1. Introduction: The Problem

A political phenomenon becomes tangible and discussable only after it has been expressed in words. The way political reality is perceived is therefore to a large extent determined by the basic concepts of political discourse, political formulas and clichés. Politics evolves alongside with the language, relying on it and utilizing it. Abundant academic literature describing the relations between political realias and their reflection in the language speaks for the correlation of these two phenomena: politics and political discourse. It’s noteworthy, that political discourse displays “primacy of values over facts, prevalence of persuasion and evaluation over information sharing, and the emotional over the rational”\(^1\).

Control over the dissemination of political information is an important factor in the definition of a political regime: authoritarianism and totalitarianism are characterized by a stringent control over the

\(^1\)E.I. SHEIGAL, *Semiotics of Political Discourse*, Moscow, Volgograd, p. 46.
information flow, while democracy presupposes free public flow of information\(^2\).

Scholars have shown undiminishing interest to how language functions in totalitarian and authoritarian societies. Specialists are increasingly asserting that the Soviet regime did not allow for natural development of political language or mass media in its modern sense; it is no surprise that at the time it was referred to as mass campaigning and propaganda\(^3\). All this reflects one of the constants of the totalitarian regime that establishes control over the whole society and justifies its legitimacy with the help of a universal (totalitarian) ideology presented as the expression of the ultimate truth. This robs political discourse of one of language’s most characteristic traits – multiplicity of interpretations. That in turn inevitably leads to an attempt to destroy the freedom of the individual, as well as social, political, cultural, religious and linguistic freedom.

In political science, the term “totalitarianism” (from the Latin “totalis,” entire, whole) is used to describe control over the entire social system, including all of its elements, such as people and their minds. From the point of view of communication, the most significant characteristic of the totalitarian regime is that its communication model has the format of a monologue. In other words, the ideal (toward which the society is striving) presupposes a clear, universal communicative hierarchy where one person speaks and the rest listen.

The main characteristic traits of totalitarianism are the ideologization and rationalization of the public consciousness, referred to by some researchers as the total politization of the mind\(^4\). Almost all political discourse experts, as well as many writers (G. Orwell, Y. Zamyatin) highlight the defining role of language and other symbol systems in the establishment and functioning of any totalitarian regime.

R. Barthes observed that, since the act of speaking always involves subjugating the listener in a certain way, language is nothing but a universally binding form of constraint\(^5\). And while such assessment is perhaps overly categorical, the practice of using language as

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\(^2\) See G.Ch. GUSEINOV, B. PETERSON, N.A. KUPINA, A. VEZHBIZKA, J. YOUNG et al.


an instrument of suppressing free thought in society is a recent phenomenon from our Soviet past, where the word was turned into an aggressive force, aimed at deliberately altering people’s consciousness. Still, words or rhetorical devices on their own cannot be totalitarian or democratic: only a certain social, political and ideological discourse can transform and/or distort their meaning.

Upon a more critical inspection, the language of totalitarianism appears to be an illusory system, partly of a temporary nature. Canadian researcher F. Eidlin suggests that realizing the principles of Newspeak in reality is not possible, as “totalitarianism will always remain a utopian ideal – something dictators may strive for but will never be able to achieve.”6 There has never been complete totalitarian sovereignty over language, even at the time when totalitarian regimes blossomed.

Nevertheless, the influence of totalitarianism on the communicative processes in society remained significant and was determined by the special nature of totalitarian ideology. One of the main traits of a totalitarian ideology is its teleological (target-oriented) view of social development. The promise of a better, happier future helped people forget about the difficulties and hardships of their everyday lives. Another important characteristic of such ideology is its paternalistic nature. Manifested through a patronizing, “fatherly” attitude of leaders towards their people, it prepared a fertile ground for manipulating people’s minds.

A totalitarian regime always aims at sacralising power and creating a cult of its leaders. Here ideological persuasion becomes indispensable, and the regime creates a special system for ideological conditioning, using language as the primary instrument of symbolizing reality and sacralising power7.

Thus, from the point of view of language, the totalitarian discourse displays the following dominant characteristics:

“orating”: prevalence of a declamatory style and a fervent campaigning tone;

propaganda-style triumphalism: deliberate exaggeration of the importance of social accomplishments and achieved results;

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common usage of ideologization, attribution of symbolic meanings to core political concepts, creation of ideologemes, potentially different in meaning from the actual meaning of the words; exaggerated abstraction and scientism, active use of generalizations at the expense of logic; heightened criticism and fervour, not always genuine; slogan-like style, passion for mantras; claims to absolute truth.8

2. Comparative Analysis of Three Speech Cases

Using these conclusions and the characteristics of totalitarian language as our theoretical and methodological foundation, we will now proceed to analyse and compare three public speeches of political leaders in totalitarian states: J. Stalin, A. Hitler and B. Mussolini. The analysis will be conducted in the intentional and strategic manner, with reference to the linguistic resource base, and we will be looking at three specific aspects: the speeches’ intent, language and implications. The working hypothesis suggests a degree of lingua-strategic universality of totalitarian texts while allowing for subjectivity in the choice of linguistic means and the format of communication. As part of the on-going analysis of totalitarian language, this paper provides comparative material (three case studies and their comparison) for practical substantiation of the resource nature of totalitarian language (it is not a separate language but politically-charged use of various linguistic resources and registers).

For the Russian-language case study we have chosen the speech made by J. Stalin at the reception for higher education workers in the Kremlin on May 17, 1938. Kremlin reception speeches were among the most frequent speeches made by Stalin.9 V.A. Nevezhin believes Kremlin receptions to have been official events of national importance, stating that they played a decisive role in the reinforcement of Stalin’s power and consolidation of the Soviet political, military, economic and intellectual elite around its leader. It is a special type of

political communication with strictly defined parameters: the format of the event itself calls for “praise” and “glorification” from the receiving party and acceptance and agreement from the guests. In such communicative situations Stalin was a natural: he was not only (and not so much) “the master of the country”, “the sovereign of the state” and “the father of all nations” but also a friendly and welcoming host. The framework for the event is provided by oriental customs and traditions, manifested through common use toasts, perorations and eulogies. This is not to say, however, that Kremlin receptions convey a relaxed, informal tone. Close monitoring by NKVD, fixed etiquette whereby only Stalin or a special master of ceremonies, a member of his circle of confidants, can start off the conversation at the table, as well as fixed, strictly allocated seating arrangements determine the special “Kremlin” tone of the communication.

The first thing that stands out about Stalin’s speech to the representatives of higher education is the simplicity and transparency of the text. According to specialists, “strange as it may seem, it is the limited vocabulary that gave Stalin’s speeches a solemn, monumental tone, enabling them to be accepted as a given, without questioning or doubt.” With time, Stalin’s speeches became more prescriptive, lost all traces of a journalistic tone, verbosity, or internal dialogism. The language of Stalin’s speeches “had to be concise, clear, unambiguous, peremptory”; its “slogan-like vocabulary was to be learnt and chanted”.

To a large extent, these discursive expectations and the communicative format of the speech determine the nature of the speaker’s intent.

Interestingly, even this fairly “amicable” text aimed at members of the academic world, was polarized in multiple directions and delivered with the intent to expose the opponent: science vs. people; old science vs. new science, rank-and-file vs. academics. Stalin opposes “the people’s science” to the science which is “distant from the people” and is merely forced to serve them; he stigmatizes the old school, traditional scientists (the “priests”, “monopolists of science”), while praising the young who break norms and traditions; he glorifies people outside of the academe (such as A. G. Stakhanov, a Soviet miner).

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10 Ibidem.
12 Ibidem.
Such polarization of the text immediately segregates the audience which is made up of members of the opposing groups (renowned scholars and young professionals, professional researchers and representatives of non-academic fields).

The intent of condemning “bad science” is also realized through labelling the “other” scientists who refused to support the ideas advanced by V. I. Lenin (G.V. Plekhanov and others). The microtheme of Lenin is used in the text to implement the strategy of persuasion through a positive example. Stalin puts Lenin on par with Galileo and Darwin, praising his academic behaviour and calling him “the model man of science”. The intent of glorification is realized through the use of clichés from a higher linguistic register: “scientific luminary”, “the greatest man of our time”, etc.

It’s important to emphasize that from the point of view of general purpose Stalin’s speech was “educational” in nature. Stalin explains the meaning of true, progressive science to his Kremlin audience: “I was talking about science. But there are different kinds of science. The science I was referring to is called progressive, advanced science.” In language terms, this general educational intent brings to mind the words of Edward Bernays, the founding father of public relations, who suggested that the difference between education and propaganda lies merely in the point of view: “Advocacy of what we believe in is education. Advocacy of what we don’t believe in is propaganda”¹³. Totalitarian discourse successfully combines these two sides of language (being an instrument of education and propaganda at the same time) and makes propaganda a part of education. An important illustration of this point is provided by observations made by A.I. Sherbinin in his series of articles¹⁴, where he researches indoctrination as a means of influencing mentality with emphasis on the linguistic component of education in a totalitarian society. Talking about education and the educational system in the Soviet state in the period of 1930-1950, A. I. Sherbinin demonstrates how black-and-white thinking was imposed upon the public through the earliest types of textbooks – the ABCs. ABC-books for adults (made to boost the literacy level in the society) and children (reading manuals) shaped the learner’s political stand and class identity: “…This ABC-book can

legitimately be called ‘The most concise course in the Communist Party (b)’… Studying the ABC… children were mastering simple political vocabulary and getting a grasp of the basics of the social classification’ 15.

This is similar to what we observe in Stalin’s text about science and scientists: it is right to believe that there is no universal science; there is the new, “true” science, and the old science, the “drag” which turns people into “slaves of tradition”.

Let us consider another case study involving a different version of totalitarian thinking and totalitarian language. On March 15, 1938, at the Heroes’ Square in Vienna, Hitler announced to an enormous crowd of listeners that Austria was annexed to the Third Reich. This short speech projects simplicity and accessibility. The setting is meticulously designed. The orator is standing on a balcony, above the audience, thus symbolically realizing the main semantic orientation of totalitarian discourse (from top to bottom). Addressing the Austrians who have convened before the National Library, the speaker begins: “Germans!” (Deutsche!). This renaming, this use of a different ethnonym, reinforces the idea that Austria has lost its independence as a nation.

The Catholic “class state” (Ständestaat) existed in Austria from 1933-1934 to 1938. The main principles of Chancellor Dollfuss and his successor Chancellor Schuschnigg’s policy were Catholicism, the “Austrian idea” and the corporate structure of the society, patterned after Mussolini’s Italy.

On March 15, 1938, at the Heroes’ Square in Vienna, Hitler announced the victory of the German idea over the Austrian idea. Shortly prior to the event it became clear that Mussolini had ceased support of the “class state,” and the annexation of Austria to the Third Reich became inevitable.

While the speech opens with an instrumental substitution of ethnonyms (“Germans!” instead of “Austrians!”), the subsequent text is characterized by the use of abstract notions and generalizations. Hitler addresses the public as “Men and women!” By emphasizing the gender, the speaker shifts focus away from personality and individuality towards the type. Fitting a person into a certain generalized notion (ethnic, gender, or social) and ignoring the individual is a characteris-

15 A.I. Sherebinin “From the image in your ABC” or “Az, Vedi, Glagol, Thinking and Living in total indoctrination”// Polis, 1999, is 1, p. 116.
tic trait of totalitarian language. Renowned philologist V. Klemperer (Klemperer, 1881-1960) researched this trend in his book on the language of the Third Reich “LTI” (Lingua Tertii Imperii). He wrote: “The purpose of LTI is to strip everyone of their individuality, to paralyze them as personalities, to make them into unthinking and docile cattle in a herd driven and hounded in a particular direction, turn them into atoms in a huge rolling block of stone. The LTI is the language of mass fanaticism”\textsuperscript{16}.

Later, the speaker makes a transition from a generalising pattern to historical notions. It is clear that the event he is talking about is of historic significance which will be fully appreciated only by the following generations. The orator emphasises the idea of the “unity of the German people” (deutsche Volksgemeinschaft) and goes on to describe the image of the defeated “enemy”. Not once does he use the word “annexation” (Anschluß), even though that is the subject of the address\textsuperscript{17}.

Totalitarian language is built on an explicit and implicit opposition of “friends” vs. “foes”, “our own” vs. “others”: the German heroes vs. their recent enemies who supported Austrian independence and, according to Hitler, tried to stop the creation of a “truly great” German empire. Austria’s previous rulers, leaders of the class state whom the speaker refers to as “legitimists”, thought of Austrian independence as their “mission” (“Mission”). Hitler accepts the religious vocabulary of the Dollfuß-Schuschnigg government. Totalitarianism needs an “authority”, a “father”, a “master”. Leaders of the German and Italian totalitarian regimes purposefully used religious vocabulary in their language\textsuperscript{18}. On the one hand, it was a familiar and accessible emotional reference that the audience was used to from childhood. On the other hand, it placed the totalitarian way of thinking into a framework of the sacred tradition of the pastoral, paternal word. Hitler doesn’t give up the religious vocabulary of the “class state”: it was easier to use this language than to overwrite it. Hitler states: “And so, I proclaim a new mission for this country” (Ich proklamiere nunmehr


\textsuperscript{17} See SCHMITZ-BERNING CORNELIA, Anschluß: Vokabukar des Nationalsoaialismus, Berlin - New York, Walter de Gruyter, 2000, pp. 32-34.

für dieses Land seine neue Mission). Politicization of “the sacred” is one of the peculiarities of totalitarian mentality and language.

The new mission of Austria as part of the Third Reich is to protect the German nation from “Eastern storms”. That is the “commandment” preserved by the inhabitants of the “East German mark”. Thus polarization of the text is manifested, and an image of a new “enemy” is created. While the supporters of Austrian independence and the “class state” are the enemy which has already been defeated, the current enemy lies in the East.

The next linguistic layer used in the speech contains historicisms. The history of the German Empire is used to reinforce authority. The speech utilizes such obsolete words as “Gauen” (lands, states, territories), “die alte Ostmark des Deutschen Reiches” (the Eastern mark of the German empire), as well as elevated achaic and legal and official vocabulary. Hitler concludes the speech with the German cry “Sieg Heil!” The word “stronghold” is used in several variations: general linguistic (Bollwerk) and archaic (Trutzburg). The speaker uses such expressions as “Guarantee of happiness and peace for the great nation of Germany” (Unterpfand für das Glück für das Glück und für den Frieden unseres großen Volkes), “Nazi willpower” (nationalsozialistische Willenskraft). The attribute “great” (groß-) occurs 6 times in the 543-word-long speech. Words denoting power, force, militantism (force, cruelty, pressure, victory, etc.) permeate the speech. It is yet another lexical layer which is characteristic for totalitarian discourse.

The speaker continues with a clever rhetorical stroke. He decreases the level of generalization and starts speaking on behalf of “the millions of citizens of this beautiful country of Germany, on behalf of Styria, the Lower and Upper Austria and of Salzburg, the Tyrol, Carinthia, and especially on behalf of the city of Vienna” (im Namen der Millionen dieses wunderschönen deutschen Landes, im Namen der Steirer, der Nieder- und Oberösterreicher, der Kärntner, der Salzburger, der Tiroler und vor allem im Namen der Stadt Wien)”. These differentiated Austrian names, however, are included in the summative concept “German”: “This country is German, it has accepted its Mission, and it will fulfill it…”

The end of the speech is delivered in a more personal tone. The speaker cites the most important accomplishment of his life: bringing Austria back into the German world (die größte Vollzugsmeldung meines Lebens abstatten).
This game of personal and impersonal, generalized and individual, and the intertwining of various layers of the language hallowed by the authority of the past, is the foundation of totalitarian mentality which always expects ecstatic response from the audience and eliminates the possibility of “questioning”. Questioning or critical evaluation is impossible when listeners are in the state of affect. Researcher of totalitarian language V. Klemperer accurately defines this quality of totalitarian regimes as “suppression of the ability to question” (das Unterdrüken des Fragetriebs)\textsuperscript{19}.

Another case study which brings out specific characteristics of totalitarian discourse is the speech delivered by B. Mussolini on June 10, 1940. In that speech \textit{Il Duce} announced that Italy was entering WWII. Thanks to his journalistic experience, the ability to speak to crowds and a natural rhetorical talent, Mussolini is known as one of totalitarianism’s most eloquent orators. On 10 June, 1940, at the Piazza Venezia in Rome, Mussolini announced that Italy was joining the Nazi Germany in the Second World War. This short, emotional speech paints a good picture of Mussolini the orator and demonstrates the peculiarities of the language of his speeches.

The success of Mussolini’s speeches is largely due to the simplicity of his language. \textit{Il Duce} rarely uses literary allusions, scientific or political terms, or loan words. His speeches are universally accessible. It is a widely-known fact that the Italian fascist party conducted a policy of control over language which was aimed at “protecting” it from influences of other languages and Italian dialects.

This doesn’t mean however that speeches delivered by the Italian leader are primitive. Mussolini utilizes traditional, well-known totalitarian clichés. In the speech in question, for example, it is such idioms as “the die is cast”, or “the bridges are burnt”. This simplicity combined with familiar “embellishments” guarantee the desired effect. Declamation is one of the hallmarks of totalitarian language.

What stands out in Mussolini’s speeches is their clear structure. The majority of them are delivered in the form of a dialogue with the crowd and follow the following pattern: address – message – pause – address – message – pause – final address. This structure draws the crowd into the main message, creates a sense of “participation”, and ensures active support for the speaker. The speech of June 10, 1940, follows this pattern too.

The first address sets the tone for the whole speech: “Veterans of land, sea and air! Blackshirts of the revolution and the legions! Men and women of Italy, the Empire and the Kingdom of Albania! Listen!” Such an introduction immediately “instrumentalizes” the listeners, turning them into implements of war – which is in full accordance with the topic of the speech. The imperative “Listen!” is reminiscent of the archaic forms of appeal to the people used by ancient leaders and prophets. Sacralisation and attribution of higher symbolic meanings to words become stronger as the speech goes on.

From the very beginning Mussolini appeals to the higher powers which compel him to speak on that day: “The hour, marked by fate, has come”. He talks about decisions that cannot be recalled. At the same time, despite using the format of a dialogue, Mussolini does not ask questions, but rather proclaims and declares. As a mediator of higher powers, Mussolini presents himself as a semi-god, “the father of the nation” – an image that is typical for totalitarian regimes. This effect is reinforced by the setting of the speech, delivered at a grand square, from a balcony of a tall building, the speaker himself surrounded by top generals and senior government officials.

Polarization, mandatory for totalitarian discourse, shows up in the beginning of the speech, when Mussolini names the enemy, England and France, calling them “plutocratic and reactionary democracies of the West”. In order to justify entering the war, *Il Duce* uses the highly effective strategy of “intimidation”, claiming that the enemies are stalling healthy development of the Italian people and at times even threaten the very existence of Italy. Mussolini calls the world to witness this, saying that the fascist Italy has done all everything in its power to avoid what is happening in Europe but its efforts were not successful.

The principle of polarization is used to compare the people of Italy with the future enemy. In Mussolini’s speech Italians are pictured as a young, active people who need to expand their country’s borders and get access to the ocean in order to develop: “Forty five million people cannot feel at ease without access to the ocean. War is in line with the ideas of the revolution, the struggle…against the aging suppressors who have usurped the right to the riches of the land.” Thus the fascist idea of occupation is justified, and a new moral code is created.

The fascist morality is one of the most important ideologemes found in the text. Mussolini declares that Italy must support Hitler
according to the fascist moral code: “If you have a friend, you must march alongside him to the end”. In this manner, totalitarianism perverts the meaning of traditional human values and attributes opposite meanings to words. For example, Mussolini urges people to win in order to “finally bring justice and peace to Italy, Europe and the whole world”. He counterbalances the risks and potential casualties of the war by emphasising the honour of Italy’s citizens and protection of their rights. He tells the people of their special mission, and calls them to step onto the battlefield and not be afraid of this “ultimate test,” if they will determine the course of history.

3. Research Findings

Analysis of three specific totalitarian texts has revealed evidence in support of the original hypothesis, namely: polarization, creating the image of “the enemy”, exaltation of “own victories and accomplishments”, paternalism, declamation, and sacralisation of the political.

The facts that go against the hypothesis are related to the differences in speech genres and the different types of audience. While Stalin’s Kremlin speeches were made before the Soviet elite and were styled as toasts or perorations, Hitler and Mussolini spoke in the “marketplace” genre, addressing large crowds of people. Consequently, the structure of their speeches is radically simplified, the rhetorical devices are crisp and clear, and they strive to achieve the “amplification” effect of speaking into the microphone turned up to full volume. At the same time the speakers seek to establish trust through inserting a personal note into their orations.

Totalitarian discourse analysed on the basis of the three case studies demonstrates a combination of the abstract and the specific as well as the schematic and the individual, based on paternalism, declamation and conscious design of the political setting. Generally totalitarian discourse conveys a unilateral, “top to bottom” semantics, which provokes a rapturous response from the audience, reducing the communication format to a monologue. Key words of totalitarian language function as signals.

Totalitarian language poses a particular threat because it shapes and sustains mass totalitarian mentality. Viktor Klemperer wrote the following about totalitarian language: “Words can be like tiny doses
of arsenic: they are swallowed unnoticed and seem to have no effect, but after some time the toxic effect is there after all”\textsuperscript{20}. The German linguist, who was making daily observations of language transformations from the inside of the regime, concluded that “what had the greatest impact was not individual speeches, articles, leaflets, posters or banners. National Socialism penetrated into the flesh and blood of the crowd through individual words, expressions and sentence forms drilled into people by relentless repetition and accepted by them mechanically and unconsciously.”\textsuperscript{21} Thus the power of totalitarian language is predetermined by the use of special language resources found in all the three case studies.

4. Evaluation of Results

The comparison of the three case studies reveals typological and contextual elements of totalitarian discourse. The comparative approach seems to support the hypothesis of a universal intentional nature of texts within totalitarian discourse with unique (individual) usage of specific language resources.


\textsuperscript{21} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 25.