixth question is to what extent the notorious approval rates of almost 100 per cent of the votes were really able to contribute to the legitimization of power. Of course, official propaganda always celebrated such results as the overwhelming affirmation of the regime. However, in the end the results of a non-competitive election say little about whether the citizens actually regard their government as legitimate. Election results with approval rates of 99 or 100 per cent are not only implausible, but they also suffer from a kind of performative self-contradiction since they signal complete consensus even though modern electoral technology is supposed to guarantee *individual* voting that is detached from collective ties. Indeed, one can regard elections as a symbolic representation of the postulated unity of Party, state and people, but they tell us little about the degree to which the population believed in their legitimacy. Rather, they are an indicator of conformism and the extent to which the population was prepared to take part in a ritual demonstration of loyalty. In this respect, this would concord with the thesis of Zaslavsky and Brym who argue with respect to the Soviet Union that: “Elections buttress the regime—not by legitimizing it, but by prompting the population to show that the *illegitimacy* of its ‘democratic’ practice has been accepted and that no action to undermine it will be forthcoming” (Zaslavsky and Brym, 1978, 371).

Consensus und Discipline

Even under democratic, constitutional conditions in which elections are a credible instrument of political participation, they nevertheless have elements of discipline. This is true, on the one hand, in the sense that the

establishment of elections means that non-institutionalized forms of protest and representation lose their legitimacy (Bertrand et al., 2007b, 12). On the other hand, the technology of the modern electoral process promotes the rationalization of political forms of articulation and demands from the electorate a controlled, disciplined behavior: they have to accept the electoral procedure and follow the strict time frame of the election process. The registration of the electorate and the control of their franchise depend on reliable identification and recording processes. It is no coincidence that modern suffrage has become more widespread at the same time as “the standardizing omnipotence of bureaucracy” (Geisthövel 2008, 25). There is also a close link between literacy and suffrage, and in the past illiterate sections of the population were often either in effect, or sometimes also legally excluded from elections (Bertrand et al. 2007 b, 11). The extent to which elections and suffrage were used to exclude whole groups of people can be seen in the long history of the struggle for universal and equal suffrage. In many countries it was not until well into the 20th century that voting restrictions based on class, wealth, occupation, education, religion, race, and gender were finally abolished and the political rights of citizens were extended to all (Marshall 1964). The right to vote created the disciplined citizen, who in voting demonstrated his or her belief in legitimacy and their membership of the political community. Those in the 19th century who were of a liberal mindset saw suffrage as having an integrating and disciplinary effect. The New York politician Henry Ward Beecher declared, for example, in the 1860s that “to have an ignorant class voting is dangerous [...]; but to have an ignorant class and not have them voting, is a great deal more dangerous” (quoted in Wilder 2000, 79).

However, even if the technology of elections has always been connected with elements of behavioral discipline, in 20th century dictatorships this assumed a completely new quality and became one of its main functions. Regimes of both the right and left took advantage of one of the constitutive characteristics of modern electoral technology, namely the public organization of the elections while at the same time systematically annulling the corresponding confidentiality of the individual act of voting. Thus, since participation in an election without choice was public and became conventionalized as the duty of a citizen, elections were easily able to be made into a litmus test of obedience (Zaslavsky and Brym 1978, 368; Hermet 1978 b, 15). As Paul Corner highlights in his article in this volume, the disciplinary effect of the election did not depend on the actual opinion

of the voters, but rather on their public cooperation: “Political conviction took second place to *public* behavior. What was important was that the individual had to *be seen* to be part of the collective effort; inner thoughts were less important.” The Fascists merely expected everyone to behave as if they believed in Fascism—even if this was not the case. What was important was “*visible* manifestations of conformity with the common purpose” (Corner). Therefore, the ruling Party and the state authorities put a huge amount of effort into getting the electorate to the ballot box. In the GDR, for example, inquiries were carried out before the elections to ascertain who was likely to refuse to vote or would use the voting booth. In individual and group discussions those citizens who were regarded as suspect, such as the clergy, would be persuaded and pressed into going to vote—sometimes by exerting pressure, but sometimes by using incentives (see Richter in this volume). Jan T. Gross has interpreted the forced participation in the first Soviet elections in occupied East Poland in October 1939 as a public humiliation ritual that was designed to have a long-term damaging effect on the self-respect of the people as well as their belief in others:

“In such a spectacle we are all shown to each other engaged in an act of betrayal of our own beliefs for fear of sanction. What expectations of loyalty can one hold from such tainted prospective associates? And then, in the end, nobody can be sure who was in earnest, or to what degree. After the October elections the overwhelming majority of the inhabitants of the Western Ukraine and Western Belorussia had lost their innocence. They had made a contribution. They were, as of then, implicated. For the only interpretation which makes sense of the otherwise absurd herding of the people into pre-election meetings and then voting booths, lies in the recognition that Soviet authorities never sought *engagement* from the population in their custody or *electio* or *acclamatio*, only complicity.” (Gross 1986, 29).

Despite the moral tone of the language, this is an important observation that can explain why the grotesque approval rates of 99 per cent despite their implausibility had the effect of greatly stabilizing the system. In his study on “Private Truths, Public Lies” Timur Kuran has analyzed this as “preference falsification”, and David T. Smith has followed this up with his study on elections in the *post-totalitarian* Soviet Union (Kuran 1995; Smith 2006). A picture of general approval was nevertheless generated because citizens whose private opinion did not concur with the politics of the regime still signaled conformity in the context of the public ritual of the elections in order not to be conspicuous and thus attract sanctions.

This public impression in turn motivated other people to also behave in a conformist manner. “Thus the populace itself perpetuated Communism” (Smith 2006, 19).

Bottom-Up Communication: Loyalty and Dissent

Even if voters had no real opportunity to participate, they usually had some options to act: they could or could not take part in election meetings, go to the polls, enter the voting booth, cast their vote. The voters had more or less three options: active acceptance combined with an inner identification, passive acceptance or open rejection.

Active acceptance and a huge willingness to identify with the regime can be seen in the example of National Socialist Germany when the 1933 November elections reflected the euphoria of large sections of the German population in the wake of the successful seizure of power by the National Socialist movement. The Soviet elections also show indications of an inner willingness to comply on behalf of some parts of the electorate—for example, when conformist citizens used the ballot papers to write down patriotic slogans or hymns to the Soviet Union (Carson 1955, 75; see Merl and Bohn in this volume). Even if it is very difficult to assess how widespread and representative such expressions were, it seems as if in this respect there was a significant difference between *autochthonous* dictatorships of National Socialist Germany and the Soviet Union, and regimes that were established by means of Soviet external pressure.

As a rule, the majority of voters completed the state ceremony of the election as designated by the authorities: they voted for the nominated candidates on the single-list, put the ballot paper into the ballot box without changing it and without using the voting booths, which had been set up as a matter of pro forma (Dietrich 1966, 816; Bohn, 10 and 17, this volume; Bienert 2008). It was a similar story with respect to the plebiscites that were held in Fascist Italy and National Socialist Germany. Indeed, the voters in this context did formally have the choice of ticking “yes” or “no”, or in Italy they could either put the “yes” slip in the national colors of Italy or the gray “no” paper into the see-through ballot box in full public view (see Fimiani in this volume). The barrage of propaganda, scare tactics, and public pressure that surrounded the whole staging of the elections, as well

as the above-mentioned mechanisms for *preference falsification* all ensured that the vast majority of voters participated and conformed (Ó Beacháin in this volume; Jacobs 1970, 69; Gross 1986, 27; Lewis 1990, 91).

Antipathy or indifference was not so much reflected in dissenting votes or demonstrative abstaining from voting, but rather in complacency and uncertainty with respect to elections without choice. For example, a study showed that in Poland in 1958 only four per cent of the population were familiar with the voting procedure. Even after the 1973 elections twenty per cent of Polish voters did not know which candidates had been elected for which political committees. In addition, the voters had to constantly face the fact that the election results could be manipulated as required. Even if such falsifications were not widely necessary in light of the pressures on the population (Lewis 1990, 91), the knowledge that manipulation could take place was both demotivating and demoralizing (Drygalski and Kwasniewski 1990, 308; Yurchak 2006, 15–17; Jacobs 1991, 186; see in this volume Tsipursky, Merl and Ó Beacháin). Thus dictatorial elections promoted political passivity, indifference and cynicism—a fundamental attitude that certainly made it easier for the post-communist states to establish new forms of electoral authoritarianism (see in this volume Ó Beacháin; on political apathy see Nohlen 2009, 28).

Open rejection of the elections and non-conformist behavior, the third option open to the electorate, always remained the exception. This was not only as a result of pressure from above and the paralyzing perception that all others were publicly participating. The pressure to conform that arises from peers, colleagues, and neighbors should not be underestimated—adaptation, subordination and integration into the *collective* or the *community of the people* were key values while individualism and *Eigensinn* (Alf Lüdtke, see Lindenberger 1999) were frowned upon. Whoever refused to take part in the elections disrupted the regulated course of events. In Socialism a non-voter or voting booth user could, under certain circumstances, provoke the punishment of his shop floor brigade or housing collective in that he or she put the brigade's premium or the renovation of the house at risk (see Tsipursky in this volume). Non-voters demonstratively positioned themselves outside society. Even if someone only wanted to criticize the elections, they would quickly be labeled as anti-social and a suspected oppositionist. Those who disapproved of the voting ritual nevertheless took part in order not to be excluded from society. As a rule, non-voters

were well-known, self-confident outsiders who no longer expected anything from society and who openly rejected it.

Despite these factors, the infamous 99 per cent results were not seen immediately, nor were they universal. On the one hand, there were differences among the regimes. It was the communist dictatorships in the Soviet sphere of power that placed a particularly high value on almost complete approval at the polls. Although it is also the case that elections held in Fascist Italy, National Socialist Germany and more recently those held in China on a local level saw participation and approval rates that would be unthinkable in western liberal democracies. Nevertheless, there were also results that were under the 90 per cent level (Jacobs 1991, 187; see Lu and Shi 1999; Fimiani, Corner, and Omland in this volume). The *totalitarian* 99 per cent did not only depend on the specific political traditions, the electoral politics of the regime and the relative insularity of the Soviet empire. They were also the result of a longer process of acclimatization and the successive implementation of the demand for loyalty from those in power (see Ó Beacháin and Merl in this volume). During the first few years of the Soviet Union, in the countryside only about a quarter of the electorate went to the polls. In contrast to the modern technology of central state-organized elections, in the villages there initially continued to be a “patriarchal oral culture of village politics” (Figs 1988, 26). Before 1920, when a national campaign was started to increase the political activities of women, female participation in elections in the Soviet Union was more the exception than the rule (Radkey 1989; Figs 1988).

Democratic electoral traditions could also have an inhibitory function: in the large industrial cities in Northern Italy, where there was a long history of democracy, under the Fascists up to 18 per cent of the electorate did not vote or voted “no” (Fimiani, 16; Corner, 10). Also, in East Germany after 1945 there were significant levels of “no” votes with respect to single-lists (Bienert 2008). In Czechoslovakia the workforce, which was familiar with democracy, at first did not resign itself to letting its vote be dictated by the Party and maintained a “stubborn localism” (Heumos in this volume).

Lastly, one should not lose sight of the importance of the micro-politics of the elections. They show once again that elections under dictatorships were not only instruments of the top-down exercise of power, but also to a certain extent served as means of communication between the ruling powers and society. In the Soviet Union many voters used the ballot

paper as a type of petition, and wrote down their worries, complaints and wishes (Merl and Bohn). They did not do this, for the most part, in order to articulate their fundamental rejection of the system, but rather in the hope of achieving a concrete improvement in their living standards.

The functionaries of the Communist Party responded to these concerns in their election meetings or in individual conversations. In the later years of the GDR, they hugely concerned themselves with potential non-voters, and had *election discussions* with them in order to encourage them to vote. These discussions often centered on concrete wishes. In a rather crude form of haggling, voters were presented with trade-offs in exchange for their votes if they expressed dissatisfaction about their housing, working conditions or lack of supplies. While such individual discussions were reserved for possible non-voters, the normal citizens could have their say at the public election meetings that were held throughout the country during election campaigns. At these the citizens could present the candidates with *election contracts* in which they demanded new shopping facilities or reminded them that a building needed renovating. The candidates could then accept these requests if they could be fulfilled within the Party's plan (Merl 2007; Richter 2009, 283–295). It was not only pressure and propaganda that ensured a high rate of participation—local negotiations also played a part. Along with petitions, election campaigns belonged to the communication channels used for exchanges between the ruling and the ruled on a local, micro-political level. However, it was by no means close to being political participation on an effective level.

Most of the articles in this volume were first presented and discussed at a conference on Elections under 20th century Dictatorships, which took place in 2009 at the University of Cologne. The editors would like to thank the *Faculty of Arts and Humanities* as well as the *Center for Comparative European Studies* for their financial and organizational support, as well as Miryam Marthiensen and Felix Kramer for their invaluable help in organizing the conference and in the editing of this book. Many grateful thanks are also due to the Fritz Thyssen Research Foundation (*Fritz-Thyssen-Stiftung für Wissenschaftsförderung*), as well as the Federal Foundation for the Reappraisal of the SED Dictatorship (*Bundesstiftung zur Aufarbeitung der SED-Diktatur*). Without their generous financial support neither the conference nor the publication of this book would have been possible.

Bibliography

- Aly, Götz (2005). *Hitlers Volksstaat. Raub, Rassenkrieg und nationaler Sozialismus*. Frankfurt: S. Fischer.
- Anderson, Margret L. (2000). *Practicing Democracy. Elections and Political Culture in Imperial Germany*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Arendt, Hannah (1951). *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. New York: Brace & Company.
- Arsenschek, Robert (2003). *Der Kampf um die Wahlfreiheit im Kaiserreich. Zur parlamentarischen Wahlprüfung und politischen Realität der Reichstagswahlen 1871–1914*. Düsseldorf: Droste.
- Bayerlein, Bernhard H. (2009). Abschied von einem Mythos. Die UdSSR, die Komintern und der Antifaschismus 1930–1941. *Osteuropa*, 59, 125–48.
- Bensel, Richard Franklin (2004). *The American Ballot Box in the Mid-Nineteenth Century*. Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge University Press.
- Bertrand, Romain, Jean-Louis Briquet, and Peter Pels (eds.). (2007). *Cultures of Voting. The Hidden History of the Secret Ballot*. London: Hurst & Co.
- Jean-Louis Briquet, and Peter Pels (2007). Towards a Historical Ethnography of Voting. In *ibid.* (eds.). *Cultures of Voting. The Hidden History of the Secret Ballot*, 1–15. London: Hurst & Co.
- Bessel, Richard and Ralph Jessen (eds.). (1996). *Die Grenzen der Diktatur. Staat und Gesellschaft in der DDR*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- Biefang, Andreas (2009). *Die andere Seite der Macht. Reichstag und Öffentlichkeit im "System Bismarck" 1871–1890*. Düsseldorf: Droste.
- Bienert, Michael (2008). Wie demokratisch muss es aussehen? Die SED und die Inszenierung der "Volkswahlen" 1950. In Susanne Muhle et al. (eds.). *Die DDR im Blick. Ein zeithistorisches Lesebuch*, 19–28. Berlin: Metropol.
- Bizeul, Yves (ed.). (2000). *Politische Mythen und Rituale in Deutschland, Frankreich und Polen*. Berlin: Duncker & Humblot.
- Brandt, Hartwig (1998). *Der lange Weg in die demokratische Moderne. Deutsche Verfassungsgeschichte von 1800 bis 1945*. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft.
- Broßmann, Beate (1999). Die Überprüfung der Kommunalwahlergebnisse 1989 in Leipzig. In Bernd Gehrke and Wolfgang Rüdtenklau (eds.). *"...das war doch nicht unsere Alternative."* *DDR-Oppositionelle zehn Jahre nach der Wende*, 123–34. Münster: Westfälisches Dampfboot.
- Bryce, James (1921). *Modern Democracies, 2 volumes*. London: Macmillan.
- Carson, George Barr (1955). *Electoral Practices in the USSR*. New York: Praeger.
- Chartier, Roger (1988). *Cultural History: Between Practices and Representations*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
- Childers, Thomas (1983). *The Nazi Voters. The Social Foundations of Fascism in Germany. 1919–1933*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Chrystal, William G. (1975). Nazi Party Election Films, 1927–1938. *Cinema Journal*, 15, 1, 29–47.

- Corner, Paul (ed.). (2009). *Popular Opinion in Totalitarian Regimes: Fascism, Nazism, Communism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Creuzberger, Stefan (1999). The Soviet Military Administration and East German Elections, Autumn 1946. *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 45, 1, 89–98.
- Crewe, Emma and Marion G. Müller (ed.). (2006). *Rituals in Parliaments: Political, Anthropological and Historical Perspectives on Europe and the United States*. Frankfurt, New York: Peter Lang.
- Crook, Malcolm and Tom Crook (2007). The Advent of the Secret Ballot in Britain and France, 1789–1914: From Public Assembly to Private Compartment. *History*, 92, 449–71.
- Dal Lago, Paola (1999). *Verso il regime totalitario: il plebiscito fascista del 1929*, Padova: Cleup.
- Dietrich, Nils (1966). Wahlen, Wahlsysteme. In Claus Dieter Kerning et al. (eds.). *Sowjetsystem und demokratische Gesellschaft. Eine vergleichende Enzyklopädie*, vol. 1, 805–19. Freiburg: Herder.
- Dinka, Frank and Max J. Skidmore (1973). The Functions of Communist One-Party Elections: The Case of Czechoslovakia, 1971. *Political Science Quarterly*, 88, 395–422.
- Drygalski, Jerzy and Jacek Kwasniewski (1990). No-Choice Elections. *Soviet Studies*, 42, 295–315.
- Edelman, Murray (1964). *The Symbolic Uses of Politics*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Falter, Jürgen W. (1991). *Hitlers Wähler*. Munich. C.H. Beck.
- Fimiani, Enzo (1997). La legittimazione plebiscitaria nel fascismo e nel nazional-socialismo. Un'interpretazione comparata. *Quaderni storici*, 94, 183–224.
- Figes, Orlando (1988). The Village and “Volost” Soviet Elections of 1919. *Soviet Studies*, 40, 1, 21–45.
- Fitzpatrick, Sheila (1999). *Everyday Stalinism, Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Foucault, Michel (1977). *Der Wille zum Wissen*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.
- (1977). *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison*. New York: Random House.
- Frese, Matthias (1991). *Betriebspolitik im “Dritten Reich”. Deutsche Arbeitsfront, Unternehmer und Staatsbürokratie in der westdeutschen Großindustrie 1933–1939*. Paderborn: Schöningh.
- Friedgut, Theodore H. (1979). *Political Participation in the USSR*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Geisthövel, Alexa (2008). *Restauration und Vormärz 1815–1847*. Paderborn: Schöningh.
- Gellately, Robert (2001). *Backing Hitler. Consent and Coercion in Nazi Germany*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Getty, J. Arch (1991). State and Society under Stalin: Constitutions and Elections in the 1930s. *Slavic Review*, 50, 1, 18–35.
- Gilson, Jerome (1968). Soviet Elections as a Measure of Dissent: The Missing One Percent. *American Political Science Review*, 62, 3, 814–26.

- Goldman, Wendy Z. (2007). *Terror and Democracy in the Age of Stalin. The Social Dynamics of Repression*. Cambridge, Mass: Cambridge University Press.
- Grand, Stephen R. (2011). *Starting in Egypt: The Fourth Wave of Democratization?*, May 29, 2011, <http://www.brookings.edu/opinions/2011/0210egyptdemocracygrand.aspx>.
- Gross, Jan T. (1986). The First Soviet Sponsored Elections in Eastern Europe. *East European Politics and Societies*, 1, 4, 4–29.
- Hahn, Jeffrey W. (1988). *Soviet Grassroots. Citizen Participation in Local Soviet Government*, London: Tauris.
- Haslinger, Peter (2004). Loyalität in Grenzregionen. Methodische Überlegungen am Beispiel der Südslowakei nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg. In Martin Schulze Wessel (ed.). *Loyalitäten in der Tschechoslowakischen Republik 1918–1938. Politische, nationale und kulturelle Zugehörigkeiten*, 45–60. Munich: Oldenbourg.
- Helf, Garvin and Jeffrey Hahn (1992). Old Dogs and New Tricks: Party Elites in the Russian Regional Elections of 1990. *Slavic Review*, 51, 3, 511–30.
- Hermet, Guy (1978). State-Controlled Elections: a Framework. In Guy Hermet et al. (eds.). *Elections Without Choice*, 1–17. London: McMillan.
- et al. (eds.). (1978). *Elections Without Choice*, London: McMillan.
- Herz, Andrea (2004). *Wahl und Wahlbetrug im Mai 1989: DDR-Kommunalwahlen im Thüringer Raum*. Erfurt: Landesbeauftragten für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen DDR.
- Howard, Marc Morjé and Philip G. Roessler (2006). Liberalizing Electoral Outcomes in Competitive Authoritarian regimes. *American Journal of Political Science*, 50, 2, 365–81.
- Huntington, Samuel P. (1991). *The Third Wave. Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Jacobs, Everet M. (1970). Soviet Local Elections: What They Are, And What They Are Not. *Soviet Studies*, 22, 7, 61–76.
- Jacobs, J. Bruce (1991). Elections in China. *Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, 25, 171–99.
- Jędruch, Jacek (1982). *Constitutions, Elections and Legislatures of Poland, 1493–1977: a Guide to their History*. Washington: University Press of America.
- Jessen, Ralph (1995). Die Gesellschaft im Staatssozialismus. Probleme einer Sozialgeschichte der DDR. *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 21, 96–110.
- Jung, Otmar (1995). *Plebiszīt und Diktatur: die Volksabstimmungen der Nationalsozialisten. Die Fälle "Austritt aus dem Völkerbund" (1933), "Staatsüberhaupt" (1934) und "Anschluß Österreichs" (1938)*, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.
- (1998). Wahlen und Abstimmungen im Dritten Reich 1933–1938. In Eckhard Jesse and Konrad Löw (eds.). *Wahlen in Deutschland*, 69–98. Berlin: Duncker & Humblot.
- Kaisenberg, Georg (1930). Artikel 125. Wahlfreiheit und Wahlgeheimnis. In Hans Carl Nipperdey (ed.). *Die Grundrechte und Grundpflichten der Reichsverfassung. Kom-*

- mentar zum zweiten Teil der Reichsverfassung, 2nd vol.*, Art. 118–42, 161–75. Berlin: Reimar Hobbing Verlag.
- Karklins, Rasma (1986). Soviet Elections Revisited: Voter Abstention in Noncompetitive Voting. *American Political Science Review*, 80, 2, 449–69.
- Kloth, Hans-Michael (2000). *Vom "Zettelfalten" zum freien Wählen. Die Demokratisierung der DDR 1989/90 und die "Wahlfrage"*. Berlin: Ch. Links.
- Kocka, Jürgen (1999). Die DDR—eine moderne Diktatur? Überlegungen zur Begriffswahl. In Michael Grüttner et al (eds.). *Geschichte und Emanzipation. Festschrift für Reinhard Rürup*, 540–53. Frankfurt: Campus.
- Kühne, Thomas (1994). *Dreiklassenwahlrecht und Wahlkultur in Preußen: 1867–1914. Landtagswahlen zwischen korporativer Tradition und politischem Massenmarkt*. Düsseldorf: Droste.
- (1998). Historische Wahlforschung in der Erweiterung, in: Simone Lässig et al. (eds.). *Modernisierung und Region im wilhelminischen Deutschland. Wahlen, Wahlrecht und Politische Kultur*, 39–67. 2nd edition. Bielefeld: Verlag für Regionalgeschichte.
- Kuran, Timur (1995). *Private Truths, Public Lies: The Social Consequences of Preference Falsification*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.
- Latour, Bruno (1995). *Wir sind nie modern gewesen. Versuch einer symmetrischen Anthropologie*. Berlin: Akademie Verlag.
- Lane, Christel (1981). *The Rites of Rulers. Ritual in Industrial Society—The Soviet Case*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.
- Levitsky, Steven and Lucan A. Way (2010). *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes after the Cold War*, New York: Cambridge University Press.
- and Lucan A Way (2002). Elections without Democracy: The Rise of Competitive Authoritarianism. *Journal of Democracy*, 13, 2, 51–65.
- Lewis, Paul (1990). Non-Competitive Elections and Regime Change. Poland 1989. *Parliamentary Affairs*, 43, 1, 90–107.
- Lindberg, Staffan (2009). *Democratization by Elections: a New Mode of transition*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.
- Lindenberger, Thomas (ed.) (1999). *Herrschaft und Eigen-Sinn in der Diktatur*. Cologne: Böhlau.
- Linz, Juan J. (2000). *Totalitarian and authoritarian regimes*. Boulder, Co: Lynne Rienner.
- (1975). Totalitarian and Authoritarian regimes. In Fred I. Greenstein and Nelson W. Polsby (eds.). *Handbook of Political Science, vol. 3: Macropolitical Theory*, 175–411. Reading: Addison-Wesley.
- Lipset, Seymour Martin and Jason M. Lakin (2004). *The Democratic Century*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.
- and Stein Rokkan (eds.). (1967). *Party Systems and Voter Alignments: Cross-National Perspectives*. New York: Free Press.
- Löw, Konrad (1998). Wahlen und Abstimmungen in der SBZ und in der DDR. In Eckhard Jesse and Konrad Löw (eds.). *Wahlen in Deutschland*, 99–116. Berlin: Duncker & Humblot.

- Lu, Jie and Tianjian Shi (2009). Political Experience: A Missing Variable in the Study of Political Transformation. *Comparative Politics*, 42, 1, 103–120.
- Marshall, Thomas Humphrey (1964). *Class, Citizenship, and Social Development*. New York: Doubleday.
- Mergel, Thomas (2002). Überlegungen zu einer Kulturgeschichte der Politik. *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 29, 574–606.
- (2010). *Propaganda nach Hitler. Eine Kulturgeschichte des Wahlkampfes in der Bundesrepublik 1949–1990*. Göttingen: Wallstein.
- (2005). Die Wahlkabine. In Alexa Geisthövel and Habbo Knoch (eds.). *Orte der Moderne. Erfahrungswelten des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts*, 335–44. Frankfurt: Campus.
- (2005). Wahlkampfgeschichte als Kulturgeschichte. Konzeptionelle Überlegungen und empirische Beispiele. In Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger (ed.). *Was heißt Kulturgeschichte des Politischen?*, 355–76. Berlin: Duncker & Humboldt.
- Merl, Stephan (2007). Konsum in der Sowjetunion: Element der Systemstabilisierung? *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht*, 58, 9, 519–36.
- Mühlen, Patrick zur (1979). “Schlagt Hitler an der Saar?": *Abstimmungskampf, Emigration u. Widerstand im Saargebiet 1933–1935*. Bonn: Verlag neue Gesellschaft.
- Nohlen, Dieter (2009). *Wahlrecht und Parteiensystem. Zur Theorie und Empirie der Wahlsysteme*. 6th edition. Opladen: Leske und Budrich.
- O’Gorman, Frank (1989). *Voters, Patrons, and Parties. The Unreformed Electoral System of Hanoverian England 1734–1832*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- (1992). Campaign Rituals and Ceremonies: The Social Meaning of Elections in England, 1780–1860. *Past and Present*, 135, 79–115.
- (2000). Ritual Aspects of Popular Politics in England (c. 1700–1830). *Memoria y Civilización*, 3, 161–86.
- Olimat, Muhamad S. (2008). The Fourth Wave of Democratization. *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, 25, 2, 16–48.
- Omland, Frank (2008). “Auf deine Stimme kommt es an!” Die Reichstagswahl und Volksabstimmung am 12. November 1933 in Altona. *Zeitschrift des Vereins für Hamburgische Geschichte*, 94, 57–88.
- (2002): Wahlkampf, Wahlzwang, Wahlfälschung: Nationalsozialistische Volksabstimmungen und Reichstagswahlen in Kiel 1933–1938. *Mitteilungen der Gesellschaft für Kieler Stadtgeschichte*, 80, 6, 241–95.
- Onisoru, Gheorghe and Kurt W. Treptow (1998/99). The Elections of 28 March 1948: The Consolidation of the Communist Regime in Romania. *Romanian Civilization* 7(3), 37–49.
- Paul, Gerhard (1984). “Deutsche Mutter—heim zu Dir!": *Warum es misslang, Hitler an der Saar zu schlagen. Der Saarkampf 1933–1935*. Cologne: Bund-Verlag.
- Pravda, Alex (1978). Elections in Communist Party States. In Guy Hermet et al. (eds.). *Elections Without Choice*, 169–95. London: McMillan.
- Racz, Barnabas (1987). Political Participation and Developed Socialism. The Hungarian Elections of 1985. *Soviet Studies*, 39, 1, 40–62.

- Radkey, Oliver Henry (1989). *Russia Goes to the Polls: the Election to the All-Russian Constitutional Assembly, 1917*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Retallack, James (1995). Politische Kultur, Wahlkultur, Regionalgeschichte. Methodologische Überlegungen am Beispiel Sachsens und des Reiches. In Simone Lässig et al. (eds.). *Modernisierung und Region im Wilhelminischen Deutschland. Wahlen, Wahlrecht und Politische Kultur*, 15–38. Bielefeld: Verlag für Regionalgeschichte.
- Richter, Hedwig (2009). *Pietismus im Sozialismus. Die Herrnhuter Brüdergemeine in der DDR*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- Roeder, Philip G. (1989). Electoral Avoidance in the Soviet Union. *Soviet Studies*, 41, 3, 345–64.
- Rokkan, Stein (1968). Electoral Systems. In David L. Sills (ed.). *International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences*, vol. 5. New York: Macmillan.
- Roman, Peter (1987). A Preliminary Report on the October 1986 Municipal Elections in Cuba. *Socialism & Democracy*, 5, 89–102.
- (2007). Electing Cuba's National Assembly Deputies: Proposals, Selections, Nominations, and Campaigns. *European Review of Latin American & Caribbean Studies*, 82, 69–87.
- Rüther, Martin (1991). Die Vertrauensratswahlen von 1934 und 1935. *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 2, 221–64.
- Rytlewski, Ralf and Detlev Kraa (1987). Politische Rituale in der Sowjetunion und der DDR. *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, B 3, 33–48.
- Schatzki, Theodore R. (2003). *Social Practices. A Wittgensteinian approach to human activity and the social*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.
- Schedler, Andreas (ed.). (2006a). *Electoral Authoritarianism. The Dynamics of Unfree Competition*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.
- (2006 b). The Logic of Electoral Authoritarianism. In Andreas Schedler (ed.). *Electoral Authoritarianism. The Dynamics of Unfree Competition*, 1–23. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.
- (2002). The Menu of Manipulation. *Journal of Democracy*, 13, 2, 36–50.
- Schwedler, Jillian and Laryssa Chomiak (2006). And the Winner Is...: Authoritarian Elections in the Arab World. *Middle East Research & Information Project*, 238, 12–9.
- Smith, David T. (2006). *Elections as Instruments of Autocracy* (Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, Palmer House Hilton, Chicago, Illinois, Apr 20, 2006) unpublished manuscript, http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p138735_index.html.
- Stollberg-Rilinger, Barbara (ed.). (2001). *Vormoderne politische Verfahren*. Berlin: Duncker & Humblot.
- (ed.). (2005). *Was heißt Kulturgeschichte des Politischen?* Berlin: Duncker & Humblot.
- (2008). *Des Kaisers alte Kleider. Verfassungsgeschichte und Symbolsprache des Alten Reiches*. Munich: C. H. Beck.

- Swearer, Howard R. (1961). The Functions of Soviet Local Elections. *Midwestern Journal of Political Science*, 5, 2, 129–49.
- Tullner, Mathias (1997). *Zwischen Demokratie und Diktatur: Die Kommunalwahlen und die Wahlen zum Provinziallandtag in Sachsen-Anhalt im Jahre 1946*. Magdeburg: Landeszentrale für Politische Bildung des Landes Sachsen-Anhalt
- Urban, Markus (2007). *Die Konsensfabrik. Funktion und Wahrnehmung der NS-Reichsparteitage, 1933–1941*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- Vernon, James (1993). *Politics and the People. A study in English political culture, c. 1815–1867*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Vorländer, Hans (2005). Die Verfassung als symbolische Ordnung. Perspektiven einer kulturwissenschaftlich-institutionalistischen Verfassungstheorie. In Michael Becker and Ruth Zimmerling (eds.). *Recht und Politik*, 229–249. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag.
- Welch, David (1993). Manufacturing a Consensus: Nazi Propaganda and the Building of a “National Community” (Volksgemeinschaft). *Contemporary European History*, 2, 1, 1–15.
- White, Stephen (1985). Non-competitive Elections and National Politics: The USSR Supreme Soviet Elections of 1984. *Electoral Studies*, 4, 3, 215–29.
- Wiatr, Jerzy J. (1962). Elections and Voting Behavior in Poland. In A. Ranney (ed.), *Essays on the Behavioral Study of Politics*, 235–51. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Wilder, Craig Steven (2000). *A Covenant with Color. Race and Social Power in Brooklyn*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Wilson, Andrew (2005). *Virtual politics: Faking Democracy in the Post-Soviet World*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Wright, Theodore P. (1961). The Origins of the Free Elections Dispute in the Cold War. *The Western Political Quarterly*, 14/4, 850–64.
- Yurchak, Alexei (2006). *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More. The Last Soviet Generation*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Zaslavsky, Victor and Robert J. Brym (1978). The Functions of Elections in the USSR. *Soviet Studies*, 30, 2, 362–71.
- Zimmermann, Volker (2002). “Die Wahlen müssen schon vorher entschieden werden!” Das erste Nachkriegsjahr im Bezirk Ústí nad Labem und der Wahlsieg der kommunistischen Partei der Tschechoslowakei (1945/46). *Bohemia*, 43, 1, 1–32.
- Zollitsch, Wolfgang (1989). Die Vertrauensratswahlen von 1934 und 1935: Zum Stellenwert von Abstimmungen im “Dritten Reich” am Beispiel Krupp. *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 15, 361–81.

I Legitimacy

The Self-Staging of a Plebiscitary Dictatorship: The NS-Regime Between “Uniformed *Reichstag*”, Referendum and *Reichsparteitag*

Markus Urban

Over the past 20 years, research has increasingly focused on some aspects of National Socialist rule that had long been excluded from scholarly investigation. Based on a strict distinction between rulers and the ruled, investigations during the initial post-war decades did not give a serious account of such factors as willingness for consensus, emotional mobilization, or the effects of social promises such as that of the *Volksgemeinschaft* (people's community). Any attempt to investigate these subjects usually raised suspicion that their analysis would run the risk of being taken in by Nazi propaganda slogans, and that therefore such investigation would add nothing of interest to our knowledge.

Only recently have more and more historians tried “to use social reality as a point of departure” and to “investigate the dimensions of consent and rejection, participation and refusal, sharing sympathy with, or looking away” (Bajohr and Wildt 2009, 10). If we take up this more recent focus on *social practices* in the exercise of power we can understand that even apparently one-dimensional propaganda measures, such as elections and referendums under the conditions of a dictatorship, are legitimate objects of scholarly inquiry.

Continuity and the Expectation of Social Upheaval at the Beginning of NS Rule

In view of the turbulent political dynamics that the National Socialist seizure of power developed, especially during the first months of 1933, many observers and supporters of the NS regime at the time expected fundamental socio-political upheavals that would correspond with the character

of a national revolution. Ideas that were floated and then quickly rejected—including a new calendar that would replace the names of the months with old Germanic names—attest to the extent of change thought possible for a limited period of time. Similar expectations were held that fundamental changes would be made in the political sphere of the newly created *Führerstaat*, too. It is therefore possible to understand why, during the weeks following the break-up of all the opposition parties, consideration was also given to disbanding the NSDAP (*Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei*). After all, Hitler, in his manifesto, had originally conceived of the Party as a means for establishing the dictatorship, rather than as a long-term instrument of power. The NSDAP, however, remained intact, as did the institution of the *Reichstag*—the national parliament, which during the *Weimar Republic* had been continually defamed by National Socialists as a mere “talking shop”. Similarly, the National Socialists left women’s suffrage, which had been introduced in 1919, unscathed, even though Hitler himself had stressed that the sphere of political activity belonged exclusively to men. By way of illustration, even the request by a local mayor of the district of Moers to discontinue using electoral registers because they would not be necessary any more was rejected by his superiors (Bracher 1971, 32).

Within a short time it became evident that proclamations made during the *Weimar Republic* could no longer be taken at face value. Rather, the leading National Socialists took a pragmatic view of the hated political apparatus of the *Weimar Republic* and its various institutions, and modified them to achieve their own goals. Most initiatives, however, remained in the planning phase and were eventually abandoned because, in Hitler’s poly-cracy of administrative bodies, the decision-makers normally blocked one another’s initiatives. This was especially the case regarding the project to reform the *Reich*, which many observers expected to see at the beginning of the Third Reich, and which Interior Minister Wilhelm Frick tried to push through in the early years. An important component of the stranded *Reichsreform* would have been the formation of a Party senate that would have had an advisory function and been responsible for the election of the *Führer*’s successor (Hitler 1933, 501; Hubert 1992, 164–78). But, although a hall for the prospective sixty members had already been set aside in the Brown House in Munich, and although Hitler had even announced it publicly in September 1939, it was never actually established.

Theory and Practice of the Elections and Referenda in the Third Reich

The Experimental Phase (1933–1934): Returning to “Old Germanic Legal Forms”

Since genuine changes to constitutional law did not occur, procedures for elections and referenda in the Third Reich largely followed those established during the *Weimar Republic*, whose constitution had not been repealed, as many opponents and supporters of the new regime had expected it would be. The *Reichstag* was brought into line after a few months, as were all other state institutions. But, after the illegal arrest of the KPD (German Communist Party) representatives and the enforced self-disbandment a little later of all other parties, the newly-formed *Einheitsparlament* (Unity Parliament), in which a number of so-called “guest auditors” served alongside the National Socialist members, remained intact. Although the *Reichstag* technically retained its right to legislate, it would later become a body of mere acclamation, with Hitler using it as a public forum to announce decisions that had already been made and that would then be formally approved by the delegates in attendance. Shortly after seizing power, the new regime launched the *Gesetz über Volksabstimmung* (Plebiscite Law) of July 14, 1933—ostensibly strengthening the element of direct democracy that had already been a component of the *Weimar* constitution. The fact that a law forbidding the formation of new parties was enacted on the very same day shows clearly that the plebiscite law was first and foremost an act of National Socialist *Symbolpolitik*. Beyond a few concrete changes, such as the abolition of the quorum agreement for referenda, it was designed to demonstrate both the rejection of old-style parliamentarianism and the alleged strengthening of the popular voice in the authoritarian state.

At this stage, however, the regime was apparently determined to use the referendum as a means of legitimizing its power. The official reason given for the introduction of referenda—namely, to address the “great and moving questions concerning the entire nation in an ennobled manner using legal forms that go back to ancient Germanic times” (Uhde 1936, 47)—should not be dismissed as pure propaganda, however. For, regardless of the truth of this statement, there were conservative elites who were con-

vinced that the only solution to the failure of the *Weimar System* was a return to pre-modern forms of “democracy”.¹

The fact that the referendum was used twice within the space of a year is not surprising, for Hitler had been looking for a suitable way to demonstrate the German people’s support for the government since the summer of 1933. Finally, on November 12, 1933, a *Reichstag* election, together with a plebiscite on Germany’s withdrawal from the League of Nations, were held; and, on August 19, 1934, voters were called upon again to confirm in a plebiscite the transference of presidential power from Hindenburg, who had recently died, to Hitler. As Jung points out in his detailed analysis, the election results announced reveal the relative success of the regime, even though the numbers can have little validity given the prevailing conditions in the totalitarian state. A closer look at the results of November 1933 shows that the plebiscite with 95.1 per cent of the valid votes received nearly one million more “yes” votes than the list of the NSDAP in the *Reichstag* election held separately on the same day. Researchers consider this a great victory for the Nazi regime and an indicator of public support, despite the numerous infringements of voter independence, which made the free, equal and secret casting of votes in many cases impossible.

For example, the “right to vote” was declared a “duty to vote”, which is the reason why potential non-voters were visited at home by a *Schleppdienst* and taken to the polling station. And, as at National Socialist fundraising campaigns, small badges were given to those who had already voted, which made identifying those who had not yet done so easier. Furthermore, opponents of the regime could never be sure that the confidentiality of the ballot would be observed, since in some areas ballot papers were marked so that voters could be identified later.² Also, in many places, an attempt was made to normalize the practice of not using the polling booth to vote in, the consequence of which was that anyone who insisted on using the polling booth to preserve their anonymity attracted suspicion. For this reason, Victor Klemperer is right to view his “no” vote and his wife’s ab-

1 The former Chancellor Franz von Papen had declared months earlier that “We have learned from the Middle Ages, from institutions that have been preserved to the present day, that there are natural and real forms of democracy that have nothing to do with mass opinion, mass scourging and mass abuse”. Speech of February 24, 1933, quoted from Hubert (1992, 44).

2 Cf. also the essay by Frank Omland in this volume. Uhde’s claim that the “basic election principles (general, equal, direct, secret) had not been touched up to that point” was pure fiction in 1935 (Uhde 1936, 23).

stention as “nearly a brave deed since everybody anticipated that the confidentiality of the ballot would not be observed”.³

Nonetheless, large-scale electoral fraud does not seem to have occurred in the Third Reich, which makes it possible to compare individual election results. Thus, between the election of November 1933 and the plebiscite held nine months later, the regime’s popularity fell. In the summer of 1934, the first signs of wear and tear after the initial seizure of power began to show, and the state-sanctioned murders committed during the so-called “*Röhm-Putsch*” had created feelings of unease. In addition, the ballot following Hindenburg’s death appeared more a matter of domestic policy, even though for Hitler its primary importance lay in its impact on foreign policy, so that many voters did not see the need to present a united front to an international public. With 89.9 per cent of the valid votes cast, the regime achieved results that were more than 5 per cent less than those achieved the previous year, which was interpreted by the regime as well as by observers hostile to the regime as a failure.⁴ Thus, the National Socialist regime became very early on a victim of its own world view, a view that had absolute faith in the *mission* of its own *movement*, and that would accept no stagnation or regression. Jung is correct, therefore, in his claim that, following this negative experience, Hitler was resolved not to use this instrument for the time being (Jung 1995, 77), thereby contradicting his earlier announcement, broadcast during the “election campaign”, that a referendum would be held annually so that National Socialist rule could be legitimized by the people.⁵

Dissolution of the Concept of the Plebiscite (1935–1938)

That the plebiscite had lost some of its credibility can be seen in the fact that, in spring 1935, when the *Stresa Front*, set up by the allies of the First World War, opposed Germany’s reintroduction of conscription, there were

3 Diary entry of November 14, 1933 (Klemperer 1999, 68).

4 Goebbels made the struggle between church and state primarily responsible for this. Cf. the diary entry of August 20, 1934: “Initial results: very bad. Then better. Finally over 38 million for the *Führer*. I expected more. The Catholics failed. Rosenberg!” (Fröhlich 1998-2006).

5 *Völkischer Beobachter*, August 7, 1934. In Werner Patzelt’s terminology, this is the *legitimating junction*, which plays the most significant role in these considerations. Cf. Patzelt’s contribution in this volume.

no concrete plans to hold one. This was certainly due to the minor crises, such as the covert struggle with the church, that the regime faced at the time. Above all, the National Socialists viewed the results of the *Volkstag* elections in the Free City of Danzig, which were announced at this very time, as a cruel defeat: despite the sophisticated and expensive propaganda campaign, fewer than 60 per cent of the electorate voted for the NSDAP.⁶ Therefore, Hitler made use of the less risky, but also less spectacular, instrument of plebiscitary acclamation and convened—for the only time that year—the *Reichstag* on May 21 in the Berlin Kroll Opera House. It is apparent that his speech before the *Reichstag* on this occasion was intended to fulfill a similar function as a referendum or a *Reichstag* election: arguing that his position had already been legitimized through the earlier plebiscite,⁷ he devoted much of his speech to attacking foreign countries and to stressing once again the German will for freedom and equality. Since the National Socialists, for propaganda purposes, had moved the *Reichstag* sessions to the evening, the entire German population, and potentially also a European public, could listen to the live radio broadcast, transmitted as it was at the prime time of 8 pm.⁸ Following the two-hour speech, the members of the *Reichstag* rose to their feet, and President Göring proclaimed that the occasion signified the uniting not only of the *Reichstag* but of “the entire people today as well”.⁹

Although, from the National Socialist point of view, the crisis had been averted, since the *Stresa Front* was unable to prevent Germany’s revision of the Treaty of Versailles, Hitler resorted once again to the referendum in the following year. The opportunity presented itself in March 1936, when German troops invaded the demilitarized Rhineland and made military action—especially by France—a real possibility. In the same *Reichstag* as-

6 Cf. Goebbels’ diary entry of April 9, 1935: “Late evening Danzig results: only 60 per cent [...] Jubilation from abroad. A heavy defeat”. (Fröhlich 1998-2006). Originally the National Socialists had anticipated a two-thirds majority, which would have enabled them to make a constitutional amendment. Minister of Propaganda Goebbels even had to persuade *Ganleiter* Alfred Forster not to announce a false result of 67 per cent, which would probably have led to an escalation of the situation at this time.

7 At the outset of the speech, he referred to the fact that “with 38 million votes the German people had elected only one member of parliament, him, to be its representative”. www.reichstagsprotokolle.de/Blatt2_w9_bsb00000142_00044.html.

8 Cf. Uhde (1936, 25): “German radio broadcast this *Reichstag* session, the content of which was primarily directed at a foreign audience, at other European and non-European countries”.

9 www.reichstagsprotokolle.de/Blatt2_w9_bsb00000142_00060.html.

sembly of March 7 in which he announced the invasion, Hitler declared the *Reichstag* dissolved and proclaimed that a ballot would take place on March 29. The tactical nature of this decision is shown by the fact that the *Reichstag* was not dissolved immediately, as would have been the case in the *Weimar Republic*. Rather, Hitler scheduled the dissolution of the *Reichstag* officially for election day. Thus, any semblance of an intermediary phase was avoided, and it would have been possible—should the need have arisen—for Hitler to have convened the *Reichstag* to make a formal declaration on foreign affairs (Hubert 1992, 129). The election result was once again a great success for the NS regime, which won 98.7 per cent approval.¹⁰ A closer scrutiny reveals two radical features to this vote, however. First, the mechanism to exclude so-called *Gemeinschaftsfremde* (aliens to the community) from the group of eligible voters was already in operation, since the German Jews were no longer allowed to take part in the election.¹¹ Second, those arguing for a legalistic course within the regime found themselves increasingly on the defensive as it became known that Minister of the Interior Frick, under the directive of the Ministry of Propaganda, was no longer allowed to make a separate record of spoilt ballot papers.¹² Furthermore, the *Reichstag*, in the absence of occasions suitable for propaganda, did not convene once for a constitutive meeting during the first nine months following the election, which clearly violated the procedure stipulated in the *Reich's* constitution.

The reason why Hitler decided in March 1936 to hold a *Reichstag* election rather than a referendum can no longer be determined with certainty. More important, though, is the fact that the National Socialists themselves barely distinguished between these two modes of balloting at the time. This is evident not only from the numerous intentional and unintentional terminological muddles, which can be attributed in part to a certain secretiveness, but also from the fact that Hitler liked to take decisions at short notice.¹³ At this time also, the majority of experts in National Socialist

10 Cf. Goebbels' diary entry of March 31, 1936: "Triumph upon triumph. [...] We hadn't imagined it like this in our wildest dreams". (Fröhlich 1998-2006).

11 Through Heinrich Himmler's intervention, the inmates of concentration camps were no longer allowed to vote after 1938.

12 Goebbels' diary entry of March 31, 1936: "I am correcting a stupid legal nonsense by Frick: 'valid and invalid votes!' what a load of nonsense". (Fröhlich 1998-2006).

13 In this way Frick announced a referendum in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* on March 9, 1936. Conversely, Goebbels spoke, at least internally, in August 1934 about the impending "election", as in all of his diary entries stemming from this time. (Fröhlich 1998-2006).

constitutional law were interpreting this development as showing that there were no clear borders “between ‘election’ and ‘referendum’”, with both being “essentially one and the same” (Uhde 1936, 7; Hubert 1992, 235). Especially illuminating in this context is Gustav Uhde’s dissertation of 1935, which clearly shows that the *Gesetz über Volksabstimmung*, which was passed in July 1933, and which made possible a referendum on an “intended measure”, had already become obsolete. In reality, it was measures that had already been decided that Hitler presented to the German people in the form of a *Sachentscheidung* (substantive decision), of which in Uhde’s view the *Reichstag* election was also a part, since voters only had to respond to the single question: “Do you stand on the side of the state, which has made this personnel decision [on the unified list of candidates of the pre-selected *Reichstag* members]?” (Uhde 1936, 19). And, since the *Reichstag* was solely an institution of acclamation, Uhde was able to draw the logical conclusion that it also had in the meantime become a plebiscitary instrument: “Today the *Reichstag* has a similar task to the referendum as [...] do the people in entirety” (Ibid., 33). The fact that such developments caused not only the terminology but also the established certitudes of constitutional law to become muddled can be seen in the discussions on the topic within the academic discipline at the time. Even the established experts found it difficult to understand that, with respect to referenda, the legislation could no longer develop in the traditional manner, but rather was modified purely through ideologically-motivated legal practice.¹⁴

Given the rapid dissolution of the concept of the plebiscite, it also does not seem appropriate to speak, as Jung does, of a “factual abolition of the referendum” (Jung 1995, 82) after August 1934, since, in the eyes of the National Socialists, the 1936 *Reichstag* election largely concerned a plebiscitary process identical with the two referenda. On the other hand, the last instance of the use of a referendum in the Third Reich can be considered a special case. Austrian chancellor Kurt Schuschnigg, in his increasingly desperate attempt to resist the National Socialist pressure on his government, originally wanted to resort to the tool of the plebiscite and announced on March 9, 1938 that a referendum would be held four days later. But then events came thick and fast, and Schuschnigg resigned two days after his announcement in the face of new German threats of military force. For Hitler, who then decided to carry out the immediate *Anschluss* of

14 At the same time that Uhde’s dissertation appeared, Wilhelm Stuckart spoke of the “fundamental philosophies of National Socialism, which had become common law”.

Austria, canceling the referendum would have meant taking a certain propaganda risk. Therefore, he decided to hold a *Greater German* election to the *Reichstag* and two separate referenda—one in Austria and one in Germany—in order to legitimize the territorial expansion. With an election turnout and approval quota of 99 per cent each, the NS regime once again achieved superlative results. This was possibly due in part to a national frenzy that had been stirred up by the propaganda. At the same time, though, the results also posed the NS leadership with a problem of credibility, since the figures “were no longer taken seriously—neither by the majority of the population nor even by the regime’s own supporters”.¹⁵ And a further problem, of course, was that there was simply no more room for improvement in the future.

In the first six years of his rule, then, we can say that Hitler employed an instrument of plebiscitary self-staging that consisted of three elements: referendum, *Reichstag* election, and speech before the *Reichstag*. Although the third was somewhat less useful than the other two in terms of its propaganda effectiveness, all three had very similar goals: first and foremost, to demonstrate to other countries that the politics of the NS regime were legitimate since they were approved of by the population. Furthermore, the referendum and the election, at least, were designed to mobilize the German population and to demonstrate that the Nazi ideology constituted a popular political movement. And finally, mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion determined who belonged to the racially defined *Volksgemeinschaft* (people’s community) and who, as *Gemeinschaftsfremder* (aliens to the community), did not.

What had also become apparent to National Socialists in the first years of the Third Reich, however, was that holding referenda and *Reichstag* elections was inherently risky, since they could not deliver results that were predictable or that improved every time. Furthermore, they only allowed symbols and rituals to be used to a limited extent. In other words, they lacked performative potential, since the act of voting locally was very limited in terms of how it could be stage-managed or even emotionalized. In the final analysis, this is the reason why an additional extension of the plebiscitary instrument had to be sought, which is what happened at the same time.

15 With regard to the Sopade reports, see Jung (1995, 123).

Mass Rallies as an Alternative System of Plebiscitary Acclamation

If we take Ernst Fraenkel's thesis of the National Socialist *dual state* seriously, we can see that the development of the *Reichstag* and the referendums, in spite of all their limitations, predominantly took place in the sphere of the *normative state* (Fraenkel 2001). The *Weimar* constitution remained largely intact with its traditional plebiscitary elements and was also only changed minimally by the *Gesetz über Volksabstimmung*. Bureaucrats such as the Minister of the Interior Wilhelm Frick tried to bring the practice of the National Socialist exercise of power into line with the traditional structure of legal regulations. In spite of clear breaches of law, he was successful in most cases, even if Hitler's spontaneous-opportunistic style presented a permanent endurance test and caused conflicts time and again. The dictator himself, in spite of earlier intentions, could not bring himself to push through a reorganization of constitutional law, although he was dissatisfied with the current situation and kept feeling hampered in his exercise of power.

Although the plebiscitary institutions of the *normative state* were not abolished, they had already lost part of their relevance by the summer of 1934. At the same time, a shift took place with respect to the plebiscitary element that strengthened those aspects of participation that must be attributed to the sphere of Fraenkel's *prerogative state*, which concerned an essential feature of the National Socialist dictatorship. On many levels, it constituted a parallel structure to the *normative state*, existed in a perpetual state of emergency, and formed a "legal vacuum" (Ibid., 55).

In order to comprehend the features of the *prerogative state* with respect to the phenomena discussed here in all their complexity, it is essential to engage in a broader understanding of the "plebiscite concept", based on Bracher's 1962 definition (Bracher et al. 1983, 472). As Jung, in spite of his general criticism of Bracher,¹⁶ correctly asserts, the term *Volksbefragung*,¹⁷ which was posited by leading National Socialists, not only meant "referen-

16 Cf. Jung's criticism of Bracher's definition of a "system of plebiscitary acclamation" (Jung 1995, 88, 90, 126).

17 This term, which aimed to level the differences between the individual plebiscitary elements, was introduced early on. Cf. "Richtlinien für die Pressearbeit zur Volksbefragung am 19. August 1934", published by the *Reich* propaganda management of the NSDAP (no year given).

dum” but comprised numerous additional phenomena, including, in later years, the more or less voluntary fundraising campaigns as well as participation in marches and mass rallies. And we can actually conclude from the development of the Nuremberg Party rallies that the large mass events of the NS regime were staged increasingly as plebiscitary events.¹⁸

The National Socialist *Festfeuerwerk* of 1933 and the Nuremberg Rallies in the Transitional Phase (1933–1935)

During their first few months in power, the National Socialists virtually ignited a kind of *Festfeuerwerk* (firework of celebrations) (Freitag 1997, 18): all kinds of political festivities and public events that transcended the routines of everyday life and symbolized the transition to a new era, a transition that the originators of the “national revolution” claimed as their own. A vast number of small, locally organized celebrations formed the basis for this; they targeted the *Volksgenossen* (national comrades) and sought to create an experience and feeling of participation for each and every individual. Often these local celebrations occurred together with a centrally organized mass rally such as the Berlin Celebrations on Labor Day (May 1, 1933), the *Reichserntedankfest* (Reich Harvest Festival) on the slopes of the Bückeberg near Hameln, or the Day of Remembrance of the failed *Putsch* of 1923, held on November 9 in Munich. These corresponded with Hitler’s belief that the mass assembly is “the only way to have an effective, because directly personal, influence by which to win over large factions of the people” (Hitler 1933, 115).

The staging of the *Reichsparteitag* (Nuremberg Rally), which mobilized a vast number of participants from various organizational divisions of the Nazi-movement in the city of Nuremberg for several days, turned out to be by far the largest event during the *Festfeuerwerk* of 1933. In the years following, the regime developed the Nuremberg Rally, which soon came to last for a week, into the central mass event of the annual calendar of political festivals. With respect to its aesthetics, it took on the character of a model that the local organizers of smaller ceremonies tried to emulate. What is important for our purposes is that the *Reichsparteitag* was already declared a plebiscitary mass event by several members of the NS regime as

18 For more on this topic, see Urban (2007).

early as 1933. In his opening address, Rudolf Hess—Deputy to the *Führer*—had characterized the rally as “the most modern *Volksvertretung*” (representative body of the people). But Rudolf Hess was not the only one who considered the Party rally a plebiscitary event, as Peter Hubert erroneously assumes (Hubert 1992, 98). It was above all the *Gauleiter* of Franconia, Julius Streicher, who labeled the rally the “first *Reichstag* of the German people in the new Germany”, with which he made reference to Nuremberg’s medieval past as a venue for the Holy Roman Empire’s Imperial Diet.¹⁹ Both expressed an already widespread expectation that the NS regime would introduce new modes of political participation in place of the old ones. In the case of the Nuremberg Rally, participation extended first and foremost to members of the SA—the Nazi Party militia—and the NSDAP, the latter being stylized above all into an elite representing the entire *Volk*. And already in 1933, observers did in fact notice that the Nuremberg Rally had a function above and beyond that of a Party rally. Rudolf Kirchner, for example, the special correspondent to the *Frankfurter Zeitung* who was dispatched to Nuremberg, characterized the rally as having an “overwhelming sense of community”, and reminded his readers of the many people “who have demanded both a true, social community state built on the German nation, and a powerful democracy that would lead them away from party disunity”.²⁰ And, with National Socialism’s inherent inclination toward the “invention of traditions” (Hobsbawm), the authors of a semi-official chronicle of the rally concluded that the *Reichsparteitag des Sieges* (Rally of Victory) “had already become for the first time a *Reichstagung* (Reich Congress) in the true sense of the word in which the entire population participated in hailing the *Führer*” (Streicher 1934, 9). In accordance with the claim that the *Volk* was represented in Nuremberg, organizations that did not genuinely belong to the sphere of the Party, but rather to that of the state, were increasingly integrated in the following years into the *Parteitagswoche* (Nuremberg Rally Week). Therefore, soon the *Reichswehr*, beginning in 1934, and the *Reichsarbeitsdienst* (State Labor Service), beginning in 1935, were represented by large mass rallies, whereas, conversely, the significance and strength of the SA fell sharply after the “*Röhm-Putsch*”. Important, however, is the fact that the regular staging of the Nuremberg

19 Live audio recording in the DRA Wiesbaden, B 004891360. Interestingly, Streicher’s choice of words was changed in the printed edition to *Reichsparteitag*. (Streicher 1934, 38).

20 Rudolf Kirchner, *Das Erlebnis von Nürnberg* (The Nuremberg Experience), *Frankfurter Zeitung*, September 6, 1933, 1.

Rallies, as well as that of referenda and *Reichstag* elections, was in no way assured at this time. Thus, Hitler announced at the *Reichsparteitag* in 1933 that, in future, rallies would be held in a two-year-cycle, at least for the time being. In fact, until 1936, the final decision to hold the rally was made as late as about five weeks before the first day of the event.

This transitional phase reached a high point in the *Reichsparteitag der Freiheit* (Rally of Freedom) in 1935, when Hitler summoned the delegates of the Berlin *Reichstag* to a session in Nuremberg. As usual, this was a spontaneous decision that caught those involved by surprise. The immediate cause of Hitler's decision was the verdict of an American judge who had refused to punish a perpetrator of an attack on the swastika flag in New York Harbor as it was not a national flag. Within three days, Hitler wanted to make use of the Nuremberg rally for the greatest possible propaganda effect and to announce a new *Reich* flag law. The decision to adopt the anti-Semitic *Rassengesetze* (Nuremberg Laws) at the same time was even more abrupt and caused great confusion amongst those lawyers responsible for preparing the draft (Gruchmann 1983). The fact that the *Blutschutzgesetz* (Blood Protection Law) and the *Reichsbürgergesetz* (Reich Citizenship Law) had to be drawn up within 48 hours is indicated by the fact that there were hand-written changes even in the final draft. Furthermore, Hermann Göring was so badly prepared for the *Reichstag* session that the radio station was ordered to fade out his live-broadcast speech.²¹ The joint session of *Reichstag* and *Reichsparteitag*, which was designed for public effect, only occurred once, although Göring had actually announced in 1935 that from now on the *Reichstag* would always convene during the annual Party Rally in Nuremberg.²² This combination of *Reichstag* and *Reichsparteitag* had offered another opportunity of plebiscitary self-staging, but it was rejected since it did not work. The mass rallies, however, were to have a definite future in the Third Reich.

21 Goebbels' diary entry of September 15, 1935: "Then Göring read the laws and 'justified' them. Almost unbearable. The radio broadcast was stopped." (Fröhlich 1998-2006).

22 "May it become for all eternity an honorific as well as a binding custom to combine it with future *Reichstagparteitage* (Nuremberg Party Rallies) so that Nuremberg—once a free city of the German Reich—can become the seat of the German *Reichstag* during the climax of the *Reichsparteitage*." [www.reichstagsprotokolle.de/Blatt2_w9\)bsb00000142-_00061.html](http://www.reichstagsprotokolle.de/Blatt2_w9)bsb00000142-_00061.html).

Establishment and Expansion (1936–1939)

The year of 1936 was a turning point for the National Socialist regime as a whole, since, following the completion of the domestic consolidation phase, a “risk zone” in foreign policy had been crossed with the remilitarization of the Rhineland. Moreover, during this year a change of priorities in the plebiscitary self-staging of the regime took place. In spite of the great success of the *Reichstag* elections on March 29, 1936, this was to remain the last occasion on which the leadership of the Third Reich called the people to the polling stations of their own accord. It is difficult to determine whether Hitler, following the “relative defeat” of 1934, really doubted the long-term propagandist usefulness of the more traditional plebiscitary instruments, or whether, in view of the “inevitable 98.9 per cent” (Evans 2005, 637), dwindling hope for further improvement on past results was the deciding factor. In any case, it appeared that the Summer Olympic Games, with their vast numbers of international participants and visitors, had convinced Hitler that the mass rallies would offer the most suitable stage from which to deliver the propaganda messages that were by this time primarily directed at a foreign audience. In contrast to the *Reichstag* elections and the referenda, the mass rallies offered the chance to make the staging of the *Volksgemeinschaft* an experience, and the emotions themselves that were aroused by National Socialism became an object of propaganda. In spite of concerns on the part of the NS functionaries, Hitler insisted that yet another *Reichsparteitagswoche* (Nuremberg Rally Week) would take place in Nuremberg in September 1936.²³ Coming so soon after the Olympics, which had been staged at great cost, this *Reichsparteitag* led to the mass rally becoming established definitively. Their further development, up to 1939,²⁴ reveals that the Party rallies were systematically changed on three levels, with some of the measures taken being traceable to direct interventions by Hitler.

First, the mass rallies of the participating Nazi-organizations were continually expanded and their numbers were increased through more and

23 Propaganda Minister Goebbels above all had tried to convince Hitler—who at this time was in a poor state of health—to cancel the *Reichsparteitag* given its close proximity to the Olympic Games. Cf. Goebbels, diary entry of August 7, 1936. (Fröhlich 1998-2006).

24 The *Reichsparteitag des Friedens* (Rally of Peace) of 1939 was finally planned by the organizers and has therefore to be included in the analysis in spite of its abrupt cancellation on the eve of World War II.

more events being on offer, such as the *NS-Kampfspiele* (Competitive Games), beginning in 1937. As a consequence, the NSDAP *Parteikongress* (Party Conference), which had been a central feature of the early *Reichsparteitage* in the 1920s, lost more and more of its significance, and became an outdated relic of the former party character of the NSDAP. Since no substantive decisions were announced here, and the speakers offered in large part just the usual ideological phrases, the “delegates” showed little interest in the individual sessions. Thus, in later years, even 3,000 people specially selected to occupy empty seats were not sufficient to fill them (Urban 2007, 130).

Second, a steady militarization of the event took place, which was reflected both in the increasing frequency with which participating groups wore uniforms, and in the ever stricter regulations that all participants including the leading Party functionaries themselves had to observe.

Third and finally, individual events were deliberately given a sacral atmosphere. March-pasts and roll calls by the mass organizations were transformed into ritualized stagings by using music, flags, choral dialogues, and the employment of biblical vocabulary. For instance, the roll call of the *Politische Leiter* (PO), an organization that was especially unpopular with the people, was moved to the evening hours. After nightfall the use of fire and Albert Speer’s light architecture evoked an experience very similar to a church service. Hitler had already explained in *Mein Kampf* that he considered the end of the day to be the time when the individual was most open to “mass suggestion”.²⁵ Speaking to an audience of approximately 180,000 participants against the backdrop of Speer’s monumental light architecture, the dictator assumed the role of a kind of intermediary between the terrestrial and the celestial spheres. As Cancik (1980) has already shown, Hitler, by speaking in prayer-like utterances, made the roll call in 1936 a mystical performance.

The goal of such events was to establish a set of rituals for a national cult, whereby the individual “Ritual act would take the place of the theoretical texts” (Mosse 1976, 20). Most modifications of the event were

25 Hitler (1933, 531): “In the morning and even during the day the volitional powers of the people seem to resist with utmost energy the force of an external will and an external opinion. In the evening, on the other hand, they succumb more easily to the domineering power of a strong will. [...] The artificially made and yet secretive glow of the Catholic Church, the burning candles, the incense, the incense burner, etc, serves the same purpose”.

designed to increase the emotional value on site, where, for one week a year, the National Socialist utopia of the militarized *Volksgemeinschaft* would be brought to life. The organizers also claimed a representative function for the week of events, since it was declared a *Gemeinschaftsfest der Nation* (National Community Celebration).²⁶ From here, it was only a small step to stylizing the emotional characteristics of the *Führer* cult into a kind of plebiscite for the legitimization of National Socialist rule in general.²⁷

The Nazi event managers instrumentalized this function increasingly for the benefit of those looking on from abroad. Foreign journalists and special guests of honor were soon courted to an extent that indicated that they were the main target group of the Nuremberg events. A great amount of scarce foreign currency reserves was spent on inviting people whom the National Socialists thought would be able to play important roles in the future, such as foreign diplomats and opposition politicians, as well as business leaders and academics. For these special guests, visiting the Nuremberg rally was often the culmination of several days spent flying over the German Reich. And what awaited them in Nuremberg was an emotionally charged masterpiece of propaganda. They were not only greeted personally by Hitler, but were also driven through the crowd for up to an hour directly behind the dictator's car. At this very moment, the peoples' enthusiasm itself became a visual object of the visit—an effect that no successful referendum or election could ever achieve.²⁸

A special occasion for the instrumentalization of the Party congress event presented itself in September 1938, when the *Parteitag Großdeutschland* (Rally of Greater Germany) coincided with the culmination of the Sudeten crisis. The organizers of the event moved the climax of the rally to the final day, when Hitler, in his closing speech before the *Parteikongress*, addressed in particular the western democracies and demanded that the right of self-determination of the Sudeten Germans be respected. At that moment—a mere three weeks before the signing of the Munich Agreement—both the

26 According to Hitler in the *Proklamation zum Parteitag* (Proclamation to the Party Congress) in 1937 (Kerrl 1938, 56).

27 Cf. the description in a code of practice for the administration of justice from 1941: "Referenda are also a declaration of approval at assemblies, parades etc., especially the participation of the people at the Nuremberg Rallies". Quoted from Jung (1995, 88).

28 According to Paul Schmidt, chief interpreter for the Foreign Office, "the English and French were sometimes moved to tears over what played out before their eyes" (Schmidt 1968, 363). Leni Riefenstahl took advantage of this effect for cinematic purposes in a longer sequence in *Triumph of the Will*. Cf. Urban (2007, 211).

staged mass enthusiasm that had been mounting over a period of seven days, and the presentation of the military threat,²⁹ must have functioned as one whole plebiscitary underlining of this demand.

Termination in War

It is highly significant that the instruments of plebiscitary participation in the National Socialist dictatorship examined above were abandoned with the outbreak of the Second World War. Hitler would surely have liked to have continued the mass rallies in the style of the 1930s during the war, and indeed they were already part of a planned National Socialist post-war order. However, since such stagings of plebiscitary approval were impossible for logistical reasons, hardly anyone took exception to the sudden cancellation of the short-lived tradition, whose creation had been tremendously expensive. This can be explained by the fact that the war not only constituted a genuine goal of National Socialist ideology, but was also itself understood as a plebiscitary action of the nation. For, as Hans Zehrer had explained in the magazine *Die Tat* (The Deed), shortly after Hitler's seizure of power, the nation could only manifest itself as a postulated unity of *Volke* and state when both coincided "in warlike or revolutionary moments" (Zehrer 1933, 98).

Consequently, the line leading from the festivals of celebration of 1933 up to the beginning of the Second World War reveals the numerous stagings of plebiscitary acclamation to be merely intermediary stops. In addition to the foreign policy messages that were primarily aimed at the western democracies and of increasing importance for the NS regime from 1936, it was the performative character of the plebiscites that played a decisive role. Furthermore, apart from demonstrating the unity of the lead-

29 The traditional *Tag der Wehrmacht* (Armed Forces Day), with its ceremonial maneuvers, had taken place on the Zeppelin field on the day before Hitler's closing speech in the presence of numerous foreign guests of honor. Later, the official *Parteitagsschronik* (Convention Chronicle) was to write that one comprehends in view of this demonstration the warning on the day of this convention, "over which the shadow falls in this hour of the yet unredeemed Sudetenland: how tremendously and powerfully the National Socialist armed forces [...] will be able to fight, and they will fight if Germany is forced to" (Kerrl 1939, 370). Plebiscitary and military intimidations went hand in hand at this point in time.

ership and its followers, they continually functioned as a paramilitary mobilization, and thereby emphasized the character of the National Socialist worldview as *movement*, one that was oriented towards a permanent state of emergency. In addition, as opposed to traditional referendums, the large mass rallies had the central advantage that, beyond the concrete messages, they could make emotions and rituals a part of the stagings, thereby offering an experience with a high potential for fascination for the immediate participants.³⁰ Yet the plebiscites remained for the National Socialists a mere instrument of authority that had to be deployed flexibly, as was illustrated by the sudden cancellation of the long-prepared *Reichsparteitag des Friedens* (Rally of Peace), originally scheduled for the day when Germany invaded Poland.³¹

During the war, old and new forms of plebiscitary staging were once more shown to be interchangeable in their function as an instrument of goal-oriented power politics. Thus, with the swiftly-convened *Reichstag* on September 1, 1939, Hitler once again chose the least-challenging forum for his first war speech, in which he threatened the Jews with their complete annihilation. On this day, too, the total arbitrariness of this form of “pseudo-representation of the people” was revealed, and it became obvious that it had been retained for purely opportunistic reasons. Since more than a hundred members of parliament had already entered military service, Göring randomly filled the empty seats with other Party functionaries that happened to be present. They, too, were allowed to take part in the vote and represented, as Göring eagerly proclaimed, “the will of the German people to make each and every sacrifice for the honor and future of the nation and the Reich”.³²

30 In spite of great financial and logistical efforts the propaganda, as a rule, did not succeed in conveying the true value of the experience by means of the mass media.

31 The *Parteitag* was cancelled on August 26, 1939, the planned date for the invasion of Poland. For this day, the *Reichstagsabgeordneten* (Reichstag deputies) had also already been summoned to Berlin (Hubert, 1992, 231).

32 *Reichstag* session of September 1, 1939. www.reichstagsprotokolle.de/Blatt2_n4_bsb-00000613_00050.html.

Bibliography

- Bajohr, Frank and Michael Wildt (eds.). (2009). *Volksgemeinschaft. Neue Forschungen zur Gesellschaft des Nationalsozialismus*. Frankfurt: S. Fischer.
- Bracher, Karl Dietrich, Gerhard Schulz and Wolfgang Sauer (1983). *Die nationalsozialistische Machtergreifung. 1. Stufen der Machtergreifung*, Frankfurt: Ullstein. [first published as Karl Dietrich Bracher et al. (1962). *Die nationalsozialistische Machtergreifung: Studien zur Errichtung des totalitären Herrschaftssystems in Deutschland 1933/34*, Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag].
- (1971). Plebiszit und Machtergreifung. Eine kritische Analyse der nationalsozialistischen Wahlpolitik (1933–34). In Max Beloff (ed.). *On the Track of Tyranny*, 1–44. Freeport: Books for Libraries Press.
- Cancik, Hubert (1980). “Wir sind jetzt eins”. Rhetorik und Mystik in einer Rede Hitlers (Nürnberg, 11.9.1936). In Günter Kehr (ed.). *Zur Religionsgeschichte der BRD*, 13–48. Munich: Kösel.
- Evans, Richard (2005). *The Third Reich in Power, 1933–1939*, New York: Penguin Press.
- Freitag, Werner (1987). Der Führermythos im Fest. Festfeuerwerk, NS-Liturgie, Dissens und “100% KdF-Stimmung”. In Werner Freitag (ed.). *Das Dritte Reich im Fest. Führermythos, Feierlaune und Verweigerung in Westfalen 1933–1945*, 11–69. Bielefeld: Verlag für Regionalgeschichte.
- Fraenkel, Ernst (2001). *Der Doppelstaat*. Hamburg: Europäische Verlagsanstalt [first published as Ernst Fraenkel (1941). *The Dual State*. New York: Oxford University Press.].
- Fröhlich, Elke (ed.). (1998–2006). *Die Tagebücher von Joseph Goebbels, Teil I*. Munich: Saur.
- Gruchmann, Lothar (1983). “Blutschutzgesetz” und Justiz. Zu Entstehung und Auswirkung des Nürnberger Gesetzes vom 15. September 1935. *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 31, 418–42.
- Hitler, Adolf (1933). *Mein Kampf*. 2 vols.. Munich: Eher.
- Hubert, Peter (1992). *Uniformierter Reichstag. Die Geschichte der Pseudo-Volksvertretung 1933–1945*. Düsseldorf: Droste.
- Jesse, Eckhard and Konrad Löw (eds.). (1998). *Wahlen in Deutschland*. Berlin: Duncker & Humblot.
- Jung, Otmar (1995). *Plebiszit und Diktatur: die Volksabstimmungen der Nationalsozialisten. Die Fälle Austritt aus dem Völkerbund (1933), Staatsoberhaupt (1934) und Anschluss Österreichs (1938)*. Tübingen: Mohr.
- Kerrl, Hanns (ed.). (1938). *Reichstagung in Nürnberg. 1937. Der Parteitag der Arbeit*. Berlin: Weller.
- (ed.). (1939). *Reichstagung in Nürnberg. 1938. Der Parteitag Großdeutschland*. Berlin: Weller.
- Kershaw, Ian (2000). *Hitlers Macht. Das Profil der NS-Herrschaft*. Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag.

- (2002). *Der Hitler-Mythos. Führerkult und Volksmeinung*. Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag.
- Klemperer, Victor (1999). *Ich will Zeugnis ablegen bis zum letzten. Tagebücher 1933–1945*. Berlin: Aufbau.
- Linz, Juan J. (1978). Non-Competitive Elections in Europe. In Guy Hermet et al. (eds.). *Elections Without Choice*, 36–65. London: Macmillan.
- Mosse, George L. (1976). *Die Nationalisierung der Massen. Politische Symbolik und Massenbewegungen in Deutschland von den Napoleonischen Kriegen bis zum Dritten Reich*. Frankfurt: Ullstein.
- Omland, Frank (2006). *Du wählst mi nich Hitler! Reichstagswahlen und Volksabstimmungen in Schleswig-Holstein 1933–1938*. Norderstedt: Books on Demand.
- Schmidt, Paul (1968). *Statist auf diplomatischer Bühne 1923–1945. Erlebnisse des Chefdolmetschers im Auswärtigen Amt mit den Staatsmännern Europas*. Bonn: Athenäum.
- Streicher, Julius (1934). *Reichstagung in Nürnberg 1933*. Berlin: Weller.
- Stuckart, Wilhelm (1936). *Nationalsozialismus und Staatsrecht*. Berlin: Späth & Linde.
- Uhde, Gustav (1936). *Wahl und Volksabstimmung im Führerstaat*. Würzburg: Konrad Tritsch.
- Urban, Markus (2007). *Die Konsensfabrik. Funktion und Wahrnehmung der NS-Reichsparteitage, 1933–1941*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- Zehrer, Hans (1933). Der Umbau des deutschen Staates. *Die Tat*, 25, 97–105.
- Zollitsch, Wolfgang (1990). *Arbeiter zwischen Weltwirtschaftskrise und Nationalsozialismus*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- (1989): Die Vertrauensratswahlen von 1934 und 1935. Zum Stellenwert von Abstimmungen im *Dritten Reich* am Beispiel Krupp. *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 15, 361–81.

Popular Sovereignty and Constitutional Rights in the USSR's Supreme Soviet Elections of February 1946

Mark B. Smith

After the end of the Second World War, Western observers usually saw Soviet elections as empty rituals that were derisory or comic, or as totalitarian ceremonies with sinister trappings. These were, after all, elections in which only a single political party could field candidates, and then only one in each electoral district. They generated an assembly whose delegates apparently gathered to do little more than applaud a dictator. At a reception in the British Houses of Parliament in the spring of 1956, the Conservative Minister of Housing, Edwin Duncan Sandys, made this point to the Soviet Minister of Culture, Nikolai Aleksandrovich Mikhailov. Mikhailov was a deputy in the lower house of the Supreme Soviet, the country's parliament, and represented a district of Moscow. According to their interpreter, Sandys asked Mikhailov: "Did you have an opponent at the last election?" To which Mikhailov replied: "Mr. Duncan Sandys knows very well that we do not have opponents in our elections." Sandys went on: "Well, why do you bother to visit your voters?" Mikhailov's response seemed evasive: "They have other ways of expressing their dissatisfaction with me. [...] They can withdraw their confidence in me at a [candidate nomination] meeting of the electorate. [...] The voters are not expected to judge us only by what we do for them, but also by our contribution to national affairs." Like Sandys, the interpreter seemed unimpressed, and he prefaced his archived transcription with some comments about Soviet "pseudo-parliamentary institutions".¹

During a visit to the USSR more than twenty years earlier, the leading left-wing commentators, Sidney and Beatrice Webb, had formed a different view. They deduced that Soviet elections proved the existence of "universal participation in public administration"; even though the political system had only one party, the procedure for nominating candidates for election to local and national Soviets ensured that "there is never such a

¹ TNA: FO 371/122838, Interpreters' Reports, 15: report by Mr. Kolarz.

thing as an uncontested election”; the country’s fundamentally democratic public culture produced a Soviet government that was “less of an autocracy or a dictatorship than many a parliamentary cabinet” (Webb and Webb 1935, 44, 46, 448). A few years later, they praised the Stalin constitution of 1936 for creating “the most inclusive and equalized democracy in the world” (Webb and Webb 1942, 16). For them, the universal rights that the constitution enshrined, from the right to certain welfare services to the right to vote for the national assembly, were deeply impressive. They saw nothing “pseudo” in the Supreme Soviet or the elections to it.

Yet Soviet elections were neither meaningless nor sincere: neither hollowly totalitarian nor openly democratic. While their judgments do not survive historical scrutiny, Sandys and the Webbs still provide a number of contrasts that throw light on Soviet electoral democracy. This chapter seeks to interpret that phenomenon by making special reference to the Supreme Soviet elections of 1946. On the one hand, these elections had some formalistic and emptily procedural characteristics, but, on the other, they were also solidly constitutional, and were considered important by the hierarchy of Party and government. The election campaign and poll were static occasions in political terms, but they rested on a dynamic and sometimes unpredictable popular sovereignty that was presented as unanimous. The exercise of this sovereignty was intrinsic to Soviet rule and was the basic reason why elections were held. True, this popular sovereignty was an incarnation of Rousseau’s general will and was a fearsome, institutionally “totalitarian” consequence of the popular Soviet democracy of 1917. Yet the Supreme Soviet, the product of the 1936 constitution, was an ideal parliamentary form; in outline it resembled a Western parliament, and was similarly grounded on constitutional rights. Indeed, a major theme of the 1946 campaign was the propagandizing of these rights.

In the USSR, elections took place at various levels of Party and government, and citizens found themselves voting with improbable frequency (Friedgut 1979, 73). At the top of the hierarchy was the all-union, bicameral Supreme Soviet, set up as the whole country’s parliament by the 1936 constitution. Its first election took place in 1937 (the second was in 1946, following the interruption of the war). Elections to all institutions ignored recognizably democratic norms: most outstandingly, they were not contested; by definition, they could not change an incumbent for a challenger; and some of their practices—such as the need to cross out, often when standing outside the privacy of a polling booth, an unfavored candidate on

a ballot paper that contained a single name—were aggressively anti-democratic.² Nonetheless, the general constitutional framework of elections, set up in 1936, offered a robustly democratic prescription. Elections took place according to universal suffrage, with even the “former people”, such as the children of nobles or priests, who had been denied the right to vote since the revolution, now being able to cast a vote. Constitutional rules did not presume at all that elections would not be competitive, or that the Communist Party had supreme status (Hazard 1953, 64). There was no chance, however, of the ruling order being disrupted by these elections. The point of the elections was different.

This chapter uses a range of evidence from the 1946 Supreme Soviet campaign and beyond to explain why the Soviet dictatorship held elections and whether these elections fulfilled the uses ascribed to them. Part one summarizes the general functions of Soviet elections in the late Stalinist polity (1945–53), such as the need to offer a democratic vision to the West, and to promote leading officials through the Soviet political order; parts two and three address the ultimate, core functions of these elections, associated with popular sovereignty and constitutional rights; and part four discusses how successfully the dictatorship realized its election aims in 1946, and especially the aim of universalizing the language of constitutional rights among the population. These four sections are united by the general argument that for all the efforts of the dictatorship to make people think in terms of constitutional rights in the immediate post-war period, monolithic popular sovereignty robbed constitutionalism of meaning. Partly as a consequence of this, the population failed to make much coherent use of rights talk in 1946. Elections were built into the logic of the Soviet order, but they did little to sustain it.³

Why did the Soviet Dictatorship Hold Elections?

The elections of 1946 were special. Coming so soon after the end of the war, they must certainly be interpreted in its light. Yet Geoffrey Roberts’s

² The arrangements of Soviet elections are described in detail in Carson 1956: 72.

³ David Priestland argues that while ‘Soviet democracy’ was a logically worked through phenomenon, the practice of democracy, Soviet-style, destabilized the Soviet Union in various ways. See Priestland 2002.

judgment, that these elections “gave the population a chance to pass their verdict on the regime’s performance during the war” (Roberts 2006, 328), is somewhat difficult to sustain. The mechanism of single-candidate elections offered no scope for the exercise of public opinion, unless it was unanimously supportive of the Party. Supreme Soviet elections did not provide a space for negotiation between rulers and ruled, and only the most limited dissent arose during the campaign and voting.⁴ Such a space existed in other areas of Soviet life: in the convention of petitioning higher authorities about one’s living conditions, for instance. It was also evident in a restricted way during later elections, as seen, for example, in the way in which relatively large numbers of people allowed themselves not to be registered to vote during the 1970s (Zaslavsky and Brym 1978, 366). But only in the most formal sense was a late Stalinist election an opportunity for political participation. While historians are rightly now describing late Stalinism as a fluid social and administrative system, its popular politics remained emphatically monolithic.

More convincing explanations for these elections exist. Although the principles of popular sovereignty and constitutional rights formed the core of Soviet electoral democracy in this period, elections were also held for a number of subsidiary reasons, reasons that were important but not fundamentally structural. Each of these reasons is significant as an explanatory factor in its own right, and together they throw light on the more fundamental explanations for elections: popular sovereignty and constitutional rights.

First, elections provided a way of satisfying outsiders like the Webbs; the Stalinist hierarchy was set on eliciting favorable comments from the Western intelligentsias, especially during the 1930s (David-Fox 2003, 313). In 1946, in the context of the new United Nations, the soon-to-come People’s Democracies, and the pending Universal Declaration of Human Rights, pressure existed to present the USSR as a democratic respecter of international norms, and to out-do the United States in these terms. The official turnout rates of 99 per cent or more were contrasted with those of the United States, where (polemicists emphasized) problems with registration were just one means of mass disenfranchisement (Krutogolov 1958, 8–10). By extension, the USSR should appear as a desirable model of gov-

4 For examples from the 1950s onwards, see Gilson 1968, and Jacobs 1970: 70–76. More expansive analyses of dissent are developed by Thomas A. Bohn in this volume, based on messages written on ballot papers in 1958.

ernment that could appeal to colonial insurgents in the disintegrating Western empires and elsewhere in the Third World. Andrei Vyshinskii, a famous legal academic, prosecutor and bureaucrat, wrote in his long tract on Soviet law:

Never in a single country did the people manifest such activity in elections as did the Soviet people. Never has any capitalist country known, nor can it know, such a high percentage of those participating in voting as did the USSR. The Soviet election system under the Stalin constitution and the elections of Supreme Soviets have shown the entire world once again that Soviet democracy is the authentic sovereignty of the people of which the best minds of mankind have dreamed. (Vyshinsky 1948, 724)

Vyshinskii's point about popular activity, participation and sovereignty is at least as important as his insistence on the international triumph of the Soviet hyper-democracy. In fact, it takes us closer to the fundamental structural function of elections, connected with popular sovereignty.

A second subsidiary explanation concerns cadres. Elections to the Supreme Soviet may not have offered a choice between would-be legislators, but the nomination process did select the candidates who became deputies. Together with single-candidate elections to more junior institutions of Party and state, this formed a crucial element in the *nomenklatura* system and the personnel ladder. Many leading officials, including Stalin himself, were Supreme Soviet deputies, and nomination for office derived from one of the most influential of the networks of political patronage, which underwrote the whole Soviet system.

Third, elections also allowed the police to measure the public mood, both through people's participation in the electoral process and in the comments they made about it (when informers and agents were listening). On a more technical level of surveillance, the campaign offered the regime the opportunity to check people's housing registration documents, to find unregistered dwellings, and to correct addresses that had been wrongly entered in the records of the authorities.⁵ "Agitators" did this job as an incidental bonus to their task of looking up local people and persuading them of the reasons to vote.

Fourth, these agitators, as well as candidates, newspapers and public culture generally, communicated information, ideas and rhetorical con-

⁵ An example of this in the 115th electoral precinct of Moscow's Frunzenskii constituency is described in *Vecherniaia Moskva*, January 1, 1946.

structions—propaganda—to the population. The absence of competition in elections ensured that public information could be carefully arranged and presented without distractions, interruptions, or unanticipated challenges (Swearer 1961, 135). This was especially important in 1946, when the Party and government were seeking to deliver messages of particular importance, at a time when the war had destabilized some of the meaning of these messages. The themes that lay at the heart of the campaign included the veneration of Stalin, the extreme praise of the candidates (“the best sons and daughters of the Fatherland”), victory in the war, the unique greatness of Soviet democracy, the dangers of the international arena (the Nuremberg trials were proceeding at the time), and the genius of the 1936 constitution, with its panoply of rights and its capacity to improve people’s material conditions at a time of extreme deprivation. The campaign was a “total” performance. Election meetings of all kinds brought together tens of millions of people. Armies of agitators campaigned. Long articles about the election dominated the press for weeks, far more so than they would after Stalin’s demise. Even children campaigned, or were presented as so doing, and the words put in their mouths often concerned the constitution and the exercise of rights. A leading schoolgirl volunteer from Moscow’s Stalinskii district recounted the following tale for the Union-wide children’s paper:

After lessons at school a bus pulls up. Having taken our little suitcases and bundles, we get on board, and the bus tears along the streets of Stalinskii district. We stop at the arch of an illuminated building. Above the entrance are red panels, slogans and posters. Here is the agitpunkt [local propaganda center]. We enter the hall. It is full of people: the voters are listening to a report. Then they invite us onto the stage. The voters applaud us noisily. Today we’re showing them a montage called “The Stalin constitution”. [...] We have already performed in five precincts. Everywhere we are well met and thanked warmly. (*Pionerskaia pravda*, February 1, 1946).

The infrastructure of voting also co-opted children in the process. As in other countries, schools were used as polling stations. Another schoolgirl volunteer was quoted in *Pionerskaia pravda*: “There will be a polling station in our school. We are very glad about this and will be able to decorate it well. We will also prepare a children’s room with an election notice. We will do this with great pleasure” (*Pionerskaia pravda*, November 27, 1945). These sources display a performance; they do not necessarily record events but combine as a “total” presentation.

A fifth reason concerns the way that elections might hoodwink the people. Social scientists working in the West during the Soviet period pointed to the location of the elections in the regime's "façade of legitimacy and legality", and to the symbolic significance of the elections for the population, since they allowed ordinary people a token of participation (Vanneman 1977, 74). But this last point does not stand up so well to historical analysis, since it overstates the credulity of the population and underestimates the structural role of elections.

Despite their lack of liberal democratic rigor, elections and constitutionalism were not a Soviet façade, but part of its foundation. During the shaky post-war year of 1946, re-establishing the strength of this foundation was a major priority for Stalin and his ruling circle. While the themes of the campaign were presented for celebration rather than for approval or disapproval, this was because unanimity was assumed: the unanimity of a monolithic popular sovereignty whose theoretical existence was at the core of the Soviet system of rule. The campaign was a moment when power sought to teach the people to express the will of all—the will of people and power, alike and indivisible—in the language of constitutional rights. The campaign, though, would fail to do this.

Forcing People to be Free: Popular Sovereignty and Unanimity

A fake electoral democracy was an indispensable component in making the Soviet system coherent, in theory and practice. The tensions and paradoxes that underpinned elections were essential to the inner logic of the Soviet system as a whole. In two books, David Priestland has elaborated on two impulses inherent to Marxism that directly influenced the construction of Soviet institutions: Marxism's rational, modern side, and its Romantic, mobilizing aspect (Priestland 2007; 2009). The electoral system can be seen as a product of both. The Bolsheviks might have held "bourgeois parliamentarianism" in contempt, but they believed in the creation of modern institutions and in the formation of a state that (before its ultimate withering away) could efficiently serve the needs of the proletariat and then the people as a whole. They had to make a modern bureaucracy work in a socialist society (Friedgut 1979, 38). Elected and accountable institutions were part of the landscape of modernity of which the Soviet project was

deemed the center. For the Bolsheviks, it was inconceivable that elections should not be held. Yet they found it equally inconceivable that a near absolute majority—the 99 per cent—should not vote for them. Straight after the revolution, national elections to the Constituent Assembly favored the Socialist Revolutionaries, and the Bolsheviks destroyed the Assembly; for the Bolsheviks, permitting the elections and then violently eliminating their outcome were consistent. One of their pamphlets at the time declared: “The constituent assembly must meet in Petrograd, so that the revolutionary people, and especially the revolutionary garrison, can watch it and direct it” (Anweiler 1974, 211). This logic created in turn the Soviet system of elections. Single-candidate elections were symptomatic of Soviet mobilizing techniques. In formal terms, elections to the Supreme Soviet were indeed a grand exercise in popular sovereignty, as Vyshinskii maintained, but this was sovereignty indistinguishable from unanimity.

This popular sovereignty owed little to the feeble heritage of the Duma-period parliaments between 1906 and the First World War (Hosking 1973; Emmons 1983), let alone to the elected assemblies of the medieval Russian lands, though its populist form to some extent emerged from the village commune.⁶ The enduring weakness of parliamentary structures during the Soviet period and after can be better explained as a result of the popular sovereignty embedded in the Soviet system, which derived from the early Soviets (Carson 195, 93–95; Kravtsov 1954, 9). The Soviets were products of “direct democracy”, appearing dramatically in 1905 and then again in 1917, and were elected in factories, villages and military units (Geltzer 1992). Notwithstanding their free election, and the lively and exciting debates that they hosted during the revolutionary period and especially during the “freest” year of 1917, Soviets would ultimately provide a template for unanimity, with their public voting, high pressure atmosphere, and exhausting, revolutionary intensity (Anweiler 1974, 54).

Both in 1917 and later, a determined attitude to class was the rhetorical framework within which unanimity developed. Even after Stalin’s triumph of socialism in the 1930s and consequent universalization of the concept of citizenship, class remained the crucial discursive category. After 1917, as other parties were sidelined and then banned, and as the Communist Party came to speak with a more unified voice, elected Soviets became the repre-

⁶ The existence of organs of local government (*zemstva*) was only one sign by the late imperial period of a political culture that might have had the potential to evolve democratically.

sentative organs of a dictatorship—the dictatorship of the proletariat. As so often, the inner logic of Soviet rule rested on discursive and practical paradoxes. The point that revolution-era Soviets were “democratic institutions” that “would be an obstacle to any force wishing to establish one-party rule” (Thatcher 1995, 26) does not account for the way that the Bolsheviks were quite easily able to integrate democracy and dictatorship within the Soviets as part of the construction of the Bolshevik brand of popular sovereignty. This principle underwrote everything that happened in the 1946 campaign.

Popular sovereignty and populism extended into various areas of life. Wendy Z. Goldman has shown how in 1937 and 1938 factory and village meetings, and elections to Party organizations at multiple levels, helped to drive the cycles of denunciation that made the Great Terror such a dynamic and expanded process (Goldman 2007). Elections to the Supreme Soviet were driven by the same pressures of unanimity, populism, conformity and fear. They followed the prototype of the 1936 “all-union discussion” by which the new constitution was publicized, when a dynamic uncertainty and sometimes populist discussion lay behind a general face of unanimity (Getty 1991; Wimberg 1992). The language of unanimity was certainly ubiquitous in 1946. In a typical campaign article, the newspaper *Moskovskii bol'shevik* described “the indestructible moral-political unity of our people” (*Moskovskii bol'shevik*, January 8, 1946). *Pravda* splashed a banner in standard style: “Across the whole of the Soviet country, with the greatest unanimity, candidate nominations continue” (*Pravda*, January 4, 1946). An elderly, disabled doctor was reported in the *Literary Gazette* as struggling down from his fifth floor home to vote and thereby to “feel clearly my connection with the monolithic will of our people” (*Literaturnaia gazeta*, February 9, 1946). In elections, candidates were elected unopposed by universal suffrage on 99 per cent-plus turnouts. Propagandists claimed greater credibility for this unanimity by extending it beyond the Party; candidates belonged to a bloc of Party and non-party representatives (Hill 1973, 200–2; 1976). In 1946, the proportion of non-party candidates was 19 per cent (Hazard 1953, 75). For all the idea of a populist coalition, Party and non-party candidates alike shared the same opinions, and the things over which they agreed were by definition in everyone’s interests. It was an electoral system in which people were forced to be free.

Constitutional Rights and Modern Government

Popular sovereignty, populism and the “general will” seem contrary to regularized principles of modern government, but in the Stalinist Soviet Union, they were complementary. The 1936 constitution had created what looked like liberal institutions, including a national parliament, and had declared new universal rights. While class remained an essential means of structuring Soviet society, the 1936 constitution removed the class disabilities of “former people” and established rights for all. The 1946 election was a natural time to emphasize these new rights to the population. Following victory, and amid mass disruption and major-scale destruction, the regime sought to make its grip on power as tight as possible. One method was by emphasizing the durability of Soviet institutions and their grounding in constitutional propriety. Institutions were renamed or reconstituted to embody regularity and permanence rather than revolution. At the centre of government, the Council of People’s Commissars became the Council of Ministers (Gorlizki and Khlevniuk 2004). The dull “parliamentarianism” of the Supreme Soviet, with its routine territorial constituencies and apparently standardized voting procedures, reflected this normalization. It recrafted the revolutionary inheritance, replacing the direct workplace democracy and combined executive-legislative functions of typical Soviets (Medvedev 1975, 131–47). In the quest for permanence and renewed legitimization, the constitution was put at the heart of the election campaign of 1946. The constitution’s emphasis on rights was central to the way that the regime sought after the war to describe its relationship with the population.

Even in the Supreme Soviet nomination meetings, gatherings that existed because of the Soviet heritage of popular sovereignty, the turn to regularized constitutionalism was becoming evident. The mass meetings at which candidates were nominated for election to the Supreme Soviet were faint echoes of their institutional predecessors, the Soviets of workers that had gathered in 1905 and 1917, and their expression of popular sovereignty was trammled by top-down and centrally coordinated political directives. True, nominations involved collective, public expressions of enthusiasm. Public organizations outside the immediate ambit of the Party—trade unions, the Union of Writers, and so on—made nominations in their own right and announced them at grand meetings. Newspaper reports recorded mass enthusiasm at the meetings where the nomination was made, and

described a thoroughly bottom-up approach to political power.⁷ Nevertheless, and of course, city-rank Party organizations were in 1946 orchestrating events. Comrade Likovenkov, Party secretary of Moscow's Krasnopresnenskii district, reported to a gathering of his peers in the city that nomination meetings for very senior candidates had proceeded at various factories "in an organized way"; they started and ended on time, no one left early. Other Party secretaries, whose nominees were somewhat less senior, reported similar impressions. Yet the chairman of the Moscow Party and Soviet, Georgii Popov, still looked for ways to tighten the effectiveness of the nomination meetings, especially with regard to their capacity to communicate political ideas in an emphatic way, in the Bolshevik tradition; he called for better oratory, crisper sloganeering, even the use of orchestras to play in and play out speakers and raise the tempo of interest and involvement (Kiselev 2000, 119–25). All these were top-down ways of orchestrating performances of the general will and fitting them inside regularized political forms. These forms were aligned with the attempt to construct constitutional permanence.

Some of the democratic deficit in the workings of the Supreme Soviet was reduced by an established practice of petition and limited accountability. Citizens wrote in large numbers to their deputies to seek redress for injustice, bad luck or poverty. Much recent historical research has made use of these letters; the vastness of the archival collections illustrates the complex dimensions of ordinary people's social problems and even their opinions about public policy. Writing about a parallel trend in the German Democratic Republic, Mary Fulbrook discerns participatory and responsive qualities inherent to the letter-writing process, and she might be right about the post-Stalin period about which she makes her point (Fulbrook 2005, 14, 269–88). Less controversial is the conclusion that the huge numbers of people who wrote to deputies—huge numbers proven by the size of the depositories on which historians have recently so gratefully drawn—were taking part in a process that had become regularized and almost constitutional; although it contained some characteristics of clientelism, it was also simply part of the modern post-war way of doing Soviet government, and would in the Khrushchev era be backed up by a more legally robust right to petition the authorities. It was an element of Soviet "democracy"

⁷ This persisted; Jeffrey W. Hahn has argued that voting in local elections in the 1980s was "antidramatic, if not ceremonial" after the more participatory procedure for nominating candidates. See Hahn 1988, 105.

that was associated with the Supreme Soviet, but not with the elections to it, though it could not quite have existed without the electoral system.

In various ways, the electoral process required popular participation, but it rejected any manifestation of dissent or alternative opinion, and did not seek to persuade voters, but to present policy and politicians to an often skeptical population.⁸ Stalin lay at the heart of this mass presentation, which appealed to principles both of popular sovereignty and modern constitutionalism. His cult reached a still new level of ubiquity during the campaign. His election speech at the Bolshoi Theater shortly before polling day was one of the major set-piece speeches of his entire career. Each citizen's relationship with their leader was emphasized during the campaign, rhetorically renewing the bond that united them. Public culture insisted that this popular sovereignty had been revitalized by victory, and had been bolstered both by Stalin's wartime genius and the people's wartime sacrifices. It was publicized extensively during the campaign.⁹ Marshal Georgii Zhukov was one of the most prominent Supreme Soviet candidates in 1946; the speeches that nominated him as a candidate focused completely on the war (*Krasnaia zvezda*, January 28, 1946, 2). This domestic and international self-presentation—of a victorious superpower—was couched in democratic terms. At a nomination meeting in Moscow early in February 1946, for example, a Stakhanovite stonemason, N. P. Babikin, declared:

We are gathered here to discuss and nominate a candidate for the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. The first elections to the Supreme Soviet were conducted eight years ago. Since that time events of great historical importance have happened in the life of our country. [...] We were victorious because we have Soviet rule—the most just, the most democratic rule in the world (*Pravda*, February 3, 1946).

Similarly, following the elections, the first speech of the first session on March 12 emphasized above all the great feat of victory, the role of the institutions of state and Party and especially of Stalin, in the service of a way of politics that was “the most democratic in the world” (*Zasedaniia Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR* 1946, 4).

The campaign theme of victory was thus closely connected to themes of Soviet democracy, constitutionalism, and rights. In 1946, the elections

⁸ For a description of the elaboration of public information in a post-Stalin election campaign, see Mote 1965, ch. 3.

⁹ On the place of the war in the election campaign generally, see Jones 2008.

were a chance for the Communist Party and Soviet government to showcase the rights that the 1936 constitution had granted, and for voters to demonstrate their awareness of the significance of these rights and—paradoxically—their gratitude to Soviet power. Constitutional rights included the right to work, to have leisure, to obtain welfare benefits, to be educated, to exercise the freedoms of speech, assembly and association, and to enjoy the inviolability of the person and the home, unencumbered by discrimination based on gender, nationality or race.¹⁰ Under Stalin and after, the right to vote was granted central rhetorical importance, as “the most important part of the democratic rights and freedoms, which every citizen of the USSR possesses” (Gorshenev and Cheliapov 1959, 63). It was the focus of an entire chapter of the constitution.¹¹ Yet, despite the constitutional framework, the right to vote was not recognizably liberal or democratic. Instead, it was the right to participate in a monolithic populist sovereignty; Stalin-era and post-Stalin commentators alike described a unanimous popular will (Gusev 1957, 4). Only by agreeing with everyone else was the right to vote empirically “real”. Many other rights were demonstrably false. No one was exercising their right to hold public demonstrations or to publish freely, for example. Indeed, rights would only break beyond rhetoric and into people’s understanding of their everyday lives after Stalin’s death, and then only within limited spheres, especially those associated with welfare, education and the home. Yet, while the late Stalinist polity remained arbitrary, “rights” were a crucial aspect of its public culture. They were a means by which the Party-government could explain to the population its apparently practical legitimacy, and the rhetoric of rights (but certainly not their practice) was one of the most distinctive structuring features of the 1946 campaign.

The children’s newspaper *Pionerskaia pravda*, which published detailed coverage of the election alongside ideas for games and advice about homework, ran a series of very prominent articles just before the campaign on the meaning of constitutional rights for school children.¹² As a result, public culture turned these rights into a would-be mechanism for improving the lives of even the very young. During the campaign (and just before), letters from children conveyed this idea to the newspaper’s readership. Whether the letters are fictional is not relevant: their presentation for

¹⁰ Chapter 10, articles 118–28.

¹¹ Chapter 11.

¹² E.g. *Pionerskaia Pravda*, December 5 and 18, 1945.

the attention of the young public is the point. A child called Liusia, who was one of the leading activist volunteers at her school, declared that the constitution allowed one's dreams to come true (*Pionerskaia pravda*, November 27, 1945). In an interview with the newspaper shortly before polling day, General I. V. Tiulenev juxtaposed for the benefit of his young audience the right to vote, the sacrifice of the war, and the expectation of well-being (*Pionerskaia pravda*, February 8, 1946). Straight after polling, the paper offered a front-page poem for its young readers, which folded the specialness of Soviet democracy into the unique array of Soviet rights: "There are many countries in the world / But the Soviet country / On the great earth / Among all others—is unique! / Beyond the Soviet border, you can't find such a country / Where everybody can study / Where everybody can work / Where everybody is equal" (*Pionerskaia pravda*, February 12, 1946, 1). The election campaign was used as an intensive exercise during which children might internalize the notion of Soviet rights. Success in this enterprise seems improbable, but it is true that the generation that entered adulthood during the Khrushchev era was quick to make use of the much greater substance and practical utility that rights contained after 1953 (Smith 2009).

Published letters (from adults) to the press during the campaign spoke the language of rights more fluently. Such published correspondence, which might or might not have been entirely fictionalized, provided a template for citizens' private letters to the authorities, and showcased the kind of language they might be expected to use in these and other formal transactions with authority, and even in their everyday conversations. Many of these letters, and indeed newspaper articles about the campaign, illustrated these rights with the description of an ideal life trajectory, in which being poor under arbitrary Tsarist rule gave way to living well under rights-based Stalinist constitutionalism. Thus, one Professor A. Orlin described how his father, a teacher, could hardly look after his family before the revolution, while he, the son, enjoyed the comfort of student housing and a stipend even while studying. "Soviet power opened for me, as for thousands of my contemporaries, the doors to educational institutions", Orlin enthused, explaining his upward social mobility as the consequence of his rights. "From the example of my life and the lives of my students", he went on, "one can judge what a wide right to education is possessed by every citizen of the Soviet country. This right is written in gold letters in the Stalin constitution." Orlin described how voting for Stalin will now give him further

joy (*Vecherniaia Moskva*, February 5, 1946). Similarly, O. F. Leonov, also an educationist, described her life path. “You [now] have considerable rights, to work, to time off, to education,” she wrote. “I recall my own life, my childhood and youth in pre-revolutionary times, of perpetual, joyless life and great need. Only Soviet power gave me the chance to become a teacher” (*Vecherniaia Moskva*, February 6, 1946). Adopting the same structure, a citizen, I. Nikolaev, wrote of his pre-revolutionary misery: “I am 62. I well remember my unhappy childhood. All our family lived on the wretched wages of my father, who worked on the railways. We all huddled together in a small room.” His contrasting experience since 1917 had partly been defined by rights and by the possibility to vote for the great hero, Stalin:

Soviet power is our people’s power. It has brought people out of beggary and lack of rights. My brothers, sisters and I live in good houses, not needing for anything. My youngest brother received a higher education and became an engineer. My salary is nine hundred rubles a month. Apart from that, in view of my age, the state pays a pension. In 1933 the government made me a hero of labor. As a resident of the Stalinskii electoral district I will have the honor to vote on 10 February for our first candidate for deputy of the Supreme Soviet USSR, Comrade Stalin. I am awaiting this day as a great festival (*Vecherniaia Moskva*, February 5, 1946).

The Failure of Rights During the Campaign

The election campaign publicized this approach to rights and showed people how to deploy its language.¹³ Nonetheless, the constitutional existence of rights, and their repeated emphasis in public culture, was not reflected in the realities of daily life. Not only did rights have no substantive meaning in a polity that remained arbitrary, but some people openly acknowledged this, either disputing the existence of rights or simply not using the official language. Ordinary people sometimes expressed concerns about their political rights, about the problem of what electing a single candidate could possibly mean, and about the way that political structures were or were not consistent with their description in the constitution. In the lead-up to the 1946 election campaign, a worker at the First State Ball Bearing Factory, Comrade Martynovskii, commented in a private conversation that “the

13 As Stephen Kotkin (1995) has it, how to “speak Bolshevik”.

elections don't serve any public interest. The Party chooses the candidates, and we vote for them." He concluded: "There's a lot of talk about true democracy in our country, but we don't have it in practice" (Kiselev 2000, 105). Workers asked about the single-candidate problem at meetings: "Is it not a breach of democracy to nominate just one candidate in an electoral district?" (Ibid.). Comrade Kuznetsov, an engineer at the same factory, declared in late 1945 (just before the campaign started, but during the period of "preparation" for it, when the authorities were listening): "in our country, the rights of voters have been pinched [...] the majority of deputies elected to the Supreme Soviet in 1937 have not reported back to the voters on their work" (Ibid., 104). Around the same time, Comrade Zharkovich commented in a private conversation among co-workers at the Stalin Car Works that, "According to the constitution, all citizens of the USSR have the right to an education. But in actual fact that right is not properly implemented." She described her own case: "I, for example, wanted to enroll at a theater college, but they wouldn't release me from the plant. I thought about leaving anyway, but I was afraid of the courts" (Ibid.). A worker called Andreev told the Party organization at his plant that the housing rights of those returning from the front or from evacuation had been "breached" (Ibid.). Abrekov, who worked at Moscow's Central Telegraph, argued in December 1945 that there was no point in voting, as deputies would not restore the right to move freely to a new place of work (Ibid., 110).

Other people, however, simply ignored the language of rights. This was not surprising, given that language could not create rights where none existed in reality. Yet, this was not just a consequence of a glaring empirical inconsistency, but also of a rhetorical confusion at the heart of the campaign. This confusion was ultimately associated with the mixed message embodied in the electoral process of 1946: that popular sovereignty, according to which the whole population expressed, through the genius of Stalin, its general will, was overlaid with the notion that the Soviet political system was governed by a constitution that protected the rights of individual Soviet citizens. While the categories of popular sovereignty and constitutionalism should have been reconciled in the Soviet order, voters naturally had little success in absorbing a notion so fanciful and distant from their bitter post-war struggles.

Citizens could hardly be expected to internalize even the rhetoric of rights when the election campaign also constructed the rhetoric of grati-

tude and gift.¹⁴ Having things by right and being given them as gifts stand, of course, in opposition to each other. This rhetorical scheme made the election an arena in which the Soviet people expressed their thanks for the great things that Stalin had given them. High among these was the 1936 constitution and its range of rights. An article in Moscow's popular evening newspaper about hero-mothers—those who had given birth to several children and who were entitled to special help from state agencies, and who received particular attention during the election campaign—declared shortly before the election: "Only in our Soviet country is such care for the family possible. The Stalin constitution gave us all this" (*Vechniaia Moskva*, February 1, 1946, 2). The same newspaper ran a feature the following week headlined: "The heartfelt gratitude of Soviet women to the great Stalin" (*Vechniaia Moskva*, February 9, 1946, 2). Petitioning the authorities (often their Supreme Soviet deputy) in their desperation to obtain basic goods amid catastrophic shortages, people more often mimicked these rhetorical constructions and not the countervailing talk of rights. Evidence of many different forms of popular language exists, of course, and seeking a decisive conclusion about the most typical mode of popular expression is methodologically misguided, however broad the base of evidence, but archival research shows that the following examples are at least common. When Professor A. P. Kreshkov eventually obtained extra housing space in 1946 (in line with the law) because some of his work inevitably had to take place at home, he wrote to Georgii Malenkov, the Supreme Soviet deputy and Politburo member who had helped him: "From all of my soul I thank you for your attention."¹⁵ People pleaded with their Supreme Soviet deputies for a better life, subordinating themselves to power and circumventing completely the idea of rights, both in the lead-up to 1946 and long after. "Excuse me for disturbing you too much," one dreadfully housed citizen wrote in 1944 to Maksim Saburov, a Supreme Soviet deputy in Minsk, "but I don't see another way."¹⁶ While people became increasingly effective at deploying the language of rights after 1953, many others still struggled to move on from a ritualized rhetoric of subordination. A citizen wrote to Saburov about a housing problem in 1954: "I ask you not to neglect my plea, and to help me in my deep sadness."¹⁷ Clearly, the campaign of 1946,

14 The Soviet language of the economy of the gift is analyzed in Brooks 1999.

15 GARF R-5446/85/1/251. For more similar cases, see Smith 2010.

16 GARF R-5446/3/5/38.

17 GARF R-5446/68/42/77.

like the campaign of 1950, did not generally succeed in its aim of making citizens talk and write as if they were exercising rights.

The rhetorical coherence of Soviet rights was further undermined by another theme of the campaign: trust. Elections in democracies and dictatorships present trust in different ways. In modern democracies, trust is ideally earned by politicians who observe constitutional norms and allow people to exercise their rights without hindrance: popular politics is mediated through accountability rather than paternalism or deference (though of course few such democracies existed in 1946). By contrast, in dictatorships, trust requires a leap of faith. In the 1946 Supreme Soviet campaign, “trust” was constructed as a substitute for the exercise of rights, not as a means of reinforcing them, and was often conflated with “faith”. For the prestigious *Literary Gazette*, “the trust of the people” lay at the heart of the election (*Literaturnaia gazeta*, January 12, 1946). But this anodyne formula really served to subordinate the status of the population to that of power. Typically, Moscow’s popular evening paper declared shortly before polling that “The people have unlimited trust in the Bolshevik Party” (*Vecherniaia Moskva*, February 5, 1946). Writing of political elites, the teachers’ newspaper *Uchitel’skaia gazeta* claimed: “the people [rightly] trusted them” (*Uchitel’skaia gazeta*, February 14, 1946). The notion of faith was connected to that of trust. A speaker declared at the vast nomination meeting at Moscow’s Elektrozavod plant at the start of the campaign: “Comrade Stalin, with his love for the Motherland, for his people, his indefatigable energy and care for the needs of the workers, has justified our faith—the faith of the voters—in his role as a deputy of the people” (*Pravda*, January 3, 1946).

Rhetorical inconsistencies and the observable absence of rights in everyday life were unpromising enough, but the campaign also suffered from practical failures. Was an election campaign an unpromising arena for the inculcation of a particular rhetoric? To be fair, the task was immense and the post-war circumstances of extreme deprivation imposed practical hindrances and elevated popular skepticism or confusion.¹⁸ Regime rhetoric was unlikely to obtain even a superficial purchase among the population when electoral campaigning was extremely ineffective in some areas of the country. This left some people badly educated in the language and concepts that the Party-government wanted the election campaign to impart. A confidential report on Voronezh *oblast’* (province) showed that some

18 For post-war misery and “state-society” relations, see Zubkova 1998.

villages were entirely neglected by agitators, while, in others, the propaganda effort comprised nothing more than an activist “reading out the electoral rules, two articles of the constitution, and all of a speech by Comrade Molotov”, which officials understood as being unlikely to engage the audience of tired peasants (Zubkova 2003, 396). Welfare rights, protected by the constitution, made little sense when the level of well-being was so low, and when agitators could not explain the situation. A confidential report that summarized voters’ responses and questions at small election meetings throughout the country showed widespread dissatisfaction with the provision of welfare and local facilities. One voter asked, “Why is there no care for people’s everyday needs in Troitsk? The whole municipal economy is in ruins.” Another wondered: “When are residents of Novgorod going to be moved out of holes in the ground and basements?” (Zubkova 2003, 403–4). In the end, rights did not exist in the Stalinist dictatorship and the election campaign of 1946 could not invent them.

Conclusion

Election talk is often cheap. In conventional democracies, as parties and candidates compete with each other, they exaggerate the generosity of their policies, or scaremonger about their opponents, or deliberately ignore the issues that actually concern them most. The language of election campaigns in twentieth century dictatorships also seems pitiful, re-circulating slogans and clichés, reheating a leader cult, offering gigantically ambitious formulae for insoluble problems. Yet this rhetoric gave citizens the chance to understand the Party on its own terms. Controlling the media and the campaign agenda completely, not needing to deal with an opposition or to concern itself with unpredictable political weather, the leading Party could communicate its ideas of choice in a clear and uncluttered way, offering ready-made rhetorical strategies that the population could learn and repeat.

The 1946 campaign for elections to the Supreme Soviet displayed these characteristics. Central to its aims was the reassertion of the legitimacy of Party and government—and indeed of the whole Soviet project—following the test of the war. It sought to achieve this by exploiting the dynamics of popular sovereignty and constitutional normality in order to present its principal campaign messages in a relentless and even total performance.

These messages were very particular to the time: they focused on victory in the war, the personality of Stalin, and—the theme analyzed in this chapter—the rights that were part of the 1936 constitution. But the campaign failed on the last of these. The gap between rhetoric and reality was too stark, while the rhetorical message that sought to bridge it was too confused for people to internalize and make use of on a widespread scale. They would only do so after Stalin's death, and then only thanks to concrete social and political reforms rather than electoral rhetoric. In the end, Soviet democracy's essence of popular sovereignty and would-be modern constitutional rights undermined the coherence of the campaign, as it would do again later in the Soviet period. The 1946 election makes clear why a pseudo-democratic process was essential for Soviet rule, just as it demonstrates that it was a weak technology for the exercise of dictatorial power.

Bibliography

- Anweiler, Oskar (1974). *The Soviets: The Russian Workers, Peasants, and Soldiers Councils, 1905–1921*. New York: Pantheon.
- Brooks, Jeffrey (1999). *Thank You Comrade Stalin! Soviet Public Culture from Revolution to Cold War*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Carson, George (1956). *Electoral Practices in the USSR*. London: Atlantic.
- David-Fox, Michael (2003). The Fellow Travelers Revisited: the “Cultured West” through Soviet Eyes. *Journal of Modern History*, 75, 2, 300–335.
- Emmons, Terence (1983). *Formation of the Political Parties and the First National Elections in Russia*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Friedgut, Theodore H. (1979). *Political Participation in the USSR*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Geltzer, Israel (1992). Soviets as agents of democratization. In Edith Rogovin Frankel, Jonathan Frankel and Baruch Knei-Paz (eds.). *Revolution in Russia: Reassessments of 1917*, 17–33. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Fulbrook, Mary (2005). *The People's State: East German Society from Hitler to Honecker*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Getty, J. Arch (1991). State and Society under Stalin: Constitutions and Elections in the 1930s. *Slavic Review*, 50, 1, 18–35.
- Gilison, Jerome M. (1968). Soviet Elections as a Measure of Dissent: The Missing One Per Cent. *American Political Science Review*, 62, 3, 814–26.
- Goldman, Wendy Z. (2007). *Terror and Democracy in the Age of Stalin: The Social Dynamics of Repression*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Gorlizki, Yoram and Oleg Khlevniuk (2004). *Cold Peace: Stalin and the Soviet Ruling Circle, 1945–1953*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gorshenev, A. and I. Cheliapov (1959). *Sovetskaia izbiratel'naia sistema*. Moscow: Gospolitizdat.
- Gusev, N. (1957). *Kak my vypolnim nakazy izbiratelei*, Moscow: Gospolitizdat.
- Hahn, Jeffrey W. (1988). *Soviet Grassroots: Citizen Participation in Local Soviet Government*. London: I.B. Tauris.
- Hazard, John N. (1953). *Law and Social Change in the USSR*. Westport, CT: Hyperion.
- Hill, Ronald J. (1973). Patterns of Deputy Selection to Local Soviets. *Soviet Studies*, 25, 2, 196–212.
- (1976). The CPSU in a Soviet Election Campaign. *Soviet Studies*, 28, 4, 590–8.
- Hosking, Geoffrey (1973). *The Russian Constitutional Experiment: Government and Duma, 1907–1914*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Jacobs, Everett M. (1970). Soviet Local Elections: what they are and what they are not. *Soviet Studies*, 22, 1, 61–76.
- Jones, Jeffrey W (2008). *Everyday Life and the “Reconstruction” of Soviet Russia during and after the Great Patriotic War, 1943–48*. Bloomington, IN: Slavica.
- Kiselev, A. S. et al. (eds.). (2000). *Moskva poslevoennaia 1945–1947gg: Arkhivnye dokumenty i materialy*. Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Mosgorarkhiv.
- Kotkin, Stephen (1995). *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Krasnaia zvezda, Moscow.
- Kravtsov, B. P. (1954). *Verkhovnyi Sovet SSSR*. Moscow: Gosizurizdat.
- Krutogolov, M. A. (1958). *Vybery v SSSR i v stranakh kapitala*. Moscow: IMO. Literaturnaia gazeta, Moscow.
- Medvedev, Roi (1975). *On Socialist Democracy*. London: Macmillan.
- Moskovskii bol'shevik, Moscow.
- Mote, Max E. (1965). *Soviet Local and Republic Elections*. Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution.
- Pionerskaia pravda, Moscow.
- Pravda, Moscow.
- Priestland, David (2002). Soviet Democracy, 1917–91. *European History Quarterly*, 32, 1, 111–30.
- (2007). *Stalinism and the Politics of Mobilization: Ideas, Power and Terror in Interwar Russia*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- (2009). *The Red Flag: Communism and the Making of the Modern World*, London: Allen Lane.
- Roberts, Geoffrey (2006). *Stalin's Wars: From World War to Cold War, 1939–1953*, New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press.
- Smith, Mark B. (2009). Khrushchev's promise to eliminate the urban housing shortage: rights, rationality and the communist future. In Melanie Ilic and

- Jeremy Smith (eds.). *Soviet State and Society under Nikita Khrushchev*, 26–45. Abingdon: Routledge.
- (2010). *Property of Communists: The Urban Housing Program from Stalin to Khrushchev*. DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press.
- Swearer, Howard A. (1961). The Functions of Soviet Elections. *Midwest Journal of Political Science*, 5, 2, 129–49.
- Thatcher, Ian D. (1995). Elections in Russian and Early Soviet History. In Peter Lentini (ed.). *Elections and Political Order in Russia: The Implications of the 1993 Elections to the Federal Assembly*, 15–35. Budapest: Central European University Press.
- Uchitel'skaia gazeta, Moscow.
- Vanneman, Peter (1977). *The Supreme Soviet: Politics and the Legislative Process in the Soviet Political System*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Vecherniaia Moskva, Moscow.
- Vyshinsky, Andrei Y. (1948). *The Law of the Soviet State*. New York: Macmillan.
- Webb, Sidney and Beatrice (1935). *Soviet Communism: A New Civilization*. London: Longmans, Green and Co.
- (1942). *The Truth about Soviet Russia*. London: Longmans, Green and Co.
- Wimberg, Ellen (1992). Socialism, Democratism and Criticism: The Soviet Press and the National Discussion of the 1936 Draft Constitution. *Soviet Studies*, 44, 2, 313–32.
- Zasedaniia Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR (*pervaia sessiia*) 12–19 marta 1946g: *steno-graficheskii otchet* (1946). Moscow: Izdanie Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR.
- Zaslavsky, Viktor and Robert J. Brym (1978). The Functions of Elections in the USSR. *Soviet Studies*, 30, 3, 362–71.
- Zubkova, Elena (1998). *Russia After the War: Hopes, Illusions and Disappointments, 1945–1957*. Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe.
- et al. (eds.). (2003). *Sovetskaia zhizn' 1945–1953*, Moscow: ROSSPEN.

List of Archives Cited

- The National Archives, Kew, United Kingdom, cited as TNA.
- The State Archive of the Russian Federation (Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii), cited as GARF.

Integration, Celebration, and Challenge: Soviet Youth and Elections, 1953–1968¹

Gleb Tsipursky

At the Twentieth Communist Party Congress in 1956, when the new Soviet leader N. S. Khrushchev gave the Secret Speech that launched the de-Stalinization campaign, the First Secretary of the Komsomol Central Committee (KCC, the ruling organ of the Komsomol), A. N. Shelepin, also addressed the Congress (Kassof 1965, 14–18).² He stated that “The Komsomol and all Soviet youth assure the Congress that they will give all their strength, knowledge, and energy to the selfless service of the noble task of constructing a communist society in our country”. While this mirrored analogous rhetoric in the post-World War II years before Stalin’s death in 1953, other elements of the speech illustrate a shift in accent in the “Thaw”, the decade and a half after Stalin (Bittner 2008, 1–13; Condee

1 I would like to acknowledge my gratitude to the participants of the “Elections under 20th Century Dictatorships” workshop, whose stimulating feedback on my presentation helped improve and clarify my own ideas, and in particular Ralph Jessen and Hedwig Richter, whose comments on the article draft itself resulted in a stronger final manuscript. More broadly, Donald J. Raleigh’s insightful suggestions on my book-length project, “Communist Fun: Youth and State-Sponsored Culture in the Cold War Soviet Union, 1945–1968,” found their reflection in this article as well. The funding to gather materials for this project came from the Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad Fellowship, awarded by the Educational Information Program Service, and also from the Doctoral Travel Research Award, awarded by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Center for Global Initiatives. I am grateful for their support.

2 The Komsomol, the Soviet mass organization for those aged between fourteen and twenty-eight, which was dedicated to socializing youth, grew rapidly in the 1950s, with half of all those eligible becoming members by 1958. With participation essential for attending college or joining the Communist Party, most members belonged to the middle class. Like the Party, it was composed of a hierarchical pyramid of cells, with the KCC at the top, followed by Komsomol organizations at the republic and province (*oblast*) levels, with city and district (*raion*) Komsomol branches next, then Komsomol cells of large enterprises and institutions, with primary-level Komsomol cells subordinated to the enterprise-level cells.

2000, 160–76).³ Thus, in contrast to the emphasis on discipline and militarism of the late Stalin era, Shelepin repeatedly underlined that excessive bureaucracy and centralization, and lack of attention to grassroots activism, posed serious challenges to the Komsomol’s organizational work (Krylova 2009).⁴ This discursive shift represented part of a broader move away from Stalinist authoritarianism and toward a more populist method of governance under Khrushchev. In this chapter, I investigate how the breaks and continuities in youth policy during the Thaw impacted upon the Soviet use of “elections without choice” as a tool of social management.

My study contributes to the recent debates about the nature of the Thaw. According to the traditional historiographic paradigm, and much current scholarship, Stalin’s death was a monumental break for the USSR (Taubman 2003; Ilic 2009, 1–8; Vail and Genis 1988; Brusilovskaia 2001; Cohen 1980; Jones 2006; Aksiutin 2004).⁵ Some recent authors, however, have cast doubt on this opinion, questioning the attention given to 1953 as a fundamental caesura in Soviet history, and suggesting strong continuities between the period from 1945 to 1953 and the subsequent decades, while still acknowledging the transformative impact of Stalin’s death on some areas of life. This approach sees much of the Thaw era innovations as having their roots in the postwar Stalin era, and argues that they came to fruition in the mid-1950s as a result of broader processes such as the completion of postwar reconstruction, rather than due to policy shifts resulting from a new leadership (Fürst 2010, 1–31; Fürst et al. 2008, 201–07; Hessler 2004).

This chapter also furthers our understanding of the Soviet Party’s youth policy. Work with young people constituted a basic element of Party policy due to the key role of young people in communist ideology (Lenin 1982, 41). Simultaneously, the large proportion of youth in the Soviet Union during those years, due to massive World War II casualties, made their

3 While recognizing the debate over the use of the term “Thaw,” this article continues to use it as the best means of conveying the sense of quickening change during the post-Stalin years. For more on this term, see Stephen Bittner and Nancy Condee’s works, cited above.

4 *XX s’ezd KPSS. Stenograficheskaï otchet. Ch. 1* (Moscow: Gospolitizdat, 1956), 603, 606–07. On militarism and discipline as central to Stalinist youth policy, see Anna Krylova’s work.

5 These works generally voice this opinion.

successful social integration particularly crucial.⁶ Much of the early scholarship on the USSR viewed Soviet youth as comprising a mass of politically brainwashed people and a small minority of autonomous rebels: even in the Thaw, the Komsomol, in its view, prohibited opposition (Kassof 1965, 171–86; Fisher 1959, 285–86). More recent literature, though, without claiming that the Soviet Union achieved its aim of integration, has still underlined the Party’s intent to form a monolithic, disciplined, ideal young constructor of communism, and has emphasized its censure of those deviating from this task (Konecny 1999, 258–64; Pilkington 1994, 46–78; Silina 2004; Gorsuch 2000, 1–11; Fürst 2010, 1–31). Recent historical publications have given us excellent insights into this latter group, focusing as they do on alternative youth cultural practices, as well as political dissent, in the postwar Stalin years and under Khrushchev. (For alternative cultural practices, see Fitzpatrick 2006, 1–32; Edele 2002, 37–61; Fürst 2006, 209–30; Stites 1992, 123–47; Bushnell 1990; Riordan 1989; Tsipursky 2011; Tsipursky 2008, 629–49; for political dissent, see Zubkova 1998, 1–51; Alekseeva and Goldberg 1990; Fürst 2010, 64–94).

However, the everyday political life of Thaw era youth who publicly conformed to mainstream norms remains largely in the shadows (Tromly 2007).⁷ Informed by Sheila Fitzpatrick’s recent call for a more conscious focus on political practices in Soviet history, this essay opens the curtain on how post-Stalin youth participated in elections, thus stretching the boundaries of current historiography (2004). In the process, it considers the applicability to Soviet elections of the framework proposed by Werner Patzelt in this volume for elections in authoritarian states. These consist, in his hypothesis, of four key functions: a democratic “legitimizing function” through which public support for the government is demonstrated; “impression management”, by which a democratic facade is built; “preference falsification”, meaning an attempt to create a widespread belief that everyone is favorable towards the regime; and, finally, an “accommodation function”, by which promises to share the spoils of office with one’s sup-

⁶ For example, about 47 per cent of the RSFSR population was under 25 in 1959: Tsentral’noe Statisticheskoe Upravlenie (1963).

⁷ One exception is a recent dissertation by Benjamin Tromly, which examines the education of elite Soviet students in the postwar Stalin years and the Thaw, and which comments briefly on elections.

porters are made more credible. This chapter relies on a range of archival sources,⁸ as well as Soviet publications, recent memoirs, and interviews.⁹

In looking at youth participation in elections to the Supreme Soviet and to local soviets, the organs of the Soviet government, in the 1950s and 1960s, my essay shows that such events served the purpose of political indoctrination by calling on activist Komsomol members to assist in conducting elections. Still, the evidence shows the need to shift the traditional historiographic emphasis from elections as purely political events, by drawing attention to elements of merry-making inherent to the election process. Comparing these to other Soviet celebrations, I argue that the system, in contrast to the image of top-down coercive indoctrination, also offered significant consumption-oriented incentives for those willing to participate. This reveals the softer side of dictatorial dominance of elections as social practice.

While youth participation in elections to the Supreme Soviet and local soviets remained largely unchanged from the Stalin years to the Thaw, my research finds more of a break in elections within the Komsomol itself. Departing decisively from postwar Stalinist precedents, some young people, drawing on the novel tones in the Komsomol leadership's discourse encouraging grassroots participation, challenged existing election practices. These youth positioned themselves as a "loyal opposition" within Komsomol elections. They publicly expressed full support for the Khrushchev leadership and the goal of building communism, while lambasting local officials for authoritarian methods that made elections into a pure formality, and occasionally even taking power away from entrenched cadres. By doing so, they demonstrated significant individual agency, meaning self-willed actions responding to the interests and desires of young people themselves (Krylova 2010; Appadurai 1996, 5–11; Grossberg 1992, 113–27).

Such unanticipated, spontaneous elements in Komsomol elections underscore that previously conformist "elections without choice" could be transformed from a tool of political integration into a source of challenge

8 From the Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv noveishei istorii (RGANI); Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv sotsial'no-politicheskoi istorii (RGASPI); Tsentral'nyi arkhiv goroda Moskvyy (TsAGM); Tsentral'nyi arkhiv obshchestvenno-politicheskoi istorii Moskvyy (TsAOPIM).

9 From an interview series that I conducted in 2008–09 with those who grew up in the post-Stalin years.

and instability for socialist states in times of reform and uncertainty, a finding that parallels that of a number of other contributions to this volume.

Youth and Elections to Soviet Government Organs: Integration and Celebration

A resolution by the KCC at its Fifth Plenum in December 1950 dealing with elections to the Supreme Soviets of the republics making up the Soviet Union, their highest government bodies, stressed the critical organizational role ascribed to activist Komsomol youth. The decree noted that such young people already performed agitation work for the elections to local soviets: “Hundreds of thousands of Komsomol members worked as agitators, took part in setting up and decorating election sites and agitation points, putting together lists of voters”. It called on them to perform analogous tasks for these elections, such as organizing election sites, informing voters of the time and place of voting, and organizing various mass events, including lectures, meetings with candidates, and cultural events at election sites. The resolution even directly cited the political socialization and integration function of elections: “The upcoming elections [...] will enhance the further growth of the political activity of Soviet youth”.¹⁰ Similar rhetoric characterized the Khrushchev years.¹¹

While previous research made patent youth involvement in agitation and propaganda devoted to elections to the soviets, it paid little attention to the cultural events also referred to in the decrees, which cast light on elements of celebration and festiveness that were present both before and after Stalin’s death. One of the principal forms of such youth engagement in Soviet democracy came via amateur arts collectives, volunteer groups of young amateur musicians and actors, which had substantial popularity among the citizenry. The government sponsored the amateur arts collectives, providing the institutional and organizational basis for these groups in state-owned clubs, sending government-paid cultural workers to lead the

10 *Posotanolvenie piatogo plenuma TsK VLKSM (26–27 dekabria 1950 goda)* (Moscow: “Molodaia gvardiia”, 1951), 7–14.

11 A. N. Shelepin, *Otchetnyi doklad TsK VLKSM XII s’ezdu komsomola* (Moscow: “Molodaia gvardiia”, 1954), 42.

groups, and creating spaces and supplying musical and theatre equipment for their performances. Altogether, Moscow apparently had over 1,400 collectives in 1947, which put on over 7,000 or more shows.¹²

The Soviet state frequently engaged the amateur arts collectives to perform at election sites. One of the principal tasks of the Moscow Krasnopresnenskii district Cultural-enlightenment department involved overseeing the work of labor union clubs and their amateur arts collectives. Its annual report of 1951 records how the department organized “Performances of amateur arts at district enterprises during the days of the election campaign”, specifically praising the club of the Moscow Sugar factory for having “good amateur arts, which performed at election sites”.¹³ In 1957, this same organization reported that it had 1,500 young people in over 70 collectives giving over 130 concerts, with some dedicated to elections to local soviets.¹⁴ By 1959, about 3,000 young people participated in amateur arts collectives, giving over 300 concerts for approximately 200,000 people in the Krasnopresnenskii district. According to the report, such amateur arts are “used in all district political-mass events, and during the time of the elections to the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR and local soviets in 1959 alone there were over 100 concerts”.¹⁵ The KCC underlined the critical role of clubs to Soviet-style democracy in a report in the autumn of 1945 about the problematic state of cultural work in labor union clubs, with “the acute nature of this problem made worse by the fact that clubs are currently obliged to do much work in relation to the election campaign”.¹⁶ A 1946 KCC decree, entitled “About mass physical culture events dedicated to elections to the USSR Supreme Soviet”, demonstrates that other organized leisure events also served to promote Soviet democracy.¹⁷

Youth also constituted the object of celebratory elements in elections to the Soviet government in addition to being the subjects supplying such festivities. In one case in point, the Moscow food industry club held an evening for the young voters of the food industry workforce on November 25, 1950 with a talk entitled “The Stalin constitution and Soviet youth”, followed by a play based on a novel by the laureate of the Stalin prize, E.

12 TsAGM, f. 2011, op. 1, d. 49, ll. 357–59.

13 TsAGM, f. 1988, op. 1, d. 9, ll. 8–10.

14 TsAGM, f. 1988, op. 1, d. 52a, ll. 8–9.

15 TsAGM, f. 1988, op. 1, d. 72, l. 24.

16 RGASPI, f. M–1, op. 3, d. 403, ll. 17–22.

17 RGASPI, f. M–1, op. 3, d. 408, l. 10.

Kazakevich.¹⁸ The Komsomol election committee conference of Krasnopresnenskii district in 1950 records that “there were especially many interesting events for youth during the preparation for the 70th anniversary of Stalin’s birth and the election campaign”.¹⁹ No wonder, then, that Irina, who grew up under Khrushchev, recalls elections as a time of leisure and celebration, with concerts of amateur arts, enjoyable social interaction, and cheap goods for sale.²⁰ Still, for some youth involved in amateur arts and agitation related to elections, this occasionally proved a burden. Thus, in 1951, a Komsomol official at the Government University of Theater Arts (GITIS) complained of the excessive requirements placed upon the students both to perform and propagandize for elections, which apparently hindered their actual education.²¹

The amateur arts collectives also performed at other ideologically and politically loaded events, as well as at less ideologized concerts and festivals. In 1950, the same year that it held the evening for young voters, the Moscow food industry club organized another youth evening entitled “Peace will defeat war”.²² In 1951, the same collectives of clubs that performed in the election campaign of the Krasnopresnenskii district also put on concerts dedicated to various official Soviet celebrations, and evenings of leisure of district enterprises and clubs: for example, the amateur arts collective of the Sugar plant.²³ For the 1957 Moscow International Youth Festival, the amateur arts collectives prepared a series of events and concerts.²⁴ According to a 1960 report, the club of the factory “Dukat” held amateur arts concerts for the workers and service personnel of the factory, as well as the neighborhood population, with all collectives apparently preparing a major concert program dedicated to the 43rd anniversary of the October revolution.²⁵

These parallels between the festive aspects of youth participation in elections to the Soviet government, and other more or less ideologically and politically loaded events, open a window onto the role of elections as

18 TsAGM, f. 44, op. 1, d. 19, ll. 3–4.

19 TsAOPIM, f. 667, op. 2, d. 33, l. 11.

20 I use only the first name and interview date in order to protect anonymity: Irina, interviewed November 8, 2008.

21 TsAOPIM, f. 667, op. 2, d. 41, ll. 127–28.

22 TsAGM, f. 44, op. 1, d. 19, l. 4.

23 TsAGM, f. 1988, op. 1, d. 9, ll. 8–10.

24 TsAGM, f. 1988, op. 1, d. 45, ll. 8–9.

25 TsAGM, f. 1988, op. 1, d. 85, ll. 23–24.

celebrations of legitimacy. Certainly, we need to realize the role of political socialization inherent in these festive occasions: the youth who performed in amateur arts concerts at election sites engaged in political rituals, in parallel to the young Komsomol agitators who lectured to crowds, as highlighted by the comment of the GITIS Komsomol representative. A link can also be made between the celebratory components of elections in the postwar years, and extant research on festivals in the NEP and Stalin-era Soviet Union. In both cases, celebrations served the purpose of promoting communist ideology and Soviet political discourse (Petrone 2000; Rolfe 2009, 7–10; Rolfe 2000, 447–73). Considering the celebratory elements of elections provides further insights into the Soviet system's rituals of political legitimization. The voluntary and often enthusiastic participation of young people in amateur arts concerts, including at elections sites as well as other ideologically-loaded celebrations, and their popularity among the population, sheds light on how the Soviet government used consumption to garner political legitimacy. By supplying merry-making at election sites, the Soviet government, with extensive youth engagement, expanded elections from political practices that determined political power to include festive aspects that, like mass attendance at parades or rallies, affirmed government legitimacy. These “elections without choice” to the organs of the Soviet government did, then, involve a choice. Individuals could choose to come and enjoy, and gain pleasure from, the festive atmosphere, as Irina did—or not. As Arjun Appadurai rightly notes, “where there is consumption, there is pleasure, and where there is pleasure, there is agency” (Appadurai 1996, 7). Therefore, by enjoying themselves, by experiencing pleasure, individuals expressed their affirmation, however passive, of the political legitimacy of the Soviet government.

Intriguing comparisons can be made to elections in the GDR, in Nazi Germany, and in Italy under Mussolini, where, according to the contributions of Hedwig Richter, Markus Urban, Paul Corner and others in this volume, festive elements played an important role. This indicates the widespread role of consumption management for political legitimization within authoritarian states, and suggests the need for further examination of the softer, less coercive side of the dictatorial dominance of the election process as social practice. In relation to Patzelt's model of elections in authoritarian states, youth engagement in elections to Soviet governing bodies can be said to fit the category of “preference falsification”, through creating a widespread impression of ubiquitous support for the government.

Youth and Internal Komsomol Elections: Challenge and Loyal Opposition

While youth participation as agitators and amateur arts performers in elections to the Supreme Soviet and local soviets remained relatively unchanged from Stalin to Khrushchev, a marked shift took place in elections within the Komsomol. The period after Stalin's death witnessed the new General Secretary Khrushchev re-energizing the drive to progress from socialism to communism. An integral component in the project of ideological renewal involved the attempt to shift governing functions to the citizenry in a populist move intended both to mobilize the population and to achieve the eventual goal of communism, an ideal future where the government withers away (Breslauer 1980, 50–70; Park 1993; Ilic 2010, 1–8).²⁶ The Khrushchev leadership believed that the engagement of the young was particularly essential in this project, as they would not only build, but also presumably live in, the communist utopia that represented the primary goal of the Soviet experiment.²⁷ This reasoning underpinned the novel Khrushchev-era shift in emphasis on inspiring voluntary youth grassroots activism. In the postwar Stalin years, the Komsomol leadership's rhetoric focused on the need for youth discipline and organization, as opposed to youth initiative and autonomous grassroots activism.²⁸ However, the resolution of the Twelfth Komsomol Congress in March 1954, the first after Stalin's death, underlined the importance of “guaranteeing the appropriate realization of Komsomol democracy, development of criticism and self-criticism, especially from below, the strengthening of Komsomol member control over the activities of Komsomol organs, the escalation of activeness by Komsomol members”.²⁹ Here, the stress lies on democratic, voluntary activism from below, by engaged Komsomol members who criticize and impose control over the elected Komsomol organs. In his speech to the Thirteenth Komsomol Congress in 1958, Khrushchev went even further, proclaiming that “Bureaucratic organization of [Kom-

26 See, for example, *Voprosy ideologicheskoi raboty* (Moscow: Gospolitizdat, 1961), 144–158.

For a classic study of these ideologically-motivated goals of the Khrushchev leadership, see George Breslauer's work, and for a more recent take, see Soo-Hoon Park's contribution. For how this drive fitted into broader Thaw era governance, see Melanie Ilic's study.

27 See *Spravochnik partiionogo rabotnika. Vypusk IV* (Moscow: 1963), 681–84.

28 See *Rezoliutsii i dokumenty XI s'ezda VLSKM* (Moscow: “Molodaia gvardiia”, 1950), 20.

29 RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 38, l. 127.

somol] work may harm the upbringing of youth, and push it away from the Komsomol [...] Life in Komsomol organizations needs to boil, overflow with initiative”. More than that, he criticized “some of our comrades, who are so used to bureaucratic forms that even now, when we need to reject these forms, they are fearful”.³⁰ Illustrating the stress on grassroots activism and criticism of bureaucratic methods, such tropes grew ubiquitous within the discourse aimed at youth under Khrushchev (Tsipursky 2010, 629–49).

Designed to devolve governing functions to the population and to mobilize young people to build the communist tomorrow, as well as to differentiate itself from the Stalinist past, such language inspired some Komsomol members to act as a “loyal opposition” in Komsomol elections. These young people, while expressing full support for the Khrushchev leadership and the goal of building communism, demanded that elections within the Komsomol conform to democratic norms as promoted by official Soviet Thaw era discourse, particularly in its emphasis on youth initiative. Their actions advanced a pluralistic vision of a communist future that often conflicted with the ideas and methods of hard-line cadres who opposed many of the post-Stalin reforms, yet in many cases drew the support of pluralistically-oriented officials. This finding offers support for those scholars who argue for the important role of such struggles within the Soviet government of the Khrushchev years (Ilic 2010, 1–8; Taubman 2003; Jones 2006, 1–18; Cohen 1980, 11–31), and goes against some recent historiography that takes a more critical view of the significance of such tensions (Bittner 2008; Dobson 2009).

Elections in Komsomol cells occurred at election conferences, usually held annually in each local Komsomol organization. These events included a report on the Komsomol cell’s activities over the past year, a formulation of a plan for the upcoming year, and election of the Komsomol committee who would manage that cell’s activities for the year. In the postwar years before Stalin’s death, the election conference closely followed the directions of officials from the Komsomol hierarchy and the local Party cell, with any criticism highly formulaic and in no way challenging either the

30 N. S. Khrushchev, *Vospityvat’ aktivnykh i soznatel’nykh stroitelei kommunisticheskogo obshestva (rech’ na XIII s’ezde VLKSM 18 aprilia 1958 goda)* (Moscow: “Molodaia gvardiia”, 1961), 33–37.

Komsomol hierarchy or the local Party officials.³¹ As such, youth participation in Komsomol elections, in similarity to elections to Soviet government organs, functioned overwhelmingly as a means of political socialization and legitimization. Young people hardly ever departed from the planned election process, showed little or no initiative in using elections to push for reforms, and did not act as a loyal opposition—especially in large-scale elections in central sites. In fact, any expression of political non-conformism under Stalin, in any venues, drew harsh repression from the state (Zubkova 1998, 1–51, Alekseeva and Goldberg 1990; Fürst 2010, 64–94).

Yet the election practices of Komsomol election conferences underwent some changes in the Thaw. Half a year after Stalin's death, the autumn 1953 Komsomol election conference of the physics department of the Moscow State University (MSU), a highly prestigious department in the most prominent institute of higher learning in the USSR, erupted in controversy. At the election conference, the students of the physics department expressed outrage over the poor quality of education in theoretical and nuclear physics, a result of the fact that many of the best physicists had been forced out of the MSU due to the attacks by ideological conservatives in the anti-cosmopolitan campaign of the late Stalin years (Esakov and Levina 2005). Under the influence of the Thaw as well as the recent transfer of the physics department of MSU to a newly-built building, the students felt “intolerance to all phenomena hindering them from living and studying in the new manner”. Consequently, at the autumn 1953 Komsomol election conference, the students, in an unprecedented step, decided to send a letter to the PCC expressing their “distrust toward the administration and the Party organization of the physics department”, and criticizing the conservative traditions established there. This move proved “completely unexpected” for the MSU administration: the Komsomol organization, while in accordance with the formal norms of the law, acted in “sharp contradiction” to the real, unwritten rules-of-the-game. The Party and leading administrative officials at the department strongly argued against the letter, suggesting that the students lacked political maturity and responsibility, but the student leadership of the physics department Komsomol refused to budge, and sent it to the PCC. As Kovaleva rightly notes, under Stalin such behavior would have “inevitably resulted in harsh punish-

31 To confirm this, I examined the archives of the Moscow city Komsomol cell, and the Kransopresnenskii district Komsomol cell for the postwar Stalin years: TsAOPIM, f. 635 and f. 667 respectively.

ments”, including accusations of a lack of political sense, the expulsion of the organizers from the Komsomol and the department, and possibly even arrest and trial. Certainly, the organizers of the letter suffered certain repressions, as the university administration tried to use any excuse to punish them, yet only managed a few penalties. The PCC launched an investigation into the situation in the MSU in December 1953, and, by August 1954, had passed a resolution that resulted in the appointment of a new chair for the department, and the invitation of prominent theoretical and nuclear physicists, such as L. D. Landau, to teach at the MSU (Kovaleva 2003, 12–31; Gaponov et al. 2002).³² Some recent research suggests other factors also played a crucial, perhaps even a determining, role in this decree, such as the attempts to strengthen physics for the needs of the Cold War or the general turn from Stalinist political repression (Tromly 2007, 192). Still, this appeared to the physics students at MSU, as well as to many young intellectuals across the Soviet Union, as a victory for the reformist spirit of the Thaw (Kovaleva 2003, 28). This letter and its results both mirrored and were simultaneously constitutive of the spirit of the Thaw, which inspired many young people to engage actively in reforming the system for the sake of an ideal, communist society, and in opposing hard-line, orthodox officials, but with support from more pluralistically-inclined figures of authority. Furthermore, it reveals how Komsomol election conferences offered a crucial venue for the expression of youth agency, challenging existing political practices regarding elections, and serving as a source of instability in times of reform.

Further evidence of this is found in the first election conference held by the Moscow city Komsomol committee after Stalin’s death, in February 1954. After the Moscow Komsomol secretary gave his keynote speech, a series of delegates gave response speeches, and, at one point, the conference organizers—the Moscow city Komsomol committee—suggested ending the responses. Yet, in an unusual move, a Komsomol delegate from the police department, Artamonov, stood up and said he would like to address the conference. The conference leadership, clearly reluctant to

32 My description of this incident is based on an excellent composite memoir by a former student in the physics department, Svetlana Kovaleva, who used interviews with participants, memoirs, and quotes from archival documents in addition to her own recollections to write a history of what she calls the “informal traditions” of the physics department. I also draw on a paper written by her and other participants in the events, Iu. V. Gaponov and A. V. Kessenikh.

allow this speaker a platform, called for a vote on either ending the response speeches or letting the police delegate speak—and the conference participants voted to let the delegate speak, going against the will of the higher-up Komsomol officials, something that would certainly not have occurred in late Stalinism. Most probably, the conference organizers did not want the police delegate to speak because they realized the intended content of his address. Their worries proved accurate, as Artamonov severely censured the Moscow city Komsomol committee for its lack of attention to policing the city.³³ The Moscow city Komsomol conference of 1956 reveals a similar pattern. Vavilov, the Komsomol secretary of a factory in “Enterprise 765”, severely criticized the problem of hooliganism in the city.³⁴ The Moscow city Party committee representative at the Komsomol conference, Marchenko, insisted that Vavilov’s comments were too extreme, since “the situation in Moscow is not that frightening”. The transcript of the conference indicates that, in a clear breach of election conference protocol, one delegate shouted out, “Sokol’niki and the Gorkii Park of Culture and Leisure have a lot of problems” with hooliganism.³⁵ These two incidents illustrate how Komsomol members used election conferences to address issues they felt required attention, even if this meant going against the Komsomol hierarchy and expressing strong criticism of its actions.

In some instances, the disparities between Komsomol members and their elected officials grew too great to be addressed through criticisms of single issues and resulted in broad confrontations in which cliques of Komsomol members removed some or all of the Komsomol leadership and elected new members to the committee. In one case, a memoir by Ronkin, a former Komsomol patrol member, describes how he and his patrol friends who studied at a Leningrad institute in the mid-1950s decided to seize power in their institute’s Komsomol committee. They brought their friends together and managed to elect several people, including Ronkin himself, to the Komsomol committee of the institute. Once in the leadership, they promoted issues such as making political education not obligatory, and called for a radical struggle against alcoholism. These activities, in Ronkin’s words, aimed to “try to return its ‘true’ face to

33 TsAOPIM, f. 635, op. 13, d. 267, l. 279.

34 TsAOPIM, f. 635, op. 13, d. 484, ll. 204–07.

35 TsAOPIM, f. 635, op. 13, d. 484, l. 249. For a list of critical statements made at Komsomol conferences, see RGASPI, f. M–1, op. 3, d. 1028.

the Komsomol” (Ronkin 2003, 120). De-emphasizing political education and speaking out against alcohol, and returning a “true” face to the Komsomol—a phrase reminiscent of “socialism with a human face”—mark Ronkin’s clique as a group of reformist, ideologically committed young people striving to improve the USSR. Other memoirists recall similar factional struggles in their institutes (Shakhnazarov 2001).

Intriguingly, data suggest that such conflicts in elections occurred even after Khrushchev’s removal from office in 1964. Returning to the MSU physics department in 1966, we witness another student uprising due to outrage at the activities of the Komsomol secretary Borish Ishkhanov, who was too conformist for the wishes of the university administration, which saw a new committee voted in (Kovaleva 2003, 98). A student at the physics department, Volodia, recalled the organization of this election coup. The students met in dormitories, led by student activists: they “strategized how, who, and what should be said, and how to vote”. Volodia agitated for his classmates to vote against the current Komsomol committee, and helped make sure that more pluralistically-oriented Komsomol officials would be elected to lead the physics department Komsomol committee that year.³⁶ In doing so, the Komsomol members of the MSU physics department used the opportunities and resources made available by the institution of elections to pursue their own agenda.

One of the fundamental practices that enabled the Party leadership to maintain control over the system involved higher-level organs appointing lower-level officials, even if the rules called for such cadres to be elected from below. Such methods characterized the Komsomol as well, and, in the Khrushchev era, Komsomol members occasionally opposed such appointments. In most cases, as recalled by Ol’ga as well as many others, young people considered serving as the secretary of a primary cell organization or in another lower-level capacity less a privilege than a duty requiring extra work. Ol’ga herself was elected after several people took themselves out of the running, and did not experience any particular joy over her election.³⁷ Occasionally, though, controversies arose, particularly when higher-level Komsomol organizations imposed candidates whom the Komsomol members disliked, as Anatolii suggests. In these situations, a higher-level official would come to a primary Komsomol meeting, for example at a university class, suggest a candidate, “and look meaningfully

³⁶ Volodia, interviewed November 7, 2008.

³⁷ Ol’ga, interviewed December 25, 2008.

at the hall". Since the voting was an open process, by voting against the proposed candidate, a youth placed her- or himself in direct opposition to the university-wide Komsomol committee. Still, Anatolii underlines the fact that young people certainly could, and did, enter such conflicts, and found ways of achieving their aims. One method involved going upward, to the next level of the hierarchy, and making reasoned arguments either against a candidate or for a different candidate. A credible criticism of a candidate may have been that the candidate "is rude", while supporting a candidate may have involved highlighting her or his achievements at work. To some extent, this was a political game, one in which, as Anatolii recalls, the Komsomol members "needed somehow to make an argument in such a way that the real motives did not shine through".³⁸ The Komsomol hierarchy also occasionally imposed leaders on associations under the command of the Komsomol, such as Komsomol patrols. Ronkin describes how at one point their university Komsomol committee installed a patrol leader from outside of the patrol collective, and that this patrol leader, Fedorov, proved to be a poor leader who rarely went on patrols. As a result, the older members of the patrol, in opposition to the Komsomol committee, kicked Fedorov out and elected another leader, censuring the Komsomol committee for "imposing him from the top" (Ronkin 2003, 81–2).

Such criticism fitted perfectly with Khrushchev's policy of developing grassroots initiative and disparaging excessive bureaucracy, as the practice of installing lower-level, supposedly elected cadres by higher officials constituted one of the classic examples of the administrative methods censured by both Shelepin and Khrushchev. The KCC even specifically highlighted the fact that Komsomol election meetings in late 1963 and early 1964 frequently uncovered such problems. Documents for a March 1964 KCC resolution included a memorandum stating that "during elections the style of many Komsomol committees was seriously censured" by the grassroots Komsomol members. Such reprimands included the comment that "there is still a prevalence of directives from the top and a clear lack of questions coming from below, from primary organizations, directly from Komsomol members", and that Komsomol cadres "do not pay enough attention to suggestions and criticisms of Komsomol members".³⁹ These

38 Anatolii, interviewed December 12, 2008.

39 *Zapiska otdelov komsomol'skikh organov TsK VLKSM ob itogakh otchetov i vyborov v komsomole.* (Moscow: "Molodaia Gvardiia," 1964), 11.

comments again highlighted the Khrushchev-era Komsomol leadership's desire to unite with grassroots initiative, and against mid-level officials, in order to achieve meaningful reforms in the style of political work within the Komsomol.

Nonetheless, in certain instances, Komsomol election practices challenged not only the hard-line, militant cadres, but even the intentions of the Khrushchev leadership itself. One example involves the expulsion of misbehaving members, a process that required a majority vote from the Komsomol members of the cell to which that individual belonged. In the Thaw, this posed an unexpected difficulty to the Komsomol hierarchy. Indicating the importance of the matter, the KCC passed a resolution censuring the problems in the B. V. Shchukin Moscow theater institute. Apparently, a female student named Nechaeva frequently partied and had sexual relations with several prominent theater and arts personages, including a family man, while also studying poorly, and insulting her professors and service personnel. As a result, the institute director expelled her. The Komsomol members discussed her behavior at an October 1954 class conference, but "the 'sincere' repentance by Nechaeva was so 'touching' that some students at the conference cried, while the absolute majority of Komsomol members, including the Komsomol secretary, asked the institute administration to re-admit Nechaeva into the institute".⁴⁰ The requirement for voting on expelling members, a simple rubber-stamp procedure in the late Stalin years, now posed a significant challenge, illustrating how young people could manipulate practices associated with elections to achieve personal, private goals that did not accord with the aim of building communism.

In an even more direct challenge to the Khrushchev leadership's aims, criminal youth groups occasionally took over the Komsomol election procedures and used them in their own organization. A case in point was when a group of youths, influenced by the American movie *The Magnificent Seven*, created a criminal gang nicknamed "Alenushka". According to the February 1964 Moscow Komsomol city committee conference keynote speech, "all that they learned in the Komsomol, they actively used in their own work, holding meetings regularly, electing leaders in open elections, taking turns keeping the minutes, even collecting membership dues".⁴¹ Here, the Komsomol election practices informed the framework for the

40 RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 3, d. 869, l. 5.

41 TsAOPIIM, F. 635, op. 15, d. 188, ll. 51-52.

institutional structure of a criminal youth group. This case highlights the unexpectedly negative consequences of young people expressing agency through elections during the years of the Thaw even for the Khrushchev leadership.

Conclusion

Using postwar and Khrushchev-era archival and published sources, as well as contemporary memoirs and interviews, I have demonstrated how young people wrote themselves into the election narrative by participating in the organization of elections to the Supreme Soviet and local soviets. These young people, for the most part activist Komsomol members, helped legitimize the state by promoting and normalizing the Soviet “elections without choice”, both through their direct function as agitators and performers, and through lending their youthfulness to the service of the state, allowing the government to appear as if it expressed the desires of the next generation. Concomitantly, agitation at these elections and amateur arts concerts devoted to them also functioned politically to socialize young people by teaching them how to behave according to the political requirements of the Soviet state, and they imbibed communist ideology through their choice to engage in behavior with heavy ideological content.

To a degree, therefore, elections should be seen as part of a spectrum of Soviet celebrations, perhaps similar to the role elections played in other authoritarian contexts, such as the GDR, Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. Elections, in parallel to other Soviet festivals, functioned to legitimize the state by offering its citizens a sociopolitical contract that provided them with the chance to receive pleasure from participating in the celebratory elements of elections. Those who chose to experience pleasure engaged in an agentic, if passive, affirmation of the Soviet government, a conclusion that suggests the need to examine further the softer aspects of dictatorial dominance as social practice.

While this remained true of youth engagement in elections to the Soviet government organs in both the Stalin and Khrushchev years, elections to Komsomol organizations changed under Khrushchev, highlighting both the breaks and continuities associated with the ascendancy of a new leadership. Some activist Komsomol members at the grassroots, building on

statements from the leadership encouraging Komsomol democracy and on criticism from below of bureaucracy, began to introduce controversy into election conferences. Acting as a “loyal opposition”, these young people, while demonstrating public concordance with the pronouncements of the Thaw era Kremlin and the goal of building communism, used the previously formulaic, rubber-stamp election conferences to make their voices heard and achieve their goals, and thereby challenged the unwritten rules of the game. These conflicts, played out within elections to local and even regional Komsomol committees, habitually pitted pluralistic Komsomol members, in alliance with the top leadership and local soft-line officials, against conservative local bureaucrats. Arguably, this functioned to legitimize the central government in the eyes of young people, and also enabled the post-Stalin Kremlin to weaken hard-liners and therefore to ease the passage of various reforms. At the same time, what was no less important was the goal of teaching young people to take the initiative in solving social problems, since the eschatological goal of the Soviet project—communist utopia—meant, in the view of the Khrushchev leadership, the withering away of the government and the emergence of social self-rule, which involved the engagement of citizens in elections. Further research is needed to determine the extent to which Thaw era young people acted as the “loyal opposition” in elections.

Occasionally, though, Komsomol elections caused problems for the Thaw era Party leaders, such as when the mass of local Komsomol youths refused to expel their friends, or when Komsomol democratic forms became co-opted by underground organizations. Overall, Komsomol elections under Khrushchev demonstrate that ordinary citizens of communist states could, in certain cases, effectively express their agency and represent their interests vis-à-vis various authorities through elections that, while not determining higher governing bodies, certainly had great significance to young people themselves. This also happened in elections in authoritarian states besides Soviet youth elections—for example, when workers voted in elections to worker councils in Czechoslovakia, as described in this volume by Peter Heumos. Furthermore, in line with a number of other contributions in this volume, this chapter demonstrates that previously conformist “elections without choice” had the potential, in times of change and uncertainty, to transform an instrument of political socialization dominated by the state into a source of instability and even subversion, into something that more directly served the interests of the populace.

The shift to more democratic, open, and meaningful elections within the Komsomol in the post-Stalin years helps illustrate important differences between the Soviet authoritarian model and those in Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. In the Soviet Union, the concept of “democratic centralism” formed an important component of the intra-Communist Party political culture from the very beginning. While conveniently ignored by the Party leadership for long periods, at other times—such as the Thaw or the Gorbachev years—the concept could be drawn upon by the reform-oriented top leaders who held power during this time to promote their reformist initiatives by appealing to popular support. In contrast, in Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, there was no concept of “democratic centralism”, and therefore there was less leeway for more democratic elections.

My findings suggest that only one of the four categories proposed by Patzelt is applicable to youth engagement in elections to Soviet governing bodies, and that none of them is applicable to elections within the Komsomol itself. Therefore, the model needs to be modified, and I would suggest two concrete adjustments. First, the model needs to introduce a chronological element in order to acknowledge the importance of changes in election patterns within an authoritarian system, such as the Soviet Union’s transition from Stalin to Khrushchev. Secondly, it should take greater account of the ideological goals of certain authoritarian states, as they may well play crucial roles in shaping elections, as we witnessed for Komsomol elections in the post-Stalin Soviet Union, which were designed to promote societal self-management in the idealized communist future. A fifth function of elections might then be “ideological advancement”, when elections have explicitly ideological goals.

Jessen’s and Richter’s introduction raises the question of whether authoritarian elections contribute to state legitimacy. In my view, youth engagement in the more democratic elections to the Komsomol in the Khrushchev era probably strengthened the loyalty of young people since they felt represented in the political system. Ironically, though, these elections might actually have delegitimized the Soviet system in the long run, since, when these young people grew up and voted in elections without any choice to local government councils, they probably experienced disillusionment with the Soviet system. And this disillusionment may well have contributed to the increasing delegitimization of the Soviet system in the later Brezhnev years.

Bibliography

- Alekseeva, Ludmilla and Paul Goldberg (1990). *The Thaw Generation: Coming of Age in the Post-Stalin Era*. Boston: Little, Brown.
- Aksiutin, Iu. V. (2004). *Khrushchenskaia "Ottepel'" i obshchestvennye nastroyeniia v SSSR v 1953–1964 gg.* Moscow: ROSSPEN.
- Appadurai, Arjun (1996). *Modernity at Large*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Bittner, Stephen (2008). *The Many Lives of Khrushchev's Thaw: Experience and Memory in Moscow's Arbat*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Breslauer, George (1980). Khrushchev Reconsidered. In Stephen F. Cohen, Alexander Rabinowitch, and Robert Sharlet (eds.). *The Soviet Union since Stalin*, 50–70. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Brusilovskaia, L. B. (2001). *Kul'tura povsednevnosti v epokhu "ottepeli": metamorfozy stilia*. Moscow: Izdatel'stvo URAO.
- Bushnell, John (1990). *Moscow Graffiti: Language and Subculture*. Boston: Unwin Hyman.
- Cohen, Stephen F. (1980). The Friends and Foes of Change: Reformism and Conservatism in the Soviet Union. In Stephen F. Cohen, Alexander Rabinowitch, and Robert Sharlet (eds.). *The Soviet Union since Stalin*, 11–31. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Condee, Nancy (2000). Uncles, Deviance, and Ritual Combat: The Cultural Codes of Khrushchev's Thaw. In William Taubman, Sergei Khrushchev, and Abbott Gleason (eds.). *The Khrushchev Era: A Reappraisal*, 160–76. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Dobson, Miriam (2009). *Khrushchev's Cold Summer: Gulag Returnees, Crime, and the Fate of Reform after Stalin*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Edele, Mark (2002). Strange Young Men in Stalin's Moscow: The Birth and Life of the Stiliagi, 1945–1953. *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, 50, 1, 37–61.
- Esakov, V.D. and E.S. Levina (2005). *Stalinskie "sudy chesti": delo "KR."* Moscow: Nauka.
- Fisher, Ralph Talcott Jr. (1959). *Pattern for Soviet Youth: A Study of the Congresses of the Komsomol, 1918–1954*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Fitzpatrick, Sheila (2006). Social Parasites: How Tramps, Idle Youth, and Busy Entrepreneurs Impeded the Soviet March to Communism. *Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique*, 47, 1–2, 1–32.
- (2004). Politics as Practice: Thoughts on a New Soviet Political History. *Kritika*, 5, 1, 27–54.
- Fürst, Juliane (2006). The Importance of Being Stylish: Youth, Culture and Identity in Late Stalinism. In Juliane Fürst (ed.). *Late Stalinist Russia: Society between Reconstruction and Reinvention*, 209–30. New York: Routledge.
- (2010). *Stalin's Last Generation: Soviet Youth and the Emergence of Mature Socialism, 1945–56*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- , Polly Jones, and Susan Morrissey (2008). The Relaunch of the Soviet Project, 1945–64: Introduction. *The Slavonic and East European Review*, 86, 2, 201–07.
- Gaponov, Iu. V., S. K. Kovaleva, and A. V. Kessenikh (2002). Studencheskie vystupleniia 1953 goda na fizfakе MSU kak sotsial'noe echo atomnogo proekta. In *Istoria atomnogo proekta vyp. 2*. 01.01.2009 at <http://russcience.euro.ru/papers/gkk02ap.htm>.
- Gorsuch, Anne E. (2002). *Youth in Revolutionary Russia: Enthusiasts, Bobemians, Delinquents*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Grossberg, Lawrence (1992). *We Gotta Get Out of This Place: Popular Conservatism and Postmodern Culture*. New York: Routledge.
- Hessler, Julie (2004). *A Social History of Soviet Trade: Trade Policy, Retail Practices, and Consumption, 1917–1953*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Ilic, Melanie (2009). Introduction. In Melanie Ilic and Jeremy Smith (eds.). *Soviet State and Society under Nikita Khrushchev*, 1–8. New York: Routledge.
- Jones, Polly (2006). The Dilemmas of De-Stalinization. In Polly Jones (ed.). *The Dilemmas of De-Stalinization: Negotiating Cultural and Social Change in the Khrushchev Era*, 1–18. New York: Routledge.
- Kassof, Allen (1965). *The Soviet Youth Program: Regimentation and Rebellion*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Konecny, Peter (1999). *Builders and Deserters: Students, State, and Community in Leningrad, 1917–1941*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Kovaleva, S. K. (2003). *Ty pomnish', fizfakе? Neformal'nye traditsii fizfaka MGU*. Moscow: Pomatur.
- Krylova, Anna (2010). *Women in Combat: Writing Shared History of Violence on the Eastern Front, 1930s–1980s*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Lenin, V.I. (1982). *Uchitsia kommunizmu, kniga 1. V. I. Lenin, KPSS: o partiinom rukovodstve komsomola*, Moscow: Izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury.
- Park, Soo-Hoon (1993). *Party Reform and "Volunteer Principle" under Khrushchev in Historical Perspective*. Ph.D. diss., Columbia University.
- Petrone, Karen (2000). *Life Has Become More Joyous, Comrades: Celebrations in the Time of Stalin*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Pilkington, Hilary (1994). *Russia's Youth and its Culture: A Nation's Constructors and Constructed*. New York: Routledge.
- Riordan, James (ed.). (1989). *Soviet Youth Culture*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- Rolfe, Malte (2000). Constructing a Soviet Time: Bolshevik Festivals and Their Rivals during the First Five-Year Plan. A Study of the Central Black Earth Region. *Kritika*, 1, 3, 447–73.
- (2009). *Sovetskie massovyie prazdniki*. Moscow: ROSSPEN.
- Ronkin, V. E. (2003). *Na smenu dekabriam prikhdiait ianvari: vospominaniia byvshego brigadmir'tsa i podpol'shchika, a pozzhe—politzakliuchennogo i dissidenta*. Moscow: Obshchestvo "Memorial": Izd-vo "Zven'ia".
- Shakhnazarov, G. Kh. (2001). *S vozhdiamy i bez nikh*. Moscow: Vagrius.

- Silina, L. V. (2004). *Nastroeniia sovetskogo studenchestva, 1945–1964*. Moscow: Russkii mir.
- Stites, Richard (1992). *Russian Popular Culture: Entertainment and Society since 1900*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Taubman, William (2003). *Khrushchev: The Man and His Era*. New York: W. W. Norton.
- Tromly, Benjamin K. (2007). *Re-Imagining the Soviet Intelligentsia: Student Politics and University Life, 1948–1964*. Ph. D. diss., Harvard University.
- Tsentral'noe Statisticheskoe Upravlenie (1963). *Itogi vsesoiuznoi perepisi naseleniia 1959 goda, RSFSR*. Moscow.
- Tsipursky, Gleb (forthcoming, 2011). Coercion and Consumption: The Khrushchev Leadership's Ruling Style in the Campaign against "Westernized" Youth, 1954–64. In William J. Risch and Kate Transchel (eds.). *The Socialist Beat in the Soviet Bloc*. Lanham: Lexington Books.
- (2010). "As a Citizen, I Cannot Ignore These Facts": Whistleblowing in the Khrushchev Era. *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, 58, 1, 52–69.
- (2008). Citizenship, Deviance, and Identity: Soviet Youth Newspapers as Agents of Social Control in the Thaw era Leisure Campaign. *Cahiers du monde russe*, 49, 4, 629–49.
- Vail, P. L. and A. A. Genis (1988). *60-e. Mir sovetskogo cheloveka*. Ann Arbor: Ardis.
- Zubkova, Elena (1998). *Russia after the War: Hopes, Illusions, and Disappointments, 1945–1957*. Armonk: M. E. Sharpe.

Mass Obedience: Practices and Functions of Elections in the German Democratic Republic¹

Hedwig Richter

The Soviet army occupied East Poland on September 17, 1939. The rural areas were on the brink of falling into chaos. Only few roads were passable and there was hardly any electricity available. Refugees and defeated soldiers were roaming the countryside. Nevertheless, for the occupiers, the organization of elections took priority. In order to bring the Ukrainian and Belarusian areas under the control of the Soviet power, the population were supposed to elect a representative and give their consent for Ukraine and Belarus to be unified within the Soviet Union as early as October. For the first time, the communist superpower exported its system of voting, dating from 1937, to another European country: elections, which in an official sense were universal, fair, direct and secret (Constitution of the Soviet Republic from 1936, article 135–140).

The methods for realizing and enforcing the elections would prove to be paradigmatic for communist state elections. At the forefront lay a massive campaign, the core being made up of the electoral assemblies in the factories or tenements. At these involuntary meetings, the agitators would often hold speeches in Russian, a language that the Poles didn't understand. When the inhabitants of a village refused to take part in the meeting, the vicinity was burned to the ground. However, the new authorities also used incentives, promising to provide tractors, employment and good food. What is remarkable is the ignorance of the voters. It is probable that the majority of the electorate had no idea what they were voting for (Alexander 2003, 313; Gross 1986).

The voting procedure also proved to be typical of state-socialist elections: the electorate had to vote as early in the day as possible. Those refus-

¹ Significant research for this article took place during my postdoctoral studies in Prague, enabled by the Institute of Contemporary History, Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic and the Center for Contemporary History Potsdam in summer 2008. On this subject see also Richter 2009a, 283–295.

ing to do so later received reduced food rations, or were arrested or deported. Election helpers would collect votes using “flying ballot boxes”. The ballot papers, the ballot boxes and the voting booths demonstrated the orientation towards the electoral standards of the West for fair, i.e. secret ballots. At the same time, the authorities did everything they could to circumvent the officially propagated secret ballot. The whole event was staged by the Soviets as a celebration. Colorful bunting and banners with political slogans were hung all over the vicinity. Musical ensembles played. The election resulted in nearly 100 per cent turnout and assent (Gross 1986, 13–22).

What did the holders of power hope to achieve with such elections, especially as the Soviets had made no secret of their ambivalent and broken relationship to democracy, and the fact that communist ideology did not acknowledge the principle of majority rule (Beyme 1966, 1139–1153; Diedrich 1966, 813)? Why go to so much trouble and expenditure, repeated in every other state-socialist country, albeit with lessening brutality? Why didn’t the Soviet Union under Stalin create an appropriate electoral system according to its needs? Why did the Soviet Union feel not only obliged to conduct elections, but also to use the framework that had been developed by the Western world to guarantee the electoral freedom of the individual (Mergel 2005; Crook and Crook 2011)?

Political scientists and the few historians who have dealt with the topic of elections under dictatorships interpret dictatorial modeled elections mainly as a failed attempt to create the appearance of being democratic (Leng 1969, 1170–1227; Hübner 1997, Jesse and Löw (eds.) 1998, Kloth 2000, Herz 2004; Nohlen 2009, 29–36). However, the hermeneutic categories that perceive elections as necessarily free and democratic and the predominant perspective from political science blind us to the cultural importance of elections in state-socialist dictatorships. Therefore, in order to work out the analytical value of these elections, it would seem to make more sense to take a cultural historical approach. In doing so, I will orient myself methodologically towards a cultural history of politics. In this context, it is of particular interest to follow the process of the “performative shift” that Alexei Yurchak recognized for Soviet society (Yurchak 2006). By focussing on the practices and the actors, the “culture of voting” (Romain Bertrand) will be investigated. In order to do this, it is important to have an understanding of state control, which apart from the aspect of violence also takes into consideration the social aspect of exercising power

and perceives state dominance as a reciprocal process. With the aid of this cultural historical approach and the concept of social dominance two hypotheses will be investigated: firstly, elections in communist states cannot simply be interpreted as façades; instead they exhibit functions different to Western democratic elections. Secondly, elections in state-socialism demonstrate the attractiveness and unavoidability of the “modern” Western democratic model in the 20th century.

Using these propositions as a starting point and using the GDR as an example I will investigate state-socialist elections in three stages: first, I will employ an ethnological approach to describe the material setting and the techniques of the elections. After that, I will undertake a small historical excursion in which I will look at the communist understanding of elections before 1945. Finally, I will seek to analyze state-socialist elections, by questioning their functions.

Practice and Technique of the Elections

Western Democratic Technique and Dictatorial Practice

By guaranteeing universal, equal, direct and secret elections in their constitution, i.e. the four pillars of election fairness that had developed in the Western world in order to guarantee equality, the state-socialists not only upheld the requirements of democratic standards (constitution of the GDR, 1949, Article 51; constitution of the GDR 1974, article 54), they also sought to live up to Western norms. This is evident in the use of election techniques and materiality: officially, there was supposed to be a standardized voting ballot, voting booths and ballot boxes. These methods of holding a secret ballot, which had been developed in the Western world in the 19th Century, were implemented in Germany in 1903 with the support of the Social Democrats (Crook and Crook 2011; Buchstein 2000).

In the case at hand, it is remarkable and in need of explanation how strongly Western election norms came through, as it required an enormous organizational and material effort for the ruling powers to outwit the Australian ballot. The GDR government had also permitted a multiple party system pro forma. The question why the communists officially didn't distance themselves from the Western election techniques, which were so closely tied to the idea of individual political rights, is of importance for an

understanding of state-socialist elections and therefore should remain a focus.

Election Campaigns

Great importance was placed on the election campaigns in the GDR, which were also described as “an election movement”. The functionaries wanted to use the campaigns to reach as many of the electorate as possible and to ensure their participation in the election. Because of this they went to great lengths.² Election events, which were ordered from above, took place all over the country: in the villages and towns, in factories or in housing associations, for particular groups such as women, priests or for young voters. In the meetings, Party functionaries and candidates gave speeches on topics that had been specified by the *Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands* (SED—Socialist Unity Party of Germany). In 1961, for example, the election slogan was “With the freedom pact for the freedom and unity of the nation, with socialism for the happiness of the people”.³ The speakers explained the socialist policy and asked the electorate to increase their commitment to the state. In return, the electorate had to declare “voluntary commitments” (“*Selbstverpflichtungen*”). In a coalmine, for example, the workers agreed to increase the production of briquettes by ten thousand tons above the planned target during an election meeting in 1958.⁴

The talks held at the end of the event were of interest for the voters. At this point, they were able to state their problems. It was possible to give “electors’ remits” (“*Wähleraufträge*”) to the candidates, to lobby the building of a road or to improve nursery care, for example. However, the candidates had instructions from their superiors to only accept the election pleas that were feasible “within the framework of our plans”.⁵ In 1958, for example, the farmers who did not yet belong to an agricultural cooperative by that time demanded a reduced workload in exchange for their votes.

2 Files in Bundesarchiv DO 1 / 8705, 11872, 11905, 11909, 11910; HStA Drd. 11430, No. 10847.

3 “Mit dem Friedensvertrag zu Frieden und Einheit der Nation, mit dem Sozialismus zum Glück des Volkes”, Speech by the deputy election leader from the election of 17.9.1961, Bundesarchiv DO 1 / 11872.

4 Bundesarchiv DO 1 / 11909.

5 “Im Rahmen unserer Pläne realisierbar”, Bundesarchiv DO 1 / 11872, especially speech held at the parliamentary meeting in 1961; compare to Merl’s essay in this volume.

This was not part of the “plan”. Subsequently, individual talks were held with the farmers to negotiate a “price” for their votes that was acceptable for both sides.⁶ The bargaining over votes and the fight for every single citizen greatly characterized the election movement, as will be shown below.

Election Day and Polling

The Election Day itself was celebrated as a festival. First time voters received flowers, bands played and funfairs and dancing created a bustling atmosphere. The official iconography presented the event as a family celebration, showing dynamic voters in their Sunday best, often hand in hand with their children (Hronek 1954; Merl 2007, 527). Early turnout at the ballot box was seen as a sign of great loyalty. In a surveillance report, it was noted: “A great political receptiveness is displayed by, amongst other things, the fact that in 12 constituencies 100 per cent of eligible voters had cast their vote by 7am”.⁷ The high turnout was an integral feature, and in actual fact, since about the end of the fifties only very few citizens stayed away from the polling stations.

There was no possibility to mark the ballot card with a cross. There was just the “Einheitsliste” printed on it, a single list of candidates, who had been preselected under the instructions of the SED. The voters were expected to simply fold the piece of paper and place it in the ballot box, and thereby give their consent to the compulsory list of candidates. Officially, it was possible for citizens to express their disagreement by way of the ballot. However, hardly anyone knew how this could be put into practice: were you supposed to mark individual candidates, or was it enough to draw a line through the ballot paper or did you have to cross out each candidate, as civil rights campaigners later claimed? When the vote was counted, the election helpers tended to add the few ballots that were crossed through to the votes in favor (Jessen 1998, 67).

6 Central Election Office. GDR government, the Home Office; analysis on the lead up to the elections in the People’s Parliament and district council, 23.12.1958, Bundesarchiv DO 1 / 11909.

7 “Die große politische Aufgeschlossenheit der Bürger findet seinen [sic] Ausdruck u. a. darin, dass bis 7 Uhr schon in 12 Gemeinden 100% der wahlberechtigten Bürger ihre Stimme abgaben”, short report on the constituency of Gera, not dated, BL of the SED Gera IV A–2/13/691.

The polling area corresponded to the need for absolute results: the election helpers handed out the ballot paper at tables that were positioned right next to the ballot box. The polling booth, required by law, was placed far from the table and the ballot box. One voter, who went against the protocol later reported: “The walk to the polling booth took forever. It was a terrible moment. Every step resounded loudly. I felt as if all eyes were upon me. And then the walk back to the ballot box—it was awful.” Others said that the scratching sound of the pencil was audible as they crossed out the candidates’ names on the ballot. Whoever deviated from the norm had to demonstratively put themselves bodily and spatially outside of society.⁸

Monitoring

In order to circumvent the standards for a secret ballot, stringent supervision was inevitable. It was easy to identify who had marked the ballot paper, as it was very rare that someone would use the polling booth—the majority of voters simply folded the ballot. In the GDR, there were countless institutions that served as a surveillance authority: the state and the SED authorities, the bloc parties, the State Security and the electoral committees, which were made up of Party members and state staff.⁹ On the day of the election, working independently, they had to pass on information to the next highest authority and afterwards write concluding reports.¹⁰ By the early hours of the morning, the first telegrams containing election information had already reached Berlin. Over the course of the day the reports were continuously updated.¹¹ The observers not only reported on participation or non-participation, but also on the use of polling

8 Interviews with East Germans, Berlin, Dresden, Juni – September 2008, files H. Richter.

9 E.g. Election report in ACDP (Archiv für Christlich-Demokratische Politik) 111–50–002/1 and 11–209–030/1; Papers from Thüringen StA Rudolstadt, district head of the SED Gera IV / A–2 / 14 / 696 and IV 2 / 14 / 1195.

10 Official Instructions “The following to report up until 21:00”, addressed to the district leader, n.d., ACDP II–209, 044/10.

11 Bericht Beteiligung der Pfarrer an den Wahlen, RdK (Rat des Kreises) Löbau an RdB Drd. (Rat des Bezirkes Dresden), December 10, 1965, HStA Drd. (Hauptstaatsarchiv Dresden) 11430, No. 10849; SED-Informationsbericht Kreis Löbau, October, 18, 1954, HStA Drd. 11864, No. IV/4/09.085; Protokoll Sitzung des RdS Herrnhut, October 21, 1954, Stadtarchiv Herrnhut; files in Thüringisches StA Rudolstadt, Bezirksleitung der SED Gera IV / A–2 / 14 / 696.

booths, often giving the names of the respective persons. Reports mentioned markings on the ballot paper or the behavior of the spouse.¹²

But citizens also watched themselves. A non-voter brought the anger of the collectives in the workplace and the housing community upon herself, because everyone could be punished for her misconduct, for example, the withdrawal of the usual bonuses for their work. In the evening, functionaries from the SED and other parties and “mass organizations” went from door to door with the “flying ballot box” to collect votes from stubborn members of the community. This proved to be embarrassing for both the officials controlling and those being policed if there was an encounter between colleagues or friends, for example. By the 1960s, at the latest, even in relatively isolated villages where the SED had little influence, the elections worked like clockwork. Most of the electorate had the feeling that they didn’t have much to do with the elections, but nearly everyone contributed to their success (Richter 2009a, 283–295).

Those able to withstand the pressure from the authorities and the social control from others, and avoid being a cog in the wheel had to display extraordinary civil courage. The clergy, in particular, stand out in the sources documenting the practices of voting in East Germany. In the 1970s as well as in the two previous decades, the election turnout by the clergy was sometimes less than fifteen per cent in Dresden, the most resistant constituency. During the 1950s and 1960s the electoral turnout was around 50 per cent on average for Catholic and Protestant churchmen in the GDR, rising to ca. 80 per cent in the 1970s and 1980s, and therefore lay far below the average of the total population.¹³

12 SAPMO (Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR) DY 30/ IV 2 /14/16–17, 21 and in the district archive of Löbau-Zittau, RdK Löbau 230.

13 Übersicht Wahlbeteiligung von Pfarrern, July 7, 1967, ACDP III–045–125/3; vorläufige Zusammenfassung der Wahlbeteiligung kirchlicher Amtsträger, RdB Drd., Sektor Staatspolitik und Kirchenfragen, October 17, 1976, HStA Drd. 11857, No. IV C–2/14/675; cf. HStA Drd. 11430, No. 11028 u. 10994; Bericht Entwicklung des Anteils der konfessionell gebundenen Bürger, RdB Drd., September 7, 1970, 3; Gesamtergebnis der Wahlbeteiligung, Kirchenbereich, Bundesarchiv DY 30 IV B 2/14/70; files in Bundesarchiv DY 30 IV A2/14/4 u. DY 30 IV 2/14/21; Wahlbeteiligung der Amtsträger, November 14, 1971, HStA Drd. 11430, No. 10994; files in SAPMO DY 30 / IV A 2/14/4; information by Heidrun Küchler, Dresden, 12.7.2007, files H. Richter.

Historical Excursus: The Secret and Free Ballot in Germany

In order to understand the paradox of state-socialist elections that lay between superficially mimicking democratic liberal standards on the one hand and dictatorial communist electoral aims and policing on the other, it is helpful to take a look at the communist understanding of elections before 1945.

The history of elections could have provided the communists with plenty of examples for collective elections and public acclamations. The standardized elections of the West, with the attempt to express the wishes of the individual, are by no means the norm in the history of elections and are a relatively late development. Furthermore, several political theories offered a basis for the justification that an elite or cadre should dominate an election, even if the majority were allowed to take part in it (Boberach 1959; O'Leary 1962; Kühne 1994). Why, for example, did the SED not refer to Rousseau and his idea of "Volonté Générale", so that the Party could distance itself from the high esteemed position of the individual in the West and the corresponding election techniques? Why did the Party not call upon the various election modi that existed in the Soviet Union before 1937, which didn't meet the standards for a secret ballot (Goldman 2007)?

During the time of the German Empire, German socialists always counted amongst those who campaigned for secret and fair elections. To be sure, the 19th century socialists, like their competitors, manipulated the elections as much as they could after the introduction of the universal and equal male suffrage in the German Empire in 1871, and in doing so circumvented the stipulated conditions of secrecy. They controlled workers or small traders at the polling station or made it appear as if voters had moved to hard-fought constituencies to increase the number of loyal supporters. The "social democratic terrorism", as their opponents polemically denounced it, was notorious. However, the Social Democrats remained convinced that fair, meaning secret, equal, direct, and universal elections would benefit them, with the result that they virulently defended them on the national level. After all, they had to campaign for a form of participation that would live up to their demands for equality. However, although communists and social democrats had also protested against the dictatorial election practices during the Nazi era, there was no evidence of this historical commitment to free elections to be found within the SED. The univer-

sal electoral tradition in Germany was probably much more decisive. In general, the German electorate displayed a growing awareness for the importance of universal and equal suffrage at a national level as early as the 19th Century (Anderson 2000). The turnout increased steadily, rising to 84.5 per cent in the final poll in 1912. Citizens of the empire registered with pride the complexity of the election procedure, which for them was inseparable from civility and modernity. In 1897, a liberal newspaper noted: “We don’t believe that anything has ever existed on this earth, neither in its scope and scale nor in its refinement and technical accomplishment which can compare to the election apparatus that exists in all civilized countries” (“Bremen, 17. Oktober”, *Weser Zeitung*, October 17, 1897).¹⁴ The conservative parties soon saw the advanced election laws, which had been installed by Bismarck, as a mistake, and argued against electoral equality.¹⁵ Despite this, they also recognized that suffrage was a political hot potato, and to interfere with it would mean being punished in the elections.¹⁶ In the Weimar Republic, women received the right to vote—compared internationally, this was quite early—meaning that the German suffrage became markedly progressive at a national level. The National Socialists did not dare to fundamentally change the political franchise and kept the material setting with standardized ballots papers, ballot boxes or voting booths (cf. the contributions by Frank Omland and Markus Urban in this volume).

Not least because of this historical hypothec—the fight for free and equal elections—the leadership of the KPD advocated a “parliamentary democratic republic with all democratic rights and freedom for the people”, at the end of the war (*Aufruf des Zentralkomitees der KPD*, in: *Deutsche Volkszeitung*, June 13, 1945). This policy was embedded in the Soviet Union’s general efforts to add a veneer of democracy to the state restructuring taking place in the Soviet Occupation Zone in order to obtain international legitimacy (Richter 2009b, 11–25). Because of this, the Soviet Union refrained from implementing its dictatorial electoral practice, as they

14 “Wir glauben nicht, dass es je zuvor auf Erden etwas gegeben hat, was mit den in allen civilisirten Ländern existierenden Wahlapparaten auch nur von ferne verglichen werden könnte, weder an Umfang und Massenhaftigkeit, noch an Raffinement und technischer Vollendung.”

15 “Die sächsischen Konservativen und das Reichstagswahlrecht”, *Berliner Tagblatt*, November 16, 1897; “Parteigenossen! Wähler!”, in: *Vorwärts*, April 10, 1898; cf. Lässig 1998, 139–145; Arsenschek 2003.

16 Bundesarchiv, Reichlandbunds R8034, II, No. 5072–5080; Bönker 2010, 68–93.

had in Poland in 1939. In actual fact, the municipal, county council and *Länder* elections of the Soviet Occupation Zone in 1946 proved to be relatively open despite some repression. However, the authorities were shocked that the elections didn't result in the desired resounding endorsement (Bienert 2008). This blow altered the German communists' understanding of elections fundamentally. Up to this point, they had assumed that free elections would benefit them. Now they had to recognize that even after the Nazi dictatorship, the people did not show willing for socialism. Before the "Workers' and Peasants' State" was founded, an official stated in an internal meeting, "once we establish a government we will never give it up, be it through elections or any other methods" (cited by Mählert 2007, 54).¹⁷

In the elections of 1950—one year after the German Democratic Republic has been founded—the authorities turned to the electoral experiences of the Soviet Union and installed the single list. This not only meant the end of competition and electoral freedom, but also led to an open voting procedure *de facto*. In a complicated fashion, the communists also made use of the same reasoning as their former adversaries in the German empire, taking the position that only a vote cast openly was worthy of an upright citizen: moreover, the welfare of the people would be at stake, and whoever wished to vote against it, should admit to this disgraceful deed. These were the arguments of those in total control and who, in spite of elections, wanted to hold onto it. Also the Leninist viewpoint, that only the advanced cadre should play a decisive role in the election, corresponded with conservative ideas of the dominant role of an elite that knew better than the people.¹⁸

The people, however, rebelled. Decades of a relatively free election tradition and a political mentality, formed by around 150 years of fighting for universal suffrage, could not be obliterated, even during the Nazi era. Many GDR citizens protested against the dictatorial election practice far into the 1950s. They felt that the electoral procedure and the alleged 99.7 per cent of votes in favor were a travesty and deeply humiliating, particu-

17 "Wenn wir eine Regierung gründen, geben wir sie niemals wieder auf, weder durch Wahlen noch andere Methoden".

18 "Parteigenossen! Wähler!", in *Vornwärts*, April 10, 1898; "Die Sozialdemokratie und die Landtagswahlen", in *Die Post*, October 10, 1897; "Zur Revision des Reichstagswahlrechts", in *BZ*, November 4, 1897, Bundesarchiv Reichslandbund R8034, II, 5075, S. 31; "Die Conservativen und das Reichstags-Wahlrecht", in *Mecklenburgische Nachrichten*, January 29, 1898.

larly as massive vote rigging was necessary to achieve these results right into the 1950s. Thomas Kühne has pointed out that changes to electoral suffrage are very difficult to put through. This is not only because the existing constitutional rights normally support those in power, as Kühne suggests, but also due to the popularity and meaning of elections in the society's political culture, when the society has a long tradition of electoral practice (Kühne 1998, 59). In an anonymous letter addressed to the authorities it was stated, "Even Adolf Hitler didn't manage to pull off such brazen debasement", and went on: "There has already been a result of 99 per cent! Do you remember? Something like this is only possible in totalitarian states."¹⁹ Bishop Ludolf Müller complained that the elections were "one of the most difficult and burdensome decisions of conscience" for the clergy to make.²⁰ In an SED report from 1956 it was stated: "The opponent" repeatedly attempts "to spread his argument about 'free elections' amongst the population", and amongst the population the opinion was still prevalent that: "People can vote everywhere in the world, except for in the GDR".²¹ Also, in the following year, the complaints did not diminish.²²

However, the people slowly got used to the new procedure. The pressure of the Stalinist years bore its fruit. An East German university chaplain described the mental development from the first election of 1950 to later elections: "Obviously, the majority of the population did not recognize as strongly in October [1950] the shame of such a caricature of political decision for which it was being used. Then, there had been reserved and bitter faces, now there was a resigned light-heartedness. One had got used to it [...]"²³ By the end of the 1950s, the elections functioned without a hitch.

19 "Eine solche schamlose Erniedrigung [...] hat nicht einmal Adolf Hitler zuwege gebracht [...] Es gab bereits einmal ein Ergebnis 99%! Entsinnen Sie sich? So etwas ist nur in totalitären Staaten möglich", anonymous letter, o.D., HStA Drd. 11420, No.54.

20 "eine der schwersten und bedrückendsten Gewissensentscheidungen", Evangelischer Bischof der Kirchenprovinz Sachsen, D. Müller, an Brüder im Amt, Reformationstag 1950, SAPMO-Bundesarchiv DY 30/ IV 2/14/16; cf. SED-Informationsbericht Kreis Löbau, May 13, 1957, HStA Drd. 11864, No. IV/4/09.086; Leidholdt, CDU-Vorsitzender, OV Lobenstein an KV Schleiz, August 5, 1950, ACDP II-209, 004/6.

21 SED report, District of Löbau, June 12, 1956, HStA Drd. 11864, No. IV/4/09.086.

22 e.g. Report SED-KL to SED-BL, May 13, 1957, HStA Drd. 11864, Nr IV/4/09.086.

23 Report "After the plebiscite of June 3rd, 1951" Strictly confidential, anon., archive ÖRK 213.13.155/1.

The Functions of State-socialist Elections

How could this election practice, which officially maintained liberal-democratic regulations including competition, multiple party system or ballot boxes, be explained? Obviously, the communists attributed totally different functions to the elections than was the case in the Western democracies. Thereby, the propagated official functions of elections can be distinguished from the informal ones.

Official Functions

In the GDR, as in most of the state-socialist regimes, three official functions of the elections can be identified throughout all changes. The first function, which comes as no surprise, serves the *legitimization of power*. Constitutions are, as “symbolic orders” (Vorländer 2006; cf. Rohe 1990, 329; Häberle 1982) invariably also a form of public presentation. The concept of elections in the GDR constitution was, not least because of this, aimed at the Western democratic hemisphere, in order to legitimize itself in the face of West Germany and abroad (Hahn 1988, 435).²⁴ In practice, of course, the state-socialist particularities had to be taken into consideration. Legitimization could not mean winning over the majority in competition with other ideas because of the monolithic ideology. Instead, a collective endorsement of the Marxist-Leninist truth was sought after, in a kind of acclamation of the ruling body. According to the argumentation of leading communist thinkers, socialist countries did not need the incentive of competitive elections, unlike capitalist countries, as the communist basis of the society was generally approved; an East German social scientist explained: “State and people are one in Socialism” (Eckler et al. 1975, 73). This key phrase of the ideology should be confirmed in socialist elections. The authorities could not offer up a doctrine of salvation for the people that could be rejected by the people. Because of this, the regime could not do without the high turnout and the high numbers of votes in favor.

The fundamental tension between the official election procedure and dictatorial practice led to a kind of performative self-contradiction, as it was the individual who voted, despite the function of collective acclama-

²⁴ Cf. HStA Drd. 11430, No. 10849, 10872 etc.

tion. This disparity impeded the degree to which the election generated legitimacy. For many voters, the use of Western election techniques kept the demands of an individual vote alive. In the discussions about elections, the electorate indicated time and again that the Western model was an obvious point of reference. Even for the state officials, the Federal Republic of Germany served as a model of comparison, as they constantly felt the need to dismiss the West German electoral practice. A certain kind of indifference, and often disgruntlement pervaded the population, even in the decades in which the elections ran smoothly, as the individual act of voting seemed pointless to many (Richter 2009a, 284). The flagrantly high election results also did little to achieve the desired recognition from abroad.²⁵ In particular, the permanent comparison to Western standards and the use of Western procedures meant that the potential for delegitimization was massive both at home and abroad (Ammer 1977).

The second official function of the elections was *mobilization*, which, above all, manifested itself during the prolonged election campaigns mentioned above. The people were supposed to realize the advantages of the system in which they lived and show their eagerness to put themselves out for society. As an East German social scientist maintained, “the individuals should commit themselves to the political and societal aims, as decided by the Party” (Poppe 1959). Western political scientists describe this as a “social economic function” to increase production (Vogel et al. 1969, 16). In the months leading up to the election, repair work, painting and other jobs were carried out, everywhere. A GDR citizen described how, surprised by the freshly painted door of the institute where she was working, she intuitively assumed that there must be elections coming up (Richter 2009a, 183–296).

A third official function was closely connected with the function of mobilization in state-socialism: elections served the *relaying of utopia*. They were supposed to bring the ultimate goal of the communist ideal society closer to the people. For that reason, it was necessary, during election time in particular, to strengthen the unity of state and citizens and to make more apparent the aims of communist politics (Feddersen 1965, 46). In this respect, it is understandable why the state-socialists staged the elections as a festive event. According to Jan Assmann the festival lights up “the background of our being, faded in the everyday”. During festivities, the collec-

25 HStA Drd. 11430, No. 10849 and 10872.

tive identity, which needs celebration and a break from everyday life, can be assured (Assman 2005, 53 and 57). The festival was supposed to represent the societal canon of values. Thus, the elections under state-socialism had to be a festival of consensus and uniformity; they drew the individual into line with the collective. The Czech social scientist Jiří Hronek explained in 1954 that the election campaigns revealed the deeper meaning of the socialist concept of society. The point was “to create a sustainable relationship” between governed and governing and to mobilize the citizens through discussions and self-commitment (Hronek 1954). The exceptional importance of election campaigns in many dictatorships and thereby the relativization of the voting act in relation to this refers to a fundamentally different understanding of elections: elections, not as an individual act of sovereignty and decision, but rather a festive period to represent unity—the deeper sense of society, in which the collective sought to reach the ultimate communist goal.

However, the performance failed. Although the majority of people voted, hardly any GDR citizen felt in high spirits. Election day turned out to be both a perverse celebration and day-to-day life; with its absurd collectivist rhetoric, the forced disregard of the individual and the demands to pay lip service it smothered the claimed celebratory atmosphere, despite all festivities. The performative self-contradiction—the insistence on the individual vote whilst adhering to the function of acclamation—delegitimized the elections all too clearly. It was totally different to the National Socialist elections, in which a majority of the population actually voted in a celebratory manner and gave the “Führer” their “yes” vote (Urban 2011, in this volume).

Unofficial Electoral Functions

The individual act of voting, however, offered the state an opportunity, which it knew how to exploit strategically. The almost one hundred per cent participation in the election ritual served as a powerful symbol: each person had to submit. The first unofficial function, then, is the *subjugation* of the citizens of the GDR. Even people who were critical of the regime explained in hindsight that they went to vote because they did not want to separate themselves or stand apart from society (Richter 2009a, 283–295). The historian and sociologist, Jan T. Gross, interprets the elections in East

Poland, described at the beginning of this text, as an attunement to the communist dictatorship, as a humiliation of the population and as a construction of a kind of complicity with the regime (Gross 1986, 29; cf. also the contribution by Merl in this volume). By means of the individual vote, the elections made it possible to separate the disciplined supporters of the collective from those dissenters who deviated from the norm, to reward the former and to punish the latter.²⁶ The anthropologist Alexei Yurchak wrote about the seemingly senseless collective acts in communism such as elections: “Participating in these acts reproduced oneself as a ‘normal’ Soviet person” (Yurchak 2006, 25). Non-participation meant the refusal to submit to the collective and in doing so one became “unacceptable”. The voting procedure created realities, because the performative act made visible consent and submission, particularly as in the GDR, as in most other state-socialist countries, voting was not officially compulsory. The willingness to obey, essential for every form of domination, grounded in the belief in legitimism of which Max Weber has spoken, found its expression through this voluntariness, even if it remained dubious. The widely spread readiness to vote very early in the day, which the authorities wished for, highlights the elections ability to discipline. From the end of the fifties, terror and external repression had declined during elections. Instead, internal discipline and therefore the horizontal aspect of power had increased in importance. By participating in the elections, the citizens showed their readiness to be a part of the socialist collective. In doing so, they also received the right to be taken care of by the collective. Indeed, submission was swiftly followed by the blessing of the collective: material and also immaterial, by being unhindered in career paths and being granted a private life in peace. This exchange between submission and reward was possible because *communication* was a significant aspect of the election.

Communication is the second unofficial function that played a central role in the elections. Election time intensified the interaction between

26 Cf. Brief Weise, Staatssekretariat für Kirchenfragen, an W. Barth, Arbeitsgruppe Kirchenfragen, June 10, 1968, SAPMO-Bundesarchiv DY 30 / IV A 2/14/40; Informationen zu Pfarrern in DO 1/100 / 183/2; Information, Staatssekretariat für Kirchenfragen, December 12, 1977, SAPMO-Bundesarchiv DY 30/IV B 2/14/80; cf. Volkspolizei Kreisamt Löbau an Landesbehörde der Volkspolizei Sachsen, September 26, 1951, BStU (Bundesbeauftragter für Stasi-Unterlagen) BV Dresden AGI 1198/52, S. 37; cf. BStU BV Drd. AOP 2163/62; Ermittlungsbericht, September 27, 1962, Dienststelle Löbau, BStU BV Drd. AIM 4977/81 I-I, S. 90; Beurteilung des IM Hickmann, Abteilung XX/4, Dresden, October 17, 1976, BStU BV Drd. AIM 4977–81, S. 143.

above and below, which at other times was sorely lacking (Herz 2004; Böckenförde 1967, 59; cf. also Mergel 2010, 11–14). Because the authorities wanted something from the electorate that they could not achieve through pure force—namely the seemingly voluntary vote of every single citizen—they had to offer something in return. The submission of concrete requests from citizens to the authorities (for consumer goods or apartments or a better infrastructure) rose steeply during election campaigns and had good chances of being fulfilled at these times. The Soviet Union was, here again, an obvious role model. In 1979, Brezhnev put it bluntly during an election meeting that the aim of the elections is to “improve the life of the workers” (Brezhnev 1979). Stephan Merl shows in his contribution in this volume the close connection between elections, communication and consumer gratification in the USSR. The voters there used their ballots to note down their wishes and complaints (cf. also Merl 2007; Bohn 2008). Voters displayed a pragmatic and instrumental grasp of elections, which correlated with their understanding of politics and rule: the regime was supposed to look after them, and in return they owed it to the regime to submit. If the good turns did not materialize, it could lead to an election boycott.²⁷

The intensified communication between above and below offered especially those citizens who were critical of the regime a chance to be heard. The above-mentioned rebellious farmers, motivated to participate only by “one-on-one conversations”, are a good example of this. The officials gave members of the clergy their special attention. High-ranking candidates were ordered to personally meet up with theologians.²⁸ During these “one-on-one conversations” the faithful, who as a rule were leading members of the church, could negotiate a price for their vote. Nearly everything was bargained over in the discussions, informally but very concretely: from permits to travel to fuel for heating right up to building permission.²⁹ The

27 A Soviet voter wrote in 1962 on a ballot paper: “I don’t want to vote—I am living at rock bottom”, another wrote: “If you feed us, you will get our vote,” quoted in Merl 2007, 530.

28 Brief Stellv. des Vorsitzenden, RdK Löbau, an Stellv. des Vorsitzenden, RdB Dresden, April 25, 1966, HStA Drd. 11430, No. 10809, S. 5. Cf. files in HStA Drd. 11430, No. 10792 u. in SAPMO DY 30/ IV 2/14/16.

29 See Abschlussbericht über Mitarbeit bei Volkskammerwahlen, October 18, 1976, ACDP II–209–030/1; Monatsbericht RdK Löbau, April 25, 1974, HStA Drd. 11430, No. 10926; Zentralsekretariat der SED an Landes-Provinzial- und Bezirksorganisationen, 7/1946, HStA Drd. 11377, No. 236; RdB an alle Stellvertretenden Vorsitzenden in den

negotiations interwove all parties into the intricate web of power relations. An example of this is the case of a young pastor and his family in East Berlin, who had been waiting years to be allocated an apartment. Just before elections were due in the 1960s, the family was told by the authorities that something could be arranged if the couple would finally relent and participate in the election. The pastor and his wife voted in the election and were allocated a four-room apartment.³⁰ At times, a more complex approach was required in the case of church leaders. Before the 1967 election, it came to the following prototypical conversation between the chairman of a district council and the leading member of a Free Church: at first, the members of the Free Church referred to their difficulties (building permission, requests for upcoming celebrations etc.). The state official expressed his “total sympathy” for them. Afterwards, the men chatted about the imminent elections. In the protocol, the head of the district council reported that the leaders of the Free Church had given their assurance “that they would vote and that they would put their confidence in those persons who are standing as candidates”.³¹ A member of the Free Church spoke openly about a sore point: his notorious use of the voting booth. According to the theologian, he did not use the voting booth “to spoil his ballot, but to document that he was making use of his right to cast a secret vote, which is bound by law.” Finally, according to the protocol, everyone mocked the allegedly democratic elections of the West during the election discussion.³²

However, the election discussions are not only witness to corruptibility and lip service, but also to resistance. Time and again, pastors used the opportunity to demand free elections or also a fair educational policy to-

RdK, November 5, 1971, HStA Drd. 11430, No. 10994; Telegramm Probst Grüber an Staatssekretär J. Hegen, September 25, 1954, Bundesarchiv DO 4/342; Goerner, *Behandlung der Kirchenpolitik*, S. 155 f.; *Wahlanalyse*, o.A., [1958], HStA Drd. 11430, No. 10701; *Nationale Front an Kreisrat Löbau*, September 19, 1950, HStA Drd. 11420, No. 57.

30 Letter D. Schiewe to Brüdergemeinde Berlin II, September 24, 2006, S. 5, UA files H. Richter.

31 The incumbent chairman RdK Löbau for distribution, September 9, 1965, HStA Drd. 11430, No. 10872.

32 CDU, KV Löbau, an 1. Stellv. Vorsitzenden des RdK, September 13, 1965, HStA Drd. 11430, No. 10849; Dreßler, amtierender Vorsitzender des RdK Löbau, an Verteiler, September 4, 1965, HStA Drd. 11430, No. 10872.

wards Christian pupils.³³ In the run-up to the local election of 1970, a state church official had to pass on the bad news: “It is official that the regional bishop, Noth, by his own admission, will not be voting.”³⁴ Many other priests also proved to be stubborn and declared that there were no democratic elections in the GDR, no credible opposition, no freedom of speech.³⁵ After the wall was erected, many pastors demanded in the run up to the 1963 election of the Peoples’ Parliament that travel restrictions should be lifted.³⁶ In later elections, the priests brought up the subject of travel restrictions again and again. In these cases, however, the authorities were not “sympathetic”.³⁷ Political horse-trading flanked the elections right up to the demise of the GDR. The negotiation process was so closely connected to elections, that during the peaceful revolution in 1989 there were demands for “immediate talks to be had with the people, when it is known that there is a grievance or problem, and that it should not be left until the day of the election or shortly before”.³⁸

However, the performative dimension of the elections and the rewards from the state cannot alone explain the nearly 100 per cent electoral turnout and consent. The other side of the coin were the sanctions for refusing to vote. Because voting was not officially compulsory, a boycott could not be punished directly. However, the wide legal gray areas and arbitrary practice of the SED authorities now came into force. Whether it was education for children, business trips abroad, holiday plans or a license to

33 Informationsbericht Februar, RdB Drd., Referat Kirchenfragen, March 6, 1970, Bundesarchiv DO 4/2967/68; records in SED, Kreis Löbau, HStA Drd. 11864, No. IV/4/09.085; Informationsbericht von H. Dohle, RdB Drd., March 6, 1970, Bundesarchiv DO 4 / 2968.

34 Informationsbericht von H. Dohle, RdB Drd., March 6, 1970, Bundesarchiv DO 4 / 2968; see Interview with Ehepaar K., ostdt. Gemeinhelferpaar, August 28, 2007, S. 24, files H. Richter.

35 Informationsbericht von H. Dohle, RdB Drd., March 6, 1970, Bundesarchiv DO 4 / 2968; see also Interview with Ehepaar K., ostdt. Gemeinhelferpaar, August 28, 2007, S. 24, files H. Richter.

36 26 Pastor to the State Council of the GDR, October 1, 1963, HStA Dr. 11430, No. 10847.

37 CDU, KV Löbau, an 1. Stellv. Vorsitzenden des RdK, September 13, 1965, HStA Drd.11430, No. 10849.

38 Protokoll über Stadtverordnetenversammlung Herrnhut, February 16, 1989, Stadtarchiv Herrnhut, Stadtverordneten und Ratssitzungen 1969–72, 1974.

import—refusal to participate could be sanctioned as the opportunity arose.³⁹

Conclusion and Perspective

The elections in the GDR, with their notoriously high results and their extremely high turnout can be better understood when one interprets them as a process of representation and focuses on their performative and also their material character. The performative aspect refers to functions such as subjugation, a demonstration of consensus, communication, mobilization and the transmission of a utopian idea.

The question that arises when looking at materiality is, why did the Soviet Union import this Western election procedure in 1937 and go on to export it again in their hegemonic area, as the Western electoral setting proved to be inappropriate for functions such as subjugation or the demonstration of consensus? Certainly, the desire to gain legitimacy at home, but particularly abroad by implementing the “modern” procedure was a crucial factor. In addition to that, the adoption of Western election standards, probably, demonstrates the attractiveness of “modern” Western democratic values. (After all, the socialist idea had played a substantial part in implementing these values, far beyond the election procedure). Universal, equal, direct and secret elections had developed into a symbol that manifested progress and modern society (Beyme 1966, 1145). By the 20th century, no government, not even a totalitarian regime, could officially go back on the values of the “modern” (Mergel 1997), especially after the disaster of the Second World War. It was hardly possible in the 20th century to build legitimacy – whether at home or abroad—in open conflict with the ideas of modernity.

39 Brief Weise, Staatssekretariat für Kirchenfragen, an W. Barth, Arbeitsgruppe Kirchenfragen, June 10, 1968, SAPMO-Bundesarchiv DY 30 / IV A 2/14/40; Informationen zu Pfarrern in DO 1/100 / 183/2; Information, Staatssekretariat für Kirchenfragen, December 12, 1977, SAPMO-Bundesarchiv DY 30/IV B 2/14/80; Volkspolizei Kreisamt Löbau an Landesbehörde der Volkspolizei Sachsen, September 26, 1951, BStU BV Dresden AGI 1198/52, S. 37; see also BStU BV Drd. AOP 2163/62; Richter 2008.

Bibliography

- Alexander, Manfred (2003). *Kleine Geschichte Polens*. Stuttgart: Reclam.
- Ammer, Thomas (1977). "Wahlen" in der DDR: Versuch einer Analyse. *Politische Studien*, 28, 47–52.
- Anderson, Margret L. (2000). *Practicing Democracy. Elections and Political Culture in Imperial Germany*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Arsenschek, Robert (2003). *Der Kampf um die Wahlfreiheit im Kaiserreich. Zur parlamentarischen Wahlprüfung und politischen Realität der Reichstagswahlen 1871–1914*. Düsseldorf: Droste.
- Assmann, Jan (2005). *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis. Schrift, Erinnerungen und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen*. Munich: C. H. Beck.
- Bensel, Richard Franklin (2004). *The American Ballot Box in the Mid-Nineteenth Century*. Cambridge, Mass.
- Beyme, Klaus von (1966). Demokratie. In *Sowjetsystem und demokratische Gesellschaft. Eine vergleichende Enzyklopädie*, vol. 1, 1111–1158. Freiburg: Herder.
- Bienert, Michael (2008). Wie demokratisch muss es aussehen? Die SED und die Inszenierung der "Volkswahlen" 1950. In Susanne Muhle et al. (eds.). *Die DDR im Blick. Ein zeithistorisches Lesebuch*, 19–28. Berlin: Metropol.
- Boberach, Heinz (1959). *Wahlrechtsfragen im Vormärz. Die Wahlrechtsanschauung im Rheinland 1815–1849 und die Entstehung des Dreiklassenwahlrechts*. Düsseldorf: Droste.
- Böckenförde, Ernst Wolfgang (1967). *Die Rechtsauffassung im kommunistischen Staat*. Munich: Kösel-Verlag.
- Bohn, Thomas (2008). "Im allgemeinen Meer der Stimmen soll auch meine Stimme erklingen ..." Die Wahlen zum Obersten Sowjet der UdSSR von 1958—Loyalität und Dissens im Kommunismus. *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 34, 524–549.
- Bönker, Kirsten (2010). *Jenseits der Metropolen. Öffentlichkeit und Lokalpolitik im Gouvernement Saratov (1890–1914)*. Cologne: Böhlau.
- Leonid I. Breshnew (1979). *Für das Glück der sowjetischen Menschen. Rede des Generalsekretärs des Zentralkomitees der Kommunistischen Partei der Sowjetunion und Vorsitzenden des Präsidiums des Obersten Sowjets der UdSSR auf der Wählerversammlung des Moskauer Bauman-Wahlbezirks zu den Wahlen zum Obersten Sowjet der UdSSR im Kongresspalast des Kreml, Moskau, März 2, 1979*. Moscow: APN-Verlag.
- Buchstein, Hubertus (2000). Geheime Abstimmungen und Demokratiebewegung. Die politischen Ziele der Reformbewegung für das "Australian Ballot" in den USA. *Politische Vierteljahrschrift*, 21, 48–57.
- Crook, Malcolm, and Tom Crook (2011). Reforming voting practices in a global age: the making and remaking of the modern secret ballot in Britain, France and the United States, c. 1600 – c. 1950. *Past & Present* (forthcoming).
- Diedrich, Nils (1966). Wahlen, Wahlsysteme. In *Sowjetsystem und demokratische Gesellschaft. Eine vergleichende Enzyklopädie*, vol. 1, 804–819. Freiburg: Herder.

- Frevort, Ute, and Heinz-Gerhard Haupt (eds.). (2005). *Neue Politikgeschichte. Perspektiven einer historischen Politikforschung*. Frankfurt: Campus.
- Eckler, Werner et al. (1975). "Demokratischer Sozialismus". Schein und Wirklichkeit. Berlin (East): Dietz.
- Fedderson, Dieter (1965). *Die Rolle der Volksvertretungen in der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik*. Hamburg: Hansischer Gildenverlag.
- Foucault, Michel (1994). *Überwachen und Strafen. Die Geburt des Gefängnisses*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.
- Goldman, Wendy (2007). *Terror and Democracy in the Age of Stalin. The Social Dynamics of Repression*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Gross, Jan T. (1986). The First Soviet Sponsored Elections in Eastern Europe. *Eastern Europe Politics and Societies*, 1, 4, 4–29.
- Häberle, Peter (1982). *Verfassungslehre als Kulturwissenschaft*. Berlin: Duncker & Humblot.
- Hahn, Jeffrey (1988). An Experiment in Competition: The 1987 Elections to the Local Soviets. *Slavic Review*, 47, 3, 434–447.
- Herz, Andrea (2004). *Wahl und Wahlbetrug im Mai 1989*. Erfurt: Die Landesbeauftragte des Freistaates Thüringen für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen DDR.
- Hronek, Jiří (1954). *A Land Ruled by its People*. Prag: Orbis.
- Hübner, Jan-Kristof (1997). *Die Strafrechtliche Beurteilung von DDR-Wahlfälschungen nach der Wiedervereinigung*. Regensburg: Roderer.
- Jesse, Eckhard, and Konrad Löw (eds.). (1998). *Wahlen in Deutschland*. Berlin: Duncker & Humblot.
- Jessen, Ralph (1998). Partei, Staat und "Bündnispartner": Die Herrschaftsmechanismen der SED-Diktatur. In Matthias Judt (ed.). *DDR-Geschichte in Dokumenten*, 27–86. Berlin: Ch. Links.
- Kloth, Hans Michael (2000). *Vom "Zettelfalten" zum freien Wählen: die Demokratisierung der DDR 1989/90 und die "Wahlfrage"*. Berlin: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung.
- Kühne, Thomas (1994). *Dreiklassenwahlrecht und Wahlkultur in Preußen: 1867–1914. Landtagswahlen zwischen korporativer Tradition und politischem Massenmarkt*. Düsseldorf: Droste.
- (1998). Historische Wahlforschung in der Entwicklung. In Simone Lässig et al. (ed.). *Modernisierung und Region im wilhelminischen Deutschland: Wahlen, Wahlrecht und politische Kultur*, 39–67. Bielefeld: Verlag für Regionalgeschichte.
- Lässig, Simone (1998). Wahlrechtsreformen in den deutschen Einzelstaaten. Indikatoren für Modernisierungstendenzen und Reformfähigkeit im Kaiserreich? In Simone Lässig et al. (ed.). *Modernisierung und Region im wilhelminischen Deutschland. Wahlen, Wahlrecht und politische Kultur*, 127–170. Bielefeld: Verlag für Regionalgeschichte.
- Leng, Hermann Otto (1973). *Die allgemeine Wahl im bolschewistischen Staat: Theorie, Praxis, Genesis*. Meisenheim a. Glan: Hain.

- (1969). Sowjetunion. In Dolf Sternberger and Bernhard Vogel (eds.). *Die Wahl der Parlamente und anderer Staatsorgane. Ein Handbuch*, vol. 3, 1203. Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter.
- Mählert, Ulrich (2007). *Kleine Geschichte der DDR*. Munich: C. H. Beck.
- Mergel, Thomas (1997). Geht es weiterhin voran? Die Modernisierungstheorie auf dem Weg zu einer Theorie der Moderne. In Thomas Mergel and Thomas Welskopp (eds.). *Geschichte zwischen Kultur und Gesellschaft. Beiträge zur Theorie-debatte*, 203–32. Munich: C. H. Beck.
- (2005). Wahlkampf als Kulturgeschichte. In Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger (ed.). *Was heißt Kulturgeschichte des Politischen?*, 355–376. Berlin: Duncker & Humblot.
- (2005b). Die Wahlkabine, in: Alexa Geisthövel and Habbo Knoch (eds.). *Orte der Moderne. Erfahrungswelten des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts*, 335–344. Frankfurt: Campus.
- (2010). *Propaganda nach Hitler. Eine Kulturgeschichte des Wahlkampfes in der Bundesrepublik 1949–1990*. Göttingen: V&R.
- Merl, Stephan (2007). Konsum in der Sowjetunion: Element der Systemstabilisierung? *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht*, 9, 519–536.
- Nohlen, Dieter (2009). *Wahlrecht und Parteiensystem*. 6th edition. Opladen: Barbara Budrich.
- O’Leary, Cornelius (1962). *The Elimination of Corrupt Practices in British Elections 1868–1911*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Poppe, Eberhard (1959). *Der sozialistische Abgeordnete und sein Arbeitsstil*. Berlin (East): Deutscher Zentralverlag.
- Richter, Hedwig (2008). “Literatur sackweise abverfügt”. In der rechtlichen Grauzone: Kirchlicher Literaturtransfer in die DDR, in: Siegfried Lokatis and Ingrid Sonntag (eds.). *Der heimliche Leser. Zensur und Literaturschmuggel in der DDR*, 262–273. Berlin: Ch. Links.
- (2009a). *Pietismus im Sozialismus. Die Herrnhuter Brüdergemeine in der DDR*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- (2009b). *Die DDR*. Paderborn: Schöningh.
- Rohe, Karl (1990). Politische Kultur und ihre Analyse. Probleme und Perspektiven der politischen Kulturforschung. *Historische Zeitschrift*, 250, 321–346.
- (1992). *Wahlen und Wählertraditionen in Deutschland: kulturelle Grundlagen deutscher Parteien und Parteiensysteme im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.
- Sternberger, Dolf and Bernhard Vogel (eds.). (1969). *Die Wahl der Parlamente und anderer Staatsorgane. Ein Handbuch*. 3 vol. Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter.
- Stollberg-Rilinger, Barbara (ed.) (2005). *Was heißt Kulturgeschichte des Politischen?* Berlin: Duncker & Humblot.
- Verfassung der DDR (1974). <http://www.documentarchiv.de/ddr/verfddr.html>.
- Verfassung der DDR (1949). <http://www.documentarchiv.de/ddr/verfddr1949.html>.

- Verfassung der Union der Sozialistischen Sowjetrepubliken (1936), http://mdx.bib-bvb.de/cocoon/1000dok/dok_0021_ver.html?object=-translation&lang=de.
- Vorländer, Hans (2006). Die Verfassung als symbolische Ordnung. Perspektiven einer kulturwissenschaftlich-institutionalistischen Verfassungstheorie. In Michael Becker and Ruth Zimmerling (eds.). *Recht und Politik*, 229–249. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.
- Weber, Max (1922/2002). Die drei reinen Typen der legitimen Herrschaft. Eine soziologische Studie. In Max Weber. *Schriften 1894–1922*, 717–733. Stuttgart: Kröner.
- Yurchak, Alexei (2006). *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More. The Last Soviet Generation*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Elections in Modern Dictatorships: Some Analytical Considerations¹

Werner J. Patzelt

Research Problem

Of the some 150 states that have viable, functioning regime structures, about 70 can be categorized as democratic according to the current mode of measuring democracy. These states hold periodic elections which are the constituent factor of a modern mass democracy. By contrast, around 80 states are dictatorships² in which it is not really necessary to hold elections. Nevertheless, only six states in total—Brunei, China, Eritrea, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates—have never held parliamentary or presidential elections on a national level. Thus, there are currently 70 dictatorial regimes that hold more or less regular elections at national or local level. The latter have even been held in China despite the country never having had elections at a national level. On balance, holding elections is not only currently the case for the dictatorships in Asia and Africa, but was also the practice in many of the states that, like many in Central and Eastern Europe, claimed to practice “real socialism”, and also in Mexico under the rule of PRI.

In dictatorships election results can of course be manipulated in many different ways. If manipulation becomes known or even highly visible, this leads to a loss of trust and support in the regime, even among its followers. In the GDR, the obvious manipulation of the local elections of May 7, 1989, was one of the main causes of that loss of legitimacy, which became increasingly pervasive until it culminated in the Peaceful Revolution in the

1 This is the revised version of a paper that was given at the “Elections in Dictatorships” conference held in Cologne in 2009. Thanks are due to both my research assistants and the editors for their various comments and suggestions.

2 In this article the term dictatorship will be used as a generic term for all non-liberal regimes, and will occasionally be supplemented by more specific terms such as “authoritarian regime” or “totalitarian regime”.

autumn of 1989 (Kowalczyk 2009, 318–333). Such observations lead to the question of why dictatorships hold elections at all. Furthermore, this prompts the additional question as to how dictatorships that hold elections adapt these to their overall institutional structure in such a way that they can afford to stage potentially risky elections.

In the following, some elements of an analytical framework will be presented—a framework that will enable these questions to be addressed by means of comparative empirical studies. This attempt will build on important previous work in this area, including the following studies: Hermet et al. (1978), which gives a general overview of the phenomenon of elections in dictatorships; Smith (2006), which offers a very useful classification of their various forms; Magaloni (2010), which provides insights into the logic underpinning authoritarian electoral manipulation; Schedler (2002, 2002a, 2006), which not only describes the “menu of manipulation”, but also makes its functional logic plausible; and Gandhi und Lust-Okar (2009), which documents the current state of research. In this article, the systematizing suggestions presented in those studies will be integrated, albeit sometimes in altered form, into an over-arching theory that can serve as a guide both for comparative empirical research and for the systematic contextualization of its results, preferably leading to *Gestalterkenntnis*.³ A comprehensive overview or even a synthesis of the relevant studies in political science is, however, outside the scope of this paper.

The Phenomenon: How Elections are Organized in Dictatorships

The Reference Model: Elections in Democracies

One often equates democracy with the existence of free elections. Thus, if in a former dictatorship a parliament is freely elected, the transition to democracy passes for being complete. However, the history of post-colonial Africa shows that it is not as simple as this. Democracy has proven not

³ “Gestalt” refers to a transposable structure—for example, that of a parliamentary system of government or a totalitarian dictatorship. “Gestalterkenntnis” is the provisional end point of the hermeneutic process in which the “Gestalt” is perceived and accepted as “truly existing”.

to be a state that is achieved once and for all, but rather a process that needs to be continuously maintained. Although it is true that free elections are indeed necessary for this process, they are in no way a sufficient condition. Rather, the democratic form of government also requires the rule of law, the separation of powers, safeguards that ensure that those who hold power are politically accountable to the parliament and the people, a largely non-corrupt administration, a self-organizing civil society, and the free and pluralist formation of public political opinion. Only when all of this exists *alongside* elections, can democracy be established and has a chance to continue (Patzelt 2007a, 245–253).

One-off elections, for a president or a parliament, certainly cannot turn a polity into a democracy. Only the reliable scheduling of the *next* elections after not too long a term of office ensures that the actions of the political class are tied to the approval of those who are being governed. This is the institutional mechanism of “temporal separation of power” (ibid., 274–275), which can be more precisely termed the “re-election mechanism”. There are three necessary conditions for this institutional mechanism to have a democratizing function. First of all, someone can hold an elective office only for a limited period of time, and can *only accede to office by means of a free and fair election* (Elklit 2000), voted in either by an electoral college or by the electorate. Second, the *possibility of re-election*⁴ needs to exist. Third, there need to be incentives for *wanting* to be elected again. If these three requirements are met, the re-election mechanism functions as follows: whoever wishes to have his/her period of office extended must exercise the powers of this office in such a way that he/she will once again gain the necessary percentage of the vote in free elections. As a consequence, he/she certainly can go against the current wishes of the prospective voters during the period of office; but of course he/she cannot go too far, too consistently, or for too long a period of time *against the wishes* of the electorate, because this would dramatically reduce the chances of being re-elected. In this way, the temporal separation of powers in connection with free elections and the attractive possibility of re-election connects the elected holder of power with those whom he/she governs, and doing so re-distributes power from the office holder to those voters to whom he/she owes his/her election to office. The key point of this institutional mecha-

4 In the case of the Mexican members of parliament this is still lacking. Therefore, they are auxiliaries of political leaders rather than the representatives of the electorate, which in fact becomes irrelevant to them once they have been elected.

nism is its double dialectic: only if the period of office *both is limited and can be extended* does a close connection arise between the office holder and the electorate; and it is precisely the desire to exercise *power* through holding an office that makes the person who wishes to realize this desire *dependent* upon those over whom he/she wishes to exercise that power. This re-election mechanism is regularly stripped of its function in dictatorships. First, politicians do *not* gain office by means of free and fair elections. Second, and even more important, it is not possible to vote out an office holder even if he/she is acting completely against the wishes of the people (Smith 2006, 4). But if a state desires to be a democracy, or if a dictatorship wishes to become a democracy, then the re-election mechanism must be put in action both institutionally and culturally.

Elections in Dictatorships

Whoever holds elections, but nevertheless does not want to risk losing power, has to make numerous institutional arrangements. Andreas Schedler has shown how elections in dictatorships are run in such a way that they conform to the structure of the authoritarian system (Schedler 2002, 41–46). *First of all*, one can set up the political system so that the elections will only be held for lower positions or for offices that have a very limited portfolio of responsibilities, or such that the parliamentary opposition parties continue to have little influence. In this case even free elections and victorious opposition candidates can do little to change the established distribution of dictatorial power. *Second*, one can ensure that the constitutional powers of the elected office holders remain in effect on paper only. In this case, to refer to Walter Ulbricht's famous phrase, everything *appears democratic*, but the real power remains for the most part in the hands of the ruling party, the army, or a spiritual leader. *Third*, it is possible to systematically work towards guaranteeing the failure of the competing opposition parties. For example, the electoral regulations can be devised in such a way as to ensure that the opposition remains split and cannot unify itself. Also, one can try to bribe the leaders of new, apparently popular parties, or at least to damage their public reputation. Even political murder or the threat of physical violence in the run up to elections may exist for opposition politicians. Furthermore, one may find ways of excluding parties or candidates from the election. *Fourth*, the composition of the

electorate can be manipulated in many ways: those officials who have been entrusted with the actual staging of the elections may receive out of date or manipulated electoral registers, and the process of electoral registration may be made so difficult that many voters will be put off, or indeed will fall at such hurdles as having to prove their reading and writing skills. In addition, the election process can be organized so that the act of voting itself is controlled publicly, or such that the use of a voting booth, which may still be an option, effectively becomes a test of courage. Moreover, in the run up to the elections, individual groups of citizens may be the targets of intimidation, and ethnic, religious or cultural minorities may be weakened by means of “cleansing” practices. *Fifth*, it is possible to manipulate the political views of the poorer and the less well educated population groups, and in important cases this may even reach the stage where votes are actually bought. Apparently there are many different options whereby one can use the welcome appearance of elections while at the same limiting their unwelcome political leverage.

In doing so, the election result is made more or less predictable, depending on the extent to which these measures are used, and on how well they are co-ordinated. This ranges from elections where the external appearance gives the impression of a democracy, to those where there is in effect no choice at all for the voters. The former can be termed “competitive authoritarian elections”, and the latter “closed authoritarian elections” (Smith 2006; Levitsky und Way 2002). Between these two extremes there is a broad transitional zone with many gradations. The same regime may even be categorized differently from election to election, depending on how it tries to manipulate the elections in the light of political conditions and its current ability to assert itself.

The general characteristic of *competitive* authoritarian elections is that the opposition can theoretically, but never in practice, win the election. This can be achieved in two ways. *First*, the competition between those in office and those in opposition can be organized through state regulations in such a way that the opposition will certainly suffer from clear disadvantages, but not to the extent that this would cause early withdrawal from the election. This is known as rule-controlled competition (Lindberg 2004; Walle 2005). One instrument for this purpose is state-controlled media that can refuse the opposition access to the voting public. A further one is the unequal distribution of resources for the election. For example, the government can use cars and planes at the expense of the state, and they may even make

use of the PR departments of the ministries, while the opposition has to pay for everything. In addition, laws or police powers intended to ensure public safety may be formulated in such a way that election meetings and demonstrations held by the opposition can easily be banned. Thus, the government enjoys clear advantages in terms of having a higher profile in the election campaign. However, because these types of rules—as unfair as they might be—are known in advance, the opposition can adapt itself to them and indeed may count on particular sympathy and support, being seen as the victim of these rules. Moreover, even in unfair elections the opposition will have a much greater public profile than would normally be the case, and thus it is still a rational decision for the opposition to take part even in unfair elections. This is all the more so if elections are taking place under the auspices of international observers. For although direct election success may be far from attainable, participation can well be a step towards the introduction of fair elections *in the future*.

Second, the result of the election may be falsified, which is known as fraudulent competition. The ballot papers cast may be manipulated—be it that before the count fake ballot papers are planted in the *real* ballot boxes, or be it that unfavourable ballot papers are suppressed or are deliberately counted incorrectly. In addition one may simply announce fake election results, either by the polling stations to the central electoral authorities, or by the election authorities to the public. Of course this is a very risky form of fraudulent manufacturing of desired election results. A regime will usually resort to this only if it no longer trusts to the implementation of unfair rules in the election campaign, that is, if it has already started to become weak. Due to the fact that in such cases the trust of the voters will be consciously broken, in that their vote—which may well even have been a dangerous one—is not respected, regimes that employ such means risk losing support on a huge scale.

Closed authoritarian elections take place when, in addition to all the aforementioned tactics, the opposition is given no chance of victory at all. There are two possible methods of achieving this. They have very different, but in each case far-reaching consequences of a psychological, political, cultural and institutional nature. *First*, there may be opposition parties that are allowed to take part in elections, but that are kept so weak by the general structure of the dictatorial regime that they do not even theoretically have a chance of winning the election. Tactics employed to achieve this aim include keeping opposition parties under the legal status of private

associations, and making it difficult for them, by means of arbitrary state action, to acquire and use resources such as practical and financial support, offices and office equipment. In addition, opposition groups may be widely prevented from expressing their views on radio, television, the Internet and in the press; their operations can be criminalized by a compliant police force or justice system; and similarly their supporters, members or leaders may be terrorized and intimidated by physical acts of violence. Lastly, the opposition parties may find themselves the target of state slur-campaigns aimed at weakening their position.

Second, the voting procedure itself can be set up in such a way that the opposition cannot in practice be voted for. Tried and tested means are the following: single party lists are put forward, and the addition of further names to the list in the voting booth makes the ballot paper invalid; there is only a single name on the ballot paper, and to score it out or to add an additional name would make it invalid; no voting booths are made available, or their use is met with such threats that to vote against the regime becomes a test of courage, which, given its obvious uselessness, one does not take upon oneself.

Types of Dictatorial Regimes and Authoritarian Elections

Close examination shows that not all forms of dictatorial regimes are equally inclined to permit elections, that is, are not prepared to the same degree to expose themselves to the potential risks involved. The best indicators for ranking, on the one hand, dictatorial regimes, and, on the other hand, the elections held in them, include the positions of power of the respective office holders, and how these positions are safeguarded institutionally (Smith 2006, 8–10).

Totalitarian regimes (Patzelt 1998), which undertake to impose a new guiding value system even in the face of societal opposition, because they are convinced of its superiority for religious, scientific or other reasons, are those that have the smallest incentives to hold elections. In these regimes—for example, in National Socialist Germany or in Mao's China—one simply claims that there is no sound alternative to those in power. Thus, there is no room for different political groups to compete for the better concept. This makes elections irrelevant from the outset. At best, acclamation for the central political leaders or for their party can be attrac-

tive and is often expressed in the form of a leadership cult, of parades, or of plebiscitary approval of the politics of the ruling elite. In such circumstances, elections and referenda can be superfluous even with respect to their purely symbolic functions. However, if one nevertheless holds them, then they will often take the form of closed authoritarian elections.

Weaker is the self-assurance of dictatorial elites in *uncompetitive authoritarian regimes* such as the GDR. These at least implicitly accept that it is advantageous not only to assert the superiority of their claims and principles, but also to prove that those who are being governed seemingly approve of the regime and its politics. It is exactly this symbolic purpose that elections serve in such regimes: their results are meant to demonstrate that the people support the regime out of their own free will, and that the political position of those in power is not based on violence, but on democratic legitimization. By the same token, however, it has already been admitted that ideological self-empowerment is not a sufficient justification for being in power. Therefore, as long as only self-empowerment exists for the ruling elite, which is typical in dictatorships, the regime is already in the following trap: it simply has to manipulate the elections, making them closed authoritarian elections, at least if it does not want to get itself into a pre-revolutionary situation.

The situation is somewhat different for *competitive authoritarian regimes* such as Iran. There the political situation is such that there exist groups who are opposed to the system *and* have so much support in the society that banning or suppressing them could only be done at huge political cost. In this case it is more reasonable for a dictatorial regime to come to an agreement with opposition groups so that these are able to act and to express themselves to a certain extent, but nevertheless will not be able to achieve positions of power of any consequence. Therefore, the regime needs to have elections, and previous to them electoral campaigns, that can be recognized as such even according to democratic principles. In this way, holding elections links the opposition groups taking part in them to the state, and manipulating these elections can contribute to the stability of the system. Typically, this will lead to competitive authoritarian elections. Practical wisdom suggests that one should not go so far in terms of manipulation that widespread falsification of election results might bring with it a significant risk of being discovered. It is better to limit oneself to ensuring that the opposition will be disadvantaged in the election campaign by means of chicanery, and it is wise not to go so far as to motivate the

opposition to consider a demonstrative withdrawal from the election process. Of course it is open as to how many times this form of manipulation can be used in elections subsequently, since on the part of both the opposition groups and the population there will be an increasing awareness, and therefore unwillingness, to be involved with unfair elections, which only have a symbolic function and merely serve the agenda of those in power.

The continuation of such processes leads to *terminal authoritarian regimes*. An example would be the People's Republic of Poland in its latter years. In this type of regime, the powers opposed to the system become so strong that the regime can no longer intimidate them at will. Thus, the dictatorship has forfeited its capability to organize the electoral process in such a way that the opposition parties have no chance to win from the outset. If, then, the ruling class does not wish to lose power, it can hardly avoid the direct falsification of election results. However, if this becomes known, then its reputation and power will come to a particularly swift end.

Of course, these relationships can also be understood in reverse order. For example, if after the collapse of a regime, or at the end of a civil war, a stable political order with a claim to a democratic basis is to be established, then the absence of necessary cultural pre-conditions will in fact lead to a weak authoritarian dictatorship arising. Although the regime will hold competitive elections, it will attempt to secure its victory by manipulation of the election results, as has happened in Afghanistan. And if this type of regime does become more stable over the course of time, as is the case in Zimbabwe, the electoral suppression of the political opposition can be accomplished by means of arranging unfair elections as they are found in competitive authoritarian elections. If, finally, the government at some point finds itself firmly in the saddle, then the elections can be converted into the type of uncompetitive acclamation events that were common for those central and east European states that claimed to practice "real socialism". Thus, the form of a dictatorship and its type of authoritarian election procedure are closely connected to each other.

Structural Causes of Elections in Dictatorships

The last section showed *how* dictatorships engage in election campaigns, elections and electoral manipulation, which in the end carries very high

risks for them. Three structural and four functional causes explain *why* most current dictatorships cannot manage without elections.

Political Transaction Costs as a Challenge—Elections as a Structural Response

Understandably it is easier to govern if one can show the people that the intentions and achievements of the government are congruent with their own political wishes. It became even more desirable to achieve this impression when the idea began to become widely accepted that all legitimate power ought to be founded on the voluntary assent of those who are being ruled. This started with the 18th century revolutions and for the most part came to completion with the waves of democratization in the 20th century. However, once democracy has come to be seen as a desirable, or indeed an indispensable characteristic of a political system, and once the power of charismatic and traditional authority no longer hold sway and democracy is accepted as the central form of rationally based legitimacy, a regime can no longer afford to eschew elections or plebiscites. Under such circumstances, a dictatorship *has* to work at creating a façade of democracy.

The easiest measures for dictatorial regimes to use in this respect are referenda and plebiscites initiated by the government or by the head of state. These allow for purposeful mass mobilization of the population and give the impression at least of national or political unity. In addition, they can attempt to confer democratic legitimacy, or at least the appearance of it, on a person or party *just in time*. “Plebiscitary Caesarism” is a good shorthand way of describing this way of putting some democratic trimmings on a dictatorial regime (Loewenstein 2000, 59–62). The question that is brought to the electorate in the plebiscite may be formulated in unobjective or biased terms and can be placed in a frame of meaning so that—irrespective of what in fact is to be decided—a yes to political leaders will be the result. The latter can also be worked towards by means of appropriate manipulation. And because no office holder is elected in this plebiscitary process, but rather the current one is simply confirmed, there are rarely political follow-up costs in the form of rivals growing in strength as a result of the plebiscite. Therefore plebiscites and referenda are, all in all, the *cheapest* form of integrating the outward appearance of democratic decision-making into a dictatorial regime.

What in fact is riskier is to have *office holder selected* for a given term in a dictatorship—for example, the head of state. A safer approach is to have the ruling dictator elected for life. Then, on the one hand, his or her asserted democratic legitimacy can be pointed to, and on the other hand the consequences of the aforementioned re-election mechanism are avoided, that is consequences, that would effect a real democracy. However, since *elections for life-terms* became so notorious that usually re-election needs to be sought, it became necessary to manipulate either the election process or its results. This leads to ever new risks for legitimacy. These risks are greatest when even a representative assembly is elected. Parliaments,⁵ irrespective of under what name they exist, of course tend to develop not only a political life of their own, but also institutional power, if such processes are not carefully suppressed by political leaders or overlaid by other political processes (Patzelt 2005).

Representative Assemblies as Focal Points of Election Processes

Representative assemblies are much older than democracies. They evolved wherever it seemed to be sensible to bring together the really powerful actors for the purpose of joint consultation and decision-making (Patzelt 2007). Within history, five institutional roots of representative assemblies can be identified, most of which may lead to viable, and even to a certain extent powerful institutions, even under dictatorships. In the case of *Estate* Parliamentarianism, which was so important for the history of Europe, those work together who hold interconnected authority and power within either territories or corporations. *Federal* Parliamentarianism, which in the form of federal assemblies produced the oldest known representative assemblies, is characterized by periodic meetings of the real holders of power, or of their ambassadors, from collaborating political systems. *Corporate* Parliamentarianism exists wherever a representative assembly is the board of an organization tasked with self-government or self-administration. *Liberal* Parliamentarianism opens the path towards democracy: under this form of parliamentarianism, the members of an assembly, as repre-

⁵ In the following, the term parliament is used in a broad sense and does not simply refer to the type of representative assembly in which the members of parliament are elected by means of free elections and possess considerable political power. On the advantages of using the term in this way, see Patzelt (2007, 484-485).

sentatives of a large variety of groups, are provided with a free mandate by those whom they are representing. At the end of this path we reach *Democratic* Parliamentaryism. This goes beyond Liberal Parliamentaryism in that the members of parliament are not simply holders of a free mandate, but are in fact *delegates as well* who are permanently linked to the citizens by means of general, equal, direct, secret and free elections.

The institution of a representative assembly is, at least in some of its various forms, highly compatible with dictatorial rule. In the form of representative advisory boards it is even part of the basic institutional set-up of many dictatorial regimes. Examples include the *Shura* in Islamic monarchies, formalized in the consultative institution of the *Majlis al Shura*, or the provincial and imperial estate assemblies in which European rulers convened their vassals for *consilium et auxilium*, that is, for advice and assistance. Representative assemblies became a particular challenge for dictatorships only when during the 19th and 20th centuries in Europe “houses of commons” or “chambers of deputies” were elected under an increasingly democratic system of electoral law. This was consolidated when in political language the word “parliament” became synonymous with *democratic representation of the people*, and when the idea started to prevail that a state ought to be based on democratic legitimization and should have a representative assembly directly elected by the people. Moreover, with the worldwide spread of the Western legal system in which a large part of a government’s actions requires a legal basis, which can only be created by a parliament, legislative representative assemblies became essential for dictatorships for technical legal reasons as well, even if only as formal rubber-stamping machines for authoritarian decisions made elsewhere.

However, as soon as an *elected* representative assembly is established within a dictatorial regime, two sets of measures become necessary in order to secure the stability of the authoritarian regime.⁶ First of all, it is unavoidable to manipulate the elections so that on the whole only partisans of the regime get into parliament. These will make sure that the “people’s representation” restricts itself to a back-seat role in the dictatorial regime. Second, in order to ensure that no unexpected momentum, or even veto power, can develop in the parliament, all intra-parliamentary decision-making processes should be watered down, monitored, or even overlaid, by the disciplining effects of, for example, an authoritarian-led ruling party. All

⁶ See Patzelt und Schirmer (2002) for a detailed analysis of how this happened in the GDR People’s Assembly.

historical and recent experience shows that without such precursory and concomitant controls being in place, at least some members of parliament will work on establishing an independent power base of their own. They will even be justified for such attempts because doing constituency work and social networking is the typical and irrepressible business of all members of parliament. Moreover, if the representative assembly meets often enough, it can develop political life of its own, and if this is not countered, it may even become a political co-actor. Such a parliament, especially if based on personal power of its members within society, will gradually alter the regime. It may be unavoidable these days that dictatorships establish elected representative assemblies and hold periodic elections. But this leads inevitably to the establishment of a potentially dangerous “foreign body” in their institutional system, and this in turn forces the regime into the risky act of electoral manipulation every few years.

The Dual Structural Compatibility of Elections

Moreover, elections in dictatorships also occur because there is no clear dividing line between dictatorships, which can essentially function without elections, and democracies, which require periodic elections (Schedler 2002, 37–39). That there are usually overlaps between regimes that are *still* dictatorships *and* rudimentary democracies, is reflected in the current practice within political science to label many dictatorships simply as “defective democracies”, or to talk of “hybrid regimes” (Diamond 2002). Elections and plebiscites can in fact assume very different roles despite apparent external similarities, depending on the type of regime in which they are embedded.⁷ On the one hand they can be instruments of manipulation in the hands of a dictatorial elite. But on the other hand, and in the best case even free of any manipulation, they can be instruments of power in the hands of pluralist competing elites, of civil society groups, or of the citizenry as such.

Attempts to understand the role of elections in dictatorships must, therefore, not simply contrast *dictatorship* with *democracy*, but rather look at the *continuum* that exists between the two (Schedler 2002, 46–48; Diamond 2002, 27–33). At one end of the continuum we find liberal constitutional

⁷ On the important distinction between homologous and analogous similarity in parliamentary research see Patzelt (2007, 511-517).

democracy in all its various forms, which is not only based on free elections as the necessary requirement of democracy, but also exhibits the other necessary features of democracy, that is, the rule of law, the separation of powers, the accountability of the government, the absence of corruption, the existence of political pluralism, and free mass media. In the transition area between fully-fledged democracy and dictatorship there are various “electoral democracies” in which we find non-manipulated free elections, but which lack the reliable institutionalization of the additional features of a liberal democratic constitutional state. Near the other end of the continuum there are the many forms of “electoral authoritarianism”. This type of regime not only lacks the important prerequisites of liberal constitutionality, but it also falls short with respect to free and fair elections. These electoral autocracies, as has been shown, can be differentiated between those regimes that have *competitive* authoritarian elections and those with *closed* authoritarian elections. And beyond the electoral autocracies, at the extreme end of this political spectrum, there are totalitarian dictatorships, which usually do not hold elections at all.

From this perspective, elections are clearly *not* the decisive distinguishing feature between democracy and dictatorship. The reason is that under the normative, even if not de facto, dominance of the democratic principle, and all the more so because of the ubiquitous existence of representative assemblies, elections have become a “necessary” element of virtually all non-totalitarian regimes. As a result, their actual organizational form varies greatly. At one end of the continuum there are truly free and fair elections, and at the other end there are manipulated or falsified elections.

It is important to understand that elections, just like representative assemblies, tend to develop a life of their own. First, *power* develops around them: on the one hand because the outcome of the election will at least formally bestow or withdraw power, and on the other hand because the manipulation of a desired election result requires significant resources of power. Both features prompt the ruling power clique *and* the opposition to *really take elections seriously*. In this way, however, electoral campaigns and elections *will* become real and visible power struggles even if they only concern small victories of a still powerless opposition, or small defeats of a still overly powerful ruling party. Inevitably facing these power struggles, all those who participate in them are *sensitized* to the instruments of manipulation employed within the election context. This occurs in an even more sustained manner when it is apparent to all that manipulation is

working against the goal that elections or plebiscites are supposed to have, at least in terms of their external appearance: that the preferences of the people be transformed into decisions on offices or policies. Thus, if people become used to elections, then they also become used to being aware of the *opportunities for manipulation*. As a result, chances increase that those members of the political class will be criticized or even rejected who are responsible for such manipulative practices. On balance, elections possess great *structural ambiguity*: they can serve to both establish and shatter a dictatorship, and everything depends on how one handles them (Schedler 2002, 49).

Functional Causes of Elections in Dictatorships

Functions are services rendered by one element of a system for the whole. They can, in a first dimension, be differentiated in terms of instrumental functions and symbolic functions. Instrumental functions are services that have concrete and “technical” consequences. In this sense elections determine the actual composition of a parliament. Symbolic functions are, by contrast, services by which meaning is attached to actions or structures, or by which frames of interpretation are shaped. For example, elections suggest that those in power really want to act in accordance with the priorities of those who are being governed. In a second dimension, a distinction can be made between manifest and latent functions. Manifest functions are services that are announced and openly expected. The manifest functions of elections include the transformation of popular preferences into policy choices. Latent functions, by contrast, are services that are rendered alongside, but in the shadow, of openly announced or overtly expected services. This does not mean, however, that they are any less important. Latent functions of elections include, for example, providing political friends with—possibly well endowed—seats in parliament, and thereby promoting allegiance and loyalty.

Functions are rendered by persons within structures. And structures, irrespective of how they came into existence, usually consolidate and stabilize themselves to the degree to which they can provide useful, or at least welcome, functions for the overarching system. But what benefits do specifically elections provide for dictatorships? If one arranges their functions

for authoritarian regimes from those that are the least sustainable to the most stabilizing for the system, the following effects can be seen. *First of all*, ever since the democratic principle started its triumphal march around the world, elections have been the only convincing means to achieve legitimacy for a political system. However, dictatorships try to harvest the fruits of democratic legitimacy without exposing themselves to the risks connected to real democracy. Therefore, in dictatorial regimes elections fulfill their democratic legitimization function only for those members of the population who are ideologically blind or politically naïve, and even then this is only the case as long as the people are prepared to take the appearance of democracy for democracy itself.

Second, elections in dictatorships serve for purposeful “impression management”. The central impression to be achieved is that the regime is based on mass support. To this end, elections are not only held but also made as “democratically convincing” as possible by means of political symbolization and propaganda. In the GDR the practices used for this purpose stretched from candidate nomination rituals via appealing election slogans to highly ceremonial conduct in the polling station. In this way, a democratic façade can be erected in front of a dictatorial regime. The goal is to make credible that the political system upholds high democratic standards, possesses a high degree of ethical value, and thus deserves support. This works quite well among the truly committed supporters of the system, sufficiently well among those who are politically naïve, and quite often even among inadequately informed external observers. A lot of external political or economic support usually depends upon their verdict, and this is why effective *impression management* can also yield indirect domestic advantages for those in power.

Third, elections in dictatorships are suitable for rendering voters uncertain of their own beliefs, which is sometimes called “preference falsification” (Smith 2006, 18–20). By means of an election process that is convincingly staged from the nomination of candidates to the announcement of the election results, and in particular if there is a nearly unanimous vote, the impression can be manufactured that almost the whole population is loyal to the system, or at least takes a neutral position. Those opposed to the system, perhaps including oneself, then seem to be a negligible minority. As soon as such an impression is given, the “spiral of silence” is set in motion (Noelle-Neumann 2001): oppositionists experience themselves as isolated from the rest of society, begin to refrain from expressing their

views, and thus less and less opposition to the system can actually be heard. As a consequence, more and more dissenting citizens gain the impression that they are in a hopelessly inferior minority. By the same token, an atmosphere of unanimity is created. Although this may be only a veil over the actual situation of the system, such an atmosphere usually discourages citizens who in fact are discontented or opposed to the regime from articulating their views publicly or even semi-publicly. This stabilizes any dictatorship. In the course of time, even non-voting may become a real political act that is viewed by the regime as evidence of non-compliance. Therefore it will be met with sanctions, which in turn tend to increase the participation rates in the election. For naïve observers their unanimous results will then look very impressive.

Fourth, elections in dictatorships offer convenient opportunities to distribute or withdraw favors, albeit in small doses. This is known as their “accommodation function” (Magaloni 2010). It works particularly well if access to economic wealth or social status is easily available through political positions, but would be difficult to achieve on one’s own or even against the ruling establishment. Whoever is at the top of a dictatorial power pyramid under such circumstances can confer favours on party members from the second or third ranks—for example, with nomination for election, or with support during election campaigns for lucrative or influential offices. By the same token, dictatorial leaders can also punish their followers with great accuracy—by refusing to nominate them as a candidate, by hindering them in the election campaign, or by falsifying the election result. Moreover, authoritarian elections offer to political leaders a seemingly legal opportunity to distribute the spoils of their seizure of power to loyal followers, like revenue from state-run companies, personal sinecures, or benefits from current patronage opportunities. And because approval rates could fall far below 100 per cent in the next election, which the ruling clique would like to avoid, it even seems to be rational to pay for loyalty in this way—and to expect, on the part of the people, such benefits as a fair price for undisputed support.

If one examines these four functions of elections in dictatorships, it becomes clear that, even though they are occasionally risky, it is extremely advantageous for dictatorships to hold elections regularly. Doing so is particularly rational if the rules of the regime are such that the opposition parties can operate, but will not be able to achieve anything but a small share of the votes or of power. Therefore, we should not be surprised if

dictators take even manipulated elections quite seriously: they really are a very useful instrument of power—of course in the hands of the ruling clique, but not in the hands of the people.

Bibliography

- Diamond, Larry (2002). Thinking about Hybrid Regimes. *Journal of Democracy* 13, 21–35.
- Elklit, Jørgen (2000). Free and fair elections. In Richard Rose (ed.). *International Encyclopedia of Elections*, 130–135. Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly Press.
- Gandhi, Jennifer, and Ellen Lust-Okar (2009). Elections Under Authoritarianism. *Annual Review of Political Science* 12, 403–422.
- Hermet, Guy, Alain Rouquié, and Richard Rose (eds.). (1978). *Elections Without Choice*. New York: Wiley.
- Kowalczyk, Ilko-Sascha (2009). *Endspiel. Die Revolution von 1989 in der DDR*. Munich: Beck.
- Levitsky, Steven, and Lucan A. Way (2002). The rise of competitive authoritarianism. *Journal of Democracy* 13, 51–65.
- Lindberg, Staffan I. (2004). When do opposition parties boycott elections? Paper prepared for the international conference on “Democratization by Elections? The Dynamics of Electoral Authoritarianism”, CIDE, April 2–3, in Mexico City, Mexico.
- Loewenstein, Karl (2000). *Verfassungslehre*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.
- Magaloni, Beatriz (2010). The Game of Electoral Fraud and the Ousting of Authoritarian Rule. *American Journal of Political Science* 54/3, 751–765.
- Noelle-Neumann, Elisabeth (2001). *Die Schweigespirale: öffentliche Meinung—unsere soziale Haut*. Munich: Langen Müller.
- Patzelt, Werner J. (1998). Reality Construction under Totalitarianism: An Ethnomethodological Elaboration of Martin Draht’s Concept of Totalitarianism. In Siegel, Achim (ed.). *The Totalitarian Paradigm After the End of Communism. Towards a Theoretical Reassessment*. 239–271. Amsterdam/Atlanta: Editions Rodopi.
- (2005). Phänomenologie, Konstruktion und Destruktion von Parlamentsmacht. In ders. (ed.) *Parlamente und ihre Macht. Kategorien und Fallbeispiele institutioneller Analyse*. 255–302. Baden-Baden: Nomos.
- (2007). Grundriss einer Morphologie der Parlamente. In ders. (ed.). *Evolutorischer Institutionalismus. Theorie und empirische Studien zu Evolution, Institutionalität und Geschichtlichkeit*. 483–564. Würzburg: Ergon.
- (2007a). *Einführung in die Politikwissenschaft*. Passau: Rothe.

- and Roland Schirmer (eds.). (2002). *Die Volkskammer der DDR. Sozialistischer Parlamentarismus in Theorie und Praxis*. Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag.
- Schedler, Andreas (2002). The Menu of Manipulation. *Journal of Democracy* 13, 36–50.
- (2002a). The Nested Game of Democratization by Elections. *International Political Science Review* 23, 103–122.
- (ed.). (2006). *Electoral Authoritarianism. The Dynamics of Unfree Competition*. London: Lynne Rienner.
- Smith, David T. (2006). Elections as Instruments of Autocracy: A tentative taxonomy and post-totalitarian case study. Paper for the annual meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, in Chicago, United States.
- Walle, Nicolas van de (2005). When do oppositions coalesce in electoral autocracies? *The Mario Einandi Center for Internationals Studies Working Paper Series* 01–05. 29.01.2010 <http://www.einaudi.cornell.edu/files/workingpaper/01–2005.pdf>.

II Discipline

The Great Soviet Paradox: Elections and Terror in the Unions, 1937–1938*

Wendy Z. Goldman

At the height of “the Great Terror” in the Soviet Union in 1937, leaders of the Communist Party launched a democracy campaign aimed at involving ordinary citizens in a revitalization of various governing institutions. The campaign, which initiated multi-candidate, secret ballot elections in the soviets, the Party, and the unions, has received little attention from historians despite a vast literature on the terror. Superficially, these two phenomena—terror and democracy—appear in sharp contradiction. What could denunciations, spy mania, fear, mass arrests, extra legal trials, and executions possibly have in common with secret ballots, new elections, official accountability, and the revitalization of democracy? Historians have placed so much emphasis on terror during the Stalin era that it is difficult to see a mass campaign for democracy as anything but a cynical propaganda ploy from above. Yet the campaign in the unions was a complex movement in which the interests of many groups—Party leaders, union officials, and workers—combined, collided, and ignited. It had important intentional and unintentional consequences and refocused attention, albeit briefly, on working and living conditions. Most importantly, the democracy campaign played a critical role in the terror, sparking a power struggle within more than 160 unions and thousands of factory committees and involving millions of workers in the repressions.

Historians differ sharply about almost every aspect of the terror: the intent of the state, the targets of repression, the role of foreign and domestic pressures, the degree of centralized control, the time frame, and the reaction of Soviet citizens. One long-prevailing view holds that the Soviet regime was from its inception a terror state. Its authorities, intent solely on

* This article is excerpted from material in Wendy Goldman (2005). *Stalinist Terror and Democracy: The 1937 Union Campaign*. *American Historical Review*, 110, 1427–53; and Wendy Goldman (2007). *Terror and Democracy in the Age of Stalin. The Social Dynamics of Repression*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

maintaining power, sent a steady stream of people to their deaths in camps and prisons. The stream may have widened or narrowed over time, but it never stopped flowing. The Bolsheviks, committed to an anti-democratic ideology and thus predisposed to terror, crushed civil society in order to wield unlimited power.¹

In the 1980s, a new interest in social history prompted a revisionist reaction to this view. Historians began to take a closer look at the fissures and tensions within the state. They explored a dynamic dialectic between state policies and social responses in which state action produced unforeseen social and economic consequences, which in turn led to increasingly Draconian measures. They identified specific targets and episodes of repression (Manning 1984; Getty 1985; 1991; 1997; Getty and Naumov 1999; Harris 1999; Rees 2002; Rittersporn 1991; Solomon 1996). A few historians began to explore popular elements in the terror, discovering that workers and peasants used its rituals and rhetoric to denounce managers and officials for abuse. But with a few exceptions, historians did not fully develop these initial findings.²

In the 1990s, newly released archival materials provided important information on Stalin's role and the targets of repression. The documents provided incontestable proof of Stalin's close personal involvement in repression. The archives also yielded new information about victims, substantially expanding the categories of people marked for repression beyond the economic managers, Party and military leaders, former oppositionists, and foreign communists previously identified by historians. "Order 00447" for "mass operations" in July 1937 set target numbers for the imprisonment or execution of criminals, village clergy, religious activists, former kulaks, and other "hostile elements". It was followed by additional orders for the round up of various national groups deemed a threat to national security in event of war. The discovery of the "mass and national operations" encouraged some historians to conceptualize the terror more narrowly as "a series of centrally directed punitive actions" launched by Stalin.³ At the same time, however, others broadened their view by linking

1 Conquest 1990; Courtois et al. 1999; Solzhenitsyn 1973; Jansen et al. 2002; Kuromiya 1998; Khlevniuk 1995a; 1992 is informed by a similar view of the state, but focuses mainly on the period 1936–39.

2 On workers and industry, see Fitzpatrick 1994b; Manning 1993; Thurston 1993; Hoffman 1993; Thurston 1992; 1996. On repression in other institutions, see Chase 2001; Fitzpatrick 1993, 1994a; Siddiqi 2003.

3 Khlevniuk 2004, 140.

the operations to earlier policing practices developed in response to the great social upheavals of collectivization and industrialization (Hagenloh, 2009; Shearer 2009; Getty 2002; McLoughlin and McDermott 2004).

Scholars working in newly available archives have taught us much about the role of central authorities and the victims targeted, but the issue of mass participation in the terror still remains relatively unexplored. Historians emphasize that the assassination of Sergei M. Kirov, the head of the Leningrad Party organization, the rise of fascism, and the threat of war fueled widespread fears of hidden enemies, wreckers, and spies.⁴ Yet they rarely mention that Party leaders presented the murderous abrogation of civil rights that we presently term “the Terror” as patriotic *anti*-terror measures, which demanded the support and active participation of all loyal citizens. Moreover, Party leaders couched these anti-terror measures in the language of anti-bureaucratization, socialist renewal, and mass control from below, appeals with strong popular resonance. In the unions, which encompassed almost 22 million members, the slogans of repression were intimately intertwined with those of elections and democracy. Nowhere is this astounding, puzzling pairing more evident than in the campaign for union democracy (*profdemokratiia*), a mass movement to revitalize the unions that coincided with the sharpest period of political repression in 1937 and 1938.

The Democracy Campaign

The democracy campaign was first launched at a Central Committee (CC) plenum, which met from February 22 – March 5, 1937. It was part of a wider effort to revitalize Soviet institutions, including the soviets, the Party, and the unions, from below. The plenum delegates gathered amid an intensifying hunt for enemies within the Party and industry. Nikolai Ezhov, appointed head of the People’s Commissariat of Internal Affairs (NKVD) in September 1936, had already arrested over 1,000 officials in industry for

4 A disgruntled former Party member, Leonid V. Nikolaev, assassinated Kirov, the secretary of the Leningrad Party organization, in 1934. The murder led to mass arrests of former oppositionists and the abrogation of civil liberties (Lenoe, 2010; Conquest 1989). Scott (1989, 197) notes that newspapers, radio, and theater all encouraged Soviet citizens to be vigilant of spies.

“wrecking” and “industrial sabotage” (Getty and Naumov 1999, 282). In January, Grigorii Piatakov, the Deputy Commissar of Heavy Industry, and other former members of the left opposition, were charged with industrial wrecking and espionage for fascist Germany, tried in the second of the famous Moscow show trials, and subsequently shot. The Commissar of Heavy Industry, Grigorii (Sergo) Ordzhonikidze, unable to protect his employees from arrest, foresaw his own fate and committed suicide on the eve of the Central Committee plenum. Parallel to the quickening tempo of arrests, the new Stalin Constitution had recently been adopted after broad discussion and a national referendum. It mandated multi-candidate, secret ballot, direct elections to the soviets, lifted previous voting restrictions on priests, white guards, former aristocrats, and other *byvschie ljudi* (former people of the tsarist regime), and provided equal weight to rural and urban votes. Party leaders were more than a bit nervous about how their candidates would fare in such elections. The lead editorial of the main union journal queried anxiously, “Are we ready for this?”⁵ The hunt for enemies among industrial and Party leaders was thus accompanied by great fanfare trumpeting “the most democratic Constitution in the world.”⁶

The CC plenum, too, was shaped by the striking duality of terror and democracy. Much of the plenum was devoted to the “anti-party activities” of Nikolai Bukharin and Aleksei Rykov. The discussion ended with the CC’s decision to expel them from the Party, arrest them, and march them directly from the plenum to prison. Ezhov and other party leaders delivered lengthy speeches on the threats posed by a new terrorist bloc of Trotskyists and rightists who aimed to assassinate Soviet leaders. At the same time, Stalin and Andrei Zhdanov, secretary of the CC and the Lenin-grad Party organization, focused on the need for greater internal Party democracy, presenting a vision of a new, revitalized Party purged of oppositionists. The Party needed to eliminate the noisy boasting, servile flattery, and empty sloganeering that characterized its activities.⁷

5 Informatsionnoe Soobshchenie ob Ocherednom Plenum TsK VKP (b), *Voprosy profdvizheniia*, 5–6, Mart (1937), 2. Elections to the Supreme Soviet were held in October 1937 but single candidate elections were substituted for the promised multi-candidate form at the last minute (Getty, 1991).

6 *Constitution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics* (OGIZ State Publishing House of Political Literature, Soviet Union, 1938).

7 Materialy Fevral’sko-Martovskogo Plenuma TsK VKP (b) 1937 goda, *Voprosy istorii*, No. 5 (1993), No. 3 (1995). The full stenographic report was published in sections in *Voprosy istorii* between 1992 and 1995. A long excerpt in English, dealing with the purge

Using the same phrases that marked the Party's earlier introduction of the Stalin Constitution, Zhdanov linked the coming elections to the Supreme Soviet to the need for greater democracy within the Party itself. He called for the "activation of the party masses", "mass involvement in government", "multi-candidate, secret ballot elections from top to bottom", "an end to appointments [*kooptatsiia*] in place of elections", "criticism and self criticism", and "greater accountability of Party leaders before their members". Zhdanov held that elections within the Party had become "a mere formality": heads of local Party committees were chosen and confirmed by rote elections, or appointed and removed "from above", practices that "deprived members of their legal rights to control the Party organs". The Party had to be rebuilt "on the basis of unconditional and full realization of internal Party democracy".⁸

What did Party leaders mean by "democracy [*demokratiia*]"? The answer here is fairly clear cut: secret ballots, multi candidate-elections, accountability of leaders, greater involvement of the rank and file, and an end to the mini-cults surrounding local and regional leaders. This definition, which encompassed both the general electorate and Party members, shared much with the classical liberal conception of democracy, yet differed from it in two crucial respects. First, although Party leaders encouraged the rank and file to speak out against bosses and officials, they placed limits on free speech and policed them. Party leaders never endorsed the abstract principle of free speech. Second, although they insisted on secret ballots and multi-candidate elections, they never viewed the ballot as the sole defining feature of democracy. They also placed great emphasis on active participation, or control from below, realized in workers' brigades, for example, to oversee prices in stores, disbursement of social insurance funds, housing construction, and the re-gendering of industrial jobs. The brigades often wielded real power to redress problems. Yet like elections, these participatory control mechanisms, too, were often transformed into empty performative rituals devoid of power.

What did Party leaders intend in their invocation of democracy? This question is more complicated. Party leaders believed that the practice of

of Bukharin and Rykov, can be found in the work of Getty and Naumov (1999). No. 5 (1993) contains Zhdanov's speech; No. 7 (1993) resolutions on Zhdanov's speech; No 3 (1995) Stalin's speech; Nos. 11–12 (1995) Stalin's concluding words.

8 Materialy Fevral'sko-Martovskogo Plenuma TsK VKP (b) 1937 goda, *Voprosy istorii*, No 5 (1993), 3–14; No. 7 (1993), 17–23.

koopatsiia made it difficult to remove oppositionists, fostered resentment, and widened the gap between the leadership and the rank and file. Regional and local leaders staffed the posts beneath them with their own loyal appointees, creating an atmosphere of *semeistvennost'* or "family" based on circles of mutual protection. Not beholden to an electorate, wielding vast power to appoint and fire others in leading posts, they built up personal fiefdoms and cults. A. I. Ugarov, former secretary of the Party's Leningrad city committee, complained at the plenum, "Parades, clamor, boasting, glorification of leaders, and toadyism" had replaced honest relations between Party officials and workers.⁹ At the same time, the Kirov murder provoked deep fears within Stalin and his supporters that oppositionists might mobilize the social discontent created by collectivization and rapid industrialization.¹⁰ Party leaders thus had several interests in democracy. They wanted to revitalize the links between the Party and its base and eliminate the creeping apathy at the lower ranks, *but at the same time*, mobilize those ranks to break up the "family circles" around the regional leaders that protected former oppositionists. Most importantly, in their promotion of democracy, *they viewed these aims as complementary, not contradictory.*

N. M. Shvernik, the head of the All Union Central Council of Trade Unions (VTsSPS), delivered the main address on the unions to the CC plenum. Although a number of speakers had prepared their texts in advance for review by the Politburo, Shvernik's speech seemed to surprise Stalin and other CC members (Khlevniuk 1995a, 126–27, 145–46). When Shvernik mentioned that wreckers had seized leadership posts in the unions, Stalin called out, "Who seized these posts?" Shvernik replied that Gil'burg, the head of the Union of Coke and Chemical Workers, had been arrested, and Stalin interrupted again, "He seized a post?" His bewilderment suggested that he was not aware of which union leaders the NKVD had already arrested. Shvernik also surprised the delegates with his announcement that the unions were as badly in need of democratic overhaul as the Party. "I should say here directly and with all frankness that the unions are in even worse shape." He casually tossed out the suggestion that

9 Materialy Fevral'sko-Martovskogo Plenuma TsK VKP (b) 1937 goda, *Voprosy istorii*, No. 5 (1993), 6–8, No. 10 (1995), 22–24.

10 These fears were among the main subtexts of the first Moscow show trial in August 1936. See also speeches of Stalin, Kabakov, Eikhe, Kalygina, and Kosior in Materialy Fevral'sko-Martovskogo Plenuma TsK VKP (b) 1937 goda, *Voprosy istorii*, 6 (1993), 3–12, 27–9; 7 (1993), 3–5; 3 (1995), 3–14.

the unions too might benefit from democratic elections. The suggestion clearly startled the plenum delegates. L. M. Kaganovich, a Politburo member and one of Stalin's staunchest supporters, called out in surprise, "By secret voting?" Shvernik shook his head doubtfully, "I don't know about secret voting." There was general laughter in the hall, as one CC member blurted out, "It's frightening!" Shvernik replied thoughtfully, "I think this wouldn't be too bad."¹¹ And with these words, Shvernik launched what would quickly become a mass campaign for union democracy.

The key speeches at the plenum were used to formulate its resolutions, which in turn, set the future program of the Party. Calling for "mass control from below", direct voting, individual candidates in place of lists, secret ballots, and "the unlimited right to criticize candidates", the resolutions mandated new elections at every level of the Party hierarchy from the primary Party organizations to the central committees of the republics by May, and set terms of office not to exceed 18 months.¹² Getty and Naumov note that Zhdanov's speech and others unleashed "serious insurrections" within the Party against the entrenched regional leadership.¹³

The plenum's resolutions also became the new marching orders for the unions, disseminated by union leaders from the VTsSPS to the shop floor. The March issue of *Voprosy Profdvizheniia*, the main journal of the VTsSPS, paired publication of the resolutions with a searing editorial that excoriated the unions and the VTsSPS from top to bottom. The editors wrote, "The insufficiencies characterizing the Party, characterize the unions to an even greater degree." Their critique echoed Zhdanov's language precisely: violations of union democracy, *keoptatsiia*, "Bureaucratic perversions", "weakening ties with the masses", "arrogance", "toadying", and suppression of criticism.¹⁴ And in the unions, too, the call for democracy was wedded to the politics of purge. VTsSPS leaders claimed that former oppositionists

11 Materialy Fevral'sko-Martovskogo Plenuma TsK VKP (b) 1937 goda, *Voprosy istorii*, 10 (1995), 18, 21.

12 Materialy Fevral'sko-Martovskogo Plenuma TsK VKP (b) 1937 goda, *Voprosy istorii*, No. 7 (1993); *Informatsionnoe Soobshchenie*, 2–3.

13 See Getty and Naumov (1999, 358–60). For detailed discussion of the plenum, *ibid.*, 364–419. Although the resolutions ostensibly called for more democracy, Getty and Naumov contend that the real aim of Stalin, Zhdanov and other leaders was not to empower the lower ranks, but to use them to weaken the regional leadership, thus strengthening power at the top. See also Getty, 1997, 25–26.

14 Itogi Plenuma TsK VKP (b) i Zadachi Profsoiuzov, *Voprosy profdvizheniia*, 5–6, Mart (1937), 4–8.

occupied numerous posts. Mikhail P. Tomskii, a former head of the VTsSPS, and Nikolai A. Uglanov, a former head of the People's Commissariat of Labor, had been key figures in the right deviation of the late 1920s. When the Commissariat of Labor was eliminated in 1932, the VTsSPS incorporated its functions along with hundreds of former rightists on its staff. The Department of Social Insurance, for example, which provided support to sick and disabled workers, moved from the People's Commissariat of Labor to VTsSPS. Leaders now claimed that it "was riddled with embezzlers and enemies of the people" who robbed millions of rubles and "systematically disrupted pensions". Skillfully blending anti-oppositionist rhetoric with an appeal to workers' needs, VTsSPS leaders charged that "enemies of the people" organized accidents, violated safety rules, embezzled union funds, and wrecked housing construction and social services. The NKVD had arrested leading officials in the chemical, agricultural machine building, and metallurgical industries, among others, yet the unions had failed to identify and stop "wrecking".¹⁵

Echoing party leaders at the CC plenum, VTsSPS officials made the same link between terror and democracy: wreckers flourished because democracy had withered. "Enemies", they argued, were "able to pursue their dark, traitorous affairs because the unions did not encourage self criticism, and did not heed the complaints and declarations of the workers". The unions had abandoned occupational health and safety and ignored dangerous work environments.¹⁶ If the unions had been truly democratic organizations, run by and for workers, "wreckers" would not have halted housing construction, disrupted the food supply, and created hazardous conditions in the mines and factories. The solutions proposed by VTsSPS leaders were identical to Zhdanov's program for the Party: to revive democracy, criticize the officials "who overlooked wreckers", and bring in "fresh blood" through democratic elections. Invoking a return to "the authentic, Bolshevik Leninist spirit", they called to sweep out the bureaucrats, to put power back into the hands of the workers, and to bring important issues like safety, housing, and health to the fore.¹⁷

This message resonated strongly with union members. Millions of peasants had flocked to the cities during the first Five Year Plan (1928–32), real wages had fallen by half due to uncontrolled inflation, and living and

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid.

17 Ibid., 8–9.

working conditions were very difficult. In 1929, when the Party purged the “rightists” and forced the unions to “face toward production”, they largely abdicated defense of working class interests.¹⁸ Although VTsSPS leaders were disingenuous in blaming accidents and poor living conditions on “wrecking”, they were accurate in their assessment of the unions. The call for revitalization was guaranteed to appeal directly to workers by linking the hunt for enemies to a new workers’ democracy. It was quickly translated into action. Within less than three weeks, the CC plenum was followed by a plenum of the VTsSPS, which was followed in turn by meetings within individual unions at every level.

The VTsSPS Plenum

The VTsSPS held its VI Plenum in April 1937, its first since 1931. The long hiatus figured prominently in Shvernik’s keynote address, which charged that the unions had fallen apart after the purge of Tomskii and the rightists in 1929. Shvernik, who had first floated the idea of union democracy, now vigorously promulgated the new campaign. He sharply criticized union leaders for violating democratic principles, omitting elections and entrenching themselves in posts without a popular mandate. Many unions, in fact, did not have legally elected central, regional, or factory committees.¹⁹ Officials were dismissive of the people they were supposed to serve, “insensitive toward complaints”, and cavalier about safety rules, labor laws, housing, and occupational health.²⁰ Shvernik’s repeated invocations of workers’ rights were interspersed with references to wrecking, “enemies of the people”, and loss of “class vigilance”. Union officials had allowed enemies, Trotskyists, wreckers, and diversionists to flourish at

18 The rightists were branded as “capitalist trade unionists” for suggesting that unions should defend workers’ interests against managers and the state. After they were purged, the unions’ main role was to encourage worker productivity. On living conditions and the wage crisis, see Fitzpatrick (1999, 40–66, 89–114), Goldman (2002) and Osokina (2001). On unions and workers in the 1930s, see Filtzer (1986); Murphy (2005) and Rossman (2005).

19 Each union was headed by a central committee, with regional (*oblast*) committees at mid-level, factory and shop committees in the enterprises, and *profgrupy*, the smallest unit, at the base. Some unions also had district (*raion*) committees.

20 Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (GARF), fond 5451, opis’ 21, delo 1, l. 68.

every level.²¹ Many union leaders had already been arrested as “enemies of the people”. Shvernik broadened the attack further to include those “politically blind, sluggish, and careless” union officials who failed to help the NKVD in its hunt for enemies.²² He urged union officials to participate actively in identifying and denouncing the enemies in their midst.

The delegates, prominent union and VTsSPS officials, listened carefully to Shvernik’s speech. Attentive readers of the Party and union press, they were not surprised by his message. Yet this was the first time they responded publicly, as a group, to the change in course. Their reactions, initially defensive, spanned the gamut from fear to enthusiasm as they took up the new slogans. In fact, the delegates’ responses foreshadowed the range of reactions that would be replayed with growing intensity as the campaign spread. Some took advantage of the new course to advance the interests of their workers and expose conditions in the factories, some scrambled to blame their superiors, others publicly distanced themselves from union colleagues who had recently been arrested. Delegates fired criticism in every possible direction, including at Shvernik himself. Not even the head of the VTsSPS was off limits.²³

N. V. Voronina, an older woman from *Elektrozavod*, a large Moscow electrical factory, pressed the claims of her fellow women workers. A factory worker for almost forty years, Voronina understood conditions well. Railing against everything from lack of ventilation in the shops to the recent prohibition of abortion, she roundly criticized union officials for ignoring the plight of the very people they were supposed to be representing. Although Voronina was uneducated, her strong commitment had brought her to the attention of union and Party officials who appointed her to the VTsSPS presidium in 1933. Yet Voronina was in many ways a token appointment, unsure of her role. She complained that no one ever told her what to do. She had tried to meet with Shvernik, N. N. Evreinov, and other VTsSPS leaders, but “was not able to have a proper conversation with a single secretary”. Shvernik had visited her factory only once since 1931. Voronina argued that VTsSPS leaders passed and recorded endless resolutions, but were disconnected from the real problems of workers.²⁴

21 GARF, f. 5451, o. 21, d. 1, ll. 126–9.

22 GARF, f. 5451, o. 21, d. 1, ll. 58–9.

23 GARF, f. 5451, o. 21, d. 1, ll. 187–92.

24 *Ibid.* See also comments of Diachenko, the chairman of the factory committee of “*Serp i Molot*” in Ukraine, l. 224.

Voronina's deepest concern, however, was not the useless paper generated by the VTsSPS, but the 23,000 workers in her plant. If VTsSPS leaders genuinely cared about workers, they would address stoppages, low wages, and living conditions. "The factory is a scandalous mess!" she said with disgust. In three years, the factory committee had five different chairmen, and not a single one was elected. She contrasted conditions in the lamp department, which was 90 per cent female, with the promises of the state.

We know that according to the Stalin Constitution, everyone has the right to work, to education, and to rest. But what do we have in the lamp department? As a result of stoppages, women workers with two or three kids, and no husbands, earn 150 rubles a month. They swear at the Party and the government, but the Party and government are not to blame. The unions and managers who don't struggle with these stoppages are guilty. And as a result, women receive miserable pay!

Voronina complained that conditions were deplorable. After the 1936 decree prohibiting abortion, the factory director had promised to build a crèche for 180 infants. "Due to the decree, we have 500 women on maternity leave, 300 more ready to take maternity leave, and 200 women bringing their babies to the factory committee. Did we build crèches? No."²⁵ Housing had not kept pace with the massive influx of new workers from the countryside. People slept in the factory or in makeshift huts. Older workers, who had lost the strength and energy to work, were afraid to retire on pensions of 75 rubles a month. They deserved better. Sick workers were deprived of rightful insurance awards in an attempt to "economize" on funds. And working mothers received little help. "On this you should not economize", Voronina declared angrily. Her words rushed out, building to a crescendo of criticism. There were no ventilators in many shops, and temperatures reached over 130 degrees Fahrenheit. When Voronina exclaimed in frustration, "We have already talked about this for five years and we still have no ventilators", the entire plenum burst into spontaneous applause.²⁶

The response to Voronina's speech showed that an auditorium of union officials could still be moved by a heartfelt appeal to workers' interests. Yet their applause was also strangely displaced. For who, if not union and

25 After a tightly scripted national debate and much opposition from women, the Soviet state prohibited abortion in 1936. The decree led to considerable hardship particularly among working mothers (Goldman 1993, 254–95).

26 GARF, f. 5451, o. 21, d. 1, ll. 195–202.

VTsSPS leaders were responsible for the lack of ventilation in the shops? Voronina's critique of VTsSPS leaders revealed the dangerous dilemma Shvernik's speech posed. If union leaders recognized that conditions were bad why had they not done anything to rectify them? Many officials at the plenum struggled to escape this trap by shrugging off responsibility and casting themselves as victims of *other* "Bureaucrats". Several repeated Voronina's excuse that "no one told us what to do". At times, it appeared that every delegate was looking for someone a little higher in the union hierarchy to blame.

S. L. Bregman, a member of the VTsSPS presidium and head of the Union of Shoe Workers, cast himself as a powerless victim: "We have no help, we have no check-up, we have no controls." He complained so much about the VTsSPS leaders that one exasperated voice in the audience finally burst out, "But you're a member of the VTsSPS presidium!" Yet Bregman refused to take any responsibility, retorting quickly that it was all Shvernik's fault: "The secretariat and presidium of the VTsSPS are in the position of an orchestra without a conductor." He followed the oft-used strategy of penitently admitting failure while shifting blame to his bosses. Critiquing the leaders of the VTsSPS, he righteously declared, "It is much better to sit in an office, to give orders, to defend the paper barricades." Bregman especially targeted Evreinov, a VTsSPS secretary and editor of its journal. "It's a great event when the secretary goes to a factory", Bregman sneered. "In two years, Evreinov went to the Urals once. What kind of leadership is this?"²⁷ While Bregman cast himself as a bold and outspoken fighter against the "Bureaucrats", his own position on the VTsSPS presidium and as head of the Shoe Workers undercut his blameless, heroic pose.

The delegates' eagerness to shift blame was also prompted by fear. Party expulsions and arrests were occurring all around them, and even casual contact with an enemy of the people was grounds for investigation. The head of the Union of State Beet Farm Workers, Radianskii, noted that the secretary of his union turned out to be a "Trotskyist", who had been excluded from the Party several years before for participating in the left opposition. Radianskii anxiously explained that the union presidium had been unaware of its secretary's past, but once it realized the Party had expelled him, it fired him immediately, transferred his case to the Party Control Commission, and asked the VTsSPS to affirm its decision. The secre-

²⁷ GARF, f. 5451, o. 21, d. 1, ll. 203–6.

tary was thus placed in an untenable position shared by thousands: excluded from the Party, he also lost his job. The Party Control Commission investigated, overturned the expulsion, reinstated him in the Party, and ordered the Union of State Farm Beet Workers to rehire him. Radianskii, eager to prove his own “vigilance”, pressed for further investigation, but Evreinov refused, and hired him onto the staff of the VTsSPS. He was arrested soon thereafter “within the walls of the VTsSPS”.²⁸

This story of expulsion, appeal, reversal, reinstatement, and arrest was common, as thousands of desperate people attempted to save their Party standing, jobs, and very lives by pushing for review of their cases at higher levels. Radianskii, terrified that he would be associated with his arrested colleague, painted himself as a scorned crusader who tried repeatedly to bring an “enemy” to the attention of the VTsSPS. Yet Radianskii also revealed the problems union officials faced when last week’s colleague became yesterday’s enemy, today’s exonerated victim, and tomorrow’s enemy again. Radianskii’s behavior was typical, if not honorable. Fearing guilt by association, he severed contact with his former colleague and shifted blame to the VTsSPS. “I was vigilant, comrades”, he implied. “The problem is yours now.” Shvernik’s speech forced the delegates to explain why they had ignored conditions and failed to encourage union democracy. Some spoke out on behalf of the workers, seizing on “union democracy” as a long-awaited opportunity to alleviate real problems. Yet in an attempt to escape blame, the delegates also searched for scapegoats. The small winds of recrimination and denunciation were kicking up. They would gain greater power and speed as the delegates brought Shvernik’s message back to their own unions.

The Charter for Union Democracy

The resolutions adopted by the VI VTsSPS plenum added up to nothing short of a bold new charter for union democracy. The unions were to be recast by a newly activated membership in secret-ballot elections from the central to the factory committees. Voting by lists was to be replaced by individual candidates, and union members would have the “unlimited

²⁸ GARF, f. 5451, o. 21, d. 1, ll. 218–9.

right” to reject and criticize candidates. These were not vague principles for some unspecified future. Elections for factory and shop committees were to be held in June and July, immediately followed by regional conferences, union congresses, and elections for higher-level union organizations in July, August, and September. The VTsSPS would hold its own capstone congress composed of newly elected officials on October 1, 1937. Moreover, voting was to be accompanied by accountability. Before the elections, the members of each union’s central and factory committees were to submit reports on their activities to the rank and file, initiate the process of “criticism and self criticism”, and actively solicit suggestions, which would serve as “commands” for the newly elected leadership.

The VTsSPS plenum instructed *Trud*, its daily newspaper, to investigate various unions to ensure compliance. Control of funds was to be decentralized and democratized. The factory committees in the larger enterprises (300 workers or more) were instructed to organize soviets of social insurance (*sotsstrakha*) of 15 to 30 people to oversee disbursement of money, investigate occupational safety and health, and check that managers observed labor laws on overtime, rest days, and holidays. The unions were to stop managers from withholding workers’ wages to meet other pressing expenses and to ensure that workers were paid on time. Finally, permanent committees of union volunteers were to be attached to soviets at every level of government to guarantee that workers’ issues, including housing, consumption, and working conditions, were at the forefront of local and regional policies.²⁹

Taken together, the resolutions promised workers real, albeit limited, power over the unions. Multi-candidate, secret-ballot elections offered the possibility of new leadership. Workers’ control over social insurance funds encouraged fairer and prompter distribution. And the new emphasis on occupational safety and health promised elimination of the more flagrant violations. The campaign fell considerably short of workers’ control of the factories, but it offered the possibility of genuine improvement. For mid-level officials, the campaign portended no good. Blamed for poor working and living conditions, and faced with the possibility of dismissal, they scrambled to retain their posts. The impulse to shift blame intensified, creating new turmoil at every level of the union hierarchy.

29 GARF, f. 5451, o. 21, d. 1, ll. 130–7, 62–4. See also f. 5451, o. 21, d. 114, ll. 69–82.

Purging the Unions

Over the next two years, the unions went through a major shake up. Immediately following the VI plenum, the VTsSPS and *Trud*, the labor newspaper, sent investigators into factories and unions throughout the country to expose abuses, publicly shame officials, and jumpstart change. These investigators reported that the factory committees, once the soul of the revolution, had become little more than purveyors of a vast pyramid scheme, enrolling new members in an organization that did nothing but enroll members.³⁰ Two workers in a Moscow gas factory summed up the role of union officials, “They sit in the factory committee like some kind of clerks, they never go to the shops, and they don’t work with the active workers [*aktiv*].”³¹

Union leaders, now held responsible for accidents and safety violations, were charged with “wrecking” and arrested by the NKVD. Leaders of the Union of Metallurgical Workers of the East became embroiled in frightening accusations when the managers and factory committee of a Cheliabinsk factory were accused of constructing a ferrous-molybdenum shop without regard for technical safety and spending 400,000 rubles over budget on equipment. After numerous accidents, the shop was shut down, and several officials arrested and charged with “wrecking”.³² The Union of Cement Workers sent a labor inspector to the Amvrosievskii factory in Bryansk to investigate conditions after the director and the main engineer were accused of wrecking in a series of accidents they attributed to technical defects. The inspector found “mass accidents”, “ruinous housing”, no clean drinking water in either the factory or the nearby workers’ settlement,

30 GARF, f. 5451, op. 21, d. 103, ll. 48–51. The membership process was cumbersome and time consuming. A new worker would write an application and submit it to the union group (*profgrup*), the primary organization in the plant. After a cursory background check, the *profgrup* would make a recommendation and pass the application to the shop committee, which would in turn make its decision, and send it to the factory committee for final approval. In most cases, these reviews were *pro forma*; yet the large size of factories coupled with high labor turnover and poor records meant that many shop and factory committees did little more than process applications. In the metal factory, Proletarian Labor, for example, the factory committee plenum discussed thirty or more applications every time they met. Turnover in the factory was so great that the number of workers quitting exceeded the number hired in certain months. The factory committee kept no records of its meetings, but it appeared to be occupied solely with membership.

31 GARF, f. 5451, o. 22, d. 11, l. 12.

32 GARF, f. 5451, o. 21, d. 114, l. 1.

temperatures over 125 degrees in some shops, and constant fires in the factory and the settlement. The factory committee had done nothing. The union sent the inspector's report to the procurator, urging him to bring criminal charges against the director if the problems were not fixed within one month.³³ The Party's single minded emphasis on production coupled with newly imported technologies and a young, untrained work force was sufficient to explain most accidents. Yet accusations of "wrecking" rapidly replaced any rational assessment of fault.

The concentrated attention of VTsSPS and NKVD investigators jolted union officials out of their long torpor. Terrified of public censure and arrest, they began to address conditions. The Union of Metallurgical Workers of the South discussed and drafted new safety rules for the industry to be disseminated in all factories by September.³⁴ The Union of Machine Instrument Workers addressed the large number of accidents and eye injuries in the Stankolit factory, ordered management to provide safety goggles, special boots, work clothes, and other items in short supply, and pledged to investigate every accident in the future.³⁵ Factory committees everywhere began taking minutes and forwarding their records to VTsSPS headquarters. The days of fiddling with membership applications seemed to be over.³⁶ The accusations of "wrecking" were patently false, but they did concentrate attention on health and safety issues that had long been overlooked.

Multi-candidate, Secret-Ballot Elections

Throughout the summer of 1937, the unions held multi-candidate, secret-ballot elections at every level from the factory to the central committees. The workers took up the campaign for union democracy and swept out the old staff in one election after another. A report from the Union of Woolen Workers to the VTsSPS optimistically noted, "Work in the factories has

33 GARF, f. 5451, o. 21, d. 114, ll. 1–3.

34 GARF, f. 5451, o. 21, d. 114, l. 3.

35 GARF, f. 5451, o. 21, d. 114, l. 9.

36 The unions also launched investigations in the barracks and dormitories that housed hundreds of thousands of new workers who had migrated to the cities during the industrialization drive. See GARF, f. 5451, o. 21, d. 114, l. 22.

completely changed its face.” For the first time in years, woolen workers actively participated in large, noisy “accountability” meetings. Of the more than 1,300 people elected to 195 factory committees in the woolen industry, 65 per cent were new, and 43 per cent had never participated in union activities. They voted out about half of the old factory committee chairmen, elected over 1,000 people to shop committees, and another 1,000 as shop organizers. The sheer numbers of new participants pointed to a major overhaul of the union. Paid officials on the shop committees were eliminated and replaced with volunteers. In the Red Weaving Factory, about one-sixth of the 4,400 workers were elected to shop committees, an unprecedented level of voluntary participation. The factory committee began meeting regularly to discuss living conditions. In August, the Union of Woolen Workers held its first congress with 245 delegates. After sharply criticizing the union’s central committee for its phony performances, poor leadership, and “deep violations of union democracy”, the delegates voted it out of office. Only four previous members were reelected. Stakhanovite workers from the shop floor composed almost half of the new forty-one-member central committee. It promptly created labor protection commissions to improve ventilation, record accidents, provide work clothes, and monitor overtime work.³⁷

The electoral shake up in the Union of Woolen Workers was replicated in other unions. Through the fall of 1937 and into the winter, 116 unions held congresses attended by over 23,300 delegates. They were turbulent affairs. Using the language of democracy and purge, the delegates strongly criticized the existing central committees and “unmasked an entire series of individuals in leadership positions, who were politically blind and careless, as well as a number of corrupt elements, idlers, and bureaucrats”. The blame game spread like wild fire. At the congresses, each layer of leadership criticized the one above it: delegates from the Union of Railroad Construction Workers criticized their central committee; the central committee of the Union of Central Cooperative Employees criticized its presidium. Union members from elektrostations, peat bogs, schools, and dining halls denounced their officials for “bureaucracy, separation from the masses, and ignoring the needs of their members”.³⁸

37 GARF, f. 5451, o. 22, d. 64, ll. 211–24. Of the people elected to the factory committees,

40 per cent were Party members, and 17 per cent, engineering or technical employees.

38 GARF, f. 5451, o. 22, d. 64, ll. 12–3.

Workers embraced the campaign for union democracy, but they did not control it. Regardless of the rhetoric spouted at the podium, workers composed only about one quarter of the total number of delegates at the union congresses, the remainder included union officials, white-collar employees, engineering/technical personnel, and over 600 directors of trusts and enterprises and their deputies. About two-thirds of the delegates were Party members. The congresses, aimed at revitalization from below, were still dominated by paid union officials and managers.³⁹ Along with genuine efforts by workers, the congresses thus replicated the delicate exercise that the VTsSPS plenum delegates had performed earlier in which “Bureaucrats” trumpeted against bureaucracy.

By the end of 1937, over 1,230,000 people had participated in the electoral process in 146 unions. Elections were held in hundreds of thousands of union groups (*profgrupy*) and shop committees, in almost 100,000 factory committees and 1,645 regional committees. Elections in hundreds of enterprises were nullified for violating “the principles of union democracy” by not offering more than one candidate and secret ballots. Final election returns showed a serious shake up of personnel. Over 70 per cent of the old factory committee members were replaced, 66 per cent of the 94,000 factory committee chairmen, and 92 per cent of the 30,723 members of the regional committee plenums. The election results, however, were mixed in terms of putting workers into positions of power. At the lower levels of the union organizations, many of the new people were workers or “people from production”: in the *profgrupy* (the primary organization), 65 per cent of those elected were Stakhanovites or shock workers, in the shop committees 62 per cent, in the factory committees 45 per cent, and in the regional committees 25 per cent. These figures indicated strong participation from leading workers in the factories, but they also revealed an inverse ratio between the level of the union organization and the percentage of workers elected to it: the higher the level, the lower the percentage of workers. From the *profgrupy* to the regional committees, for example, the representation of workers dropped by 40 per cent.⁴⁰ People who did not work in the industry represented by the union still occu-

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid., ll. 10–14.

pied most positions at the upper levels. The wave of renewal weakened as it rolled toward the upper reaches of the unions.⁴¹

In elections for the highest level of union leadership, the central committees, union members also returned strong votes of no confidence. Electoral returns from 116 union central committees showed that over 96 per cent of 5,054 plenum members, 87 per cent of presidium members, 92 per cent of secretaries, and 68 per cent of chairmen were replaced. Here, too, officials at the apex of the hierarchy retained a greater share of posts than those immediately below them: 96 per cent of central committee members were replaced, but only 68 per cent of chairmen. Moreover, the new chairmen and secretaries often transferred from other important Party, managerial, or union posts. In about one third of the central committees, they were former heads of factory committees.⁴² The new electoral shake up provided the greatest benefits to this group, catapulting them from leadership of the factories into positions of national prominence.

Party and VTsSPS leaders pointed with pride to the fact that many newly elected officials were *not* Party members, evidence that “new people”, “the best Stakhanovites” were becoming active in union affairs. Far more non-Party members could be found at the lower than the upper reaches of union leadership. Fully 93 per cent of *profgrup* members did not belong to the Party, in contrast to 19 per cent of the central committee presidium members.⁴³ Just as the per cent of workers steadily decreased from the bottom to the top of the union hierarchy, so did the percentage of Party members increase.

Party leaders’ active endorsement of non-Party people stood in sharp contrast to their usual policy of promoting Party candidates. What was their motivation? Union leaders officially presented the elections as a means “to liquidate stagnation in the unions and root out the entrenched Trotskyist-Bukharinist agents of fascism and their supporters”.⁴⁴ The aims

41 There was a similar pattern in the May 1937 Party elections: the regional (*oblast’* and *krai*) first secretaries retained their positions, while the district (*raion*) and primary Party officials were voted out (Getty 1997, 28).

42 GARF, f. 5451, o. 22, d. 64, ll. 10–4.

43 The percentage of non-party members decreased as one moved up the unions’ hierarchies: 84 per cent of shop committee members, 80 per cent of factory committee members, 66 per cent of the factory committee chairmen, 47 per cent of regional committee members, 34 per cent of regional committee presidiums, and 33 per cent of central committee members did not belong to the Party. GARF, f. 5451, o. 22, d. 64, ll. 10–4.

44 *Ibid.*, l. 11.

were thus an exact replica of Stalin and Zhdanov's program for the Party itself: to renew democracy from below and to remove former oppositionists. In the campaign for union democracy, "non-Party" served as a signifier for workers, just as "Party", especially among unionists in leading posts, signified a greater likelihood of oppositional activity. Top Party and union leaders viewed mid- and upper level union officials as the analog to the regional leaders they denounced at the February–March CC plenum. By mobilizing workers to remove these officials, top Party leaders were able to target former oppositionists and gain working class support in much the same way they sought to use the rank and file Party cadres against their regional leaders.⁴⁵

Workers voted out the overwhelming majority of old officials, but did they succeed in replacing them with workers? Salary data shows that over half the newly elected officials did not take a pay increase in their new posts. In other words, they did not move up from lower positions, and certainly not from the shop floor. In 1938, there were 5,484 salaried positions within the unions.⁴⁶ Of the people elected to these posts, 59 per cent either took a pay cut or stayed at the same level. Of the remaining 41 per cent who increased their salaries, the overwhelming majority did not make a big jump: they gained less than 200 rubles per month. Union elections thus encouraged officials to play a type of leapfrog. The union pots began to boil, but unlike the proverbial frogs that remained in hot water, leading officials began leaping laterally. The newly elected chairman of the Union of Oil Refinery Workers, for example, was previously the head of a shop. As head of the union, he earned 1,000 rubles a month, 100 rubles *less* than he earned as shop boss. The new chairman of the Union of Coalminers of the East was previously the head of the Cadre (Personnel) Department of the Eastern Coal Transport Trust. He, too, took a pay cut, from 1,200 to 800 rubles. The new chairman of the Union of Medical Workers (*Medsantrud*) was previously director of a shoe workshop; the chairman of the Union of Fish Workers, the deputy chairman of the Murmansk town soviet;

45 Getty and Naumov (1999, 263–68, 322–33, 357–61, 576–83) argue that regional leaders were targeted for removal by Stalin and his supporters not only because they represented a threat to centralized power, but because they were a likely pool of oppositionists. The process of mobilizing the lower ranks against the regional leaders involved several advances and retreats between the June 1936 and February–March 1937 Central Committee plenums.

46 These included chairmen and secretaries of union central and regional committees, and chairmen and secretaries of their respective presidiums.

and the head of the Union of Iron Ore Workers, director of the Liebknecht mine.⁴⁷ These newly elected chairmen of the union central committees were not workers; they were managers in powerful local and regional posts. They earned high salaries compared to workers.⁴⁸ Leading officials stubbornly defended their privileges even through the unpredictable vagaries of “revitalization”. Managers moved into unions, and former union officials were most probably appointed to management posts. Lateral leapfrog was one way regional and local cliques protected each other. If these men were representative of the newly elected officials, the higher union staff appeared to have been “renewed” by the bosses!

Conclusion

Analysis of the elections suggests that many interests were at play. Stalin, Shvernik, and other Party leaders aimed to gain workers’ support and root out former oppositionists. They viewed the personal fiefdoms that had developed around regional elites as obstacles to these aims. The democracy campaign was a way to rebuild working class support, and to forge a united Party, purged of opposition and corruption. The workers hoped to remove corrupt and complacent “Bureaucrats”. The campaign for union democracy offered the opportunity to elect officials who would address accident rates, working conditions, housing, food supply, and wages. They voted the old leadership out, especially at the lower levels, in the hope of creating unions that would represent their interests. For union officials, the campaign initiated a desperate struggle to maintain their standing. They sought to preserve their standing by moving members of their own “family circles” from one leading post to another.

47 The study covered 1,349 paid, elected officials or about one-quarter of the total paid elected union *apparats*, see GARF, f. 5451, o. 22, d. 75, ll. 2–4.

48 The average monthly wage in industry in 1935 was 185 rubles, with a range of 129 rubles for workers in the linen industry, and 223 rubles in the oil industry. Women textile workers were frantic when machine stoppages further reduced their small paychecks, because they could scarcely feed their children on their regular wages. Highly skilled workers in heavy industry might earn up to 500 rubles. Yet union officials earned considerably more than workers even at the highest end of the pay scale. *Trud v SSSR. Statisticheskii spravochnik* (TsUNKhU Gosplana, Moscow, 1936), 97.

The elections were not an unalloyed victory for any of these groups. Party leaders were circumvented by lateral leapfrog from breaking up “family circles” and rooting out oppositionists. The workers did not succeed in removing “Bureaucrats”. And regional and local leaders continued to be arrested even after assuming new posts. More than ten members of the new union central committees were arrested as “enemies of the people” soon after the elections. In the Union of Railroad Workers alone, 19 newly elected officials were “unmasked” and arrested.⁴⁹ Throughout 1937 and 1938, the NKVD continued to cull their ranks. These arrests encouraged union officials to denounce each other, which prompted in turn, ever widening circles of arrests.

The new elections opened a Pandora’s box of grudges, charges, and grievances. In fact, the real struggle in the unions began *after* the elections. Expulsions from the Party, VTsSPS investigations, and arrests kept union officials in a state of churning uncertainty. Officials charged with “indifference to the needs of the workers” lashed back with countercharges in an attempt to discredit their accusers. *Everyone* cloaked their criticism or complaint in the language of democracy, using the same phrases to advance differing interests. As the paired messages of democracy and repression percolated down through the unions’ hierarchies, the meanings attributed to the slogans multiplied along with the number of people using them. Terror and union democracy mixed with charges of corruption and personal resentments to create a toxic brew. Daily workplace gossip turned deadly, creating an ugly mess that the NKVD was all too eager to investigate under the watchwords of democracy. There was no dearth of villains or victims: officials in every union were soon caught up in the deadly game.

By 1938, thousands of union leaders had picked up the double-edged sword of terror and democracy, and were slashing each other to ribbons. The new leaders attacked the old, and everyone scrabbled frantically to find someone to blame for problems in the factories. It became impossible to disentangle the knot of charges and countercharges. Everyone portrayed themselves as avatars of democracy and defenders of the working class. In less than 18 months, the interests of top Party leaders had been subsumed by those of mid-level union officials and workers, who were in turn engulfed by chaotic mud slinging at the local level. In the end, the campaign was used to serve a variety of interests. It spread rapidly through the un-

49 GARF, f. 5451, o. 22, d. 64, l. 23.

ions because it proved useful to so many ends. The campaign for union democracy not only paralleled the mass repression of 1937–38, it became the very means by which groups with different aims were transformed into the willing, even enthusiastic proponents of purge and repression.

Although the campaign for democracy brought some limited attention to working and living conditions, the newly elected leaders were neither willing nor able to pursue substantive democratic reforms. Elections, even with multiple candidates and secret ballots, meant little if the elected representatives had no power to win tangible benefits for their constituencies. Union representatives, no matter how honest and efficient, did not have the power to challenge wage rates, investment policy, or production norms. The only language available to workers, managers, and union officials for advancing their interests was that promulgated by Zhdanov at the Central Committee plenum and popularized by Shvernik through the VTsSPS: “wrecking”, “weakening ties with the masses”, “violation of democracy”, “arrogance”, “toadying”, “lack of vigilance”, and “suppression of criticism from below”. This was the language of the terror and, as the only sanctioned outlet for expression, it was widely employed. Yet these phrases were of limited value in solving real problems, which were rooted in rapid industrialization. Accidents, poor food distribution, housing shortages, delayed construction, wage arrears, and low productivity were not the result of “wrecking” and could not be solved by either elections or arrests. Whether elections can alter deep structural inequalities is a question relevant not only to the Soviet Union in 1937–38, but also to stable capitalist democracies. In these countries, leaders pride themselves on their political legitimacy and do not link elections to the purge of alleged enemies. Yet their citizens, like Soviet workers, have also frequently found voting to be a poor substitute for the power to effect genuine change.

Bibliography

- Chase, William (2001). *Enemies Within the Gates. The Comintern and the Stalinist Repression, 1934–39*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Conquest, Robert (1989). *Stalin and the Kirov Murder*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- (1990). *The Great Terror. A Reassessment*. London: Hutchinson.

- Courtois, Stéphane, Nicolas Werth, Jean-Louis Panne, Andrzej Paczkowski, Karel Bartosek, and Jean-Louis Margolin (1999). *The Black Book of Communism. Crimes, Terror, Repression*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Filtzer, Donald (1986). *Soviet Workers and Stalinist Industrialization. The Foundation of Modern Soviet Production Relations, 1928–1941*. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.
- Fitzpatrick, Sheila (1993). How the Mice Buried the Cat. Scenes from the Great Purges of 1937 in the Russian Provinces. *Russian Review*, 52, 299–320.
- (1994a). *Stalin's Peasants. Resistance and Survival in the Russian Village After Collectivization*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- (1994b). Workers Against Bosses: The Impact of the Great Purges on Labor-Management Relations. In Lewis H. Siegelbaum and Ronald Suny (eds.). *Making Workers Soviet. Power, Class and Identity*, 311–40. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- (1999). *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Getty, J. Arch (1985). *Origins of the Great Purges: The Soviet Communist Party Reconsidered, 1933–38*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- (1991). State and Society Under Stalin: Constitutions and Elections in the 1930s. *Slavic Review*, 50, 18–35.
- (1997). Pragmatists and Puritans: The Rise and Fall of the Party Control Commission. *The Carl Beck Papers in Russian and East European Studies*, No. 1208, Pittsburgh: Russian and East European Studies, University of Pittsburgh.
- (2002). “Excesses are Not Permitted”: Mass Terror and Stalinist Governance in the Late 1930s. *The Russian Review*, 61, 113–38.
- and Oleg Naumov (1999). *The Road to Terror. Stalin and the Self Destruction of the Bolsheviks*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press.
- Goldman, Wendy (1993). *Women, the State and Revolution. Soviet Family Policy and Social Life, 1917–1936*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- (2002). *Women at the Gates. Gender and Industry in Stalin's Russia*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- (2005). Stalinist Terror and Democracy: The 1937 Union Campaign. *American Historical Review*, 110, 1427–53.
- (2007). *Terror and Democracy in the Age of Stalin. The Social Dynamics of Repression*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Hagenloh, Paul (2009). *Stalin's Police. Public Order and Mass Repression in the USSR, 1926–1941*. Baltimore and Washington, DC: John Hopkins University Press.
- Harris, James (1999). *The Great Urals. Regional Interests and the Evolution of the Soviet System, 1934–1939*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Hoffman, David (1993). The Great Terror on the Local Level: Purges in Moscow Factories, 1936–1938. In J. Arch Getty and Roberta Manning (eds.). *Stalinist Terror. New Perspectives*, 163–67. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.
- Jansen, Marc, and Nikita Petrov (2002). *Stalin's Loyal Executioner. People's Commissar Nikolai Ezhov*. Stanford: Hoover Institution Press.

- Khlevniuk, Oleg V. (1992). *1937-i: Stalin, NKVD i sovetskoe obschestvo*. Moscow: Izd-vo "Respublika".
- (1995a). In *Stalin's Shadow. The Career of "Sergo" Ordzhonikidze*. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.
- (1995b). The Objectives of the Great Terror, 1937–1938. In J. Cooper, M. Perrie and E.A. Rees (eds.). *Soviet History, 1917–1953. Essays in Honor of R. W. Davies*, 158–76. London and New York: St. Martin's Press.
- (2004). *The History of the Gulag. From Collectivization to the Great Terror*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press.
- Kuromiya, Hiroaki (1998). *Terror and Freedom in the Donbas: a Ukrainian-Russian Borderland, 1870s–1990s*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lenoe, Matthew (2010). *The Kirov Murder and Soviet History*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Manning, Roberta (1984). Government in the Soviet Countryside in the Stalinist Thirties: The Case of Belyi Raion in 1937. *The Carl Beck Papers in Russian and East European Studies*, No. 301. Pittsburgh: Russian and East European Studies, University of Pittsburgh.
- (1993). The Soviet Economic Crisis of 1936–1940 and the Great Purges. In J. Arch Getty and Roberta Manning (eds.). *Stalinist Terror. New Perspectives*, 168–97. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.
- McLoughlin, Barry, and Kevin McDermott (eds.). (2004). *Stalin's Terror. High Politics and Mass Repression in the Soviet Union*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Murphy, Kevin (2005). *Revolution and Counterrevolution. Class Struggle in a Moscow Metal Factory*. New York: Berghahn Books.
- Osokina, Elena (2001). *Our Daily Bread. Socialist Distribution and the Art of Survival in Stalin's Russia, 1927–41*. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.
- Rees, E.A. (ed.). (2002). *Centre-Local Relations in the Stalinist State, 1928–1941*. New York: Palgrave.
- Rittersporn, Gabor (1991). *Stalinist Simplifications and Soviet Complications: Social Tensions and Political Conflicts in the USSR, 1933–1953*. Chur; New York: Harwood Academic Publishers.
- Rossmann, Jeffrey (2005). *Worker Resistance under Stalin: Class and Revolution on the Shop Floor*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Scott, John (1989). *Behind the Urals. An American Worker in Russia's City of Steel*. Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press.
- Shearer, David (2009). *Policing Stalin's Socialism. Repression and Social Order in the Soviet Union, 1924–1953*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Siddiqi, Asif (2003). The Rockets' Red Glare. Technology, Conflict, and Terror in the Soviet Union. *Technology and Culture*, 44, 470–501.
- Solomon, Peter (1996). *Soviet Criminal Justice Under Stalin*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Solzhenitsyn, Alexander (1973). *The Gulag Archipelago. An Experiment in Literary Investigation, 1918–1956*. New York: Harper & Row.

- Thurston, Robert (1992). Reassessing the History of Soviet Workers: Opportunities to Criticize and Participate in Decision-Making. In Stephen White (ed.). *New Directions in Soviet History*, 160–90. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- (1993). The Stakhanovite Movement: The Background to the Great Terror in the Factories, 1935–1938. In J. Arch Getty and Roberta Manning (eds.). *Stalinist Terror. New Perspectives*, 142–60. New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- (1996). *Life and Terror in Stalin's Russia, 1934–1941*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Plebiscites in Fascist Italy: National Unity and the Importance of the Appearance of Unity

Paul Corner

At first sight at least, the use of the plebiscite—or the *plebiscitary election*, as it was called—in fascist Italy in March 1929 and then again in March 1934 is one of the more paradoxical aspects of the regime. Particularly the 1929 plebiscite, which came only four years after the effective establishment of the regime, is remarkable, in the sense that a movement that had devoted so much of its time during the 1920s to killing, beating and imprisoning its opponents should have had the courage to give the Italians the opportunity to express their opinion on how it operated. However, the 1929 plebiscite was hardly an act of courage (as we shall see, the risks were very few). Rather, it has to be seen as an expression of the fascist attitude to politics in general and also as an example of the relation between this attitude and the formation of a popular consensus for fascism. Viewed in this way, the use of the plebiscite appears less a shallow tactical operation of the type seen in the phony elections of certain other dictatorial regimes and more an expression of the fascist conception of the relationship that should exist between the state and the individual.

The Fascist Approach to Elections

At the time of its foundation in early 1919, and for many months after, the Italian fascist movement liked to define itself as the “anti-party” and often declared itself not only “anti-parliamentary” but also, and even, “anti-political”. These definitions (made largely to *avoid* any conventional definition) reflected the fascist movement’s refusal to recognize itself as a component part of the political structure of liberal Italy. As fascist violence was soon to show, this refusal implied a disposition to reject the political methods of liberal Italy and to develop a new logic of justification for its actions and activities.

The rejection of traditional “politics” (in later years, fascist leaders would admonish argumentative subordinates with the disgusted rejoinder, “Please, no politics here!”) had its origins in certain minority intellectual movements of the first decade of the century but became more generalized as a result of the immediate experience of the First World War in Italy. During the conflict, and particularly following the rout of the Italian armies at Caporetto in November 1917, political polarization within Italy had reached unprecedented levels, with hysterical nationalists accusing the neutralist socialist movement of having responsibility for the defeat. On the right, the lesson drawn from this particular crisis was that political division within Italy threatened the very integrity of the recently-formed Italian state and that such division should be eliminated if Italy were to realize its ambition of becoming a great European power. These views were confirmed by the events of 1919 and 1920, when polarization around the question of the utility of the sacrifices of the war reached new levels and when those socialists who rejected the “national” values of the war and who seemed to scorn any kind of patriotic sentiment were about to gain political power. For the fascists, therefore, “politics” became synonymous with division and national weakness; national unity required the elimination of division and, thus, logically, the elimination of the limited democratic politics of liberal Italy.

Fascist attitudes towards *elections* were dictated by this reasoning. For the fascists, elections were the ultimate expression of factionalism and political fragmentation; discussion of political *alternatives* and the opportunity that elections provided for the expression of individual *choice* simply opened the door to division and invited the kind of national disintegration that had seemed so close in 1917. The violence of the fascist action squads was no more than a reflection of the fascist intolerance of discussion or argument; by defeating the political adversary through violent means, they also closed the road to any discussion of political alternatives. Fascist logic dictated that national unity—the pre-condition of national greatness—was to be imposed rather than agreed.

This emphasis upon enforced unity (which the liberal Giovanni Amendola would acutely term “totalitarian” in 1923) necessarily implied a revised interpretation of the relationship between the state and the individual. Repression of all forms of dissent signified that the traditionally public sphere of politics—that occupied by the debate and discussion emanating from civil society—had been destroyed. With its insistence on the defense

and elevation of the “virtues” of the First World War infantryman, the fascist movement argued instead for discipline and simple obedience (spontaneous or otherwise) as the true characteristics of political behavior. Individual initiative and personal sentiment had no place in this vision, except in so far as they served the purpose of the nation. It was no accident that the fascist slogan painted on a thousand walls was “Believe, obey, fight”, and not “Think, debate, discuss”. The organic state invoked by Mussolini’s phrase “Everything within the state, nothing outside the state” left little room for the promotion of political alternatives or individual initiatives; the individual was to become a part of the state and nothing more.

Fascist practice regarding elections reflected this anti-pluralist thinking, which, obviously, was not unique to fascism. Even in the 1924 elections, which were still, formally, free elections, the risks of a genuine expression of popular opinion seemed too great for many fascists. Despite Mussolini’s order that intimidation should not take place (he was convinced, probably correctly, that he would win a majority under the new electoral law in any case), fascist leaders in the provinces did not hesitate to use violence in order to ensure victory. This was done—significantly—even in those provinces, like Ferrara, where the fascists were in any case assured of a large majority, indicating that the objective was less a majority than total conformity and virtual unanimity.¹

Ironically, many of the same provincial leaders would find their disregard for the basic democratic principles of electoral choice used against themselves two years later. Tired of perpetual indiscipline on the part of provincial fascist leaders, who often based their challenges to Mussolini on their popularity within their own provinces (that is, on a local legitimacy), Mussolini determined in 1926 that such leaders should no longer be elected by their supporters but appointed from the center—in effect, by Mussolini himself.² Provincial leaders—the *rux*, as they were called—were wrong-footed by this ruling, torn as they were between their long-standing

1 Italo Balbo, the fascist leader in Ferrara, is alleged to have told his supporters to take the first elector to come out of the voting station and, “even if he has voted for us”, to break his head open, shouting “Bastard, you voted for the socialists”. After this, Balbo was sure that no one would dare to vote against the fascists (Corner 1975, 263).

2 A further reason for this was very probably the tendency for provincial fascist assemblies to degenerate into open battles between the factions that had formed within the movement. See letter of party secretary to federations, December 1, 1923, in which people attending assemblies are told to leave their guns at the door. (See Aquarone 1965, 343).

and subversive hatred of Rome and its politics, and the obligation to show discipline within a paramilitary organization. In this conflict, Mussolini held most of the cards and, almost inevitably, the call to discipline won out. The message he sent to his followers was clear: hierarchy was to be respected on all occasions and from that point onwards all appointments would be made from the center. Within the Fascist Party itself, therefore, elections were eliminated and *designation from above* became the rule. In no circumstances should the people—not even the fascist faithful—be given the chance to choose.

The same principle was applied widely from 1926 onwards. Elected municipal councils were replaced by nominated bodies; the town mayor was replaced by the newly-created figure of the fascist *podestà*, nominated by the Prefect; and union organizations no longer elected their own representatives. Even the Italian Jewish community came under attack in the late 1920s because its inner councils were elected rather than appointed; it was feared that this example might be followed by others and could prove an embarrassment to fascism.

Popular Participation: Terms, Conditions and Objectives

Denial of the principle of elections solved certain problems for the regime, but it did leave the government with the difficulty of establishing some kind of channel of communication with the people—without allowing the people any kind of say. The essential conundrum facing Mussolini was that of seeking popular approval, while at the same time denying any spontaneity to the expression of that approval. After all, the fascist regime claimed to be “popular”; Giuseppe Bottai even asserted that the regime was more democratic than the traditional democracies because it had solved the problem of the tension between elite and masses by unifying the two; and yet, very obviously, the regime could not trust the people to express an opinion. The use of the plebiscite is one of the ways in which the fascist movement attempted to solve this dilemma. It permitted mass participation, but it conceded no power or responsibility. This was perfectly in line with fascist thinking.

As any student of fascism knows, if the people were denied any form of real election and all appointments were made from above, it was far

from true that, under fascism, the people were absent from the scene. The populist element in fascism reserved a significant role for the people; indeed, in many ways the people were much more present than they had ever been before. Before the First World War, no one had been able to stand in Piazza Venezia in Rome and scream replies to the questions shouted from the balcony by the national leader. Under fascism, the piazza—the central focus of any Italian town or village—assumed a new importance as a place where people gathered to hear speeches by local leaders or speeches relayed by radio by the *duce* himself in Rome. Moreover, if people were not invited to vote in free elections, they were still “encouraged” to participate in a whole range of activities organized by the Fascist Party and by other related fascist groups. The leisure organization—the *Opera Nazionale Dopolavoro*—was the most obvious example. Indeed, the undoubted totalitarian pretensions of fascism produced situations of almost frenetic activity in many provinces as local leaders worked to involve as many people as possible in some kind of fascist activity.

What characterized this kind of political participation was that it was realized not by voting but by wearing a uniform, belonging to a fascist organization, sending one’s children to a fascist youth group, giving a certain kind of salute, and so on. This represented a specific kind of political participation, one no longer based on individual choice but on involvement in collective activity and on behaving in a certain way. In these circumstances, political conviction took second place to *public* behavior. What was important was that the individual had *to be seen* to be part of the collective effort; inner thoughts were less important.

The intense activity of the fascist regime throughout its entire existence in organizing mass rallies, huge party meetings, fascist festivals and so on was determined by this imperative. It was not that the people were absent, therefore; it was rather that the channels of communication between the people and their government had been changed, as had the content and the significance of that communication. It is, of course, true that popular participation was always, in a sense, one-directional. People could reply to Mussolini’s questions from his balcony in Rome—but their replies could only be those indicating agreement; the people were essentially audience to, and chorus in, a play in which the protagonists were always others. This kind of popular participation was essentially about creating a sense of being part of a common narrative. The constant invocation of History,

and of fascism's major role in History, was a way of underlining the same common belonging to a unique story.

The mass demonstration was the classic way of attempting to create a sense of commonality, of unity of purpose, among the population. Even those present against their will (non-attenders were identified and punished) were in some way involved in the process and could hardly fail to be touched by the impression of unity. In this respect, what was important was that people had to, like all the others, behave *as if* they believed. Again, it was collective *action* rather than internal conviction that was to be emphasized. Mussolini's balcony questions to the crowd usually invited the answer "To us!"—the collective and unifying "we" in its various forms being the characteristic of the replies.

So Why the Plebiscite?

This brings us nearer to the question of why fascism—which rejected all forms of election—decided to hold plebiscites in 1929 and 1934. The first plebiscite generated a great deal of noise in Italy; it was clearly seen as an important test. The second passed almost unnoticed.

It should be noted that the 1929 plebiscite was held to renew the 1924 parliament; at least formally, therefore, the procedure appeared to observe the rules governing the end of the 1924 legislature. Similarly, the 1934 plebiscite marked the end of the 1929 legislature. Analogies with previous elections ended there, however. The 1929 plebiscite asked a significant proportion of the male population to reply "Yes" or "No" to the question, "Do you approve the list of parliamentary deputies drawn up by the national Grand Council?" But, since it was readily apparent to everyone, fascists included, that parliament had ceased to count for anything, the vote was seen everywhere as a request for a generic approval of fascist government.

It is evident that the plebiscites—particularly the first—were above all exercises in international and internal legitimization. In reply to international criticism coming from the democracies, the fascist regime wished to demonstrate that the people, when asked, really did support the regime and that the traditional Western democratic model, which reflected class conflict, had been superseded by a system that managed to achieve

the conciliation of class differences and was therefore superior. The *Corriere della sera* interpreted the results of the 1929 plebiscite precisely in these terms:

Our opponents, especially those who, from the columns of foreign newspapers, persist in denigrating fascist Italy, have been defeated with their own weapons. These people, who deny any legitimacy that does not come from below, which is not delegated and consecrated by the wishes of the masses, will have to accept with enormous surprise that the masses are entirely for Mussolini and for his authoritarian system. Democrats all over the world cannot deny that [...] the fascist regime is the most democratic regime that exists because it has total consensus of the greatest electoral mass that has ever voted in Italy.

Here, the intention was to justify the past history of fascism, which had attracted such negative judgments from liberal opinion in the rest of Europe, and also to provide Mussolini with a solid platform of apparent popular support from which to carry out his expansionist foreign policy in the future.

Within Italy, the regime hoped—through the plebiscite—to establish a claim to power that went beyond the violent and coercive methods it had used during the 1920s. The intention was to change the terms on which certain groups within the population—mainly middle-of-the-road liberals and Catholics—looked on the regime by inducing these groups to abandon their residual reservations about the legitimacy of the regime. It should be remembered that the plebiscite took place at a moment when the regime had managed to realize the Conciliation with the Catholic Church. The creation of an alliance between church and state, after seventy years of hostility, undoubtedly represented a moment of triumph for the regime, allowing it to assert further its role as undisputed and legitimate leader of the national cause. In the same way that the overtures to the church were made in the spirit of healing divisions, so the plebiscite was meant to confirm a generalized recognition of national purpose and common aim.

The path to legitimization of fascist rule was to pass, therefore, through the recognition that the national cause was more important than individual rights or liberties, and that the individual had significance only as part of the nation. The plebiscite was the perfect vehicle for the implementation of this philosophy. It allowed people to vote without allowing them any choice about who or what to vote for; it gave the impression that people could participate in the decision-making process without allowing any real popular intervention. It carried none of the risks

of a genuinely free election, in which individual choice was the key element, but it did permit the public expression of unanimity. People all voted in the same way, were all seen to vote in the same way, and could all be told that they had all voted in the same way. Collective unitary purpose was expressed publicly and, by that expression, became fact; the methods and objectives of fascism were therefore assumed to be legitimized in the eyes of the public.³ The plebiscite permitted, therefore, the creation of a new kind of public sphere in which the central features were not debate and discussion but rather the *visible* manifestations of conformity to the common purpose. Unlike a democratic election, which invited voters to consider alternatives and which generated divisiveness, the plebiscite was intended to be an expression of collective solidarity. It was to be a *public* demonstration of *national* unity and a clear indication of how far Italy had traveled since the days of political fragmentation during and immediately after the war.

Mussolini's newspaper *Il Popolo d'Italia* summed up the situation a few days before the 1929 plebiscite: "Factions have disappeared. Parties are logically submerged. The region, the province, the [electoral] college have made room for a deep and human reality—the Nation. In order for this revival to be absolute, in order for Italy to be raised above the narrow view of the [electoral] college and the absurd humiliation of parties, it has been necessary [to invoke] the totalitarian conception of the plebiscitary election [...]" (*Il Popolo d'Italia*, March 1, 1929).⁴ This plebiscitary election was to be the concrete example of a newly united Italy under fascism. It was to impose a new image of the fascist movement on public opinion, both at home and abroad.

3 The process was described perfectly by Victor Klemperer regarding the November 1933 German plebiscite results. "If I have no choice but to read and hear something everywhere, it is forced upon me. And if I can hardly guard against believing it—how shall millions of naive people guard against it? And if they believe, then they are indeed won by Hitler and the power and the glory are really his". (Klemperer 1998, 51).

4 It is worth noting that the 1929 plebiscite provided an opportunity for Mussolini to discipline further the unruly elements within the Fascist Party. By proclaiming that local, provincial office was incompatible with the role of parliamentary deputy, the fascist leader was able to remove several powerful local leaders from their power base, bringing them to Rome where they could be more easily controlled. Here, it is obvious that the denial of the elective principle, combined with the principle of top-down designation, greatly reinforced the leader's position; it was this system that was ratified by the plebiscite.

At the same time, the regime was very careful not to suggest that the origin of fascist legitimacy came from the people. The former revolutionary syndicalist, now fascist, leader Michele Bianchi explained why in a very revealing homily: “The fascist government doesn’t depend for its existence on the consensus of the electoral body, in the same way as the government of a family doesn’t depend on the wishes of the children. Mussolini’s government, entrusted with the realization of a portentous historical mission, has too great a responsibility for it to be conditioned by the passing vote of the electoral body” (*Corriere della sera*, March 3, 1929). And Mussolini himself left no doubts that the future of the regime was not in question: “No one should delude themselves that they can—with a few votes—impose some ephemeral conditioning on the regime, which tomorrow will be more totalitarian than yesterday” (*Corriere della sera*, March 23, 1929).⁵

This denial of any kind of legitimization by the people may be one of the reasons why it is difficult to find evidence that the plebiscites put a bargaining weapon into the hands of the people. In respect of both plebiscites, there appears to be very little interaction between the people and the authorities. Why was this so? In other dictatorial regimes, particularly post-Stalinist communist regimes, workers seem on occasions to have been able to sell their votes at a price (see the contributions of Bohn and Richter in this volume). In Italy, there is no indication of bargaining over the vote. There are several probable reasons for this. It has to be remembered that the working class was, at this time, much smaller than it was in either Germany or the USSR in both relative and absolute terms. More relevant perhaps was the heavy defeat suffered by the working class in the 1920s, with the collapse of the occupation of the factories in 1920 and the subsequent reorganization and restructuring of the industrial workforce in such a way as to disturb radically the traditional links of worker solidarity. The fascist trade union monopoly, firmly established after 1927, ensured that the unions functioned almost exclusively as a vehicle of communication between workers and bosses, and not as an instrument of pressure. Structural factors may have played a role here as well. The fact that most industrial units in Italy were still small, employing fewer than 15 people, undoubtedly had an influence. Bosses had a much freer hand to sack and suspend workers in these small companies. In the context of a country characterized by an

⁵ He made a similar statement when announcing the plebiscite in December 1928: “I need hardly remind you that a revolution can be consecrated by a plebiscite, never overthrown”. (Aquarone 1965, 158).

excess of labor and persistent unemployment, the prospect of losing one's job had an enormous cautioning effect.⁶

But a further reason lies no doubt in the fact—mentioned above—that the fascist regime, unlike many other dictatorships, made no pretence of drawing its authority from the people. Despite all its efforts surrounding the plebiscites, the fascist movement was, in reality, self-legitimizing and self-justifying; it appealed to the needs of the Nation, which it claimed to interpret, not to those of the people, whose interests were subordinated to those of the Nation. Workers were less able to argue—as they could in some communist states, for example—that the formal justification of the regime gave them the right to vote. If workers in Italy tried this, they simply lost their jobs, and, in any case, there were always fascist thugs ready to deal with them.

The 1929 Plebiscite: Its Organization and Results

So, what actually happened in 1929? Such information as we have speaks of a short campaign (on Mussolini's instructions), with intensive organization of the vote by fascist groups, which used public meetings, street demonstrations, and posters and leaflets. Mussolini himself did not participate in the campaign, no doubt trying in this way to underline the difference between an ordered election under fascism and the public chaos of those before fascism. In many places, the priests also advocated support for the regime from the pulpit. The desire for a great public demonstration of popular consensus and the fear of any hostile vote are made very clear by the instructions sent out to the voting stations. Voters were to be handed two ballot papers. One—printed in the colors of the national tricolor—for “Yes”; the other—on plain, poor quality, paper—for “No”. Booths were to be set up in which people could, in secret, select and fold their chosen ballot paper; there was a receptacle within the booth in which to discard the paper not selected. Then the voter would have to place the ballot paper in a box, carefully surveyed by a group of fascist officials behind the tables who made sure that everything proceeded in an orderly manner. It seemed as though the formal procedures of democratic choice

⁶ Fear of losing one's job is cited as one of the principal factors in determining disciplined behavior among labor by Sapelli (1975, 20-1).

were being observed. The problem was that, apart from the fact that the color of the folded ballot paper made the choice obvious, there were two boxes—one for “Yes” and one for “No”. Identification was immediate, therefore.⁷

The instructions to the fascist unions were equally precise. They were to ensure that the workers arrive all together at the polling stations in a “perfectly regimented” way (*Corriere della sera*, March 23, 1929). Here, perhaps, there could be some element of festivities, as columns of workers marched behind a band to the polling station. Whether these workers would have preferred to use their Sunday (the plebiscite took place on a Sunday) in a different manner remains an open question. Fascist organizations were also invited to try to identify those most likely to abstain and to exert pressure on these people, although what kind of pressure was not specified.

The results indicate the extent of fascist control (published in *Corriere della sera*, March 26, 1929). The “Yes” vote obtained 98.3 per cent of the total votes cast, which was more than 88 per cent of the total number of those registered to vote. Some examples will help to show the degree to which the fascists seem to have achieved their goal of unanimity. In Reggio Calabria, of the 97,514 votes cast, only 37 were “No” votes; in Cosenza (we are still in Calabria), of 157,470 votes cast, 5 were “No” votes; in Matera (Basilicata), of 29,155 votes cast, there were no “No” votes whatsoever. Perhaps more significant than the “No” votes, which, in the circumstances, were almost inevitably very few in number, were the abstentions—the people who stayed at home despite the pressures of the fascist organizations. At the national level, about 10.4 per cent of those entitled to vote decided not to do so. In the large industrial cities, the percentage was generally much higher: 15 per cent in Turin (almost 42,000 people abstained; put together with the “No” votes, these made up almost 18 per cent of the electorate), 14.5 per cent in Genoa, 13 per cent in Rome, 14 per cent in Naples (but only 8 per cent in Milan). In the smaller provincial cities, it was evidently more difficult to be seen not to vote and the percentage of abstentions falls below the national average: 8.7 per cent in

7 A story told by my father-in-law is instructive. His cousin voted “No” in Florence on the morning of 24 March. Later in the day the (very ingenuous) friends and relations of this cousin were greatly impressed to see him being driven away in a very large black car, accompanied by uniformed fascist officials. (He was held for several hours and then released with a serious warning to watch his step).

Matera, 6.7 per cent in Cosenza. Very eloquent of the degree of control the fascists had achieved in the province of Ferrara was the fact that, of the 79,775 people who voted, only 199 voted “No”, while only 2 per cent of those entitled to vote chose not to do so.

Image Management and Majority Suggestion

Did the 1929 plebiscite reinforce the regime? In most respects, it was more a public confirmation of a situation that few had doubted rather than a novel expression of support for fascism. But there is little reason to question the view that sees the plebiscite, coming as it did together with the Lateran Pacts and the Concordat with the Vatican, as representing a significant moment in the stabilization of the regime. In the space of a few days, Mussolini had shown that he had both God and the Italian people on his side. Moreover, the effort made to mobilize the vote and to condition the voters seems to have consolidated the understanding between those groups who had responsibility for realizing mobilization: fascists, Catholics, industrialists, landowners and businessmen pulled together in March 1929 in a way that they had not done before. One unexpected result of the plebiscite may have been that the very fact of organizing it had the effect of strengthening the organizers (Sapelli 1975: 18–22).

Yet, even if the result of the plebiscite was essentially a public ratification of an already-existing situation, the force of suggestion of the overwhelming success of the fascist ticket should not be underestimated. The 1929 plebiscite in particular helped to perform the conjuring trick so essential for the long-term survival of the regime—the trick of persuading the population that the objectives of the dictatorship were also the objectives of the entire nation. To be out of step with this formulation of unanimity became an increasingly difficult operation because it apparently put the individual up against most of his or her fellow Italians.⁸ In this sense, the plebiscite undoubtedly reinforced fascist politics of inclusion / exclusion. Given the unanimity of the plebiscite, the drive towards conformity became extremely strong and, by conforming, the individual became in effect

⁸ On the importance of the concept of unanimity in totalitarian and would-be totalitarian regimes, see Sabrow (2009, 168–83).

an accomplice of the regime. All of which was exactly what the plebiscite had been designed to realize.

Bibliography

- Aquarone, Alberto (1965). *L'organizzazione dello stato totalitario*, Turin: Einaudi.
- Corner, Paul (1975). *Fascism in Ferrara 1915–1925*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Klemperer, Victor (1998). *I Shall Bear Witness*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson.
- Sabrow, Martin (2009). Consent in the Communist GDR or How to Interpret Lion Feuchtwanger's Blindness in Moscow 1937, in Paul Corner (ed.). *Popular Opinion in Totalitarian Regimes. Fascism, Nazism, Communism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Sapelli, Giulio (1975). *Fascismo, grande industria e sindacato. Il caso di Torino 1929–35*, Milano: Feltrinelli.

Works Council Elections in Czechoslovakia, 1948–1968

Peter Heumos

Outline

Elections to the works council (*závodní rada*) and its successor organization, the works committee of the Revolutionary Trade Union Movement (*závodní výbor ROH*), in Czechoslovak industry after 1948, had, at first glance, two things in common with elections to the Czechoslovak National Assembly. Firstly, there was symbolic coloring. Workers went to the polls with music playing,¹ in a “dignified” and “solemn” atmosphere ensured by the organizers,² while speeches were delivered by Party and trade union officials (and, occasionally, even by literary figures).³ Secondly, works council elections (which, until 1967, were held annually) met with as much publicity as did elections to the National Assembly. Usually, the electoral campaign was launched by a letter of the Central Council of trade unions, the executive body of the Revolutionary Trade Union Movement (ROH) which, in 1948, had more than 3.5 million, and in 1968 more than 5.2 mil-

1 Cf. the letter of the workers of the repair workshop of the Czechoslovak State Railways in Chomutov to the Central Council of trade unions of May 27, 1953, in the appendix to this article. Hereafter, Czech and Slovak place-names are used, with the exception of the familiar English name for Praha, “Prague”.

2 Minutes of the meeting of the trade union factory group and the works council of *Kladno Steel Works*, February 23, 1949. Všeodborový archiv (hereafter referred to as: VOA), Prague. OS Kovo, box 2, no. 8a.—Report of the Kladno district committee of the mine workers’ trade union to the organizational department of the mine workers’ trade union in Prague [November 1959]. VOA, ÚVOS-horníci, 1959, fascicle “Volby 1959–1960”.

3 Report on safeguarding elections of trade union organizations in the *Lenin plants* [= *Škoda Works*] Plzeň, January 18, 1952. Škoda archives, Plzeň, ZVIL 1495, PV 751.—In May 1953, for example, on the occasion of works council elections, poet and state laureate Marie Majerová made a speech in a mine of the northwest Bohemian lignite coalfield of which she was patroness. Report of the organizational department of the mine workers’ trade union on the election campaign, May 15, 1953. VOA, ÚRO-Org., box 140, no. 478.

lion members.⁴ Afterwards, while newspapers and trade union journals were rejoicing at the new era of “democracy in the factories” agitators, instructors and cadre specialists from the trade unions and district trade union councils set off for the factories in flocks.⁵

Touching on the subject in a cursory manner, one would not think that works council elections facilitated the formation of authentic workers’ interests. Firstly, since the Communist take-over in February 1948, candidates used to be nominated by the factory cells of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSČ) according to a Party’s instruction.⁶ Secondly, after 1948, the Revolutionary Trade Union Movement was lacking any regular institutional procedure to represent the workers’ cause (Heumos 2001). Thirdly, as of 1948, elections mainly served to mobilize workers to speed up production and step up their rate of work according to the role “transmission belt” trade unions had to play in state socialism. In the Party leadership’s view, elections achieved their object when producing self-commitments to increase production, shock work and socialist labor competition.⁷

Trade Union Representation on the Shop Floor

As of 1945–1946, trade union representation in the factories was initially characterized by coexistence of works council and trade union factory group. When the Nazi occupation regime fell apart, works councils emerged from the underground or formed in the first days following liberation. They took over production and assumed de facto control over the entire industrial sector. Works councils linked together syndicalist demands

4 Statistical overview of the development of ROH members 1945–1976. VOA, box “ROH—statistické údaje”.

5 Out of numerous reports on organization of elections, reference shall be restricted to: Report on the election campaign and on elections of shop stewards, workshop councils and commissions of revision in heavy engineering works, June 16, 1953. VOA, ÚRO-Org., box 140, no. 477–478.

6 When this instruction was issued could not be ascertained. Its existence is evidenced, among other things, by the minutes of the plenary meeting of the trade union general works committee of the Plzeň *Škoda Works*, October 1, 1958. Škoda archives, ROH 4/696.

7 Report of the district committee of the mine workers trade union in Zastávka on elections of trade union organizations [undated]. VOA, ÚVOS-horníci, 1959, box 89.

for radical democracy in the factory and for workers' control in industry ("The factory is ours") with the idea of an imminent socialist transformation based on industrial self-management and strong egalitarian tendencies (Heumos 1981). Initially, workers approved highly of the KSČ as the guarantor of social justice,⁸ and this was also reflected in the composition of the Party's membership. In 1946, almost half of its members came from the working class (Maňák 1995, 28). In 1955, more than half of works council members elected were at the same time members of the Communist Party.⁹

The factory groups of the highly centralized unified trade union (since 1955 referred to as ROH works committees) were set up "from above" and only legalized in 1947 when elections were held. Together with production committees¹⁰ established in summer 1945 they tried to exploit post-war political enthusiasm for campaigns designed for increasing production. By Presidential decree no. 104 of October 24, 1945 the works councils' popular demand for participation in decision-making was refused and the traditional "one-man rule" of works managers re-established. Moreover, the decree provided that trade union factory groups should make up the list of candidates for works council elections (Sbírka 1945, 231–238).

Communist Rule Facing Industrial Unrest: Works Council Elections 1948–1953

Works council elections frequently took a tumultuous course during the first five-year plan (1948–1953) reflecting fundamental social change and widespread social unrest characteristic of the "founding years" of "people's democracy" in Czechoslovakia (Kalinová 2007). The introduction of state socialism went hand-in-hand with excessive use of force to which the workers were exposed to an exceptional extent (Heumos 2004), and, on

8 Minutes of the constituent meeting of the Revolutionary Works Council of the *Škoda Works* in Plzeň, May 10, 1945. Škoda archives, Plzeň 503, 45 A.

9 Evaluation of the annual meeting of members of works committees, of elections of shop stewards, workshop councils and works councils, January 13, 1955. VOA, ÚRO-Předst., box 21, no. 212/2/1.

10 This committee was set up according to a proposal by the *Bohemian-Moravian Engineering Works* in Prague. The initiative to set up production committees lay with the factory group of the ROH. VOA, NHK, box 24, no. 69.

the other hand, with strong opposition to increasing work intensity in industry, stepped up even more by the outbreak of the Cold War, as a result of which, in 1951, the Communist Party had to revoke the norms decreed in 1950 (Heumos 2008c). In addition, workers were deprived of most of their elementary rights which, in November 1951, called forth the workers' revolt in Brno (Pernes 1997), while disturbances reached their climax in a strike movement beginning soon after the Communist coup d'état and ending in a series of violent stoppages, riots and popular protest in early June 1953, immediately after the currency reform (Heumos 2005).

These general aspects of industrial conflict should be taken into account as causing confrontations in works council elections, since the sources rarely specify the exact causes or their respective weight. Thus, for example, the "very turbulent course" of works council elections in the *Jičín Engineering Works* in March 1949 was due to three different controversial points that led to a change of the list of candidates, while the respective report keeps the reader guessing as to the effect of each point: by way of pamphlets all "patriots" in the factory were urged to unite their forces "in order to fight the communists"; one of the works council's candidates nominated was a worker who was a member of the KSČ, but had been a member of a "yellow" trade union in the interwar period; during the election meeting, a trade union official carelessly hinted at other engineering works in the same district having "softer" norms.¹¹

Confrontations were unavoidable when Party or trade union officials tried to "improve" election results, for example, in Kyjov (glass factory) and in Kolín (chemical factory); in both cases the workforce left the polling room under protest.¹² Sometimes a glance at the list of candidates was sufficient to make people leave the polling room¹³—which officials would prevent by bolting the doors.¹⁴ It was a common habit to simply stay away

11 Minutes of the meeting of factory organization of the KSČ in the *Agrostroj Works* (Jičín), April 1, 1949. VOA, OS Kovo, strojrenství, box 2, fascicle 7.

12 Evaluation of the election campaign for works council elections for the presidency of the glass and ceramic workers' trade union, [November 1951]. VOA, ÚRO-Org., box 109, no. 384d.—Report on elections in the chemical workers' trade union, May 4, 1953. VOA, ÚRO-Org., box 140, no. 478a.

13 Evaluation of annual meetings [of trade union members], elections of shop stewards, workshop councils and works councils, January 13, 1955. VOA, ÚRO-Předst., box 21, no. 212/2/1.

14 Evaluation of works council elections in the České Budějovice district on May 23, 1953. VOA, ÚRO-Org., box 140, no. 478a.

from elections—in spring 1953, not even a tenth of the workers of the *Škoda Works* modeling department made their appearance at the shop stewards' election.¹⁵

On the other hand, works council elections offered ample opportunity for bargaining. Among others, miners in the Plzeň coalfield and workers of the *Brno Engineering Works* tried to make the most of their requested “political maturity”.¹⁶ Bargaining, however, required patience, which the workers often lacked. Casters in the *Králov Dvůr Ironworks* threw their ballot papers away declaring that they did not intend to go to the polls as they received an hourly wage of 20 crowns. The election officials then handed them new ballot papers—and the casters voted for the official candidate.¹⁷

Nevertheless, in elections one could ascertain how to see conflicts through to the end. This is true for numerous protests that stopped only after the list of candidates had been amended in favor of workers; for example in the *Přerov Engineering Works*¹⁸ and the *Stalingrad Ironworks* in Místek.¹⁹ It is true, too, for ubiquitous conflicts between KSCČ members and independent candidates, the so-called indifferents,²⁰ who quite frequently gained the upper hand, for instance, in the *Aero Works* in Prague, in an armaments factory in Kbely,²¹ in the *Leonora Glass Factory*, in the *Union Engine Works* in České Budějovice,²² in the *ČKD Stalingrad Engineering Works*

15 Evaluation of elections of basic trade union organizations in the Plzeň district, June 12, 1953. VOA, ÚRO-Org., box 140, no. 478a.

16 Report on the miners' district council in Plzeň and on the *Masaryk Pit* in Zbuch, April 27, 1953. VOA, ÚRO-Org., box 140, fascicle “Volby do ZR”.—Report on the election campaign and on elections of shop stewards, workshop councils and commissions of revision in heavy engineering plants, [June 1953]. VOA, box 140, no. 477–478.

17 Report of trade union instructor Čoban on his activities from October 20 to 27, 1951. VOA, ÚRO-Org., box 105, no. 382.

18 Report of the organizational department of the Olomouc district trade union council on the election campaign in the Olomouc district, June 12, 1953. VOA, ÚRO-Org., box 140, 1953, no. 478a.

19 Report on elections of trade union factory groups in the *Stalingrad Ironworks*, January 17, 1952. VOA, ÚRO-Org., box 109, no. 384e.

20 Ibid.

21 Evaluation of elections of works councils for the meeting of the presidency of the Prague district trade union council, June 30, 1953. VOA, ÚRO-Org., box 140, no. 478a.

22 Report of trade union instructor Málek on his activities from October 29 to November 2, 1951, November 3, 1951. VOA, ÚRO-Org., box 105, no. 382.—Evaluation of works council elections in the České Budějovice district, May 23, 1953. VOA, ÚRO-Org., box 140, no. 478a.

in Prague,²³ in the *Roosevelt Pit* in the Most coalfields,²⁴ and in the *Škoda Works* in Plzeň.²⁵ It would be misleading to put these conflicts on a level with petty clashes. Reports on the works council elections in a *Škoda* branch in Děčín and the *Česká Lípa Railway Workshops* tell a different story.²⁶ In Děčín, Communist officials threatened a candidate for the works council's chair that he would not remain in office for long. The enraged workforce then unanimously voted for the politically undesirable candidate. In *Česká Lípa*, during a strike, workers held an "extraordinary" election and, catcalling and booing, removed all Communist members from the works council.

Opposition to Communists—a distinction was usually drawn between "good" (= lukewarm) and "bad" (= radical) Communists²⁷—came from various motives. As is well known, syndicalists are basically critical of political parties. Workers in the *Asbestos Works* in Zvěřinec crossed out all names on the list of candidates arguing that "elections carried out in this way [i.e. prearranged by the KSČ—P.H.] are a breach of democracy as conceived by the trade unions".²⁸ Opposition to those Party members who built political careers on socialist labor competition was widespread. Thus, in 1951, in the Plzeň *Škoda Works* many bemedalled and beribboned "heroes of labor" who would travel from one international workers' conference to the next, but could hardly be seen at their workplace, were voted down on a grand scale in the election of workshop and works councils.²⁹ In view of the front against shock work and socialist competition, which

23 Report on the situation in *ČKD Stalingrad* and *Autopruga* in Prague-Vysočany and in the workshops of the Czechoslovak State Railways in *Česká Lípa* [October 1953]. Národní archiv (hereafter referred to as: NA), Prague. Inventory 014/12, vol. 10, no. 90, 1953/10.

24 Report of trade union instructor Slížek on his activities from October 15 to 20, 1951, October 25, 1951. VOA, ÚRO-Org., box 105, no. 382.

25 Report on safeguarding elections to trade union organizations in the *Lenin plants* [= *Škoda Works*] Plzeň, January 18, 1952. Škoda archives, ZVIL 1495, PV 751.

26 Report of trade union instructor Slížek on his activities from November 10 to 17, 1951. VOA, ÚRO-Org., box 105, no. 382.—Report on investigation into the activities of the party's factory organizations in the Railway Workshops in *Česká Lípa*, May 21 and 22, 1953. NA, inventory 02/3, vol. 40, no. 224.

27 Report of trade union instructor Čoban on his activities from October 20 to 27, 1951. VOA, ÚRO-Org., box 105, no. 382.

28 Report on elections of trade union factory groups in the chemical industry, June 13, 1953. VOA, ÚRO-Org., box 140, no. 478a.

29 Report on safeguarding elections of trade union organizations in the *Lenin plants* [= *Škoda Works*] Plzeň, January 18, 1952. Škoda archives, ZVIL 1495, PV 751.

formed as early as 1951 and was supported by many leading works council members (Heumos 2005b), Communist worship of ever increasing work intensity was apparently an important motive for voting against the KSČ.

The sources do not allow for a more precise idea of the extent of industrial conflict accompanying elections. Certainly, the official election statistics occasionally specify the figures of so-called substitute bodies set up when the list of candidates failed.³⁰ The degree of acceptance, however, of the official lists of candidates suggested by low figures for substitute bodies seems to be too high.³¹ Following official figures, that acceptance would have been more than 98 per cent in 1950.³² Information provided by a trade union instructor and confirmed by other sources, is probably more realistic, even though it is limited to 1951 and to just one trade union. According to this information, in 1951, in the glass and ceramics industry alone approximately 14 per cent of the official lists of candidates missed the 80 per cent quorum.³³

Insisting on Grassroots Democracy: Lower Communist and Trade Union Officials

The Governmental Decree no. 17 of March 10, 1953 stipulated that works councils, which, since 1947, had been elected by acclamation, should again be elected by secret ballot; at the same time, the 80 per cent quorum was reduced to simple majority (Sbírka 1953, 160–161). Even earlier, directives issued by the Central Council on January 22/23, 1953 laid down that individual names on the list of candidates could be crossed out and other

30 These substitute bodies were not elected, but, since 1945, appointed by the trade union factory group.

31 For the year 1950, the official trade union statistics for Bohemia and Moravia show 181 substitute bodies for more than 14,000 elected works council members. Cf. report for the secretariat of the Central Council of trade unions on elections of trade union factory groups. VOA, ÚRO-Sekr., box 12, no. 383.

32 The percentage according to the figures stated in note 32.

33 Report for the presidency of the CC of the glass and ceramic workers' trade union. Evaluation of the election campaign [November 1951]. VOA, ÚRO-Org., box 109, no. 384d. Information given in this report is confirmed by: Report of trade union instructor Svoboda on his activities from November 10 to 17, 1951. ÚRO-Org., box 105, no. 382.

names be added.³⁴ Both regulations, to be sure, legalized what was in use before. There is evidence of a secret ballot in 1950 in the Olomouc district,³⁵ and it is proven, too, that individual names were crossed out earlier than January 1953.³⁶

Many things, therefore, seem to indicate that the Communist leadership felt uncertain how emphatically to enforce its “leading role” in the factory. A certain hesitation is actually evidenced insofar as Party cells in the factories were officially assigned the task of controlling the management as late as 1954 (Kaplan 2007, 203). Moreover, the Party refrained from demonstrating its power vis-à-vis the works councils when elections were held in industrial areas of great importance for building up socialism and where, at the same time, workers were expected to be particularly rebellious. It is, therefore, not accidental that in the Moravská Ostrava coalfields as early as 1950 more than half of approximately 15,000 shop stewards and members of workshop and works councils were non-Communists.³⁷

In addition, there is reason to believe that the Party leadership could not dispose of unlimited resources when trying to bring the shop floor under control (Heumos 2008b). The catchy thesis claiming that in the factories a group of ideologically hardboiled Party officials was always master of the situation (Kaplan 2007) is best contradicted by citing the Party leadership itself, which, in the early 1950s, kept lamenting that one-third of the Party’s members did not fulfill their duties³⁸ and only one-third actively participated in Party work.³⁹ It is true that, after 1948, some factory cells looked upon the principle of their leading role as an invitation to take

34 Final evaluation of works council elections in the energy industry’s trade union, June 17, 1953. VOA, ÚRO-Org., box 140, no. 478a.

35 Evaluation of the election campaign and summary of election results in the Olomouc district, June 16, 1950. VOA, KOR, box 14/1950, no. 59.

36 Report on safeguarding elections of trade union organizations in the *Lenin plants* [= *Škoda Works*] Plzeň, January 18, 1952. Škoda archives, ZVIL 1495, PV 751.

37 Minutes of the extended plenary meeting [of the Moravská Ostrava district trade union council], June 8 and 9, 1950. VOA, KOR, 1950, box 15, no. 60. The total number of trade union officials elected in the area of the Moravská Ostrava district trade union council is given as 15,149, of which 6,438 were members of the KSČ and 8,281 non-Communists. At the time when the plenary meeting took place, information was still lacking on elections in four trade unions.

38 Experience gathered during the preparation and in the course of meetings of [Party] members in the district of *Klement Gottwald Ironworks* in Vítkovice [October 1952]. NA, inventory 014/12, vol. 7, no. 38.

39 Káňa’s report on the situation in the *President Gottwald Pit* in Moravská Ostrava [August 1951]. NA, inventory 100/2, vol. 4, no. 54.

command of management and works council.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, the Party leadership was deeply dissatisfied with its cells taking a firm ideological stand, in particular with regard to elections. In the Party leaders' view, for instance, the political "safeguarding" of the elections in 1951 had been completely inadequate in a "number of cases" with the factory cells shrinking back from determined measures that would have been interpreted as "Party diktat". So they did not interfere when, as works council members were nominated, Party members were passed over. The reason as to why former social democrats were elected to the works councils was allegedly "poor vigilance", and, in the end, the lack of interest in elaborating conclusive election programs opened the way to "hostile" and "backward" elements penetrating the trade unions.⁴¹

Even though, in actual fact, Party organizations frequently did influence elections,⁴² the Party leadership's poor opinion of the cells' ideological vigor did not miss the mark. Demands of trade union officials to stop "independent" actions of factory cells,⁴³ protests reported from factories that "comrades from the factory organizations [of the Party—P.H.] were intervening in the works council elections in a totally inadequate manner",⁴⁴ and charges of district trade union councils against the "wrong concept that the Party should have a leading role in the factories vis-à-vis the ROH factory groups"⁴⁵—faced with all these objections, Party organizations in the factories apparently did not think it advisable to add more fuel to the flames.⁴⁶

40 Minutes of the conference of the cadre and social political department [of the *United Kladno Steelworks*], March 21, 1949. Státní oblastní archiv, Prague. Inventory SONP, no. 10, 1949–1960.

41 Report on works council elections [November 1951]. NA, inventory 014/12, volume 7, no. 9.—In March 1948, the Czechoslovak Social Democratic Party was compelled to merge with the KSČ.

42 Cf. for the Plzeň *Škoda Works*: Minutes of the meeting of the works council's workteam [of the *Škoda Works*] together with youth representatives [1950]. Škoda archives, ROH 13/669.

43 Report on the delegation to Příbram-Březové Hory, August 18, 1948. VOA, ÚVOS-horníci, box 5, 1948.

44 Minutes of discussions held by the political secretariat of the Olomouc district trade union council, May 18, 1950. VOA, KOR, box 14, 1950, no. 59.

45 Letter of the ROH district secretary in Olomouc to the Central Council of trade unions, April 12, 1950. Ibid.

46 Report of trade union instructor Málek on his activities from October 29 to November 2, 1951. VOA, ÚRO-Org., box 105, no. 382.

Works council officials, for their part, made it clear that they would not care for any instructions “from above” concerning elections—whether issued by the Party or the trade unions—and considered an election procedure “suitable for the factory” to be the proper option. “Your guidelines [for works council elections—P.H.] are of no use, we have to do it in our factory in a way that is in line with the circumstances prevailing here”, the chairman of a works council in Ružomberok told the instructor of the Žilina district trade union council.⁴⁷ Many officials of Communist factory cells did not approve of the orders given by their political bosses either complaining that the factory cells would have to “iron out” what was “bungled by those above”.⁴⁸

Only as late as 1953, however, did this kind of stubborn localism assume wider dimensions. In May 1953, the trade union of the iron and steel industry grumbled at members of works councils “very often” disregarding electoral regulations and deciding on their own who was to be elected.⁴⁹ In the same year, the České Budějovice district trade union council came out very critically against this kind of high-handedness. Where the election campaign had not been controlled in a “responsible” manner and the plan to have “able officials of the KSČ factory organization” elected had misfired, the trade unions’ rank and file were playing first fiddle in the elections. While this was proof of the “democratic character of elections, it certainly does not strengthen political maturity of trade union organizations in the factories”.⁵⁰

Defensive Stabilization after 1953: ROH Works Committees

After works councils had been restricted in their activities by the All-Trade-Union Congress in 1955, they were replaced by act of law in 1959 by ROH works committees (Sbírka 1959, 107–112). Thus, the second half of the 1950s can be seen as a period when the turbulent development of in-

47 Report of trade union instructor Pistovčák on his activities from November 5 to 15, 1951. Ibid.

48 Report on introduction of the new wage system in the Czechoslovak State Railways (October 1954). NA, inventory 014/12, vol. 15, no. 377.

49 Report on presentation of annual reports and on elections of trade union factory groups in the iron and steel industry [May 1953]. VOA, ÚRO-Org., box 140, no. 478a.

50 Evaluation of works council elections in the České Budějovice district [May 1953]. Ibid.

dustrial workers during the first five-year plan fizzled out (Kalinová 2007, 113–217). In actual fact, elections in the factories ceased to end up in conflicts and “election campaigns” against the bossy attitude of Party officials only took place in exceptional cases.⁵¹ From 1953 up to the mid-sixties, workers had obviously come to terms with the prevailing circumstances.⁵²

Conditions, however, for successfully preventing the central authorities from shaping the shop floor according to their ideas did not change for the worse as ROH works committees remained, in many respects, on the works councils’ track. The possibility of maintaining opposition and thereby upholding the democratic potential of works council elections of the early 1950s depended very much on the informal balance of power within the factories.

The “plan fulfillment pact”, i.e. the informal agreement between management and workers to the effect that the mostly unlawful demands resulting from daily work (extremely flexible working hours caused by abrupt changes in the plans and stop-and-go material supply, uncomfortable working conditions, etc.) had to be exchanged for social and material concessions (Heumos 2008b), formed, without doubt, part of the protective shield against central interference. Thus, for example, the extension of shift work repeatedly required by the Party and the trade unions came to nothing precisely because the industrial management put forward social arguments against it.⁵³ The “plan fulfillment pact” based on, among other things, the fact that as early as 1950 one-third of factory directors were former workers who had been promoted since 1948 (Kalinová 1993), remained effective up to the 1960s. Due to this tacit agreement works councils and works committees maintained their strong informal position.⁵⁴

51 With regard to these exceptions see report of the Šimák delegation to Přebor, December 14, 1955. VOA, ÚVOS-horníci, box 33, 1955, fascicle 3, delegation reports.

52 Report on elections in factories of the Brno district, October 5, 1956. VOA, ÚRO-Org., box 157, no. 523/1.—Final report on elections [of the ROH works committees] and on annual general meetings and conferences. VOA, ÚVOS-horníci, 1959, box 89, fascicle “Volby 1959–1960”.—Evaluation of annual general meetings of ROH works committees in 1965, July 8, 1965 (for the meeting of the presidency of the Central Council of trade unions on July 21, 1965). VOA, ÚRO-Před., box 75, no. 419 I/1.

53 Report of the trade union district committee for mechanical engineering of the South Moravian district on use of basic funds through shift work. VOA, strojírenství, box 55, 1962.

54 In accordance with the syndicalist aim of abolishing the traditional division of labor between white-collar and blue-collar workers (see minutes of the joint meeting of works council and ROH factory group, January 10, 1950. Škoda archives, ZVIL 1515/PV

After 1953, there is every indication that ROH works committees and Communist factory cells by way of informal interplay were trying to protect each other against influence “from outside”. Thus, in times of political purges (1958), cadre appraisals were used for mutual confirmation of impeccable political behavior.⁵⁵ A much more decisive factor with regard to distribution of power on the shop floor was the “absorption” of KSCĚ members by the social environment of works council members, as, for instance, in a Prague-based aircraft factory. To be sure, the works council in that plant had “many Communist” members, but would not hear anything of the “leading role of the Party in the factory”.⁵⁶ In the *Škoda Works*, too, the factory cells only just managed to mobilize their comrades in the trade union organizations to keep to the Party line,⁵⁷ and, in the end, even lost any control of ROH works committee.⁵⁸ This case easily serves to demonstrate to which extent KSCĚ members were “assimilated” by trade unions. Out of 155 members of ten ROH works committees in the Plzeň *Škoda Works* in 1957, 119 were KSCĚ members.⁵⁹ During the elections in 1958, however, the very same works committees prevented any Commu-

1287), in the early fifties works councils assumed tasks of managers; in the area of the Prague district trade union council this was a “general phenomenon” as early as 1951. Even in big factories works councils used the politically weak position of foremen to secure control over the organization of work (i.e. control over distribution of *hard* or *soft* work standards, over the fixing of premiums and bonuses, waiting and down-times, etc.) and thus gained quite considerable influence on the process of determining wages. The fact that the ROH works committees, too, were effectively controlling organization of work, can be seen from: Documents for the programmatic statement of the *Škoda Works* management referring to the period 1960–1968 [July 1969]. Škoda archives, RP, box 10, no. 180.

55 In April 1958, a leading member of an ROH works committee wrote (in a letter checked by security services): “... I have four perfect appraisals. The works committee gave me the appraisal ‘very good’, my boss appraised me ‘excellent’, the KSCĚ also ‘good’, and so did the cadre department. I myself, in turn, appraised them, so we cannot reproach each other with anything: It is tit for tat...” Quoted from: Overview of the insights gained from checks of correspondence on the reorganization of economy for April 1958. NA, inventory AN.

56 Report on the factory *Rudí Letov* in Prague-Letňany. VOA, strojírenství, box 10, 1954, fascicle 5.

57 Report on the party’s political situation in the *Škoda Works* [1958]. Škoda archives, PV KSCĚ 1/430.

58 Report on the situation in the electric railway engine works, April 13, 1964. Škoda archives, PV KSCĚ 45, PR 560.

59 Cf. table in the annex to the report for the KSCĚ works committee on elections of the Revolutionary Trade Union Movement [1957]. Škoda archives, ROH 8, PV 686.

nist influence on the election of shop stewards and the chairman of the works council.⁶⁰

Hence it can be established that non-offensive approaches to elections by works committees and their tactics of avoiding clashes with the KSČ, as mentioned above, did make sense and were by no means due to works committees' powerlessness vis-à-vis the Party. The committees, on the other hand, dug in their heels when Party and trade union officials tried to break up the factory regime and the works committees' informal position of power. In 1961, for example, the Party's crusade to improve "state discipline" (= morale of the workers) by setting up "people's courts in the factories" totally miscarried because of massive opposition on the part of works committees.⁶¹

Mobilization for Reform? Elections in 1968

Elections in the factories in 1968 had little in common with those in previous years, not only because the "Prague spring" forced the KSČ on to the defensive to such an extent that its usual means of establishing political conformity did not work anymore,⁶² but also because in 1968 elections became part of fierce controversies about *different* concepts of future economical and political development.

While the general policy pursued by the "Prague spring" met with the approval of broad masses of workers (Heumos 2008a), the economic reform initiated in 1965 and the measures accompanying it (massive material and political support for industrial management, restrictions on works committees' competences, shutdowns of factories without involvement of trade unions, strong differentiation of wages) called forth strong opposition. Regular elections of the works committees took place as late as fall

60 Minutes of the plenary meeting of ROH works committee in the *Lenin plants* [= *Škoda Works*] in Plzeň, October 1, 1958. Škoda archives, ROH 4/696.

61 Report on activities of ROH organizations in strengthening socialist legality and development of activities of local people's courts (for the meeting of the presidency of the Central Council of trade unions on November 20, 1963). VOA, ÚRO-PŘ., box 66, no. 390 I/3.

62 Report on the present social and political situation in the factories and on the policy pursued by Communists in the trade unions (for the meeting of the presidency of the Central Council of trade unions on June 3, 1968). VOA, ÚRO-Před., box 95, no. 471.

1968, but as early as March and April 1968 workers' demands for the abolishment of the trade union nomenclature and "new democratic elections", for rehabilitation of people persecuted on political grounds since 1948, as well as for building up trade unions "without Communists", led to serious losses of the Party in the trade unions when Party members were voted down in "extraordinary" elections, losing their seats in works committees on a large scale. In addition, there was a wave of votes of censure and of forced resignations of Communists from works committees, here and there, without any KSČ member.⁶³ In 1968, the syndicalist movement gave its traditional claim for participation a more radical edge, as can be seen, for example, from a works committee's resolution in the *Avia Works* in Prague requiring that works committees should be given the right of veto when decisions of the management infringed upon "rights of the workers" (*Rezoluce ze závodu 1968*, 19). In this way the Party's policy of privileging industrial management was openly rejected. The disintegration of the unified trade union and the re-establishment of individual trade unions' autonomy were more or less completed in early summer 1968. The trade unions began to reassume their "classical" role, and this, too, required a clear demarcation from the KSČ in order to avoid trade unions falling back on their former "transmission belt" concept (Heumos 2007).

To overcome the workers' objections to economic reform and to calm down discussions about participation, the "Action Program" of April 5, 1968 (Vondrová et al., 1999, 320–359) suggested the establishment of "democratic bodies" in the factories, officially called "councils of employees" (*rady pracujících*), which were supposed to revive the "great period" of the works councils during the years 1945–1948. De facto, however, these bodies functionalized participation with regard to the success of economic reform, as the "Action Program" explicitly stated. Workers, in their turn, made good use of the councils in their own way. Sociologists entrusted with controlling the establishment of the councils were driven to despair since councils established by workers—in contradiction to the "theoretical ideas" of the Party, the state and the economy—served the purpose of strengthening the workers' position for forcing through their social demands (Dvořák 1969). Voting habits of workers followed this policy of stubbornly ignoring "higher values". Since they "did not know" many of

63 Report for members and candidates of the Central Council of trade unions on the present situation in the factories and districts, May 18, 1968. VOA, ÚRO-Před., box 94, no. 465a.

the candidates nominated for the councils—according to the election regulations, a certain percentage of the councils’ members had to be “experts” who were supposed to harmonize the interests of the factory and of society, but did not necessarily have to be members of the factory—a great number of workers refused to go to the polls.⁶⁴

Summary

The fact that the KSCĚ was prepared to get involved in elections in the factories after 1948, which, despite all repression, still rendered protest possible, can probably be explained by an overrating of the approval that the Party derived from the parliamentary elections in 1946, with nearly 40 per cent voting for Communists. Besides, the Party leadership apparently believed that it could rely all the more on democratic-parliamentary traditions, as the Communist takeover formally took place by means of a government reshuffle largely in conformity with the constitution.

With regard to the strength of the works council movement it is obvious that, after 1948, the KSCĚ, in addition to police-state terrorist methods, would also make use of *soft* means in order to subdue that movement; these means included elections of works councils or ROH works committees. In the long run, however, the Party could not derive any legitimacy from these elections, because, between 1948 and 1968, it was only interested in increasing control over production, but not in institutional changes offering partnership. Well aware of this, workers resorted to informal and *deviant* strategies, displaying a carelessly *subversive* behavior (e.g. when establishing the councils of employees in 1968). Their criticism of “managerial socialism” practiced by the KSCĚ (Vondrová et al., 1999, 521) refers to the fact that, in 1968, Communist reformers were actually not very willing to institutionalize partnership. They rather supported Western patterns of “democratic elitism” and shrank back from grassroots democracy even when popular participation would have strengthened their political power (Pauer 2008, 1207).

⁶⁴ Minutes of the review of the third elections of the council of employees in electoral district no. 20 of České Budějovice *Škoda Works*, November 22, 1968. Škoda archives, RP, box 6, no. 35.

The fact that the Party remained adamant with regard to authentic participation and revised, at its discretion, concessions that had already been made in this respect,⁶⁵ contributed to a situation in which the trade union organizations in the factories isolated themselves, ending up in “loose coupling” with organizational macrostructures, as the KSČ leadership itself conceded in May 1968 (Vondrová et al., 1999, 497).

Workers adhered to the idea that the economy and state machinery could be rearranged by means of a comprehensive mode of political integration. Based on this idea, workers, before 1968, merely took the Party at its word, i.e. stuck to the orthodox Marxist platform of the KSČ asserting predominance of politics over economics. The separation of economics from politics announced by the KSČ in 1968 (withdrawal of the Party from production) did not shake workers in their belief that the Communist system could be reorganized on an extensive democratic basis. They were arguing that the Party, after its dazzling efforts to modernize industry, felt so undisputed that they believed that the crucial question of industrial power relations could be settled by simply pouring new wine into old bottles (Vondrová et al., 1999, 521).

Appendix

Chomutov, May 27, 1953

To the Central Council of trade unions, Prague
Works council elections have taken place today in our factory, the repair workshops of the Czechoslovak State Railways. We left our respective workplace as early as half past two, joined the procession and went to the Sokol gymnasium nearby while music was playing. After the former chairman of the works council opened the assembly, making a short speech, the other officials of the former works council reported on their activities. The chairman of the election commission read out the election procedure. The most important thing, he said, was that somebody who was not happy with a candidate is allowed to cross out the name and can write another [name] next to it. This was also reported in the trade union periodicals. But what they did not mention was that you need a *pencil* for doing so,

⁶⁵ Thus, for example, extended rights of works committees regarding participation in decisions of works management were provided for by law on July 8, 1959. As of summer 1964, the State Wage Commission began to dismantle these rights again since, in the commission's view, they were weakening the “authority” of industrial managers. Vgl. VOA, ÚRO-Před., box 70, no. 405 I/5.

which not everybody has on him. And is it really secret when the lists of candidates are distributed immediately before the elections and if you want to cross out a candidate—should a pencil be actually available—you would have to do it *right under the nose of the comrades sitting next to you?* They will have something to talk about, and they are right! And what serious consequences all this will have! Since there is no discussion, the comrades leave the room where the election takes place early and bitterly whisper in some corner or other saying that people do not like to leave a warm nest. We have to permit criticism without any consequences for those who utter it, and exactly that does not happen in our case. Only then will we have a clean record and can tackle our daily work with pride.

The workers of the repair workshop of the Czechoslovak State Railways in Chomutov (VOA, ÚRO-Org., box 146, no. 484. Italics as per the [hand-written] original letter.)

Bibliography

- Dvořák, Stanislav (1969). Postoje pracujících pardubických podniků k podnikové samosprávě [Views of staff members of enterprises in Pardubice on self-management of enterprises]. *Odbory a společnost*, 3, 19–32.
- Heumos, Peter (1981). Betriebsräte, Einheitsgewerkschaft und staatliche Unternehmensverwaltung. Anmerkung zu einer Petition mährischer Arbeiter an die tschechoslowakische Regierung vom 8. Juni 1947. *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Ost-europas*, 2, 215–45.
- (2001). Aspekte des sozialen Milieus der Industriearbeiter in der Tschechoslowakei vom Ende des Zweiten Weltkrieges bis zur Reformbewegung der sechziger Jahre. *Bohemia*, 2, 323–62.
- (2004). Stalinismus in der Tschechoslowakei. Forschungslage und sozialgeschichtliche Anmerkungen. *Journal of Modern European History*, 2, 82–109.
- (2005a). Zum industriellen Konflikt in der Tschechoslowakei 1945–1968. In Peter Hübner, Christoph Kleßmann, and Klaus Tenfelde (eds.). *Arbeiter im Staatssozialismus. Ideologischer Anspruch und soziale Wirklichkeit*, 473–97. Cologne: Böhlau.
- (2005b). State Socialism, Egalitarianism, Collectivism: On the Social Context of Socialist Work Movements in Czechoslovak Industrial and Mining Enterprises, 1945–1968. *International Labor and Working-Class History*, 68, 47–74.
- (2007). Betriebsräte, Betriebsausschüsse der Einheitsgewerkschaft und Werk-tätigenräte. Zur Frage der Partizipation in der tschechoslowakischen Industrie vor und im Jahr 1968. In Bernd Gehrke and Gerd-Rainer Horn (eds.). *1968 und die Arbeiter. Studien zum "proletarischen" Mai in Europa*, 131–59. Hamburg: VSA-Verlag.

- (2008a). Arbeitermacht im Staatssozialismus. Das Beispiel der Tschechoslowakei 1968. In Angelika Ebbinghaus (ed.). *Die letzte Chance? 1968 in Ost-europa*, 51–60, 215–20. Hamburg: VSA-Verlag.
- (2008b). “Der Himmel ist hoch, und Prag ist weit!” Sekundäre Machtverhältnisse und organisatorische Entdifferenzierung in tschechoslowakischen Industriebetrieben (1945–1968). In Annette Schuhmann (ed.). *Vernetzte Improvisationen. Gesellschaftliche Subsysteme in Ostmitteleuropa und in der DDR*, 21–41. Cologne: Böhlau.
- (2008c) Zum Verhalten von Arbeitern in industriellen Konflikten. Tschechoslowakei und DDR im Vergleich bis 1968. In Roger Engelmann, Thomas Großbölting, and Hermann Wentker (eds.). *Kommunismus in der Krise. Die Entstalinisierung 1956 und die Folgen*, 409–27. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- Kalinová, Lenka (1993). Ke změnám ve složení hospodářského aparátu ČSR v 50. letech [On the changes in the composition of the economic apparatus in the ČSR in the 1950s]. In Karel Jech (ed.). *Stránkami soudobých dějin. Sborník statí ke pětadesátinámhistorika Karla Kaplana* [Leafing through contemporary history. Collection of essays on the 65th birthday of the historian Karel Kaplan], 149–57. Praha: Ústav pro soudobé dějiny.
- (2007). *Společenské proměny v čase socialistického experimentu. K sociálním dějinám v letech 1945–1969* [Changes in society during the period of the Socialist experiment. On social history in the years 1945–1968]. Prague: Academia.
- Kaplan, Karel (2007). *Proměny české společnosti (1948–1960). Část první* [Changes in Czech society (1948–1960). Part one]. Prague: Ústav pro soudobé dějiny.
- Maňák, Jiří (1995). *Komunisté na pochodu k moci. Vývoj početnosti a struktury KSČ v období 1945–1948. Studie* [The Communists rising to power. Development of membership and structure of the KSČ in the period 1945–1948. Study]. Prague: Ústav pro soudobé dějiny.
- Pauer, Jan (2008). Der Streit um das Erbe des “Prager Frühlings”. In Stefan Karner, Natalja Tomlina, Alexander Tschubarjan (eds.). *Prager Frühling. Das internationale Krisenjahr 1968. Beiträge*, 1203–16, Cologne: Böhlau.
- Pernes, Jiří (1997). *Brno 1951. Příspěvek k dějinám protikomunistického odporu na Moravě* [Brno 1951. Contribution to the history of the anticommunist opposition in Moravia]. Prague: Ústav pro soudobé dějiny.
- Rezoluce ze závodů (1968) [Resolutions from the plants]. *Odborář*, 7, 18–20.
- Sbírka zákonů a nařízení Republiky československé* (1945, 1963, 1959) [Collection of laws and ordinances of the Czechoslovak Republic 1945, 1963, 1959].
- Vondrová, Jitka, Jaromír Navrátil, and Jan Moravec (eds.). (1999). *Komunistická strana Československa. Pokus o reformu (říjen 1967—květen 1968)* [The Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. Attempt at reform (October 1967 – May 1968)]. Prague/Brno: Ústav pro soudobé dějiny.

Faking It: Neo-Soviet Electoral Politics in Central Asia

Donnacha Ó Beacháin

Post-Soviet Central Asian states are Potemkin democracies, which have borrowed the form—but not the substance—of the Western systems they claim to emulate. They have composed constitutions, using the best Western advice, and established state institutions separated from one another with clearly defined powers. There is a clear hierarchy of government with often elaborate layers from the president through regions, towns, cities, villages, and communities. Similarly, elections are held with due solemnity. Announcements are made, campaigns are conducted, election commissions established, vote counts held and victors announced. Elections, however, are often theaters of the absurd, in which each citizen is assigned an acting role—the voter happily eschewing all alternatives to the status quo, the president gratefully acknowledging yet another overwhelming vote of confidence in his God-like powers. It is less an election than a ritual performed to reaffirm faith in the president and the political system over which he exercises absolute control.¹

Though Central Asian regimes fit most neatly into the authoritarian category defined by Linz (2000), some veer close to totalitarianism, complying with at least one of its characteristics (elimination of opposition). There has never been a peaceful transfer of power from government to opposition and thus, employing Przeworski's (2000) reasoning, they cannot be considered democratic polities. If we use Levinsky and Way's (2002, 51–56) definitions, Central Asian states, while of considerable variety, more closely resemble “façade electoral regimes” (where electoral politics are a sham thinly disguising outright dictatorships) than “competitive authoritarian” systems (where meaningful competition is permitted despite abuse of administrative resources). Initially, many of the deficiencies were attributed to difficulties associated with the relatively sudden collapse of the

¹ This echoes what Jeffrey Brooks has called the “performative culture” inculcated during Soviet times (See Brooks 2000, xvi, xvii).

USSR and the attendant need to establish newly independent states. Many authors wrote of a transition to democracy and transitologists were *in vogue* to identify the shopping list of attributes necessary to move towards Western style democratic governance (O'Donnell et al. 1986; Przeworski 1991; Lijphart and Waisman 1996; Diamond et al 1997; Schmitter 1994; von Beyme, 1996).² It is clear now that rather than the early elections being mere bumps on the road to democracy they were in fact the foundation blocks of new authoritarian states that used pre-*Glasnost* Soviet methods to consolidate power and demand obedience.

The Caucasus and Central Asia



Another popular myth propagated by the regimes attributes imperfections to the failure of the common people to embrace democratic values. In this version, enlightened (and benign) elites are doing their best to promote democracy and implement reforms as quickly as possible but are held back by a recalcitrant people attached to old Soviet practices, tradition and “Asian values”. However, all evidence suggests that it is the elite and not the electorate who fear democracy most. Indeed, *Glasnost* had been an unwelcome interlude when the first signs of democratic politics took root,

²The “epitaph” of transitology was announced by Thomas Carothers (2002).

and Central Asian presidents simply turned the clock back to centralized authoritarian rule. A democratic façade belies an unreconstructed pre-*Glasnost* communist model of dictatorship.

This chapter focuses on the five former Soviet republics of Central Asia and, given the 20th century time frame of the book, analyzes primarily, but not exclusively, the practices of the 1990s. The reader is provided with a brief overview of the origins of Central Asian states before being furnished with an appreciation of how elections were conducted during the Soviet era. The menu of manipulation at the disposal of the incumbent presidents is discussed and the obstacles facing potential opposition movements identified. Integral to the argument presented here is the assertion that Central Asian political regimes are as much neo-Soviet as post-Soviet. To illuminate this thesis, the chapter will examine election campaigns in all five Central Asian states. As the manipulation generally takes place behind closed doors and potential whistleblowers are rarely given a microphone in the national media, it is difficult to quantify. However, after almost two decades of systemic falsification, an attempt can be made to assess how electoral politics has been conducted in post-Soviet Central Asia.

Central Asian States: Where did they Come from?

Central Asian states are relatively new creations and in their present form they are entirely a product of Soviet imperial power, which, with the arrogance of the imperial pen, carved out new territories for those peoples on whom Russian ethnographers bestowed the title “nation”. Soviet rule was a mixed blessing for Central Asians. Millions died in the process of collectivization and purges but the new political dispensation brought modernization, industrialization and literacy. Though the state boundaries were entirely arbitrary, Central Asian states were afforded, within the sometimes suffocating limitation of Soviet democratic centralism, the emblems and structures of statehood—anthems, flags, and parliamentary institutions. The Brezhnev years in particular are popularly remembered as a golden age of stability and relative prosperity. Brezhnev’s policies of cadre stability meant Central Asian peoples enjoyed the fruits of relative autonomy under the (often corrupt) patronage of leaders who shared the ethnicity of the titular nation. Independence when it came was accepted reluctantly, more a

burden than a gift. Communist cadres reinvented themselves as national leaders who now changed their political lexicon from Marxism-Leninism to national independence, democracy and market reforms.

Back to the Future: Soviet Elections in Central Asia

During the Soviet era, the law was considered subservient to the regime; its role was to facilitate the leadership, never to restrain it. Marxist zealots and their apologists argued that socialism was superior to any law and that the quest to achieve full communism was too important to be subjected to legal straitjackets. In 1927, the USSR Supreme Court effectively defined itself out of existence by declaring that “Communism means not the victory of socialist laws, but a victory of socialism over any law”.³ Policies enunciated by the communist leadership and five year plans would do away with the need for laws. This system, with modifications, remained intact for decades. Writing in the early 1980s, T. H. Rigby (1980, 12) noted that

The Soviet constitution, even in its latest variant, is a notoriously misleading and incomplete guide to the distribution of power in the system [...] [The] core aspect of the Soviet system, the party-state relationship, is regulated, as it always has been, by discretion and not by law [...] The Soviet regime [...] has never been prepared to limit itself within the rules it itself prescribes.

Even when the Cold War was at its peak, Soviet elections attracted remarkably little attention from academics. It was assumed that, considering the outcome was predetermined, the process was unworthy of scrutiny. But despite—or because of—their irrelevancy in terms of political decision making, elections were elaborate affairs, requiring immense organizational effort. Over 50,000 Soviets at republican, regional and local levels were regularly elected and subordinated to the Supreme Soviet, the Soviet of Nationalities and, of course, the politburo. In 1984, the last pre-Gorbachev elections, a staggering and almost identical number of citizens were deemed to have cast their vote in elections to the Soviet of the Union (99.95 per cent) and Soviet of Nationalities (99.94 per cent). In none of the 15 republics did turnout dip below 99.9 per cent (Russia was the lowest with 99.91 per cent). In Central Asia, the results for the Soviet of the Un-

³ Quoted in Linz and Stepan (1996, 248).

ion were 99.93 per cent (Kyrgyzstan), 99.96 per cent (Kazakhstan), 99.98 per cent (Uzbekistan) and 99.99 per cent (Turkmenistan and Tajikistan) with almost identical turnout for the Soviet of Nationalities.⁴ In Uzbekistan, of almost eight and half a million voters only thirty failed to vote, according to official sources, while in the whole of Turkmenistan there was only one non-voter.

Such spectacular turnouts could only be achieved through a combination of great organizational effort and bending the rules. The manner of casting a ballot spoke volumes. Voters were usually presented with a single candidate and could either leave the ballot unmarked, thus signaling approval, or put a line through the name of the candidate indicating that he or she rejected the candidate. Thus, a “good citizen”, who readily endorsed the party nominee, would simply register at the table, collect their ballot and walk to the ballot box and cast their vote without making a mark or entering the booth. To enter the booth could only indicate an intention to cross out a candidate’s name, spoil one’s vote or write comments on the paper. It was thus a subtle yet effective deterrent against dissident behavior, a powerful tool to promote conformity and acquiescence. Mobile ballot boxes brought to those unable to make it to the polling station also boosted turnout and limited the options for making a protest.⁵ In the 1984 elections, votes against candidates were extremely rare. Only one in every 1,686 votes cast to the Soviet of the Union and every 1,897 Soviet of Nationalities were against candidates.⁶

There was very little one could do with their vote beyond fulfilling one’s duty and demonstrating loyalty to the regime. According to official figures, invalid votes were very small in number. Of 183,897,278 votes cast in the 1984 elections to the Soviet of the Union only 17 were deemed invalid. At the level of small villages, where only a few votes were cast, it was sometimes possible to reject a candidate. It was still a very rare occurrence; in 1975, one in every 30,000 electoral contests ended with a candidate failing to secure 50 per cent of the vote (Smith 1988, 102). The majority who went to the polling booth (estimated to be between two and five per cent) (Smith 1988, 103) most likely did so to write something on the ballot

4 Statistics for elections to Supreme Soviet (Soviet of the Union and Soviet of Nationalities) from *Izvestia*, March 7, 1984, 1.

5 Based on author’s interview with Dr. Vladimir Kibenko of Kharkiv State University and KGB Colonel (retired) Vladimir Bezruchenko in Yalta, July 10–11, 2009.

6 *Izvestia*, March 7, 1984, 1.

paper knowing that the vigilant bureaucracy would take note of any marked ballots and that through this form of petitioning something might be done to solve their pet grievance. Since voting was anonymous and comments were not usually accompanied by names and addresses, appeals were often general (see Smith in this volume).

Great effort was devoted before the election to selecting candidates who would be reliable and acceptable to their peers. Competition, if there was any, generally occurred at this selection or nomination stage, not at the election itself. The trick was to put forward only candidates who would be endorsed rather than elected. Any opposition brave (or foolhardy) enough to try and stand for election found themselves strangled by red-tape and confronted with all manner of obstacles to registration (Medvedev 1979). That the interests of the state should predominate over the candidate is not surprising considering that the election validated not the individual candidate but the regime itself (Friedgut 1979, 96).

Gorbachev's anti-corruption drive hit Central Asia particularly hard and there was a rapid clearing of the old guard, often with several purges at the top. When the musical chairs came to an abrupt halt with the USSR's collapse, the Central Asian leaders presided over sovereign states with membership of the United Nations. Independence necessitated a new legitimating myth with which to justify their continued dominance and to crush any nationalist and/or democratic movements that had managed to take root during the period of *Glasnost*. As in Soviet times, history has been substantially rewritten but instead of Stalin magnifying his part in key Bolshevik endeavors, Central Asian presidents have exaggerated or simply manufactured tales of how they fought for their country's independence. Toadying sycophants have thus been transformed into manly freedom fighters.

Games Without Frontiers: Election Campaigns

Elections in Central Asia legitimate power rather than provide an opportunity to challenge it. Forbidding opposition parties outright would have dented the democratic credentials of the new presidents so the generally preferred option (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan) has been to put extraordinary barriers to the formation and operation of political parties

not beholden to the government. While the count is invariably rigged, the primary fraud occurs long before election day. The main electoral corruption is in the process not the vote. A wide variety of technical means have been devised to destroy opposition to the executive—be it in the form of parties, NGOs, media or universities. Tax affairs are deemed not to be in order, organizational buildings found to be fire hazards, registration signatures discovered to be invalid—the list has been potentially endless. In Kazakhstan, one of the most novel devices has been to counter oppositionists and confuse the electorate by inducing political nobodies to run against oppositionists who bear strikingly similar names.⁷ Reflecting the relative weakness of the governing elite, Kyrgyzstan's President Askar Akaev preferred to appoint potential rivals as ambassadors and then as elections approached nudged the Kyrgyz courts to rule that such individuals could not run for political office as they were not now deemed to meet election law residency requirements. Language laws, confining competition to those who speak fluently the “state language”, which in many parts of Central Asia is only spoken by a minority, is another popular way to combine national populism and opposition annihilation. In Kyrgyzstan's case, the provision was hastily inserted into legislation to stymie the presidential ambitions of popular Bishkek mayor, Felix Kulov, who soon after found plenty of time in prison to overcome his linguistic deficiencies.

Election campaigns in some Central Asian states like Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan are extremely low key. No outdoor rallies are generally permitted, election material is scarce and there are few visual reminders that an election is taking place save for a few isolated billboards exhorting the population to vote. In Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, candidates are not allowed to organize meetings with voters by themselves but instead are invited to participate in discussions organized by the District Election Commission. At such controlled gatherings, candidates speak to small groups of voters, a format that forbids debate between candidates in favor of establishing a dialogue with the voters. However, the candidates as a rule say little or nothing about their policies or those of their parties but merely provide the audience with details of their talents and professional background. During the 2007 presidential elections, for example, the Uz-

⁷The author witnessed this practice while observing the 2004 parliamentary elections in Kazakhstan. This procedure bears a resemblance to that carried out in Eastern Europe during the 1940s—known as “salami tactics”—when parties of similar names were established to dilute the vote for real opposition parties.

bekistan National News Agency (UNA), which was entrusted with reporting the election for an international audience, provided tell-tale signs of carefully managed electoral choreography. When Karimov spoke at meetings, the report always ended by claiming that the participants said that all progress and stability in Uzbekistan “are directly linked with the name of Islam Karimov” and that supporting his candidature “was a reliable guarantee of the continuation of wide-scale reforms and increasing the people’s prosperity”. This contrasted with how the meetings of the other candidates were reported. On no occasion did candidates solicit a vote for themselves. Rather they were reported as saying (in exactly the same words, irrespective of the candidate or place of meeting) that “that wide-scale reforms implemented in Uzbekistan in the years of independence have produced notable results. The country’s economy is developing and the people’s well being is improving. Reforms in the economic and sociopolitical spheres are deepening”. These “opposition” candidates offered no program except praise for current progress, and the UNA report always ended cheerily by saying that the voters present had claimed that “conduction of the elections of the President of Uzbekistan on a multi-party and alternative basis is proof that principles of democracy are being observed in the country”.⁸

The authorities provide meager funds for each party or candidate to conduct their campaign and the parties are often prohibited by law from obtaining alternative campaign funds. This produces a very modest election campaign and further skews resources in favor of the ruling regime. All candidate posters for the 2004 Uzbekistan parliamentary elections had a uniform layout that included the Uzbek flag and state emblem, a picture of the candidate and the candidate’s biography.⁹ In Turkmenistan’s parliamentary elections of the same year it was the Central Election Commission, as before, that designed, printed and distributed campaign leaflets, posters and pamphlets. Posters during the campaign were for the only legal contender, the Democratic Party of Turkmenistan, with identically sized

⁸ See, for example, “Islam Karimov meets voters in Jizzakh and Syrdarya regions”, UzA, December 15, 2007, 11:17, available at <http://uza.uz/en/politics/115/>; “Dilorom Tashmuhamedova meets voters in Syrdarya region”, UzA, December 17, 2007, 20:40, available at <http://uza.uz/en/politics/114/>; “Asliddin Rustamov meets voters in Jizzakh region”, UzA, December 19, 2007, 09:23, available at <http://uza.uz/en-politics/119/>.

⁹ Nils Gunnar Songstad, “The Republic of Uzbekistan: Parliamentary Elections—2004” (Norwegian Centre for Human Rights/NORDEM, Oslo, February 2005), 11.

candidate photographs and lettering. Candidates were encouraged to address their constituents at approved “corner meetings” and the media (all state controlled) were instructed to cover these meetings.

	Presidential Elections	Parliamentary Elections*	Referenda
Uzbekistan	2000: 95.1 2007: 90.6	1991: 94.2 1994: 93.6 1999: 95.0 2004: 85.2	1995: 99.3 2002: 94.0
Turkmenistan	2007: 95.0	1990: 96.6 1994: 99.8 1999: 99.6 2004: 76.88 2008: 93.87	1994: 100.0
Kazakhstan	1999: 87.0 2005: 76.8	1991: 84.0 1994: 73.5 1995: 79.8 1999: 62.5 2004: 56.7 2007: 64.56	1995 (i): 91.2 1995 (ii): 90.6
Kyrgyzstan	1995: 86.2 2000: 78.4 2005: 74.67 2009: 79.3	1990: 89.0 1995: 76.3** 2000: 64.4** 2005: 60.0** 2007: 71.93	1994: 96.0 1994: 86.0 1996: 96.6 1998: 96.4 2007: 81.58
Tajikistan	1994: 95.0 1999: 98.9 2006: 90.9	1991: 84.6 1995: 84.0 2000: 93.4 2005: 92.6	1994: 90.0 1999: 91.5 2003: 93.0

Table 1: Turnout at Presidential and Parliamentary Elections in per cent¹⁰

10 *Figures refer only to first round voting. Regarding the last Soviet parliamentary elections (1990-1), the exact figures are unavailable. In Uzbekistan, 500 seats were up for grabs but only 463 MPs were elected by the time of the first parliamentary session held on March 24, 1990. Of these, 368 seats had been won in the first round; 348 going to the Communists and the remainder (it seems) going to independents. The nationalist party Birlík (Unity) is alleged to have supported about 50 elected deputies. In January 1990 Supreme Soviet elections in Turkmenistan were formally multi-candidate with 90

Elections in Central Asia, thus, are managed, rather than won or lost. It is not enough that power is monopolized but competition for power is also controlled by the ruling regime. Central Asian regimes do not resort to limiting the franchise. This would give the game away and deny much-sought legitimacy. Instead, they have fallen back on the Soviet trick of endowing everyone with a meaningless vote with which they can do anything but change the regime. Even if they decided not to go to the polling booths, turnout figures will be boosted to deny them even this token act of defiance. In this sense, there is much less competition in, say, contemporary Uzbekistan, than there was in competitive oligarchies like 19th century Britain or South Africa under apartheid. Elections, therefore, are not determinative; there is only one possible outcome and the only question—rarely posed—is how the result will be received domestically by the opposition (if one exists) and international opinion (if it can influence the regime).

Central Asian elections, like their Soviet predecessors are noteworthy for the extraordinary turnout, probably the highest among states whose electoral legislation does not prescribe compulsory voting. Drained of any life, however, political parties do not have the means nor the ability to inspire turnout. Moreover, since parties merely support power rather than exercise it, voters have no sense that by casting a ballot they are making the slightest difference to their lives or the composition and character of the political system. Thus, *it is the state and not the parties that bring the vote* out and even, as is most often the case, the state fails to arouse the electorate from its political slumber, official figures will invariably record an astonishingly high turnout. Campaigns in such environments are also “issue free”, for to raise issues is to discuss issues and to discuss issues is to start talking about pros and cons, and before you know it someone has started questioning government policy. Thus candidates are reduced to talking in terms of vague aspirations without conceding that anything is actually wrong with the status quo.

per cent going to communists. Tajikistan's communist party got 96 per cent of seats and was the only registered party. Though only state organizations nominated candidates (like large collectives) the number of candidates (878 for 350 seats) suggests unprecedented competition. **Figures refer only to first round voting for elections to the lower house of parliament. In 1995 and 2000, there were elections to a bi-cameral legislature, which included an upper house called the People's Representative Assembly. Second round turnout for the lower house was 65.6 per cent in 1995 and 61.9 per cent in 2000. In 2005, Kyrgyzstan reverted to a unicameral legislature.

Two potential obstacles to election manipulation are a vigilant media and international election observers. The media were central to undermining authority in Ukraine (Kanal 5) and Georgia (Rustavi 2), facilitating “color revolutions” following rigged elections in both countries (See Ó Beacháin 2009a, 2009b; Polese 2009; Ó Beacháin and Polese 2009a, 2009b). The media environment in Central Asia, however, is not one that lends itself to lively election campaigns.¹¹ The local media is tightly controlled and it is virtually impossible to conduct independent surveys. The Internet is the only means through which alternative views can be obtained. Internet penetration is very small in the countryside (where most of the population live) and very expensive in urban centers.¹² Opposition websites are periodically blocked. Government pressure has meant media self-censorship is deeply ingrained; newspapers no longer have to receive formal instructions and are rarely admonished. Moreover, opposition forces have found it impossible to establish alternative media sources.¹³ Though woefully partisan, Kazakhstan’s 2005 election coverage was perhaps the best in terms of allowing opposition access to the airwaves and even permitting a presidential debate. However, the president himself used the opportunity to make an official visit to Ukraine and allowed the other four candidates to debate among themselves at a time few television viewers with a job were likely to be at home.¹⁴

Election observers also provide a potential break on authoritarian excesses during national votes. For many Central Asian elections the OSCE has provided the only detailed assessment but these missions have been scaled down in recent years and challenged by more favorable assessments from the (Russian-dominated) Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).¹⁵ Kazakhstan’s 2010

11 Radio Free Europe//Radio Liberty, “Covering An Election In A Closed Country”, December 13, 2008, http://www.rferl.org/content/Turkmenistan_Covering_An_Election_In_A_Closed_Country/1359433.html

12 Author’s observations in Central Asia from 2002–2008.

13 Azezkhan Kazhegeldin’s challenge against Nazarbayev in the late 1990s was doomed partially because he failed to establish a rival media empire as he had hoped (KTK—“Commercial TV Channel”)

14 Based on observations of the author who was living in Kazakhstan during the 2004 parliamentary and 2005 presidential elections (See Kennedy 2006; Dave 2005; Ó Beacháin 2005).

15 At time of writing (September 2009), the CIS is composed of all post-Soviet countries except the three Baltic States and Georgia. The SCO is composed of Russia, China and all Central Asian states except Turkmenistan.

chairmanship of the OSCE damaged the credibility of that organization in conducting its election-monitoring duties. Turkmenistan's 2004 parliamentary elections provide an example of how little scrutiny election fraud has attracted. Foreign observers were not invited to observe the election.¹⁶ Instead, 200 members of the state-run Turkmen Institute for Democracy and Human Rights under the President of Turkmenistan (TIDHR) were entrusted with the task and they predictably gave the elections a clean bill of health. This was an improvement on the 1999 elections when only ten members of the TIDHR were entrusted with monitoring the national elections (which meant that there was one monitor for every 156 polling stations). The head of the Institute, Shemshat Atajanova, also served as vice-chair of the 16 member Central Election Committee and obviously believed that there was no conflict of interest. As only one party was allowed to contest the election, only one party filled the 50 seat legislature. A repeat performance in 2008 for an expanded 125-seat parliament was enthusiastically endorsed by the CIS election monitoring mission. Despite the usual array of fraud and irregularities, the organization's Executive Secretary, Sergey Lebedev, concluded that

The parliamentary elections were well-organized, competitive and free. They were held in compliance with election legislation in effect in the country and generally recognized norms of democratic elections, and were marked by high voter turnout [...] The parliamentary elections in Turkmenistan have become an important factor in the further democratization of the Turkmen state and society.¹⁷

Not surprisingly, Central Asian dictators have increasingly sought the services of CIS and SCO monitors to provide a counterbalance to western critiques. In this way, something of a mutual support group has been established among autocracies as monitors from non-democracies like Belarus, Azerbaijan and China descend on Central Asia to approve the electoral process and results, a favor happily reciprocated.

16 In most former Soviet countries, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) plays a key role in monitoring elections. In 2004, however, the head of the OSCE in Turkmenistan was expelled from the country, having being accused of "only looking for negative material".

17 Turkmenistan.ru, December 15, 2008, "CIS observer mission highly rates parliamentary elections in Turkmenistan" http://www.turkmenistan.ru/?page_id=3&lang_id=en&elem_id=14158&type=event&sort=date_desc

Presidential Elections: Meet Mr. Ninety Per Cent

A two-round majority system for presidential elections is thought to have a “decisive effect” on opposition attempts to forge successful coalitions (van de Walle 2006). However, while all Central Asian states employ this electoral system, there has never been a second ballot in any presidential election; instead the incumbent wins the first round by an overwhelming majority. Rather than suffering from voter fatigue as the same face presents himself for endorsement, election votes have often become more emphatic over time. Official statistics tell a story of an indefatigable electorate who turn out in implausibly high numbers to tell the leader that they want absolutely no change at the top or indeed of any part of the political regime.

	No. of candidates	Incumbent vote	Opposition vote*
Uzbekistan	2	87.1	12.4
Turkmenistan	1	98.3	0.0
Kazakhstan	1	98.8	0.0
Kyrgyzstan	1	95.4	4.6
Tajikistan	6	56.9	33.1

Table 2: Founding Presidential Election in per cent (1990–1)¹⁸

With the exception of war-torn Tajikistan, which saw an effective *coup d'état* in 1994, and Kyrgyzstan, whose then liberal-leaning president depended heavily on Western good-will, Central Asian presidents spent much of the 1990s avoiding elections by extending their terms of office. Turkmenistan's President Niyazov proved most effective in this regard when, after one term extension, he dutifully accepted in 1999 the recommendation of the people's assembly he had personally appointed that he be relieved of electoral burdens and made President for Life. Nazarbayev's position in Kazakhstan was not as all-powerful and he tried to pre-empt rising opposition by first calling early elections in 1999 (all the more bewildering considering

18* Voters had an “against all” option in all five presidential elections though, as Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan had only one candidate running the choice was simply for or against the incumbent leader. This option was selected by 0.4 per cent in Uzbekistan, 1.2 in Kazakhstan, 1.7 in Turkmenistan, 3.0 in Tajikistan, 4.6 in Kyrgyzstan.

he had earlier sought a term extension) and debarring his main rival, Azezkhan Kazhegeldin, on a trumped-up misdemeanor (“administrative crime” in Kazakhstan). Though “winning” by a landslide, Nazarbayev obviously felt he had allowed too much room for opposition to develop and with a series of amendments to the election law made it much more difficult to form a political party.¹⁹

	No. of candidates	Incumbent vote in per cent	Opposition vote* in per cent
Uzbekistan	2000: 2 2007: 4	2000: 95.7 2007: 90.77	2000: 4.3 2007: 9.23
Turkmenistan	2007: 6	2007: 89.23	2007: 11.77
Kazakhstan	1999: 4* 2005: 5	1999: 81.0 2005: 91.15	1999: 27.3 2005: 8.65
Kyrgyzstan	1995: 3* 2000: 6* 2005: 6*	1995: 72.4 2000: 76.4 2005: 88.9	1995: 26.4 2000: 22.9 2005: 10.2
Tajikistan	1994: 2* 1999: 2* 2006: 5	1994: 59.5 1999: 97.6 2006: 79.3	1994: 34.7 1999: 2.1 2006: 20.7

Table 3: Subsequent Presidential Elections²⁰

In 2000, Uzbekistan saw two presidential candidates pitted against each other in what was a badly acted theatrical performance. The incumbent, Islam Karimov, accepted the nomination of his latest creation, the *Fido-korlar* (Self-Sacrifice) party, and prodded a willing lackey, Abdulhafiz Jalolov, to run for the top job. Jalolov, a member of another Karimov created party, was put in a difficult position, having to feign enough enthu-

19 Article 10 of the highly restrictive “Law on Political Parties” (2002) denied registration to parties that could not muster 50,000 members representing all fourteen regions and the major cities of Kazakhstan (a minimum quota of 700 members in each region and major city was also established) (See Ó Beacháin 2005).

20 * Voters had an “against all” option. In Kazakhstan (1999) this was 1.7 per cent (not available in 2005). In Tajikistan the option was exercised by 5.8 per cent of voters in 1994 and 0.3 in 1999 but the provision was abolished for the 2006 contest). In Kyrgyzstan, the figures were 1.1 per cent (1995), 0.7 (1999), 0.9 (2005).

siasm to present himself as a willing candidate but not so much that his loyalty to the president could be seriously questioned. When asked of his voting intentions on election day, Jalolov, most likely perplexed as to what constituted the correct answer, let the cat out of the bag and admitted to television viewers that he was voting for his “rival” Karimov. According to official results—surely a fabrication—over half a million (4.3 per cent) voted for a man who would not vote for himself.²¹ Interestingly, at the time of writing the Uzbekistan election of 2000 remains a solitary example of a two-man contest. The clearly preferred option is to allow several candidates to contest a presidential election (as was the case in the subsequent Uzbek contest in 2007). Thus, rather than one candidate emerging as the serious challenger, the vote is relatively evenly divided between the contenders so that the margin between incumbent and loser is overwhelming.²²

Plebiscitary Dictatorship

Despite elections being an optical illusion that should pose no threat to the regime, Central Asian presidents have proved remarkably shy of holding them. It is as if the mere concept of an election as a selection process could somehow dent their efforts to be viewed as politically immortal. Throughout the 1990s, first in Turkmenistan and then in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, presidents deferred elections by putting to the people referenda to endorse their continued grip on power without recourse to election (see table 4). The advantages of plebiscites over elections are obvious. Rather than staging a process whereby actual opponents are allowed to contest or, if not, are manufactured, the issue is distilled into being for or against the incumbent with no alternative presented. This is in keeping with the daily reminders that the president has, *deus ex machina*, come as a founding father, to guide the nation through the first generation of independent statehood. How can this living divinity be reconciled with the image of a politician battling with mere mortal mediocrities to distinguish himself? Plebiscites, whereby people could simply applaud the hero, rather than elec-

21 The “against all” option was removed for the 2000 Uzbekistan presidential elections.

22 This was the case in the most recent presidential elections in Kazakhstan (2005), Tajikistan (2006), Turkmenistan (2007), Uzbekistan (2007) and Kyrgyzstan (2009).

tions, which theoretically depicted the president as one of many potential office aspirants, were preferable.

	Stay in USSR*	Independence+	Prolong Presidential term	Constitutional changes
Uzbekistan	94.8 (95.6)	98.3 (94.1)	1995: 99.6 (99.3) 2002: 91.78 (91.58)	2002: 93.68 (91.58)
Turkmenistan	98.3 (98.0)	94.1 (97.4)	1994: 99.9 (100.0)	Not put to referendum
Kazakhstan	95.6 (88.2)	None	1995: 95.5 (91.2)	1995 (i): 95.5 (91.2) 1995 (ii): 89.1 (90.6)***
Kyrgyzstan	94.5 (92.9)	None	None	1994: 97.0 (96.0) 1994: 89.0 (86.0) 1996: 98.6 (96.6) 1998: 95.4 (96.4) 2007: 76.19 (81.58)
Tajikistan	96.0 (94.0)	None	1999: 75.3 (91.5)**	1994: 90.0 (n/a) 1999: 75.3 (91.5) 2003: 96.4 (93.13)

Table 4: *Referenda: Results and Turnout*²³

The constitutional changes that have permitted, first, term extensions, and, then, the abolition of term limits have been done to benefit the incumbent not his successors. Presidents in Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan all extended terms by arguing that earlier two term limits were part of the older constitutional order and the clock had started ticking afresh with new basic laws. Thus, Tajik President Rakhmonov, already in power for a dozen years by the time of the 2006 presidential contest, gave

23 * Two questions in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan: the statistic cited is for the standard Kremlin-devised question. + Two questions in Turkmenistan; ** Three questions in Tajikistan, one on extending presidential term; *** New Constitution (August 1995), presidential term prolongation in April 1995.

himself a new lease of political life by pushing through a 2003 referendum allowing him to stay in office until 2020. Islam Karimov simply ignored the two term limit by running (after earlier extensions) for a third time in 2007. In Turkmenistan, presidential elections were done away with all together on the understanding that this “for life” status would only be conferred on the first incumbent. His successors were theoretically to be bound by the two term limit but there would be little to stop them discarding constitutional niceties once the precedent had been set. In fact, there is no election pendulum; it is the presidential life cycles and not election cycles that are the harbingers of change. The latest to join this band was Nursultan Nazarbayev who, having exhausted the usual tricks of extending his term and starting afresh after a new constitution, rammed through a proposal in 2007 allowing him to contest an unlimited number of presidential contests with the proviso that this indulgence would only apply to him and not his successors (but, again, whether his successors will demonstrate the self-restraint that Nazarbayev himself could not muster is uncertain). In general, however, enthusiasm for referenda seems to have waned somewhat since the 1990s. The preference now appears to be for making constitutional changes through pliant parliaments rather than having to bother with the exigencies of a referendum campaign.

Let's have a Party

Considering the shared inheritance of a dominant Communist Party (CP), it is perhaps surprising that Central Asian presidents have been slow to set up a strong pro-government party. Instead they have based their power on personal charisma and state coercion. The pro-presidential parties that have been established share some characteristics with the Communist Party during the Soviet era. Indeed, parties like the Democratic Party of Turkmenistan and Peoples Democratic Party in Uzbekistan were simply names applied to the Communist Party at republic level (in the former case, the change of names took place during a lunch break).²⁴ However, Central Asian presidential parties fundamentally differ from their Soviet antecedents in a number of ways. In general, the parties have not pene-

²⁴ For Turkmenistan see Gleason (1997, 116).

trated society to the same degree. Whereas the Communist Party and the USSR were indistinguishable and the CP served the ambitions for all Soviet leaders, post-Soviet Central Asian presidential parties are pale shadows of their communist predecessors. Today, parties exist at the pleasure of the president, and can be dissolved or ignored.

As parties do not have real power, voters cannot exploit them for resources, nor can they use them to exert control over the system or bring presidents to book. Party leaders are non-entities and, worse, are subject to constant rotation. New faces, programs, and initiatives all make it difficult to gain voter loyalty and serve to confuse the electorate. Party strengths are routinely exaggerated to create the impression of vibrant civic activism. It is difficult, for example, to reconcile the staggering number of party branches alleged to exist in Uzbekistan with the complete absence of visible party activity in the country. Moreover, the parties see people in the abstract sense. Their appeals are Soviet-style and wooden; they offer no mobilizing call for change or critique of the status quo. Instead, they maintain that the regime has done a tremendous job and should be endorsed indefinitely.

In Kyrgyzstan, Askar Akaev consistently ran as an independent candidate and only in 2005, on the eve of his downfall, did he make a feeble effort to establish a pro-presidential party, *Alga Kyrgyzstan* (“Forward Kyrgyzstan”) whose fortunes were reversed as suddenly as those of the president. In Uzbekistan, President Islam Karimov dithered before deciding in the middle of the 1990s that the president should not be a member of any political party. While presenting this as a noble attempt to put the president above politics, it was more likely to guarantee that the president would be unencumbered by any party duties or obligations. At each parliamentary election, Karimov oversaw the creation of a new pro-presidential party to instill new momentum into the elections and reinforce the image of Uzbekistan as a multiparty democracy. In all, Karimov created five pro-presidential parties (simultaneously outlawing all opposition parties) but never accepted the presidential nomination from the same party twice, further freeing himself from being tied to any of his political progeny in the public mind. Kazakhstan’s President Nazarbayev also vacillated throughout the 1990s until, coming under renewed pressure from presidential aspirants, he established *Otan* (Fatherland) to provide a nursery for pro-presidential sycophants. His experimentation with allowing another strong pro-presidential party (*Azhar*) vie for the people’s affections (admit-

tedly led by the president's daughter) ended in 2007 with the merger of *Azpar* with *Otan* to become *Nur Otan*. *Nur Otan* won all seats in the 2007 parliamentary election, completing the process of Kazakhstan's journey back to a one-party state. However, the exigencies of diplomacy and real-politik produced the remarkable feat that Kazakhstan was selected to chair in 2010 the OSCE, an organization whose remit includes the monitoring of elections in member states. This is all the more remarkable given the fact that since independence not one of Kazakhstan's parliamentary or presidential elections has been judged free or fair by the OSCE.

In Tajikistan, the Peoples Democratic Party, established in 1994 as the country descended ever further into civil war, was founded as a counter-pole to the opposition that had set themselves the task of ousting President Rakhmonov. Ever since, it has dominated parliament but not national politics, which remain firmly in the grasp of the collective farm director turned state president. A 1997 agreement that brought the civil war formally to an end guaranteed the United Tajik Opposition a 30 per cent stake in power but initial token efforts to implement the power-sharing aspects of the agreement were quickly abandoned in favor of centralized executive power. Only Turkmenistan refused to engage in the pretence of multi-party democracy. Asked (in Washington DC, 1998) why he didn't allow opposition parties to organize freely, President Niyazov drolly replied that there were no opposition parties in Turkmenistan "so how can we grant them freedom" (Sabot 2003, 51). One of his party chiefs further explained that opposition arises when leaders make mistakes but as Niyazov did not make mistakes no opposition arose (Akbarzadeh 1999, 275).

Destined to Lose: Opposition Parties and Elections

Real opposition parties, which are those that are not manufactured by the regime, are usually co-opted or neutralized. Those that remain find themselves in something of a quandary. Since their only role in elections is to lose, there is often a debate as to the virtue of participation and the appropriate response to the inevitable defeat.²⁵ If they participate in what they

²⁵ Lindberg's (2006) analysis (based on database of 95 executive and 125 legislative elections between 1989 and 2003) concludes party boycotts are generally a sign of weakness rather than strength; the last resort of the impotent rather than a weapon capable of

know can only be a rigged contest, they may simply lend legitimacy to a system designed to marginalize them in perpetuity. Their role, as in the warm-up gladiatorial acts of old, is to provide an opponent for the star of the stage and die gracefully before public view. The decisive manner by which they are dispatched reinforces the perceived strength of the victor and the impossibility of challenging him. It is not only a win but a warning; look what happens to those that take me on, challenge at your peril. If the opposition boycott, however, they risk further marginalization and may simply confirm their impotency to the electorate. Ignored between elections, a national contest provides opposition parties with a brief moment in the spotlight to show their wares, be afforded some media coverage, and, under international scrutiny, organize relatively unmolested. The presence of election monitors and media correspondents reduces the chances of being summarily imprisoned for agitation. Once the election count is over and the regime re-installed for another term, the opposition are again faced with a choice; bow out with or without scowls of derision, or mobilize a challenge to the result. Kyrgyzstan's "Tulip Revolution" of March 2005, when angry mobs stormed the White House in protest against rigged parliamentary election and ousted President Akaev in the process, was the most dramatic example of the latter strategy. The result however owed more to the weakness of the state than the strength of civil society. Pilfering through state coffers by the president's family, friends, and allies had reduced the state to a rotten edifice so that even a mild kick through the front door was enough to seize power. The chief beneficiary of the coup, Kurmanbek Bakiiev, further entrenched corruption and electoral fraud to an extent that the Akaev era was looked on by many with an air of nostalgia. That said, the Tulip Revolution proved that elections, for all their stage-managed excesses, still present the potential for an organized and determined opposition to dislodge a politically ailing incumbent.

Conclusion

The euphoria that accompanied the end of Cold War has subsided and the optimism about post-Soviet democratic trajectories has been eroded with

dislodging the incumbent regime. This certainly corresponds with the experience in Central Asia.

every election. It was commonly assumed that post-Soviet states were on a transition *to* democracy and early problems were thought to be the inevitable teething problems arising from the dislocation caused by the USSR's implosion. If, as some suggest, the world has witnessed a democratic recession in recent times, Central Asia has played its fair share in the crisis of confidence. The region has succeeded in burgling well-meaning donor agencies of hundreds of millions while drying up a reservoir of goodwill for democracy promotion in the region.

After almost two decades, we can make some tentative conclusions about how elections are conducted in post-Soviet Central Asia. Faking democracy is not the unintended consequence of electoral mismanagement or inexperience. Nor is it a mistake, the unfortunate result of incompetence, or an inability to digest imported Western electoral methodology. It is the product of a communist past combined with a communist-trained present and an increasingly cultivated "Asian" approach that officially stresses consensus, compliance and hierarchy as cardinal virtues. Everyone from the presidentially appointed Central Election Committee to the humble voter has their role to play in the deception and, like faking an orgasm, all make the right motions and noises to assuage the ego of the insecure ruler, sensitive to any signs of disaffection lest it signal the end of his relationship with the people.

So why hold elections in post-Soviet Central Asia? For much the same reasons that they were held in Soviet times. Elections are for ratifying and gratifying. However, the Central Asian leaders did not slip back to communism; this had been discredited and could not provide legitimization. Instead, they maintained a slimmed down version of Soviet authoritarian rule, not a Stalinist model but certainly more despotic than the practices of the late Gorbachev era, when a variety of diverse interest groups and movements bloomed.

Western bewilderment at blatant acts of rigging, manipulation and plain theft should be tempered by an appreciation of the fact that Central Asian autocrats, schooled in Soviet style democracy and eager to establish a towering place in their nation's history, cannot think of any other way to achieve their ambitions. With a desire for unbridled power comes a fear of the repercussions should they lose an election. Unlike their Western counterparts, who are merely condemned to lecture tours, writing memoirs and spending more time with their family, ousted Central Asian presidents know they risk death, exile, and loss of enormous wealth, not to mention

their place in history should they be unceremoniously dislodged.²⁶ For that reason, most prefer their personal life expectancy rather than the electorate to determine presidential terms of office.

Bibliography

This article owes much to dozens of interviews conducted with political leaders, activists and analysts in the five countries of post-Soviet Central Asia. It also utilized several election reports, particularly those compiled by the OSCE. In addition, the following secondary sources were employed:

- Akbarzadeh, Shahram (1999). National Identity and Political Legitimacy in Turkmenistan. *Nationalities Papers*, 27, 271–90.
- Beyme, Klaus von (1996). *Transition to Democracy in Eastern Europe*. London: Macmillan.
- Brooks, Jeffrey (2000). *Thank You, Comrade Stalin! Soviet Public Culture from Revolution to Cold War*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Carothers, Thomas (2002). The End of the Transition Paradigm. *Journal of Democracy*, 13, 5–21.
- (2006). The Backlash Against Democracy Promotion. *Foreign Affairs*, 85, 55–68.
- Diamond, Larry, Marc F. Plattner, Yun-han Chu, and Hung-mao Tien (eds.). (1997). *Consolidating Third-Wave Democracies. Themes and Perspectives*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Friedgut, Theodore (1979). *Political Participation in the USSR*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Gleason, Gregory (1997). *The Central Asian States: Discovering Independence*. Boulder, CO: Westview.
- Hoffman, Barak D., and Jack Santucci (2009). *The Democratic Recession*, available at http://www8.georgetown.edu/centers/cdacs/globalizing/democratic_recession_5apr09.pdf
- Lane, David (1985). *State and Politics in the USSR*. New York, NY: New York University Press.
- Levinsky, Stephen, and Lucan A. Way (2002). The Rise of Competitive Authoritarianism. *Journal of Democracy*, 13, 51–56.

²⁶ Thompson and Kuntz (2006) have coined the term “electoral sultanism” to describe those regimes where incumbents have too much to lose by allowing the opposition to win an election; such regimes, they conclude, are highly repressive and weakly institutionalized, a description for many, if not all, of the Central Asian states.

- Lindberg, Staffan I. (2006). Tragic Protest: Why Do Opposition Parties Boycott Elections. In Andreas Schedler (ed.). *Electoral Authoritarianism: The Dynamics of Unfree Competition*, 203–23. Boulder, CO: L. Rienner Publishers.
- Lijphart, Arend, and Carlos H. Waisman (1996). *Institutional Design in New Democracies. Eastern, Europe and Latin America*. Boulder, CO.: Westview Press.
- Linz, Juan J., and Alfred Stepan (1996). *Problems of Democratic Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America and Post-Communist Europe*. Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press.
- Linz, Juan J. (2000). *Totalitarian and Authoritarian regimes*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.
- Ó Beacháin, Donnacha (2005). Parliamentary Elections in Kazakhstan. *Electoral Studies*, 24, 762–69.
- , and Abel Polese (2008). American Boots and Russian Vodka: The importance of external factors in colour revolutions in Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan. *Totalitarismus und Demokratie*, 5, 87–113.
- (2009a). Kyrgyzstan’s Tulip Revolution. In Immanuel Ness (ed.). *The World Encyclopedia of Protest and Revolution: 1600 to Present*, 3228–33. Oxford: Blackwell.
- (2009b). Roses and Tulips: Dynamics of Colour Revolutions in Georgia and Kyrgyzstan. *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, 25, 199–226.
- , and Abel Polese (2009). From Roses to Bullets: The Rise and Decline of Post-Soviet Colour Revolutions. In Uwe Backes, Tytus Jaskulowski, and Abel Polese (eds.). *Totalitarianism and Transformation: Central and Eastern Europe between Socialist Legacy and Democratic Transformation (Totalitarismus und Transformation Defizite der Demokratiekonsolidierung in Mittel- und Osteuropa)*, 63–100. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- , and Abel Polese (eds.). (2010). *The Colour Revolutions in the Former Soviet Republics*. London: Routledge.
- O’Donnell, Guillermo, Philippe C. Schmitter, and Laurence Whitehead (eds.). (1986). *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Comparative Perspectives*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Polese, Abel (2009). Russia, the US, “the others” and the “101 things to do to win a (colour) revolution”: reflections on Georgia and Ukraine, available at www.politics.plymouth.ac.uk/PIP/Polese.pdf.
- Przeworski, Adam (1991). *Democracy and Market. Political and Economic Reforms in Eastern Europe and Latin America*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- (ed.). (2000). *Democracy and Development; Political Institutions and Well-Being in the World, 1950–1990*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rigby, T.H. (1980). A Conceptual Approach to Authority, Power and Policy in the Soviet Union. In T.H. Rigby, Archie Brown, and Peter Reddaway (eds.). *Authority, Power and Policy in the USSR*, 9–31. New York, NY: St. Martin’s Press.
- Sabol, Stephen (2003). Turkmenbashi: Going It Alone. *Problems of Post-Communism*, 50, 48–57.

- Schedler, Andreas (2006). *Electoral Authoritarianism: The Dynamics of Unfree Competition*. Boulder, CO: L. Rienner Publishers.
- Schmitter, Philippe C. (1994). The Conceptual Travels of Transitologists and Consolidationists: How Far to the East Should They Attempt to Go?. *Slavic Review*, 53, 173–85.
- Smith, Godan B. (1988). *Soviet Politics: Continuity and Contradiction*. London: Macmillan.
- Thompson, Mark R., and Philipp Kuntz (2006). After Defeat: When Do Rulers Steal Elections?. In Andreas Schedler (ed.). *Electoral Authoritarianism: The Dynamics of Unfree Competition*, 113–28. Boulder, CO: L. Rienner Publishers.
- Van de Walle, Nicolas (2006). Tipping Games: When Do Opposition Parties Coalesce? In Andreas Schedler (ed.). *Electoral Authoritarianism: The Dynamics of Unfree Competition*, 77–92. Boulder, CO: L. Rienner Publishers.
- Wilson, Andrew (2005). *Virtual Politics*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

III Dissent and Loyalty

Elections, Plebiscitary Elections, and Plebiscites in Fascist Italy and Nazi-Germany: Comparative Perspectives

Enzo Fimiani

“Force and Consensus”

In this essay I analyze the historical significance of both plebiscitary experiences and electoral practices of a plebiscitary nature in Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany.¹

If there is no doubt that the very high frequency of plebiscitary-electoral voting was largely determined by the suffocating nature of the totalitarian dictatorship, it is also important to bear in mind that these systems of power were able, in some way, to anticipate the moods, ambitions and expectations of a fair proportion of the people. Neither Fascism nor National Socialism, in fact, can be assessed solely in terms of their political violence, juridical illegalities or institutional corruption, and not even in terms of the ideological constraints that they imposed or their inherent ability to spread their propaganda through technologically-advanced forms of mass communication. The positive responses in the plebiscites also pointed to the population's approval of the myths of nationalism or of patriotic redemption in the face of previous humiliations in the course of history (the *shame* of Versailles for Germany, the “*vittoria mutilata*” for Italy after the First World War). So, to succeed and to achieve totalitarian levels of participation, elections and plebiscites needed not only the mere praxis of power. The plebiscite ballot boxes, overflowing with *Sì* and *Ja*, represented well this *mixture* in the essence of right-wing dictatorial power, which we could define—using the words of the Italian *Duce* himself—as a perverse mixture of “force and consensus” (Mussolini 1923). As has been written of Fascism, “the regime organized consensus, oppressed and at the same time made the people participate [...]. This was typical of an authori-

¹ My thanks to: Paul Corner, for his friendship; Barbara Lewis (teacher and language scholar, Pescara, Italy), who translated this essay from Italian into English; John Guerin (Kaplan School, Dublin), who was very patient with my English...

tarian mass regime, subduing the individual to the state and to his boss and making him participate all the same, while giving him space” (Foa 1996, 126, 131). In other words, the plebiscitary exercise of the right to vote was an emblematic paradigm of *participation* in political life under totalitarianism.

Form of Regime, Form of Vote: Meanings and Functions of Nazi-Fascist Plebiscitary Votes

The plebiscitary experiences and electoral practices of a plebiscitary nature under the two regimes have not received the attention they deserve from international historiography. In one of the best works on the relations between German totalitarianism and the people, Gellately has stressed that historians “are used to ignoring the subsequent elections and plebiscites under Hitler’s dictatorship” (Gellately 2002, 15). In Italy, the principal scholar of Germany’s history recently wrote that “until now, the problem of the plebiscites [...] has only been dealt with marginally by the wealth of literature available on Hitler’s regime” (Corni 2010, 179). As far as Fascism is concerned, after a long silence, historians only began to turn their attention to its plebiscites some ten or twelve years ago.

This lack of interest has almost always been determined by *negative prejudice*, so to speak, towards plebiscites in general. It was generally thought that there was little point in studying them as they always turned out, in European history, to be mere rituals for illiberal regimes, occasions for celebration, and predictable manifestations of consensus for the political system in power. Moreover, the regime’s plebiscitary successes were put down largely to coercion.

In effect, the electoral and plebiscitary dates, that marked the lives of the German and Italian peoples between the two World Wars took on many important meanings and functions for the political dynamics of the two regimes that we cannot afford to ignore. On the one hand, they marked out and emphasized some of the main emblematic moments of the respective totalitarian experiences, albeit with their quite distinct characteristics. Elections for the two parliaments, and plebiscites for the collective ratification of political decisions already taken in practice by the two governments, now give us another opportunity to measure, among other

things, the ability of profoundly non-democratic regimes to control and mobilize the *masses* by using a typical instrument of democratic tradition, the right to vote. On the other hand, they had the function of conferring a kind of “chrism” to the Fascist and Nazi powers, *legitimizing* them in some way from the bottom upwards, and often contributing to *legalizing* formally the more obvious aspects of their illegality (especially but not only in respect of international public opinion).

The elections and plebiscites also constituted authentic paradigms of the modern totalitarian plebiscite, which, in its respective propaganda campaigns, produced some of its highest expressions of violence, persuasion and invasiveness in forms that included technology and advertising, the extraordinary power of the party machines, the weight of both psychological and physical coercion, and lastly the ability to gain the electoral support of a substantial portion of Italians and Germans on topics of broad popular appeal. Moreover, they had an additional function, which helps us “to look totalitarianism in the face” (Ungari 1963, 11). For Fascism and Nazism, the numbers achieved in the results of elections and plebiscites were only of relative importance (although the two regimes threw all they had into achieving the maximum percentage of affirmative and, indeed, plebiscitary votes). Electoral experiences of this kind, putting aside the differences between Italian and German history, are revealed as being something that went far beyond the tally of the ballot papers. They also became a symbolic fact, a *plastic* testimony of the link between the *new* power and popular consensus.

We can say, ultimately, that the ten elections and plebiscites that were held in Italy, Germany and in some German-speaking areas between 1924 and 1938 are a reliable yardstick for us. They enable us to comprehend better, in comparative terms, the two systems and to observe their relationships with the contradictions of political modernity.

Elections, Plebiscitary Elections and Plebiscites: Questions of History and Definitions

When Fascism and Nazism used the plebiscite, an instrument, which allowed a government to appeal to the people to express themselves with a *Yes* or *No* on a particular issue, already had a long history, which began in

the French Revolution. The modern plebiscite soon revealed its ability to become a phenomenon of European dimensions over the next two centuries (Fimiani 2010). It has been used by a number of nations and has crossed several frontiers of political thought, revealing itself as a useful means for different sorts of regimes to legitimize, consolidate or legalize themselves, and to gain in this way a gloss of *democracy*. Numerous forms of electoral competitions “without choice” have revealed a close relationship with plebiscites proper. Fascism and Nazism, therefore, did not invent the plebiscitary tradition; rather, they *reinterpreted* a plebiscitary past with methods characteristic of modern dictatorships.

Beside the *plebiscite*, then, the two regimes made use of other instruments of *electoral* consultation of the people, which, in many ways, were similar enough to plebiscites to allow us to consider them side-by-side in a comparative analysis of *Nazi-Fascist* plebiscitarianism. The *elections proper*, in a juridical sense, both in Italy (in 1924) and Germany (two in 1933 and two in 1938, on the *Anschluss* and the Sudetenland issue),² *always* took on a *de facto* plebiscitary nature and were aimed at winning approval for the regime in a general sense, beyond the political contingencies for which they had been called. Alongside these specific electoral experiences, *hybrid forms* of polls were tried out, which we could term *plebiscite-elections* (the Italian elections of 1929 and 1934; the German one of 1936 on the Rhine issue). The three forms of election under study constitute, from a historical and interpretative point of view, a fascinating mixture for the scientific study of a crucial point—the more or less real commitment to the dictatorships of the twentieth century.

At first sight, the sheer numbers bring out substantial differences between Fascism and National Socialism. Fascist plebiscites emerge as feeble compared to Nazi ones. Only two plebiscites were held in Italy during the Fascist dictatorship: on March 24, 1929 and March 25, 1934. To these, we should add the general elections, still formally with more than one party, which were held on April 6, 1924: they were celebrated not so much as an “electoral victory” but as a “national plebiscite” in favor of Fascism as a whole (*Il Popolo d'Italia*, April 8, 1924). On the other hand, Fascism—for

² Often neglected by scholars, but achieving a great impact at a time of international tension, after the Munich agreement of September 1938: the votes obtained on December 4 in the Czechoslovakian region of Sudetenland were a plebiscite of annexation to the *Reich* and a partial renewal of the *Reichstag* with the inclusion of 41 new representatives.

the first time in modern European history—transformed elections into plebiscites through a series of laws.³The two plebiscites that were held took place at the end of the *normal* five-year period of parliamentary legislation, and not as a result of the dictatorship choosing the most propitious moment to call a plebiscite about a political question.⁴

In Germany—both in the *Reich* and in the Saar, in Austria and in Sudetenland—between March 1933 and December 1938, there were seven polls, roughly one per year. This is evidence of the *permanent mobilization* to which German citizens were subjected, one of the distinguishing features of Nazism as a whole. A real election took place on March 5, 1933, but this was an election that was interpreted by contemporaries as an authentic “plebiscite” (Schmitt 1935, 178), a “historic event, a plebiscitary decision on the new form of the State” (Poetzsch-Heffter 1935, 9; Jung 1995, 15–16; Corni 2010, 186–187). The first two plebiscites were proclaimed on the basis of an *ad hoc* law: the plebiscite of November 12, 1933 was on Germany’s exit from the League of Nations and the Disarmament Conference, and the plebiscite of August 19, 1934 was called when Hitler also became head of state after the death of Hindenburg. On March 29, 1936, there was an election that could be defined as an *election-plebiscite*. The German people were called to the ballot box to say *Yes* to the single list of a single party, the Nazi Party: it was formally only an election, but on a substantial plebiscitary question, the re-militarization of the Rhineland. Two other plebiscites were held in 1938: on the same ballot paper, Germans voted for a new *Reichstag* and the ratification of the birth of *Grossdeutschland* (*Anschluss* of Austria on April 10; annexation of Sudetenland on December 4). Lastly, a further plebiscite, on the return of the Saar region to Germany, was held on January 13, 1935. This was a poll controlled externally by the League of Nations. Nazism was adept, however, at using polls effectively, organizing huge propaganda campaigns and then receiving an extraordinary injection of international *legitimization* from the successful result; in this case, the return of the Saar region to the German *Heimat*.

3 Law 1019 of May 17, 1928; electoral unified code (Royal Decree of September 2, 1928, No 1993); Head of Government’s Decree, September 8, 1928, No 2225; Royal Decree of January 17, 1929, No 13. There was a single electoral roll, of 400 “designated representatives”, with a single national electoral College. See Camera dei Deputati (1929, 153–160).

4 A recent dictionary on Fascism has separate entries for “Elections” and “Plebiscites”. Dal Lago (2005).

We cannot, however, ignore the fact that historians disagree on the definition of *plebiscite* applied to the two regimes. This is particularly true for the German regime. In fact, if we follow a purely formal and legal criterion, there were only three Nazi plebiscites, and these three—1933, 1934, *Anschluss* 1938—are examined by the scholar who has investigated the issue most thoroughly (Jung 1995; 1998). In effect, every time the Germans entered a polling station during the Nazi regime, they were asked not so much to vote for a parliamentary representative or for a territorial referendum as to express “their solemn approval of the [politics] of re-establishment of national honor and sovereignty of the *Reich*” (RGB 1936/I, 133). The parliamentary elections were evidently a direct and extraordinary (and therefore plebiscitary) testing of the people’s attitude towards the regime in its entirety. The renewal of the composition of the *Reichstag* was simply a pretext to hold the ballot. Jung, taking a different position on these issues from previous theses, has denied that the features of the “*System plebiszitärer Akklamation*” (Bracher 1960, 348) or of “plebiscitary power” (Kershaw 1991, 88–104) can be attributed to Nazism, because only two of Hitler’s plebiscites officially applied the law of 1933. Jung speaks, rather, of a real *Abschaffung* (Jung 1995, 82–91), an “elimination” of the plebiscite after the disappointing results in 1934. (The vote for the *Anschluss*, in fact, is seen to have been a sort of *retaliation* against the Austrian government’s decision to call a free plebiscite opposing annexation). I believe, however, that the historian should be less constricted by formal criteria. I think it would be misleading to measure the plebiscitary nature of a regime according to legal criteria alone: the plebiscite as a principle cannot be identified with the juridical instrument.⁵

According to the same logic, Fascism should not be removed from the array of dictatorships based—*not only, but also*—on plebiscites, simply because the polls held in 1929 and 1934 were, formally, parliamentary and *normal* elections. Both regimes (with their respective measures and modes) managed to combine *totalitarian and plebiscitary* elements, and indeed derived part of their success from this *mix*.

⁵ I couldn’t agree more with Rapone (2010, 146-147).

National Socialist and Fascist Ideas on Parliamentary and Popular Democracy

In Italy, after the last plebiscitary vote in 1934, the electoral criterion was abandoned as a means to select members of Parliament. The laws on the plebiscite were annulled in 1939. The “Chamber of Deputies” was replaced by the “Chamber of Fasci and Corporations”, an assembly whose composition was predetermined and no longer dependent on ratification by popular vote: the members had a seat merely by virtue of their belonging to the Party machine. This abrogation was accompanied by the decision to avoid, by law, any juridical norm that left the door open to further plebiscites.⁶ This conscious renouncement of popular legitimization and of the periodical public *consensus* represented by plebiscites was probably one of the weaknesses inherent in Fascist power.

In Germany, on the other hand, Nazism formally kept alive the parliamentary electoral institution of the *Reichstag*, although, from March 1933 onwards, it was virtually a nazified fake of democracy. The electoral law did not change, but it was void of any meaning, with a single party and a single list of candidates. Nazism never abandoned popular ratification, except during the war. While in Italy, then, the dates of plebiscitary elections were determined by the periods of parliamentary legislature, in Germany the opposite was the case: on three occasions, the plebiscite was used to interrupt the period of legislature. A new *Reichstag* was elected to coincide with direct popular consultation, which therefore dictated the pace of parliamentary life.

Thus, Fascist plebiscites, called according to laws establishing their regular occurrence, appear to be bereft of that *unpredictability*, that extemporary *dramatization* of a bond between the leader and his people according to the particular political need of the moment—something that was typical of Nazism. Hitler’s government had acquired a legislative instrument, the *Gesetz über Volksabstimmung* of July 14, 1933. (Significantly, this was passed on the very same day as the law to suppress all political parties except the NSDAP).⁷ German law contemplated the possibility of consulting the people on *any* act of government policy, leaving the executive free to es-

6 Laws of January 1939: No 10 of January 5, No 127 and No 129 of January 19. See Rapone (2010, 163-166).

7 RGB (1933/I: 479). There is no monographic study on the law. See the latest work—in Italian—by Corni (2010).

establish the *if*, the *when* and the *object* of the plebiscitary ballot. In the Italian law, on the other hand, the Fascist plebiscites revealed themselves to be predictable in the institutional dynamics of the regime, a sort of *routine* unlike the unexpected (but in actual fact carefully studied) plebiscites brought into being by Hitler's political *imagination*: by the very nature of their being *plebiscitary elections*, Italian votes took a sort of midway position between a strongly plebiscitary system and the kind of non-competitive elections typical of a single-party regime.

This different use of plebiscites found confirmation in the forms of political mobilization and propaganda campaigns of the two regimes. Elections and plebiscites under totalitarian regimes were also reliable indicators of their ability to rally the masses and to obtain a sort of grip on their citizens. Nazism, compared to Fascism, used more coherent and efficacious methods to achieve the "totalitarian dream figure" of 99 per cent of favorable votes (Bracher 1969, 325). The two leaders were also involved in the electoral-plebiscitary campaigns in different ways: whereas Mussolini never took part personally, Hitler was always directly involved, taking part in demonstrations, holding electoral speeches, and flying from one end of Germany to the other. The relative importance of the plebiscite in Germany is probably due to the fact that National Socialism needed the plebiscite more to prove to the world that the German people were united behind the *Führer's* international decisions. Only one of Hitler's plebiscites was called on themes of home policy, that of 1934, and after the unsatisfactory result it was not repeated. In Italy, on the other hand, Fascism was unable to make voting a new form of legitimization in itself.

It is important not to underestimate the fact that, in general, the shelving of elections in Italy after 1934 was to do with Fascism's underlying mistrust of the Italian people. To flatter the people once more by implying that they were a source of the regime's legitimization meant conferring on the Italian people a power that Mussolini felt they did not deserve. Differences in how the two regimes perceived the *masses* led to different strategies. Fascism, by means of *corporatism*, underlined its division into "bodies" (on the basis of their economic function). In contrast, National Socialism stressed community, and therefore unity, from which followed the possibility for the people to express themselves collectively through a vote. Nor must we forget that in Germany, unlike in Italy, universal suffrage did not bear the hallmark of democratic emancipation, both as a result of the authoritarian way in which Bismarck had used it, and because of the thrust

that it had given to Hitler in his rise to power (a rise that, unlike Mussolini's, had come about in a context of formal universal suffrage, with women allowed to vote, too).

However, in one way, Fascism did strongly resemble Nazism: both regimes seemed to have a highly ambivalent attitude towards forms of popular legitimization, either pandering to, or rejecting it, according to the context. While actively seeking confirmation by popular consensus, they also firmly rejected the idea of deriving their political and constitutional legitimization from the people. This, in fact, would have meant weakening their totalitarianism, since their rule would have been subject to the whims of the people, as expressed through the essentially *democratic* act of voting. Hitler, for example, during a rally in 1937, was clear on the subject: "our State is in no way founded on the plebiscite, and I stress this most strongly" (Von Kotze-Krausnick 1966, 132). Under Fascism, many doctrinaires of the regime had already expressed similar opinions. Commenting on the first *election-plebiscite* of 1929, Maraviglia wrote: "Popular participation [...] reinforces and makes the institutions created by the regime more efficient; it does not legitimize them" (Maraviglia 1929, 236). Entrusting the foundations of public power to the variable nature of the plebiscite, building the *mythopoiesis* of a regime on the democratic act *par excellence*, meant admitting the role and weight of the hated *popular sovereignty*: the plebiscite or plebiscitary election, even in those contexts furthest from democracy, called to mind the democratic ideals of the *Grande Révolution*—civil and political rights, equality, and freedom. These were ideals that Fascism and Nazism opposed, since they considered them to be epigones of a past that was to be destroyed. Nazism, in particular, boasted of having been able to build the "most beautiful kind of democracy that exists" (von Kotze-Krausnick 1966, 123–77), a democracy that contrasted with the liberal-democratic model of 1789 (Pombeni 1997, 70–1). From such an attitude there followed a clear use of the collective sanction of political choice to celebrate a power that was already firmly established:

First I acted—proclaimed the *Führer* during a speech in the Teutonic Order Castle (*Ordensburg*) of Vogelsang on April 29, 1937, on the first anniversary of the foundation of the "Party schools" in Eastern Pomerania—and then I showed the world that the German people follow me, that's what it's about. If I hadn't been sure that the German people would be behind me, as one, I would have acted all the same, but I wouldn't have called the plebiscite. (Von Kotze-Krausnick 1966, 134; Frei 2001, 239)

Behind this similarity, however, the two regimes did use electoral and plebiscitary instruments differently in practice. One of the main reasons for this was the place that each gave in their doctrine to the relationship between the people and the state (Rapone 2010, 166–67). If both systems denied the existence of a variegated public opinion that called to mind the hated democracy, Fascism, in giving huge importance to the state, was oriented towards overcoming the separation of state and people, and towards incorporating the latter into the former. National Socialism, in contrast, tended to raise the position of the *Volk*, seeing it as the repository of moral values and the source of the regime's and the state's spiritual and creative energy. Appealing to the *Volk*, and giving it voice and legitimacy, implied recognizing its juridical and moral personality as distinct from the organs of the state. Fascist culture went in the opposite direction, towards the annulment of any duality between the people and the state, which was achieved also through a mutation of the nature and function of parliament.

While Fascism tended towards the imprisonment of the people in the grip of the state, in Nazi ideology the people were the (only formal) basis for the conception of the state and the law, although not, of course, as a sociological entity and even less as an autonomous political subject, but as a mystical community, founded on racial identity and on constitutive factors of blood and soil. Hitler felt himself to be the incarnation of the “community of the people”, an interpreter of the interests of the people from whom he held himself to be the emanation. The *völkisch* order of ideas saw the people as a spiritual, meta-historical entity *beyond* the state, which was a result of the conviction of the *excellence* and the *peculiarity* of the German people. The text of the decree with which Hitler asked for the plebiscite in 1934 ended thus:

Firmly and deeply convinced as I am that all state power derives from the people and must be sanctioned with a free and secret vote, I ask that the decision of the government be submitted to the German people without delay with a free plebiscite. (Minuth 1983, 1387)

Such a phrase would have been inconceivable in an official document of the Fascist government.

Why Imitate the Democratic Order? Stages in Regime Development and the Use of Plebiscitary Votes

Plebiscitary votes were above all a consequence of an already consolidated situation. They did not turn out to be a direct consequence of theoretical-ideological constructions that might have prepared for them in some way. On the contrary, they were almost always held *ex-post* with regard to changes in power that had already taken place, before the *will of the people* was called upon in an election.

Albeit with different methods and times (quicker for Nazism—just over a month for the first poll after January 30, 1933 and just over nine months for the first plebiscite; less rapid for Fascism—almost a year and a half between the seizure of power and the first election, and over six years before the first plebiscite was held), the Italian *Popolo* and the German *Volk* were allowed to vote according to not dissimilar schemes. This was synthesized, cynically and publicly, by Alfredo Rocco, one of the founders of the totalitarian state in Italy and Minister of Justice. Presenting his “Bill” on the new electoral mechanisms in Parliament in 1928, which transformed elections into plebiscites, he calmly declared that, “as always occurs in the evolution of Fascist institutions, [...] here, too, facts have preceded norms” (Rocco 1928, 4). Ten years later, his Nazi counterpart, Hans Frank, in an attempt to place the new system on a legal footing, echoed his words during a speech on June 18, 1938: “The *Führer* creates a constitution that is not based on legal prescriptions [...], but on historical actions” (Frank 1953, 466). In other words, both regimes began by moulding reality according to what suited them. It was only later that a juridical framework was found, and it was no mere coincidence that Hitler himself defined his times as the “epoch of accomplished facts” (Hitler 1965, 155, 169; Hoffmann 1955, 82). At that point, the electoral rites could take place (with juridical and political value), which consolidated this reality. From the millions of affirmative votes, all possible advantages could be drawn, and it was not so much specifically Nazi or Fascist ideological objectives that were achieved but gains in terms of *democratic* recognition and an image of a *united* country, which were then directed at public opinion both at home and abroad.

In effect, in the history of France, Italy and Germany between the end of the eighteenth and the mid-twentieth century, there was never a plebiscitary pronouncement that signified the authentic and recognized birth

certificate of a new power before it had already been firmly established. Nor has a plebiscite ever led to the downfall of an established power. Mussolini was well aware of this and, on December 8, 1928, he announced to the already *fascistized* Chamber of Deputies that the assembly would be dissolved and that there would soon be a plebiscitary election, declaring that “a revolution can be consecrated by a plebiscite, but never overthrown” (Mussolini 1957, 272). The affirmative result, however, proved to be useful in conferring a *surplus* of legitimacy and a gloss of legality, neither of which were indispensable, to the new structure of power.

So, modern forms of *election-plebiscite* have never caused or solved, *by themselves*, a crisis in the system. If anything, they have offered those able to exploit them the advantages of a useful (and often necessary) mechanism for smoothing over potentially critical stages. They might also have served to emphasize highly *symbolic* steps on a path that in any case had already been embarked upon, but whose general direction had not yet been altogether consolidated. An example of this is the Fascist plebiscite of 1929, held shortly after the extraordinary boost of legitimacy offered by the Concordat with the Catholic Church, or the double Nazi votes of November 1933, which symbolized the *liberation* of the “new Germany” from the hated “order of Versailles”. These political instruments helped to reinforce, exalt and—in a certain sense—crystallize the prerogatives of power that had already been established by various means—even illegal and coercive, of course. This helps to explain other typical features of the plebiscites, which often resulted from the power of a *fait accompli*: the prevalence of affirmative votes, almost always verging on 100 per cent, and the high numbers of voters, exceeding those of normal elections (Pavone 1996, 162–63).

According to such an interpretation, it is easy to understand why Fascism and Nazism—although not plebiscitary dictatorships *tout court*—gave such importance to elections and plebiscites in the array of instruments that democratic tradition had provided for them to legitimize themselves from the base upwards and to consolidate *consensus* through the exploitation of propaganda. At the same time, however, one can see how the two regimes studiously avoided giving the impression that they depended on the whims of the voters. Risky moments, above all for Nazism, were solved first with the power of the *fait accompli*: an example is when the Nazis abandoned the League of Nations and the Disarmament Conference, not to mention the unscrupulous exploitation of Hindenburg’s death

in 1934, after the assassins of June 30 had settled their scores within the Party; or when the *Wehrmacht*, which had entered the Rhineland in 1936, swept over the Austrian border two years later and subsequently occupied Sudetenland. Only at a later stage were such manoeuvres showered with affirmative votes in a popular ballot: in Germany, between action and poll, a mere month passed, then twenty days, then three weeks, then a month and, finally, just under two months.

In the case of the Italian dictatorship, it may be said that both the “closed authoritarian elections” of 1924 and the plebiscitary experiments of 1929 and 1934 in a regime of “zero competitive elections”⁸ took place within a sphere of *normal* rhythms of consolidation and public recognition of Fascist power; they were not resounding turning points or held to reject hypothetical destabilizing impulses. To be sure, a couple of events that occurred before the polls had had a key role in the founding moments of the regime. The electoral law passed in November 1923 (giving the relative majority party two thirds of the seats in Parliament) and then the Concordat with the Catholic Church of February 11, 1929 (solving the age-old *Roman question*) were two decisive steps that had preceded popular sanction at the polls. Elections and plebiscites, at that point, took on a sort of *certifying* role in the transformations that had been initiated. It was only the polls of 1924 that constituted a *picklock* capable of sanctioning Fascist dictatorial power and of opening the doors to totalitarian rule.

Electoral Campaigns and Reception of the Idea of Plebiscites

Ernst Jünger (1993, 249) wrote that, in the Germany of the early thirties, the “election days [...] felt like rehearsals for a general mobilization for a civil war” In effect, although they declared that they were not dependent on the whims of the people, Nazism and Fascism used all the persuasion they were capable of and made every effort in terms of organization and propaganda to secure crushing victories in all the polls held during their terms in power. Their election campaigns were short-lived, lasting a maximum of a few weeks. The two regimes, however, used all the modern political means in use in the twentieth century, including the *showing-off* and

⁸ See Werner J. Patzelt in this book.

scenography of the consensus. Albeit to a different degree—Nazism, as we will see, with more radical forms⁹—they both made use of the obsessive repetitions of propaganda, technology applied to mass communication, the new and violent spell-binding oratory of political meetings, the newspaper graphics, the slogans and enormous posters in every street and on every wall, the rousing tones of the first talking newsreels and radio shows, the same many-sided, non-verbal, symbolic messages, expressed in the theatrical gestures of the leaders, the loops and turns of the planes in the sky, and all the other means of contemporary communication, including photography, silent films, propaganda scenes prepared by architects in the main towns, swooping beams of light on the crowds, and so on.

Fascism reserved for the Italian people at fixed, well spaced-out times, the need to rally for an affirmative vote for the regime. The German people, on the other hand, were assailed in their everyday lives with a sort of permanent mobilization for electoral purposes; they had to suffer the incessant reiteration of watchwords and icons of the regime, with the resulting obligations in public behavior and proofs of fidelity. This was the suffocating burden of—to quote from the diary of a contemporary witness—a “boundless propaganda for a yes-vote” and in general a “colossal propaganda” (Klemperer 2000, 17, 45; Fimiani 2009), which determined a condition of continuing exceptionality. One of the many slogans was emblematic: *Führer wir folgen Dir! Alle sagen Ja!*, in violent bright-red letters, which gave great visual impact to one of the posters that decked the walls of all German cities in the November of 1933.¹⁰ The watchword, superimposed on a picture of Hitler in his brown shirt with an icy glare towards a fixed point in front of him, had in the background a vast crowd of people making the Nazi salute. The word *JA*, in particular, was written in large capitals and the exclamation mark made the whole message particularly emphatic.

Fascism used similar means, but they were less extreme. During the election campaign of 1924, the pressure of intimidation, coercion and propaganda reached such levels that Giacomo Matteotti made an official protest in Parliament, as is well-known, and was subsequently assassinated. In the 1929 polls (but it was the same in 1934), Italian towns, suburbs and villages were invaded by posters, leaflets, slogans and megaphones urging

⁹ Many examples now in Omland (2006).

¹⁰ www.earthstation1.com/Warposters/jingram/gwwii007;

www.members.tripod.com/~Propagander/dh1.html (“*Führer* we follow you! We all say yes!”).

people to vote *Sì*, and reminding them of their “patriotic duty” in putting the right ballot into the box, which had the purpose of consecrating the “organic union” between regime and people, “the moral unity of the Italian people under the signs of the *Littorio*” (Galeotti 1999, 76).

One of the differences between the two countries, however, lay in the more convincing and invasive use of color, the efficacy and evocative potency of the slogans, the carefully crafted designs and the very size of the posters, which produced successful propaganda and a political-publicity message that homed in. There was no comparison between the impression that one of these posters on German streets was able to produce on the onlooker, and the large letters saying *SI* that crowned the face of the *Duce* on the façade of the Fascist Party Headquarters in Rome.¹¹ In Germany, almost all the posters on view were brightly colored and contained rallying themes. Besides, although the *Führer* was indisputably the protagonist, Nazi propaganda went beyond the overbearing personality cult of Mussolini that characterized Fascism. On the one hand, I am thinking in particular of a huge, imposing, three-quarter portrait of Hitler in his military uniform for the *Plebiszjt* of 1935, standing behind on an imperious *JA!* with its exclamatory tones, which was impossible to ignore.¹² But, on the other hand, there were also others that did not have Hitler as the protagonist but that covered in the same way every available surface with some of the more typical slogans of the regime (*Das ganze Volk sagt Ja! Am 10. April*,¹³ or *Ein fester Block. Ein millionenfaches Ja!*).¹⁴

In a few exceptional cases, Fascist propaganda was able to provide examples that were as powerful as the Nazi ones. Five years after the above-mentioned posters appeared on the walls of the Party Headquarters in Rome, the Italian dictatorship called a poll in 1934 on the inseparability of the *Duce* and *SI*, giving it, however, a spectacular paradigmatic acceleration:¹⁵ in the second Italian plebiscite, the large, but gray, almost anonymous Mussolini of 1929 had turned into a massive face, which peered

11 De Felice (2001, cd II, “I plebisciti”); Amendola-Iaccio (1999, 7); ASMIL (“Giornale Luce” No A0298.4, March 1929, Roma).

12 GPA: www.calvin.edu/academic/cas/gpa/posters/ja1935.

13 ASL: www.linz.at/archiv/nationalsoz/kapitel4.html (“All the people say Yes!”, for *Anschluss* 1938).

14 DHM: www.dhm.de/lemo/objekte/pict/pl004015/index.html (“A solid block. A million times Yes”).

15 De Felice (2001, cd III, “I plebisciti”); Amendola-Iaccio (1999, 118); ASMIL, (“Giornale Luce” No B0443, March 25, 1934, “Il Plebiscito dell’anno XII”).

down from the façade of the same building (the symbol of the Party's absolute power), but this time with quite a different expression, much more probing, looking into the soul of every passer-by, near or far, as if trying to search out the infidels, anyone who was not *fascistissimo*. Making up the background and frame surrounding this giant poster, hundreds of *SI*s, in stylized letters (far more modern and attractive than the previous ones), filled the whole wing of the building.

It was also no coincidence that for the same plebiscite the regime decided to call on the services of one of the most famous artists of the time. For the celebrations surrounding this plebiscite, the graphic artist Xanti Schawinsky was commissioned to design a thoroughly modern poster, one that was destined to become one of the most prominent propaganda symbols in times of contemporary plebiscites, and not only in Italy (Silva 1973, 51; Fimiani 2002, 168). With the colors touched up, but still fairly soft (something Fascism did not often resort to, preferring blacks, grays and whites), and created with montages, the poster portrayed an enormous *Duce* looking gravely down, his black shirt formed by a mass of thousands of Italian heads during one of the ritual "oceanic rallies". This was a graphic feature that could no longer be considered paradigmatically plebiscitary. In the foreground, superimposed, there was a colossal *SI* with the triumphant results of the 1934 plebiscite. Such a poster was indeed impressive, for its massive size and plebiscitary unanimity as well as for the perception it offered of how the new visual communication techniques were entering the sphere of politics, altering the very codes of the propagandistic message.

These peaks of efficacy achieved by the Fascists were taken up by National Socialism with the obsessive mobilization to which it subjected the German people, an increasingly lapidary communicative potency, and designs and colors guaranteed to impress. Of the many examples of this were the enormous, aggressive *Jas* and the hands outstretched in the "German salute" (*deutsche Gruß*) of the posters used for the last *Volksabstimmungen*, the ones that, in 1938, although the totalitarian order had been virtually achieved and guaranteed, were even more fiercely controlled: in April in Austria,¹⁶ and in December in Sudetenland (where the work of the well-known graphic artist Karl Gold was used).¹⁷

16 www.earthstation1.com/Warposters/jingram/gwwii020.

17 www.earthstation1.com/Warposters/jingram/gwwii002;

www.members.xoom.virgilio.it/mauro51/gold.htm.

Ultimately, then, in the field of electoral campaigns, propaganda and therefore the collective impression of the idea of plebiscitary “consensus”, there was a substantial difference between the two regimes.

Fascism, in a certain sense, although swamping Italy with its slogans and subjecting the Italians to harsh dictatorial oppression, was less radical in its exploitation of the Party machine for electoral propaganda motives. In particular, after 1934 and the subsequent decision to go without parliamentary elections (and thus collective political consensus by means of ballot-papers), the shows of popular support ended up by seeming almost “Bureaucratic” and predictable, whether it was the election-plebiscites every five years or the “oceanic rallies” to listen to the *Duce* from the balcony in Piazza Venezia. After a while, the continual, enthusiastic rallies of the masses ceased, except on rare, but notable, occasions, such as the “conquest” of the Empire in 1936. Instead, there was a new feeling of “weary disillusionment, which spread steadily throughout the *gerarchi* and ordinary activists” (Aquarone 1995, 167) and emerged frequently and in various forms. As one can read in the many reports written by the Fascist police, preserved in the central State Archives in Rome, by the early 1930s, the Italians were already becoming “significantly tired” of having to turn up for the rallies and meetings, and having continually to show their support for the regime. It “bored” them and made them “hostile”.¹⁸

National Socialism, on the other hand, from the very first days after the seizure of power, revealed an obsessive preoccupation with making sure that the Germans did not lose their “enthusiasm” for the new idea of Germany that it represented. Therefore, the use of organizational systems for electoral propaganda was much more radical. Hitler had always been convinced that “political enthusiasm” risked being diluted by “the gray daily routine” (Heiber 1962, 178), and this made him seek one success after the other, even in the electoral-plebiscitary arena, unscrupulously and imprudently exploiting the effects. For the *Führer* and for the Nazi propaganda apparatus, it was a question of not allowing “political lethargy to seep in”—that fearful disease that was always waiting to strike the German masses (Minuth 1983, 159) and cause them to “rest” on the *Reich*’s successes, and become slothful and indifferent; plebiscites ensured that the *Volk* would be summoned regularly to keep them on their toes.

18 ACS, PNF, *Situazione politica ed economica delle provincie*, b. 19, f. Roma, rapporto July 6, 1932.

Voting: The Electoral Performance

As regards the formal respect that was given to electoral freedom, the National Socialist regime, more than the Fascist one, was always very careful not to expose itself to criticism by the international press. For this reason, much effort was devoted to giving the international observer the impression of a perfectly functioning electoral machine and of great *serenity* during the voting period. Although the situation was in reality very different, with the coercive methods being ferocious in their restriction of individual freedom, this contributed greatly to the impression that Nazism was a regime *freely* supported by almost all the German people.

In both totalitarian systems, the external icons of democracy and of the right to vote were in any case present on the political scene, from the polling stations to the voting booths and ballot boxes. But the methods used—which were not a privation of the formal guarantee of the right to vote—to force voters to vote in the affirmative, to reveal the names of those who had not voted, and to check how the voter had voted, were very different, as were the methods of psychological and practical pressure brought to bear. In both regimes, “much publicity was given to the rumors that spoke of the way votes would be checked and controlled, and the consequences a negative vote would have for the voter” (Leonetti 1929, 49), and this was quite enough to make any violence unnecessary: “it was enough for someone to *believe* that the secrecy would be violated to frighten him to death” (Klemperer 2000, 45). As Rudolf Heberle, a German University Lecturer and coeval witness of the Nazi *Machtergreifung*, wrote in 1934 (Frei 2001, 221):

Here is an example of the type of intimidation suffered by political opponents. Before the plebiscite of November 1933, there was a rumor, which proved to be well-founded, that polling would be closely checked, and not only would voting be compulsory, as in fact happened, but that anyone who voted against the government would be found out. Naturally the government denied this and in effect nobody attempted to violate the ballot-box’s secrecy, as the high percentage of “no” votes showed, or the differences with respect to the referendum and the elections for the *Reichstag*. However, the *fear* that there might be *manipulations* induced many of my acquaintances, who were declared enemies of National Socialism, to vote *Ja* to the plebiscite and to Hitler at the elections.

The very ballot papers used for the Nazi plebiscites were in themselves potent propaganda, a psychological pressure on the *voters* and a form of

subtle coercion. In the ballot paper for the *Anschluss*, for example, the space for the cross next to *Ja*—with which every “good Austrian” could sanction the *Wiedervereinigung Österreichs mit dem Deutschen Reich*, which in actual fact had already taken place—was over double the size of the one next to *Nein*.¹⁹ Graphics were therefore used to serve ideology, and the results gained were a cascade of positive votes. In order not to make the oppositional votes obvious in the ballot boxes, in the elections for the *Reichstag* of November 1933, called at the same time as the plebiscite, like the election-plebiscite of March 1936, the German people were confronted with a ballot paper that only had a space for the *Ja* vote, which meant that anyone who wanted to vote *Nein* had to spoil the ballot paper. Such practices had already been used by Fascism. For the two plebiscites, the affirmative ballot papers were printed in the colors of the Italian flag, a reminder of the patriotic duty to vote favorably, while the negative ballot papers were dull, flimsy and black-and-white. Besides, the voter who posted the ballot paper²⁰ in the slatted, and therefore transparent, ballot box would be almost certain that his choice would be noted by the officials and ever-present Party members at the polling station by means of a complicated mechanism, which has been revealed by recent research on new sources (Dal Lago 1999, 136–39). As for those who tried not to vote at all, the Fascist Party had created a system whereby the electorate was divided into small groups, according to residence, each of which had a leader, the aim of which was to ensure that everyone voted.

From such examples, it is clear that, for both regimes, one of the most important aims of the people’s vote was to convey at home and abroad the feeling of complete unity between governors and the governed.

However, if we take a look behind this granite-like image—“Achieve one hundred per cent!” was the order telegraphed to the Fascist provincial secretaries in 1929 (Fimiani 2002, 191)—we can see that the reality was much more variegated than the two regimes would have admitted. Pockets of non-conformity still managed to exist, making the *consensus* less widespread than it officially appeared to be. In Italy in 1929 (despite the impact of the years since 1922: the repressive control, the lack of secrecy surrounding ballots), popular legitimization of the regime revealed shady areas

19 DHM: www.dhm.de/lemo/objekte/pict/98001899/index.html; IZG: www.dade.at/-gug-bildein/museum4.htm (“Reunification of Austria with the German Reich”).

20 See ASMIL (“Documentario Luce” No M136, March 1929, Abruzzo); De Felice (2001, cd II, “I plebisciti”).

of opposition to the logic of the plebiscite.²¹ Over ten per cent of those on the electoral roll—over a million Italians—did not vote. There were approximately 145,000 ballot papers cast that were either *No* votes, or were spoiled, blank or contested (figures often underestimated in historiographical interpretations).²² There was a concentration of *No* votes in the central northern area of Italy, which demonstrates the existence of Italians who did not fall easily into line in areas where political awareness was historically greater. There were almost three million non-aligned Italians who were denied the right to vote due to the drastic revision of the electoral roll.²³ Women were denied the suffrage, despite the repeated promises to grant them the vote. All this meant that no more than one Italian out of every five expressed “unanimous consensus” with the single list and with Fascist politics as a whole. Indeed, while it is true that the second and final plebiscitary consultation, in 1934, simply increased formal popular support for Fascism, it was received almost with indifference by the majority of Italians; and, in fact, by the Fascists, too, who by now had revealed a “weary disillusionment [with] the mortification of politics as a free activity” (Aquarone 1995, 167–68).

In Nazi Germany, despite the harsher totalitarian set-up, it was precisely some of the electoral results that revealed signs of timid non-conformity. For example, in the plebiscite and in the election of November 1933, almost eleven per cent of Germans entitled to vote expressed their dissent through not voting (almost two million), through voting *Nein*, through posting a blank ballot paper, or through spoiling the ballot. (The NSDAP list attracted less consensus than that concerning the plebiscitary issue, linked as it was to nationalistic themes of wider appeal). The 1934 plebiscite, moreover, had “a relatively unsatisfactory outcome [...] from a Nazi perspective” (Kershaw 2001, 68–9). These forms of dissent totaled almost 16 per cent (that is, over seven million Germans), causing great

21 Archive sources in ACS, MI, *DGPS*, *DAGR*, Category F1, file 23.1, 238; G1, f. 535.1 (leaflets); Section II, 1929, envelope 50 “Elezioni plebiscito”; c. 2, e. 51 (anti-fascist leaflets); S. II, c. 2, e. 5, “Propaganda per il no”; S. II, 1929, c. 2, e. 5, “Movimento sovversivo antifascista”. The best-documented communist publication on the repressive atmosphere of the first Fascist plebiscite is Leonetti (1929).

22 ACS, MI, *DGPS*, *DAGR*, S. II, 1929, c. 2, e. 51.

23 Camera dei Deputati (1929, 156): there was a 25 per cent reduction, from the 12,424,183 voters in the 1924 polls to 9,460,727. According to Ballini (1988, 215, 224) and Dal Lago (1999, 19–20), the reduction was certainly huge, but not so marked, with approximately two and a half million electors.

consternation within the Party. This probably occurred because Hindenburg's death made a definite break, unhampered by constitutional scruples, with the old Wilhelm-style, nineteenth-century Germany. As Victor Klemperer (2000, 90–1) wrote in his diary in the fear of future tragedies, that dawn of non-unanimity

meant much more, from an ethical point of view, than a mere ninth of the electorate. It took courage and conscience. The electors were dazzled and intimidated by the slogans and Party-spirit. One third voted *Ja* out of fear, a third out of drunkenness, and another third out of fear and drunkenness. [...] We voted *Nein* out of desperation in the end, but not without fear. However, despite his moral defeat, Hitler is the unchallenged winner, and I can see no end to it.

Abbreviations

ACS: Archivio centrale dello Stato, Rome.

ASL: Archiv der Stadt, Linz.

ASMIL: Archivio storico mediateca, Istituto Luce, Rome.

DAGR: Direzione Affari Generali e Riservati.

DGPS: Direzione Generale di Pubblica Sicurezza.

DHM: Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlin.

GPA: German Propaganda Archive, Calvin College, Michigan, USA.

IZG: Institut für Zeitgeschichte, Vienna.

MI: Ministero dell'Interno.

NSDAP: Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei.

PNF: Partito Nazionale Fascista.

RGB: Reichsgesetzblatt.

Bibliography

Amendola, Eva P., and Pasquale Iaccio (eds.). (1999). *Storia fotografica della società italiana. Gli anni del regime 1925–1939*. Rome: Editori Riuniti.

Aquarone, Alberto (1995). *L'organizzazione dello Stato totalitario*. Turin: Einaudi.

Ballini, Pier Luigi (1988). *Le elezioni nella storia d'Italia dall'Unità al fascismo*. Bologna: il Mulino.

Bracher, Karl Dietrich (1960). *Stufen der Machtergreifung*. Frankfurt: Ullstein.

- (1969). *Die deutsche Diktatur. Entstehung, Struktur, Folgen des Nationalsozialismus*. Cologne-Berlin: Kiepenheuer & Witsch.
- Camera dei deputati (1929). *La legislazione fascista. Legislatura XXVII: 1922–1928*. Vol. I. Rome, Tipografia della Camera dei Deputati.
- Corni, Gustavo (2010). Il nazionalsocialismo: una “dittatura plebiscitaria”? In Enzo Fimiani (ed.). *Vox populi? Pratiche plebiscitarie in Francia, Italia, Germania (secoli XVIII–XX)*, 179–202. Bologna: Clueb.
- Dal Lago, Paola (1999). *Verso il regime totalitario: il plebiscito fascista del 1929*. Padova: Cleup.
- (2005). Elezioni; Plebiscito. In Victoria De Grazia and Sergio Luzzatto (eds.). *Dizionario del fascismo*. 2 vols. 462–65; 391–93. Turin: Einaudi.
- De Felice, Renzo (2001). *Mussolini. Edizione multimediale in quattro cd-rom*. Turin: Einaudi.
- Fimiani, Enzo (2002). “Raggiungi Cento per Cento!”: mobilitazione, adesione, coercizione nei plebisciti fascisti (1929–1934). In Pier Luigi Ballini and Maurizio Ridolfi (eds.). *Storia delle campagne elettorali in Italia*, 168–92. Milan: Bruno Mondadori.
- (2009). I diari di Victor Klemperer. Propaganda e mobilitazione politica, elezioni e plebisciti nella Germania nazionalsocialista (1933–1938). *Studi Storici*, 50, 5–43.
- (ed.). (2010). *Vox populi? Pratiche plebiscitarie in Francia, Italia, Germania (secoli XVIII–XX)*. Bologna: Clueb.
- Foa, Vittorio (1996). *Questo Novecento*. Turin: Einaudi.
- Frank, Hans (1953). *Im Angesicht des Galgens*. Munich-Gräfelfing: Beck.
- Frei, Norbert (2001). *Der Führerstaat. Nationalsozialistische Herrschaft 1933 bis 1945*. Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuchverlag.
- Galeotti, Carlo (1999). *Credere obbedire combattere. I catechismi del fascismo*. Rome: StampaAlternativa.
- Gellately, Robert (2002). *Backing Hitler. Consent & Coercion in Nazi Germany*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Heiber, Helmut (ed.). (1962). *Hitlers Lagebesprechungen. Die Protokollfragmente seiner militärischen Konferenzen 1942–1945*. Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt.
- Hitler, Adolf (1965). *Tischgespräche im Führerhauptquartier 1941–1942*. Ed. Henry Picker. Stuttgart: Seewald.
- Hoffmann, Heinrich (1955). *Hitler was my Friend*. London: Burke.
- Jung, Otmar (1995). *Plebiscit und Diktatur: die Volksabstimmungen der Nationalsozialisten. Die Fälle “Austritt aus dem Völkerbund” (1933), “Staatsüberhaupt” (1934) und “Anschluß Österreichs” (1938)*. Tübingen: Mohr.
- (1998). Wahlen und Abstimmungen im Dritten Reich, 1933–1938. In Eckard Jesse and Konrad Löw (eds.). *Wahlen in Deutschland*, 69–97. Berlin: Duncker & Humblot.
- Jünger, Ernst (1933). *Der Arbeiter. Herrschaft und Dienst*. Hamburg: Hanseatische Verlagsanstalt.

- Kershaw, Ian (1991). *Hitler*. London: Longman.
- (2001). *The "Hitler Myth". Image and Reality in the Third Reich*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Klemperer, Victor (2000). *Testimoniare fino all'ultimo. Diari 1933–1945*. Eds. Anna Ruchat and Paolo Quadrelli. Milan: Mondadori.
- Kotze, Hildegard von, and Helmut Krausnick (1966). "Es spricht der Führer". *7 exemplarische Hitler-Reden*. Gütersloh: Bertelsmann.
- Leonetti, Alfonso [Saraceno, Guido] (1929). "No". *Come si è votato il 24 marzo in Italia. (Fatti e documenti sul Plebiscito fascista)*. Paris: Edizioni italiane di cultura sociale.
- Maraviglia, Maurizio (1929). Dopo il plebiscito. In *Momenti di vita italiana*, 236–41. Rome: Pinciana.
- Minuth, Karl-Heinz (ed.). (1983). *Akten der Reichskanzlei. Regierung Hitler 1933–1938*. Vols. I/1, I/2. Boppard am Rhein: Boldt.
- Mussolini, Benito (1923). Forza e consenso. *Gerarchia*, 2, 802–03.
- (1957). La diana del nuovo tempo. In *Opera omnia*. Vol. XXIII, 267–73. Florence: La Fenice.
- Omland, Frank (2006). "Du wählst mi nich Hitler!". *Reichstagswahlen und Volksabstimmungen in Schleswig-Holstein 1933–1938*. Hamburg: Books on demand.
- Pavone, Claudio (1996). Appunti sul principio plebiscitario. In Giuseppe Carbone (ed.). *La virtù del politico*, 151–81. Venice: Marsilio.
- Poetzsch-Heffter, Fritz, Carl-Hermann Ule, and Carl Darnedde (1935). Vom Deutschen Staatsleben (30. Januar bis 31. Dezember 1933). *Jahrbuch des öffentlichen Rechts*, 22, 1–272.
- Pombeni, Paolo (1997). Typologie des populismes en Europe (19^e–20^e siècles). *Vingtième siècle*, 56, 48–76.
- Rapone, Leonardo (2010). Un plebiscitarismo riluttante. I plebisciti nella cultura politica e nella prassi del fascismo italiano. In Enzo Fimiani (ed.). *Vox populi? Pratiche plebiscitarie in Francia, Italia, Germania (secoli XVIII–XX)*, 145–77. Bologna: Clueb.
- Rocco, Alfredo (1928). *Atti Parlamentari, Camera dei Deputati, Documenti parlamentari, XXVII Legislatura, sessione 1924–1928, Disegni di Legge-Relazioni, Relazione Alfredo Rocco*, 27 febbraio.
- Santomassimo, Gianpasquale (ed.). (2003). *La notte della democrazia italiana. Dal regime fascista al governo Berlusconi*. Milan: il Saggiatore.
- Schmitt, Carl (1935). Stato, movimento, popolo. Le tre membra dell'unità politica. In Delio Cantimori (ed.). *Principii politici del nazionalsocialismo. Scritti scelti*, 173–231. Florence: Sansoni.
- Silva, Umberto (1973). *Ideologia e arte del fascismo*. Milan: Mazzotta.
- Ungari, Paolo (1963). *Alfredo Rocco e l'ideologia giuridica del fascismo*. Brescia: Morcelliana.

“Germany Totally National Socialist”— National Socialist *Reichstag* Elections and Plebiscites, 1933–1938: The Example of Schleswig-Holstein

Frank Omland

On November 12, 1933, the first two ballots of the Nazi dictatorship were held. Voters were asked both to elect a new National Socialist single-party parliament and to approve Germany’s withdrawal from the League of Nations. On the following day, the *Kieler Zeitung*, a pro-Nazi newspaper, ran the headline: “The miracle of November 12. Germany totally National Socialist”. And its chief editor and Party member, Max Gröters, commented:

A miracle really has happened. The millions who voted yesterday in what was a record turnout—a turnout, indeed, unprecedented in German history—made this miracle possible: Marxism and Bolshevism have disappeared from Germany. The forces of evil that brought about Germany’s downfall have been destroyed; and it was the sheer force of National Socialism in both principle and practice that dealt them their death blow. It is only when we bear in mind that yesterday’s ballot was secret, and that every single German citizen could vote as he wished, that the true scale of the miracle becomes clear; it is the miracle of unanimous faith in the aims and politics of Adolf Hitler [...] Germany has become a single-party state, an organism constructed and led according to wholly National Socialist principles.¹

This comment was not mere propaganda. Although the results of the first two ballots in the single-party state may not have been a “miracle” in the strict sense, the fact that nearly 90 per cent of those entitled to vote had registered their support for the Party took the National Socialists by surprise. What made the result even more credible to those in power and to their supporters was that the ballot had supposedly been secret—something that did not fail to impress their opponents, too. Although not all of

¹ *Kieler Zeitung*, November 13, 1933. “The miracle of 12 November: Germany totally National Socialist”.

Germany had become “totally National Socialist”, what was apparent to both sides was that the regime’s opponents had been marginalized.

Many of the questions concerning ballots in dictatorships are raised by this episode: What do people do when they have to vote in a dictatorship? Why and for what purpose does a regime stage elections, when it does not wish to give people a choice? How are the results of such ballots interpreted by those in power and by the persecuted opposition? And can we draw conclusions on the nature of society in a dictatorship from what happened in the elections and from the election results?.

Possible answers to these questions can be found in numerous sources: election statistics, NSDAP reports, administrative files, files belonging to the apparatus of persecution, and documents from the illegal workers’ movement (Omland 2006a, 13–15, 243–44).² These sources enable us to reconstruct the election campaigns and to show what room for maneuver those entitled to vote really had. Moreover, by analyzing the election results, we can make judgments concerning the extent to which National Socialism was embedded within the population as a whole. When brought together, these sources enable us to answer the question: Who voted where and how against or for the Nazi regime, and which conditions encouraged or discouraged voting behavior either way?

My focus is on the region of Schleswig-Holstein, which had already been an early NSDAP stronghold during the Weimar Republic. From 1928 onwards, this Prussian province in Northern Germany was one of the most important regions in the Party’s ascent, which can be seen not only in the Party’s growing membership, but also in their election successes. Between 1928 and 1933, the Party generally won over 10 per cent more of the votes in Schleswig-Holstein than in the other regions of Prussia and the German *Reich*.³ It was only in the *Reichstag* election of March 5, 1933 (47.1 per cent in Schleswig-Holstein compared to 38.7 per cent as a national average) that Schleswig-Holstein was toppled from its position of ascendancy by five other constituencies, but it nonetheless remained a stronghold for the Party.⁴ What is all the more remarkable, then, is that, in

2 For literature and statistics, see also my database of election statistics at www.akens.org/akens/texte/diverses/wahldaten/index.html (accessed on January 2, 2011).

3 Percentage according to number of those entitled to vote rather than according to number of valid votes cast. Distortions due to electoral participation are thereby avoided.

4 *Reichstag* election September 14, 1930: 22.1 per cent (German *Reich* 14.9 per cent); *Landtag* election April 24, 1932: 43.3 per cent (Prussia: 29.6 per cent); *Reichstag* election

the controlled elections under the National Socialists, Schleswig-Holstein would no longer be a Party stronghold. This raises further questions: could the electorate vote more freely in Schleswig-Holstein than elsewhere? Or were the National Socialist leaders so sure of victory here that they exerted less pressure and social control? Or was there perhaps less vote-rigging here than elsewhere? I will pursue these and further questions regarding pseudo-elections in relation to Schleswig-Holstein and the German Reich.

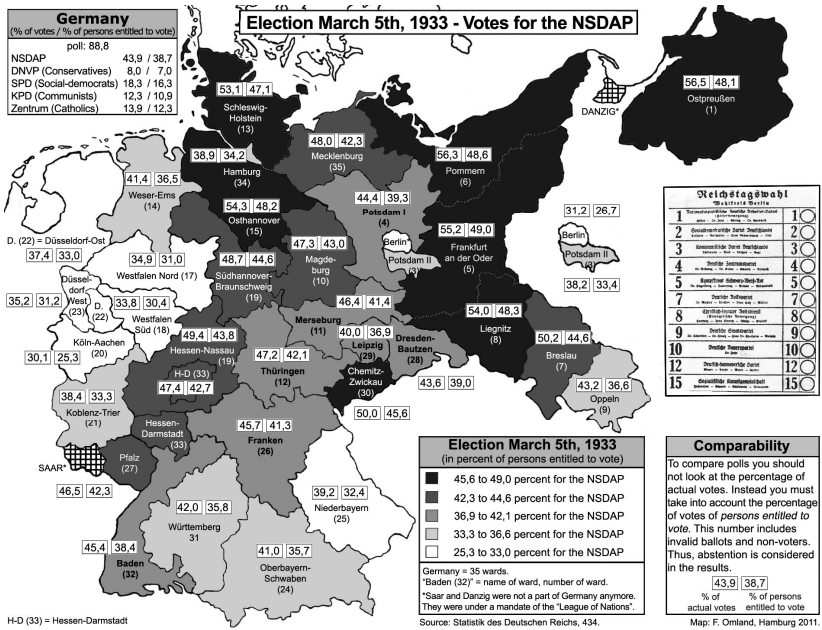


Figure 1: Election March 5, 1933: Votes for the NSDAP (Map: Frank Omland, Hamburg 2011).

July 31, 1932: 44.3 per cent (= 51 per cent of the valid votes cast) compared to 31.1 per cent; Reichstag election November 6, 1932: 38.4 per cent compared to 26.5 per cent; Reichstag election March 5, 1933: Frankfurt/Oder (49 per cent), Pommern (48.6 per cent), Liegnitz (48.3 per cent), East Hanover (49 per cent), East Prussia (48.1 per cent).

The Legality and Reality of “Voting Without Choice”

After the last multi-party *Reichstag* election of March 5, 1933, the Nazi regime, as part of the process of *Gleichschaltung*, ensured that the *Länder* parliaments were reconstituted according to the *Reichstag* election result, with the seats won by the KPD being discounted. The exclusion of the workers’ parties and the self-dissolution of the middle-class parties, together with the ban in July 1933 on the formation of new parties, led to the pseudo-legal single-party state (Wendt 1995, 111).⁵ In November 1933, the parliaments of the different *Länder* were dissolved without new elections and, at the end of January 1934, their rights of sovereignty were transferred to the *Reich*. Consequently, no elections took place during the Nazi period either at the level of the *Land* or the *Gemeinde*.⁶ Therefore, the only opportunity left open to the electorate to express their support for, or opposition to, the NSDAP’s single-party state was to vote at the national level. The first *Reichstag* elections and a plebiscite (on the withdrawal from the League of Nations) took place on November 12, 1933. There was another plebiscite on August 19, 1934 (on Hitler’s presidency of the *Reich*) and the *Reichstag* election on March 29, 1936 (to legitimize the invasion of the de-militarized *Rheinland*). Finally, there was the “plebiscite and election for *Großdeutschland*’s *Reichstag*” on April 10, 1938 (the annexation of Austria) and the additional election for the *Reichstag* in *Sudetendeutschland* on December 4, 1938 (Jung 1995, 109; Hubert 1992, 149).⁷

Each of these ballots was conducted at short notice and for purely tactical reasons, which can be seen not only in the fact that the legislative period of the *Reichstag* was not observed, but also in the election dates chosen and the subjects of the plebiscites. The purpose, rather, was to mobilize the population to support the German national interest at times of self-inflicted foreign and domestic political crises, and to demonstrate to the outside world that the German *Volke* was fully behind its government. The surprisingly good results for the National Socialists in November 1933 had precisely this effect; as did the decline in support for the regime in August 1934, after which Hitler’s stated intention to hold plebiscites annu-

5 Reichsgesetzblatt (I, 1933, 153); *ibid.* (I, 1933, 173). Reichsgesetzesblatt (I, 1933, 479).

6 Reichsgesetzblatt (I, 1934, 75).

7 Reichsgesetzblatt (I, 1933, 729); *Reichskanzlei* files (1983, 906)—Reichsgesetzesblatt (I, 1934, 747, 751). Reichsgesetzblatt (I, 1936, 133, 134). Reichsgesetzblatt (I, 1938, 237, 249)—Reichsgesetzblatt (I, 1938, 1636, 1567).

ally was quietly dropped (Jung 1995, 58; Omland 2006a, 126–27). After that, the manipulation of ballots reached its peak in 1936 and 1938: the results that were announced, with 97 per cent of the electorate supporting the regime, lacked credibility both at home and abroad, and were even regarded with some skepticism by the Party's own supporters (Omland 2006a, 152, 185).

In the first ballots, the National Socialists adhered to the formal and legal procedures established during the Weimar Republic to maintain the illusion that the polls were free. This gave the regime a certain amount of credibility and made the dictatorial nature of the plebiscites and elections less obvious to the public. The freer these ballots seemed to be, the greater would be the political gain when the electorate delivered high levels of support for the Party.

On the other hand, though, the electoral law formally remained by and large unchanged between 1933 and 1938. To ensure a maximum turnout the regime simply adhered to the concept of “the right to vote is the duty to vote”, which had been established by the parties of the Weimar Republic. In November 1933 the regime aggressively called to the polls with the slogan: “Each and every member of the *Volke* has a duty to vote, since the right to vote is the duty to vote! Staying at home is not an option!”⁸ The *Wahlschleppdienste*, already familiar to all from the Weimar Republic, forcibly mobilized the electorate to vote: they called on those who had not yet voted and compelled them to do so. This made the right to vote in effect a duty to vote, and led to the very high results lacking credibility. It was difficult for the regime to get across either to its own supporters or to anyone else that every voter had gone to the polls and that no opposition had been voiced (Deutschland-Berichte 1936, 218, 319, 449; *ibid.* 1938, 426–28).

In general, most of the laws and administrative regulations of the Weimar Republic stayed in place when the Nazis staged their ballots in 1933 and 1934, and also the new *plebiscite law* merely simplified the existing procedures (Schwieger 2005, 203–14; Jung 1995, 21, 31–4).⁹ All this was designed to maintain the appearance of normality: electoral registers were published, those entitled to vote got a polling card, what went on at polling stations was monitored carefully by election committees, and voters cast their votes secretly in polling booths (Omland 2006a, 36, 52–4). Moreover,

8 *Marner Zeitung*, May 19, 1928; *Allonaer Nachrichten*, November 6 and 8, 1933.

9 Reichsgesetzblatt (I, 1933, 479).

voters could be issued with a *Stimmschein* (absentee ballot), which enabled them to vote outside their own constituency or even to avoid voting without being monitored. For this reason, those voters with a *Stimmschein* were suspected by the *Gauleitung* of being potential non-voters: “In order to prevent Marxist and other politically unreliable elements from using a *Stimmschein* to avoid voting, the *Ortsgruppenleiter* must immediately contact local police officials and suggest that *Stimmscheine* are only issued in the most urgent cases and only to persons who are politically reliable”.¹⁰

Initially, it was even more important to the *Reichsinnenminister* Frick to have a high turnout in elections than to exclude certain groups of people from the ballot. It was only in 1936, once the Nazis had consolidated their power, that those defined as Jewish were deprived of their franchise (Hubert 1992, 241, 248; Omland 2006a, 130–32).¹¹ To maintain the appearance of a legal procedure, even political enemies, who were imprisoned in concentration camps as *Schutzhäftlinge*, were allowed to vote as late as 1936—although this concession gave the Nazi administration some headache: the civil servant responsible for the elections in Glückstadt concentration camp, for example, commented after the polls in November 1933: “The election result shows that approximately one third of all *Schutzhäftlinge* have still not understood, or are unwilling to understand, what today has been about. Unfortunately, we are not able to identify the names of those who are unable to learn”.¹²

Nevertheless, from 1936, the Minister of the Interior, Frick, was unable to defend his formal legal positions within the Party hierarchy either against Goebbels, the propaganda minister responsible for election campaigns, or against Himmler, the leader of the SS. The latter, in 1938, decided without any legal basis to exclude political *Schutzhäftlinge* from elections, and thereby denied them the opportunity to express their dissent towards the regime. In practice already after November 1933 the Nazi regime gave less and less consideration to their propaganda assertion that the ballots were free and adhered less and less to the proper formal procedures (Hubert 1992, 255–57; Omland 2006a, 164).

10 Kreisarchiv Schleswig-Flensburg 9 /26. NSDAP *Ortsgruppe* Schleswig to the Schleswig Magistrate, November 6, 1933.

11 Bundesarchiv Berlin R 1501 /5350, page 63. Reichsgesetzblatt (I, 1936, 133).

12 24 or 26 of the 70 prisoners voted against the Nazi regime. Landesarchiv Schleswig-Holstein 309 / 22574. Source reproduced in Omland (2006a, 58).

The Election Campaigns of a *Volksgemeinschaftspartei* and its Myth of the *Führer*

For the NSDAP, what was important in ballots was mobilizing the electorate. To achieve this, they made use in their propaganda of all the mass media available to them and ran election campaigns that were very modern for the time. These campaigns comprised lectures for NSDAP members, mass gatherings and public parades, as well as visual propaganda, photo montages and posters. Electoral advertising was ever-present in the press, in the cinema, on the radio, in employees' meetings, and in schools. For shopkeepers it was obligatory to decorate their stores, for business associations to call for support for the regime, for newspapers to proclaim the regime's apparent successes and their devotion to the *Führer*. In addition, there were radio addresses by members of the regime and the *Gauleiter*, and specially-made propaganda films about current events in the world. As part of the attempt to guide the press, the ministry of propaganda prescribed not only *what* should be published in the newspapers, but also *where* and *how*. In 1933 and 1934, there still were some deviations from these prescriptions, but in 1936 and 1938 the instructions to the press had become firmly established (Bohrmann and Toepser-Ziegert 1984). What is apparent is that the Party used the modes of propaganda that they had already used in the *Weimar Republik*, and added their own modes, which were available to them as the single power in a single-party state (Paul 1990; Reichel 2006, 139, 198; Omland 2006a, 42–52, 93–100, 132–41, 166–73).

The Hitler regime used the election campaigns to drive forward the formation of the *Volksgemeinschaft*, and as a means of mobilizing its own members and supporters. Their purpose was to promote a sense of solidarity and to work meaningfully for those who understood the Party as a *movement*. The propaganda activities also gave the SA-Party militia, which during the *Weimar Republik* had violently fought against political competitors from the left, a new role within the new single-party state.

As a party that pretended to represent the German people as a whole, the *Volksgemeinschaftspartei* NSDAP sought to motivate every member of the electorate to vote “yes” either of their own free will, or through social pressure, or through force. To this end, the Party gave itself two to four weeks' campaign time before every election and plebiscite between 1933 and 1938. Only in August 1934, when, after the death of Hindenburg, Hitler aimed for the *Reichspräsident*-office, did the Nazi propaganda ma-

chine choose another strategy. Since the Party wanted to present itself as being “deeply saddened” by Hindenburg’s death, it largely abstained from mobilizing the masses through parades, public meetings and propaganda posters. Even gatherings with local political representatives were banned and *Gauleiter* Hinrich Lohse from Schleswig-Holstein merely gave a short radio address (Omland 2006a, 89–96; Wendt 1995, 123–25). After a week of national mourning, there was a little less than a week left for campaigning, which was mostly confined to newspaper articles. Moreover, only a few public appearances were made by the most prominent Party and SA leaders as well as by members of the government; in Kiel, for example, by Rudolf Heß. Nonetheless, the execution of the SA leadership a month ago and relatively widespread criticism regarding the unification of the presidential and *Reichskanzler* roles led in 1934 to a decline in public support for the regime. “Hitler’s attempt to benefit from Hindenburg’s charisma and to appear presidential” (Herbst 2010, 275–79) had suffered a setback. In the plebiscite of 1934, Hitler suffered a relative defeat, which the National Socialist leadership tried, in vain, to explain. *Reichspropagandaminister* Goebbels noted in his diary on August 22:

The election’s over. Foreign press so-so. Broadsheets, good. But our failure is still the main topic [...] Midday with the *Führer*. Many there. Discussed reasons for failure. Everyone looked to blame everyone else (Goebbels 1934, 475).¹³

As a consequence, from 1936 onwards, election campaigns became the sole responsibility of the *Reichspropagandaminister*. He organized the two subsequent election campaigns with great professionalism, since a decline in support for the Party could simply not be allowed to happen again.

Fundamentally, the NSDAP and the regime made the basis of every ballot the person of Adolf Hitler. What the electorate was led to believe was that they were no longer voting for or against a particular issue or the NSDAP, but for or against the *Führer* personally, and this was designed as an additional psychological block to voting against the regime. This was achieved through slogans such as “*Volksgenosse!* The *Führer* needs your vote! Don’t let him down: vote yes!”¹⁴ and through photomontages, reports and appeals in campaign speeches: “The world should hear what we think; the world should know what we believe: one *Volk*, one *Reich*, one

13 Goebbels (1934, 475). Compare Kershaw’s evaluation (1987, 68, 71).

14 *Norddeutsche Nachrichten*, November 11, 1933.

Führer".¹⁵ Banners, installations and enormous portraits of Hitler were omnipresent in the public space.

Each election campaign closed with a mass parade to a central place, the broadcasting of a speech by Hitler, a prayer of thanksgiving and, finally, an oath of loyalty to "*Führer, Volk and Vaterland*". This was all staged according to the concept of propaganda invented during the Weimar Republic and based on Hitler's charisma and the myth of the *Führer* (Herbst 2010, 260; Kershaw 1987, 25–31; 63, 68). "Undoubtedly the effect of the plebiscites staged in 1933, 1934, 1936 and 1938 [...] reflected genuine widespread approval and admiration for Hitler's accomplishments and persuaded waverers to fall in line", according to Ian Kershaw (Kershaw 1987, 258). Through basing the election campaigns on the personality of Adolf Hitler, the regime made every act of voting an act of acclamation for the *Führer*. In the election campaigns, Hitler was portrayed as the *Messiah* of the German people, and his politics aroused pseudo-religious expectations that every problem could be overcome (Omland 2006a, 46–50).

The Staging of the Ballots

The NSDAP consciously celebrated the Sunday ballot day as a public holiday for the *Volksgemeinschaft* (Omland 2006a; Reichel 2006, 262–82). The National Socialists' political performances were extraordinary events that were designed to transcend everyday routine and bring the German people into close contact with National Socialist ideology. "In a city, there are always days that stick out from the grayness of everyday life, that stay in the memory and that people can talk about for a long time. The eve of the election as well as the election day itself is one of those days that offer a glorious, illuminating finale to the election preparations".¹⁶ As a means of self-promotion for the Nazi regime, these days were designed "to express publicly the power and unity of state and Party and to compel the population to make gestures of homage and devotion" (Hörtnagel 1998, 134–35). The staging of the ballot was meant to win over the electorate to the side of the regime and, through a mixture of "wonderful show" and social con-

¹⁵ *Kieler Neueste Nachrichten*, April 7, 1938: "The whole world should hear what we believe in!"

¹⁶ *Flensburger Nachrichten*, November 13, 1933: "Flensburg is National Socialist".

trol, to influence those opposed to the regime to support the new state. The events of the ballot day followed the rituals of a political celebration:

In almost every street, there are enormous banners with core slogans pointing out the importance of November 12. Huge, imposing posters are urging people to vote tomorrow, and to vote “yes” in support of the regime. Countless ground-floor windows have small posters in them, and almost every shop window in Kiel has a poster calling on people to vote. In short, the election is dominating the city.¹⁷



Figure 2: *Queuing up to vote, Schwarzenbeck, Schleswig-Holstein, November 12, 1933*
(Source: *Stadtarchiv Schwarzenbek*)

On Sunday morning, marching bands from the SA or the Hitler Youth paraded through the streets and woke up the population: “Get out of bed, and vote”.¹⁸ Open-air concerts made the day feel like a public holiday, while streets festooned in decorations and public installations served to create a positive atmosphere. The newspapers urged voters to go to the polling station early and long queues underlined the feeling of solidarity and the apparent unity of the *Volksgemeinschaft*.

¹⁷ KiZ, November 11, 1933: “Kiel under the spell of the *Führer*’s speech”.

¹⁸ StAAH 614-2/5 NSDAP, circular of the Altona *Kreisleitung* 1933-1939, 1941. Circular Nr. 59/34, August 14, 1934.—HC August 20, 1934: “Almost 27,000 people vote in Neumünster”.

People marching in groups to the polling stations—for example, in 1938, the enfranchised Austrians living in the German *Reich*—intensified the pressure to vote, and made the *Volksgemeinschaft* appear unified. “Every polling station was decorated very carefully. Against a background of dark green leaves, a picture of our *Volkskanzler* looks down at the voters with a warning gaze”, according to the *Oldesloer Landboten* in 1933.¹⁹ The procedures in the polling station were similar to those during the Weimar Republic. The *Hamburger Tageblatt* described what happened in November 1933:

There’s a lively atmosphere in the morning at the polling stations, with all the men there working busily. The first handing out the ballot paper with the envelope, the second checking the brown card after the vote has been cast, the third looking up and calling out the number in the electoral register, the fourth supervising people putting their envelope in the ballot box, and the fifth handing out a pin with the word “yes” on.²⁰

And the *Holsteinische Courier* in Neumünster wrote: “On the way to the polling booth, during the time actually spent in the booth, and on the way from the booth to the ballot box—this is where the voter had to be left to himself. The secrecy of the ballot—that simply had to be adhered to”.²¹ The impression of a *free* election had to be maintained in 1933 at all costs. “Every act of harassment, especially in front of a polling station, is to be prevented by all measures available to the police [...] The result of the ballot must not be affected negatively by cases of “election terror”, which could be used as anti-German propaganda”, according to *Reichsinnenminister* Frick.²² This is what he, as the Party’s election organizer, attempted to press home to the NSDAP:

Cases have come to light in which NSDAP officials (*Kreisleiter*, *Ortsgruppenleiter*, etc.) have tried to make election committees behave illegally in how they run their election [...] I therefore expressly forbid any NSDAP official to interfere in the election process in a way that could be construed as negatively affecting the right to a secret vote or the freedom to vote or as an unlawful act, and I make the *Gauleiter* personally responsible for ensuring that such cases do not occur in their *Gau*.²³

19 *OL*, November 13, 1933: “Plebiscite and *Reichstag* election”.

20 *HAT*, November 13, 1933: “The Sunday election day in Hamburg”.

21 *HC*, November 13, 1933: “Neumünster declares its support for the *Führer*”.

22 LAS 309 / 22574, government decree from November 3, 1933 on the “safeguarding of the election and plebiscite on November 12, 1933”.

23 BarchB R 1501 / 125196, page 282. Letter dated November 7, 1933 to the *Gauleitungen*.

After voting, voters were given a badge to wear, and this increased the social pressure on non-voters, who were not able to display the pin. The only exception was the plebiscite of 1934, when the pin was replaced by a written note of confirmation. Some of the population gathered in front of newspaper display windows to find out the interim results, while others met in pubs and assembly halls to listen to radio broadcasts.



Figure 3: Hamburg, November 1933 (Source: Freie und Hansestadt Hamburg, Kulturbehörde, Denkmalschutzamt, Bildarchiv)

Deceiving the Voter, Breaking the Secret ballot, Rigging the Vote

It was not enough for the regime simply to mobilize the population on election day and to have the electorate register their approval, real and apparent. Hence, the regime also always manipulated the results in its favor: in November 1933, for example, envelopes missing ballot papers were

counted as abstentions, whereas in March 1933 they had still been counted as invalid (Omland 2006a, 53–4, 72–3).²⁴ In 1936, Jews were excluded from elections, as were political *Schutzhäftlinge* in 1938. Also in 1936 vote-rigging became a regular practice:

A ballot paper is not invalid [...] because it has not been filled in. Now that the *Volk* has absorbed the ideas of National Socialism to the point where the replacement of the multi-party system with the single-party state is taken for granted, the ballot paper does not need to be filled out for it to be valid.

In other words, the vote of those who did not put a cross on the ballot paper should not be counted as “no” or “invalid”, but as “yes”. This was an official endorsement of vote-rigging, since there were no legal basis for it and the electorate was not supposed to find out about it: “This should not be announced publicly, so as to avoid spreading uncertainty amongst the electorate regarding the method of casting a vote”.²⁵ By 1936 at the latest, the NSDAP occupied all positions in polling stations, and the counting of votes gradually took place in complete secrecy.

This enabled the Party not only to rig the vote but also, through their access to electoral registers and lists of those who had already voted, to identify and intimidate those who might boycott the election. Rumors that non-voters could be identified through electoral registers, fear of being denounced as a non-voter, and open repression from Nazi-activists usually ensured high election turnouts: the SA’s *Wahlschleppdienst* called on “tardy” voters in the afternoon and forced them to go to the polling station, and there is evidence that in 1938 in Reinbek a large crowd shouting “Hang them!” marched humiliated non-voters to the town hall (Omland 2006a, 179). At the same time, voters could not be sure that the secrecy of ballot was guaranteed. In Luhnstedt, for instance, a small village in the district of Rendsburg, the electoral committee sought to identify possible opponents by giving them marked ballot papers (Omland 2006a, 103).²⁶

As a result of the vote-rigging in the 1936 *Reichstag* election, between two-thirds and three-quarters of all votes against the regime were dis-

²⁴ In Schleswig-Holstein, this made a difference of almost 15,000 votes (1.3 per cent of the number of those entitled to vote), whilst, in some polling stations in Kiel and Lübeck, this made a difference of 19 per cent or 28 per cent.

²⁵ BarchB, R 1501 / 5356, note from 27 March 1936.—LAS 309/22737. *Reichsinnenministerium* to Reg. SL, 27 March 1936.

²⁶ See the correspondence between the lawyer and the *Regierungspräsidium* in the Schleswig state archives 309 / 22738.

counted in Schleswig-Holstein; mainly by counting ballot papers without a cross as a “yes”-vote for the NSDAP. Taking this into account, the number of votes against the regime in 1936 was probably just as high as it was in 1934, which indicates some degree of continuity in non-conform voting behavior at least for the region of Schleswig-Holstein. It is not easy to determine whether these findings also apply to other parts of the *Reich* because comparable data are still lacking. All in all, social control grew from election to election both in front of and inside the polling station, and increased the pressure to vote “yes” to such an extent that at least from 1934 onwards there was no such thing as a *free* vote in the *Reich*.

Analysis of Election Results

It is worth looking more closely at the results of the ballots of 1933 and 1934, since it was still possible then to vote against the Nazi regime. By analyzing the election results at constituency and polling-station level, we can make clear the extent of deviant voting behavior at local level. Since I have produced detailed statistical analyses elsewhere, I will confine myself here to a few key findings (Omland 2006a).²⁷ My evaluation of election results is based on the number of those entitled to vote and not on the number of valid votes cast. Distortions due to electoral participation are thereby avoided. My analysis is based on the model suggested by Otmar Jung, which focuses on the election results that deviate most from the average in the *Reich*—both below and above the average (Jung 1995, 50–71, 120; Jung 1998, 85). The benefit of such an analysis is already apparent for 1933 and 1934 at the level of the *Reichstag* constituency,²⁸ and is even more evident at district and local level: Hamburg and Berlin deviate the most below the average in the *Reich* as a whole, by minus 10–11 per cent of votes on average.

27 For the results at local level in Schleswig-Holstein, see www.akens.org/akens/texte-diverses/wahldaten/index.html (accessed on January 2, 2011).

28 My own calculations according to statistics of the German *Reich* (1935, 8, 45-47); *ibid.* (1936, 37, 52ff.); *ibid.* (1939, 8, 56); statistical report on Hamburg (1934, 96); from Hamburg's economy and administration (1934, 138).

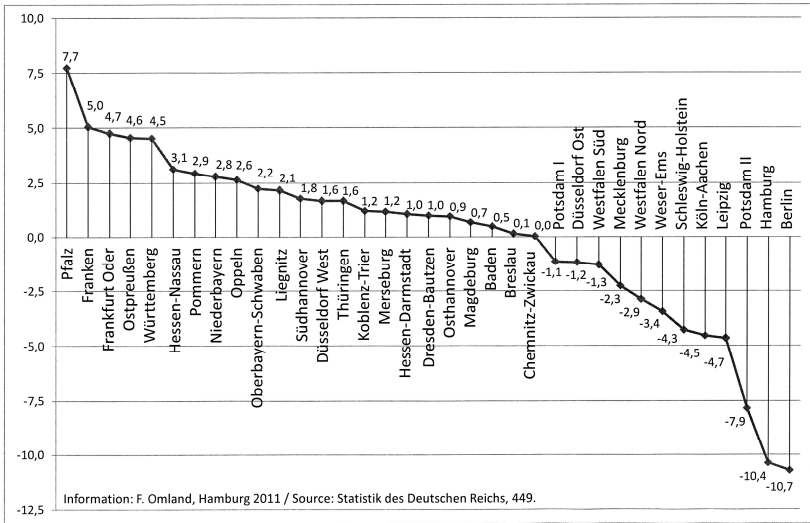
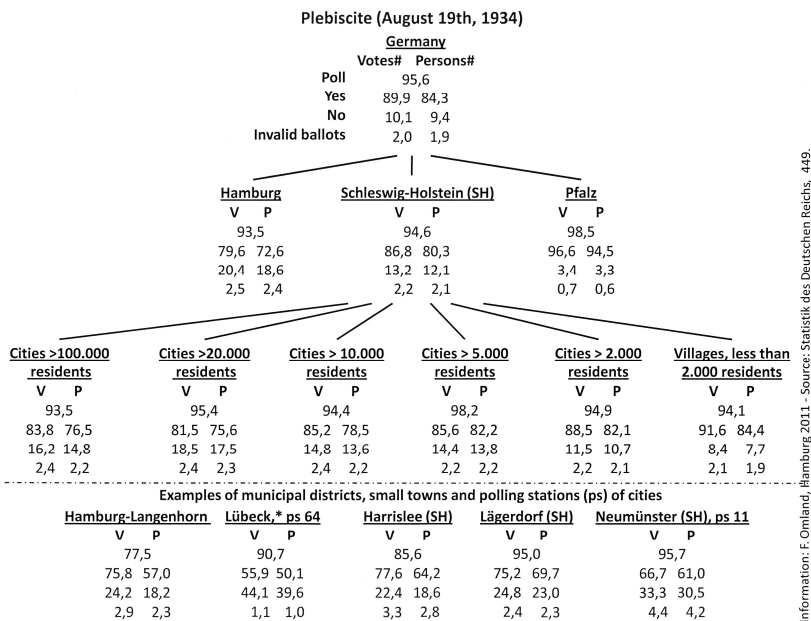


Figure 4: Results of positive votes above/below the average vote across Germany (Polls November 1933 and August 1934) (Source: Frank Omland, 2011)

Of the cities, Lübeck (-15 per cent), the former Communist stronghold of Lägerdorf (-13 per cent), and Harrislee near Flensburg (-19 per cent), which was dominated by a Danish minority, are worth mentioning. If we consider the results at the local and polling-station level, the extent of the dissent becomes even more apparent, as the following graph for 1934 shows. From 1933 to 1938, Schleswig-Holstein, after the cities of Hamburg, Berlin and the region around Potsdam, always remained one of the constituencies with relatively weak results for the Nazi regime. Similarly to other regions with a high level of dissent, the no-votes registered here came from former adherents of the Communists and Social democrats. An analysis of the election results confirms this correlation: this is the case for the two cities of Altona and (to a lesser extent) Kiel, for the predominantly industrial areas surrounding Hamburg and Lübeck, and also for Harrislee and Lägerdorf. In 1933, Lübeck delivered the worst election result of all for the NSDAP (71.6 per cent / 71.9 per cent) and was also one of the main areas of dissent in 1934 (Omland 2006a, 154; 2008, 57–88; 2007, 29–39; 2006b, 162–68). If we also consider the *Reichstag* election of March 1936, two assumptions are evident: first, it was easier to vote “no” in towns and cities. Second, there remained between 1933 and 1938 in certain

areas a hard albeit gradually diminishing core of voters voting “no” (Omland 2006a, 154–56; Jung 1998, 86).²⁹



Information: F. Omland, Hamburg 2011 - Source: Statistik des Deutschen Reichs, 449.

Figure 5: Plebiscite August 19, 1934 (Source: Frank Omland, Hamburg 2011)

Sören Thomsen has provided a model that enables us to measure the scale of vote-shifting, which also can be applied to the elections in Schleswig-Holstein for 1933 and 1934. (Thomsen 1987; Hänisch 2008, 31; Omland 2006a, 73–85).³⁰ According to these figures, between 80 and 90 per cent of those who voted against the National Socialists were former supporters of the two banned workers’ parties, the KPD and the SPD. This is confirmed when we evaluate the patterns of voting according to occupation: in predominantly agrarian areas, support for the National Socialists was at its highest, while in areas where the sectors of “industry and manufacturing”, or “service and trade”, were predominant, the support was at its lowest. The greatest rejection of the National Socialists came from the *workers*,

29 For the results in Germany, see the maps at www.akens.org/akens/texte/diverses-/wahldaten/index.html (accessed on January 2, 2011).

30 Schleswig-Holstein: 104 *Gemeinde* as well as rural areas with fewer than 2,000 inhabitants. I am indebted to Dr. Dirk Hänisch, Bonn, who calculated the shifts in voting.

both employed and unemployed, who in the rural areas in 1933 constituted almost the only notable opposition to the Nazis. They were responsible for 69 and 97 per cent of all the “no” votes respectively, and were usually followed by the (unemployed) *white-collar workers*.

These results indicate that the former Communist and Social Democratic voters in particular used the opportunity to express their dissent. The majority of opposition votes and abstentions in Schleswig-Holstein came from supporters of the KPD and, to a much lesser extent, from those of the SPD, as well as from the Danish minority in certain regions. To do so, they used every opportunity available to them: they boycotted the ballot, voted “no”, or spoiled the ballot paper.

The Electorate’s Room for Maneuver

Those who chose to vote “no” took a great personal risk. The peril that the secrecy of the ballot would be broken was real, as an example from the district of Stormarn demonstrates. Here, in 1936, two members of an election committee marked ballot papers, which prompted the local authorities to ask the NSDAP for a response:

According to *Kreisleiter* Friedrich, the KPD is particularly active in Billstedt and Oststeinbek. This will be the reason why the two men accused committed the act. They wanted to establish the identity of those likely to be hostile to the state. They did this, though, in a most unfortunate manner. [F.O.: This sentence is crossed out in the report]. Both undoubtedly meant well, however.³¹

Those voting “no” were taking a political and public stance against the Nazi regime. The election results at polling-station and local level, as well as the written sources for Schleswig-Holstein and its surrounding areas, give an impression of the preconditions for this kind of “dissident use” of non-choice elections: the electorate could best express their rejection of the Nazi regime on polling day in those areas where the apparatus of intimidation composed of the *Gestapo* and police was relatively weak, where the NSDAP had to struggle against a strong tradition of communist or social democratic voting, and where there was a relatively strong illegal

31 Stormarn district archives, B 130 (office of community supervision and elections) *Reichstag* elections 1936-1938 file.

resistance movement (Omland 2006a, 55–7). Established ideologies, social networks and an environment of opposition all encouraged, then, a potential “no” vote.

In Schleswig-Holstein, the electorate’s room for maneuver was still large enough in 1933 and 1934 to allow dissenting voters to express their disapproval in every ballot. They had to be prepared, though, for possible consequences: there was still the threat that non-voters would be identified, that the secrecy of the ballot would be broken, and that deviant behavior would be punished. Therefore, to vote “no”, to post an invalid ballot paper, or to abstain from voting at all, required great personal courage. Although it was only a small minority who expressed their dissent towards the Nazi regime, the *Volksgemeinschaft* that the National Socialists sought to establish could not be achieved in the face of such deviant behavior. According to Nazi ideology, Germany was “totally National Socialist” and every *Volksgenosse* had allegedly voted voluntarily for the regime. It was to achieve their aim of having no votes against them that the regime sought in 1936 and 1938 to conceal any deviation from a hundred per cent result. The election campaign organized by Goebbels, the social control exercised by the Party, and the vote-rigging instituted in 1936 by the *Reichsinnenministerium*, all contributed to the desired outcome of almost hundred per cent voting for the regime.

Conclusion

The Nazi dictatorship claimed to be a superior alternative to parliamentary democracy. An article published in 1934 in the Kiel Party newspaper, began with the question, “Hitler—democrat or dictator?” The author first distinguished Hitler from the Italian dictator Mussolini, then denounced “French-Jewish” parliamentary democracy, and finally claimed:

Only Germany has a real democracy [...] The fact that we do not have a dictatorship in Germany is down to the *Führer* Adolf Hitler [...] And again the *Führer* proves himself to be a man of the people, as someone who wants to make sure that the state and the way that it is led are in accordance with the *Volk* as a whole.

For instance, he is now calling his people to the ballot box. Again the *Volke* should speak and voice their real opinion, without being influenced by state and Party.³²

The case of Schleswig-Holstein, as well as findings from other regions and the *Reich*, makes very clear that this pretension had nothing to do with the spirit, standards, and procedures of free elections held in a liberal democracy. The aim of those in power remained: “Germany totally National Socialist”. Only the first elections after the Nazi’s seizure of power were relatively free and still left—despite a non-choice single party list—some opportunities to express opposition to the dictatorship through voting “no”, through submitting invalid ballot papers, or through abstaining. As the statistics show, the courageous opponents came, apart from a few isolated cases, from KPD and SPD backgrounds, while everybody else, including supporters of the catholic *Zentrum* Party, were no longer prepared to express their dissent in the pseudo-elections. After 1934, state, Party, and *Gestapo* had gained complete control of the voting procedure by disfranchising Jews and political prisoners, by harassing potential non-voters, by painstakingly monitoring the polling stations, and rigging the results if necessary.

If we finally ask for the rationale and results of this strategy at least three aspects should be mentioned: firstly, we have to acknowledge that very high turnouts and a great majority of affirmative votes do indeed indicate the popularity of Hitler and his regime. Election results can be used to gauge not only the extent to which the Nazi regime was rejected by a minority of voters, but also the extent to which people were integrated into the *Volksgemeinschaft*. We can see the “yes” votes as indicating a “dictatorship that is always capable of winning a majority” (Aly 2003, 76; 2005, 36; Bajohr 2005, 69), and they also reflect the widespread national consensus during the “successful” period of Nazi Germany between 1933 and 1941.³³ This consensus comprised all parts of society, and even the majority of the working class, which had been a stronghold of the left-wing parties before 1933, tended more and more towards “National Socialism”. For the majority of the *Volksgenossen*, the Nazi *Volksgemeinschaft* was a *success Gemeinschaft*, which was also reflected in the approval that the Party received in ballots.

32 *Nordische Rundschau*, August 11/12, 1934, “Hitler—Democrat or Dictator?”

33 This is shown indirectly by the results of the Saar ballot in 1935, of the *Landtag* election in the area of Memel in 1935, and of the election in Danzig in 1935, which were held in “German” territories outside the *Reich*.

Secondly, it seems quite plausible that not only repression and manipulation but also the overwhelming approval rate itself became a factor of stabilization for the Nazi regime. In his chapter about “Plebiscites in Fascist Italy: National Unity and the Importance of the Appearance of Unity” Paul Corner argues that the impact of elections under dictatorships did not so much depend upon what voters “really” believed: “what was important was that people had to, like all the others, behave *as if* they believed.” (Corner in this volume). This is also true for Germany after 1933. Under the impact of a ubiquitous propaganda machine, widespread distrust and fear of denunciation, it was difficult to talk about one’s own dissent either publicly or in private. The initial protection afforded by one’s own social milieu—especially in the banned workers’ movement—eroded during the course of Nazi rule. Finally, isolation and atomization dominated. In marked contrast, the monumental performances of elections and plebiscites celebrated the imagined community of the nation as a unified political body. This central function of pseudo-elections is what Werner Patzelt calls “impression management”, a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy, which more and more marginalized and isolated those who stood apart.

But—finally—also in this case the functionaries and propaganda experts, who doctored and engineered the hundred per cent outcome, ran the risk of destroying the very impression they tried to make. After the “perfectly” controlled ballot of 1936 the underground newsletter of the Social Democratic Party in exile reported from Hamburg: “There were many smiling faces in Hamburg: out of bafflement or irony [...] The electoral fraud is so clumsy, so real, so obvious” (*Deutschland-Berichte* 1936, 319). For as long as the pseudo-elections were less obviously manipulated, the regime could use them to isolate and marginalize its opponents. But as soon as the results became obviously and almost publicly falsified, the regime ran the risk of losing its credibility and thereby strengthening its critics. But even if Goebbels and his propaganda machine could not completely avoid this dilemma of “performative self-contradiction” (Jessen and Richter in this volume) this did not lead to a significant crisis of legitimacy during the “Third Reich”. The politics of permanent radicalization and finally the rush to war made it obvious that elections and plebiscites were only one of several instruments to stage the vision of a purified and unified *Volksgemeinschaft*.

Bibliography

- Akten der Reichskanzlei, Regierung Hitler* (1983), vol. 2: 12. September 1933 bis 27. August 1934. Boppard am Rhein: Boldt.
- Aly, Götz (2003). *Rasse und Klasse. Nachforschungen zum deutschen Wesen*. Frankfurt: S. Fischer.
- (2005). *Hitlers Volksstaat. Raub, Rassenkrieg und nationaler Sozialismus*. Frankfurt: S. Fischer.
- Bajohr, Frank (2005). Die Zustimmungsdiktatur. In Forschungsstelle für Zeitgeschichte (ed.). *Hamburg im "Dritten Reich"*, 69–121. Göttingen: Wallstein.
- Bohrmann, Hans and Gabriele Toepser-Ziegert (eds.) (1984, 1985, 1993, 1998, 1999). *Nationalsozialistische Presseanweisungen der Vorkriegszeit. Edition und Dokumentation*. Munich: Saur.
- Deutschland-Berichte der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands (Sopade) 1934–1940* (1982). 6th edition. Frankfurt: Petra Nettelbeck.
- Falter, Jürgen et al. (1986). *Wahlen und Abstimmungen in der Weimarer Republik*. Munich: C.H. Beck.
- Fladhammer, Christa and Michael Wildt (eds.). (1994). *Max Brauer im Exil. Briefe und Reden aus den Jahren 1933–1946*. Hamburg: Christians.
- Fröhlich, Elike (ed.). (2001). *Die Tagebücher von Joseph Goebbels*. Munich: Saur.
- Hänisch, Dirk (2008). Die Wahl- und Abstimmungsergebnisse in Chemnitz 1933 und 1934. In Stadtarchiv Chemnitz (ed.). *Chemnitz in der NS-Zeit, Beiträge zur Stadtgeschichte 1933–1945*, 7–36. Leipzig: O.K. Grafik.
- Herbst, Ludolf (1996). *Das nationalsozialistische Deutschland 1933–1945*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.
- (2010). *Hitlers Charisma. Die Erfindung eines deutschen Messias*. Frankfurt: S. Fischer.
- Hörtnagel, Matthias (1998). *Regionale Kultur im Zeichen des Hakenkreuzes. Nationalsozialistische Kulturpolitik und ihre Auswirkungen auf das Alltagsleben der Bevölkerung in den holsteinischen Städten Kiel und Elmshorn 1933–1939*. Dissertation. Universität Kiel (Philosophische Fakultät), Kiel.
- Hubert, Peter (1992). *Uniformierter Reichstag. Die Geschichte der Pseudo-Volksvertretung 1933–1945*. Düsseldorf: Droste.
- Jung, Otmar (1995). *Plebiszit und Diktatur: die Volksabstimmungen der Nationalsozialisten. Die Fälle "Austritt aus dem Völkerbund" (1933), "Staatsüberhaupt" (1934) und "Anschluß Österreichs" (1938)*. Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr.
- (1998). Wahlen und Abstimmungen im Dritten Reich 1933–1938. In Eckhard Jesse and Konrad Löw (eds.). *Wahlen in Deutschland*, 69–98. Berlin: Duncker & Humblot.
- Kershaw, Ian (1987). *The "Hitler Myth". Image und Reality in the Third Reich*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Kloth, Hans Michael (2000). *Vom "Zettelfalten" zum freien Wählen. Die Demokratisierung der DDR 1989/90 und die "Wahlfrage"*. Berlin: Ch. Links.

- Omland, Frank (2008). “Auf Deine Stimme kommt es an!” Die Reichstagswahl und Volksabstimmung am 12. November 1933 in Altona. *Zeitschrift für Hamburgische Geschichte*, 94, 57–88.
- (2006a). “Du wählst mi nich Hitler!” *Reichstagswahlen und Volksabstimmungen in Schleswig-Holstein 1933–1938*. Hamburg: Books on Demand.
- (2010). Plebiszite in der Zustimmungsdiktatur—Die nationalsozialistischen Volksabstimmungen 1933, 1934 und 1938: das Beispiel Schleswig-Holstein. In Lars P. Feld et al. (eds.). *Jahrbuch für direkte Demokratie*, 131–59. Baden-Baden: Nomos.
- (2007). “Jeder Deutsche sagt morgen: Ja!” *Neumünster und die erste Reichstagswahl und Volksabstimmung im Nationalsozialismus am 12. November 1933*. Hamburg: AKENS.
- (2006b). “Jeder Deutsche stimmt mit Ja!” Die erste Reichstagswahl und Volksabstimmung im Nationalsozialismus am 12. November 1933. *Zeitschrift für schleswig-holsteinische Geschichte*, 131, 133–76.
- Paul, Gerhard (1990). *Aufstand der Bilder. Die NS-Propaganda vor 1933*. Bonn: J. H. Dietz Nachf.
- Preußisches Statistisches Landesamt (ed.). (1930). *Statistisches Jahrbuch für den Freistaat Preußen*. Berlin.
- Reichel, Peter (2006). *Der schöne Schein des Dritten Reiches. Gewalt und Faszination des deutschen Faschismus*. Hamburg: Ellert und Richter.
- Reichsinnenministerium (ed.). (1933, 1934, 1936, 1938). *Reichsgesetzblatt*. Berlin.
- Schwieger, Christoph (2005). *Volksgesetzgebung in Deutschland. Der wissenschaftliche Umgang mit plebiszitärer Gesetzgebung auf Reichs- und Bundesebene in Weimarer Republik, Dritten Reich und Bundesrepublik Deutschland (1919–2002)*. Berlin: Duncker & Humblot.
- Statistischen Reichsamt (ed.). (1933–1938). *Statistik des Deutschen Reichs*. Berlin.
- Thomsen, Sören. R. (1987). *Danish Elections 1920–1979. A Logit Approach to Ecological Analysis and Inference*. Aarhus: Politica.
- Urban, Markus (2007). *Die Konsensfabrik. Funktion und Wahrnehmung der NS-Reichsparteitage, 1933–1941*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- Wendt, Bernd Jürgen (1995). *Deutschland 1933–1945. Das Dritte Reich. Handbuch zur Geschichte*. Hanover: Fackelträger.

Elections in the Soviet Union, 1937–1989: A View into a Paternalistic World from Below

Stephan Merl

Elections in the Soviet Union were elections without choice. This was not only a Western assessment, but perceived also by a lot of Soviet voters in this manner. But why were elections held at all, and why was election day celebrated as one of the big holidays in the Soviet calendar, right alongside May 1 and November 7? Examining the importance and function of elections, one has to abandon Western conceptions of democracy, law and civil rights. In addition, we should be very careful about connecting Soviet elections with the term *modernization*. The function of elections changed profoundly with the adoption of the Stalin constitution in 1936. Elections in the Soviet Union from that point on had to serve just two aims, which were to control local officials on the one hand and to demonstrate the unity of subjects and ruler on the other hand. It was based on a pre-modern concept of political culture, familiar to us as “the well-ordered police state”, but no longer on the agenda in 20th century Western democracies. The traditional Russian and Soviet version of this was the myth of the Tsar: the wise and just ruler pursuing nothing else but the public and individual welfare of his subjects, while a corrupt und incompetent administration obstructed him in doing so. Such an understanding was still shared by the majority of the Russian people on the eve of the 20th century, and was relatively easy to revive in 1936 (Merl 2010a).

The implications for the elections were significant. First, elections aimed to unmask incompetent and corrupt officials. This was at the core of Stalin’s understanding of “democracy”. Second, the subjects had to pay reverence to the ruler. As it was unthinkable that any true Soviet citizen could vote against the wise ruler, everybody in fact doing so excluded himself from the Soviet people and thus became subject to arrest and annihilation. As opposed to any Western definitions of the sovereignty of the people, Soviet elections from 1937 to the mid-1980s were, above all, a demonstration of the subordination of the whole people under the almighty ruler. For fear of punishment, everybody felt obliged to take part in this event.

Taking into account the fear of both, voters and local officials will help us understand what really happened behind the scenes during the election campaign. To protect themselves from repression, local officials and citizens started to bargain in order to pursue their interests, i.e. the local authorities to get the votes of the subjects and the voters to force the local officials to take care of the people's public and private welfare, as had been promised by the "good Tsar".

I will have to start with a closer look at the situation in the mid-1930s and the fundamental changes the Stalin constitution wrought for the execution of the elections. In the second section, I will inquire about what the elections meant for the voters, and how they could express and pursue their wishes through participating. The third chapter will analyze the execution of the elections. What do we know about how the elections were held in practice? What stood behind secret ballot, or voting for or against a given candidate? The fourth part will look at a specific form of communication between regime and Soviet citizens in connection with the election: the voters' remarks on the ballots. In the final section I will summarize the findings.

My contribution is based on nearly 40 years of archival work on elections in Russia and the Soviet Union, although I never paid special attention to this particular topic and perspective before. The interpretation follows the attempt to understand the reasons as to why dictatorships could win stability at least for some time, and the conviction that *political communication* between subjects and ruler played a decisive role to this end. Due to limits of space, I can only present my argument in the form of hypotheses and just give select illustrations of what they meant in practice. The description makes use of material from local and central State and Party archives, including the fund of the Central Election Commission for the election of the Supreme Soviet, the reports of *oblast'* and Republic Party committees to the Central Committee, and local material on elections from the Yaroslavl' *oblast'*.¹

There is little profound research on Soviet elections seen from below at this point. Due to the lack of choice and an incredibly high reported approval of the candidates, they were seen as fakes rather than as a serious

1 Russian State Archive of New History, Moscow (RGANI), State Archive of the Russian Federation, Moscow (GARF), Russian State Economic Archive, Moscow (RGAE), Center of Documentation of New History, Yaroslavl' (TsDNIIY), and State Archive of the Yaroslavl' *oblast'* (GAYO).

part of the political process. There are some descriptions of the legal foundations of the elections and of their execution.² From a judicial point of view, there is hardly anything to add to the findings that the principles set by the constitution were violated from the very beginning. Archival material on the execution of the elections, accessible since the opening of the archives in 1992, has hardly been used until today, although it reveals public responses to the elections otherwise unknown. There are just two contributions on the connection of the 1936 constitution and the new electoral system from 1937 onwards (Getty 1991; Goldman 2005). While Arch Getty focuses on the reasons why the secret ballot and the choice of candidates were established in the first place, and under which pressure changes were made in preparation of the 1937 elections, Wendy Goldman points out the close connection between the democracy campaign and terror. In their study on popular turmoil, based on files of judicial investigations, Kozlov and Mironenko (2005, 186–212) reveal the amount of repression taking place in connection with the elections even from the 1950s onwards. While many of the available articles expand our knowledge of how the elections took place, very few are stimulating for a better understanding of what was going on behind the scenes. Among them is the article by Zaslavsky and Brym (1978), a first attempt to treat the question of the functions of the elections based on interviews with emigrants.³ We should keep their conclusion in mind: “Elections buttress the regime—not by legitimizing it, but by prompting the population to show that the illegitimacy of its ‘democratic’ practice has been accepted and that no action to undermine it will be forthcoming” (Zaslavsky and Brym, 1978, 371).

2 Cf. for example Roggemann (1973, 243–94) on the law on the election to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR and the law on the status of the Soviet deputies; (Wolters and Wolters 1977; Ritterband 1978; Jacobs 1971; Hough and Fainsod 1979, 315–19; Carson 1955).

3 The argument, however, suffers a little bit from a Muscovite perspective and does not stand up to an examination in all points.

Political Circumstances of the Creation of the Election Regime 1936/1937: On the Connection of Terror and Democracy

The elections of the Soviets at different levels took place at different times and thus, nearly annually. After the election of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR and the Supreme Soviet of Nationalities for a legislative period of initially four, and from 1974 five years, the election to the Supreme Soviet of the Republics and their Supreme Soviet of Nationalities took place the respective following year. Elections of the local, district and regional soviets were held every second year. After the introduction of the constitution of 1936, the local peoples' judges were also elected in a general vote. In addition, the members of the social organizations such as unions, cooperatives, Komsomol and Party organs were elected at the grassroots level, just as before 1936.⁴ Soviet election campaigns, lasting normally for two months, took enormous efforts in mobilizing voters and propaganda.

To determine the importance of the elections, we have to look at the actual power of the organs. In spite of its formal function as the supreme organ of legislation at the level of the USSR or the republics, the Supreme Soviets, convening only twice per year, were nothing but organs of acclamation. Controversial discussions did not take place.⁵ As the Supreme Soviets lacked actual political power, the election of deputies into these soviets before the beginning of *glasnost*' in 1987 had nothing to do with political decision-making. Local soviets, however, were organs of executive power. They exercised administrative or repressive power over the population in implementing state politics (tax, arrests etc.), distribution of state funds (apartments, jobs, pensions etc.), and in organizing public welfare. Thus, the election of local deputies had much more immediate significance for the people. The voters often knew precisely how these deputies did their job. It was only at the grassroots levels that there existed a manifest risk for the candidates in the countryside of being defeated in secret elections.⁶ The real places of political decision-making, however, the Central

4 Also, candidates in these elections in general were designated by higher levels.

5 Cf. Ritterband (1978, 101–3).

6 Roggemann (1973, 256) indicates that the total number of such cases for the 1957 election to the local soviets was 134 candidates defeated for the RSFSR, and 16 for Ukraine. Especially the heads of rural soviets or *kolkhoz* chairmen ran the risk of being defeated, cf. TsDNIY, Fond 272, op. 226–29, diverse dela.; 227, delo 489, l. 209 states that there were more negative votes in the lower soviets; delo 464 (1959), l. 53: states that two chairmen of rural soviets failed.

Committees of the Party or the Party Committees, were not elected in general or direct elections. Their leading personnel was installed from the top by the ruler and the *nomenclatura system* (Merl 2010a, 264).

From 1937 onwards, elections of the Soviets were prescribed to be general, direct, free and secret. This constituted a fundamental change in the principles effective until the mid-1930s. Only the principle of equal elections had existed since 1917, granting men and women the same voting rights.⁷ Especially in the countryside, it had taken a long time for women to make use of their new rights.⁸ The principle of general elections was new. From 1937 onwards, every person “was granted” voting rights, including the previously disenfranchised “former people” such as former *kulaks*, landowners, and “cult servants” (priests). While participation in the elections until the mid-1930s was under increasing political pressure, it still remained voluntary. Now it became obligatory. The second novelty was the introduction of direct elections to all levels of the soviets. This meant that in 1937, for the first time, the election of the newly-founded highest organ of state power, the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, was held. Until the mid-1930s, only the rural and city soviets had been elected directly. Finally, the principle of secret balloting was introduced. It played the core role in Stalin’s understanding of “democracy” (Goldman 2005).

Was there a need to change the election system in the mid-1930s in the first place? In comparing Stalinism to National Socialism, we realize that the ideological foundation of Stalinism, making use of class struggle and splitting up the population by class categories, was clearly inferior to the German *Volksgemeinschaft*, providing a formal cover of *belonging together*.⁹

7 (Cf. Roggemann 1973, 243–49). In contrast, the constitution of 1918 introduced a differentiated, indirect and unequal vote. Only rural and city soviets were elected directly. It could be classified as class right of voting. Cf. Carson (1955, 49–54). He gives an overview on pre-1935 election practices (ibid. 9–48).

8 For participation in pre-1935 elections see Carson (1955, 39–48) and Merl (1990, 241–42). In 1922, total participation in rural soviets was only 28.9 per cent (men 47.8, women 10.0 per cent). In 1929, 61.5 per cent of the rural inhabitants took part (75.7 per cent of men and 48.5 of women), and in 1934 participation in the election to rural soviets reached 83.2 per cent (women: 80.3 per cent). This increase in the female voter turnout is partly to be seen as emancipation and partly due to the presence of industrial worker brigades, since 1929, during the rural elections. Roggemann (1973, 249) provides data on the percentage of disenfranchised voters: 1923 8.2 per cent in cities, 1927 in cities 6.6 per cent, in the countryside 3.0 per cent, 1934/35 3.0 and 2.3 per cent respectively.

9 See my forthcoming study (2012) on “Political Communication in Dictatorships”.

After forced collectivization and the Cultural Revolution made the affirmative-action policy towards the integration of non-Russian population groups obsolete at the turn to the 1930s, the Soviet state was in urgent need of an integrative ideology suitable for a multi-ethnic country. The constitution of 1936 therefore created a new unity, becoming manifest in the *Soviet* people, and granted each citizen equal voting rights. It is in conjunction with this new emphasis on the unity of the people that we can understand the full scale of the altered voting principles. Equality now meant that each Soviet citizen possessed equal voting rights regardless of ethnicity. Direct voting meant that everybody would take part in the election of the supreme organ of state power. From this point of view, it becomes evident that the principle of general voting was a threat rather than a right to many citizens. It put the voter and the official under fear of repression. Not taking part in the election from now on meant self-exclusion and unmasking oneself as an enemy of the people, the consequences of which were dire. As nobody could possibly be against the “good Tsar”, not voting could only be attributed to the lack of the local officials’ persuasive powers. Voting against the candidate signified dissent with the ruler on the one hand, but expressed dissatisfaction with incompetent local officials on the other hand, who did not provide the promised welfare to the voters. Voting against the candidates thus caused repressions against both, the officials for their failure to convince and mobilize the voters and the voters themselves for being political enemies, subject to arrest or annihilation (Kozlov and Mironenko 2005, 186–212). In 1937 this demonstration of unity served foreign policy aims as well. In connections with Stalin’s mania of a *fifth column*, it should demonstrate to enemy countries that in the case of attack any hope of finding collaborators in the Soviet Union was idle.

The fatal consequence of this interpretation was the criminalization of any form of justified opposition as a result of the political role played by the ruler. Being the representative of the objective truth, he could do no wrong. An individual might have held a different view at the beginning, but upon being informed by the officials, he/she had to recognize the objective truth. The duty of the officials was to make the people “voluntarily” take part in the election. Pressure on the officials led to pressure on the population. Nomination of the deputies by the state would have been a much easier way, as the voters suggested several times.¹⁰

10 GARF, Fond R-7522, opis’ 6, delo 22, ll. 16–20; delo 28, ll. 17–20.

The birth of Stalin's electoral system was strongly connected to the simultaneous implementation of his conception of consumption. Both elections and consumption aimed at the stabilization of the regime on a seemingly "democratic" basis. The system of allotting consumption goods was replaced by the principle of free or open trade, allowing the people to decide on their own which goods they preferred to consume (Merl 2007). The electoral system was designed to be secret, allegedly allowing the voter to make his own choice.

How could Stalin be convinced that general elections in 1937, granting voting rights also to those class-alien and *anti-Soviet* elements, would not lead to a disaster for his rule by showing dissatisfaction with the Communist regime? The archives do not leave any doubt that this was Stalin's own decision, enforced even by personally interfering in the work of the commission writing the constitution. Many people making proposals for the constitution in the public discussion campaign in 1936 did not agree with Stalin's proposal to give voting rights to everyone. About 20 per cent of those writing demanded the exclusion of priests and alien people, especially former *kulaks* (Getty 1991, 26). Getty states that the majority of people were concerned with questions of bread and butter and with putting the local authorities under public control, but "they were not worried about individual rights or civil protection" (*ibid.*).

The new election regulations were mostly a threat to the local officials, who could now be blamed and repressed for any unpleasant result of the vote. As Goldman argues, the campaign for "democracy" was closely connected to terror. In the self-conception of the Party, there could be no opposition to the regime. Everything depended solely on correct and competent agitation. From the very beginning, the principles of general and secret ballot caused a wave of letters from Party and NKVD officials to leading Party organs. The local officials feared that the "former people", especially *kulaks* and priests, might negatively influence the result of the vote. They were especially frightened that somebody might misunderstand the concept of the secret ballot as the right to vote against the regime. They were also afraid of Stalin's "democratic" claim that there should be several candidates in order to give the voter a chance to unmask incompetent officials. This would have led the voters to turn office-holders into scapegoats, eliminating the names of officials who had previously executed Stalin's orders from the ballots. The dubious outcome of such a choice would have been to elect unknown and inexperienced new candidates, as

the voters expected them to represent their own interests more effectively. This was exactly the outcome of the closed elections of the secretaries of the lower Party cells and the union elections in 1937 (Getty 1991, 31; Goldman 2005, 1433, 1440–52). The task that Stalin required of the local officials, i.e. to fulfill his orders and simultaneously take into account the contrasting interests of the people so as to win their trust and the trust of the ruler was impossible to carry out.

In reaction to letters warning of the activities of former kulaks and priests, and stating that these activities would influence the election results, Stalin signed order No. 00447 (cf. Goldman). In preparation of the election, he ordered to arrest only those people whom he had constitutionally granted voting rights just before: priests, former *kulaks*, as well as beggars and prostitutes, according to quotas set by himself. Half of the arrested people were to be shot, the others sentenced to forced labor. This order was to be executed in a secret police action. The fate of these people was kept secret until the very end of the Soviet Union. A total number of 386,798 people were shot under this order, most were executed prior to the election in December 1937.¹¹ Shot in secret, these people had to pay for their voting rights, which they had just been granted, with their very lives. Abused by a public propaganda campaign that called the Soviet Union the truest democracy in the world, they served as cynical examples of Stalin's envisioned "unity of the people".

In October, a second important change of rules was ordered by Stalin, kept secret from the people until the very eve of the elections. Instead of giving the voters the promised choice of selection, it was only the name of one candidate that was to appear on the ballots. This certainly saved a lot of the officials from being defeated in the election. The real choice left to the people on election day now was either to vote for the candidate or to be shot. Even under these conditions, the Party decided to keep the results under strict control (Getty 1991, 31–35). Instead of a choice, from now on a block of Party and non-Party candidates was propagated. With the officially published result of 96.8 per cent of the registered voters taking part

11 Danilov and Manning 2004, 33–38. For local NKVD reports during spring 1937 on increasing counter-revolutionary activities see *ibid.*, 240–41, 247, 258; Binner and Junge (2001). The first order claimed the shooting of 75,950 persons and the conviction of an additional 193,000 to arrest in camps. "On request of local authorities" the quotas were raised several times. Until the fall of 1938, a total of 767,397 persons were repressed, nearly half of them shot. The order required there to be silence regarding the time and the place of shooting. For individual life stories of those shot, see Herzberg (2011).

in the election and 98.6 per cent voting for the candidates on the ballots, the result of this first election in 1937 was already similar to all following elections (Vollweiler 1938, 126–29).

Soviet election results from 1937 onwards therefore were, first and foremost, dangerous to officials at the local level. More than average absenteeism from voting or votes against the candidates would be taken as proof of their failure in organizing the election. This fear created the chance of bargaining between officials and subjects, as I will argue in the following. Putting both groups in a state of insecurity eventually robbed the regime of the total control over the election process, leaving pieces of actual power in the hands of the voters.¹² Voting from 1937 onwards had nothing to do with choosing candidates or political alternatives. On the contrary, it had to prove the nearly universal and mutual harmony and trust between subjects and ruler. The officials, under pressure to report nearly 100 per cent consent with the regime, were willing to negotiate with single voters and thus fulfill part of the paternalistic promise to care for public and individual welfare.

The candidates' selection was strictly controlled by the Party. Thus, the candidates were fully dependent on the Party. Formally, only societal organizations were allowed to make nominations.¹³ The Party ensured that the deputies were eventually representative of the population, including all professions and non-Party members as well. Among the candidates for the Supreme Soviet, about one half consisted of senior officials in high state positions, while within the other half milk-maids and herdsmen, blue collar workers, directors of enterprises and academics had to be included. As higher officials were typically men, with only few exceptions, female candidates in general were younger and represented less qualified professions. While about one half of those deputies holding senior positions in the state

12 Zaslavsky and Brym (1978, 367–68) state that electors, especially workers, increasingly refused to register and asked their agitator to report dissatisfaction, for example, with unpaved roads or leaky roofs. Voters in this manner utilized their vote—or at least the threat of withholding it—to extract minor concessions from the regime.

13 (Cf. Roggemann 1973, 250–53). The election rules did not exclude the nomination of more than one candidate. The name of the candidates had to be published 30 days ahead of the election. TsDNIY, Fond 272, opis' 229, delo 320 and 321 give biographical data of the candidates of the 1967 elections to the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR; GAYO, Fond R-2513, opis' 1, delo 107 (1950), contains the protocols on the selection of the candidates. In general, the members of the local commissions first suggested nominating Stalin or Molotov for their *okrug*, and only then changed to another candidate.

and Party apparatus served as deputies over long periods of time, others—the majority of them women—were just elected for one election cycle.¹⁴

The annual compilation of the voting list had an important side effect on registration of the population, as the police had to check who lived where. Special problems appeared in Moscow, Moscow *oblast'* and Kiev, as registration ration was strictly limited there. Many people lived in the city without registration, and thus were not easy to sign up as voters.¹⁵

The Political Significance of the Elections: A View from Below

What was the role of the deputies under these conditions? In the self-conception of the paternalistic political regime, the deputy had to act as the personal representative of his voters and represent their interests. Although the voters had no influence on the selection of the candidates, voting for the candidate established a personal relationship between voter and deputy. In communicating with the political system, the citizens were used to addressing the office-holder as a person and not as the head of an institution (Merl 2010a, 250).¹⁶ Thus, the voter could address his deputy with all his demands and request support if he wanted to get a car, a better apartment or just firewood or a spare part for his television set. According to this definition, it was the obligation of the deputy to represent the wishes of his voters in front of state authorities, give support to them in the pursuit of their wishes, and to report what he had achieved for his voters (Merl 2007, 531–32). This contributed to the “warm feeling” so important for Russian people. Apart from a “democratic” legitimization, the stability of the Soviet system until its very end was based on this paternalistic tradition. In theory, the deputy even attained an imperative mandate. In case he did not fulfill his duties, the voter had the right to vote him out of office. In practice, this rule could not materialize, as only social organizations were allowed to

14 (Cf. Hill 1972, 47–67). While on average 51.0 per cent of all deputies were re-elected, this was the case for only 15.3 per cent of the women, 14.9 per cent of non-party members, and of 21 per cent of those below 39 years of age.

15 (Cf. Zaslavsky and Brym 1978, 367–69). Carson (1955, 81) mentions that the data on voters were used by Western observers to guess missing data on demographic trends.

16 For the law on the status and the obligations of deputies from September 20, 1972 (see Roggemann 1973, 257, 281–94). The deputies were expected to keep in close and steady contact with the voters, offering receptions, giving reports, fulfilling instructions etc.

initiate the process.¹⁷ During the 1920s and 1930s it had been quite common during all campaigns of repression that elected members of executive organs, especially heads of rural soviets or *kolleboz* chairmen were discharged from office during production by state and Party plenipotentiaries or the Secret Police (Merl 1990, 234–49).

In their almost desperate attempt to bring everybody to the ballot boxes, the local officials could easily be blackmailed. The voters were puzzled to what extent the local officials were fighting for their votes, and understood that they had won exchange value. We may speak of the bargaining power of the voters. Thus, in practice voting had become a fascinating story of political communication, overlooked by most of the previous research.

Occasions for bargaining arose, for instance, during meetings of voters and candidates, in writing to state and Party organs during the election campaign, and by making remarks on the ballot. As communication in dictatorships in general and the election process in the Soviet Union in particular was not free from fear, it was crucial for the voters to identify those forms of behavior that were tolerated. Agitators had to look after special groups of voters, making sure that they took part in pre-election meetings, checking their names on registration lists, and making sure that the voter actually showed up at the polling station on election day.¹⁸

As a general rule, vertical communication with the regime was much less restricted than horizontal communication among voters. For example, a voter telling his friend in early 1953 that he had successfully threatened not to vote in the event that his housing conditions were not going to be improved, and suggesting that he do the same, risked arrest and ten years in the camps. If the voter, however, simply addressed his agitator, local or central authorities or the Central Election Commission in Moscow, he stuck to the rules and had good chances of having his housing conditions improved by election day (Kozlov and Mironenko 2005, 188). Every horizontal attempt to organize one's interests outside the officially controlled and policed pre-election meetings at one's workplace was judged as

17 See Wolters and Wolters (1977) for single cases. Cf. Roggemann (1973, 295–304) on the law to discharge deputies from office, from October 30, 1959.

18 Cf. Zaslavsky and Brym (1978, 364–66). The agitators were responsible for getting out the vote. They had to check the voter's registrations compiled by the police in cooperation with the housing superintendents. For a special study on the agitators cf. Yekelchik (2010).

counter-revolutionary and could lead to severe punishments. Although the voters constantly risked being repressed, it is evident from their behavior that at least some of them understood the tools of the trade, as it were, and estimated the risk correctly.

At the election rallies, candidates who had served as deputies before had to report to the voters. Once nominated, however, the candidate was hard to get rid of. Even in the event of substantial criticism on the part of the voters in pre-election meetings, agitators and officials were obliged to defend the candidate at any cost. The local Party committees would blame them if any problems occurred in these meetings. In general, especially males were strongly discouraged if they had to vote for a young lady who would typically work in an inferior position having no political experience whatsoever. This can also be extracted from personal remarks directed at the deputies on the ballots.¹⁹ Only severely compromising himself during the campaign or death could prevent the candidate from being elected. For example, during the campaign promoting the election of the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR in 1959 in Yaroslavl, the voters expressed open dissatisfaction about a young woman lacking any experience in political affairs. After this event, the agitators were reprimanded by the Party. During the campaign, the voters expressed strong dissatisfaction with 87 candidates in total, though only seven of them were changed by the local election commissions.²⁰ The reports on these meetings to the district Party organization usually stated in detail all critical comments made by the voters concerning insufficient work of the enterprise, or regarding the local authorities of the voting district, revealing the name of the person criticized.²¹

The voters used the pre-election meetings and the report of their deputy to criticize and discuss local welfare. The meetings formulated voter instructions relating to concrete demands to improve local infrastructure: to build a hospital, a school, and shops, to supply water up to the fifth floor in the buildings, to provide bus connections, street lighting, and elec-

19 TsDNiY, Fond 272, opis' 227, delo 355 (1958), ll. 158–59; delo 489 (1959), ll. 214–16; opis' 229, delo 301, ll. 22–23; delo 319, ll. 106–9.

20 TsDNiY, Fond 272, opis' 227, delo 405 (1959), ll. 13–14, 28–31. Cf. also the case of an engine driver who caused great damage on the eve of the election. The other engine drivers demanded the removal of this candidate. Also in this case, the local Party secretary was reprimanded for lack of political responsibility (TsDNiY, Fond 7386, opis' 5, delo 4, l. 202).

21 TsDNiY, Fond 272, opis' 227, delo 464 (1959), ll. 29–41

tricity. Other instructions demanded the improvement of the services and the supply of meat, sausage and butter in the state shops. In the mid-1960s, environmental protection became a new topic in voters' demands, as they challenged the state to close down polluting enterprises or to clean river waters, for instance. Such instructions could also demand to fight against excessive drinking, as well as teaching the youth to keep moral standards high and to work. Some of these demands could be met directly by the local authorities; others were taken up on a list as obligations to fulfill during the forthcoming election cycle.²²

The pre-election meetings did not really have the function of propagating any special political platform, as building socialism under the guidance of the Communist Party to achieve a bright future for all could not be disputed. Besides acquainting the voters with their candidates, the meetings served to produce self-obligations regarding the special tasks the voters could take over themselves in building socialism. They had to agree to fulfill the production plans ahead of time and to sign eulogies to the Party. These obligations as well as production successes held a prominent place in the pre-election reports to higher Party organs.²³

Making the voters think they had a say in local affairs and putting pressure on local authorities was one of the most important functions of the elections in the political process (Hough and Fainsod 1979, 315–19). One may ask what the actual role of the deputy was in this respect, as the fulfillment of the demands depended only on state and Party authorities. He had to play a rather symbolic role to personify the political process according to the paternalistic self-definition of the state: representing the voters in front of the local and the higher authorities and taking the blame for failure. In general, at the end of the election period, a quite significant percentage of the instructions was claimed to have been fulfilled. The

22 TsDNIY, Fond 272, opis' 227, delo 221 (1957), l. 248; delo 489 (1959), ll. 212–216; 232–242; opis' 229, delo 167 (1966), ll. 64–69, 102–3 ("many requests of the voters, uttered during the campaign and in need of a quick decision, were checked and satisfied by the local soviet organs." 103); delo 184, ll. 72–74, 161–63. On June 5, 1973 the Party committee of Irkutsk *oblast'* reported to the Central Committee that the deputies of the *oblast'* soviet satisfied 316 out of 491 voters' requests during the two year election cycle. The Party committee of Irkutsk *oblast'* reported that the local soviets satisfied 3,229 out of a total of 4,295 (RGANI, Fond 5, opis' 66 (1973), delo 124, l. 170). *Ibid.*, opis' 77 (1980), delo 102, l. 56 gives the number of 13,400 voter instructions for the *oblast'* Gor'kii.

23 RGANI, Fond 5, opis' 67 (1974), delo 97. TsDNIY, Fond 272, opis' 227, delo 489 (1959), ll. 328–32; (see also Zaslavsky and Brym 1978, 367–71).

meetings thus took place not only for propagandistic purposes, but showed some concrete results such as taking over obligations on both sides underlining the character of bargaining: while the voters subjugated themselves to self-obligations particularly regarding production, the authorities accepted concrete obligations to fulfill the special voter demands in the field of public welfare. In any case, the election campaign rendered visible pressure on the local authorities and contributed to the overall satisfaction of the voters, strengthening the paternalistic model. The rules put the full responsibility on the local authorities in direct contact with the voters, although neither the deputy nor the local authorities were able to fulfill many of these demands, given the significance of central decisions in the command economy. The rules prescribed that the local authorities and the deputy had to act as scapegoats and, in any case, accept the blame for not fulfilling voters instructions, regardless of whether it was their fault or not. The image of the wise ruler needed to stay untouched. In Russia today such a campaign of popular control is missing, depriving the voters of an important measure they had before.

Apart from the official voters' meetings, there was a second element of vertical communication accepted by the state. The voters made widespread use of writing about their personal needs to the regime (Merl 2007; 2010b). Personal requests directed at the local or central authorities or the newspapers during the election campaign had a better chance of being granted if they were obviously justified with respect to promises made by the regime. This was a clear form of bargaining, based on the regime's declared aim of a 100 per cent voter turnout in the election. The formulation of the request on the ballots reveals to what extent the voter understood his demand as a bargain (see below). Sometimes the request was connected to open threats not to vote if the request was not going to be fulfilled until election day. Even if not expressly threatening to refuse the vote, addressing such a request during the election campaign gave its fulfillment higher priority.

Although it could be dangerous to menace the regime, these tactics were increasingly used during all election campaigns. The regime avoided repressing people who only complained that promises made by the state were not fulfilled at the local level. Open announcements of refusing the vote already happened under Stalin, especially in connection with the miserable housing conditions found at that time. It happened not only in single cases that such a request was successfully accepted before the polls opened. While there are no quantitative data on the overall percentage of

success, local archival material gives us at least an idea of how widespread this practice was.²⁴ The data prove that threatening could be helpful. Until the mid-1950s the risk of being repressed was greater, for prospects of success became more promising afterwards, provided that this threat of civil disobedience was connected to a concrete demand (Kozlov and Mironenko 2005, 188). Felix Mühlberg documents that this type of threatening was practiced in the GDR as well. In the context of housing conditions, he even assigns the threats a certain “serial ripeness”.²⁵

Data from 1958 to 1989 prove how widespread it was to address the Central Election Commission for the election of the Supreme Soviet with personal matters. People sent letters or used the offer of a personal reception. In 1989, it was also possible to contact the Commission by phone (see table). Although one would have expected people to address the Central Election Commission with questions regarding the pre-election campaign or the balloting, the data reveal that the share of such questions was only 8 to 10 per cent until 1966, and then decreased from 7 to 2 per cent between 1974 and 1984. Only under the influence of *glasnost*’ and the possibility of choosing between candidates for the first time, the interest in the legal questions of voting increased significantly during the 1989 campaign, reaching 67 per cent of the total communications.²⁶ The bulk of communication until 1984 consisted of requests related to personal welfare, and was thus different from voter instructions during the pre-campaign meetings. The significant rise in the total amount of communication can obviously be explained by the fact that an ever-growing share of voters understood that their requests actually had a chance of being accepted.²⁷ It

24 GAYO, Fond R-2513, opis’ 1, delo 197, lists the pre-election checking of complaints and petitions in the Yaroslavl’ election district 356 between January 26 and March 15, 1954. 2 out of 3 complaints on housing were decided positively, only one rejected, as the complainer had rejected the apartment assigned to him before. Other fulfilled petitions included providing a job, firewood, hospital treatment of the son, or the cleaning of a public room.

25 Mühlberg (2004, 238–41) cites a note to Honecker from December 8, 1988. Until the end of November 318 petitions were sent to the state council in connection with the local election. 78 writers threatened not to vote if their request was not fulfilled.

26 Cf. table, GARF, Fond R-7522.

27 See table and GARF, Fond R-7522. The reasons why in 1966 the total number went down to 2,800, returning to the 1962-level only in 1974 is not clear. The strong increase in the number of communications in 1984 may speak for a politicization, due to growing discontent with fulfilling the consumption promise. For 1989 the reason was different. This was the first election under Soviet rule allowing contesting candidates, and

is not surprising that matters of housing conditions held top priority, with an estimated share of 50 to 55 per cent of the overall communication. The high share of complaints about court decisions or decisions of prosecutors, clocking in at nearly 10 per cent, illustrate to what extent these questions were of importance for the voters' relationship to the state.²⁸ As these people used perfectly legal channels to tell the authorities about their concerns, simultaneously reinforcing their acceptance of the paternalistic character of state power, I cannot agree with Thomas Bohn, who has interpreted these letters and the notes on the ballots as dissent.²⁹

Part of the bargaining and communication on the official's side was to provide sufficient consumer products and supply sufficient goods for celebration of election day as a holiday. In a report from the minister of trade, Pavlov, to Khrushchev on December 18, 1957 the minister pointed out the need to increase the supply of some everyday consumer goods then in short supply, causing mass complaints by the people during 1957. He asked the Central Committee to order an increase of production and to import special goods, among them sugar, tea and plant oil, in direct connection to the March 1958 election.³⁰ In 1963 the Moscow City Executive Committee addressed the head of the Council of Ministers, Kosygin, requesting him to release additional consumer goods from the state reserve for Moscow's supply on the day of the election of the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR. Kosygin reacted directly and gave the order with the handwritten remark "urgent" to ensure the satisfaction of the Moscow voters on election. Among the goods requested by the *Mossoviet* were black caviar, television sets, washing machines, radios, meat, tobacco, cheese, and five million razor blades.³¹ While Pavlov's list in 1958 mostly consisted of basic consumption goods, their special delivery to Moscow voters included a lot of luxury goods.

there was a growing interest among sections of the voters to uphold "democratic procedures" during the election.

28 See table. GARF, Fond R-7522, opis' 11 (1984), delo 25, ll. 4, 5 and 12 reports that many writings were about how to appeal or protest against court verdicts or decisions of state security organs. Among "other questions", at 2,056 letters, 16 per cent of the total, were requests to get a private car, a land parcel, and requests for environmental protection.

29 Cf. the contribution of Bohn in this volume.

30 RGAE, Fond 7971, opis' 1, delo 2929, ll. 305–8.

31 RGAE, Fond 195, opis' 1, delo 18, ll. 27–30, from February 7–8, 1963.

Table 1: *Communication of the People with the Central Election Commission for the Election to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, 1958–1989*

	1958	1962	1966	1974	1979	1984	1989
<i>A Questions on the election</i>							
concerning preparation and execution							
Of this: Complaints about deputies		372	288	341	(350)	288	13,191
<i>B Other questions</i>							
regarding:							
Personal reception by heads of state organs		35	10	87			
Labor		185	154	230	(469)	564	
Housing		2,906	1,525	2,268	(3,348)	7,088	
Social security (pensions, invalid certificates)		132	185	150		241	
Court/state attorney decision		255	204	443	(674)	1,196	
Registration (Moscow, Moscow Region, Kiev)		211	91	155		292	
Everyday material concerns			353	542	(771)	987	
Miscellaneous		**572	(2)	***509	(305)	2,169	
<i>total</i>	2,899	4,668	2,812	4,725	(6,617)	12,825	*19,647
of this: letters	2,045	3,748	2,284	4,003	(5,917)	11,369	13,819
personal receptions	854	920	528	722	700	1,456	1,700
Percentage of A (questions on the election)		8.0	10.2	7.2	5.3	2.2	67.1
Percentage on housing		62.3	54.2	48.0	50.6	55.3	

Sources: 1989: GARF Fond R-7522, opis' 13, delo 72, l. 53; 1984: opis' 11, delo 25, ll. 4–6; 1979: opis' 10, delo 24, l. 12 (the data refer only to letters. Information on the topics of the personal receptions is not available); 1974: opis' 9, delo 25, ll. 21–22. 1966: opis' 7, delo 23, ll. 1–2; 1962 and 1958: opis' 6, delo 29, ll. 1–2. * including 3963 communications by phone and 165 communications without information on means of communications; ** data corrected from 575 to make the addition fit; *** data corrected from 489 to make the addition fit.

Execution of the Vote: Facts and Political Discourse

Election day, usually a Sunday, served as a symbolic celebration of the unity of subjects and ruler and had to demonstrate the cultural achievements of Soviet power. The district Party secretary was personally responsible for the local arrangements to make all voters appear at the polling stations and to vote for the candidate. In order to obtain his votes, he had to present goods for bargaining in exchange. He attracted the voters by organizing a public festival, satisfying them with a varied program of entertainment: movie screenings highlighting the achievements of Soviet power, children and veteran choirs, orchestra performances and other cultural events, and last, but not least, with buffets selling sausages otherwise unavailable in the state trade over long periods of the year. Sometimes even alcoholic drinks were served. It was also obligatory to offer children's rooms in the polling station. Thus, for example the city Party committee of Rybinsk reported on the RSFSR-Supreme Soviet election on March 4, 1963 that in this city of about 300,000 inhabitants, there were 135 concerts performed, and 35 movies shown.³² Election day required extraordinary security measures. Avoiding any form of protest was top priority. The local Party secretary had to give updates thrice on election day: on the progress of the voting, the atmosphere and special events.³³

One report reads like another, notwithstanding whether it was written in 1946 or 1984, whether in a polling district in the center of Moscow or a remote national district. The primary function of these reports was to prove the careful preparation of the day and to record the patriotic behavior of the people. No report would forget to mention that the people started to gather around the polling station during the night, patiently queuing up in front of the station, waiting for its opening at 6am in the morning. The standard narrative then mentioned the name of the young person, proud to take part in the election for the first time, reciting a poem praising the wise ruler in front of all people. This poem would be cited by word in the report. Subsequently, a selection of other wordings of patriotic

32 TsDNIY, Fond 7386, opis' 5, delo 3, ll. 206–16. The Omsk *oblast'* Party Committee reported in 1974 that 1,636 buffets, 1,542 movie screenings, 713 concerts and 1,600 children's rooms were organized (RGANI, Fond 5, opis' 67 (1974), delo 97, ll. 34–35.

33 (Kozlov and Mironenko 2005, 186–212). On the planning of the election day, the distribution of responsibility and the obligations to report see GAYO, Fond R-2513, opis' 1, delo 147 (1954).

thanks to the regime as well as the names of the actors typically ensued. Another obligatory point in the reports was to mention that by noon, nearly all registered voters had, in fact, cast their votes.³⁴ During the afternoon, the main task was to search for the missing voters. A mobile ballot box was used not only to visit the old, sick, and disabled people in their homes, but also to reach reluctant voters. Viewing the amount of care taken by the state for them, they normally did not dare to refuse to drop their ballots in the box. Thus in 1958, two people just expelled from a *kolkhoz* did not risk not voting when suddenly the commission entered their house.³⁵ In 1989 some voters were complaining bitterly that such a service was no longer provided by each station.³⁶ In order for this afternoon program to be feasible for the members of the local voting commissions, it was necessary to provide transport for each polling station. Thus, since the 1950s, a black Volga was usually parked in front of the station.

However, it was just as obligatory to mention some failures at the end of the report. In May 1963, the Party secretary of Rybinsk reported that the collective of the artisan college did not show up in time for their concert, and one election district was reprimanded for not offering a concert at all, another for closing the buffet before the end of the voting.³⁷ Since the end of the 1950s, the reports sometimes had to mention that young hooligans played a trick on the commissions, stealing the Volga in front of the station for using it on a joyride.³⁸ On election day 1960, in the Zavolsk voting district of Yaroslavl, horse meat was erroneously delivered to the buffets in the polling stations instead of cooked sausage, which caused strong discontent among the voters, who then almost sabotaged the vote.³⁹ Cases reporting civil courage amongst the voters are rare. For example, an old lady in Yaroslavl in 1960, took the ballot and tore it to pieces in front of the election commission, visiting her at home.⁴⁰ State security investigated nearly every case of refusal to vote, as becomes evident from the case of a twenty year old student from Azerbajdzhan, studying in Yaroslavl, voting

34 TsDNIY, Fond 272, opis' 226, delo 1044 (1955), ll. 28–34; opis' 227, delo 196 (1957), ll. 83–92; delo 353 (1958), ll. 156–59; opis' 229, delo 167 (1966), ll. 96–104; delo 301 (1967), ll. 16–24.

35 Ibid., opis' 227, delo 355 (1958), ll. 94–96; cf. also ll. 268–69.

36 GARF, Fond R–7522, opis' 13, delo 72, l. 26.

37 TsDNIY, Fond 7386, opis' 5, delo 4, ll. 206–16.

38 TsDNIY, Fond 272, opis' 227, delo 222 (1957), l. 101; delo 622 (1960), l. 119.

39 Ibid., delo 622 (1960), l. 120.

40 Ibid., l. 119.

for the first time in his life and hardly able to understand any Russian. He was arrested by the police after leaving the polling station, as he had dropped only one ballot in the box. He was released after the investigation. He testified that he simply had not understood that he had to drop all four ballots into the box, the three others pertaining to different levels of Soviets.⁴¹ The reporting Party secretary added that the evaluation of the student, which he had required the director of the technical institute in question to write, was positive in nature. This incident, however, confirms the information that the refusal to take part in the elections was one of the most important causes of expulsion from universities, on the one hand. On the other hand, it was important to show one's engagement during the election campaign to receive upward social mobility as a reward (Zaslavsky and Brym 1978, 367–68).

Comments by voters on and suggestions to the Central Election Commission primarily focused on two points, i.e. the lack of choice between candidates and the problem with the secret ballot. As the original plans from 1937, which also prescribed the secret ballot, had specifically included a choice between candidates, remarks about these aspects could be made in relative safety. Comments on the voting process were sometimes also written on the ballots. Only on the ballots themselves, and additionally in anonymous letters to the regime, can we find sharp criticism of the political system, denying the Soviet Union's democratic nature.⁴²

As Stalin was in favor of the idea of choice between candidates, a rather disturbing instruction was given to the voters not only in 1937, but in all following elections as well: "Leave on the ballot only the family name of the candidate for whom you would like to vote, and cancel⁴³ the names of

41 *Ibid.*, opis' 227, delo 489 (1959), ll. 326–27.

42 TsDNIY, Fond 272, opis' 229, delo 318 (1967) mentioned one voter's remark on not agreeing with the voting system, and one dissatisfied with the government; delo 319, ll. 29–30; RGANI, Fond 5, opis 66 (1973), ll. 120–22. For a letter dropped into the box by a voter explaining his voting against the candidate as a protest against the undemocratic voting and local supply see: TsDNIY, Fond 272, opis' 227, delo 353, ll. 158–59. Kozlov and Mironenko (2005, 5–62 and 233–37) claim that writing anonymously cannot only be explained by the risk of repression. These people in their understanding spoke in the name of the people or the inhabitants of a certain city. As the Russian understanding of autobiographical writing presupposed its objectivity (Herzberg 2011), signing such writings by name would have delegitimized the argument. Such protest held a quasi-religious or mythical character. Cursing the criticized leader, especially Khrushchev, aimed at overcoming these ignoble leaders in order to establish the reign of liberty.

43 Merely crossing out the name was counted as consent.

the others.”⁴⁴ Some persons were puzzled to read this on the model ballot published before election day. Some simply proposed to erase this sentence from the ballot. The commission, however, objected to this, and explained that it was the duty of the local election commission to check the candidates. It was the commission that decided who was the best candidate. As this candidate came from a block of communists and non-Party-members, the other candidates would withdraw their candidacies. The final purpose of Soviet voting was the demonstration of unity. Unlike in capitalist countries, there were no different parties.⁴⁵ Other writers openly demanded the nomination of more candidates. The tenor of these letters was that a true democracy had to allow the voter a choice among candidates, otherwise it was to be an election without choice.⁴⁶ Some voters asked for their involvement in the process of selecting the candidates, or suggested that they should get the possibility to run for office themselves.⁴⁷

Among the communications to the Central Election Commission were always ten to twenty letters concerned with the arrangements for securing the secret ballot in the polling stations, which was required by the voting regulations. Their concern was well-founded: as only one name was on the ballot paper, voting for the candidate simply required the voter to drop his ballot into the box. This, however, put the secrecy in flux, as each person intending to enter a voting booth obviously wanted to make a change on the ballot. Voters using the booth therefore ran the risk of being suspected of canceling the name of the candidate, which was prosecuted as a criminal offence. The writers suggested that each voter on his way to the box had to pass by the voting booths, protesting against the regular arrangements, which was simply to place the booths in one corner of the room. Some of the letters contain drawings of the supposedly best arrangements of booths and the box in the station to guarantee the secret ballot. Citing the voting rules, they claimed that open voting was unconstitutional, and that open announcements of voting decisions should have been unlawful.⁴⁸

44 GARF, Fond R-7522, opis' 6, delo 28, ll. 25–27.

45 GARF, Fond R-7522, opis' 7, delo 23, ll. 3–5, 119–21.

46 *Ibid.*, opis' 11 (1984), delo 24, l. 2, 26, opis' 10 (1979), delo 23, ll. 1–2: voters asking for change and to present more candidates; opis' 9 (1974), delo 24, l. 4; opis' 8 (1970), delo 30, ll. 5–8, 126–27, opis' 7, delo 23, 3–5, 7–9, 18–21, opis' 6, delo 28, ll. 17–20.

47 *Ibid.*, opis' 7, delo 23, 29–31.

48 Others complained about the number of booths not being sufficient to allow each voter to use them. *Ibid.*, opis' 11 (1984), delo 24, ll. 5–6, 37, 69; opis' 10 (1979), delo 23, ll. 2–11, 38–39, 73, 81; opis' 9 (1974), delo 24, l. 3, 16; opis' 8 (1970), delo 30, ll. 5–8, 126–27;

Letters and telegrams to the Central Election Commission in 1946 were often sent by local election commissions, containing questions concerning the interpretation of the voting regulations. One commission reported a dispute on how to correctly use the four available rooms for the voting process. The argument was about putting the box in room three and the booths in room four, or to do it the other way round. The Central Commission, in accordance with the idea of the constitution, suggested putting the box in room four, giving as its explanation the security inside the station: if the box were in room three, people would enter room three from both directions, which certainly would be inconvenient. Others questioned how the rule that nobody apart from the voter was allowed into the room with the booths was put into practice, if at all. Might a member of the election commission watch the room? Was the cleaning lady allowed to enter the room? In this case, the Commission saw problems with neither the cleaning ladies entering nor the commission members watching the room with the booths.⁴⁹

The complaints to the Central Election Commission document to what extent the voting regulations were violated in many polling stations, unmasking the illegitimacy of the elections even further. Often, it was possible to obtain the ballot even without showing one's ID. It was a widespread practice to hand out the ballots for all members of a family or even for someone's neighbors to one single voter upon request.⁵⁰ The extent of distrust becomes evident from a letter protesting against being given only a pencil to cancel the name of the candidate, as this potentially allowed the commission to fake the ballot afterwards.⁵¹ While some voters felt uncomfortable voting for old-age deputies, it was at the same time and under the influence of Brezhnev's rule that non-working pensioners felt destined to

155; opis' 7, delo 23, ll. 3–5, 40–52; opis 6, delo' 22, ll. 41–46, delo 28, 17–20. Article 76 of the election rules claimed to provide special rooms or booths to fill out the ballot. No other person was allowed to enter this room. Only illiterate voters were allowed to ask another person to fill out the ballot (Roggemann 1973, 274–79; Carson 1955, 75).

49 Ibid., opis' 2, delo 59, ll. 91–92, 113–15, 117, 123.

50 Ibid., opis' 13, delo 72, ll. 34–35, 44–45 (1989), opis' 11, delo 24, ll. 4, 49; opis' 10 (1979), delo 23, l. 3.

51 Ibid., opis' 13 (1989), delo 72, ll. 44–45. From the comment of the commission it becomes evident that such complaints had arrived after prior elections as well. L. 56 gives information on complaints on the violation of the election rules to be decided by the mandate commission: 26 complaints were about violating the balloting rules, 16 on wrong counting or falsification of the results, 19 on the lack of equal competition between candidates, spreading of slanderous rumors etc.

be nominated as candidates, for the Supreme Soviet could benefit from their experience.⁵² There were always complaints regarding deputies not fulfilling their report obligations or failing to receive voters regularly.⁵³ Some writers suggested signaling consent for or dissent of the candidate by simply putting a “yes” or a “no” behind the respective name to avoid the wrong interpretation of the vote by the commission.⁵⁴

Taking into consideration the many concerns expressed by the population, we have to conclude that the sentence calling for the cancellation of candidates’ names on the ballot and the question of secret voting revealed the contradictory nature of the voting process for each voter. The practice of voting obviously differed vastly from its theory. To express it differently: the organization of the voting process rendered its illegitimacy strikingly obvious to the people. Getting the vote out thus signified the subjugation of the people under a process of moral corruption. The voter was essentially forced to give up his constitutionally given rights twice, on the one hand by practically being unable to vote secretly, and on the other hand by having no choice who to vote for. We may speak of a “performative self-contradiction” (Jessen and Richter in this volume). A positive interpretation will hold against this that taking part in the election was understood as praise of the wise ruler and as “bargaining”, i.e. to exchange one’s vote for private consumption goods such as a sausage, a razor blade, or even better housing. This way, one vote really did make a difference.

Were election results falsified? It is beyond doubt that there was dissatisfaction with the voting system.⁵⁵ There is ample evidence that the results were manipulated, but it is rather unlikely that they were generally falsified. Reading the reports suggests that manipulating the results became more widespread over time. Judging manipulation and falsification, we have to take into account that elections aimed at controlling local officials, and that they therefore, of course, took the opportunity to manipulate the results so as to reduce control and pressure. The crazy outcome of this trend was that the voter turnout in the 1984 elections amounted to 99.9 per cent. The highest percentage of voters canceling the name of the deputy was re-

52 Ibid., opis’ 10 (1979), delo 23, l. 2. For complaining about old-aged candidates cf. *ibid.*, opis’ 11 (1984), delo 23, ll. 2, 26.

53 Ibid., opis’ 10, delo 23, ll. 2, 39.

54 Ibid., opis’ 10, 1979, l. 25; opis’ 8, delo 30, l. 7.

55 Zaslavsky and Brym (1978, 363) speak of 18 per cent of the workers of a big Moscow plant uttering dissatisfaction with the voting system in a sociological investigation.

ported by the RSFSR with 93,320 voters, or 0.09 per cent. The Ukrainian SSR celebrated the smallest percentage (0.01 per cent) of voting against the candidates, only 5,184 voters in absolute numbers.⁵⁶ Thus, in the end, obviously nobody really cared about the results if they showed patriotic unanimity. The actual turnout at the polling stations was very likely below 80 per cent, taking into account such aspects as voting for family members and neighbors and absentee certificates.

On the absentee certificates, some information is available. Voters absent from their home district on election day had to apply for an absentee certificate, allowing the holder to vote at any polling station wherever he might be that day (Carson 1955, 57–58; Roggemann 1973, 254, 274–75). Locations included long-distance trains, airports, or places close to the dacha. Until 1962, it was necessary to procure confirmation from one's place of employment, attesting to a service leave or a vacation on election day. From 1966 on, however, the certificates could be obtained without such confirmation. During the elections taking place in June between 1966 and 1974, even more than 20 per cent of the Moscow voters might have applied for and eventually obtained such an absentee certificate. The exact number reported for the city of Moscow was 986,100 for the local soviet election in June 1973 and, after intense campaigning to vote at the place of residence, 592,500 for the election to the Supreme Soviet in June 1974.⁵⁷ Outside the big cities, such certificates were much less widespread. How many of these persons on election day really went to a polling station is unknown. Obviously, however, nobody cared about it, either. The pressure to drive voters to the polls was on the local officials of the respective district. Registering the absentee certificate, they had done their duty. The effort to apply for the absentee certificate was certainly bigger than just to show up on election day, and it satisfied everybody: the local authorities, the person applying, and even the ruler. I am therefore reluctant to categorize a person applying for an absentee certificate as a dissenter or non-

56 GARF, Fond R-7522, opis' 11 (1984), delo 8, ll. 6–7. The Estonian republic reported 454 votes against the candidate, Kirgiziya 1,333 (0.07 per cent). The reports of the republics to the Central Committee highlight that the number of those voting nay strongly decreased in comparison to 1979, in the Estonian republic from 9,411 to 1,025 (RGANI, Fond 5, opis' 90 (1984), delo 59, here l. 83). The figures between both reports differ slightly.

57 RGANI, Fond 5, opis' 67, delo 97, l. 6: Report of the secretary of the Moscow City Council Grekov to the Central Committee. Cf. also Zaslavsky and Brym (1978, 370).

voter. The majority obviously only wanted to spend election day at their dacha. A public sign of dissent towards the regime looked different.

Also the practice of bargaining and the most effective threat to refuse the vote provides further evidence that falsifications were probably not as widespread as some would believe them to be. The reports above were obliged to list the amount of non-voters, and to provide information on each of them including the reason for their not voting.⁵⁸ Most of the reports to the Central Committee subdivide the number of non-voters into two groups: deliberate non-voters (giving name and address of these individuals to the district committees of the Party), and other non-voters, who did not vote for more “respectable” reasons, for example as they were drunk or outside of the district limit without having applied for an absentee certificate.⁵⁹ Among the reasons for the refusal to vote, and looking at the entire period under consideration, housing conditions, as mentioned above, ranked first at more than 50 per cent. Non-voting for religious conviction came in second. Among the other important motives were unjust court sentences, and staying unemployed. Political reasons were named very rarely, but some voters did not take part in the election in protest against the voting system. This should not come as a surprise, as arrest was the only reaction to this.⁶⁰ Eventually, then, even a refusal to vote embod-

58 Cf. TsDNIY, Fond 7386, opis' 5, delo 4, ll. 157–68. In the election of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR in 1958 in Yaroslavl' *oblast'* 99.92 per cent of the 925,000 voters took part. Only 784 persons did not show up. All were interrogated about their reasons (TsDNIY, Fond 272, opis' 227, delo 328, ll. 35–42; delo 355 ll. 268–69). In the 1957 local election in the city of Yaroslavl' 99.83 per cent of the voters participated. Only 423 voters deliberately did not take part. The report states: “There were cases of deliberately not voting.” It gives the names of six persons living in barrack No. 22, who did not vote due to their housing. Also, most of the other non-voters did not vote because of housing (Ibid., opis' 227, delo 222). Cf. also: *ibid.*, opis' 227, delo 489 (1959), ll. 133, 289; opis' 229, delo 317–19 (1967).

59 RGANI, Fond 5, opis' 76 (1979), delo 137 and 138. TsDNIY, Fond 272, opis' 229, delo 183 (1966), ll. 142–57, speaks of 703 voters, not taking part in the election, only 58 of them deliberately. Among the rest, 604 were outside the borders of Yaroslavl' *oblast'* on the election day, 31 were unable to move due to drunkenness, 8 were sentenced as hooligans on election day, and two died.

60 RGANI, Fond 5, opis' 66 (1973), ll. 120–22; opis' 67 (1974), delo 97; opis' 77 (1980), delo 102 and 103; TsDNIY, Fond 272, opis' 229, delo 317–19 (1967). Delo 317, ll. 96–100, lists 21 deliberate non-voters, 8 of them due to housing. Two said they disliked the candidate. In addition, there were 16 who did not vote without deliberation, including one drunk person; 168–74 lists 113 deliberate non-voters, 91 of them due to housing;

ies a testament to the acceptance of the system. It functioned as the ultimate form of protest, applicable when the local authorities had failed to take care of the individual's living conditions. The crucial question in this regard is to what extent falsification of voter lists occurred, i.e. not registering possible non-voters or dissenters in order to keep the reported number of non-voters small. In my impression, this did not take place over the whole time, and even under Brezhnev, although it became more widespread, did not occur in all districts.

Analyzing the results of single voting districts, it becomes evident that the number of votes against the candidate strongly depended on his persona. This is easy to see, as usually two or more elections were held simultaneously: on the upper level, it was the election of the Supreme Soviet and of the Supreme Soviet of nationalities, on the lower level, the election of local and regional soviets. If voting against the candidates was, in fact, a protest against the regime, we should expect the same numbers of non-affirmative votes. If the vote somehow related to a candidate, there should be significantly different results for each candidate. We find that the numbers of votes against some candidates were significantly higher (up to ten or even twenty times!) than the medium votes against other candidates. Particularly high numbers of non-affirmative votes often affected young ladies, viewed as incompetent or even morally questionable as protégées of senior male officials, and candidates known to be rude or selfish in their behavior. In addition, we can find strong differences in voting by looking at neighborhoods. In certain places in big towns, protest could amount to 5 per cent of the vote in the 1960s. However, only one of the candidates was concerned in these cases, while the other remained widely accepted.⁶¹

delo 318, l. 33, lists 149 deliberate non-voters in the Leninsk Rayon of Yaroslavl, 126 of them due to housing, 6 as they do not agree with court convictions.

61 GAYO, Fond R-2513, opis' 1: Commission for the election to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, the RSFSR and local Soviets. Delo 194 gives the reports about the single polling stations of the Yaroslavl' City *okrug* for the election on March 14, 1954. In election *okrug* 354, 2,431 voters canceled the candidate's name. In the more rural parts of Yaroslavl' *oblast'* canceling the candidate's name happened quite seldom. In the city of Yaroslavl', the candidate's name was canceled by 1 per cent of the voters on average, in single voting stations of the Zavol'skii and the Krasnoperepolovskii Rayon it reached 5 per cent. In one station, 87 canceled the name of Papavin, but only 8 the name Kairov, the minister of education of the RSFSR. In the rural *raion* Stalino, crossing out of the names hardly took place. In the election *okrug* 355 0.4 per cent of the voters canceled the candidate's name, however, in one single rural polling stations 96 out of 862 voters (11 per cent) crossed out the candidate's name (delo 195). Cf. as well RGANI, Fond 5,

Notes on Ballots

Coming across archival material on Soviet elections for the first time, it was most surprising to me to find out that many voters utilized the ballots to compose short notes to the authorities. While in Western elections, any inscription on the ballot renders the vote invalid, they were welcome under the paternalistic rule in the Soviet Union (Carson 1955, 75–76). It serves to emphasize that the voter perceived voting as a process and opportunity of communication and bargaining. The voters were convinced that the ruler would, in fact, take notice of their messages. They went so far as to give clear instructions to the people reading the message. This was the core of Stalin's *secret ballot*.

Some voters—on the basis of the available data ranging from 0.01 to 1 per cent in cities—and very few in rural areas,⁶² used the ballots to address the ruler with their remarks: patriotic appraisals, recommendations, comments, demands, and complaints. They were using the ballots as a means of communication in addition to the many letters, applications, and petitions. Sometimes, voters even dropped prepared letters into the ballot box. The local election commission compiled lists of this type of communication, attaching them to their report to the district committees. A selection of this information was reported to the Central Committee by the *oblast'* Party secretaries.⁶³

For historians, these are ideal sources. Due to time constraints, the messages are short, direct and express something the voter really wanted the ruler to be aware of. Typical voter messages on the ballots read: “thanks to Stalin”, “you swine”, “croak like a dog”, “bootlicker”, “hang

opis' 76 (1979), delo 137 and 138: Reports from all regions of the Soviet Union show that while on average up to 100 voters canceled the candidate's name, in single districts up to 2,000 voters did this. Cf. also TsDNIY, Fond 272, opis' 227, delo 221 (1957), ll. 252–53.

62 RGANI, Fond 5, opis' 77' (1980), delo 102 and 103. The percentage of the voters differed strongly, ranging from 0.8 per cent (*oblast'* Sakhalinsk: 3,700 remarks and 439,981 voters), 0.5 per cent (Krai Primorsk, 6,757 from 1,477,775 voters) to as low as 0.015 per cent in *oblast'* Burjatia. Cf. as well TsDNIY, Fond 272, opis' 227, delo 196 (1957), ll. 87–92, 221; delo 355 (1958), ll. 133, 180.

63 RGANI, Fond 5, opis' 66 (1973), delo 124, ll. 161–65: Report of the CC Secretary to the Central Committee of the Communist Party from June 25, 1973. The manipulation in reporting to the ruler is evident. While the report spoke of overwhelmingly patriotic remarks, at the very end it mentioned an insignificant minority making negative remarks on the voting system and Soviet democracy; opis' 90 (1984), delo 59.

Khrushchev”, “We want meat, not deputies”, “corrupt”. Western reports certify that at least in the cities, the booths were used by 2 to 10 per cent of the voters (Ritterband 1978, 81; Jacobs 1971, 64–65). The lack of persecution of individuals making anti-Soviet notes proves that the secret ballot was upheld to some extent. This becomes evident from the fact that unmasking the anonymous writers was difficult and took years in some cases. Their successful identification in the end was often thanks to the stubbornness of this small group of mavericks, who not only wrote anti-Soviet remarks on their ballots, but continued to write anonymous letters to the regime. Analyzing these letters and comparing them to the ballot notes could then eventually reveal their writers.⁶⁴ For the writers of the notes, it was by no means easy to estimate what was going to be classified as anti-Soviet. Definitive rules did not exist, and today’s reader is puzzled by certain classifications in both ways. Even the demand to “Hang Khrushchev!” could be read as patriotic once he was out of office (and Kozlov reports at least one convict released for this remark).

Considering even the somewhat large amount of patriotic agreement with the system, some notes interpreting the voting process as a process of negotiation can be discerned: “I am a 71-year old pensioner, and in exchange for my work, Party and state take care of me in old age—many thanks for all the care and attention paid to us pensioners (name)”.—“I vote for our deputies, for a happy life and a peaceful world. I am 59 years old, and life has become so splendid, so very wonderful that I dare not think of death” (both from 1959).—“Greetings, Comrade Stalin, in casting my vote and participating in the elections, I am expressing my thanks to Party, government and Comrade Stalin” (1953). “I vote for you, Ivan Andreevic, but don’t sell the sausage for 3.20 rubles any longer, it’s only fed to the cats, anyway” (1962).⁶⁵ The fact that this remark was categorized as “positive” underlines the difficulty in anticipating how a particular note was going to be perceived.

The following request demonstrates just how well the voters understood the mechanisms of petition treatment: “Comrade K., I am voting for you, asking you to check the documents sent by Khrushchev from Mos-

64 Cf. Kozlov and Mironenko (2005, 186–212) on the basis of court investigations. For example, a student was sentenced to several years in the labor camps for saying that voting for either Stalin or a dog did not make a difference to him (Ibid., 186).

65 TsDNIY, Fond 272, opis’ 226, delo 767 (1953), l. 2; opis’ 227, delo 489 (1959), l. 242, opis’ 228, delo 206 (1962), l. 231.

cow. I wrote to the Kremlin last year. Please, comrade K., check the *oblast'* committee in room no. 11. I have been living in a wet and damp room for ten years, and I expect an answer."⁶⁶ It was common practice to combine the personal request with the denunciation of the respective person who had hitherto failed to meet the initial demand; one's petition could also be emphasized by threatening to contact superordinate positions: "Comrade K., I live on 11.5 square meters with a family of three; my mother-in-law's house burned down, and she, having worked in the *kollehoz* for 40 years, has nowhere to go now that she is 67. We appealed to the deputy chairman of the executive committee, comrade N., but what was his reply? If every mother's house burned down, we could not provide them with living space. I do think his answer is wrong."⁶⁷

Petitions demanding improvements of communal infrastructure in exchange for votes read as follows: "Remember the mandate." "I am voting for improving the invalid's standard of living in the city of Shcherbakov." "Election by the working people of our rayon requires greater effort in fulfilling this duty, such as taking an interest in the living conditions (candidate M.)." "As deputy of the local soviet, I am voting for the candidates. Working people on the other side of the Volga gave their candidates, as they did in the last elections, but the working people's requests are still not being fulfilled. We hereby ask a) once more to build a bridge across the Volga, b) to organize crossing in such a manner that crushes in the process of leaving the ship are avoided, and c) to hurry up with building the theater and shops on the other side of the Volga."⁶⁸ "We're voting for you—you take care of nourishing the working people and living space."

Reasons to refuse to vote for the candidate were given in the following manner, for instance, in 1962: "I don't want to vote—I live in a basement." "My name is (name), and I do not want to vote because we were insulted by the worker of the city soviet S., whom we had consulted in a matter of living space (address, date, name)." "Give us more to eat. I vote nay." "If you nourish us, I'll promise to vote." "We're malnourished and don't need anybody, let them go [...]" "I believe neither in God nor in building communism. I vote nay."⁶⁹

66 Ibid., opis' 228, delo 231, l. 69.

67 Ibid., l. 73.

68 Ibid., opis' 226, delo 767 (1953), l. 8; opis' 227, delo 489 (1959), l. 242.

69 Ibid., opis' 228 (1962), delo 206, ll. 73, 78, 80, 82.

Personal statements about Khrushchev usually were not very positive. Unlike Stalin, the writers simply could not recognize a dignified leader in him who embodied their image of the “good Tsar”. In 1962, utterances read: “Put Nikita on the leash and let the people live.” “Down with Khrushchev, he’s torturing us all to death.” “Khrushchev caught up with China, but a steep rise turned into a steep face, but we’re voting for you just so we can applaud him.”⁷⁰ Negative remarks on Stalin or Brezhnev were hard to find during their time of rule.

Conclusions

Soviet elections played an important part in the political communication between the regime and its subjects in order to successfully stabilize the regime. Stalin established elections in 1936/1937 with two primary functions in mind: first, elections were about the celebration of the unity of people and ruler. They were an inclusive offer to every Soviet citizen. With each person winning the right to vote, those voting nay excluded themselves and had to be annihilated as enemies of the people. It was therefore a great risk to utter that you were against the regime. Second, “democracy” according to Stalin meant that the voters could openly criticize local officials for not taking enough care of the people’s public and private welfare. This was in accordance with the political culture of the “good Tsar” and stabilized the regime. The election campaigns were thus designed as campaigns to purge the local authorities. The need for a 100 per cent voter turnout was reflected in the behavior of local officials, who were responsible for the campaigns, until the mid-1980s. The interest in each single vote forced the local authorities to pay at least some attention to matters of local public and private welfare. In practice, this meant that voters and local officials, both under the risk of repression, started to bargain: the authorities had to offer something in return for the desperately needed vote. In order to function, the regime forced everybody to make use of these corruptive practices, but to keep them invisible. This “bargaining character” of the elections, maintaining its importance until the very end of the regime, served the interests of both local officials and voters. As it

70 *Ibid.*, I. 234; cf. also Kozlov and Mironenko (2005, 233–37).

allowed the regime to solve conflicts that could otherwise have caused dissatisfaction and destabilization, it served the ruler as well.

The Soviet voting system was a crazy construction. The elections were called a proof of “democracy”, even though there was no choice between candidates, and the ballot was called “secret” although the vast majority of the people voted openly, putting those who used the booths under suspicion of voting against the regime. These contradictions were evident to everybody, and often criticized by the voters. Therefore, they cannot be interpreted as accidental. In the end, by having to take part in the voting process, everybody learnt his lesson about the discrepancy between rhetoric and practice in the Soviet Union. It forced even those in opposition to the regime to vote for the candidate, and the regime made this as simple as possible for them: they just had to carry a sheet of paper a few steps before throwing it into the ballot box. Taking this into account, voting was above all an annual exercise of moral corruption for the Soviet people, causing lasting effects on political thought. We may read this as a “corruptive practice” as well, and this legitimized the unspoken corruptive practices as a core element allowing the Soviet regime to function, although everybody in its rhetoric declared corruption as the worst evil, which was used as an explanation for every shortcoming of the regime (Merl 2010a). Voting was primarily about accepting a contradictory regime, and making the best of it for one’s personal interests. The extent to which this was an act of communication is evident from the provision of a sheet of paper and a pencil to allow everybody to write a message to the ruler, the “good Tsar”, on the ballot, strengthening the myth of the paternalistic state.

After the end of Soviet rule, the most important change seen from below today is that the people had lost the bargaining power of their vote. They are no longer forced to vote, but this also means that nobody necessarily cares about their vote. They can choose between candidates, but the winner is still determined from above. The conception of the voting process has not changed profoundly. Voting remains a patriotic act, and voting still serves to unite the people with the ruler. The ruling Party of power is not coincidentally called “United Russia” (*Edinaiia Rossiia*). The majority of the people still longs for the “good Tsar” to take care of their public and private welfare. *Edinaiia Rossiia* is serving that desire. The missing link is that the local authorities are no longer under pressure to bargain for the votes.

Bibliography

- Binner, Rolf, and Marc Junge (2001). Wie der Terror “gross” wurde: Massenmord und Lagerhaft nach Befehl 00447. *Cahiers du Monde Russe*, 42, 557–614.
- Carson, George Barr Jr. (1955). *Electoral Practices in the U.S.S.R.* New York: F.A. Praeger.
- Danilov, Viktor, and Roberta Manning (eds.). (2004). *Tragediya sovetskoi derevni. Kollektivizacii i raskulachivanie. Dokumenty i materialy. Tom 5. 1937–1939, kn. 1 (1937) Tragedija sovetsoj derevni. Kollektivizacija i raskulachivanie 1927–1939: Dokumenty i materialy v 5 tt., vol. 5. 1937–1939, kn. 1 (1937)*, Moscow: Rosspen.
- Getty, J. Arch (1991). State and Society under Stalin: Constitutions and Elections in the 1930s. *Slavic Review*, 50, 18–35.
- Goldman, Wendy (2005). Stalinist Terror and Democracy: The 1937 Union Campaign. *The American Historical Review*, 110, 1427–53.
- Herzberg, Julia (2011). *Gegenarchive. Bäuerliche Autobiografik zwischen Zarenreich und Sowjetunion (1861–1937)*. PhD diss., Universität Bielefeld.
- Hill, Ronald J. (1972). Continuity and Change in USSR Supreme Soviet Elections. *British Journal of Political Science*, 2, 47–67.
- Hough, Jerry F., and Merle Fainsod (1979). *How the Soviet Union is Governed*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Jacobs, Everett M. (1971). Soviet Local Elections: What they are, and what they are not. *Soviet Studies*, 22, 61–76.
- Kozlov, V.A., and S.V. Mironenko (eds.). (2005). *Kramola. Inakomyслиe v SSSR pri Khrushcbeve i Brezheveve 1953–1982 gg. Rassekrencenneye dokumenty Verchovnogo suda i Prokuartury SSSR. Otvetstvennyi sostavitel’ O.V. Edel’man pri uchastii E.Ju. Zavadskoi*, Moscow: Izdat. “Materik”.
- Merl, Stephan (1990). *Sozialer Aufstieg im sowjetischen Kolchosystem der 30er Jahre? Über das Schicksal der bäuerlichen Parteimitglieder, Dorfsowjetvorsitzenden, Posteninhaber in Kolchosen, Mechanisatoren und Stachanonleute*. Berlin: Duncker & Humblot.
- (2007). Konsum in der Sowjetunion: Element der Systemstabilisierung? *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht*, 58, 519–38.
- (2010a). Kann der Korruptionsbegriff auf Russland und die Sowjetunion angewandt werden? In Niels Grüne and Simona Slanicka (eds.). *Korruption. Historische Annäherungen an eine Grundfigur politischer Kommunikation*, 247–79. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- (2010b). Von Chruschtschows Konsumkonzeption zur Politik des “Little Deal” unter Breschnew. In Bernd Greiner, Christian Th. Müller and Claudia Weber (eds.). *Ökonomie im Kalten Krieg*, 279–310. Hamburg: Hamburger Edition..
- (2011). The Soviet Economy in the 1970s—a Period of Crisis of Stability? Reflections on the Relation between Socialist Modernity, Crisis and the Administrative Command Economy. In Marie-Janine Calic, Dietmar Neutatz and Julia Obertreis (eds.). *The Crisis of Socialist Modernity. The Soviet Union and Yugoslavia in the 1970s*, 28–65. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

- Mühlberg, Felix (2004). *Bürger, Bitten und Behörden. Geschichte der Eingabe in der DDR*. Berlin: Dietz.
- Ritterband, Charles E. (1978). *Sowjetunion. Bürgerrechte—Völkerrecht: Kann die UdSSR, die den UNO-Pakt über bürgerliche und politische Rechte ratifiziert hat, ihren Bürgern ein demokratisches Wahlrecht gemäß Art. 25 gewährleisten?* Diessenhofen: Rüeegger.
- Roggemann, Herwig (1973). *Die Staatsordnung der Sowjetunion*. Berlin: Berlin Verlag.
- Vollweiler, H. (1938). Die Wahlen in der Sowjetunion. *Zeitschrift für Politik*, 28, 126–29.
- Wolters, Margarete, and Annalise Wolters (1977). *Elemente des russischen Rätesystems, Bd. IV: Das Revokationsrecht der Wähler, 2. Teil: Dokumente und Materialien*. Hamburg: Buske.
- Yekelchyk, Serhy (2010). A Communal Model of Citizenship in Stalinist Politics: Agitators and Voters in Postwar Electoral Campaigns (Kyiv, 1946–53). *Ab Imperio*, 2, 93–120.
- Zaslavsky, Viktor, and Robert J. Brym (1978). The Functions of Elections in the USSR. *Soviet Studies* 30, 362–71.

“The People’s Voice”: The Elections to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR in 1958 in the Belarusian Capital Minsk¹

Thomas M. Bohn

In the mid-1970s, a short story about “elections” in the Soviet provinces appeared in the Russian-language literary magazine *Grani* (“Facets”), published in Frankfurt am Main, as part of the so-called *tamizdat* (“There-Literature”).² It was written in the style of a *skaż* (“something told”), a narrative mode in which a hero from the people tells an adventure in everyday colloquial language, establishing in the process a special type of communication with the reader. Assuming the role of chauffeur, the narrator reveals a bitter insight in the very first sentence of his “election” story: “If you don’t have a drink when you can, you’re a fool.” This view is bitter, not wise, because the narrator pretends that, right up until the fateful events of that election Sunday, he had meant to free himself of his drink problem. Briefly, his story is this: in contrast to the other members of his collective, the tragic hero spurns the obligatory buffet meal after casting his vote, and walking upright, starts on his way home. At the same time, and this is the decisive turning point of the story, the relevant Party committee is informed that the people of a village somewhere in the steppe are refusing to vote as a protest against the misappropriation of their church. As his colleagues are of no use after their morning drinks, the narrator is ordered to take an inspector to the rebellious village. After a number of adventures on the way, they finally get to the village only to find that the local election committee has already solved the problem by dumping all the papers unceremoniously into the ballot box. At the end of his report, the narrator joins again the millions of people who see elections

1 An earlier version of this article was published as: Thomas M. Bohn: “Im allgemeinen Meer der Stimmen soll auch meine Stimme erklingen ...” Die Wahlen zum Obersten Sowjet der UdSSR von 1958—Loyalität und Dissens im Kommunismus. In: *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 34 (2008), 524–549.

2 Unofficial term for banned writings that were published outside the borders of the USSR.

for what they really are: a public festival. “Since then I’ve been drinking again,” is the narrator’s disillusioned conclusion (Zinov’ev 1976).³

The reference to this story is meant to provide a counterweight to research during the Cold War period, which regarded the familiar “elections without choice”, i.e. non-competitive elections with only one candidate per constituency and an approval rate of nearly 100 per cent, as unworthy of its attention. Working on this premise, scholars would mention, at best, the system-stabilizing function of mobilizing the masses and the Party membership, and the demonstration of power (Friedgut 1979, 137; Hahn 1988, 93). The present essay, however, takes a different approach in that its interest is directed towards areas of public life in societies of the Soviet type that permitted the articulation of dissent and in which manifestations of immunity (“Resistenz”) could go unpunished. These forms of behavior are the obverse of what elections in state socialism were actually meant to provide—a means for the regime to reassure itself of the people’s loyalty. What may serve as a heuristic for the explanation of the room for maneuvering between the relevant options is the category of self-will (“Eigensinn”). To explore the potential of these terminological tools, some definitions will be given first (section I). These are followed by the history of the Soviet elections, presented, in contrast to the example quoted above from the underground literature, in the language used by scholars. The point is however that by using a fascinating new source—comments on ballot papers—this article will try to do justice to the heterogeneous and often unappreciated voices of the people. The article will proceed in three steps: the first will describe the development of the Soviet electoral system (II.), while the second discusses the perspective of Western research during the Cold War (III.). The third, finally, will use an exemplary case to reconstruct the elections to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR of 1958 on the basis of archival materials, and will distinguish between the political and social background (IV.), the election campaign (V.) and the actual voting (VI.). It is the thesis advanced in the present essay that both comments on ballot papers, though apparently of little relevance in quantitative terms, and petitions, submitted in great numbers to the various agencies of state and Party, are highly informative sources for the exploration of communications between the people and the authorities and as such reflect the whole range of public opinion, from identification with the social welfare

³ The pseudonymous author is Isaak Schapiro, an engineer who had emigrated from the eastern Ukraine to Israel in the early 1970s.

dictatorship to the questioning of the political regime.⁴ A final section (VII.) will make a few suggestions on open research questions.

Categories of Resistant Behavior in Communism

For a long time, research on the Soviet Union took its inspiration from Hannah Arendt’s thesis that the Stalinist as well as the National Socialist dictatorships had led to the “atomization of society” (Plaggenborg 2006, 221–222). This view held that communitization received a renewed impetus only after the emergence of the dissident intelligentsia, which was able to develop in the conditions of a cultural “thaw” under Nikita S. Khrushchev (Alexeyeva 1985; Beyrau 1993; Kulavig 2002; Stephan 2005). Employing the perspective of the history of everyday life, Moshe Lewin has propounded the thesis that Soviet society, due to the flight from the countryside and worker migration during the drives for industrialization of the 1930s and 1960s, constituted itself as a “quicksand society”, which was not easy to bring under the control of the authorities.⁵ It should be noted, in this context, that the social protests of the post-Stalinist era, and the hunger revolt of Novocherkassk in 1962 in particular, have repeatedly attracted the attention of researchers (Schlögel 1984; Baron 2001; Kozlov 2002, 2006). Accordingly, after the opening of the archives the mood of the Soviet people and the development of public opinion during the de-Stalinization period became a significant topic of historical research (Zubkova 1998, 2000; Grushin 2001, 2003–2006; Aksiutin 2004). Reacting to dissonances, so runs Victor Zaslavsky’s stimulating thesis, the regime under Leonid I. Brezhnev made the attempt to involve the people via “an organized mass consensus” and thus score at least an indirect success. As long as the Socialist welfare state, announced in the Party program of 1961, guaranteed jobs and stable prices, “withdrawal into the private sphere” was an increasingly attractive proposition for people in the Soviet Union (Zaslavsky 1994). Indeed, the dichotomy between the private and the public spheres, which led in Socialist political systems to schizophrenic be-

4 On submissions to the authorities see the volumes of sources by Livshin and Orlov (1998) and Livshin et al. (2001) as well as the comprehensive survey by Mommsen (1987) and the quintessence of the research on Stalinism by Alexopoulos (2003).

5 See Lewin (1985, 1991a, 1991b).

havioral patterns, has been described by a number of scholars (Shlapentokh 1989; Rittersporn, 2003).

Against this backdrop, the time has come to employ new categories in the analysis of non-conformism or dissent in the Soviet Union. As it is the actions of ordinary people that are the subject of what follows, the phenomenon of intellectual dissidence, well-researched though it is, will be left out of consideration in this contribution.⁶ Before I discuss “immunity” and “self-will”, two terms that have been tested in research on National Socialism and the GDR, as alternative analytical tools, I want to explore, by way of a foil, the concept of “loyalty”, which has been tested in recent years in Eastern European studies on the problem of minorities during the inter-war years.

Following Martin Schulze Wessel’s attempt to establish loyalty as a basic concept in historical writing, the term can be defined as a category of social action and feeling that refers to the interdependence of care and faithfulness (Schulze Wessel, 2004). Peter Haslinger, taking up Schulze Wessel’s ideas that minority groups steer a middle course between an internal national loyalty and the faithful duty of citizens toward the state, has distinguished an external from an internal form of identification. Patriotism, he contends, though difficult to grasp, is to be sought on the individual level while the external perspective can at least be quantified using such public collective acts as complying with a call-up or voting in elections (Haslinger 2004, 47–49; Haslinger and Puttkammer).

In contrast to loyalty, immunity and self-willed behavior stand for dissent and non-conformism. These terms also mark a difference to all forms of open or politically motivated opposition, which had claimed the attention of historians for a long time. It was Martin Broszat who in his research on National Socialism introduced the concept of immunity (“Resistenz”), wanting to point out that the regime had to fend off not merely the political opposition on the part of organized labor and the conservative elites; he also wanted to stress that the mass of the people showed a certain immunity to the regime’s system of values and norms. Although Broszat

6 Anke Stephan distinguishes the narrower term of “dissidence“ from the wider “dissent”, saying that the latter subsumes all varieties of non-conformism. “Dissidence”, on the other hand, is used to refer to a kind of non-violent protest in which the public arena is the central agency invoked, and in which dissidents (*inakomyshlashchie*), who appealed to human as well as civil rights, utilized the *samizdat* information network (i.e. uncensored literary works published by the authors themselves). Stephan (2005, 22–27, especially 24–25).

had only proposed a revision of the purely political explanatory approach, he was faced with his critics’ contention that the regime, notwithstanding some partial immunity, had overall met with broad-based approval.⁷ For research on the GDR, Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk has subsumed the terms “resistance” and “opposition” under the expression of “refractory behavior” (“widerständiges Verhalten”), on which basis he described a canon of options for action that questioned, limited or otherwise constrained the claim to power by the Party. “Social refusal”, he argued, had been reflected in the conscious or unconscious boycott of official conventions, such as non-participation in demonstrations, while “social protest” had manifested itself in the grumbles about everyday grievances, whether in the form of petitions or strikes. “Political dissent”, he explained, had expressed itself in three ways, as anticommunist, as socio-cultural or societal, and as reform-socialist opposition. “Mass protest”, finally, he said had emerged only twice, in 1953 and 1989.⁸

A conceptual instrument in contrast to the categories of loyalty and dissent is represented by the category of self-will (“Eigensinn”), which Alf Lüdtke applied to the everyday history of workers before 1945 and Thomas Lindenberger used to refer specifically to the history of the GDR. Describing this phenomenon, Lüdtke went back to the educational program of the Enlightenment and defined self-will as being opposed to discipline and culture or as the expression of the limited capacity for adapting to society. Behind this term, he contended, was a basic attitude of distance to everybody and everything, which resulted in forms of behavior ranging from passive acceptance and participation on the one hand to non-conformism and emancipation on the other (Lüdtke 1993; 1994; 1997). In particular, Lindenberger drew attention to the fact that self-willed behavior was motivated less by conscious resistance than by the individual’s social role and situation, and was the product of egoistic interests (Lindenberger 1999, 21–26). All this goes some way towards explaining why during election campaigns the Soviet regime met not only with widespread indiffer-

7 Cf. Broszat (1981, 697–699; 1987, 49–52, 55, 61–66). Cf. Schlögl (1996), and Eckert (1995), Kleßmann (1996), and Stöver (1997), who offer a comparative perspective.

8 Cf. Kowalczyk (1995a, 1995b), who took his inspiration from Richard Löwenthal, who in turn distinguished in the debate with Broszat between “political opposition”, “societal refusal” and “ideological dissent”. See Löwenthal (1984). Cf. also Neubert (1998), Neubert and Eisenfeld (2001) as well as Henke et al. (1999).

ence from its people but also, in some individual cases, decided antipathy as well as decided approval.

The Development of the Soviet Electoral System

In accordance with the tradition of the workers' councils (soviets), the Soviet electoral system adhered to the principle of delegation of worker representatives and the rules of democratic centralism until the Constitution of 1936 took effect. Direct elections were known only at the lowest level. While the nomination of deputies for the Soviets in towns and villages was made by informal vote in factory meetings, a selection was established for all other administrative levels, with nominating agencies merely rubberstamping the recommendations of the relevant body at the next higher level. Overall, the Soviet system was based upon a sort of class-oriented electoral practice: frowned-upon social groups like entrepreneurs, middling farmers and priests were excluded from elections, while there was, on the other hand, a town-country contrast in the supra-regional bodies based on a ratio of one to five (i.e. one deputy for 25,000 electors in towns and 125,000 in villages).⁹

It was not until the 1936 Constitution that general, direct and secret elections were guaranteed on the basis of the principle of territoriality. After the official termination of the class struggle within the Soviet Union, restrictions to the franchise of supposed class enemies became superfluous. By means of constituencies calculated in proportion to the electorate, an equal number of candidates was achieved for town and country (Maurach 1936/37; Getty 1991). In the election regulations of July 9, 1937 and January 9, 1950, the nomination of candidates in the factories was retained but the respective pre-election meetings were no more than discussion forums and were given an acclamatory function only, since the right of nomination was reserved for the Party organizations.¹⁰ In the resolution of

⁹ On this issue cf. the general treatments by Leng (1969, 1973), Diederich (1972), Klokočka (1989). On the general development cf. Zaitzeff (1925/26), and Uschakow (1988).

¹⁰ Cf. Ob utverzhdenie "Polozheniia o vyborakh v Verkhovnyi Sovet SSSR". Ukaz ot 9 ianvaria 1950 g. [On the confirmation of the "Regulations for the Elections to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR". Ukas of 9 January 1950]. In: Sbornik zakonov SSSR i

January 21, 1957, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union confirmed the widespread practice of nominating only one candidate for each seat.¹¹

Western Research on Soviet Elections

During the Cold War Sovietologists derived their information on elections in the USSR from published legal provisions and official election statistics contained in propaganda literature, as well as from the statements of emigrants. This was the basis on which election campaigns, votes and election results were discussed.¹²

As far as election campaigns were concerned, the nomination of candidates and the mobilization of the masses were at the center of interest: judging by the composition of the Soviets in various republics, the conclusion was drawn that the nomination of women and Party members must have been based on a quota system—a plausible assumption, which has however so far been impossible to trace back to an official resolution (Jacobs 1970, 67; Hill 1973, 197). As the failure rate of candidates in the pre-election meetings for local elections was, according to Soviet data, in the region of 1:1,000 (Friedgut 1979, 86), the people’s say in this matter, it was assumed, had been reduced to the possibility of formulating questions and giving deputies so-called fictive-voter mandates (Révész’ 1979, 461; Hahn 1988, 104–105). Nevertheless, no fewer than around 15 per cent of the total electorate are said to have been involved in election campaigns, either as agitators or members of election committees (Zaslavsky and Brym 1978, 365).¹³ The agitators, who went door to door to about 30 families,

Ukazov Prezidiuma Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR. 1938 g. – 1961 g. Moscow: Izvestiia Sovetov deputatov trudiashchichsia SSSR, 1961, 105–22.

11 Ob uluchshenii deiate’nosti Sovetov deputatov trudiashchichsia i usilenii ich sviazei s massami [On the Improvement of the Work of the Soviets of the Worker Deputies and the Intensification of their Connections with the masses]. In: Spravochnik partiinogo rabotnika. Moscow: Politizdat, 1957, 448.

12 Cf. Carson 1955; Swearer 1961; Mote 1965; Gilson 1968; Maggs 1968; Jacobs 1970; Lammich 1972; Reichel 1973; Hill 1973; Zaslavsky and Brym 1978, 1983; Révész 1979; Schneider 1981; White 1985; Karklins 1986.

13 Friedgut puts the share of agitators in the electorate for 1975 at 5 per cent (Friedgut 1979, 98).

were to function as seismographs of potential unrest, while normal citizens in their turn were at least able to combine their willingness to go to the polls with demands for the remedy of local grievances.¹⁴

As for the conduct of the elections, the focus of researchers was on turnout and voting: although the latter was not an official duty and no immediate sanctions for refusal to cast one's vote had become known, the convention was thought to have been to attend a polling station in the morning (Friedgut 1979, 115; White 1985, 222). It was the responsibility of the agitators, who thought nothing of making phone calls or dropping in on people at their homes, to mobilize election-weary voters (Mote 1965, 77–78; Friedgut 1979, 114). The discrepancy between the number of people with the right to vote and the actual votes registered was accounted for in two ways. Illegal persons in big cities were believed not to have been on the electoral rolls because they had not been registered. People in the cities, on the other hand, were believed to have made increasing use of the possibility of applying to the relevant electoral committee to excuse them from voting in one precinct and requesting certification of their right to vote in another one, but in the event did not go to the other polling station to vote.¹⁵ According to estimates by US observers, polling booths were attended by less than 5 per cent of all voters in 1958 and by up to 10 per cent in 1963 (Friedgut 1979, 112; Mote 1965, 81). In principle, it is argued, handing in one's ballot paper unmarked was tantamount to expressing one's approval. Only the complete scratching out of a candidate's name was counted as a "no" vote, while an invalid vote was only recorded when the ballot was exchanged. Manipulations on the part of electoral committees, it was said, took the form of accepting proxy votes, the *ex post facto* deletion of people refusing to vote from the electoral rolls and the recording of fictive votes (Friedgut 1979, 115–117).

With regard to election results, Sovietologists wondered whether it was permissible to consider "the missing one per cent" a criterion for election refusal. The categories of "individual dissent" and "collective dissent" were

14 Mote estimates the number of domestic visits by agitators in the Leningrad elections of 1963 at 10 communal apartments or 20 to 30 families (Mote 1965, 66). According to Friedgut, in the 1970s agitators paid visits to between 30 and 40 voters at their homes (Friedgut 1979, 99).

15 Zaslavsky and Brym claim that in the Soviet Union of the 1970s as many as a quarter of the electorate regularly did not vote in elections (Zaslavsky and Brym 1978, 365). White, by contrast, assumes that the share of non-voters increased from 2–3 per cent in the 1950s to only 5.4 per cent in 1975 (White 1985, 223–224).

applicable only to local elections in which, in contrast to elections at the Union and Republic levels, it was possible now and then, with a probability of c. 1:10,000 according to official figures, for candidates to be rejected. Abstentions and “no” votes in cities were attributed to the miserable socio-economic conditions and were regarded as individual protests. Only in the depths of the countryside and under conditions of face-to-face communication, it was argued, had group dissent been able to unfold, which from time to time had culminated in the rejection of an unpopular candidate (Gilison 1968, 822–823).

Given these pre-conditions, Soviet elections must be understood as expressions of a paternalistic culture and as ritualistic demonstrations of loyalty.¹⁶ As regards their political importance, elections came a distant second behind the Party Congresses—this at least is suggested by the relatively modest response that election campaigns met with in the media and the correspondingly low perception on the part of the people (Friedgut 1979, 73; 1983, 115). Dissent was easiest to articulate through an election boycott.

The Political and Social Situation on the Eve of the 1958 Elections

After this general survey of the Soviet electoral system, some insight into the practice of elections will be offered in what follows, using the example of the 1958 elections to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR.¹⁷ The focus will first be on the general political and social condition of the Soviet Union and then on the specific situation of the Belarusian capital Minsk. The latter will be reconstructed using articles in the official press as well as internal Party reports.

The power struggle among Josef Stalin’s successors was characterized by the debate about two different views of social and economic policy. In August 1953, the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR Georgii M. Malenkov announced a “new course”, declaring that following the achievement of forced industrialization the raising of living standards

16 Cf. the personal report about the 1963 elections in Leningrad in Mote (1965, 28–29).

17 For the election procedure in the BSSR in the 1960s cf. Shabanov (1969), Hill (1976). For the 1970s see Leizerov (1981).

should now be placed on the agenda. To intensify agricultural production, *kolleboz* members were to be given incentives. Although Nikita S. Khrushchev, in his role as First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, subsequently adopted this new course in part, he stood in principle for a different concept, that of changing the existing *kolleboz* economies into large enterprises and of combining increases in production with restrictions on the private farm economy. Announced in the spring of 1954, the success of the reclaimed land campaign from the steppe areas, although temporary, secured him a leading position in the Party. Against this backdrop Khrushchev, in the teeth of opposition from his rivals, was able to put on the agenda of the 20th Party Congress in February 1956 “overcoming the personality cult”. What he basically wanted to achieve was to stabilize the existing power structure and to blame Stalin in person for all the mistakes of the past. Later measures with which he laid the foundations of “welfare communism” met with popular approval whereas the reorganization of the administration of the economy of May 1957 turned out to be a risk: a mere month later, his opponents, trying to capitalize on the dissatisfaction of the Party cadres, put the replacement of the First Secretary on the agenda of the Party Presidium. However, as Khrushchev had the support not merely of the regional Party secretaries but in addition that of the army, he managed to eliminate at an extraordinary plenary meeting the so-called “Anti-Party group”. In this context also, Malenkov was stripped of all his state and Party offices (Merl 2002; Pyzhikov 2002; Taubman 2003).

It was only after the Second World War that the Belarusian Socialist Soviet Republic (BSSR), in the framework of a Soviet reconstruction program, entered on a phase of rapid industrialization and urbanization, with all of the country’s resources concentrated in its capital Minsk. In the years 1947–50, the factories for lorries, two-wheeled vehicles and tractors were started up, which turned Minsk into a center of the Soviet automobile industry. These were the conditions under which the number of people living in Minsk doubled from quarter-of-a-million in 1950 to half-a-million in 1959. This development brought a genuine exchange of population in its wake: in the Holocaust, Minsk lost the character of a Jewish *shtetl*, which it had preserved up to the 1920s, while, on the other hand, the organized recruitment of labor from the countryside and the influx of apprentices from the provinces effected a peasantization of urban society. The new formation of the “socialist city”, actively pursued until the mid-1950s, was accompanied by manifold contradictions. While the Minsk town center, for

example, was given a triumphalist neo-classicist architecture, the residential quarters suffered from a lack of infrastructure. As factories had to focus all their energy on meeting the production quota of the economic plan, they could not fulfill their obligations in residential construction. Thus it was that the great mass of the population underwent social misery on a scale that was reminiscent of the conditions of the “capitalist city”, as described by Marx and Engels (Bohn 2008).

In the lead-up to the elections to the Supreme Soviet, there were three events that attracted people’s attention: the ratification of a house building program in July 1957, the launching of a sputnik into space in October of the next year and the celebrations of the 40th anniversary of the October Revolution that same November. Less spectacular, but no less incisive, was the change of direction in agricultural policy, for which Khrushchev tried to win approval on the occasion of a visit to Minsk in mid-January 1958. For one thing, a campaign was launched against the private keeping of livestock, for another the dissolution of the machine-and-tractor stations was begun. The former measure implied the displacement of private agriculture, the latter involved the threat of future financial deficits for the *kollektives*.¹⁸

The Minsk Campaign for the Elections to the Supreme Soviet

When on January 4 and 5, 1958 the Belarusian local paper *Minskaja praua* (“Minsk Truth”) and the official Russian-language government daily newspaper *Sovetskaia Belorussia* (“Soviet Belarus”) rang in the campaign for the elections to the Supreme Soviet, the construction of communism was mentioned, but specific political issues played no role.¹⁹ Rather, the press’s job seemed to be reduced to informing the voters about the election pro-

18 Khrushchev had paid Minsk a visit on January 19, 1958 in order to take part in a consultation meeting of the top workers in Belarusian agriculture and to receive the tributes of the worker masses in Lenin Square (January 24). Cf. *Sovetskaia Belorussia* (henceforward SB) 17, 21.1.1958, 1; SB 18, 22.1.1958, 1; SB 20, 24.1.1958, 1–2; SB 21, 25.1.1958, 1–3; SB 22, 26.1.1958, 1–3. Cf. also the corresponding reports in the *Minskaja praua* (hereafter MP) of January 21–28, 1958.

19 Vybory u viarkhouny savet SSSR [Elections to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR]. In: MP 3, 4.1.1958, 1; Navstrechu vyboram v Verkhovnyi Sovet SSSR [Before the Elections to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR]. In: SB 4, 5.1.1958, 1.

cedure. The Supreme Soviet consisted of two chambers: the Soviet of the Union, directly elected by the people, and the Soviet of Nationalities, which was partly elected and partly appointed by the autonomous administrative units. This was the reason why in Minsk, a city of about half a million people, two electoral districts for the Soviet of the Union were set up and one district for the Soviet of Nationalities.²⁰ Next, 311,000 persons were entered in the electoral rolls.²¹ Besides 2,100 volunteer members of electoral committees, more than 15,000 volunteer agitators pledged their help to the election campaign.²²

According to official statements, candidates were nominated in the works' pre-election meetings, with the lorry and tractor works setting the tone. On February 3 and 4 one local and, for appearance's sake, some Moscow Party leaders were proposed as candidates for the three Minsk electoral districts. Candidates received an official confirmation of their nomination at the electoral district conferences on February 10.²³ After that, their election to the Supreme Soviet was a foregone conclusion. The press announced the nomination for the Soviet of Nationalities of Ivan N. Stets, a car mechanic who worked in the lorry works, and for the Soviet of the Union those of Aleksandr M. Tarasov, the director of the tractor works, as well as Kirill T. Mazurov, the Secretary of the Council of Minis-

20 The two electoral districts for the election to the Supreme Soviet bore the numbers 588 and 589. The first electoral district encompassed the Lenin, Stalin and October raions of the city of Minsk while the second electoral district comprised besides the Voroshilov and Frunze raions of the city also the Minsk rural raion. For the elections to the Soviet of Nationalities of the Supreme Soviet the electoral district containing the city region of Minsk was given the number 51. *Iz ukazov Prezidiuma Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR* [From the Ukases of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR]. In: SB 4, 5.1.1958, 1.

21 Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Minskoi oblasti [State Archive of the Minsk Oblast; henceforward: GAMO], fond 1, op. 5, d. 110, ll. 31–41.

22 GAMO, fond 1, op. 5, d. 110, ll. 16–19.

23 According to a report by the Party's organization section of February 11, 850 delegates from all factories and organizations of the city took part in the event at the Gorky Theater. One member each of the automobile and the tractor factory presented the proposals of their works meetings. GAMO, f. 1, op. 5, d. 110, ll. 24–30. On February 20, 1958 the organization section of the Municipal Committee of the Belarusian Communists reported that 2,150 persons (out of a total of 2,500 elected) had taken part in the two election conferences of February 10. The registration of candidates by the Electoral District Committee was carried out on February 11. GAMO, fond 1, op. 5, d. 110, ll. 31–41.

ters of the Belarusian Socialist Soviet Republic (BSSR) and First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Belarusian Communists.²⁴

Instead of discussing the real problems, *Sovetskaia Belorussia* took the occasion of the election Sunday of March 16, 1958 to call for a campaign, under the slogan of “Love Minsk, the Capital of Your Republic”, for the improvement of its built environment. For this, the paper relied on the First Secretary of the Central Committee, Nikita S. Khrushchev, who had at a rally in Moscow two days before described his impressions of the BSSR in this way: “When you drive along the main street of Minsk, you feel as if you were on Nevskii Prospekt.”²⁵ What is striking about this comment is less the fact that Khrushchev compared the Belarusian capital with Leningrad than that he had, only a few years before, declared war on neo-classicist decor. Apart from this, the heart of the city center of Minsk, Central Square, was still only a torso where only the larger-than-life Stalin monument stood out. And yet, the main thoroughfare and the adjacent Socialist Culture and Recreation Park invited the electorate to a stroll. As the organization unit of the Minsk Party Committee was able to report, voting in roughly half the electoral district was complete already by 3 pm, due to the fact that polling stations were provided with relaxation rooms, buffets and play corners, and there had also been theater performances, concerts and film showings. In addition, dance events were scheduled in the evening before polling stations closed at 10 pm.²⁶ Overall, the elections had taken place to the Party’s complete satisfaction and it tried to make people believe that they were evidence of the normalization of life, which Stalin had demanded in the immediate after-war period (Fitzpatrick 1985).

24 Vgl. Tkachuk, R.: Chelovek bol’shogo serdca [A Person with a Big Heart]. In: SB 37, 13.2.1958, 2; Nashy kandidaty. Slesar’ Ivan Stets [Our Candidates: car mechanic Ivan Stets]. In: MP 36, 19.2.1958, 1; Kandidaty [The Candidates]. In: MP 38, 22.2.1958, 2; Klimashevskaja, I.: Poslanets traktorozavodets [The Workers’ Deputy from the Lorry Works]. In: SB 62, 14.3.1958, 1.

25 Ljubi Minsk, stolitsu svoei respubliki [Love Minsk, the Capital of Your Republic]. In: SB 64, 16.3.1958, 4.

26 GAMO, fond 1, op. 5, d. 110, ll. 42–46.

Comments on Minsk Ballot Papers

Over and above noting the fulfillment of the plan, the Party could not but record irregularities that had occurred in the polling booths. Many voters felt called upon to add comments to their voting papers, whose content was recorded by the Minsk Party Committee. Thus, there is a list in the municipal archive in which the comments in the Stets and Tarasov electoral districts were written down. Whether the comments on the ballots from the Mazurov electoral district were passed on directly to the office of the Belarusian state and Party leader does not appear from the report of the organization unit, which latter took it for granted that the comments reflected a broad measure of approval of the political regime by the electorate. A part of the comments, however, were classed as “negative, impolite, malicious and even anti-Soviet”, but the question of the (in)validity of the ballots was not raised. The list was roughly systematized with a division according to the city’s districts as well as an arrangement according to semantic content. There are 695 entries in all, i.e. five in a thousand voters conceived of the ballot paper as a means of communication; 259 entries were classified by the Party as anti-Soviet polemic, 238 were viewed as general statements and 198 as petitions to the candidates. Indeed, all literary genres are found, from a simple proclamation, to poetry and anecdotes, to letters and even denunciations. Besides professions of approval, major topics were the legitimacy of the election regulations, the popularity of Khrushchev’s political opponents, the credibility of candidates, the miserable housing conditions, as well as infrastructural and supply deficits.²⁷ Voters were apparently less well informed about the consequences of Khrushchev’s agricultural policy, as shown by the lack of comments on this problem, although Minsk’s rapid growth was fed by rural migrants moving to the city. Strikingly, almost all comments were in Russian with only a handful of writers using the Belarusian language. This allows the

²⁷ GAMO, f. 1, op. 5, d. 110, ll. 47–118. The quotes in the text that follow are taken from this document.—Comments on ballot papers from the Moscow region for the elections of 1957 to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR can be found in Tarnov (2001). Cf. also the publications of sources on the elections by Kozlov and Mironenko (2005). A short report about the ballot paper comments of the Belarusian town of Borisov on the occasion of the elections to the Congress of the People’s Delegates of the USSR of 26 March 1989 is provided by Leizerov (1990). There were no legal regulations whatsoever on the treatment of ballot papers that had been written on (Shabanov 1969, 53).

conclusion that the mass of the population, doubtless of peasant background, was not interested in putting up resistance to Sovietization.

In what follows, five revealing examples will be discussed to show how the general political situation of the Soviet Union and the social problems in the Belarusian capital affected voter preferences. First, however, it may be useful to provide some details on what a Soviet ballot paper looked like.²⁸ This is what was printed on the form used until the end of the 1960s: “Keep the name of the candidate who you want to give your vote to, and delete the names of the remaining candidates.” In the left-hand column were entered the candidate’s given name, patronymic and family name, while the right-hand column contained the name of the agency responsible for the nomination. In reality, it was only one name that was entered on the ballot. Although the paper, due to lack of alternatives, could be dropped unchanged into the ballot box, many voters made use of the voting booth. They had the choice, it is true, of deleting the name or exchanging the ballot paper but could even then not be sure whether the election committee would interpret their vote correctly. This is why a number of voters made up their mind to put down their opinion in writing.

The first example is that of a poem with the title “I have cast my vote for the first time”, whose author was Margarita Maslakova, a student of the Technical College of Finance. She expressed her satisfaction with the fact that her voice was heard “in the general sea of voices”. In the sixth stanza, it says: “Today I want to express in verse/ My burning love for my country/ And a feeling of pride. Long will I cherish the memory/ Of this merry and bright day.” Maslakova identifies herself in her verse as a first-time voter. She is imbued with Soviet propaganda and gives free rein to her enthusiasm in a patriotic hymn. As she is very aware of its care and concern, she pledges her allegiance to the regime. The demonstration of her loyalty goes so far as to crown the approval of the candidate nominated with the assurance of her internal identification with the political ideology. Of note is furthermore not only that the author appeals to the Communist maxim of beauty, but also the fact that she expresses her belief in an achievement-oriented society. It is obvious that she entered the polling booth well-prepared and remained in it for a considerable length of time:

28 For a reprint of a ballot paper from the 1960s see Mote (1965, 105).

I have cast my vote for the first time.

What good fortune it is to live in the land of the Soviets,
Where all people have the same rights,
Where a multitude of different nations
Live and work like a friendly family.

In the distant past, everything was different.
Terrified and dark were the people's lives.
Everywhere life was ruled by suppression, violence and injustice,
The people were held in an iron grip by an executioner's group.

But now people's place in society
Is determined only by their personal work,
And only for outstanding achievements
Do they receive the fame they deserve.

Today is a great feast day in my life,
For the first time I have voted for people
Whom the people themselves have selected as their representatives in the Soviets,
They are worthy in their country and truthful.

In the general sea of voices, my voice shall also be heard
So that life becomes even more beautiful,
So that our young generation
Does not get to know words like 'decay' and 'war'.

Today I want to express in verse
My burning love for my country
And a feeling of pride. Long will I cherish the memory
Of this merry and bright day.

I congratulate all who for the first time
Have cast their vote with excitement.
For happiness we live, learn and work,
For peace we drop the ballot paper in the box.

Margarita Maslakova, third-year student at the Technical College of Finance

The next two examples, in contrast, present two variants of anonymous disavowals of the candidates using brief vilifications. The documented version of the first variant is introduced by an express reference to where it was found: "On the ballot papers for Comrade I. N. Stets". It is only then

that a statement is quoted calling into doubt the candidate’s integrity: “Two of his brothers worked for the police.” Here the claim is made that some of candidate Stets’s close relatives had worked for the Germans during World War II as law enforcement officers, and the way in which it was handled by the authorities reveals systemic complications. On the one hand, public opinion was dependent on rumors being spread. On the other hand, contemporary instruments of power—the stigmatization of all forms of collaboration and the practice of holding entire families responsible for the crimes of one of their members—proved counterproductive. In similar fashion, the second variant is illustrative of various criticisms raised against candidate Tarasov: “For G.M. Malenkov. The anti-Semite and high-level rogue Tarasov won’t get my vote.” The director of the tractor works was alleged to have qualities like high-handedness and unsteadiness, but also bureaucratism and anti-Semitism, all of which make him appear an apologist of the Stalinist personality cult. In addition, in selecting Malenkov as the ballot’s addressee, a person was chosen who did not stand for this electoral district in the first place. What this means in political terms is that loyalty is expressed for the father of the “New Course”—Malenkov—although, as a putschist, he had fallen out of favor with the Party. In the final resort, in both cases grumbling is expressed, which must be located between immunity towards the agitation accompanying the campaign and protest against the nomination of an unpopular, but influential candidate.

By contrast, the fourth example, handed in without an addressee or a sender, but marshalling detailed reasons for its demand to have the price of alcohol lowered, seems to be motivated at first glance merely by “Russian” (in this Minsk case better: East Slavonic) dipsomania, but actually contains, through its interest in conviviality, a serious social concern:

Requesting the implementation of the lowering of the prices for vodka, wine and beer as the promise to fix prices at the pre-war level by 1950 has not been kept, and they are still up by 400 per cent. This does not give the multi-million army of the working people any chance to drink to such holidays as 1 May and others. To buy half a liter of vodka, workers on wages or pensions of 300 rubles have to go hungry for three days.

As concerns the question of hooliganism because of alcoholism, these are unimportant details. There are other ways to combat them, and other people’s interests should not be restricted because of these people.

This comment constitutes in a manner of speaking an official voter mandate for the candidates, and points out that the prices raised because of the

war have outlasted the currency reform of 1947. In addition, violent treatment is recommended for those drunkards who jeopardized the just interests of the general public in the availability of alcoholic beverages by kicking over the traces every now and then. The central argument is that socialist holidays are impossible to celebrate without a bottle of vodka. This is an idiosyncratic version of “Speaking Bolshevik”, of the Party jargon to which Stephen Kotkin, in the case of the builders of the planned city of Magnitogorsk in the Urals in the 1930s, attributed the potential to change consciousness, in the sense of an internalization of the utopia of the new person (Kotkin 1995). On the other hand, the discreet hint in this note at the grinding poverty of the people springs from disillusionment and native cunning.²⁹ Inner identification is replaced by the writer’s self-will, which follows the logic of the system and only at first glance seems to intend de-politicization.

An illustration of deficits in consumption and an economy of scarcity is provided by the fifth example, which is concerned with the social problem par excellence, the housing problem. The documents in question are the private letters that a married couple addressed to their candidate on a number of ballot papers. In the hope of receiving feedback, for which they include their address, they depict, from their different perspectives, the hopelessness of their situation:

Dear Comrade Tarasov!

I, V. S. Riger, was discharged from the cadre of the Soviet army with the title of candidate of the naval forces and moved back to my former town of residence. At present, I am living under conditions of private accommodation. It has not been possible to date to promise me an apartment in the foreseeable future with reference to the waiting list for officers. I implore you to help me in finding an apartment as one is not allowed in private quarters with small children and there is just nowhere to live. I would be prepared to stay in the shack which is being torn down to improve the looks of the place.

I am looking forward to your answer at this address: Apartment 2, 7 Voroshilov Street.

In 1956 my husband was discharged from the ranks of the Soviet army and our family came to Minsk, where we were born and grew up. However, we did not have an apartment and therefore made our home for the time being with people we did not know. i.e. in private accommodation. One and a half years have passed by now but we have not been given any living space, and the waiting list of the

29 Cf. the section on “Consumption and Elections” in Merl (2007, 526–532).

executive committee of the raion is moving only very slowly. It is however impossible to live under the conditions we are in at present. The room is 9 square meters. Our family consists of 4 people. Conditions are unbearably cramped. We all sleep in one bed. The landlady picks on me. She throws the axe at the children, and my husband, to make us move out, she destroys foodstuffs, and breaks crockery. I worry every day that she may slay a member of my family. I ask you urgently to drop by and help.

My address is: Apartment 2, 7 Voroshilov Street.

Apparently this family of a retired naval officer lives in lodgings in private accommodation in one of those frame house areas without any infrastructure whatsoever and is terrorized by their landlady. The husband is prepared at a pinch to make do with a ramshackle shack due for demolition. The wife asks for an inspection of their living conditions. In this case, the ballot paper was used to formulate a petition that had met with no success through the official channels of the Soviet petition system because of the length of the housing waiting list of the city council (Soviet). In any case, the married couple’s request speaks of a paternalistic attitude. The sobering description of their circumstances as such may be taken as evidence of the failure of the concepts of the “socialist town” and the “new person”. On the other hand, the remoteness from ideology of its argument hints at the temporary relativization during the cultural “thaw” of schizophrenic attitudes and forms of behavior in public as well as in private life. The approval of the candidate, in any case, though desired by the Party, is of no importance for the married couple: the obvious threat of an electoral boycott is not made. The Riger family is concerned solely to improve their individual fate. It sees its participation in the elections as a formal act, allowing it to perform the desired ritual of showing loyalty and at the same time demonstrating its immunity.

Conclusion

Under the heading of “A Gigantic Demonstration of the Unity of the Communist Party and the People”, the *Sovetskaia Belorussia* reported on

March 17 in detail on the elections to the Supreme Soviet.³⁰ The official final results, however, due to the immense size and the great number of people in the Soviet Union, were not published until March 19. Right from the outset no local discrepancies were expected and so only the results at the Republic level were published. According to the official data, the Belarussian Soviet Socialist Republic (BSSR), with a turnout of nearly 100 per cent and an approval rate of 99.8 per cent, returned a result above the average for the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR):³¹

	Number of persons entitled to vote		Number of voters	
			absolute	per cent
USSR	133,836,325		133,796,091	99.97
BSSR	5,277,630		5,276,902	99.99
	Number of votes cast			
	for the Soviet of the Union		for the Soviet of Nationalities	
	absolute	per cent	absolute	per cent
	133,214,652	99.57	133,431,524	99.73
	5,268,396	99.84	5,267,110	99.81

Table 1: Announcement of the Central Electoral Committee for the Elections to the Supreme Soviet of the Results of the Elections of March 16, 1958. Source: SB 67, March 19, 1958, 1.

The figures as such offer evidence that the history of Soviet elections cannot be written exclusively on the basis of their results. If one adopts the approaches employed by the followers of a cultural history of politics, then one should concentrate not just on Party programs and staged events, but must regard election campaigns as forms of communication (Mergel 2005). It makes little sense, therefore, to start laborious searches in archives for hitherto unknown results for the city of Minsk. It would be more promis-

30 Moshchnaia demonstratsiia edinstva kommunisticheskoi partii i naroda [A Gigantic Demonstration of the Unity of the Communist Party and the People]. In: SB 65, 17.3.1958, 1.

31 Soobshchenie Tsentral'noi izbiratel'noi komissii po vyboram v Verkhovnyi Sovet SSSR ob itogakh vyborov 16 marta 1958 goda [Announcement of the Central Electoral Committee for the Elections to the Supreme Soviet of the Results of the Elections of March 16, 1958]. In: SB 67, 19.3.1958, 1. Vgl. auch MP 57, 19.3.1958, 1.

ing to track down the minutes of election meetings so as to find out what questions were asked by voters and what mandates the candidates were given to fight for in parliament. The example of the ballot papers has shown in any case that the range of ego documents from the Soviet Union offers a broad enough variety. On the basis of the concepts “loyalty” and “dissent” as well as “self-will” and “immunity”, new perspectives could be opened up for the history of everyday life or the general public.

In the end, the elections to the Supreme Soviet of 1958 demonstrate that the election campaign at the local level was not a media event but a matter of work-place meetings. It was almost exclusively the Russian-speaking part of the population that voiced its views on the ballot papers while the Belarusian immigrants from the country markedly refrained from comments, although they must have felt challenged by the latest developments in agricultural policy. In any case, the many protestations of belief in Malenkov did at least correspond with the interests of the rural population. Nevertheless, at the level of the Union, the elections constituted one more step towards the consolidation of Khrushchev’s power. When the Supreme Soviet convened on March 27, one of its first acts was to transfer to the First Secretary of the Communist Party the chairmanship of the Council of Ministers. All in all, the whole campaign took place in three different arenas dominated by correspondingly differing *modi operandi*: first, the official pre-election meetings at the workplace served the Communist Party to ascertain the public’s loyalty and in addition allowed for no dissent. Second, the decision taken in one’s own four walls to participate in the election was tantamount to submitting to a convention dictated by the Party-state, although the electoral regulations permitted certain forms of non-cooperation. For the mass of the population the “folding of the paper”—i.e. the actual act of voting—was no more than a formal act that, in view of the de-politicization on which it was based, was empty of any inner identification and bordered therefore on a demonstration of immunity. Third, entering the polling booth was a sign of self-will not merely because of breaking ranks with the societal consensus that had been reached through the nomination of the candidates. This attitude is even reinforced both by the fact that no provision was made for employing the ballot paper as a means of communication and the fact that no regulations to deal with this eventuality were ever introduced (Kloth 2000, 101–111).

Non-conformism and self-will can be tracked down therefore not only in the proclamations of oppositional dissidents. They must be looked for

also in the comments of ordinary people, which can be found, preserved sometimes only in fragments, in the records of the surveillance state. With reference to the petitions quoted above, which were written in 1958 by voters looking for an apartment, it should be pointed out that the archives hold not merely occasional comments written on ballot papers as well as regular reports on the public mood by the security forces, but can also offer great masses of the public's petitions to the various agencies of Party and state.

Bibliography

- Aksiutin, Iurii (2004). *Khrushchenskaia "otpepel'" i obshchestvennye nastroyeniia v SSSR v 1953–1964 gg.* [Khrushchev's "Thaw" and the Public Mood in the USSR from 1953 to 1964]. Moscow: Rosspen.
- Alexeyeva, Ludmilla (1985). *Soviet Dissent. Contemporary Movements for National, Religious and Human Rights*. Middletown, CN: Wesleyan University Press.
- Alexopoulos, Golfo (2003). *Stalin's Outcasts: Aliens, Citizens, and the Soviet State, 1926–1936*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Baron, Samuel H. (2001). *Bloody Saturday in the Soviet Union. Novocheerkassk, 1962*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Beyrau, Dietrich (1993). *Intelligenz und Dissens. Die russischen Bildungsschichten in der Sowjetunion 1917 bis 1985*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- Bohn, Thomas M. (2008). *Minsk—Musterstadt des Sozialismus. Stadtplanung und Urbanisierung in der Sowjetunion nach 1945*. Cologne: Böhlau.
- Broszat, Martin (1981). Resistenz und Widerstand. Eine Zwischenbilanz des Forschungsprojekts. In Martin Broszat et al. (eds.). *Bayern in der NS-Zeit. IV. Herrschaft und Gesellschaft im Konflikt. Teil C. 4*, 691–709. Munich: Oldenbourg.
- (1987). Einleitung, Gesellschaftsgeschichte des Widerstands. In Martin Broszat et al. (eds.). *Alltag und Widerstand. Bayern im Nationalsozialismus*, 11–73. Munich: Oldenbourg.
- Carson, George Barr (1955). *Electoral Practices in the USSR*. New York: Praeger.
- Diederich, Nils (1972). Wahlen, Wahlsysteme. In C. D. Kernig (ed.). *Sowjetsystem und demokratische Gesellschaft. Eine vergleichende Enzyklopädie. Vol. VI*, column 805–19. Freiburg: Herder.
- Eckert, Rainer (1995). Die Vergleichbarkeit des Unvergleichbaren. Die Widerstandsforschung über die NS-Zeit als methodisches Beispiel. In Ulrike Poppe et al. (eds.). *Zwischen Selbstbehauptung und Anpassung. Formen des Widerstandes und der Opposition in der DDR*, 68–84. Berlin: Ch. Links.

- Fitzpatrick, Sheila (1985). Postwar Soviet Society: The “Return to Normalcy”, 1945–1953. In Susan J. Linz (ed.). *The Impact of World War II on the Soviet Union*, 129–156. Totowa, NJ: Rowman & Allanheld.
- Friedgut, Theodore (1979). *Political Participation in the USSR*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- (1983). The Soviet Citizen’s Perception of Local Government. In Everett M. Jacobs (ed.). *Soviet Local Politics and Government*, 113–130. London: Allen & Unwin.
- Getty, J. Arch (1991). State and Society under Stalin: Constitutions and Elections in the 1930s. *Slavic Review*, 50, 18–35.
- Gilson, Jerome (1968). Soviet Elections as a Measure of Dissent: The Missing One Per Cent. *American Political Science Review*, 62, 814–26.
- Grushin, Boris A. (2001). *Chetyre zhizni Rossii v zerkale oprosov obshchestvennogo mneniia. Ocherki massovogo soznanii rossiiian vremen Khrushcheva, Brezhneva, Gorbacheva i El'tsina v 4-ch knigakh* [Four Lives of Russia in the Mirror of Public Opinion Polls. Studies in the Mass Consciousness of Russians at the time of Khrushchev, Brezhnev, Gorbachev and El’cin in four volumes]. Zhizn’ 1-aia: Epokha Khrushcheva [First Life: The Khrushchev Era]. Moscow: Progress.
- (2003–2006). *Chetyre zhizni Rossii v zerkale oprosov obshchestvennogo mneniia. Ocherki massovogo soznanii rossiiian vremen Khrushcheva, Brezhneva, Gorbacheva i El'tsina v 4-ch knigakh* [Four Lives of Russia in the Mirror of Public Opinion Polls. Studies in the Mass Consciousness of Russians at the time of Khrushchev, Brezhnev, Gorbachev and El’cin in four volumes]. Zhizn’ 2-aia: Epokha Brezhneva [Second Life: The Brezhnev Era]. Moscow: Progress.
- Hahn, Jeffrey W. (1988). *Soviet Grassroots. Citizen Participation in Local Soviet Government*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Haslinger, Peter (2004). Loyalität in Grenzregionen. Methodische Überlegungen am Beispiel der Südslowakei nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg. In Martin Schulze Wessel (ed.). *Loyalitäten in der Tschechoslowakischen Republik 1918–1938. Politische, nationale und kulturelle Zugehörigkeiten*, 45–60. Munich: Oldenbourg.
- and Puttkamer, Joachim von (2007). Staatsmacht, Minderheit, Loyalität—konzeptionelle Grundlagen am Beispiel Ostmittel- und Südosteuropas in der Zwischenkriegszeit. In Peter Haslinger and Joachim von Puttkamer (eds.). *Staat, Loyalität und Minderheiten in Ostmittel- und Südosteuropa 1918–1941*, 1–16. Munich: Oldenbourg.
- Henke, Klaus-Dietmar et al. (eds.). (1999). *Widerstand und Opposition in der DDR*. Cologne: Böhlau.
- Hill, Ronald J. (1973). Patterns of Deputy Selection to Local Soviets. *Soviet Studies*, 25, 196–212.
- (1976). The CPSU in a Soviet Election Campaign. *Soviet Studies*, 28, 590–8.
- Jacobs, Everett M. (1970). Soviet Elections: What They Are and What They are Not. *Soviet Studies*, 22, 61–76.

- Karklins, Rasma (1986). Soviet Elections Revisited: Voter Absention in Noncompetitive Balloting. *American Political Science Review*, 80, 449–69.
- Kleßmann, Christoph (1996). Opposition und Resistenz in zwei Diktaturen in Deutschland. *Historische Zeitschrift*, 262, 453–79.
- Klokočka, Vladimir, and Ziemer, Klaus (1989). Wahlen. In Klaus Ziemer (ed.). *Pipers Wörterbuch zur Politik. Vol. 4: Sozialistische Systeme. Politik—Wirtschaft—Gesellschaft*. Neuausgabe. 2nd edn., 531–38. Munich: Piper.
- Kloth, Hans Michael (2000). *Vom "Zettelfalten" zum freien Wählen. Die Demokratisierung der DDR 1989/90 und die "Wahlfrage"*. Berlin: Ch. Links.
- Kotkin, Stephen (1995). *Magnetic Mountain. Stalinism as a Civilization*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Kowalczyk, Ilko-Sascha (1995a). Artikulationsformen und Zielsetzungen von widerständigem Verhalten in verschiedenen Bereichen der Gesellschaft. In *Materialien der Enquete-Kommission "Aufarbeitung von Geschichte und Folgen der SED-Diktatur in Deutschland" (12. Wahlperiode des Deutschen Bundestages)*. Bd. VII/2: *Möglichkeiten und Formen abweichenden und widerständigen Verhaltens und oppositionellen Handelns, die friedliche Revolution im Herbst 1989, die Wiedervereinigung Deutschlands und das Fortwirken von Strukturen und Mechanismen der Diktatur*, 1203–1284. Frankfurt: Nomos.
- (1995b). Von der Freiheit, Ich zu sagen. Widerständiges Verhalten in der DDR. In Ulrike Poppe et al. (eds.). *Zwischen Selbstbehauptung und Anpassung. Formen des Widerstandes und der Opposition in der DDR*, 85–115. Berlin: Ch. Links.
- Kozlov, S. A., and S. V. Mironenko (ed.). (2005). *Kramola. Inakomyслиe v SSSR pri Khrushcheve i Brezhneve 1953–1982 gg. Rassekrechennyye dokumenty Verkhovnogo suda i Prokuratury SSSR* [Revolt. Non-conformism in the USSR under Khrushchev and Brezhnev 1953–1982. Declassified Documents of the Supreme Court and the Public Prosecutor's Office], 186–212. Moscow: Materik.
- Kozlov, Vladimir A. (2002). *Mass Uprisings in the USSR. Protest and Rebellion in the Post-Stalin-Years*. Armonk: Sharpe.
- (2006). *Neizvestnyy SSSR. Protivostoianie naroda i vlasti 1953–1985 gg.* [Unknown USSR. The Confrontation Between the People and the Authorities 1953–1985]. Moscow: Olma-Press.
- Kulavig, Erik (2002). *Dissent in the Years of Khrushchev. Nine Stories about Disobedient Russians*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Lammich, Siegfried (1972). Wahlrecht und Wahlpraxis in den sozialistischen Ländern Europas. (Charakteristische Merkmale). *Jahrbuch für Ostrecht*, 13, 37–52.
- Leizerov, Arkadii T. (1981). *Konstitutsionnyi printsip glasnosti raboty Sovetov narodnykh deputatov* [The Constitutional Principle of Transparency in the Work of the Councils of the People's Deputies]. Minsk: Izdat BGU im. Lenina.
- (1990). Nadpisi na izbiratel'nikh biulleteniach—odna iz form vyrazheniia obshchestvennogo mneniia [Remarks on Ballot Papers—A Form of the Public Expression of Opinions]. In *Problemy gosudarstva i prava*, 174–176. Minsk: Ministerstvo Iustitsii.

- Leng, Hermann Otto (1969). Sowjetunion. In Dolf Sternberger and Bernhard Vogel (eds.). *Die Wahl der Parlamente und anderer Staatsorgane. Ein Handbuch. Bd. I: Europa*, 1147–1227. Berlin: de Gruyter.
- (1973). *Die allgemeine Wahl im bolschewistischen Staat. Theorie, Praxis, Genesis*. Meisenheim am Glan: Hain.
- Lewin, Moshe (1985). *The Making of the Soviet System. Essays in the Social History of Interwar Russia*. London: Methuen.
- (1991a). Russia/USSR in Historical Motion, An Essay in Interpretation. *Russian Review*, 50, 249–66.
- (1991b). *The Gorbachev Phenomenon. A Historical Interpretation. Expanded Edition*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Lindenberger, Thomas (1999). Die Diktatur der Grenzen. Zur Einleitung. In Thomas Lindenberger (ed.), *Herrschaft und Eigen-Sinn in der Diktatur. Studien zur Gesellschaftsgeschichte der DDR*, 13–44. Cologne: Böhlau.
- Livshin, A. Ia., and Orlov, I. B. (eds.). (1998). *Pis’ma vo vlast’. 1917–1927. Zaiavleniia, zhaloby, donosy, pis’ma v gosudarstvennye struktury i bol’shevistskim vozhdiam* [Letters to the Authorities. 1917–1927. Explanations, Complaints, Denunciations, Letters to Government Agencies and the Leaders of the Bolsheviks]. Moscow: Rosspen.
- I. B. Orlov and Khlevniuk, O. V. (eds.). (2001). *Pis’ma vo vlast’. 1928–1939. Zaiavleniia, zhaloby, donosy, pis’ma v gosudarstvennye struktury i sovetским vozhdiam* [Letters to the Authorities. 1917–1927. Explanations, Complaints, Denunciations, Letters to Government Agencies and Leading Politicians. 1928–1939]. Moscow: Rosspen.
- Löwenthal, Richard (1984). Widerstand im totalen Staat. In Richard Löwenthal and Patrik von zur Mühlen (eds.), *Widerstand und Verweigerung in Deutschland 1933 bis 1945*, 11–24. Berlin: Dietz.
- Lüdtke, Alf (1993). *Eigen-Sinn. Fabrikalltag, Arbeitererfahrungen und Politik vom Kaiserreich bis in den Faschismus*. Hamburg: Ergebnisse-Verlag.
- (1994). Geschichte und Eigensinn. In Berliner Geschichtswerkstatt (ed.). *Alltagskultur, Subjektivität und Geschichte. Zur Theorie und Praxis von Alltagsgeschichte*, 139–53. Münster: Westfälisches Dampfboot.
- (1997). Sprache und Herrschaft in der DDR. Einleitende Überlegungen. In Alf Lüdtke and Peter Becker (eds.). *Akten. Eingaben. Schaufenster. Die DDR und ihre Texte. Erkundungen zu Herrschaft und Alltag*, 11–26. Berlin: Akademie-Verlag.
- Maggs, Peter B. (1968). Negative Votes in Soviet Elections. In Adolf Sprudz and Armins Ruis (eds.). *Res Baltica. A Collection of Essays in Honor of the Memory of Dr. Alfred Bilmanis*, 146–51. Leyden: Sijthoff.
- Maurach, Reinhard (1936/37). Wahlrecht nach der Verfassung der Sowjetunion vom 5. Dezember 1936. *Zeitschrift für osteuropäisches Recht*, 3, 547–61.
- Mergel, Thomas (2005). Wahlkampfgeschichte als Kulturgeschichte. Konzeptionelle Überlegungen und empirische Beispiele. In Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger (ed.), *Was heißt Kulturgeschichte des Politischen?*, 355–76. Berlin: Duncker & Humblot.

- Merl, Stephan (2002). Entstalinisierung, Reformen und Wettlauf der Systeme 1953–1964. In Stefan Plaggenborg (ed.). *Handbuch der Geschichte Russlands. Vol. 5: 1945–1991. Vom Ende des Zweiten Weltkriegs bis zum Zusammenbruch der Sowjetunion*, 175–318. Stuttgart: Hiersemann.
- (2007). Konsum in der Sowjetunion: Element der Systemstabilisierung? *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht*, 58, 519–36
- Mommsen, Margareta (1987). *Hilf mir, mein Recht zu finden. Russische Bittschriften. Von Iwan dem Schrecklichen bis Gorbatschow*. Frankfurt: Propyläen.
- Mote, Max (1965). *Soviet Local and Republic Elections: A Description of the 1963 Elections in Leningrad. Based on Official Documents, Press Accounts, and Private Interviews*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Neubert, Ehrhart (1998). *Geschichte der Opposition in der DDR 1949–1989*. 2nd edn. Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung.
- and Bernd Eisenfeld (eds.). (2001). *Macht—Ohnmacht—Gegenmacht. Grundfragen zur politischen Gegnerschaft in der DDR*. Bremen: Edition Temmen.
- Ob uluchshenii deiatel'nosti Sovetov deputatov trudiashchichsia i usilenii ich sviazei s massami (1957). [On the Improvement of the Work of the Soviets of the Worker Deputies and the Intensification of their Connections with the masses]. In *Spravochnik partiinogo rabotnika*, 448. Moscow: Politizdat.
- Ob utverzhdienie "Polozheniia o vyborakh v Verkhovnyi Sovet SSSR". Ukaz ot 9 ianvaria 1950 g. (1961). [On the confirmation of the "Regulations for the Elections to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR". Ukas of 9 January 1950]. In *Sbornik zakonov SSSR i Ukazov Prezidiuma Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR*. 1938 g.–1961 g., 105–122. Moscow: Izvestiia Sovetov deputatov trudiashchichsia SSSR.
- Plaggenborg, Stefan (2006). *Experiment Moderne. Der sonjetische Weg*. Frankfurt: Campus.
- Pyzhikov, Aleksandr (2002). *Khrushchenskaia "ottepel'"* [Khrushchev's "Thaw"]. Moscow: Olma-Press.
- Reichel, Hans-Christian (1973). Das sowjetische Unionswahlrecht. *Recht in Ost und West*, 17, 144–52
- Révész, László (1979). Wahl und Parlament in der UdSSR. In Eugen Bucher and Peter Saladin (eds.). *Berner Festgabe zum Schweizerischen Juristentag 1979*, 447–90. Bern: Haupt.
- Rittersporn, Gábor et al. (eds.). (2003). *Sphären von Öffentlichkeit in Gesellschaften sonjetischen Typs. Zwischen partei-staatlicher Selbstinszenierung und kirchlichen Gegenwelten*. Frankfurt: Lang.
- Schlögel, Karl (1984). *Der renitente Held. Arbeiterprotest in der Sowjetunion 1953–1983*. Hamburg: Junius.
- Schlögl, Rudolf et al. (1996). Konsens, Konflikt und Repression: Zur Sozialgeschichte des politischen Verhaltens in der NS-Zeit. In Rudolf Schlögl and Hans-Ulrich Thamer (eds.). *Zwischen Loyalität und Resistenz. Soziale Konflikte und politische Repression während der NS-Herrschaft in Westfalen*, 9–30. Münster: Aschendorff.

- Schneider, Eberhard (1981). Die Wahlen zur Volkskammer der DDR (1981) und zum Obersten Sowjet der UdSSR (1979). *Zeitschrift für Parlamentsfragen*, 12, 489–508.
- Schulze Wessel, Martin (2004). “Loyalität” als geschichtlicher Grundbegriff und Forschungskonzept: Zur Einleitung. In Martin Schulze Wessel (ed.). *Loyalitäten in der Tschechoslowakischen Republik 1918–1938. Politische, nationale und kulturelle Zugehörigkeiten*, 1–22. Munich: Oldenbourg.
- Shabanov, Iu. (1969). *Partiinoe rukovodstvo sovetami deputatov trudiasobchikhsia* [Party Guidelines for the Councils of the Worker Deputies]. Minsk: Belarus.
- Shlapentokh, Vladimir (1989). *Public and Private Life of the Soviet People. Changing Values in Post-Stalin Russia*. New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Stephan, Anke (2005). *Von der Küche auf den Roten Platz. Lebenswege sonjetischer Dissidentinnen*. Zürich: Pano.
- Stöver, Bernd (1997). Leben in deutschen Diktaturen. Historiographische und methodologische Aspekte der Erforschung von Widerstand und Opposition im Dritten Reich und der DDR. In Detlef Pollack and Dieter Rink (eds.). *Zwischen Verweigerung und Opposition. Politischer Protest in der DDR 1970–1989*, 30–53. Frankfurt: Campus.
- Swearer, Howard R. (1961). The Functions of Soviet Elections. *Midwest Journal of Political Science*, 5, 129–49.
- Tarnov, Evgenii (2001). “Doloi Khrushcheva, izberem Malenkova.” Za kulisami vyborov. [“Down with Khrushchev, we are voting for Malenkov.” Behind the Scenes of the Elections]. *Istochnik. Dokumenty russkoi istorii*, 2, 42–5.
- Taubman, William (2003). *Khrushchev. The Man and his Era*. New York: Norton.
- Uschakow, Alexander (1988). Demokratische Wahlen in Rußland/UdSSR seit 1917. Demokratie und Räte im Widerstreit von Theorie und Praxis. In *Die Haltung der Sowjetunion gegenüber freien demokratischen und geheimen Wahlen in Deutschland nach 1945—vergleichend dargestellt. Symposion 23./24. September 1985*, 7–35. Cologne: Heymanns.
- White, Stephen (1985). Non-competitive Elections and National Politics: The USSR Supreme Soviet Elections of 1984. *Electoral Studies*, 4, 215–29.
- Zaitzeff, Leo (1925/26). Wahlrecht und Wahlpraxis in Sowjetrußland. *Osteuropa. Zeitschrift für die gesamten Fragen des europäischen Ostens*, 1, 383–92.
- Zaslavsky, Victor (1994). Closed Cities and the Organized Consensus. In Victor Zaslavsky (ed.). *The Neo-Stalinist State. Class, Ethnicity, and Consensus in Soviet Society. With a New Introduction*, 130–164. Armonk, NY: Sharpe.
- and Brym, Robert (1978). The Functions of Elections in the USSR. *Soviet Studies*, 30, 362–371.
- and Brym, Robert (1983). The Structure of Power and the Functions of Soviet Local Elections. In Everett M. Jacobs (ed.). *Soviet Local Politics and Government*, 69–77. London: Allen & Unwin.
- Zinov’ev, I. (1976). Vybory [Elections]. *Grani. Mezhekontinental’nyi russkii literaturnyi zhurnal*, 102, 97–103.

- Zubkova, Elena (1998). *Russia After the War. Hopes, Illusions, and Disappointments, 1945–1957*. Armonk, NY: Sharpe.
- (2000). *Poslevoennoe obshchestvo: politika i povedenost'. 1945–1953* [Post-War Society: Politics and Everyday Life 1945–1953]. Moscow: Rosspen.

Contributors

Thomas M. Bohn is Professor of Russian and Soviet History at the Justus-Liebig-University of Giessen, Germany. His research focuses on historiography and urban history. As a specialist on Belarus he recently prepared a book *Ein weisser Fleck in Europa*. (Bielefeld: transcript 2011)

Paul Corner is Professor of European History at the University of Siena, where he is also Director of the Center for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes. He has published extensively on issues relating to Italian Fascism. His recent research interests are centered on the wider question of popular opinion in mass dictatorships, both before and after the Second World War; his latest publication on this theme is the edited volume *Popular Opinion in Totalitarian Regimes. Fascism, Nazism, Communism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2009).

Enzo Fimiani is director of the Provincial Library of Pescara (Italy). For many years, he taught contemporary history and history of political parties at the University of Chieti-Pescara. He has published books and essays on plebiscitary phenomena in Europe, political propaganda, Italian fascism, World War II, including: “Per una storia delle teorie e pratiche plebiscitarie nell’Europa moderna e contemporanea”, in *Annali dell’Istituto Storico Italo-Germanico in Trento* (Bologna, 1995); and *Vox populi? Pratiche plebiscitarie in Francia, Italia, Germania (secoli XVIII–XX)* (Bologna: CLUEB 2010).

Wendy Z. Goldman is Professor in the Department of History, Carnegie Mellon University, and is a political and social historian of Russia. She is the author of two books on Stalinist terror, *Inventing the Enemy. Denunciation and Terror in Stalin’s Russia* (New York: Cambridge University Press 2011), and *Terror and Democracy in the Age of Stalin. The Social Dynamics of Repression* (New York: Cambridge University Press 2007), which focus on the issue of

mass participation in the terror. She is also the author of *Women at the Gates: Gender and Industry in Stalin's Russia* (New York: Cambridge University Press 2002), a study of Soviet women and industrialization in the 1930s, *Women, the State and Revolution: Soviet Family Policy and Social Life, 1917–1936* (New York: Cambridge University Press 1993), and numerous articles on Soviet social history.

Peter Heumos received his PhD from Ruhr University of Bochum in 1972 and was, until 2003, research fellow at the Collegium Carolinum in Munich. His fields of research are social aspects of modern Czech/Czechoslovak history (mainly peasant and working-class movements) and the political history of East Central Europe immediately after World War II with particular regard to Socialist and Social Democratic parties and their relations to Western European left-wing parties and the Socialist International. This is also the topic of one of his recent publications, as editor, *Europäischer Sozialismus im Kalten Krieg. Briefe und Berichte 1944–1948* (Frankfurt: Campus 2004).

Ralph Jessen is Professor of Modern History at the University of Cologne, Germany. As a social historian he has published on several topics of modern Germany history, including on police, crime and welfare state in nineteenth-century Germany, on the history of academic elites in the German Democratic Republic, on collective memory and on the history of the Revolution of 1989 in East Germany. His books include *Akademische Elite und kommunistische Diktatur. Die ostdeutsche Hochschullehrerschaft in der Ulbricht-Ära* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1999) and, as a co-editor, *Zivilgesellschaft als Geschichte. Studien zum 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften 2004).

Stephan Merl is Professor of East European History at Bielefeld University and honorary doctor of State Pedagogical University Yaroslavl', Russian Federation, and Mongolian State University of Education, Ulan Bator, Mongolia. His current research interests are comparative history of dictatorships, cultural, social and economic history of Russia and the Soviet Union, comparative history of consumption, Sovietization and Destalinisation in Eastern Europe. The topic of his forthcoming book is *Politische Kommunikation in Diktaturen*.

Donnacha Ó Beacháin is Lecturer in International Relations at the School of Law and Government, Dublin City University, Ireland. He has currently a three year EU funded Marie Curie Fellowship to research the post-Soviet color revolution phenomenon and an IRCHSS Fellowship to evaluate the role of the EU and OSCE in the post-Soviet frozen conflicts. He has conducted extensive field research in the former USSR and was based in the region, in particular the Caucasus and Central Asia, from 2000–2008. He most recent books include *The Destiny of the Soldiers: Fianna Fáil, Irish Republicanism and the IRA* (New York: Macmillan 2010), *The Colour Revolutions in the Post-Soviet States: Successes and Failures* (New York: Routledge 2010), and *Life in Post-Communist Eastern Europe After EU Membership* (New York: Routledge 2011), which he has co-edited.

Frank Omland lives in Hamburg and works at a counseling center. Research and publications on the history of the Weimar Republic as well as National Socialism in Kiel and Hamburg. He belongs to a research group investigating the history of National Socialism in Schleswig-Holstein and is a member of its steering committee since 2003. Research focus: elections and plebiscites 1919–1938.

Werner J. Patzelt is Professor of Political Science at the TU Dresden. His main fields of research are comparative politics, comparative legislative studies, problems of political communication and political institutions. He is the author of *Parlamente und ihre Macht. Kategorien und Fallbeispiele institutioneller Analyse* (Baden-Baden: Nomos 2005); (ed.), *Evolutionärer Institutionalismus. Theorie und empirische Studien zu Evolution, Institutionalität und Geschichtlichkeit* (Würzburg: Ergon 2007); (ed. with Michael Edinger), *Politik als Beruf. Neue Perspektiven auf ein klassisches Thema* (Wiesbaden: VS-Verlag 2010).

Hedwig Richter teaches at the Department of History at Greifswald University. In 2008 she received her PhD in modern history from the University of Cologne. She is the author of *Die DDR* (Paderborn: Schöningh 2009) and *Pietismus im Sozialismus. Die Herrnhuter Brüdergemeine in der DDR* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2009). Her research fields also include the history of labor migration and the history of elections.

Mark B. Smith is Lecturer in Modern History at the University of Leeds. He is the author of *Property of Communists: the Urban Housing Program from Stalin to Khrushchev* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010). His current research concerns social welfare in late imperial Russia and the USSR, and transnational ties between East and West in early Cold War Europe.

Gleb Tsipursky is an assistant professor at the Ohio State University at Newark. His research interests include popular culture, consumption, leisure, youth, social control, policing, violence, and the Cold War, in socialist settings and in comparative contexts. His publications have appeared in the United States, France, Germany, Canada, England, and Russia. He is currently completing a project on Soviet youth and popular culture during the early Cold War, and starting a new study on volunteer socialist militias during the Cold War.

Markus Urban is a Public Historian and works as a freelance lecturer and author in Nuremberg, Germany. His doctoral thesis dealt with the Nazi Party Rallies. He published *Die Konsensfabrik. Funktion und Wahrnehmung der NS-Reichsparteitage, 1933–1941* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2007).

Index

absentee certificate 259, 299,
300
acclamation 19, 25, 41, 44, 46,
48, 55, 114–116, 132, 134, 192,
262
accommodation function 83,
142
Afghanistan 134
Africa 11, 126, 127, 213
Akaev, Askar 210, 221, 223
Amendola, Giovanni 174
Arab spring 11
Arendt, Hannah 12, 311
arrests 104, 147, 149, 150, 152,
154, 156, 158, 159, 161, 168,
169, 279
Asia 11, 126, 204–207, 209, 210,
213–216, 218, 220, 221, 223–
225
Austria 47, 235, 236, 243, 246,
249, 257, 264
authoritarianism 10, 11, 82–84,
88, 99, 133, 134, 137, 141,
204–206, 214, 224
closed 10, 130, 131, 133, 139,
243
competitive 10, 130, 133, 134,
139
electoral 11, 27, 88, 97–99,
130, 133, 134, 139, 142

ballot
Australian 19, 20, 105
booth 16, 19, 25–27, 42, 60,
104, 105, 108, 109, 111,
119, 130, 132, 182, 208,
213, 248, 258, 264, 296,
316, 322, 323, 329
box 9, 13, 15, 19, 25, 26, 104,
105, 107–109, 111, 114,
131, 168, 182, 202, 208,
231, 235, 245, 248, 249,
264, 272, 294–296, 297,
302, 306, 309, 323, 324
furnishing of ballot station
64, 202, 248, 258
notes on 26, 291, 303, 306,
310, 322, 324–327, 330
paper 19, 26, 29, 42, 45, 61,
62, 104, 107–109, 118, 131,
132, 182, 183, 190, 208,
209, 233, 235, 248–250,
264–267, 270–272, 277,
296, 306, 310, 316, 322–
324, 326, 327, 329, 330
secret 9, 16–20, 42, 103–105,
108, 110, 119, 122, 137,
147, 150, 151, 153, 159,
160, 162, 164, 169, 182,
192, 193, 202, 240, 254,
258, 264, 265, 277, 278,
280, 282, 295, 296, 302,
303, 314, 316

- station 9, 16, 42, 52, 64, 107,
 110, 131, 141, 183, 208,
 215, 236, 248, 249, 258,
 263, 264, 266, 267, 272,
 293, 294, 296, 297, 299,
 301, 316, 321
- bargaining, haggling 17, 23, 29,
 62, 75, 96, 107, 118–120, 157,
 181, 190, 277, 287, 289, 305,
 306
- Beecher, Henry Ward 24
- Belorussia 103, 215, 309, 317–
 323, 328, 329, 335
- Berlin 108, 119, 267, 268
- Bismarck, Otto von 111, 238
- Bottai, Giuseppe 21, 176
- Bregman, Solomon L. 158
- Brezhnev, Leonid 99, 118, 206,
 297, 301, 305, 311
- Brunei 126
- Bukharin, Nikolai 150, 151
- bureaucracy 16, 24, 82, 95, 98,
 149
- candidates 9, 26, 27, 29, 46, 59,
 60, 62–64, 66–70, 73, 74, 77,
 85, 94, 95, 106–108, 118, 119,
 129, 141, 142, 147, 150, 151,
 153, 159, 160, 162, 164, 165,
 169, 187, 189–192, 200–202,
 208–214, 216–218, 221, 237,
 277–279, 281–288, 290, 293,
 295–302, 304, 306, 310, 314–
 317, 320, 322–327, 329
- Catholic Church 43, 179, 184,
 272
- celebrations 21, 23, 49, 55, 65,
 73, 84–88, 97, 104, 107, 115,
 116, 177, 232, 234, 244, 262,
 263, 273, 310
- Central Committee 149, 150,
 169, 315, 321
- charisma 220, 261, 262
- China 21, 28, 126, 132, 214, 215
- CIS, Commonwealth of
 Independent States 214, 215
- clergy 20, 25, 61, 106, 109, 113,
 118–120, 150, 182, 280, 314
- clientelism 69, 206
- Cold War 14, 22, 81, 92, 189,
 207, 223, 310, 315
- collectivism 25, 27, 116, 117,
 177, 178, 180, 247, 312
- collectivization 149, 152, 206
- communication 17, 22, 26, 28,
 29, 62–64, 72, 75, 77, 78, 86,
 117, 118, 120, 121, 147, 231,
 244, 321, 322, 324–327, 329
- Communist Party of
 Czechoslovakia 187–192, 195,
 197–201, 203
- Communist Party of the Soviet
 Union (bolshhevik) 61, 66, 71,
 75, 147, 158, 159, 166, 315,
 318
- conformism 14, 23, 25–27, 67,
 84, 90, 94, 98, 117, 175, 180,
 184, 198, 200, 208, 249, 250,
 276, 280
- consensus 13, 14, 19, 21, 23, 25,
 39, 67, 70, 107, 114, 116, 117,
 121, 142, 173–175, 179–184,
 224, 231–233, 237, 239, 242,
 244, 246, 247, 249–251, 272,
 276, 280, 311, 329
- Constituent Assembly 66
- constitution 20, 22, 41, 45, 60,
 61, 63–65, 67, 68, 71–75, 77,
 78, 86, 105, 114, 200, 204,
 219, 220, 241
- Weimar (Germany) 22, 41, 48
- Soviet (1936) 20, 21, 22, 60,
 61, 64, 68, 71, 75, 78, 103,
 150, 151, 157, 276, 277, 279

- corporatism 237, 238
- corruption 119, 128, 139, 167,
168, 206, 209, 210, 223, 231,
276, 298, 303, 306
- Czechoslovakia 15, 28, 98, 186–
202
- democracy 9, 10, 20, 28, 41, 42,
50, 68, 74, 111, 126–128, 147,
149, 151–155, 168, 187, 192,
200, 205, 207, 211, 221, 222,
224, 234, 237, 239, 248, 271,
272, 276, 283, 296
- denunciation 14, 67, 147, 159,
273, 304, 322
- discipline 19, 20, 23, 24, 31, 82,
89, 117, 137, 145, 175, 313
- dissenting votes 14, 26, 27, 29,
62, 104, 107, 108, 117, 132,
184, 192, 201, 202, 216, 217,
276, 316, 329
- Duma (Russia) 66
- education 24, 71–74, 83, 87, 91,
93, 94, 120, 157
- Eigensinn 27, 310, 313
- election, elections
 avoiding participation in 63,
 107, 118, 120, 121, 183,
 184, 189, 200, 213, 259,
 266, 270, 317, 327
- boycott 118, 120, 143, 223,
 313
- campaign 9, 17, 22, 23, 29,
 43, 60, 61, 63–65, 67, 68,
 70–77, 86, 87, 103, 106,
 115, 116, 118, 131, 133,
 134, 142, 182, 186, 187,
 195, 196, 204, 206, 209–
 211, 213, 214, 220, 243,
 244, 255, 259, 260–262,
 271, 310, 313, 315, 317,
 320, 328, 329
- committee 87, 107, 108, 204,
 215, 224, 258, 264, 266,
 270, 287, 297, 309, 315,
 316, 320, 323
- competitive 10–12, 22, 23, 61,
 112, 114, 129, 134, 187,
 191, 204, 209, 210, 213,
 226, 238, 243, 295, 310
- fraud 11, 15, 27, 43, 110, 118,
 126, 130, 131, 133–135,
 138–140, 143, 147, 206,
 208, 210, 214, 215, 223,
 224, 248, 258, 264, 265,
 273, 306, 316
- local 14, 15, 28, 69, 126, 168,
 267, 270, 284, 289, 315,
 317, 329
- meeting 9, 17, 22, 25, 26, 29,
 48–52, 55, 56, 59, 64, 67–
 69, 74, 77, 88, 95, 106, 118,
 131, 163, 177, 182, 189,
 210–212, 244, 246, 247,
 261, 287, 314, 315, 320, 329
- practices 17, 18, 29, 42, 60,
 67, 83, 84, 88, 91, 96, 103–
 105, 107–115, 132, 190,
 201, 208, 213, 231, 232,
 255, 256, 297, 314, 323
- results 23, 27, 42, 43, 109,
 115, 126, 131, 133, 134,
 141, 164, 183, 189, 192,
 200, 255, 267, 271, 315,
 316, 328
- single-list 22, 28, 107, 112,
 235, 237, 250
- surveillance of 18, 42, 43, 63,
 107, 108, 130, 182, 248,
 259, 265, 273, 303, 330
- electorate 19, 20, 22, 24–28, 44,
59, 103, 106, 109, 115, 118,

- 128–130, 135, 151, 152, 183,
205, 210, 213, 216, 221, 223,
225, 249, 251, 256–258, 260–
262, 265, 266, 270, 271, 314,
315, 321, 322
- Elektrozavod 76, 156
- Engels, Friedrich 319
- equality 44, 105, 110, 111, 239
- Eritrea 126
- Europe 11, 12, 14–16, 22, 29,
31, 32, 35, 36, 44, 58, 101,
103, 123, 126, 134, 136, 137,
174, 179, 202, 210, 214, 215,
225, 226, 232, 234, 235, 253,
312
- Evreinov, Nikolai N. 156, 158,
159
- exclusion 12, 24, 27, 47, 184,
199, 257, 266, 281, 314
- Ezhov, Nikolai I. 149, 150
- factory 67, 74, 86, 87, 93, 147,
155–165, 186–198, 200, 201,
314, 319, 320
- Fascism 11–13, 16, 21, 22, 25,
26, 28, 149, 150, 165, 173–
184, 250
- Five-year-plan 154, 207
- Foucault, Michel 19
- Fraenkel, Ernst 48
- France 31, 44, 122, 241
- Frank, Hans 241
- Frick, Wilhelm 40, 45, 48, 259,
264
- gender 21, 28, 75, 106, 156, 315
- Georgia 214, 226
- German Democratic Republic
5, 15, 25, 29, 69, 78, 88, 97,
103, 105, 106, 108, 109, 112–
117, 120, 121, 126, 133, 137,
141, 185, 312, 313
- German Empire 51, 54, 110,
249, 255, 256, 267
- Germany 11–16, 22, 26, 28, 30,
31, 42–44, 47, 50, 54–56, 88,
97, 99, 105, 106, 110, 111,
114, 115, 132, 150, 181, 231–
238, 241–243, 245, 247, 250,
252, 254, 255, 264, 269, 271–
273
- Gestapo 270, 272
- Glasnost 205, 209, 279, 290
- Goebbels, Joseph 43–45, 51, 52,
57, 259, 261, 271, 273, 274
- Gorbachev, Mikhail 99, 207,
209, 224, 331, 333
- Göring, Hermann 44, 51, 56
- grassroot participation,
democracy 82, 84, 89, 90–97,
200, 279
- Great Britain 18, 213
- Great Terror (USSR) 22, 67,
147, 149, 168
- Hamburg 264, 267, 268, 273
- Hess, Rudolf 50
- Himmler, Heinrich 45, 259
- Hindenburg, Paul von 42, 43,
235, 242, 251, 260, 261
- Hitler, Adolf 13, 22, 31, 34, 40–
58, 78, 113, 124, 180, 232,
235–241, 244, 245, 247, 248,
251–254, 257, 260–263, 271,
272, 274, 275
- humiliation 25, 112, 117, 180,
231, 266
- Hungary 15
- ideology, ideological 23, 47, 55,
82, 88, 89, 97, 104, 114, 148,
240, 249, 262, 271, 281, 323,
327

- inclusion, integration 11, 19, 27,
47, 60, 83–85, 184, 201, 234,
240
- individuality 24, 84, 110
- industrialization 149, 152, 162,
169, 206, 311, 317, 318
- industry 150, 186, 188, 189, 191,
192, 195, 201
- Iran 133
- Islam 20, 21, 137
- Italy 11, 13, 16, 21, 22, 26, 28,
88, 97, 99, 173, 174, 178–182,
231–234, 237, 238, 241, 246,
247, 249, 273
- Jalolov, Abdulhafiz 217, 218
- Jews 45, 56, 176, 259, 266, 271,
272, 318
- Kaganovich, Lazar M. 153
- Karimov, Islam 211, 217, 218,
220, 221
- Kazakhstan 214
- Khrushchev, Nikita 69, 72, 81–
85, 87, 89, 90, 94–101, 311,
318, 319, 321, 322, 329
- Kirov, Sergei M. 149, 152, 169,
171
- Klemperer, Victor 42, 180, 248,
251
- Komsomol 81–85, 87–100, 279
- Kosygin, Alexei 291
- Kulov, Felix 210
- Kyrgyzstan 208, 209, 212, 213,
216–219, 221, 223, 226
- Latour, Bruno 19
- League of Nations 42, 235, 242,
254, 257
- legitimization 9, 11, 14–16, 18,
20–24, 54, 65, 68, 77, 88, 91,
99, 114, 121, 133, 137, 141,
178, 179, 181, 213, 223, 224,
235, 237–239, 249
- Leningrad 93, 149, 150, 152,
316, 317, 321
- literacy 24, 206
- localism 28, 195
- loyalty 13, 18, 19, 21, 23, 25, 28,
99, 107, 140, 142, 208, 218,
221, 262, 310, 312, 313, 317,
323, 325, 327, 329
- Lübeck 266, 268
- Malenkov, Georgii M. 75, 317,
318, 325, 329, 335
- Marx, Karl 319
- Marxism 65, 114, 201, 207, 254,
259
- Matteotti, Giacomo 244
- media 63, 67, 68, 71, 72, 75, 76,
77, 180, 206, 210, 212, 214,
223, 244, 260, 317, 321
- Mexico 126
- Mikhailov, Nikolai
Alesandrovich 59
- Minsk 6, 75, 309, 317–322, 325,
326, 328, 330, 332, 335
- mobilization 23, 39, 56, 115,
121, 135, 184, 235, 238, 243,
244, 246, 315
- modernity 11, 16, 18, 20–24, 28,
65, 68, 70, 111, 121, 206, 233
- Molotov, Vyacheslav 77, 284
- Moscow 9, 21, 59, 63, 64, 69,
70, 74–76, 79, 82, 85–87, 89–
92, 96, 100, 150, 152, 156,
161, 167, 185, 320–322
- Moscow show trials 150
- Müller, Ludolf 113
- music 9, 26, 53, 85–88, 97, 104,
107, 186, 201, 209, 263, 321,
323

- Mussolini, Benito 13, 21, 88,
175–182, 184, 231, 238, 239,
242, 245, 252, 253, 271
- National Socialism 11–13, 16,
22, 26, 28, 30, 31, 36, 39–52,
54–57, 88, 97, 99, 110–112,
116, 132, 187, 231–248, 250,
252–257, 259–262, 266–268,
270–274, 280, 311, 312
- nationalism 28, 53, 135, 174,
179, 180, 209, 210, 212, 231,
236, 250
- Nazarbayev, Nursultan 214,
216, 217, 220, 221
- New York City 24
- newspapers 21, 111, 160, 161,
244, 254, 261, 265, 271, 319
- Niyazov, Saparmurat 216, 222
- NKVD, People's Commissariat
of Internal Affairs 149, 152,
154, 156, 161, 162, 168
- nomination 17, 59, 63, 67–70,
187–189, 192, 202, 209, 217,
221, 284, 315, 329
- non-voters 27, 42, 109, 208,
250, 259, 265, 266, 271, 272,
300, 316
- NSDAP 13, 40, 42, 44, 48, 50,
53, 237, 250, 251, 255–257,
259–264, 266–268, 270
- Nuremberg Laws 51
- Nuremberg Rally 49–52, 54
- obedience 16, 17, 24, 103, 175,
205
- opposition 26, 83, 84, 89–91,
95, 98, 129, 190, 191, 194,
196, 198, 200, 204, 206, 208–
211, 213, 214, 216, 217, 221–
223, 225, 255, 257, 258, 270,
271, 272
- OSCE, Organization for Security
and Co-operation in Europe
214, 215, 222, 225
- parliamentarianism 41, 65, 66,
68, 136, 137, 206, 210–212,
214, 215, 221–223
- parliaments 9, 17, 40, 44, 56, 59,
60, 68, 127, 128, 136–138,
140, 178, 213, 215, 222, 240,
254, 329
- paternalism 76, 317, 327
- patriotism 26, 149, 174, 231,
245, 249, 312, 323
- performance 18, 19, 23, 47, 53,
55, 62, 64, 69, 77, 104, 116,
215, 217, 248, 262, 273
- performative self-contradiction
23, 114, 116, 273, 298
- petition 19, 29, 62, 69, 75, 310,
313, 322, 327, 330
- plebiscitary Caesarism 135
- plebiscites 9, 12–14, 16, 17, 20,
22, 26, 39, 41–52, 54–56, 113,
133, 135, 138, 140, 150, 173,
176, 178–185, 218–220, 231–
243, 245–250, 254, 257, 258,
260–262, 264, 265, 273
- pluralism 11, 139
- Poland 15, 25, 27, 32, 36, 56,
103, 112, 117, 134
- Politburo 152, 153, 207
- political technology 18, 20–22
- populism 66–68, 71, 82, 89, 177,
210
- Post-communism 11, 12, 27
- Potsdam 268
- Prague 186, 190, 191, 197, 198,
201, 203
- Prague spring 198
- preference falsification 25, 27,
83, 88, 141

- propaganda 10, 12, 14, 23, 26,
29, 64, 67, 77, 85, 147, 233,
254, 259, 260, 262, 264, 273
- protest 15, 24, 110, 112, 189,
223, 244, 291, 293, 295, 300,
301, 309, 312, 313, 325
- Prussia 255
- public opinion 62, 180, 233,
240, 241, 310, 311, 325
- purge 150, 153, 155, 163, 167,
169, 305
- Qatar 126
- radio 44, 51, 132, 149, 177, 244,
260, 261, 265
- Rakhmonov, Imomali 219, 222
- re-election 128, 129, 136, 285
- regimes
neo-authoritarian 12
totalitarian 10, 14, 59, 60, 121,
132, 139, 184, 204, 238, 337
- Reichstag 5, 6, 13, 22, 39–42,
44–48, 50–52, 56, 57, 234–
237, 248, 249, 254, 255, 257,
264, 266–268, 270, 274
- religion 24, 53, 109, 119, 242,
243
- representation 9, 18, 23, 24, 56,
67, 121, 136–139, 164, 187
- repression 91, 92, 112, 117,
147–149, 168, 169, 174, 200,
225, 249, 250, 266, 273, 277–
279, 281, 286, 295, 305
- revolution, Russian 20, 61, 66,
72, 73, 87, 319
- ritual 14, 16, 19, 23, 25, 27, 47,
53, 56, 59, 88, 141, 148, 151,
232, 263
- Rocco, Alfredo 241, 253
- Rome 176, 177, 180, 183, 245,
247
- Rousseau, Jean-Jacques 60, 110
- Russia 207, 214, 226
- Rykov, Aleksei 150, 151
- Saar 13, 34, 235, 272
- Sandys, Edwin Duncan 59, 60
- Saudi Arabia 126
- Schleswig–Holstein 6, 58, 253–
255, 259, 261, 263, 266–272
- Schuschnigg, Kurt 46
- SCO, Shanghai Cooperation
Organization 214
- Shelepin, Alexander
Nikolayevich 81, 82, 85, 95
- Shura 137
- Shvernik, Nikolay Mikhailovich
152, 153, 155, 156, 158, 159,
167, 169
- slogans 26, 39, 64, 77, 104, 141,
149, 156, 168, 244, 245, 247,
261, 263
- Social Democrats 105, 110, 194,
268, 270, 273, 338
- South Africa 213
- sovereignty 9, 21, 59–63, 65–68,
70, 71, 74, 77, 78, 116, 236,
239, 257, 276
- Soviet democracy 20, 21, 28,
59–70, 72, 76, 78, 83, 85, 86,
104, 114, 147, 149–151, 153,
155, 159, 160, 162–164, 166–
169, 206, 207, 213, 224, 276,
280, 302, 305, 314
- Soviet, Supreme of the USSR 5,
6, 21, 36, 59–63, 66–70, 73–
77, 80, 84–86, 89, 97, 150,
151, 207, 208, 212, 277–280,
284, 287, 290, 291, 293, 298–
301, 309, 310, 314, 317, 319,
320, 322, 328, 329, 334, 335
- Sowjetische Militäradmini-
stration (SMAD) 22

- Sozialistische Einheitspartei
 Deutschlands (SED) 15, 106–
 110, 113, 120
- Stalin, Josef 14, 20, 22, 60, 62–
 66, 69–76, 78, 79, 82, 91, 97,
 99, 104, 148, 150, 152, 153,
 166, 167, 209, 276, 280, 295,
 317, 318, 321
- Sudetenland 54, 55, 234, 235,
 243, 246, 257
- suffrage 15, 21, 22, 24, 42, 60,
 61, 71, 72, 110–113, 121, 182,
 232, 233, 238, 239, 248, 250,
 258, 316
- universal 9, 20–22, 24, 61, 67,
 103, 105, 110, 112
- women's 20, 21, 28, 40, 111,
 239, 250
- symbol 16, 18, 19, 20, 21, 23,
 47, 49, 65, 114, 116, 121, 133,
 134, 140, 141, 186, 233, 242,
 244, 246, 288, 293
- Tajikistan 208, 209, 212, 213,
 216–219, 222
- Thaw era 82, 83, 89, 90, 98
- Tomskii, Mikhail P. 154, 155
- trade unions 68, 147, 152–165,
 168, 169, 186–192, 194–199,
 201
- traditions 21, 22, 28, 48, 50, 55,
 66, 69, 91, 92, 111–113, 200,
 205, 233, 234, 242, 270, 314
- Trotskyists 150, 155
- Turkmenistan 208, 210–212,
 214–220, 222, 225
- Ukraine 25, 103, 156, 171, 214,
 226, 310
- Ulbricht, Walter 129
- unanimity 60, 62, 65–67, 71,
 141, 142, 175, 180, 183, 184,
 191, 246, 250, 254, 299
- United Arab Emirates 126
- university 92, 94, 95, 113, 210,
 295
- USSR 5, 6, 9, 14, 15, 20–23, 25,
 26, 28, 30, 31, 35, 36, 59–63,
 68, 70, 71, 73, 74, 78–83, 85,
 86, 88, 91, 92, 94, 99, 103,
 110–112, 118, 121, 147, 150,
 169–171, 181, 205, 207, 209,
 219, 221, 224, 225, 276, 278–
 280, 300, 301, 309–312, 314–
 320, 322, 323, 328, 329, 332
- utopia 54, 89, 98, 115, 326
- Uzbekistan 208, 210–213, 216–
 221
- Vatican 184
- violence 12, 104, 129, 132, 133,
 173–175, 231, 233, 248, 324
- Volksgemeinschaft 12, 36, 39,
 47, 52, 54, 57, 260, 262–264,
 271–273, 280
- voter registration 24, 40, 62, 63,
 130, 209, 210, 217, 258, 320
- voter turnout 16, 47, 62, 67,
 104, 107, 109, 111, 112, 114,
 116, 120, 121, 183, 207, 208,
 212, 213, 215–217, 219, 225,
 254, 258, 259, 266, 272, 280,
 289, 299, 305, 316, 328
- voting
 collective 23, 110, 114, 238,
 247
- culture of 17, 28, 60, 70, 99,
 104, 113, 134, 276, 305
- invalid 45, 132, 208, 266, 271,
 272, 302, 316
- materiality of 18, 19, 104,
 105, 108, 121, 248, 259

- public 27, 66, 112, 296
techniques of 18, 19–24, 26,
28, 104, 105, 108, 110, 115,
132
- Vyshinskii, Andrei 20
- wages 73, 154, 157, 160, 167,
169, 198, 325
- Wahlschleppdienst 258, 266
- Webb, Sidney and Beatrice 59,
60, 62
- Weber, Max 117
- Weimar Republic 13, 22, 40, 41,
42, 45, 48, 111, 255, 258, 260,
262, 264
- World War I 20, 43, 66, 174,
175, 177, 231
- World War II 52, 55, 59, 70, 82,
121, 318, 325
- workers 13, 68, 74, 76, 78, 85,
87, 98, 106, 110, 118, 147,
148, 151, 152, 154–157, 159–
169, 181–183, 186–191, 193,
196, 198–202, 255, 257, 269,
270, 273, 313, 314, 319, 325
- works council 186–197, 200,
201
- Yaroslav' oblast 277, 300, 301
- youth 61, 64, 71–73, 75, 81–92,
94–99, 107, 120, 167, 177,
181, 326
- Zhdanov, Andrei 150, 151, 153,
154, 166, 169
- Zhukov, Georgii 70
- Zimbabwe 134

History

Gábor Klaniczay, Michael Werner, Ottó Gecser (eds.)

Multiple Antiquities – Multiple Modernities

Ancient Histories in Nineteenth Century European Cultures

2011, 577 pages, ISBN 978-3-593-39101-4

Axel Jansen

Alexander Dallas Bache

Building the American Nation through Science and
Education in the Nineteenth Century

2011, 353 pages, ISBN 978-3-593-39355-1

Sebastian Jobs, Alf Lüdtke (eds.)

Unsettling History

Archiving and Narrating in Historiography

2010, 253 pages, ISBN 978-3-593-38818-2

Angelika Epple, Angelika Schaser (eds.)

Gendering Historiography

Beyond National Canons

2009, 244 pages, ISBN 978-3-593-38960-8

Mathias Albert, Gesa Bluhm, Jan Helmig,

Andreas Leutzsch, Jochen Walter (eds.)

Transnational Political Spaces

Agents – Structures – Encounters

2009, 322 pages, ISBN 978-3-593-38945-5

Martin Baumeister, Stefanie Schüler-Springorum (eds.)

»If You Tolerate This ...«

The Spanish Civil War in the Age of Total War

2008, 300 pages, ISBN 978-3-593-38694-2

Mehr Informationen unter
www.campus.de/wissenschaft

campus

Frankfurt · New York

Social Science

Tsypylma Darieva, Wolfgang Kaschuba,
Melanie Krebs (eds.)
Urban Spaces after Socialism
Ethnographies of Public Places in Eurasian Cities
2011, ca. 330 pages, ISBN 978-3-593-39384-1

Jörg Feuchter, Friedhelm Hoffmann, Bee Yun (eds.)
Cultural Transfers in Dispute
Representations in Asia, Europe and the Arab World
since the Middle Ages
2011, ca. 300 pages, ISBN 978-3-593-39404-6

Stefan Malthaner
Mobilizing the Faithful
Militant Islamist Groups and their Constituencies
2011, 273 pages, ISBN 978-3-593-39412-1

Elahe Haschemi Yekani
The Privilege of Crisis
Narratives of Masculinities in Colonial and
Postcolonial Literature, Photography and Film
2011, 320 pages, ISBN 978-3-593-39399-5

Hubert Heinelt, Eran Razin, Karsten Zimmermann (eds.)
Metropolitan Governance
Different Paths in Contrasting Contexts:
Germany and Israel
2011, 352 pages, ISBN 978-3-593-39401-5

Mehr Informationen unter
www.campus.de/wissenschaft

campus
Frankfurt · New York