

S P E E C H

Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V.

RULE OF LAW PROGRAM
SOUTH EAST EUROPE
THORSTEN GEISSLER

July 2011

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"Communist Secret Police Agencies and the Cold War Propaganda Warfare"

SPEECH HELD AT THE OPENING OF A TRAVELING EXHIBITION
ORGANIZED WITHIN THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE EUROPEAN NET-
WORK OF OFFICIAL AUTHORITIES IN CHARGE WITH THE SECRET-POLICE
FILES, PARLIAMENTS PALACE, JULY 14TH, BUCHAREST

Let me welcome you to the official opening of this exhibition on behalf of the Rule of Law Program South East Europe of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation. The Konrad Adenauer Foundation is a German non profit and non governmental organization which is affiliated to the Christian Democratic Movement. We have more than 80 offices around the globe and work in more than 120 countries, our headquarters being in Germany. The Rule of Law Program works in Romania, Bulgaria, Moldova, Albania and the six republics that formerly composed Yugoslavia. Our aim is to promote democracy, an independent judiciary, respect for human and civil rights, to support the fight against corruption and to protect ethnic and social minorities. And it is also our objective to support lustration – coping with the past – and thus to protect the newly born democracies from their adversaries.

The representatives of Official Authorities in Charge of the Secret Police Files from Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Slovakia, Poland, Germany and the Czech Republic today held the annual meeting of their network in Bucharest and I am very happy that Konrad Adenauer Foundation was both invited to support and to observe this meeting.

One of the major targets of these institutions is to ensure a comprehensive educational and historic analysis of the working principles of communist secret police bodies based on scientific findings.

In all the countries of the socialist camp every citizen was a potential suspect and secret police agencies with thousands of regular and undercover agents tried to spy on their own population.

I find it rather irritating that quite a few people already seem to have forgotten

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what happened in Eastern Europe before the collapse socialist regimes.

In the part of Europe that was governed by Communists there were no democratically elected parliaments, there was no independent judiciary, there was no rule of law, and there was no respect for human and civil rights.

This exhibition does not only show how the communists tried to convince the peoples of their countries of the superiority of socialism, something that would by the way have been fully legitimate. It furthermore shows how communist regimes tried to prevent free access to western media and information sources thus denying their own peoples the right to research and build up their own opinion. Worse, those who dared to disagree with the regimes in public were severely punished and very often imprisoned under inhuman circumstances, Jilava prison being a good example for this.

The communists split up the world into two camps: the camp of the "good" led by the Soviet Union, standing for socialism, peace and "true democracy" and the camp of the "evil" led by the USA, standing for imperialism, supporting pro-fascist, reactionary and antidemocratic movements with the intention to launch a new imperialist war. As techniques they used appeal to authority, appeal to fear, appeal to prejudice, disinformation, demonizing the enemy, cult of personality, lying and deception, oversimplification, scapegoating, unstated assumption, and of course the victory of socialism was inevitable.

It is true that propaganda as a form of communication aimed at influencing the attitude of a community was not invented by communists, nor were they the only ones that used it. What distinguishes them was that they did not tolerate any

opposing view. Even more they openly admitted that they wanted a monopoly on information and truth. Read the telegram send to the Central Committee of the Communist Party and to Nicolae Ceausescu by the board of the Writers' Union: "Press is a Party instrument, Literature magazines should be fully communist, the press will have to promote the figure of the worker."

Those who disagreed had to live under suppression and in constant fear.

Romanian Cabinet Order No. 100 signed by Gheorghe Pintilie and Pantiusa Bodnarenko orders that: "All the Romanian citizens who keep ties of friendship with imperialist legations will be under the surveillance of the Securitate, with the advice to be sent to units of work."

"Ties of friendship with imperialist legations" that could be anything the communists did not like. So the citizens were not only deprived of basic civil rights like the freedom of speech, the quoted law offers such a large room for interpretation that they could never be sure to comply with the law whenever they uttered something that was not 100 % according to the party line. And exactly this was intended, people were meant to live in this atmosphere of uncertainty and fear.

Convictions were tough: life sentences of hard labour, several decades of hard labour, loss of civil rights, seizure of private property. Conditions in labour camps and prisons were degrading and inhuman.

Of course free access to Western media had to be prevented. Radio stations such as Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty, Deutsche Welle, BBC or the Voice of America were not only surveilled or monitored but intercepted and sometimes in-

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filtrated by secret agents, phone numbers were blocked, the American Library in Bucharest which had been opened together with the Romanian Library in New York in 1971 was under permanent surveillance and informers of the Securitate provided data about the people who visited this library.

After years under such deplorable conditions the peoples in the socialist countries took the fate of their lives into their own hands and overthrew the regimes, in this country in a bloody revolution in which many people lost their lives.

I understand that not all the hopes that went along with these revolutions turned into reality, the prosperity that is considered normal in other parts of Europe has not yet been achieved in this country. But gone are the days when food tickets were common, when a single state owned TV Station only broadcasted two hours a day and electricity often was provided only a few hours a day.

And from my point of view what is even more important is that nobody has to be afraid any more to be imprisoned for a political joke, people have free access to information, and are no longer denied the right to travel freely.

Supporting democracy and the rule of law, and the protection of civil and human rights are cornerstones of the work of our program and that is exactly the objective of this exhibition. So I wish to thank all those who planned, organized or support it together with Konrad Adenauer Foundation and I wish you as visitors that will find it both inspiring and informative. In this sense I wish this exhibition every possible success.