

## A SYMPOSIUM ON THE PROBLEMS OF STALINISM

Aleksanteri Institute, University of Helsinki, 3.-4. September 2010

In recent times, the discussions about the nature of Stalin's rule in the Soviet Union from the 1930's to the 1950's and the impact of Stalinism in the international agenda have been resurfacing, no doubt partly because the end of the Cold War and the demise of ideological clichés connected with it, partly thanks to the opening of Soviet archives, which makes the concrete assessment of Stalinist policy and the amount of its victims more reliable.

The "totalitarianism theory", which a long time was, in particular during the Cold War, the dominating explanation of the Stalinism phenomenon, has been increasingly criticized as insufficient and superficial, although it undoubtedly did grasp some aspects of the Stalin régime. However, no consensus as regards to the causal and historical explanation of Stalinism has yet been achieved. Instead, there are many concurring interpretations, starting from the heterodox Marxist attempts to interpret the USSR of the Stalin period as a "state capitalist" or "developmental" dictatorship, to recent analyses by American scholars of Stalinism as a form of civilization *sui generis*.

The problem of Stalinism and the ways to assess its heritage is, moreover, not a purely academic matter but it has a persistent actuality especially in regard to the public discourse in present-day Russia, where the "Stalin question" forms a painful moment in the national consciousness. In the symposium we intend to focus on the different explanatory models of Stalinism as a political, sociological and cultural phenomenon and discuss the theoretical and methodological approaches to it.

The Aleksanteri Institute is arranging in Helsinki in September 3.—4. 9. 2010 a symposium on the phenomenon of Stalinism. The symposium, whose main language is English, will be accompanied by a couple of popular lectures in Finnish for a wider public on the present stage of Stalinism research.

The symposium will consist of 8 to 10 presentations of 40 minutes plus discussion. Please send the paper proposals for the symposium of max. 150 words by May 1, 2010 on the electronic form, which can be found in the address

<https://elomake.helsinki.fi/lomakkeet/19109/lomake.html>

For additional information, please contact Prof. Vesa Oittinen (vesa.oittinen [at] helsinki.fi) or MA Elina Viljanen (elina.viljanen [at] helsinki.fi), or see the web page <http://www.helsinki.fi/aleksanteri/english/news/events/2010/0903stalinism.htm>