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## ‘INSTIGATORS,’ ‘HOOLIGANS,’ ‘SEX MANIACS,’ ‘DRUG ADDICTS,’ ‘ALCOHOLICS...’

### THE IMAGE OF STUDENTS’ PROTESTS MIRRORED IN THE RHETORIC OF THE STATE

#### ABSTRACT

In February 2016, the students of Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi began to protest against the violation of basic democratic freedoms by Narendra Modi’s government. The protest was quickly supported by other Indian universities, and the campaigns organized by students happened in all the important academic centres in India. The purpose of this paper is to show selected examples of language expressions employed by the Indian authorities against the student-protesters and used in the official Indian media, to describe the actions taken by protests’ participants, as well as to compare the language of the Indian authorities and media used against protesting students in the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century with some official statements about student protests in Poland under the communist regime.

**Key words:** language and power; language as the tool of politics; media propaganda; verbal suppression; language as a weapon of state

In February 2016, a students' protest began at the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) in Delhi which especially rapidly reached an uncommon scale and intensity. The aim of this article is to show some of the components of the rhetoric employed by the state authorities with reference to actions undertaken by the protesting students, on the example of numerous media statements. The materials regarding the JNU protest will then be referred to selected instances of media discourse concerning the students' protests in communist Poland<sup>1</sup>, with an aim to point out some systemic regularities in the discourse of power, which simply transform language into a political or ideological device.

The question of interdependence between language and politics, or – in other words – the question of how the language of a communiqué can affect the perception of an issue conveyed by it, is in itself almost as broad and complex as the history of mankind.<sup>2</sup> However, it was the twentieth century which came to be the period when this problem most certainly reached a global dimension. The two totalitarian systems, fascism and communism, as well as their historical and moral effects, were so far reaching and of such grave importance that they still remain a source of the most significant intellectual experiences of modern times.<sup>3</sup>

For both the totalitarian ideologies, the practices of finding the most effective ways to employ the language to serve the ideological purposes of the state were extended to the limits, or perhaps sometimes even passed all imaginable boundaries. This is why, it was only natural for these practices to become the subject of extensive academic studies and descriptions.<sup>4</sup> However, as the media discourse on the JNU issue as well as numerous other instances show, these practices can refer not only to states under a totalitarian rule but, paradoxically, also to parliamentary democracies, where language can be used

<sup>1</sup> In Poland, the deep roots and clever means of communist indoctrination were analyzed by Michał Głowiński and Walery Pisarek (among others). Both the scholars gathered considerable evidence which then was put under a systematic and detailed analysis. See i.e.: M. Głowiński, *Nowomowa po polsku*, Warszawa 1991; idem, *Peereliada. Komentarze do słów 1976-1981*, Warszawa 1993; idem, *Mowa w stanie oblężenia, 1982-1985*, Warszawa 1996; idem, *Końcówka (czerwiec 1985-styczeń 1989)*, Kraków 1999; W. Pisarek, *O mediach i języku*, Kraków 2007.

<sup>2</sup> In the tradition of western thought, the conviction that language can be the most effective device of persuasion, and that the linguistic abilities are a valuable skill in achieving public as well as personal aims, was present for example in the writings of Plato, Aristotle, Cicero or Desiderius Erasmus.

<sup>3</sup> See i.e. V. Klemperer, *The Language of the Third Reich. LTI, Lingua Tertii Imperii. A Philologist's Notebook*, transl. by M. Brady, London 2002; G. Orwell, "Politics and the English Language", in S. Orwell, I. Angus (eds.), *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell*, vol. 4: *In Front of Your Nose*, London 1970, pp. 127-140; idem, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, London 1949.

<sup>4</sup> Numerous linguistic studies have analyzed the techniques and varieties of language used to enforce certain ideology or to attain specific objectives. See i.e.: T.C. Arnold, *Thoughts and Deeds. Language and the Practice of Political Theory*, New York 1993; D. Bolinger, *Language – the Loaded Weapon. The Use and Abuse of Language Today*, London 1980; M. Edelman, *Political Language. Words that Succeed and Policies that Fail*, New York 1977; N. Fairclough, *Language and Power*, London 1989; L. Thomas, S. Wareing, *Language, Society and Power*, London 1999; etc.

not only to convince or persuade, but it can also serve to conceal or excuse violence, as well as to cover up manipulations.<sup>5</sup>

For me, as for the majority of people who lived under the communist regime through their formative years, the issue of language being employed to manipulate the peoples' perception of reality is still an important social as well as scholarly and ethical problem. Perhaps this is why during the two months of my fellowship at JNU, which happen to fall exactly at the time of the protest, it was impossible for me to shut out memories and to ignore the direct associations between all that was happening around me at the JNU Campus and the Polish experiences from the dark past.

Nevertheless, the reasons to refer the case of media propaganda aimed at the protesting students of JNU (and in some instances also other Indian universities) to the hostile discourse directed by state media at protesting Polish students, were not only emotional or sentimental. In fact, the two cases seem to be a perfect illustration of how the democratically elected authorities (in this case of the Republic of India often called "the world's largest democracy") and the totalitarian rulers imposed on the nation by the system (then of the People's Republic of Poland), reached for parallel methods of propaganda manipulation, restrictions and provocations to convince the nation about the indecent and dangerous nature of students' protests.

## 1. THE ONSET OF THE "JNU ROW"

The 2016' protests at JNU started with the arrest of Kanhaiya Kumar, the President of the JNU Students' Union, on February 13, on a charge of sedition. The charge came as a result of events which took place at JNU Campus on February 9, when a group of students – linked either by membership or ideological sentiment to the Communist Party of India – organized an anniversary event to commemorate the execution of Mohammad Afzal Guru, who was sentenced to death after being found guilty of the 2001 terrorist attack on the Indian Parliament<sup>6</sup> and whose capital punishment by hanging was carried out on February 3, 2013. The event was to be organized as a debate on "Judicial Killing" and a march against the practice of capital punishment. The organizers

<sup>5</sup> This assumption was proposed and thoroughly supported by Noam Chomsky, who extended Orwell's observations about the ability of totalitarian governments to impose a completely unreal or distorted worldview on their citizens. In his works Chomsky claims that a parallel situation can happen in liberal democracies, such as the US, in which free media operate without formal censorship. See i.e. N. Chomsky, *Knowledge of Language. Its Nature, Origin, and Use*, Westport, CT 1986; N. Chomsky, E.S. Herman, *Manufacturing Consent. The Political Economy of the Mass Media*, New York 1988; iidem, "Propaganda Mill: The Media Churn Out the Official Line", *The Progressive* (June 1988), pp. 14-15.

<sup>6</sup> On December 13, 2001, at 11.30 am, five armed terrorists belonging to the Pakistan supported Lashkar-e-Toiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed terrorist groups, drove through the gates of the Indian Parliament House in a white Ambassador car, fitted with an explosive device. After being challenged, they opened fire. In the gun battle that followed, all the attackers, eight security personnel and a gardener were killed.

also planned an evening of poetry and music, titled “A country without a post office – against the judicial killing of Afzal Guru and Maqbool Bhatt<sup>7</sup>.”<sup>8</sup> However, a group of students linked to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)<sup>9</sup> filed a police complaint. As a result, Kanhaiya Kumar was arrested on allegations that anti-national slogans were used by the participants of the event, and he was ordered to three days of being in police custody. According to press reports, the students who were part of the committee which organized the event said that none of them were part of the group shouting slogans yet, in spite of that, another student, Umar Khalid, as well as others who were involved in organizing the February 9 event, were also accused of sedition but, since they went missing from the Campus, they could not be arrested immediately. It was not until February 23, after the Delhi High Court directed them to turn themselves in that two students, Umar Khalid and Anirban Bhattacharya, surrender before the Delhi Police (they were granted interim bail for six months on March 18, 2016).



A small poster appealing for the release of Anirban Bhattacharya and Umar Khalid (photo: R.C.)

<sup>7</sup> Maqbool Bhatt was a Kashmiri separatist and co-founder of Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front. He was sentenced to death and executed in Delhi Tihar Jail, on February 11, 1984.

<sup>8</sup> One of the students, belonging to the event organizing committee, told *The Hindu*: “The program was a cultural evening organized to question the working of the Supreme Court. It was also meant to bring the grievances of the Kashmiri citizens to light. The struggles of ‘self-determination’ must be openly spoken about. Considering this is a democratic republic, why should dissent be suppressed?”; “JNU Row: What Is the Outrage All About?”, *The Hindu*, 16 February 2016, at <[http://www.thehindu.com/specials/in-depth/jawaharlal-nehru-university-row-what-is-the-outrage-all-about/article8244872.ece?utm\\_source=InternalRef&utm\\_medium=relatedNews&utm\\_campaign=Related-News](http://www.thehindu.com/specials/in-depth/jawaharlal-nehru-university-row-what-is-the-outrage-all-about/article8244872.ece?utm_source=InternalRef&utm_medium=relatedNews&utm_campaign=Related-News)>, 15 June 2016.

<sup>9</sup> According to Kanhaiya Kumar’s statements these were people belonging to Akhil Bharatiya Vidhyarti Parishad. A few days later, when the atmosphere on the campus became progressively more tense, three members of the RSS student wing (ABVP) had resigned from their positions in the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) unit of the party, justifying their decision by pointing at ideological differences.

Very soon it became obvious that the video recordings used as evidence against the students were falsified, however, by then the police forces had already entered the university campus and used physical violence against students. The protestors, on the other hand, issued a statement saying that they will not allow classes to be held on the campus till the students' union President, Kanhaiya Kumar, is released. JNU teachers also joined the students in boycotting classes and proposed lectures on "nationalism" instead. Quite soon the space outside the JNU main administrative building, where lectures and discussions took place, became known as "Freedom Square".



The "Wall of Solidarity" by "Freedom Square", JNU Campus, March 14, 2016 (photo: R.C.)

On February 14, at the Delhi District Courts (Patiala House) where Kanhaiya Kumar was to appear before the metropolitan magistrate, a group of aggressive men dressed in lawyers' robes kicked and slapped Kumar and his supporters. The violence, directed mainly at journalists and students, lasted for nearly an hour. Similarly, on the next day, acts of violence took place just before the hearing of sedition charges against the JNU Students' Union president. The Delhi Police had not reacted. The policemen just watched while the attackers forced their entry into the court complex, assaulted Kumar on his way to the court hearing as well as physically and verbally insulted the team of senior advocates.

The events at Patiala House heated up the atmosphere on the Campus, now surrounded by the police forces, which created even bigger interest in the media (at some point the number of TV vans by the JNU Campus gates seemed to have more or less matched the number of police vehicles).

Kanhaiya Kumar was released on interim bail and allowed back on the Campus. Soon after his release from Tihar Jail, he addressed the crowd gathered on "Freedom Square" with a fiery speech, in which he stated: *it is not freedom from India, it is freedom in India*

[we want] (...) *from the corrupt practices that are going on inside the country*.<sup>10</sup> For several months, he remained under police surveillance. He also kept receiving death threats.<sup>11</sup>

The JNU protest went through different forms and stages, including a hunger strike<sup>12</sup>. By spreading to several other central universities (such as for example Chennai, Calcutta or Hyderabad) and colleges across India, it set off the largest nationwide protests by students in 25 years. The protesting students also received gestures of support from some of the most important academic institutions from all over the world as well as from several important personalities (such as for example Noam Chomsky). However, their action has also provoked an uncompromising response both from the government administration and the ordinary supporters of Narendra Modi's government.



A leaflet printed by the protesting students of JNU, May 2016

<sup>10</sup> "English Translation: Full Text of Kanhaiya Kumar's Electrifying Speech at JNU", *The Wire*, 4 March 2016, at <<http://thewire.in/23820/english-translation-kanhaiya-kumars-electrifying-speech-at-jnu/>>, 15 June 2016.

<sup>11</sup> See i.e.: M. Variyar, "Kanhaiya Kumar Gets Death Threats; Prize Money Offered to 'Shoot Dead,' 'Cut off Tongue' of JNU Student Leader", *International Business Times*, 5 March 2016, at <<http://www.ib-times.co.in/kanhaiya-kumar-gets-death-threats-prize-money-offered-shoot-dead-cut-off-tongue-jnu-student-669481>>; <[http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2016-03-11/news/71416829\\_1\\_poster-jantar-mantar-jnu](http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2016-03-11/news/71416829_1_poster-jantar-mantar-jnu)>; "Security for Kanhaiya Kumar and Umar Khalid Beefed up Following Death Threats", *DNA India*, 15 April 2016, at <<http://www.dnaindia.com/india/report-security-for-kanhaiya-kumar-and-umar-khalid-beefed-up-following-death-threats-2202433>>, 15 June 2016.

<sup>12</sup> See i.e.: article "Now, JNU Students Go on Hunger Strike", *India Today*, 29 April 2016, at <<http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/now-jnu-students-go-on-hunger-strike/1/654582.html>>; "Umar Rushed to AIIMS", *The Hindu*, 9 May 2016, at <<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/jnu-students-union-hunger-strike-umar-khalid-taken-to-aiims-withdraws-hunger-strike/article8575857.ece>>; "JNU Students Call Off Hunger Strike after High Court Stays Punishment", *NDTV*, 14 May 2016, at <<http://www.ndtv.com/india-news/jnu-students-call-off-hunger-strike-after-high-court-stays-punishment-1406092>>, 15 June 2016.



## 2. THE MEANS TO DEAL WITH A "DIFFICULT SITUATION"

As far as it is possible to remain objective and avoid any attempts to determine which side of the conflict is in the right, I will now proceed to the main purpose of this article and focus on some components of the discourse used by the state authorities in relation to protesting students, beginning with the charge of sedition.

According to Indian Penal Code, *Whoever, by words, either spoken or written, or by signs, or by visible representation, or otherwise, brings or attempts to bring in hatred or contempt, or excites or attempts to excite disaffection towards* [<sup>13</sup>] *the Government established by law in India*<sup>14</sup>, [<sup>15</sup>] *shall be punished with imprisonment for life*<sup>16</sup>, *to which a fine may be added, or with imprisonment which may extend to three years, to which a fine may be added, or with a fine.*<sup>17</sup> The official website of the Supreme Court of India supplies also the necessary explanations to the act, namely that "the expression 'disaffection' includes disloyalty and all feelings of enmity" and that *Comments expressing disapprobation of the measures of the attempting to excite hatred, contempt or disaffection, do not constitute an offence under this section. (...) Comments expressing disapprobation of the administrative or other action of the Government without exciting or attempting to excite hatred, contempt or disaffection, do not constitute an offence under this section.*<sup>18</sup> Moreover, the same website also informs the reader about the history of the sedition law in India, dating it back to the period of British Rule by stating that the act now in force has been *Substituted by Act 4 of 1898, (...) for the original (...) which had been inserted by Act 27 of 1870...*<sup>19</sup> "Sedition", therefore, is a category of offence incorporated into the Indian Penal Code by the British colonial rulers, most probably with the aim to silence the Indian people.<sup>20</sup> However, it has been retained and is being exercised by the democratic government in independent India.

The defenders of Kanhaiya Kumar and other JNU students charged with sedition categorically opposed the accusation, justifying their arguments with the interpretation supplied by explanations given in the Indian Penal Code (quoted above) and claiming that a person simply opposing government policy cannot be charged with sedition unless their role in instigating hatred, contempt or disaffection is proven – which in the case

<sup>13</sup> Here the words "Her Majesty or" were omitted in 1950.

<sup>14</sup> The words "British India" have successively been substituted first in 1948, and later in 1950 and by Act 3 of 1951.

<sup>15</sup> The words "or British Burma" inserted in 1937 were omitted in 1948.

<sup>16</sup> Substituted in 1955, for "Transportation for life or any shorter term".

<sup>17</sup> <<http://www.indianlawcases.com/Act-Indian.Penal.Code,1860-1557>>, 15 June 2016.

<sup>18</sup> <<http://www.indianlawcases.com/Act-Indian.Penal.Code,1860-1557>>, 15 June 2016.

<sup>19</sup> <<http://www.indianlawcases.com/Act-Indian.Penal.Code,1860-1557>>, 15 June 2016.

<sup>20</sup> For instance, the „great trial" of Mahatma Gandhi the minutes of which can be read at: "The Great Trial: The Law and The Lawyers", *Mahatma Gandhi One Spot Complete Information Website*, at <[http://www.mk gandhi.org/law\\_lawyers/25great\\_trial.htm](http://www.mk gandhi.org/law_lawyers/25great_trial.htm)>, 6 June 2016.

of the JNU students it was not. They were, however, released on interim bail – a legal means applied when the charges are justified – even though the argument against charging the students with sedition found support among many Indian lawyers. For example, a senior Supreme Court lawyer claimed that *In the JNU case, it is legally stupid and foolish on the part of Delhi Police to file an FIR for sedition. Even if anti-India slogans were raised, nothing was done later to overthrow the state.*<sup>21</sup> A convention held by ‘Lawyers for Democracy and Social Justice’ passed a resolution demanding repeal of the sedition law, autonomy of universities, administration of justice and adherence to the constitutional idea, issuing a statement that they take *serious note of (...) bizarre incidents of Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) in which entire university was dubbed as a den of anti-nationals (...) The students who oppose policies of the government are dubbed as anti-national and booked under the archaic colonial law of sedition. This brazen attempt to muzzle dissent is reminiscent of British rule.*<sup>22</sup> The fact that the sedition charge initially came from a group of students sympathizing with the BJP is also worth noting in this context.

Since the charge of sedition caused controversies<sup>23</sup>, the “role” of the “outsiders” in the protest very soon came into the lime light. One of many press reports reads: “Cops have identified three men and a woman, all suspected to be Kashmiris, who played a pivotal role in mobilizing crowds and raising anti-India slogans on campus. *Mail To-day* has decided to withhold the names of those identified as the investigation is in progress and the police have still not charged them with any offence.”<sup>24</sup> The students genuinely involved in the protest also admitted that some of the persons taking part in the events on February 9 were unknown to them.<sup>25</sup> However, who the “provokers” were or whose interests they represented is still not clear.

Even though the JNU students were accused of both instigating anti-national riots as well as being used by some anti-Indian organization for carrying out its dangerous scheme, the positive sentiment towards their actions grew both in<sup>26</sup> and

<sup>21</sup> “JNU Sedition Charge Untenable: Experts”, *The Tribune*, 13 February 2016, at <<http://www.tribuneindia.com/news/nation/jnu-sedition-charge-untenable-experts/195722.html>>, 7 June 2016.

<sup>22</sup> “JNU Row: Lawyers Body Demands Repeal of Sedition Law”, *DNA India*, 15 April 2016, AT <<http://www.dnaindia.com/india/report-jnu-row-lawyers-body-demands-repeal-of-sedition-law-2191871>>, 10 June 2016.

<sup>23</sup> There were also somewhat extreme reactions, as for example a claim of Hyderabad-based lawyer Sunkari Janardhan Goud to accuse of sedition not only the students but also the Congress Party politicians who supported them, see i.e.: S.F. Ashraf, “Meet the Man behind the Sedition Case against Rahul Gandhi”, *Rediff.com*, 1 March 2016, at <<http://www.rediff.com/news/interview/meet-the-man-behind-the-sedition-case-against-rahul-gandhi/20160301.htm>>, 10 June 2016.

<sup>24</sup> “Security for Kanhaiya Kumar and Umar Khalid Beefed up Following Death Threats”, *DNA India*, 15 April 2016, at <<http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/jnu-investigators-identify-outsiders-who-raised-provocative-slogans/1/624931.html>>, 10 June 2016.

<sup>25</sup> “JNU Row: ‘Anti-India’ Slogans at JNU Event, Police Look for Five Men”, *The Indian Express*, 16 March 2016, at <<http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/umar-khalid-jnu-row-new-video-showing-outsiders-surfaces/>>, 10 June 2016.

<sup>26</sup> See i.e.: H. Mander, “Can an Indian Spring Be Far Behind?”, *The Indian Express*, 11 March 2016, at <<http://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/can-an-indian-spring-be-far-behind/>>; R. Datta, “The Spring of 2016 and the Idea of JNU”, *The Economic & Political Weekly*, vol. 51, no. 9



outside<sup>27</sup> India. At this point the authorities decided to take a closer look at the morality of the JNU Campus residents. Gyandev Ahuja, BJP MLA from Ramgarh in Rajasthan's Alwar district, publically claimed that the JNU students indulged in all kinds of "illicit" activities. According to him: *More than 10,000 butts of cigarettes and 4,000 pieces of beedis are found daily in the JNU campus. 50,000 big and small pieces of bones are left by those eating non-vegetarian food. They gorge on meat... these anti-nationals. 2,000 wrappers of chips and namkeen are found, as also 3,000 used condoms – the misdeeds they commit with our sisters and daughters there. And 500 used contraceptive injections are also found. Besides this, 2,000 liquor bottles as also over 3,000 beer cans and bottles are daily detected in the campus (...)*<sup>28</sup>. The BJP politician also stated that *Students are mostly found taking drugs after 8 p.m. inside the campus. (...) They indulge in peace protests in the mornings, and during the nights they perform obscene dances*<sup>29</sup>.

The reaction of both the JNU students as well as the fairly independent media was devastating for the author of the above quoted claims. Gyandev Ahuja's statement was also ridiculed by Indian intellectuals and the BJP political opposition. However, some of the parents of possible future students, while interviewed by the national media, admitted that they shall consider the argument against the JNU students morality with utmost care, before they allow their children to study at such a university.

The measures undertaken by the JNU Vice-Chancellor on February 10, a day after the evening commemorating the third anniversary of the hanging of Afzal Guru, can be classified as both an attempt to clear the name of the University as well as giving in to the state authorities and compromising the university's autonomy. By the Vice-Chancellor's decision the High-Level Inquiry Committee (HLIC)<sup>30</sup> to investigate the February 9 incident that took place on JNU Campus was constituted and also, on February 12, eight JNU students were suspended. A month later, following the verdict of HLIC, the suspension was revoked<sup>31</sup>. However, the HLIC carried out a further in-

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(2016), at <<http://www.epw.in/journal/2016/9/commentary/spring-2016-and-idea-jnu.html>>, 10 June 2016.

<sup>27</sup> See i.e.: "JNU World Alumni Back University Students, Faculty", *The Tribune*, 17 February 2016, at <<http://www.tribuneindia.com/news/nation/jnu-world-alumni-back-university-students-faculty/197026.html>>, 15 June 2016; "JNU Sedition Case: Students of International Universities Support Kanhaiya Kumar", *Livemint*, 21 February 2016, at <<http://www.livemint.com/Politics/RMyqBY19qftkUVbsD22sNN/JNU.html>>, 10 June 2016; "JNU Row: Academicians from Harvard, Yale Condemn 'Illegal Detention'", *Hindustan Times*, 16 February 2016, at <<http://www.hindustantimes.com/india/jnu-gets-global-support-400-academicians-condemn-illegal-detention/story-honClq-69JYVEqe6aNcUvOI.html>>, 10 June 2016.

<sup>28</sup> "3000 Condoms, 2000 Liquor Bottles at JNU: This BJP MLA Is Keeping Count", *The Hindu*, 23 February 2016, at <<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/3000-condoms-2000-liquor-bottles-at-jnu-this-bjp-mla-is-keeping-count/article8272367.ece>>, 10 June 2016.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Full text of the report prepared by the committee see: <[http://www.thehindu.com/multimedia/archive/02776/High\\_Level\\_Enquiry\\_2776488a.pdf](http://www.thehindu.com/multimedia/archive/02776/High_Level_Enquiry_2776488a.pdf)>, 15 June 2016.

<sup>31</sup> "JNU Panel Revokes Suspension of 8 Students, Including Kanhaiya Kumar", *India Today*, 12 March 2016, at <<http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/jnu-panel-revokes-academic-suspension-of-8-students-including-kanhaiya-kumar/1/618253.html>>, 15 June 2016.

vestigation which resulted in the fact that *Jawaharlal Nehru University (...) rusticated three students, including Anirban Bhattacharya and Umar Khalid, in connection with the February 9 event on campus where 'anti-national' slogans were allegedly raised. The university also imposed a fine of Rs 10,000 on JNU Students' Union (JNUSU) president Kanhaiya Kumar*<sup>32</sup>.

Probably in defense of another university's good name, a professor of the Central University of Jharkhand (CUJ) was suspended for inviting a colleague from the Jawaharlal Nehru University to an academic event organized to mark the anniversary of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel's birth. *Shreya Bhattacharji, an associate professor, was accused by the government-run Central University of Jharkhand of 'tarnishing' the institution by inviting JNU professor M.N. Panini (...) the mentor of the group of students of JNU, who were involved in anti-national activities in JNU recently*<sup>33</sup>. According to press reports, *Bhattacharji has been relieved of all her responsibilities at CUJ, which included acting as Dean of School of Languages, Dean of School of Education, and Dean of Students' Welfare. The order further prohibits her from leaving the CUJ headquarters without prior permission from the [vice] C[hancellor]*<sup>34</sup>.

On the basis of the above quoted instances of methods undertaken by the authorities against the protesting JNU students it is possible to conclude that, in the absence of substantial arguments, the protesters were accused 1) of acting against the state or, in other words, of instigating anti-national actions, 2) of being gullible and following the lead of provocateurs sent by some anti-national organization (no matter that the two accusations listed so far seem to be completely contradictory!), and 3) of highly immoral conduct and blackening the name of not only the university but, though implicitly, also the country. To deal with these transgressions the authorities used legal and disciplinary restrictions against the students and as well as some teachers, whereas a number of members of the academic community decided to ostracize the JNU as an entirely dangerous institution with which no one decent would be associated in any way. Also the fact that students' organizations following different ideologies were manipulated to act against their protesting colleagues, as well as the death threats received by the protest leaders, should be counted among the repercussions suffered by the rallying students.

<sup>32</sup> A. Shankar, "JNU Rusticates Umar Khalid, Anirban; Kanhaiya Kumar Fined Rs 10,000", *The Indian Express*, 26 April 2016, at <<http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/jnu-probe-committee-suspends-umar-khalid-kanhaiya-fined-rs-10000/>>, 15 June 2016.

<sup>33</sup> A. Pandey, "For Inviting JNU Teacher to Event, Professor Suspended in Jarkhand", *NDTV*, 29 March 2016, at <<http://www.ndtv.com/india-news/for-inviting-jnu-teacher-to-event-professor-suspended-in-jharkhand-1291894?fb>>, 20 June 2016.

<sup>34</sup> "Jharkhand Univ Prof Invites JNU Teacher to Event, Gets Suspended", *The Quint*, 30 March 2016, at <<http://www.thequint.com/india/2016/03/30/jharkhand-univ-prof-invites-jnu-teacher-to-event-gets-suspended>>, 20 June 2016.

### 3. DÉJÀ VU

The above conclusions immediately and almost automatically bring about associations with the methods employed by totalitarian state authorities to deal with students' protests in Poland, in the period when the country suffered under communist regime. The paradox lies only in the fact that the Polish students, from 1968 till 1989,<sup>35</sup> fought for freedom of speech and other democratic rights standing against the state which – in its self-definition – acted by the principles of communist ideology, whereas the Indian students – defining themselves as communists – fight for the same causes against the state which declares itself to be democratic. This paradox is deepened by the fact that the apparently democratic state authorities of the Republic of India react to these protests in a manner similar to the totalitarian state authorities of the then Polish People's Republic.

Since 1968 Polish students, mostly together with academic staff, intellectuals and artists, organized various forms of protests against anti-democratic measures employed by the state. The ruling power in return accused them of being spoiled, demanding, naïve as well as disloyal towards their homeland and ungrateful to those who, with their hard work, secured their opportunity to study and to live in dignity.

For example, while reading the newspapers of March 1968 the impression that the students have not protested out of their own will, but because they were convinced by some outside force, is overwhelming. It is also immediately followed by a conviction that the protestors were not really students but some hooligans whose main aim was to destroy everything that had been achieved by the country since the end of the second world war, as well as to tarnish Poland's good name and to disgrace the state authorities in the eyes of "the world".<sup>36</sup> The same line of state propaganda was followed in June 1976, when the students supported the workers' protest taking place mainly in Radom, Ursus and Plock. For example, the organ of the communist Polish Youth Association, *Sztandar Młodych*, printed an article pointing out the evil tendencies of the protestors, stating: (...) *they act against the good name of Polish citizens, against the status we gained in the world, they defame the ambitions of our nation, they endanger the progress (...), spoil the necessary and deserved feeling of satisfaction experienced by every honestly*

<sup>35</sup> See i.e.: A. Friszke, *Opozycja polityczna w PRL 1945-1980*, Londyn 1994; H. Głębocki, *Studencki Komitet Solidarności w Krakowie 1977-1980. Zarys działalności*, Warszawa 1994; R. Kowalczyk, *Studenci '81*, Warszawa 2000; W. Polak, *Najtrudniejsze egzaminy. Niezależne Zrzeszenie Studentów Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika na tle wydarzeń w kraju i regionie (1980-1982)*, Toruń 2001; P. Raina, *Political Opposition in Poland, 1954-1977*, London 1978; idem, *Independent Social Movements in Poland*, London 1981.

<sup>36</sup> See for instance the authentic newspapers cuttings and other archived documents available at: "Marzec '68", *IPN*, at <<http://www.marzec1968.pl/>>, 20 June 2016; "Marzec 1968 w Krakowie", *IPN*, at <[http://ipn.gov.pl/strony-zewnetrzne/wystawy/marzec68\\_w\\_krakowie/content/index\\_pl.html](http://ipn.gov.pl/strony-zewnetrzne/wystawy/marzec68_w_krakowie/content/index_pl.html)>, 20 June 2016; K. Dowgird, "Kampania prasowa Marca '68", *Reporterzy.info*, 11 September 2003, at <[http://www.reporterzy.info/2,kampania\\_prasowa\\_marca\\_68.html](http://www.reporterzy.info/2,kampania_prasowa_marca_68.html)>, 20 June 2016.

*working Pole*<sup>37</sup>. As a result, the communist authorities prepared special secret instructions on how to deal with the anti-national elements. The main points included, for example, constant threats, 24 and 48-hour arrests, suspending and expelling from studies, thrashings by "unknown attackers" and disgracing<sup>38</sup>, as well as stultifying.<sup>39</sup> Other suggested methods encompassed actions aimed at antagonizing different students' groups and making them act against each other<sup>40</sup> as well as fabricating criminal charges against the opposition<sup>41</sup>.

More or less the same range of means were employed during the martial law period (1981-1983) and used till the fall of authoritarian communist government in 1989. Since the phenomenon of students' involvement in the last phase of anti-communist opposition in Poland is well discussed in historical sources<sup>42</sup>, I will refer only to one document issued by the state authorities to explain the reasons for officially "suspending," and in fact de-legalizing, the Independent Students' Association in January 1982. The document included such statements as: the activities of the Association harmed and still harm social harmony," "false information is being fabricated and distributed in leaflets," "illegal activities against the established code of law are being organized," "Constitution and other legal rules were systematically violated," "activities were lead, which defamed the authorities of the socialist state," "foreign contacts were made with enemies of the Polish state" etc.<sup>43</sup> Moreover, the secret police apparently dug into the student activists' private lives, preparing fabricated reports of sexual orgies, habitual drug taking and over-indulgence in alcohol. The lack of moral values in the students was often used as an argument in trying to create animosities between them and the workers, with the obvious aim to divide the anti-communist opposition.

The authoritarian apparatus of communist Poland appears to have been looking for evidence of students' actions against the state, their connections with instigators from "outside", their immorality. In the same way as the politicians who believe that the Jawaharlal Nehru University campus in Delhi is a hotbed for anti-national and libidinous activities.

<sup>37</sup> „(...) szkodzą oni dobremu imieniu Polaka, pozycji, jaką zdobyliśmy sobie w świecie, uwłaczają ambicjom naszego narodu, stwarzają zagrożenie dla postępu (...), mają potrzebne i zasłużone poczucie satysfakcji, jaką odczuwa każdy uczciwie pracujący Polak,” see: M. Mazur, *Propagandowy obraz świata. Polityczne kampanie prasowe w PRL, 1956-1980. Model analityczno-koncepcyjny*, Warszawa 2003, p. 53.

<sup>38</sup> <<http://krakow.tvp.pl/25605553/sledztwo-ws-smierci-st-pyjasa-zmiana-prokuratora>>, 25 June 2016.

<sup>39</sup> See i.e. Ł. Kamiński, „Władza wobec opozycji 1976-1989”, *Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość*, vol. 2/2, no. 4 (2003), p. 14.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>42</sup> See i.e.: W. Polak, „Jesienny strajk studentów w 1981 roku”, in W. Polak, J. Kufel, P. Ruchlewski (eds.), *Opozycja demokratyczna w PRL 1976-1981*, Gdańsk 2012; A. Anusz, *Niezależne Zrzeszenie Studentów w latach 1980-1989*, Warszawa 1991; K. Dworaczek, *Niezależne Zrzeszenie Studentów 1980-1981. Wybór dokumentów*, Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, Warszawa 2012.

<sup>43</sup> For the full text of the statement, see for example: *Trybuna Ludu*, 6 January 1982.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

In spite of many differences, which sometimes can be undoubtedly important, the state authorities inclined to dictatorial measures (no matter whether to the right or the left of the political scene) seem to have a lot in common. Firstly, a body of power unconditionally convinced in the one and only true ideology exists, of course the one which it follows. Secondly, the common ways to sustain law and order include manipulating with information and the use of force, especially in situations which rather need a dialogical approach. Thirdly, the methods of controlling the people as well as the measures undertaken to discipline, reproach and punish insubordinate citizens, or – in other words – the solutions to taking full command over the nation, usually do not have much to do with ethical values or any moral principles. If there are no substantial arguments, social or moral ones are sought and brought into the media limelight. Despite geographical, cultural, historical, political or ideological differences between states or ruling powers, the primary guideline in choosing the appropriate method seems to be the one of efficiency, since, as we frequently hear, “the end justifies the means.” However, the end in the case of using such means as described in this article, is usually not one to be envied.

The examples of media statements from the Indian press, as well as references made to the Polish propaganda sources, confirm the widely accepted view that political rhetoric, in spite of the period in history or the political system of the state, can be characterized by manipulative tendencies, visible in diluting and therefore twisting the facts, creating the atmosphere of danger and fear, positively presenting the state authorities, while at the same time condemning and defaming the opponents.<sup>44</sup> In that respect, taken as the tool of political seduction, the language of politics of “democratic” India does not differ from the one of the official state propaganda of communist Poland, bringing yet another gloomy justification to George Orwell’s famous statement that *[p]olitical language – and with variations this is true of all political parties, from Conservatives to Anarchists – is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind*.<sup>45</sup>

Moreover, as we see in both the cases, this political rhetoric can often be deeply nationalistic. It is, therefore, full of phrases underlining the need for national unity, which – in fact – work very well to enhance any possible conflict or communal contradiction. It also calls for the loyalty to society and country, condemning the opponents

<sup>44</sup> See i.e.: M. Atkinson, *Our Masters’ Voice. The Language and Body Language of Politics*, New York 1988; J. Charteris-Black, *Politicians and Rhetoric. The Persuasive Power of Metaphor*, New York 2005; B. Garsten, *Saving Persuasion. A Defence of Rhetoric and Judgment*, Cambridge 2009; G. Lakoff, *Don’t Think of an Elephant! Know Your Values and Frame the Debate – The Essential Guide for Progressives*, White River Junction 2004; J. Martin, *Politics and Rhetoric. A Critical Introduction*, New York 2014; N.J. O’Shaughnessy, *Politics and Propaganda. Weapons of Mass Seduction*, Manchester 2004.

<sup>45</sup> See: G. Orwell, “Politics and the English Language”, in S. Orwell, I. Angus (eds.), *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell*, vol. 4: *In Front of Your Nose*, London 1946, p. 140.

for staining the good name of state and nation. In both the cases quite often the statements also refer to democratic ideals, for which the people fought, therefore, they are to be cherished deeply while defended firmly, and which are being endangered by the irresponsible behavior of the protesters.

The described features of the propaganda discourse do not seem to differ very much from the Soviet or the Nazi guidelines. And, as such, they stand as perceptible testimonies that the consequences of totalitarian indoctrination have not expired with the disappearing of totalitarian states. Special attention, therefore, needs to be given to the fact that even though seemingly defamed in various ways – sometimes by being branded as Sovietization, sometimes as fundamentalism, sometimes as anti-globalism, depending on geographical region, cultural and social circumstances, or ideological orientation – these consequences remain deeply hidden in the mentality of the ruling elites to emerge suddenly, at any time, in favorable circumstances.

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