

## **CfP: Show Trials: Media and Mobilization during Stalinism – Düsseldorf 05/21**

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**12.05.2021 – 15. 05.2021; Dusseldorf, Germany**

**Deadline: 28.06.2020**

### **Show Trials: Media and Mobilization during Stalinism**

In 1952, the show trial of former general secretary Rudolf Slansky for so-called anti-state conspiracy called worldwide attention to Prague. However, similar stagings took place in other countries of the Soviet sphere of influence. There is no doubt that their inspirators and organizers used the example of the notorious Moscow Great Purge Trials. Nonetheless, the post-war show trials were not mere copies: After the war the dramaturgy tried out in the 1930s came ready-to-wear, but with a different purpose to East-Central Europe, the CSR, Poland, Hungary and also the GDR. It developed in a central conflict zone of the post-war period, in which submissive satellites had to be created and the Soviet Union was faced with the permanent task of containing the ideological influence of the West. East-Central Europe thus presents itself as a productive conflict zone for conspiracist scenarios and Cold War narratives. This applies in particular to courtrooms and other places (e.g. theatres) in which such narratives were brought on stage.

Show trials are no judicial lawsuits but media events. In order to destroy someone politically, morally, possibly even physically, by means of fabricated recrimination, no live event was required, which even with meticulous planning always carried a residual risk. The fact that political decision-makers took this risk raises questions about the horizon of expectations and the meaning as well as about the tension between political justice and social mobilization. Local politicians, under the influence of Soviet advisers, but also media producers and artists have been working on a plausible dramaturgy and effective medialisation. Based on these considerations, the conference project seeks to contribute to the history of media and mobilization in the context of Stalinist show trials. In addition to the Moscow trials of the 1930s, the focus should be on post-war cases in different countries of the Socialist Camp.

Contributions to the following subject areas are particularly welcome:

- *Planning and implementation*: role of local politicians and their Soviet security advisors, script analysis, staging,
- *Performance in the courtroom*: role of different actors, especially the audience,
- *Participation and mobilisation*: forms of participation by elites (media representatives, intellectuals, artists) and participation offers to – or pressure on – the general public,
- *Reception*: contemporary reactions, domestic, in Socialist “brother countries” as well as in the West,
- *Media*: presentation of specific products – in addition to print media, radio and visual media (film, caricature, photography, poster)

Subject to funding, the conference will take place in Düsseldorf from May 12-15, 2021. The conference would also like to focus on promoting junior researchers. Doctoral students are therefore expressly invited to submit proposals for presentations.

Please send your abstract with a short CV by June 28, 2020 to Prof. Dr. Beate Fieseler (fieseler@phil.hhu.de) and Dr. Ute Caumanns (ute.caumanns@hhu.de).