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The history of Russia and Germany in the destiny of the German academic

In memory of Bernd Bonwetsch

Annotation. The subject of the article is the collaboration of the German historian Bernd Bonwetsch, head of the Department of East European history of the Ruhr-University Bochum (Germany), subsequently the founding director of the German Historical Institute Moscow, with Kemerovo State University and the regional public organization West Siberian Center for German Studies (Kemerovo) until the death of the scientist in 2017. The center, created in 1999, united historians-Germanists and lecturers of the universities in Western Siberia. The interaction of Bernd Bonwetsch with the University and the West Siberian Center for German Studies (ZSTSGI) was unique in both format and form. Unique in the sense that this center and Kemerovo University are in the region very remote from Moscow, and at the same time one-of-a-kind in terms of intensity and variety of cooperation. The author of the article tries for the first time to outline the role and significance of the activity of the German scientist *in and for* the Russian province, to acquaint the reader with the evaluations and the judgments of the professor on the most important issues in the history of Russia and Germany in the 20th century. The sources for the article were Bonwetsch's published findings on his family, the German Wikipedia, Bonwetsch's notes on people and their destinies, his published articles based on the materials of the conferences organized by ZSTSGI, as well as meetings and discussions with the author.

Keywords: professor, Bonwetsch, Galaktionov, West Siberian Center for German Studies (ZSTSGI), cooperation, conference, 'school', tutorial (study guide), totalitarianism, democracy, overcoming the past

"Historians contribute to the formation of collective memory of the society"
Bernd Bonwetsch

The German historian Bernd Bonwetsch belongs to the post-war generation. Born in West Berlin, he well remembered the blockade of the city in 1948, when he, together with other boys, observed the planes of the Berlin airlift when the Western Allies carried supplies of food along with other cargoes. The boys called them 'sweet planes'.

Bernd Bonwetsch came from a family of German ancestors who came to Russia in the middle of the 19th century but retained his German citizenship. It was a large group of several families who lived in different regions. The Bonwetsch family lived in Saratov province. At the beginning of World War I, the family was forced to sell its agricultural machinery business and return to Germany. They settled in Berlin, where Bernd was born in 1940 in the family of the engineer Kurt Bonwetsch¹. At home, they never spoke Russian, and Bernd decided to study Slavic and Russian history on his own. From 1962 to 1967, he studied history and comparative pedagogy and completed a course in Slavic studies at the University of Hamburg and the Free University of Berlin. In 1968–69, he completed a course at Stanford University in California, studying the principles of archival science.

In 1972, Bernd Bonwetsch defended his thesis (Promotion) in Hamburg and since 1973 began his scientific and pedagogical activities, first at the Institute for Eastern European History and Area Studies at the University of Tübing, and then from 1980 to 2003, he was the long-time head of the Department of East European History at Ruhr-University Bochum. From 2003 to 2008, he was the founder and director of the German Historical Institute Moscow².

The subject of his scientific interests was mainly related to the history of Russia – the imperial, Soviet and post-Soviet periods. This research of Russia unfolded in line with the German socially critical school of the 70-80s in the 20th century. Bonwetsch was concerned with the economic aspects of Russia's participation in the military-political alliance of the Entente, the interrelationship between the domestic policy and the Cold War³.

Bonwetsch came for the first time to the Soviet Union, to Moscow, in the Soviet times, participating in the international congress of historians in 1980, where he met some Soviet historians of Russia. During perestroika, his circle of acquaintances expanded "from young employees of the Russian Academy of Sciences to the most ve-



¹ Bonwetsch B. *Mit und ohne Rußland. Eine familiengeschichtliche Spurensuche*. Essen, 2017. 168 S.

² Available at: https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bernd_Bonwetsch. Date of access 15.02.2018.

³ Bonwetsch B. *Kriegsallianz und Wirtschaftsinteressen. Die Stellung Rußlands in den Wirtschaftsplänen Englands und Frankreichs 1914–1917*. Düsseldorf. 1973; Bonwetsch B. *Kalter Krieg als Innenpolitik. Zu innenpolitischen Bedingungen des Ost-West-Konflikts nach 1945*; F. Quarthal, W. Setzler (Hg.), *Stadtverfassung, Verfassungsstaat, Pressepolitik*. Sigmaringen, 1980, pp. 230–249.

nerable academicians, such as Alexander Samsonov and Pavel Volobuev”⁴. However, at that time, this acquaintance could not result in any real cooperation with the Russian colleagues: the socio-political atmosphere prevented the openness of a professional dialogue. Such an opportunity only emerged after the construction of post-Soviet Russia statehood and began to develop further.



L.N. Korneva, Bernd Bonwetsch, Elsa-Marie (wife of Bernd Bonwetsch), 2015.

The accumulation of historical records in the archives, as well as the visit to the Soviet Union and participation in the congress, pushed the scientist to the engagement with the Russian revolutionary movement. In 1991, he published his monograph ‘The Russian Revolution of 1917. Social history from the liberation of peasants in 1861 to the October Revolution of 1917’⁵. Separate chapters of his book are devoted to the individual social strata and groups of the Russian population, whose economic and political circumstances pushed them towards revolutionary violence and ultimately predetermined the Bolshevik coup. The book was written not only based on the American archives, which were mainly used by the Western historians who wrote about Russia. Bonwetsch became one of the first German authors, who managed to work in the Russian archives during the perestroika years. He remembered with surprise and at the same time with gratitude the opportunity given to him to use the materials of the Soviet central archives. In addition, in his book, he relied on the mate-

⁴ Bonwetsch B. *Nemetsko-russkoe sotrudnichestvo. V pamiat' Yuriia Galaktionova. Natsional-socializm v Germanii: problemy izuchenii i preodoleniia: Izbrannye trudy* [German-Russian cooperation. In memory of Yuri Galaktionov. National Socialism in Germany: Problems of Study and Overcoming: Selected Works]. Kemerovo, 2006, p. 9.

⁵ Bonwetsch B. *Die russische Revolution 1917. Eine Sozialgeschichte von der Bauernbefreiung 1861 bis zum Oktoberumsturz*. Darmstadt, 1991.

rials of the studies of Marxist historians, not in everything, of course, however agreeing with their judgments and conclusions.

In the post-Soviet period, Bonwetsch participated for the first time in the German-Russian conference held far from the Russian 'capitals'. This happened in the summer of 1992 in the Urals, in Sverdlovsk. "The city itself exactly a year ago," recalled Bernd, "was renamed to Ekaterinburg and was opened to foreigners"⁶. The conference was devoted to World War II. He noted that the milestone event of the conference was the discussion about the fate of prisoners of war on both sides. The judgment of Bonwetsch that, in earlier times, the fate of prisoners of war was a grey spot in the history of the Soviet Union (especially German prisoners of war – *L.K.*), and that in Germany, this subject became the subject of research relatively late, is well-grounded. His report on the topic 'Soviet prisoners of war between Stalin and Hitler' invited a discussion among the participants of the conference.

Bonwetsch noted that the reports and speeches of the participants were prepared in a different mood. The work of the conference was covered in the local press. New by implication, was the program of acquaintance with the city and its public organizations: the participants visited the location of the remains of the royal family, the camp of German prisoners of war restored by the volunteers, met members of the society 'Memorial' and other public organizations. "For us, Germans," he wrote, "it was an interesting and touching experience. The event associated with the adoption of the resolution against the growing right-wing radical trends in the Russian society was extraordinary"⁷.

This conference was significant for the Germanists of Western Siberia, as well as Bernd Bonwetsch's acquaintance with the Tomsk researcher of German history, senior lecturer at Tomsk State university, the oldest university in Siberia, N.S. Cherkasov⁸. By that time, he was one of the leading German historians of the Urals and had prepared several PhD students (candidates of sciences) who worked at the historical departments of Tomsk, Novosibirsk, Kemerovo and Altai universities (Barnaul). In fact, this was the already established 'Siberian school' of historians-Germanists. Particularly significant was the acquaintance of Bonwetsch with the Doctor of Historical Sciences, Professor Yuri Vladimirovich Galaktionov, head of the Department of Modern and Contemporary History at Kemerovo State University, an expert in the

⁶ Bonwetsch B. *Nemetsko-russkoe sotrudnichestvo. V pamiat' Yurii Galaktionova. Natsional-socializm v Germanii: problemy izuchenii i preodolenii: Izbrannye trudy* [German-Russian cooperation. In memory of Yuri Galaktionov. National Socialism in Germany: Problems of Study and Overcoming: Selected Works]. Kemerovo, 2006, p. 8.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁸ Cherkasov N.S. *O germanskom fashizme i antifashistskom Soprotivlenii: Izbrannye trudy* [On German Fascism and Anti-Fascist Resistance: Selected Works]. Tomsk, 2006.

historiography of Nazism⁹. It was since this meeting that Bonwetsch's cooperation with the Siberian historians started; lasting until his death in October 2017.

At a meeting in Yekaterinburg, Yu.V. Galaktionov invited Bonwetsch to visit Kuzbass, Kemerovo State University, to deliver a series of lectures on the history of Russia and Germany to their students. The proposal was accepted, and "at the end of August 1993, with heavy luggage and slight fear, I packed my things and started on a journey into the unknown," Bernd wrote¹⁰.

That month spent in Kuzbass, which was very intent for the professor, left a positive impression. He agreed with Galaktionov to continue their cooperation. This idea was readily supported by the Rector of Kemerovo State University, Doctor of Chemical Sciences, Professor Yu.A. Zakharov. The plan for cooperation put into shape. It is interesting that on his way back home, Bernd found himself in Moscow amid the events of the so-called 'tank assault on the Russian White House' on 3rd October 1993 and witnessed the armed political clashes. The German professor was shocked not only by the events, but also by the fact that it was 'right place, right time', which for him, as a historian, was an impressive fact.

The interaction developed gradually. A significant fact was the official inclusion in 1997 of the cooperation plan between the universities of Bochum and Kemerovo into the three-year 'Alexander-Herzen-Programm' of the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD). The main role in promoting the plan in Germany was played, of course, by Bernd Bonwetsch. On 5th November 1998, the cooperation agreement was concluded. Within the framework of this program, students, postgraduates and teachers exchanged information. Preparation and defense of several candidate (PhD) and doctoral dissertations became possible and more profound.

Bernd Bonwetsch and Yu.V. Galaktionov were determined to go beyond the cooperation that envisaged contacts between only two universities. The idea was ripening on publishing an academic textbook generalizing the ideas on the history of Germany from the ancient times until the present day, at the same time resting upon the scientific potential of other Siberian historians, as well as the intention to attract more German researchers to participate in the cooperation. Thus, the idea was born of the creation in Kemerovo of a public regional organization 'West Siberian Center for

⁹ Galaktionov Yu.V., Korneva L.N., Cherkasov N.S. *Marksistskaia istoriografiia germanskogo fashizma* [Marxist Historiography of German Fascism]. Kemerovo, 1988; Galaktionov Yu.V. *Germanskii fashizm v zerkale istoriografii 20–40-kh gg. Novoe prochtenie* [German Fascism in the Mirror of Historiography of the 20–40s. New Perspective]. Kemerovo, 1996; Galaktionov Yu.V. *Natsional-socializm v Germanii: problemy izuchenii i preodolenii: Izbrannye trudy* [National Socialism in Germany: Problems of Study and Overcoming: Selected Works]. Kemerovo, 2006.

¹⁰ Bonwetsch B. Nemetsko-russkoe sotrudnichestvo. V pamiat' Yurii Galaktionova. *Natsional-socializm v Germanii: problemy izuchenii i preodolenii: Izbrannye trudy* [German-Russian Cooperation. In memory of Yuri Galaktionov. National Socialism in Germany: Problems of Study and Overcoming: Selected Works]. Kemerovo, 2006, p. 10.

German Studies' (ZSTSGI), initiated by Yu.V. Galaktionov and Bernd Bonwetsch. The 'Center' brought together scientists and university teachers from four regional cities in Western Siberia: Kemerovo, Barnaul, Novosibirsk and Tomsk. At the foundation conference of 'Zapsibtsentr' in the spring of 1999, the delegates unanimously elected Professor Yu.V. Galaktionov as chairman. The creation of the ZSTSGI contributed to the decision of the DAAD to support the cooperation of Bochum-Kemerovo for another two years and gave the chance to start work on the book project related to the history of Germany.

The idea of creating a textbook was put forward by Russian teachers regarding the fact that there was no generalizing massive educational edition on German history in Russia. Initially Bernd Bonwetsch and some of his Russian colleagues suggested simply translating some German textbook, but the 'Zapsibists' managed to convince their opponents, including Bonwetsch, that the work on implementation of that major project would, firstly, rally the members of the ZSTSGI; secondly, it would give an opportunity to work in-depth with the German materials and improve language training, and thirdly, it would significantly improve the qualifications of teachers working far from Russian and in general European capitals. The novelty of the proposal was also in the fact that the training manual in a special volume was to include a substantial package of documents and materials of fundamental nature for each stage in German history.¹¹

Yu.V. Galaktionov and Bernd Bonwetsch did a lot of preparatory work, understanding that such a large project would take several years to complete, and that it can be implemented only through collective efforts, based on the cooperation of Russian and German scientists. Because of these efforts, in 2000, the consent of the Volkswagen Foundation (Volkswagen Stiftung) was obtained to finance the ZSTSGI project within the framework of the program 'Joint Paths to Europe'. The twelve co-authors of the learning guide were given the opportunity to study in Germany to study and select the sources and get acquainted with the recent German publications.

During the preparation of the textbook, four 'authorial' conferences were held, in which the authors, individually and in conjunction with the German historians, discussed the concept and structure of the textbook, the plans and summaries of the chapters. Bernd Bonwetsch took the most active part in these conferences. They did a great job to attract a large pool of German historians at the Ruhr-University Bochum to review the chapters of the textbook at various stages of the project. On the Russian side, Yu.V. Galaktionov brought in the leading Russian scientists-Germanists to discuss the textbook. In general, it should be emphasized that without the close rapport of Galaktionov and Bonwetsch, the project could not have been implemented.

A separate matter in Bernd Bonwetsch's cooperation with the Siberians was the organization and holding of Russian-German conferences on the problems of totalitarianism, war and democracy.

¹¹ *Istoriya Germanii: ucheb. posobie dlia studentov vuzov: v 3 t.* [History of Germany: Study guide for graduate students in three volumes]. Kemerovo, 2005; Moscow, 2008.

The pretext for the joint reflection upon the totalitarian past of Germany and Russia was the 10th anniversary of German reunification in 2000, as well as the opportunity, as Bonwetsch wrote, "to comprehend the ways to overcome it in a comparative perspective"¹². At the same time, the scientist recalled that, given the many differences between the united Germany and post-Soviet Russia, "there are also structural parallels and similarities between them"¹³. The interest in the totalitarian past of Germany and Russia was the continuation of the discussions in the 1990s on the essence of totalitarianism, limits of its application as a theoretical basis for analyzing the dictatorships of the 20th century: first, the Stalinist era 'Nazism', the SED monopoly of power in the GDR¹⁴ and coincided with the active study of Stalinism by Russian historians both in the center of the USSR and in the Soviet province.¹⁵

Bernd's main report was devoted to understanding the influence of Stalinism on the historical path of Russia and its development in the 20th century. In the center of the report, there was an assessment of connections and interrelations of Stalin, the party and the society. This assessment was much sharper and audacious than the assessments of the Soviet-Russian historians. As an example, the following was said about the party: "The party (The All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks) has undergone the real intoxication of industrialization." About the society: "Everyone made no doubt that the country would transform into a socialist industrial power by one huge

¹² *Germaniia i Rossiia v XX veke: dve totalitarnye diktatury, dva puti k demokratii* [Germany and Russia in the 20th Century: Two Totalitarian Dictatorships, Two Ways to Democracy]. Kemerovo, 2001, p. 5.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ See, for example, Pohlmann F. *Marxismus-Leninismus- Kommunismus- Faschismus. Aufsätze zur Ideologie und Herrschaftsstruktur der Totalitären Diktaturen*. Pfaffenweiler, 1995; Möll P. *Gesellschaft und totalitären Ordnung. Eine theoriegeschichtliche Auseinandersetzung mit dem Totalitarismus*. Baden-Baden, 1998. The summary of the discussion can be seen in: Jesse E. (Hrsg). *Totalitarismus im 20. Jahrhundert. Eine Bilanz der internationalen Forschung*. Bonn, 1999. More details on the essence of studying German dictatorships from the point of theory of totalitarianism, see: Korneva L.N. *Germanskaia istoriografiia natsional-socializma: problemy issledovaniia i tendentsii sovremennogo razvitiia (1985–2005)* [German Historiography of National Socialism: Research Problems and Trends of Modern Development (1985–2005)]. Kemerovo, 2007, pp. 53–75.

¹⁵ See, for example: Kaz'mina M.V. *Otechestvennaia istoriografiia rubezha XX–XXI vv. o roli i meste kommunisticheskoi partii v sisteme sovetskoi vlasti 1930-kh gg.* [Domestic Historiography at the turn of the 20th–21st centuries. On the role and place of the Communist Party in the system of Soviet power in the 1930s]. *Politicheskaiia kul'tura v istorii Germanii i Rossii* [Political Culture in the History of Germany and Russia: A collection of scientific articles. Series: German studies in Siberia. Issue 6]. Kemerovo, 2009; Genina E.S. *Kampaniia po bor'be s kosmopolitizmom v Novosibirskoi oblasti (konets 1940-kh – nachalo 1950-kh gg.)* [Campaign of Battle against Cosmopolitanism in the Novosibirsk Region (late 1940s–early 1950s)]. *Vtoraia mirovaia voina: uroki istorii dlia Germanii i Rossii: materialy mezhdunarodnoi nauchnoi konferentsii (g. Kemerovo, 23–25 sentyabria 2005 g.)* [World War II: Lessons of History for Germany and Russia: Proceedings of the international scientific conference (Kemerovo, 23–25th September 2005)]. Kemerovo; Moscow, 2006 as well as the articles of other Russian authors in the above-mentioned collection.

leap, a revolution from above. Millions of people admired the chances of progress associated with this ... For the masses of people, social promotion has become a reality”¹⁶.

The down side of this process – the mass terror against the recent comrades-in-arms, imaginary and seeming enemies and traitors, gave rise to fear in the minds of people. Bonwetsch pointed out in this connection the spreading and infecting of the society with ‘split consciousness’ and ‘dissociations in thinking resulting from utterances’. “Outside the small circle of trusted people ... everyone pretended that life actually ‘became better’.”¹⁷ Of course, this could be an unambiguous statement, since a significant number of Soviet people sincerely believed in the presence of enemies and traitors, in the ‘intrigues of imperialism’ and in the fact, that “life has become easier, life has become more fun.” Especially among the youth, the romantic sentiments prevailed regarding building the ‘bright future’ in the country. They were ready to face difficulties along the way. And the new cities and enterprises were built not only by the Gulag prisoners, but also by volunteers who were striving to master the profession, and get a modest but own house quickly and to start a family. Answering the question why the people turned a blind eye to Stalin's crimes, Bonwetsch assessed this phenomenon through the prism of public consciousness: “This fixation of the society on the state power as the only agency with authority and the willingness of people to recognize this authority ... and the absence of other institutions independent from the state, being people-oriented”¹⁸.

The conference touched upon the subjects dealing with the most varied aspects of the relationship between the society and power, individuals and the authorities in a totalitarian system, as well as such ‘hot’ problems as the guilt of passive contemporaries in the crimes of totalitarianism or the problem of nation in repentance as one of the factors driving the movement from totalitarianism to democracy.

A lively discussion, the disputes in which 30 leading German historians and 15 well-known German scholars (researchers of Nazism and Stalinism) took part, pushed the participants to continue discussing the problems of totalitarianism and democracy in a series of subsequent conferences with the participation of Russian and foreign colleagues. Heads of ZSTSGI with the participation of Bonwetsch decided to dedicate the next conference to the problems of totalitarian mentality: its historical and political prerequisites, as well as the social and psychological components.

¹⁶ Bonwetsch B. Stalinizm i istoricheskii put' Rossii v XX veke [Stalinism and the historical path of Russia in the 20th century]. *Germaniia i Rossiia v XX veke: dve totalitarnye diktatury, dva puti k demokratii: Materialy mezhdunarodnoi nauchnoi konferentsii (g. Kemerovo, 19–22 sentyabrya 2000 g.). Seriya: Germanские issledovaniia v Sibiri* [Germany and Russia in the 20th Century: Two Totalitarian Dictatorships, Two Ways to Democracy: Proceedings of the international scientific conference (Kemerovo, 19–22nd September 2000). Series: German Studies in Siberia]. Kemerovo, 2001, p. 107.

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 109.

¹⁸ Ibid, p. 117.

The conference was held in September 2001¹⁹. Among the participants of the scientific forum were not only historians, but also philosophers, political scientists, lawyers, culturologists and philologists. The discussion tone of the conference was set with the reports at the plenary session of the Doctor of Philosophy, Professor A.A. Ovcharov 'The totalitarian mentality and the historical trajectory – between the unity of consciousness and the consciousness of unity' (Kemerovo State University) and Professor Dr. Bernd Bonwetsch (The Ruhr-University Bochum, Germany) 'The fate of revolutionaries in the years of Stalin's Terror'²⁰.

In his speech, using specific examples of Stalinism, Bonwetsch, in fact, illustrated Ovcharov's judgment that "*Russia's cultural-historical style manifests itself in the immanent gravitation to innovative constructivism*" (A.A. Ovcharov's own italics)²¹. In addition, in his report, the German scientist broadened the topic of the relationship between the power and society in a totalitarian state. The show-trials in 1936-38, when the cases were brought against the Old Bolshevik Guard and the young activists of the Soviet elite, gave rise to demonstrations and resolutions of public organizations and collectives in support of the struggle against 'enemies of the people'. However, the victims themselves from the national higher ranks did not blame the established system.

The self-awareness of the 'revolutionary fellows' that carried out the policy of terror both during the years of the forced collectivization, mass famine of 1932–33 and in the subsequent cruel laws of 1932, 1935 and 1940 (the Law of Spikelet, the age of criminal responsibility starting at 12 years old, late-to-work penalties) revealed their "absolute lack of humanity in dealing with people".²²

Another feature of the totalitarian mentality was lack of public reaction to the cruelty of the authorities. The events happening in those years were considered 'normal'. The professor himself gives the following explanation to this: "The dominant ideology frames explained that in the interests of the better future of the mankind it was not necessary to consider their current needs. According to this view, people have value only with regards to their attitude towards the state and the achievement of its objectives. "In state measures," Bonwetsch writes, "the specific Bolshevik ideology was on-stream that was formed through criticism of reformism, according to which revolutionary goals had to be achieved by using violence against class enemies, and the

¹⁹ *Totalitarnyi mentalitet: problemy izucheniia, puti preodoleniia* [Totalitarian mentality: Problems of studying, Ways of Overcoming]. Kemerovo, 2003.

²⁰ Bonwetsch B. 'Stalinskii terror i revolyutsionnyi sub'ekt' ['Stalin's terror and revolutionary subject']. *Totalitarnyi mentalitet: problemy izucheniia, puti preodoleniia: Materialy mezhdunarodnoi nauchnoi konferentsii* [Totalitarian Mentality: Problems of Studying, Ways of Overcoming.: Kemerovo, pp. 156–173. (Later the author of the article used the published copy of the report).

²¹ Ovcharov A.A. Totalitarnyi mentalitet i put' istorii: mezhdru edinstvom soznaniia i soznaniem edinstva [Totalitarian Mentality and the Path of History: Between the Unity of Consciousness and the Consciousness of Unity]. *Totalitarnyi mentalitet: problemy izucheniia, puti preodoleniia* [The Totalitarian Mentality: Problems of studying, Ways of Overcoming]. Kemerovo, 2003, p. 12.

²² *Ibid*, p. 164.

end justified the means. Any objections to state measures coming from the party leadership were considered from the first days of the revolution not as a different opinion, but as a counter-plan that either proceeded from class enemies or served them”²³.

A special place in the work of the researcher was taken by the question describing the attitude of the Stalinists to the peasantry, which they considered at best as ‘socially alien’ elements. He also associated the inhumanity of collectivization with the mentality of the ‘revolutionary subject’. “Active regime-connected functionaries and members of the Communist Party,” he wrote, “already had in their mental baggage the experience of violence, handed down from the world and civil wars”²⁴. The violence against peasants also relied on the consent or patience of society, its silent observation. The author does not explain why the society was so indifferent to the fate of the peasants. It seems that at that time an important role (apart from propaganda) was played by the primordial, on the mental level, hatred of the poor (there were a lot of them in Russia, and in the city, and especially in the countryside) towards wealthy people. And up to the present time in Russia there are supporters of ‘dekulakization’, who are not poor at all.

The issue of totalitarian mentality includes people's fear of internal terror, as well as the fact that the fear of a ‘threat from outside’ was added to it, which, according to Bonwetsch, “Stalin made the official fear of the state”²⁵. The search for ‘internal enemies’ and ‘accomplices of the external’ led to the fact that the culture of denunciation developed both in the country and in the city. “Terror sometimes acquired features of plebiscite nature,” Bernd noted.

His observation is of interest regarding the ability of a totalitarian state to unleash terror and to order its abolition from above. Stalin's society could not give such an impetus. It also came from above – in the form of a directive from the Central Committee of the Communist Party and the Politburo in November 1938, when the ‘revolutionary subject’ from the NKVD ranks waged a purge and the ‘internal enemies’ of Soviet power “ceased to be, at least, a mass phenomenon”²⁶.

²³ Bonwetsch B. ‘Stalinskii terror i revolyutsionnyi sub'ekt’ [‘Stalin's terror and revolutionary subject’]. *Totalitarnyi mentalitet: problemy izucheniia, puti preodoleniia: Materialy mezhdunarodnoi nauchnoi konferentsii (g. Kemerovo, 18–20 sentiabria 2001 g.). Serii: Germanskie issledovaniia v Sibiri. Vyp. 3* [Totalitarian Mentality: Problems of Studying, Ways of Overcoming: Materials of the international scientific conference (Kemerovo, September 18–20, 2001). Series: German studies in Siberia. Issue 3]. Kemerovo, 2003. P. 165.

²⁴ Ibid. P. 166.

²⁵ Ibid. P. 167.

²⁶ Bonwetsch B. ‘Stalinskii terror i revolyutsionnyi sub'ekt’ [‘Stalin's terror and revolutionary subject’]. *Totalitarnyi mentalitet: problemy izucheniia, puti preodoleniia: Materialy mezhdunarodnoi nauchnoi konferentsii (g. Kemerovo, 18–20 sentiabria 2001 g.). Serii: Germanskie issledovaniia v Sibiri. Vyp. 3* [Totalitarian Mentality: Problems of Studying, Ways of Overcoming: Materials of the international scientific conference (Kemerovo, 18–20th September 2001). Series: German studies in Siberia. Issue 3]. Kemerovo, 2003, p. 171.

The topic of political violence continued the discussion of the problems of authoritarianism and totalitarianism at a subsequent conference; however, it was not limited to the framework of the 20th century, but was rather reflecting the historical retrospect, in the collective memory in general and at the regional level (primarily in Siberia)²⁷. This time, during his speech, and later in the articles in the collection of published materials of the conference, Bonwetsch devoted the historiography to the issue of political violence in the Stalin era. He noted that the Soviet 'inner world' experienced the repression as 'ordinarily'. ("The tactic of survival dictated the need not to talk about one's own problems"). Therefore, "repressions, except for revelations during the Khrushchev 'thaw' and perestroika, were officially hushed up"²⁸.

Speaking about Western literature, Bernd Bonwetsch pointed out it had not mentioned the Great Terror; and Robert Conquest, a well-known researcher of the topic, was often criticized, although the very theme of violence and terror was not silenced down. Perestroika in the USSR radically changed the situation. 'The history of violence' became the central topic of the history in the Soviet Union until 1953, both in Russia itself and in the West," Bonwetsch writes²⁹. The balance of the constituent elements of Stalinism had changed. Previously, violence was considered a means to modernize the country successfully, however at that moment it started to be regarded as an independent object. Bonwetsch, at the same time, pointed to the work of the German historian J. Boberovsky 'The Red Terror'. "Even comparisons between national socialism and communism do not draw a protest," the author concludes³⁰.

More intensively in the 1990s, the Western authors began to explore the connection between the modern 'enlightened era' and violence. Citing examples of other mass atrocities of the 20th century, Bonwetsch illustrated that it did not explain each act of violence, but only elaborates that the use of Bolshevik violence by Russia was not among the very few. Summarizing the discussion, Bernd wrote that it suggested that the Bolsheviks were 'children of enlightenment' who sought to achieve a peaceful order resting upon reason. Unlike Western socialists, "the Bolsheviks did not want

²⁷ *Politicheskoe nasilie v istoricheskoi pamiati Germanii i Rossii: sbornik nauchnykh statei* [Political Violence in the Historical Memory of Germany and Russia: A collection of scientific articles]. Kemerovo, 2007.

²⁸ Bonwetsch B. Bol'shoi terror – 70 let spustia [The Great Terror – 70 years later]. *Politicheskoe nasilie v istoricheskoi pamiati Germanii i Rossii: sbornik nauchnykh statei* [Political Violence in the Historical Memory of Germany and Russia: A collection of scientific articles]. Kemerovo, 2007, p. 22.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid. 2007, p. 22. For more details with regards to consideration of the German historiography of Nazism, see the theory of totalitarianism, e.g.: Korneva L.N. *Germanskaia istoriografiia natsional-socializma: problemy issledovaniia i tendentsii sovremennogo razvitiia (1985–2005)* [German Historiography of National Socialism: Research Problems and Trends of Modern Development (1985–2005)]. Kemerovo, 2007, pp. 53–75.

to wait for the 'tide of history' and, under the fatal influence of Lenin, believed that they could and should implement that plan in short order"³¹.

Bonwetsch partially agrees with the 'Jacobin' tradition of the Russian revolutionary movement, which by the end of the 19th century had already been abandoned in most European countries, but at the same time points to a significant difference between Tsarist Russia and Bolshevik Russia. The former had already gone through some reforms following the path of placing restrictions on violence and arbitrary treatment, towards a state governed by the rule of law with separation of powers. The latter – the Bolshevik – went along the way of their strengthening and stiffening. "Without radical overcoming of all legal constraints for the sake of the bright future, those waves of unrestrained state violence would not have existed," the author concludes³².

Of interest is the first attempt by Bernd Bonwetsch to compare the overcoming of the totalitarian past in the two parts of Germany after World War II³³ and after the reunification of the FRG and GDR. The denazification was controversial, nevertheless, it reached the point when in both parts of Germany, perpetrators were as a matter of fact excluded from the public life. "However, in the sense of indoctrination of 'co-responsibility' for the crimes and atrocities of the Third Reich into the minds of the Germans, it was less successful," Bernd writes³⁴. Citizens of the GDR were 'protected' from it by the official anti-fascism state doctrine. In Germany, anti-communism and the prohibition of KPD served as proof of the alleged purification. Owing to such decisions and turns "when needed and required, the less guilty could pursue a career both in the GDR and in the West," he concludes³⁵.

At the same time, from the late 1960s, in the Federal Republic of Germany, the explanation of the fascist past for many reasons held pride of place in the scientific and political environment of the FRG. "It was there that the alternative historical culture

³¹ Bonwetsch B. Bol'shoi terror – 70 let spustia [The Great Terror – 70 years later]. *Politicheskoe nasilie v istoricheskoi pamiati Germanii i Rossii: sbornik nauchnykh statei* [Political Violence in the Historical Memory of Germany and Russia: A collection of scientific articles]. Kemerovo, 2007, p. 23.

³² Ibid.

³³ Frei N. *Vergangenheitspolitik. Die Anfänge der Bundesrepublik und die NS-Vergangenheit*. München, 1997; Becker M. „Keine Waffen für unsere Henker“. *Ehemalige Verfolgte des NS-Regimes und die westdeutsche Wiederbewaffnung*; Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte. 66. Jahrgang Heft 1 Januar 2018, S. 87–117.

³⁴ Bonwetsch B. Dvoinoe preodolenie totalitarnogo proshlogo v Germanii: 1945 i 1990 g. [Double overcoming of the totalitarian past in Germany: 1945 and 1990]. *Totalitarnyi mentalitet: problemy izucheniia, puti preodoleniia: Materialy mezhdunarodnoi nauchnoi konferentsii (g. Kemerovo, 18–20 sentiabria 2001 g.)*. Seriiia 'Germanskie issledovaniia v Sibiri'. Vyp. 3 [Totalitarian Mentality: Problems of studying, Ways of Overcoming: Materials of the international scientific conference (Kemerovo, 18–20th September 2001). Series: German studies in Siberia. Issue 3]. Kemerovo, 2003, p. 385.

³⁵ Ibid.

of remembrance appeared, the supporters of which devoted themselves to identification of the crimes of Nazism at the level of 'the little people' – be they criminals or victims. We owe the many changes in the historical consciousness to this alternative social movement," the author writes. "It promoted," he continues, "the emergence of the new culture of remembrance in the FRG, and turned the critical examination of Nazism, to a certain extent, into the daily routine"³⁶. This did not happen in the GDR, where "in relation to the nominal Nazis, the Socialist Unity Party of Germany began to 'show affection' early on, as Jürgen Daniel called it ..."³⁷.

After the GDR became part of the FRG in 1990, a question arose regarding overcoming the totalitarian past in the 'New States of Germany'. This included four areas: criminal prosecution for the crimes of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany and its regime, rehabilitation and compensation for its victims; purification of the civil service from representatives and supporters of the ruling party in the GDR; compensation for property damages to the expropriates; systematic reflection exercise and theoretical analysis of the past in the GDR. The last item was carried out most consistently. "The study of history of the GDR is now more swift and radical than was the comprehension of the Nazi past," Bernd Bonwetsch writes³⁸. Indeed, in the 1990s, several commissions and institutes were established to study the history of the GDR and compare the two German dictatorships³⁹.

The author notes that the fulfillment of the first three points of 'overcoming the past' did not go smoothly. The big dissatisfaction of East German cities and towns was caused by the decision "not to provide a refund for the property (expropriated in the GDR), but rather return it" to owners who had lived in Germany for a long time. It was also difficult to "prove in the law-bound state ... the individual liability of a particular person for the evils and crimes caused by the state"⁴⁰. As in the case of

³⁶ Bonwetsch B. Dvoinoe preodolenie totalitarnogo proshlogo v Germanii: 1945 i 1990 g. [Double overcoming of the totalitarian past in Germany: 1945 and 1990]. *Totalitarnyi mentalitet: problemy izucheniia, puti preodoleniia: Materialy mezhdunarodnoi nauchnoi konferentsii (g. Kemerovo, 18–20 sentiabria 2001 g.)*. Seriiia 'Germanskie issledovaniia v Sibiri'. Vyp. 3 [Totalitarian Mentality: Problems of Studying, Ways of Overcoming: Materials of the international scientific conference (Kemerovo, 18–20th September 2001). Series: German studies in Siberia. Issue 3]. Kemerovo, 2003, p. 385.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid, p. 392.

³⁹ See for example the Journal 'Totalitarismus und Demokratie'. 2. Jahrgang 2005, Heft. 1 of the Institute named after Hannah Arendt (Hannah-Arendt-Institut für Totalitarismusforschung e. V. an der Technischen Universität Dresden), devoted to the comparison of belief systems regarding dictatorships (Weltanschauungsdiktaturen im Vergleich).

⁴⁰ Bonwetsch B. Dvoinoe preodolenie totalitarnogo proshlogo v Germanii: 1945 i 1990 g. [Double overcoming of the totalitarian past in Germany: 1945 and 1990]. *Totalitarnyi mentalitet: problemy izucheniia, puti preodoleniia: Materialy mezhdunarodnoi nauchnoi konferentsii (g. Kemerovo, 18–20 sentiabria 2001 g.)*. Seriiia 'Germanskie issledovaniia v Sibiri'. Vyp. 3 [Totalitarian Mentality: Problems of Studying, Ways of Overcoming: Materials of the international scientific

overcoming the past in the FRG, there were no determinations of law in that area that would suffice the individual cases. "Quite a significant part of the population in East Germany considers such 'overcoming' unfair and imposed from the outside ... and the expression of the position of the West Germans as 'winners' in the cause of German unification"⁴¹.

The analysis and reflections of the German historian Bernd Bonwetsch about Stalinism and, in general, about totalitarianism, the ways of overcoming the totalitarian past, enriched the views of domestic historians on these phenomena of the 20th century, who further familiarized themselves with the possibilities to develop the Western historiography of totalitarianism. It was important to raise the problem of the shared responsibility of the elite and the society for aiding and abetting the criminal acts of dictatorial power. The speeches at conferences and round tables at the West Siberian Center for German Studies and the professor's articles gave impetus to further creative collaboration between Russian and German historians on the way towards a comparative analysis of the historical paths of Germany and Russia⁴².

The activity of Bernd Bonwetsch was certainly not limited to the interaction with historians in Western Siberia. In 2003, he began his enormous and difficult work on the organization of the German Historical Institute Moscow, of which he became the founding director. This work is yet another big chapter in his biography. Bernd, like us, bitterly regretted the premature departure from life of Yu.V. Galaktionov – chairman of ZSTSGI, his colleague and comrade. This happened in 2005, shortly after the presentation of the three-volume textbook on the history of Germany.

Despite the busyness of DHI Moscow, Bonwetsch did not forget about the existence of our Center and strongly supported its undertakings. The most memorable for all its participants was, for example, the 'school' of 2006 for young university researchers engaging themselves in the history of Germany. The 'learners' prepared for it beforehand and seriously, completing the 'homework' sent to them. To lead the 'school', Bonwetsch invited several German specialists on the medieval, modern and contemporary history of Germany. For several days, in the two sections of the operating 'school', the straight and winding paths of development for this country and its interaction with the neighbors were vigorously discussed.

conference (Kemerovo, 18–20th September 2001). Series: German studies in Siberia. Issue 3]. Kemerovo, 2003, p. 390.

⁴¹ Ibid, p. 392.

⁴² See for example: *Razrushenie i vrozozhdenie v istorii Germanii i Rossii* [Destruction and Revival in the History of Germany and Russia]. Tomsk, 2010; *Perelomnye epokhi v istorii Germanii i Rossii v antropologicheskom izmerenii* [Turning Points in the History of Germany and Russia in Anthropological Dimension]. Kemerovo, 2010; *Social'naia politika i social'noe gosudarstvo v Germanii* [Social Policy and Social State in Germany]. Kemerovo, 2014 and others.



Meeting with Chancellor Helmut Schmidt at German Historical Institute Moscow (2007)



Professor Bernd Bonwetsch (Volgograd, 2010)

Bernd Bonwetsch introduced us to the prominent representatives of the German historical school, to whom we, members of the ZSTSGI, are very grateful for the knowledge that they have brought us, and that they were not afraid to come to the far-away Siberia to participate willingly in the activities of the Center. These were Pro-

fessors Hans-Heinrich Nolte (Hanover), Bernd Faulenbach (Bochum), Wolfram Wette (Freiburg), Norbert Fries (Jena), Günther Heidemann (Leipzig, Dresden), Christian Jansen (Berlin), Wolfgang Benz (Berlin), Joachim Szoltysek (Bonn). Doctors, researchers Gerd R. Ueberschär (Freiburg), Jörg Morré (Berlin), Jürgen Tsaruski (Munich), Bernhard Schallhorn (Lüneburg), Helmut Stubbe da Luz (Hamburg), etc. During the meetings and panel discussions at the universities of Kemerovo, Barnaul and Tomsk, not only the historians from Siberia met their German colleagues, however also scientists from the capital of Russia and other cities of Russia, Kazakhstan and Ukraine.

The cooperation with Bernd Bonwetsch is the unforgettable chapter of ZSTSGI history and in the life of the author of this article.

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