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AN IRON GRIP ON SOCIETY IN VLADIMIR VOINOVICH'S *MOSCOW 2042* THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF DYSTOPIA

In his article, Marek Ochrem discusses the issue of control over society in Vladimir Voinovich's dystopian novel *Moscow 2042* against the background of Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* and George Orwell's *1984*. The analysis focuses on methods of subordinating people to the will of the rulers and manipulating them. Ochrem is interested in the impact of the oppressive features of the fictional city-state on citizens: the cult of personality (Genialissimus), poor living conditions, the threat of deportation of dissidents, lack of access to information and entertainment, influencing the shape of the family, promoting universal spying, using religion for propaganda purposes, and censorship. Ochrem also shows analogies between the worlds of fictional dystopian and totalitarian regimes and actual ones.

Keywords: Vladimir Voinovich, dystopia, authoritarianism, control, society

ОБЩЕСТВО ПОД ВЛАСТЬЮ ЖЕЛЕЗНОЙ РУКИ В АНТИУТОПИИ *МОСКВА 2042* ВЛАДИМИРА ВОЙНОВИЧА

В статье поднимается тема контроля над обществом в антиутопии Владимира Войновича *Москва 2042*, рассматриваемой на фоне произведений Олдоса Хаксли *О дивный новый мир* и Джорджа Оруэлла *1984*. Автор сосредоточен на представлении способов осуществления власти, манипулирования людьми и подчинения их власти. В статье прослеживается воздействие угнетающего города-страны на граждан: культ личности (Генералиссимуса), жалкие условия существования, угроза депортации диссидентов, отсутствие доступа к информации и досугу, влияние на формирование семейных отношений и на распространение доносов, использование религии для пропагандистских целей, цензура. Отмечаются также параллели между антиутопическим существовавшим миром и реальными тоталитарными режимами.

Ключевые слова: Владимир Войнович, дистопия, авторитаризм, контроль, общество

To a considerable degree, people of the nineteenth century viewed the future with optimism, hoping societies in general were heading towards egalitarianism. Scientists of the end of the century thought that soon most scientific mysteries in their fields of research would be solved. There was also less and less uncharted territory on the maps of the world as, for a few centuries, Europe had been making more and more territorial gains. All in all progress seemed to be set in stone. Many historians think that we can safely trace that trend back as far as to the Age of Enlightenment. It was only the outbreak and vicissitudes of World War I that finally put an end to this kind of elation. Erich Fromm notes:

This hope for man's individual and social perfectibility, which in philosophical and anthropological terms was clearly expressed in the writings of the Enlightenment philosophers of the eighteenth century and of the socialist thinkers of the nineteenth, remained unchanged until the end of the First World War.¹

The callousness and horrors of World War I, the economic crisis at the end of the 1920s, the insanity the Great Terror, the victory of Nazi barbarism in Germany in the 1930s or the destruction of cities such as Warsaw, Dresden or Tokyo during World War II fundamentally changed most writers' and thinkers' perspective on reality. Laurence Brander in his analysis of the prevailing pessimistic mood of that time notes:

When Huxley and Orwell wrote their Utopias, western man was struggling in the deepest trough of his despair. It seemed that the mental and spiritual life of mankind was so distorted that it could never recover. It was difficult in those decades to see any hope for the human race and their visions give typical pictures of our despair.²

As neither democratic states nor internal opposition to the vast majority of the new totalitarian regimes of that time succeeded in

¹ Gregory Claeys, *Dystopia: A Natural History* (Oxford University Press, 2017), 315.

² Laurence Brander, "On the 'Mass Community'," In *Bloom's Guides. Aldous Huxley's Brave New World*, ed. Harold Bloom (Broomall: Chelsea House Publishers, 2004), 75.

overthrowing them, twentieth-century Europe and Asia witnessed the spread of autocracies. It is not surprising then that the situation was so vividly and, simultaneously, allegorically depicted, among others, in *Animal Farm* or *1984* by George Orwell. Karen L. Ryan-Hayes in her monograph entitled *Contemporary Russian Satire* points out that the twentieth-century cataclysmic events (such as communist coups or world wars) left their mark on, inter alia, dystopian literature.

While the roots of the modern dystopia may ultimately be traceable to Greek Utopian satire through Swift's Lilliput, the twentieth-century variety is probably a response to relatively recent events. World War I and the Bolshevik Revolution gave a strong impetus to dystopia; World War II, the Holocaust and the nuclear arms race seem to have given the genre definitive priority in contemporary Western literature.³

In order to understand how and why dystopia became an important literary genre in the first decades of the twentieth century and still has not declined in importance, we need a brief overview of the period after World War I. After the October Coup, when all attempts to topple the Bolshevik government in Russia failed, the Western democracies began to make deals with the new communist state. In the case of Hitler's rule, Chamberlain's policy of appeasement towards him at the end of the 30s helped the Nazi despot to take control of Austria and Czechoslovakia almost effortlessly. Interestingly, at that time some intellectuals in the West fell under the spell of fascism and communism in particular. It was only the later publication of books such as *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* (1962) by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *Darkness at Noon* (1940) by Arthur Koestler or *A World Apart: The Journal of a Gulag Survivor* (1951) by Gustaw Herling-Grudziński that opened the eyes of most of them to the evils of Soviet totalitarianism. As these books revealed the horrors of Stalinism, they were real eye-openers for many people. When World War II broke out and Soviet Russia joined the Allies, any serious attempts to expose Stalinist appalling mass mur-

³Karen L. Ryan-Hayes, *Contemporary Russian Satire. A Genre Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 201.

ders were frowned upon and the situation changed only at the onset of the Cold War. In 1949, the Communist Party took control of most of mainland China. As in the case of Russia earlier, the regime began a series of economic and social steps that resulted in millions of deaths. Even the worst tyrants are mortal and with the deaths of Hitler (1945), Stalin (1953) and Mao Zedong (1976), the mass murders and executions, arrests and genocide in Germany, Russia and China respectively ceased. However, it was only West Germany that turned into a democratic state after World War II. In the second half of the 1980s democracy seemed to come back to the Soviet Union, the Soviet Bloc and to an extremely limited extent to China. Ultimately, it turned out that only in the former satellite Eastern Bloc countries democracy settled in for good. In the case of China (especially after the brutal suppression of 1989 Tiananmen Square protests and, to an even larger extent, when Xi Jinping seized power), Russia (in particular under Putin's leadership) or North Korea and Eritrea liberalism, free elections or real freedom of speech or assembly do not exist. The incumbent leaders of these states have secured themselves office held for life. Bearing in mind the fact that all of them are autocrats to the core, prospects for democracy and freedom under their rule are nothing but an illusion. Of course, the above-mentioned dictatorships do not exhaust the list of oppressive regimes. In one of his recent interviews, Garry Kasparov pointed out one of the main reasons for the survivability of contemporary tyrannies:

If we are talking about the strengths of Putin's Russia, it's very much the result of the weakness of the West. So, all the so-called Putin's accomplishments and his aggressive form of policy, and his total demolition of any opposition in Russia is the result of the lack of the political will on the other side, both in Europe and of course in the United States. [...] It emboldens not only Putin's Russia, it emboldens China that's already warning Taiwan that America will never come to your rescue. [...] Putin understands there's no appetite for America and NATO to defend the free world against aggression. [...] It's not just Chinese dictatorship, any dictatorship is lying because they don't take responsibilities.⁴

⁴Garry Kasparov, "Garri Kasparow w Onecie: Putin zaatakuję. Mam nadzieję, że Afganistan wybudzi nas ze snu," accessed August 28, 2014, <https://wiadomosci.onet.pl/tylko-w-onecie/garri-kasparow-w-onecie-putin-zaatakujecie-mam-nadzieje-ze-afganistan-wybudzi-nas-ze-snu/220w05j>.

The Russian chess grandmaster's assessment of the current political situation also pertains to a certain extent to the times after the Bolshevik Coup and when Hitler came to power, when there was not enough political will to intervene before it was too late.

It is worth remembering that, to an extent, utopian and dystopian thought/speculation coexisted successfully side by side both in the twentieth century. Andrzej Gąsiorek notes:

The first three decades of the twentieth century are particularly rich in utopian and dystopian reflections. This is almost certainly because the rapid changes brought about by processes of technologically driven modernization led to two twinned, but opposed, responses: on the one hand, a series of powerfully expressed hopes that the new future would transform the present in an entirely beneficent way, modernity ushering in a gleaming new age; on the other hand, a set of no less strongly articulated anxieties about the ways in which modernity in fact might produce the deepest forms of alienation.⁵

Both in the case of the aforementioned real dictatorships and many fictional ones, strict control over everybody is a sine qua non for them to survive intact. In this paper, against a backdrop of *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley and *1984* by George Orwell, two archetypal dystopian novels, I analyse the methods and techniques of manipulation, intimidation and coercion against individuals and society in general at the disposal of Vladimir Voinovich's version of Big Brother and his regime in *Moscow 2042*. I also assess the effectiveness of the fictitious mythical tyrant and the Communist Party of State Security in subjugating Moscow society. Furthermore, the study focuses on the far-reaching and devastating consequences of the specific living conditions in the Moscow Communist Republic. The treatment of people that is characteristic of the dystopian reality discussed herein mirrors the true nature of states governed autocratically. Finally, parallels are drawn between what takes place in the fictional world and what has been going on in the domains of real historical and current autocrats.

In view of Uyghur genocide in China, the bloody and ruthlessly suppressed riots in Iran and, last but not least, the current full-scale

⁵ Andrzej Gąsiorek, "Words Without Reason: State Power and the Moral Life in *Brave New World*," in *Brave New World: Contexts and Legacies*, ed. Nathan Waddell and Jonathan Greenberg (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 213.

unprovoked invasion of Ukraine and its atrocities, the critical awareness of the mechanisms governing the smooth functioning of tyrannical regimes is of significant cognitive value. The Chinese, Iranian, Russian and other authoritarian regimes do not respect any norms of humanitarianism and often ignore international law. It does not matter that much that in the case of each of the above-mentioned autocracies the rulers subscribe to various radical ideologies, such as communism, religious fundamentalism or chauvinism. Sadly, in the twenty-first century dystopian realities still exist beyond fictional worlds. In this article, the analysis of the nightmarish vision of the dystopian macrocosm can help us gain a better understanding of the exact causes, determinants and consequences of the harsh realities pertinent to both represented and real worlds governed by despots.

Current Research on the Issues of Exercising Authoritarian Control Over Society Raised in Aldous Huxley's, George Orwell's and Vladimir Voinovich's Dystopian Novels

A number of literary critics have commented on the role of authoritarian control over society in dystopias. Julian Symons in his review of *1984* writes about one of the objectives of the state in the novel, which is “To achieve complete thought-control, to cancel the past utterly from minds as well as records [...]”⁶ The reviewer draws our attention to the telescreen as a means of achieving this goal: “To this end a telescreen, which receives and transmits simultaneously, is fitted into every room of every member of the Party. The telescreen can be dimmed but not turned off, so there is no way of telling when the Thought Police have plugged in on any individual wir.”⁷ Symons also mentions “Newspeak,” whose function is to make a heretical thought unthinkable, and “doublethink” (holding two opposite views or ideas at the same time), which deprives party members of the voice of reason and moral fibre.

⁶ Julian Symons, “Nineteen Eighty-Four is About the Misuse of Power” in Vladimir Voinovich, *Moscow 2042*. (San Diego–New York–London: Harcourt Brace Iovanovich Publishers, 1990), 108.

⁷ Symons, “Nineteen Eighty-Four,” 108.

Erich Fromm in his afterword for *1984* by George Orwell writes about one of the means to enslave people in *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley: “In Huxley’s work the main tool for turning man into an automaton is the application of hypnoid mass suggestion, which allows dispensing with terror.”⁸ Apart from drawing attention to the significant role of hypnopedia in moulding the citizens of the World State into the specific castes in Huxley’s novel, Fromm also analyses the role of the concept of “truth” in Orwell’s dystopia. This conception pertains to the ways society is controlled in Oceania. Except for the few rebels such as Winston, people in Big Brother’s state believe anything the party propaganda tells them. It does not matter what they remember, know or experience. Hence reason and knowledge hardly exist in this world.

The basic question Orwell raises is whether there is any such thing as “truth.” [...] by controlling men’s minds the Party controls truth. In a dramatic conversation between the protagonist of the Party and the beaten rebel [...] the basic principles of the Party are explained. [...] because men, being frail and cowardly creatures, want to escape freedom and are unable to face the truth. The leaders are aware of the fact that they themselves have only one aim, and that is power. [...] Power, then, for them creates reality, it creates truth.⁹

Gregory Claeys in his *Dystopia: A Natural History* notes that Orwell’s Oceania is constantly at war with Eurasia and Eastasia. Interestingly, in his opinion “the conflicts now may well only be staged by the three governments to distract and suppress their populations.”¹⁰ Of course this view makes sense as one of the slogans of the Party is “WAR IS PEACE.” The scholar comments on the life depicted in *1984*, which is marked by the constant threat of an alleged military invasion helps the regime control its citizens. Claeys also indicates other factors that help to pacify the inhabitants of Big Brother’s state such as: facecrime (an improper expression on one’s face), talking in one’s sleep which could invite denunciation by one’s own children, young-

⁸ Erich Fromm, “Afterword” in George Orwell, *1984* (Dublin: Penguin Books, 1977), 317.

⁹ Fromm, “Afterword,” 320–321.

¹⁰ Claeys, *Dystopia*, 409.

sters suffering from paranoia and sadism, Newspeak's domination of language that reduces the possibility of thinking unorthodoxly, the fear of arrest, forced confession, execution or imprisonment in labour camps, no collective memory among the working-class majority or "proles" and, last but by no means least, an absence of any kind of "ownlife" or personal privacy tantamount to an overwhelming feeling of loneliness in the case of Orwell's main character. All the above-mentioned circumstances favour the brutal subjugation of the citizens of Oceania by the Inner Party functionaries.

Claeys also analyses Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* from the perspective of its treatment of authoritarian rule. As in the case of Orwell's dystopia, the researcher pays attention to the factors that contribute to the World Controllers' possibility of exercising considerable influence over people in the novel. He mentions the aspects of everyday life that make Huxley's represented world unalterable and under the Controllers' effective supervision: an atavistic infantilism; mandatory sexual promiscuity; no attachments of emotional love, marriage and child-bearing; the anti-depressant, bliss-inducing wonder drug *soma*; the "semi-moron" stupidity of the lower castes of society in particular and "a World State of 2 billion standardized, scientifically bred beings who are 'hatched' like Model Ts in state factories in 'uniform batches'"¹¹ Claeys especially emphasises the importance of hedonism, hypnopedia and social life in controlling Huxley's dystopian world:

Not merely eroticism, but hedonism generally, thus suppress unsocial thought. Hypnopedia, or sleep-teaching (100 repetitions 3 nights a week for 4 years, or 62,400 in total), combined with a "greatly improved technique of suggestion," encourages the sentiment that "Everyone belongs to everyone else." 27 intensive group activities, like Solidarity Services where *soma* is passed around, hymns are sung, and rapturous dancing occurs, bond the population to a common ideal and outlook defined by class and function.¹²

Michael Sherborne in his *York Notes Advanced* writes about two factors in Mustapha Mond's State that cement this world's status

¹¹ Claeys, *Dystopia*, 361.

¹² Claeys, *Dystopia*, 362.

quo and effectively contribute to the total control of everybody in Huxley's dystopia. One of them pertains to genetic engineering that groups people into divergent castes for the sake of social stability and permanence; the latter one refers to social conditioning which to a large extent results in people lacking individuality:

One of the worst horrors of *Brave New World* is that science has given the Controllers the means to reach into people's personalities and adjust them so that they conform to the categories assigned them. They are now "Alpha Pluses," "Epsilon-Minus Semi-Morons" and so on, [...] because they have been designed from conception to fit these social groups. The citizens of the World State have no ideas not put into their heads by the Controllers. The mass media, sport, *soma* and other distractions assure that they have no time for experiences and reflections which might lead them outside the "package" in which they have been placed.¹³

Gašiorek in his paper on *Brave New World* compares society in this novel to a machine:

Among the many other things that it does, Huxley's text tries to imagine what could happen when an entire society is modelled on the logic of the machine, its subordinate parts (the people that live in it) existing to service its needs.¹⁴

This analogy is quite apt because people in Huxley's narrative (due to strict genetic and social conditioning) act like cogs in a well-oiled machine. Gašiorek also explains why this type of system exists:

Huxley's future society is predicated on the need for stability above all else, and it holds that cohesion is maintained by giving all its members fixed roles and ensuring that these roles serve the good of the community to which their individual needs and desires perforce are subordinated. [...] This emphasis on the primacy of the collective trumps the individual's desire for autonomy precisely because it is feared that independence of mind and action inevitably will run counter to the interests of society at large.¹⁵

¹³ Michael Sherborne, *York Notes Advanced. Brave New World. Aldous Huxley* (London: Pearson Education Limited, 2005), 83.

¹⁴ Andrzej Gašiorek, "Words Without Reason: State Power and the Moral Life in *Brave New World*," in *Brave New World: Contexts and Legacies*, ed. Nathan Waddell and Jonathan Greenberg (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 215.

¹⁵ Gašiorek, "Words Without Reason," 216.

For Gąsiorek, the lack of one's independence of mind is one of the crucial components of personal and social life in the World Controllers' reality. It is not surprising then that one of the official catchwords of the World State is the word "community." The overwhelming majority of people in this dystopia are by no means individualists and this factor facilitates imposing control on them.

Laurence Brander in his short study entitled "On the 'Mass Community'" pays attention to the methods of manufacturing genetically homogeneous citizens in Huxley's dystopian narrative, thus implying that this kind of society is set in tablets of stone as almost each and every member of this community is unalterable due to genetic and social conditioning. A society programmed to such a degree is practically unchangeable and consequently, except for very few rebels, there is no need to pacify people:

Huxley wrote out of his scientific background and mass-produced his population in the fashion long popular in science fiction, growing them in bottles and conditioning them from birth in all the ways proposed by psychologists. Both heredity and environment were absolutely determined. These bottle products were released from moral tensions because they were so conditioned that none of their actions had moral consequences.¹⁶

Brander also writes about another factor that helps to avoid most feelings of dissatisfaction in the World State:

They could always escape from reality very easily by the use of the standard drug, *soma*, which was a great improvement on alcohol or anything else known because it produced no unpleasant reactions and was benignly addictive. The people were always in a state of euphoria because the human spirit had been prisoned and confined in a perfectly conditioned healthy cadaver.¹⁷

Karen L. Ryan-Hayes in her book entitled *Contemporary Russian Satire* indicates that in contrast to canonical British dystopian novels Vladimir Voinovich "structures the plot of his dystopia around an attempt at subversion."¹⁸

¹⁶ Brander, "On the 'Mass Community,'" 76.

¹⁷ Brander, "On the 'Mass Community,'" 76.

¹⁸ Karen L. Ryan-Hayes, *Contemporary Russian Satire. A Genre Study* (Cambridge University Press, 1995), 209.

“That’s right,” said Dzerzhin. “To look the truth right in the eye you’d have to say there’s somebody planning something against every member of the leadership. You know, there are many secret Simites among the people on the sidewalk here, those people in line, everywhere. The majority of them might be Simites.”¹⁹

In the case of Huxley’s and Orwell’s narratives opposition to the regime hardly exists. In both cases the vast majority of people find it impossible to understand why it would be better for them to overthrow their autocracy. One way or the other, the few non-conformists and rebels that still turn up are deported to the islands designated for them and brutally tortured/vaporised respectively. Ryan-Hayes draws our attention to the fact that in Voinovich’s dystopia, as in the case of many real dictatorships, there is always some kind of social discontent that can erupt for various reasons. Also, the scholar points out that in *Moscow 2042*, when a new autocracy seizes power, political persecution, atrocities or repressive measures do not come to an end. Moreover, the new dictatorship makes a good use of the security agents of the old regime.

This generic topos is radically undercut when the system that Karnavalov establishes becomes cruel and repressive in its own turn. Dissenters are torn limb from limb, beheaded and hanged; ukazes are issued regulating clothing, hair, means of transportation, religion and other aspects of personal life. Most importantly, coercion is an integral part of this state as well.²⁰

It seems that *Moscow 2042* follows in Yevgeny Zamyatin’s (the author of the Russian classic dystopian novel *We*) footsteps as far as the views pertaining to the inevitability of change are concerned. Zamyatin held a view that there could be no final revolution whatsoever.

In *Oblicza totalitaryzmu we współczesnej antyutopii rosyjskiej* Katarzyna Sobijanek gives her attention to the issue of the transitoriness of wielding power in Voinovich’s work. In her view, the novelist follows Yevgeny Zamyatin’s belief in the permanence of social, eco-

¹⁹ Vladimir Voinovich, *Moscow 2042* (San Diego–New York–London: Harcourt Brace Iovanovich Publishers, 1990), 296.

²⁰ Ryan-Hayes, *Contemporary Russian Satire*, 209

conomic, religious or political changes after periods of stagnation. It is not surprising then that at the end of *Moscow 2042* one totalitarian regime is replaced with another one:

Moscowrep personifies a communist ideal which eventually collapses and yields to another form of authoritarian rule, which is a despotic absolute monarchy. Thereby, Zamiatin's historiosophic hypothesis is confirmed. Dead entropy [...] has to come to an end due to the force of released energy. Still, it freezes to the spot and forms a new hard entropic crust. Then there is a need for a radical shake-up and entropy is transformed. It is an ongoing process.²¹

Sobijanek also emphasises the importance of oblivion in manipulating people. She stresses that cutting societies off from historical dates and facts leaves them vulnerable to the lies spewed out by the regime's propaganda machine.

The destruction of memory and no access to the past is also a frequent ruse in dystopia, guaranteeing to eradicate one's unique "personality." It is then impossible to juxtapose the present with the past, to determine one's identity and uniqueness. Citizens then have no other choice but to trust the system, serve the party unconditionally [...] and to be sure that anything at their disposal or taking part in anything should be attributed to the state and its governing bodies.²²

The researcher also writes about educational methods as an effective means of state control in the novel. Indoctrination of the young is supposed to instill in children obedience to the party and a deep conviction that it is always right. Furthermore, Sobijanek mentions control over language in Voinovich's dystopia:

Control over language and screening its words and expressions is tantamount to control over human beings who, brought up in a specific socio-political system, are affected by the knowledge instilled in them. They do not know notions such as love, freedom, criticism, choice or mutiny and therefore they do not think, discuss and all the more live for them.²³

²¹ Katarzyna Sobijanek, *Oblicza totalitaryzmu we współczesnej antyutopii rosyjskiej* (Archidiecezjalne Wydawnictwo Łódzkie, 2013), 110. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations mine.

²² Sobijanek, *Oblicza totalitaryzmu*, 114.

²³ Sobijanek, *Oblicza totalitaryzmu*, 114–115.

The language deprivation Sobijanek draws our attention to is reminiscent of the non-existence of many obsolete words and concepts in *Brave New World* (due to the fact that the World State citizens cannot even comprehend them as they do not fit in with the new reality) and in *1984* (where Big Brother's regime deliberately cuts down on vocabulary in an effort to make any unorthodox thoughts unfeasible).

Sobijanek also elaborates on the ways of supervising the Communites' love and married life. She notes the line between the sexes is blurred and both men and women are skinned as part of the fight against insects. In the case of married life the deciding factor pertains to production targets. The citizens of the Moscowrep who cope with them can get married whereas those who cannot have to settle for institutions offering sexual favours. Sobijanek thus expands on the theme of the role of conformism in *Moscow 2042*:

The citizen is "good" in the eyes of the state as far as he is of use and on condition that his interests are compatible with the interests of the state. If he is of no use any longer, the inhabitant becomes enemy of the state. [...] Taking possession of one's language, thoughts and will or in other words "raising man anew" is a major triumph of the totalitarian state on condition the citizen is compatible with its power structure and absolutely loyal to the party. To achieve this goal, the state needs to control strictly someone's life from birth, throughout one's upbringing, education, working and leisure time, love life, physiological needs till the human breathes his last.²⁴

In her monograph *Pisarstwo Władimira Wojnowicza*, Aleksandra Zywert asserts that Voinovich's Moscowrep is tantamount to the USSR in a nutshell. She points out that the reality portrayed in the novel is symptomatic of an isolated prison city-state where even one's place of residence depends on the citizen's complete and mindless conformity:

Advertised abroad as an idyll, it is *de facto* the focal point of the Greater Zone and simultaneously a big prison. Theoretically being part of the Soviet Union, in actual fact the place is cut off from the rest of the world. A six-metre wall and a minefield shelters Moscow, which is divided into three zones called the Rings

²⁴ Sobijanek, *Oblicza totalitaryzmu*, 117.

of Hostility. The division of the place depends on one's acceptance and submission to communist doctrine.²⁵

Zywert published her study of the works of Voinovich a decade before the Russian full-scale military invasion of Ukraine, which has exposed the brutality of Putin's regime and simultaneously the frailty of its army to the full. Unlike the Genialissimo's fictional world, real-life Russia has repeatedly been invading its neighbouring countries since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Interestingly, the author of the publication prophetically referred to Moscowrep as "a colossus with feet of clay"²⁶ and at the same time noted that "utopia does not disappear easily and in favourable circumstances it may be substituted with another one which could be even more dangerous."²⁷ Indeed, under Gorbachev's and, to some extent, Yeltsin's leadership efforts to democratize the society that had never been egalitarian were made. Nowadays it is a bygone era. It turns out that contemporary Russia to an extent mirrors the anxieties expressed in Voinovich's dystopia: it is also a significantly isolated country and its leader comes from the KGB as Bukashin, a former KGB general in the novel. Still, in the Moscow Communist Republic rebels are deported to the Rings of Hostility whereas in the case of the Russian Federation dissidents are systematically imprisoned and murdered. Assuredly, Russia is a failed democracy that poses a threat to the world. Reality has surpassed fiction.

This study focuses on some important characteristics of a fictional totalitarian regime in Moscow in nineteen years' time and pertains in particular to authoritarian control over society therein. As relatively few studies have been devoted to *Moscow 2042* by Vladimir Voinovich in the context of authoritarian rule, this is undoubtedly an interesting research perspective. It is also not without significance that in my article broader historical context has been taken into consideration.

²⁵ Aleksandra Zywert, *Pisarstwo Władimira Wojnowicza* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu im. Adama Mickiewicza w Poznaniu, 2012), 317.

²⁶ Zywert, *Pisarstwo Władimira Wojnowicza*, 316.

²⁷ Zywert, *Pisarstwo Władimira Wojnowicza*, 316.

**A PARODY OF A TOTALITARIAN REGIME AGAINST A BACKGROUND
OF THE HEDONISTIC PHILOSOPHY OF COERCION AND THE REALITY ENCAPSULATED
IN THE PHRASE A "BOOT STAMPING ON A HUMAN FACE"**

In the case of the classic dystopian novels *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley and *1984* by George Orwell the reality depicted therein is set in stone. As the legal, political, economic or social framework/situation will never change in the narratives, the nightmare scenario is the only existence the protagonists have to deal with in the represented worlds. Hence, in contrast to *Moscow 2042* by Vladimir Voinovich, where change is imminent, the British dystopias differ from one another mainly in the type of horror they describe. On the one hand we deal with the hell of sheer endless pleasure in a biologically as well socially conditioned moronic society (*Brave New World*), on the other hand with the inferno of extreme cruelty, an extremely oppressive regime and brainwashed people (*1984*). In Voinovich's novel, discussed below, there are some dystopian elements characteristic of Huxley's and Orwell's narratives, but what takes place in the novel pertains even more to some real totalitarian regimes. In particular, the images, situations, facts or people depicted herein bear an obvious resemblance to political, economic or social realities of the Soviet Union.

Thus, in contrast to *1984* by G. Orwell the reality portrayed in *Moscow 2042* by Vladimir Voinovich is a mixture of absurdity, humour and the harsh realities of an authoritarian state observed from the perspective of a political dissident and outsider. Orwell's dystopia came into being in the second half of the 1940s when autocracies were spreading throughout the world whereas Voinovich's novel was completed in the mid-1980s when totalitarianism seemed to be on the decline. It is not surprising then that *Moscow 2042* is less depressing and frightening than *1984*. When the novelist's alter ego, the Russian author Kartsev, talks to his acquaintance Rudi, he refers directly to Orwell's dystopia and contrasts the extremely nightmarish vision of the world in *1984* with a real-life situation in the USSR in the 1980s:

"[...] Take Orwell, for example. Didn't he predict in detail the system that exists in Russia today?"

“Of course not,” I said. “Orwell wrote a parody of what already existed at the time. He described a totalitarian machine that worked perfectly and could simply never exist in a real human society. Take the Soviet Union—its population only displays an outward obedience to the regime; in fact, people have nothing but contempt for the slogans and catch phrases. They respond by working poorly, drinking heavily, and stealing left and right. Big brother is the target of ridicule and the subject of endless jokes.”²⁸

Ryan-Hayes in *Contemporary Russian Satire* voices an opinion that “The catalyst for Voinovich’s parodic reworking of the generic conventions of the dystopia would seem to be his perverse faith that man can never design the perfectly unfree society.”²⁹ Hence this dichotomy between set-in-stone worlds in Huxley’s and Orwell’s dystopian visions of the future of mankind and Voinovich’s dystopian fantasy. In all likelihood, this type of divergence has to do with the fluid socio-political situation when the novel was being written. Towards the close of the twentieth century, Russian and Chinese communist regimes, among others, appeared to be in decline. Hence, as opposed to the World State or Big Brother’s Oceania, which are totally immune to any change, in Voinovich’s *Moscow 2042*, at the end of the narrative, the communist regime is ousted from power and a new feudal autocracy gains control of the metropolis. In the novel then, there are undertones present of a much earlier Russian novel *We* (1920) by Yevgeny Zamyatin and expressed in Zamyatin’s essay “On Literature, Revolution, Entropy and Other Matters”:

Revolution is everywhere, in everything. It is infinite. There is no final revolution, no final number. The social revolution is only one of an infinite number of numbers. The law of revolution is not a social law, but an immeasurably greater one. It is a cosmic, universal law—like the laws of the conservation of energy and of the dissipation of energy (entropy) [...] ³⁰

The above quotations instill optimism in us as it seems that even the worst totalitarian states are never set in stone and their disintegration and decay is only a matter of time.

²⁸ Voinovich, *Moscow 2042*, 7.

²⁹ Ryan-Hayes, *Contemporary Russian Satire*, 207.

³⁰ Yevgeny Zamyatin, “On Literature, Revolution, Entropy and Other Matters” in *We* (Birmingham: Harper Voyager, 1983), 106.

As *Moscow 2042* setting, backdrop and mood differ from classical dystopian British literature, it is worth discussing how in the case of this narrative the authoritarian regime wields power and why at the end of the novel the authorities are ousted and a new feudal dictatorship takes control of Russia. As befits a dystopian novel, the Communites (citizens of Moscow in the year AD 2042) are subject to constant scrutiny and surveillance. There are also other components typical of dystopian despotism such as brainwashing, personality cult, eviction from one's home, being shunned by society or a total lack of belles-lettres to mention but a few examples. There is also one common denominator pertaining to the represented world or setting of the novel: its ludicrousness and absurdity. In general, the whole philosophy of future Moscow consists in ubiquitous window dressing. In a way it resembles a bit Orwellian doublethink in action. Vitaly can take photos but without photographic films; he can record sound but without cassettes; novelists write books on computer but, in fact, nothing is recorded; Kartsev is shown a super-computer strongroom without any computers inside; he sleeps with Iskrina who is not even his wife, fiancée or girlfriend; everybody gets ready for his jubilee, but nobody has ever read any of his books, and so on and so forth. As time goes on, the protagonist is seized with a sense of helplessness. Theoretically, a lot is possible in the Genialissimo's world, but practically, in most cases, the protagonist has no choice whatsoever: powerlessness as a means of control.

As in the case of some real autocracies, the Moscowrep authorities are in control of the situation in Moscow due, to, inter alia, the displacement of many of its citizens deemed unsuitable for the "paradise" of life therein (a grim reminder of the tragic and cruel fate of ethnic minorities and later on political dissidents in the USSR). The technique uniformizes society, which is then more easily controlled.

Approximately a month before the advent of communism, antisocial elements were resettled out of Moscow, including alcoholics, hooligans, parasites, Jews, dissidents, invalids and pensioners. The students were dispatched to remote construction battalions, and the schoolchildren to Pioneer camps. [...] It was simply that critically ill people, as well as pensioners and invalids, if, of course,

they were not members of the Editorial Commission or the Supreme Pentagon, were resettled to the First Ring and lived out their days there. [...] people with cardiovascular diseases were also dispatched beyond the limits of the Moscowrep in good time, and if someone should happen to suffer a heart attack or appendicitis, the ambulance would rush him to the First Ring.³¹

The policy aims to have a chilling effect on society as Muscovites are separated from the rest of the world by a Berlin type wall. If somebody is ostracized, it carries with it serious and irreversible consequences, as life outside the boundaries of the Moscowrep is supposed to be much worse than in the Communist Republic.

One of the strategies for controlling society in the narrative boils down to putting severe restrictions upon the media. In a comparable manner to Putin and his political propagandists, who blame America and its allies for many evils of the world (especially for the foreign interference in the so-called “Russian world”), one of the main characters in Voinovich’s dystopia Iskrina guides Vitaly Kartsev through the intricacies and complexities of Moscowrep schizophrenic and absurd philosophy of life. At one point, she explains to Vitaly how the regime prevents Communites from watching American films and television programmes.

The thing was that even before the August Revolution, the Americans had started using their satellites to beam programs onto Soviet television.

“And the introduction of the cable system neutralized this ideological sabotage?” I asked.

“Not quite,” said Iskrina with a grin. “They developed a new form of provocation. They installed laser projectors on the moon, and now they show their decadent films right on the sky, using the cloud cover for a screen.”

“What?” I said in disbelief. “Is that possible?”

“Unfortunately, it is,” said Iskrina. “Needless to say, we’re taking countermeasures. For example, SECO especially recommended the long peaks on our caps to protect people from radiation. But some politically unconscious people peep out from under their caps. And so new countermeasures have to be found.”

“I see,” I said. “This is what they do to people who look out from under their caps.” I pantomimed wringing a neck.

“You’re so backward!” said Iskrina, clapping her hands. “Ours is a humane society, we don’t treat people like that. We just simply disperse the clouds. True,

³¹ Voinovich, *Moscow 2042*, 218–220.

this does have a negative effect on the climate and the harvests, but we put the ideological struggle first and the harvest second.”³²

Furthermore, an important means of social control in the novel pertains to the literary world. Vitaly Kartsev, when explaining to Smerchev the difficult situation of literary men and literature in the Soviet Union, expresses a pungent criticism.

“In my time there were two literatures too—Soviet and anti-Soviet. But, of course, both were paper literatures.”³³

The above utterance speaks volumes about the sad fate of Russian literature that was critical of the Soviet regime. In the Soviet Union, dissident writing was not published whatsoever. In turn, mediocre writers loyal to the communist authorities were coddled by massive subsidies, and their books were released in editions of many thousand copies. Hence this scathing attack on communist cultural policy does not come as a surprise. Dzerzhin from *Moscowrep* sums it up succinctly:

They banned some writers, thereby assuring them popularity and stimulating great interests in their works. And others, on the contrary, they published in enormous editions, which was completely pointless because no one read them. A tremendous waste of paper and money.³⁴

It is worth bearing in mind that both Kartsev in the fictional world and Voinovich in the real one have been forced into exile. Both totalitarian states feel hostile towards dissident writers. In the post-Stalinist USSR, the government spared no effort either to silence inconvenient writers or to make them leave the Soviet Union. Voinovich, a little bit comically, describes how the authorities try to deal with an embarrassing situation when Karnavalov, a famous dissident novelist, does not want to go abroad of his own free will and, finally, is secretly parachuted into a foreign country.

³² Voinovich, *Moscow 2042*, 222–223.

³³ Voinovich, *Moscow 2042*, 258.

³⁴ Voinovich, *Moscow 2042*, 248.

In the case of Voinovich's imaginary world, Moscowrep officials usually ignore nonconformist literary works even if feelings of deep hatred towards the supreme Muscovite ruler called the Genialissimo are expressed. It is not surprising because in 2042 Moscow great literature and professional journalism hardly stand a chance of being printed, as publishing, like most things there, is just window dressing. Consequently, nobody needs to fight against writing, as, in fact, hardly any electronic or print publications are released. Even if they are, interestingly enough, they are printed on toilet paper and all of them refer to the Genialissimo one way or another.

The toilet paper was, however, made of newsprint. [...] I grabbed the end of the roll and began pulling it toward me. And, to be frank, I was not well prepared for what I saw then. No, the roll had not been made from old newspapers. The newspaper itself had been printed in roll form.³⁵

It is worth noting there is a parallel between the quality of press releases and articles printed in Moscowrep (which are nothing but state propaganda) and the material used to publish them.

To make a long story short, under Muscovite communist rule, literature and journalism have shrunk both quantitatively and qualitatively. In terms of quantity, due to a distinct lack of paper, the state has resorted to toilet paper publications. Thus, it is obvious what happens to them sooner rather than later.

In the case of electronic publishing the state of affairs is even worse. To his utter amazement, Kartsev learns that the artistic teams' writing is never stored in any computers' memory.

"No, listen, I still don't understand," I said with anxiety. "Does this really mean that everything those sergeants write isn't recorded anywhere?"

"That's a good word for it—*recorded*," said Dzerzhin happily. "That's it exactly, none of it is recorded anywhere. A perfect, exact, and very apt definition—it is *unrecorded*."³⁶

It comes as a great shock to him that even the mythical mainframe (a large powerful computer which is supposed to collect and

³⁵ Voinovich, *Moscow 2042*, 137–138.

³⁶ Voinovich, *Moscow 2042*, 247–248.

artistically blend all the authors' works) is just a big put-on and a hoax.

I imagined a vast room lit by fluorescent lights, a host of monitors with green screens, flickering signal lights of various colors, and silent people in snow-white lab coats working the keyboards. [...] And so just imagine what I felt when I opened my eyes and saw a small room lit by a single bare bulb, forty watts at best, which did not contain a computer or anything of the sort; there wasn't even a stool in the place. [...] "What's this?" I asked absolutely flabbergasted. "This is my invention of genius," said Dzerzhin with a self-satisfied grin.³⁷

As far as quality is concerned, Moscowrep's government policy consists in restricting belles-lettres to extolling the Genialissimo as a genius at both literature and most other fields of science, technology, art, knowledge, etc. Artistic teams, acting under strict discipline, praise him to the skies. Regrettably, most journalism and literature boils down to fictive stories about the ruler's heroic virtues and amazing achievements. Needless to say, all the accounts and tales have little to do with his real life.

To his bewilderment, Kartsev learns that there is an obvious contrast between the Soviet literature and journalism of his times and their contemporary counterparts. Admittedly, the Soviet novels or newspapers were imbued with propaganda, but nevertheless some authors were able to include things like romantic love or poetry in their books or articles. Furthermore, in sharp contrast to Moscowrep (where the Genialissimo is the only reference point), Lenin, the Soviet cult leader, is not the only louse falsely portrayed in Soviet belles-lettres.

On top of all that, Dzerzhin strips Kartsev of his illusions that the citizens of Moscowrep are unaware of the put-on show they deal with.

"What's interesting about our society is that everyone knows everything, but everyone pretends to know nothing. Is that clear?"³⁸

It is not a far cry from the reality of the Soviet Union where many people saw a wide divergence between what the government pro-

³⁷ Voinovich, *Moscow 2042*, 247.

³⁸ Voinovich, *Moscow 2042*, 248.

paganda machine presented and what everybody witnessed in real terms. All the more so, Moscowrep reality stands even in sharper contrast to Huxley's dystopia where a vast majority of citizens of the World State would never understand even basic political, emotional or religious concepts.³⁹

Thus, it turns out that to a degree people in Moscowrep live in an information vacuum. Publications are hardly available due to a total lack of paper and those accessible panegyric exclusively the Genialissimo; computers practically do not exist; nobody travels the world and the Communites are cut off from the outside world by a Berlin type wall. Undeniably, lack of information helps to manipulate the Muscovites successfully.

In Voinovich's Moscow, restrictions upon the media or literature do not exhaust the means of controlling people. The state resorts to another clever ploy in order to manipulate its inhabitants. It uses a natural human tendency towards religiousness for the regime's sake. The authorities do not liquidate the Orthodox Church as such, but transform it beyond recognition. They substitute the original religious ceremonies, rituals, rites, saints, church services, etc. with their communist parodies and travesties. Naturally, this is also a ruse to fill in a gap in society's spiritual life.

Toward that end, confession was regularly available in the workplace and in the churches, where services were held to honor the August Revolution, the Genialissimo's birthday, Communist Constitution Day, and so on.

Needless to say, this church had its own saints: Saint Karl, Saint Friedrich, Saint Vladimir, and many heroes of all the revolutions (but first and foremost the August Revolution) and wars; heroes of labor had also been canonized.⁴⁰

The purpose of this manipulation is obvious. People who are ideologically motivated apply themselves to their work and tasks more fervently and diligently, and denounce their compatriots to Intsec (Internal Security) more willingly. In order to achieve such

³⁹ Marek Ochrem, "The Distortion and Demise of Language and the Written Word in Aldous Huxley and Selected Russian Dystopias," *Polish Journal of English Studies*, no. 8.1 (2022): 93–95.

⁴⁰ Voinovich, *Moscow 2042*, 224.

a desirable state of affairs, in the novel, there are certain traits that pertain to a perfect Communité:

The church always instills its flock with the belief that the truly righteous man is the one who fulfills his production assignments, observes production discipline, obeys the authorities, and displays constant uncompromising vigilance to all signs of alien ideology.⁴¹

In the Moscowrep, even entering the state of matrimony and one's married life are under constant close surveillance. Furthermore, when it comes to satisfying the inhabitants' sexual needs Voinovich's Moscow authorities also, like in Orwell's fictional reality in the case of the Party functionaries, impose tough restrictions on its citizens. In Oceania, solitary existence or loveless marriages on the basis of a required state permit suit its totalitarian regime. To some extent something comparable happens in Moscow of 2042. Still, in contrast to Huxley's World State, where married couples do not exist whatsoever, and Orwell's Oceania, where the state does not interfere too much with the proles' married life, the matrimonial sphere is carefully regulated by law herein. In the narrative, the desirable characteristics of people who enter into wedlock are enumerated in detail:

Men over the age of twenty-four, and women over twenty-one are allowed to enter into marriage. Marriages are concluded solely upon the recommendation of a local pentagon. Recommendations are given only to persons who fulfill their production assignments, take an active lead in community labor, and do not consume alcohol. Marriages are concluded on a temporary, four-year basis. Then, with the pentagon's consent, they can be extended for another four-year period but can be dissolved before that time in the event one of the partners engages in antisocial behavior. Marriages are dissolved automatically when a partner's productive years are over (at forty-five for a woman, at fifty for a man).⁴²

It turns out, however, that some married couples still live together (on condition they have a place) or engage in casual sex even when their "productive years are over" and when they do not have

⁴¹ Voinovich, *Moscow 2042*, 224–225.

⁴² Voinovich, *Moscow 2042*, 226.

enough “merit points,” whereas some other people make use of sexual service. However, in contrast to *1984*, authoritarianism in this dystopia (as well as real totalitarian states in the past and nowadays) is not perfect. This imperfection is often the germ of heralding socio-political changes. Incidentally, the Muscovite authorities are not as ruthless towards its citizens as the Orwellian ones. Julia and Winston can only daydream about melting into the prole quarters to escape the oppressors’ attention and spend the rest of their lives together. They know their plans are completely unrealistic.

As in the case of Orwellian dystopian reality, Muscovite youngsters are influenced and controlled by the state. Character traits are often ascribed to one’s genes, but at an early age upbringing undeniably plays a major part in shaping one’s outlook on life and world view. It comes as no surprise then that in Voinovich’s Moscow children are brainwashed into thinking that the Genialissimo is excellence and perfection personified. An extraordinary personality cult created around the leader is a common feature of both *1984* and *Moscow 2042*. It also means bringing up kids in a spirit of denunciation and informing on one’s compatriots. In a comparable manner to Orwell’s dystopia, the younger generation is trained to be excellent and effective informers.

In the cheery, natural settings of Pioneer camps, children learn to inform on one another, to report their parents’ transgressions to their teachers and those of their teachers to the kindergarten principals. About twice a year, a national commission on communist education inspects kindergartens, and the children can inform on their principals to the members of that commission. In the kindergartens, the pupils’ denunciations are viewed only as a game; no weight or significance is attached to them, with the exception of those cases in which children uncover serious plots.

By the time they are in the instcominsts, children learn how to compose written denunciations. Their teachers keep a close eye on those compositions to make sure they are written in good communist Russian and are interesting in form and rich in content.⁴³

Admittedly, minors often spend a lot of time with their parents and it is well-nigh impossible to be on one’s guard against them at

⁴³ Voinovich, *Moscow 2042*, 226.

all times. It is not surprising then that one's offspring are the state's key informants. In the narrative, every adult Communité is also required by law to inform on his or her fellow countrymen. Even the main character in the novel needs to reckon with the consequences if he dares to refuse to be a stool pigeon.

"[...] I must say, I am unable to inform on people."

"What do you mean you are *unable* to?" said the head judge in surprise. "I've heard that you are even able to write novels."

"[...] Writing a novel is one thing, writing a denunciation is something else."

"Come on now!" [...] "It's much easier to write denunciations. [...] Nothing could be simpler."

"It might be simple for you," [...] "but for me it isn't. I wasn't a stool pigeon in my past life and I won't be in this one either."

[...]

"Dzerzhin Gavrilovich," [...] "why have you brought us such a green comcom? Why didn't you prepare him in advance?"

[...]

I could see that Dzerzhin was embarrassed. [...] "You've gone out of your mind, darling!" he whispered, looking timorously behind him. "Why are you doing this to me? [...]"

[...] "Whether you like it or not, I didn't come here to inform on people."

"Oh Gen!" [...] "Is it so hard to repeat that oath? It's only a ritual, [...]. Swear that you'll inform, and then don't do it. Or else you can write false denunciations and give them to me personally. And I'll make sure nothing comes of them."

"That's it!" I said indignantly. "What do you take me for? If your brand of communism can't manage without denunciations, then I have no desire to spend another hour in your Moscowrep. [...]"

[...] if I really thought about it—well, after all, I had dragged myself there, risking my neck, and so what was the sense of turning back right at the threshold [...]"

"Alright," I said. "To hell with you. I'll give in this time. But it's the last time."⁴⁴

The tense atmosphere characteristic of the above conversation speaks volumes about the climate of suspicion and denunciation pervading Moscow in 2024 AD. To a certain extent, a general mood of apprehension prevails in the communist city-state nineteen years from now. Kartsev's interlocutors are shocked and then slightly scared that the newcomer will not sign a loyalty oath. Simultaneously,

⁴⁴ Voinovich, *Moscow 2042*, 128–9.

however, they let him know that writing a denunciation does not have to be fraught with consequences. Thus, the crux of the matter boils down to the dichotomy between what people are supposed to do and what they remain actively engaged in. To some extent, this divergence is a good source of humour in the novel.

As it turns out, in the *Moscowrep*, the treatment of a nonconformist can become to a degree as cruel as in *1984*. When Kartsev opposes what he deems inappropriate, his life becomes miserable and at one point in the novel he experiences the ruthlessness of the Moscow Republic first-hand. He is deported to the Socialist Hotel, which is in a wretched state, and a smear campaign is launched against him. Simultaneously, he is accused of ingratitude in the press and deprived of celebrity status overnight. Bitten by fleas at night and walking barefoot, the protagonist strives just for a meagre meal and learns he cannot use the nearby telephones as they all are out of order. He also finds himself shunned by everybody and denied access to public institutions or even food. Finally, he even contemplates suicide. In a nutshell, he experiences total social ostracism. In fear of such a fate, the Muscovites at least superficially are enormously conformist throughout the novel.

An iron grip on Moscow in Voinovich's novels also concerns technical (e.g. transport or border) infrastructure. The metropolis is fortified with walls, razor wire and other distinctive features pertaining more to a concentration camp than to a capital city.

Both sides of the highway were fenced by a continuous wall of reinforced concrete, about eighteen feet tall with three rows of barbed wire along its top.⁴⁵

There was a vacant lot across from the hotel, to the right of which stretched a high, reinforced-concrete wall topped with barbed wire, from which I concluded that I was at the very outskirts of the *Moscowrep*.⁴⁶

This kind of surroundings looks very forbidding and does not instill optimism whatsoever. In fact, it creates a chilling ambience and is suggestive of the appearance of *The Ministry of Love* in *1984*:

⁴⁵ Voinovich, *Moscow 2042*, 111.

⁴⁶ Voinovich, *Moscow 2042*, 266.

The Ministry of Love was the really frightening one. There were no windows in it at all. Winston had never been inside the Ministry of Love, nor within half a kilometre of it. It was a place impossible to enter except on official business, and then only by penetrating through a maze of barbed-wire entanglements, steel doors, and hidden machine-gun nests. Even the streets leading up to its outer barriers were roamed by gorilla-faced guards in black uniforms, armed with jointed truncheons.⁴⁷

Obviously, in the case of both dystopias instruments of torture, violence or imprisonment are intrinsic to ruling with an iron fist. The end justifies the means: an authoritarian government will stop at nothing to stay in power. Putin's Russia epitomizes this ascertainment.

COMMON DENOMINATORS AND DIFFERENCES

In this study I have examined how an authoritarian regime wields enormous power and effectively controls society. I have analysed the vital components of the totalitarian world of the Moscow Communist Republic such as: child rearing, education, human intercourse, coercion, informing on people, political propaganda, brainwashing, the social framework, a gross distortion of the facts, state cruelty, just to name a few. In the case of the world discussed herein, the main objective of the state is to preserve the status quo. Undeniably, the specific methods of the realization of this goal take various forms. As child rearing and education are concerned, in contrast to the World State in Huxley's novel where the State resorts to genetic and social conditioning, in Moscow the genetic component is mostly missing. Furthermore, in the Moscowrep the rebellious or disobedient Muscovites are exiled from Moscow forever, whereas the World Controllers forcibly deport dissidents to islands and in 1984 nonconformists are subjected to brutal torture, removed from the registers, forgotten and vaporized. In turn, informing on people does not play an important role in *Brave New World*, whereas in Orwell's and Voinovich's

Marek Ochrem *An iron grip on society...*

⁴⁷ George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1984), 3.

dystopias people are constantly in utter fear as even their children can denounce them at any time of the day and night to the Thought Police and Intsec (Internal Security) respectively. In terms of political propaganda and brainwashing *1984* and *Moscow 2042* diverge from Huxley's novel. In the World State, any dissent or rebellion is just unthinkable for most people because of genetic and social conditioning that everybody is exposed to since one's conception; in Big Brother's and the Genialissimo's worlds everybody is subjected to intense political indoctrination focused primarily on the cult of the leader and the deep hatred of real and alleged enemies. In the case of linguistic usage in Huxley's narrative many words have become obsolete or even indecent because either they have no equivalents in the real world or they mean something obscene; furthermore, semantically simplified language reflects the nature of the World State: its triviality and lack of sophistication. In turn, in Winston Smith's London the authorities aim at decreasing the number of words and in Kartsev's Moscow new words and acronyms have been coined. The common denominator of all these linguistic phenomena pertains to the process of enslaving the citizens of the state. The social framework of the society analysed in this study also plays an important role. In *Brave New World*, social stratification atomises people to such a degree that the state does not need too much coercion to discipline society, whereas in *1984* the regime resorts to brutal and excruciating torture; in turn, in *Moscow 2042*, shunning, ostracizing and deportation are implemented to intimidate the Muscovites into absolute obedience. It is also worth remembering that a gross distortion of the facts also plays an important role in manipulating people. Hence in Huxley's and Orwell's dystopias real journalism and literature do not exist whatsoever whereas in Voinovich's novel, there are only panegyrics extolling the Genialissimo.

As we can see, the number of methods of authoritarian control at the disposal of the totalitarian regime discussed herein is quite extensive. Some of them can still be used by real autocrats all over the world. We should always be on our guard when dealing with despots and tyrants.

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