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Europeanizing the Theory of Totalitarianism?
Debates Concerning the “Black Book of Communism” and the Resolution “Need for international condemnation of crimes of totalitarian communist regimes”

The “Black Book of Communism” was originally published in France in 1997. After the publication, the text caused a political controversy in France and in other European societies where it was published as well. The reason for this was the fact that in interpreting the history of Communism, the book edited by Stéphane Courtois was not only based on the theory of Totalitarianism – it even radicalized that theory. Referring to, amongst others, Ernst Nolte, the book parallelized National Socialist “race war” to Communist “class war,” the “genocide of races” to the “genocide of classes”. Hence, in my contribution to the conference, I interpret the “Black Book” as a symbol for the renaissance of the theory of Totalitarianism after the events of 1989. While the book’s argumentation caused primarily national debates and controversies, the resolution of the Council of Europe “Need for international condemnation of crimes of totalitarian communist regimes,” which is based upon the data included in the “Black Book,” indicated a Europeanization of this new and radicalized form of the theory of Totalitarianism. The debates about the resolution revealed a wide gap between different attitudes towards the epoch of Communism within Europe and the European societies; a gap, which demands closer examination. The background of this examination is constituted by the question whether the theory of Totalitarianism has become predominant in Europe or even serves as the basis for the construction of a European identity, which is currently underway. Apart from the European debates about the “Communism Resolution,” national debates about the “Black Book” will be included as well – referring to the examples of France, Germany, and the Czech Republic.