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Culture 2000
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Hannah-Arendt-Institut
für Totalitarismusforschung e.V. an der
Technischen Universität Dresden

„Überwindung der
Diktaturen -
Dichter, Künstler
und Schriftsteller in
der Begegnung“

„Overcoming Dictatorships -
The Encounter of
Poets, Artists and Writers“



1st Project report

(April/May 2007)

I. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project is designed to offer an opportunity for artists, poets and writers of different European countries to have a dialogue during which they will discuss and exchange different experiences. While the writers, poets and artists are from countries which experienced authoritarian or totalitarian regimes – hence: Germany (DE), Italy (IT), Poland (PL), the Czech Republic (CZ), Hungary (HU) and Romania (RO) –, the results of the project will also be shown additionally in Great Britain (UK), a country which was not directly affected by dictatorships, but a country which nevertheless established authoritarian rules in other countries while acting as colonial power. This transfer between cultures is intended to reduce bias and help improve communication between Central Eastern and Western Europe. The reason for these prejudices lies primarily in Europe's dictatorial past, a past which impacts almost all countries of the continent and which has yet to be sufficiently dealt with by these countries. The East-West encounter also plays an important role in this project.

The participants speak about their experiences under dictatorships as well as about the influence of the political turning point on their artistic activities. Their diversity according to their generational and national bonds is both an advantage and a challenge. They may differ considerably in their motivation for joining the project (personal record of persecution, historical responsibility, or artistic curiosity); still, they are united in their will to exchange ideas and work together. Writers and poets read from their former works during the three-day workshops, thus giving the audience an understanding of their country's culture. Furthermore, new narrations and poems are written and translated for a multi-lingual anthology to be published in all participating countries. The touring exhibition prepared by the artists involved will have its grand opening at the University of Birmingham (UK) and will then travel through all involved countries from Western and Central European countries:

October 2008	Exhibition Opening at the University of Birmingham (UK)
November 2008	Wałbrzych/Cracow (PL)
December 2008	Ústi nad Labem (CZ)
January 2009	Budapest (HUN)
February 2009	Bucharest (ROM)
March 2009	Trento (IT)
April 2009	Dresden (D)

II. POETS, ARTISTS AND WRITERS

1. Lutz Rathenow (Writer)	Berlin (D)
2. Wolfgang Templin (Publicist - Guest)	Berlin (D)
3. Harald Hauswald (Photographer)	Berlin (D)
4. Ulf Göpfert (Sculptor)	Dresden (D)
5. Zsafia Balla (Poetress)	Budapest (HUN)
6. Magda Székely (Writer) (†)	Budapest (HUN)
7. Sándor Pinczehelyi (Artist)	Pécs (HUN)
8. Eduard Vacek (Writer)	Teplice (CZ)
9. Eva Kantůrková (Writer)	Prag (CZ)
10. Zbyněk Benýšek (Painter)	Prag (CZ)
11. Mikoláš Chadima (Musician, Poet - Guest)	Prag (CZ)
12. Jiří Dědeček (Musician, Poet - Guest)	Prag (CZ)
13. Ivan Klíma (Writer - Guest)	Prag (CZ)
14. Milan Knižak (Sculptor - Guest)	Prag (CZ)
15. Alessandro Tamburini (Writer)	Trento (IT)
16. Silvestro Lodi (Painter, Graphic Artist)	Venedig (IT)
17. Michele Zaggia (Graphic Artist)	Venedig (IT)
18. Gabriel Chifu (Writer)	Bukarest (ROM)
19. Denisa Pişcu (Poetress)	Bukarest (ROM)
20. Mirela Dauceanu (Artist)	Bukarest (ROM)
21. Vlad Nancă (Painter)	Bukarest (ROM)
22. Leszek Długosz (Poet)	Kraków (PL)
23. Zbigniew Czop (Sculptor)	Kraków (PL)
24. Aleksander Marek Zyśko (Sculptor)	Jeszkowice (PL)

III. WORKSHOP IN WAŁBRZYCH (30.03.-01.04.2007)

WRITERS AND POETS:

At the first Workshop the participants came to an agreement on the theme title „*Memories of dictatorship*“. Here the main focus should be the plurality of approaches and adaptations. Every participant should be free in his artistic, poetic and narrative work. There are four subtitles which reorganize the theme: *Experiences from a life in a dictatorship, overcoming dictatorships and the life after, living in freedom and measuring its meaning, Overcoming of hostility*.

ARTISTS:

They do not look at dictatorship as a type of government. They rather perceive dictatorship as a social phenomenon, still deeply rooted in politically transforming societies and affecting every person in a different way. So an artwork solely represents the individual mediation of reality experiences. The Artists should broach the issue of the changes which have been affecting individual life stories differently, depending on their home country and its former political system. The choice of exhibits and themes to be presented during the workshops in Ústi nad Labem (May 17th-19th 2007) and Budapest (October 12th-14th 2007) is led by the common wish to share these experiences.

IMPRESSIONS:



Top left:
Opening dinner in Książ castle

Top right:
Encounter of writers and poets

Left hand:
Sándor Pinczehelyi presents his work

IV. PUBLICATIONS

LITERARY ANTHOLOGY (to be published by the end of 2007):

This anthology contains participants' contributions and lectures of contemporary eye-witnesses and writers who participate as guests during the workshops (in original version incl. an English translation). They are completed by photographs documenting the project and a bibliographical introduction of the writers and poets. Participants will publicly read their contributions during the workshop in Budapest (October 12th-14th 2007) to a Hungarian audience. The Anthology is edited by Prof. Kristina Kaiserová (University of Ústí nad Labem) and Gert Röhrborn, Dipl.-Pol. (Hannah Arendt Institute, Dresden).

CATALOGUE OF EXHIBITION (to be published by October 2008)

The catalogue will consist out of two parts, following in the footsteps of projects like *After the wall. Art and culture in post-communist Europe*, ed. by Bojana Pejić and David Elliott, Stockholm 1999 (2 volumes). This exhibition was presented in the Moderna Museet in Stockholm and the Ludwig-Museum of Contemporary Art in Budapest in 2000. Taking a different approach the project presented here will focus exclusively on visual arts and concentrate on the six participating countries. The artworks' context communicates with the discussion of the participants on their manifold relations to the fascist and communist history, with the potential to overcome dictatorships through works of art, and the with possible effects of new dictatorships in the realms of technology, ideology and social life.

V. TEXTUAL CONTRIBUTIONS

...and I invented bon mots
to curse the darkness
this was less risky than lighting a candle.
We did not rush anywhere
and whenever we managed to find something
in the shops my wife always said:
Oh, thank you, little bolsheviks.



Aus: Jiří Dědeček, „Song for my wife“, vorgetragen in
Wałbrzych, 31. März 2007

And this is how years flew by
Fridays took turns with Sundays
and I kept thinking and I simply was not sure.
We kept ourselves cheerful
although some of our friends were locked up.
My wife always said: You should be getting
ready to go too.

And me the old fool
For ages I d been packed to go
I felt followed and shadowed and watched
and in the night, beside myself with terror
I heard the secret police in the dark
my wife always said I confessed my political
crimes in my sleep...

„...noch an der Humboldt-Universität stieß ich auf Wolfgang Leonhards „die Revolution entlässt ihre Kinder“ und zwar auf einigermäßen ungewöhnliche Weise. Ein Freund, begeisterter Sammler und Stöberer, hatte den Band wortwörtlich auf einer Müllhalde gefunden. Er lag dort mit einer Menge anderer SED-Literatur der fünfziger Jahre auf einem Haufen. Ein zufälliges Blättern brachte in einem Umschlag, der Walter Ulbricht – Referate verhiess, die Dünndruckausgabe von Leonhards Lösungsgeschichte vom Kommunismus zutage. Wie der Tarndruck des Ostbüros der SPD – in hohen Auflagen in die DDR geschmuggelt -, in die echte Parteiliteratur auf der Müllhalde geriet, blieb ein Rätsel. Hatte ein mäßig pflichteifriger SED-Genosse den ganzen Stapel ungelesen im Schrank gehabt und sich irgendwann des Ballastes entledigt?

Aus: Wolfgang Templin, „Lesen in der Diktatur
– eine persönliche Spurensuche“



Vortrag in Wałbrzych, 31. März 2007

Hatte ein vorsichtiger Abtrünniger die Tarnung genutzt, war verstorben und seine Familie entsorgte posthum die vermeintlichen ideologischen Überreste? Wie auch immer, Leonhard wurde für einige von uns zur Schlüssellektüre. Den Weg eines überzeugten Jungkommunisten, durch die Moskauer Parteschule der dreißiger Jahre gegangen und als jüngstes Mitglied der Gruppe Ulbricht nach Deutschland zurückgekehrt, seine Zweifel, Konflikte und die letztendliche Lösung vom Ulbrichtsystem, lasen ich nicht als historisches Dokument. Ich verschlang das Buch als Zeugnis eines existentiellen Konflikts, den ich selbst durchlebte, als mein Glaube an das Hoffnungsprojekt eines humanen Sozialismus immer brüchiger wurde...“

„...in my last novel, *Bagaglio leggero – Light luggage*, there is a different relation with the years of fascism and war, in a story that starts from finding of a second world war's bomb [...], and how it happens in these cases, it is necessary to clear out a certain area, often also to stop motorways and railways for a few hours, too. In our case, in the area to be cleared out there is also a retirement house [...]

This situation was very interesting for me: putting an element of surprise, and also of agitation, in a place that is more than any other the place of immobility indeed; a place, where nothing happens or can happen [...]



Aus: Beitrag von Alessandro Tamburini in Wałbrzych, 31. März 2007

Certainly, the bomb has a precise symbolic value in the story, too. The past is not behind us but is – as the bomb – right under our feet. The unexploded bomb is the past that reached but never left us, that lives with us, on our side, hidden for a long time. In a precise moment this past emerges again...

VI. EXEMPLARY WORKS OF ART



Top left:
Zbyněk Benýšek, *Pražský bufet* (1995)

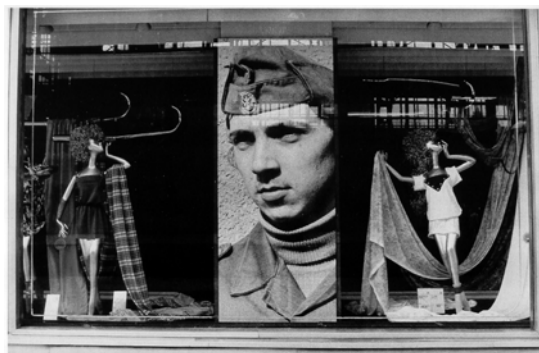
[From: Presentation in Wałbrzych, 31/03/2007]



Left:
Silvestro Lodi, *Enotria* (2003)

Right:
Silvestro Lodi im Atelier (o. J.)

[From: Lodi, Silvestro: *Vibrazioni*. exhibition catalogue Galleria d'Arte l'Occhio, February/march 2006; picture provided by the Artist]



Left below:
Harald Hauswald, *Centrum Warenhaus* (1982)

[From: Hauswald, Harald/Rathenow, Lutz: *Ost-Berlin. Leben vor dem Mauerfall*, Berlin 2005]

VII. WORKSHOP IN USTI NAD LABEM (May 17th-19th 2007)

The second workshop is not only a setting for the continued implementation of the project. There will also be time and space for memento, discussion and cultural exchange. First, MIKOLAŠ CHADIMA („*Rock and Dictatorship. On the role of music in the communist regime in the former ČSSR*“) will honour the project with a highly valued public speech (May 17th 2007, 17:30). Second, the participants will present examples of their artworks. On Friday morning students are welcome to use an opportunity to discuss with writers and poets about their experiences under dictatorships.



... in a small university
with great impetus

... and friendly
atmosphere,



We are going to meet...



... in a Bohemian Town
close to the river Elbe

... with a great European
history



VIII. CONTACT

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