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A b s t r a c t s

Heiko Haumann

“Heroes” and “the people” in Eastern Europe

A rapprochement

“Heroes” are an aid to orientation and identification. They express desires and aspirations of the “people” who define themselves according to them. At the same time, depending on circumstances and interests, they are constructed in different ways for the collective memory in order to influence individual behaviour. The connection between “hero” and “the people” is linked to freedom, hope and remembering. In Eastern Europe the frequent popularity of failed, suffering and yet proud “heroes” is particularly noticeable.

Eveline Passet

In the distorting mirror of history

German images of Ilya Ehrenburg

The life and work of the Russian writer Ilya Ehrenburg reflect the conflicts and dissonance which characterise the 20th century. The same applies to his reception in West and East Germany. In the FRG, the discussion surrounding Ehrenburg was one of the great debates of the 1960s in relation to the guilt of the war generation. For right-wing extremists, he was a hater of Germans and for some critics of Moscow, an agent of Stalin. In the GDR, the dispute regarding the publication of his memoirs was part of the wider debate on the de-Stalinisation and humanisation of socialism, which began in the wake of the 20th Party Conference of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1956. For higher-ranking officials in the SED, the memoirs were unacceptable for a long period of time because they regarded them as subversive dynamite in terms of their style and content. The control-obsessed organs of power, which wanted constant access to the inner lives of the people, found Ehrenburg’s intellectual tone dangerous.

Dietmar Neutatz

Identification and the creation of meaning

Integrative elements in the Soviet Union

During the Stalinist dictatorship and in the post-Stalinist Soviet system, integrative elements were also present alongside the known disciplining and repressive factors. These included the forced industrialisation, the “Great Patriotic War” and the technical progress which was symbolically reflected in space exploration, as well as the improved standard of living and stability during the Brezhnev years. While industrialisation has been over-emphasised as an integrative factor, the war and space exploration are still felt to be important in the collective memory, and play a key role in the creation of patriotic meaning in Russia.

Boris Dubin

A society of the adjusted

The Brezhnev era and its significance today

Adjustment and habit, fragmentation and levelling were features of everyday life during the later years of the Soviet Union. The Brezhnev era offered to the people more than the Soviet system ever could, above all, stability. The society paid for this with deformations: with double thinking, ambiguity and loss of trust, with a lack of differentiation and modernisation. The restoration under Putin follows on from the “golden age” of the Brezhnev era. Politics and culture make use of what is felt to be familiar to create a sense of “stability”, the keyword in today’s climate.

Thomas M. Bohn

“Resistance” and “insubordination” in Minsk

Resistive behaviour in the Soviet Union

Soviet Studies position non-conformism between intellectual dissent, counter-worlds offered by the church and traditional values. In general, the notion prevails that conscience and behaviour are different in the public and private arenas. In order to be able to categorise resistive behaviour among the “little people”, the terms “resistance” and “insubordination”, which have usefully been applied in NS and GDR research, are helpful. This is reflected in an analysis of behaviour among illegal settlers, deceived tenants and a Pentecostal community in Minsk after Stalin’s death. “Resistance” and “insubordination” are forms of withdrawal and deviation from the official order which are not necessarily politically motivated.

Ilshat Gimadeev, Jan Plamper

Tatarstan: the myth surrounding Musa Dzhaliil

A projection surface for identity

Musa Dzhaliil fought as a soldier on the German side in the Second World War in the Volga Tartar Idel-Ural prisoner of war legion until he joined an underground group. In 1944, he was executed in Plötzensee. From 1953, Dzhaliil was named national poet of Tatarstan, and became a mythical figure in which the history and identity of Tatarstan were reflected. It was because of him that the Tatars were able to shake off the collective suspicion of collaboration and live as full Soviet citizens. Today, his myth has been Islamised and Tatarised. In each case, the issue is the construction of identity and social and political integration.

Rainer Karlsch

Stalin, the bluff and the bomb

The confusion surrounding the first Soviet atomic test

On 11th July 1949, Stalin presented a Chinese delegation led by Liu Shaochi with an “atomic film” in Moscow. However, at that time, the Soviet Union had not yet conducted an atomic test. There are reasons to assume that Stalin deceived the Chinese by showing them a film taken from Germany in order to demonstrate Soviet military strength, and to underline the supremacy of the Soviet Union in the communist world.