

Pro-democratic Propaganda, Press Culture and Political Communication in the Weimar Republic

Conference on November 22, 2019, University of Bremen, ZeMKI

Get-Together with Film/Lecture on 21 November

The conference aims to address and bring together experts on pro-democratic political communication in the Weimar Republic. Specifically, it will focus on counterpropaganda against Nazi messages in the final phase of the Weimar Republic. The discussion will cover aspects of this counterpropaganda from a communication studies-perspective. However, we will gladly welcome any research from the history of ideas, science and art; social, political and cultural history; political science and other social science disciplines.

The contributions should deal with – but are not exclusively concerned – with the following subjects:

- the historical origins of counterpropaganda in the history of theory and ideas
- the communication- and press-historical contextualization of anti-fascist campaigns
- the organisational embedding of counter propaganda in the Weimar Republic
- biographies of central communicators, spin doctors and theorists of pro-democratic campaigns
- the contemporary press coverage of counterpropaganda
- the semiotic analysis of pro-democratic campaigns in the Weimar Republic
- the diffusion or termination of symbols and propaganda theories from the pro-democratic context after 1933 (also from a transnational and comparative perspective)
- possibilities and limits of the comparison of interwar counterpropaganda with current debates on hate and counter speech

An example illustrating the field of research: The three-arrows campaign of the Iron Front, initiated in 1932 under the leadership of the scientist Sergei Chakotin (also: Serge Chakotin, Serge Tchahhotine) and the SPD politician Carlo Mierendorff. The Iron Front built upon three pillars: the social democratic party, trade unions, working-class athletes & the Reichsbanner (pro-democratic paramilitary forces). Three arrows were their iconographic distinguishing feature, they shot down at the opponent, symbolically the National Socialist swastika (see among others the publications of Albrecht 1986; Averbeck-Lietz 2017; Vöhringer 2011; for a brief overview: Sax 2018). The field can be described as symptomatic, since previous

research on the three-arrows campaign has been conducted in a highly subject- and milieu-specific manner (cf. MacMaster 2011: 2). The works of Richard Albrecht (1986) and Marcel Böhles (2016) are standing in the tradition of social democratic historiography. Furthermore, one can differentiate between Margarete Vöhringer's approach to the history of ideas (2011), studies in the history of science (Greulich et al. 2007; Posudin 2015) and studies from communication scholars (Averbeck-Lietz 2017). Accordingly, the conference intends to transcend disciplinary boundaries, to redefine and condense the field of political communication aimed at defending the Weimar Republic. The three-arrows campaign is one of the many examples of these actions.

The conference will be held following a workshop on the history of communication of the League of Nations (DFG-Project "History of Communication of the League of Nations", project lead: Prof. Dr. Averbeck-Lietz, staff: Dr. Erik Koenen and Arne L. Gellrich). This workshop, hold on the 21st of November 2019, will be introduced with a keynote by Kaarle Nordenstreng (Prof. em. University of Tampere, Finland). Participation is also possible on request, but the number of participants is limited.

In the evening of the 21st of November, during a get-together, Boris Hars-Tschachotin, a documentary filmmaker and great-grandson of Sergei Tschachotin, will give a film-lecture on the topic of the following day, pro-democratic political communication in the final phase of the Weimar Republic.

Please send your anonymous abstracts of maximum 500 word as well as a separate file with your address data by March 15 for the blind review process to: sax@uni-bremen.de. Approvals will be sent to participants by the end of May 2019. Please also indicate whether you are interested in participating in the workshop on the history of communication of the League of Nations on the 21st of November. Conference fee: 15 euros (scientific staff), 30 euros (professors). Information on hotels / journey possibilities and the conference location will be provided later. Travel and accommodation costs cannot be covered.

Bremen, 21 January 2019

Simon Sax

Prof. Dr. Stefanie Averbeck-Lietz

Literature

- Albrecht**, Richard (1986): Symbolkrieg in Deutschland 1932: Sergej Tschachotin und der ‘Symbolkrieg’ der drei Pfeile gegen den Nationalsozialismus als Episode im Abwehrkampf der Arbeiterbewegung gegen den Faschismus in Deutschland. In: *Internationale wissenschaftliche Korrespondenz zur Geschichte der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung*, 22 (4), 498–533.
- Averbeck-Lietz**, Stefanie (2017): Persuasive Kommunikation und Behaviorismus. Serge Tchakhotines vergessenes Buch über die NS-Propaganda von 1939. In: Meyen, Michael/Wiedemann, Thomas (eds.), *Biografisches Lexikon der Kommunikationswissenschaft*. Köln: Herbert von Halem 2017. Retrieved from: <http://blexkom.halemverlag.de/tchakhotine/> (12/15/2018).
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- Greulich**, Karl Otto/Khodjakov, Alexey/Vogt, Annette/Berns, Michael W. (2007): Sergej Stepanovich Tschachotin: Experimental Cytologist and Political Critic (1883–1973). In: *Methods in Cell Biology*, 82, 725–734.
- MacMaster**, Neil (2011): Serge Chakhotin’s The Rape of the Masses (1939): the development of European propaganda c.1914-1960 and the Algerian War of Independence. Retrieved from: https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=2&ved=2ahUKEwii_cLA2abfAhUKDewKHZfBApgQFjABegQICBAC&url=https%3A%2F%2Fneilmacmaster.files.wordpress.com%2F2011%2F03%2Ffinalarticlechak.docx&usg=AOvVaw1oaRirrg9J0dGY6TFAtWjZ (12/15/2018).
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- Vöhringer**, Margarete (2011): A Concept in Application. How the Scientific Reflex Came to be Employed against Nazi Propaganda. In: *Contributions to the History of Concepts*, 6 (2), 105–123.