„European Turn“? Auf dem Weg zu einem europäischen Geschichtsbewusstsein

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On Thursday and Friday, 29th – 30th March, the Institut für Europäische Geschichte (IEG) in Mainz hosted a colloquium entitled “‚European Turn’? Auf dem Weg zu einem europäischen Geschichtsbewusstsein“. An international group of well-known historians, political scientists and literary scientists took part in the colloquium to talk about questions of development, value, meaning and effects of conceptions of Europe in historiography and in the historical consciousness of different groups. The colloquium was organised by Kerstin Armborst (Mainz) and Wolf-Friedrich Schäufele (Mainz) as part of the newly set-up research field ‘Wertewandel und Geschichtsbewusstsein’ of the IEG. It intended to discuss the question whether there are factors in historiography that contribute to a European historical consciousness. The participants tried to define and analyse these factors in talking about the value ‘Europe’ in modern history and its function in historical accounts and transfers. As Heinz Duchhardt (Mainz) indicated in his introductory speech, this approach has hardly been discussed yet in debates on European historical consciousness. The colloquium aimed to initiate such a discussion. During the colloquium, the attendant historians, literary scientists and political scientists critically considered historical perceptions and historiographical interpretations of Europe.

Two general presentations and eight further talks based on specialist studies, created a varied picture on the existence and appearances of a European historical consciousness. The colloquium was opened by two keynote speakers. Peter Krüger (Marburg) talked about „The value ‘Europe’ – its constituencies, definitions and functions“ („Der Wert ‚Europa’ – seine Bestandteile, Definitionen und Funktionen aus geschichtswissenschaftlicher Sicht“). Recognising the theme of the presentation as rather big, he started with an example defining the value ‘Europe’: the peace treaty between France and Spain of 1598 in Vervins. According to Krüger, this fragile peace treaty, based on a political compromise, is a historical experience that is illustrative for what we can understand by the value ‘Europe’. The characteristics of the Treaty of Vervins can be found in European history over and over again. The tradition of negotiation, of common politics, of compromise and moderateness and of cooperation that can be found in the negotiations of the peace treaty between France and Spain in Vervins, is typical for Europe as a political value. Of course, Krüger said, Europe is more than just a political value, but a human being is capable of politics and therefore politics has a huge impact on the value ‘Europe’.

Furthermore, Krüger talked about values with regard to the value ‘Europe’. As stated by Krüger, to examine values and to define them as European makes sense only when understood in their historically based and shaped logic. He then analysed the close boundary between interests and values in a European political context. Krüger noted that cultural values are strongly connected to and dependent on political values. He said that in the current historiographical context the value ‘Europe’ is an interaction of concrete politics, peace strategies and Europe plans and needs to be researched as such. Moreover, when talking about European values, one can ask the question to what extent these values are truly European. The origin of common conceptions of European values and European historical consciousness need to be researched in its historical context, in the context of politics and values. One has to consider the public and political integrating fields as well as the integrating forces in the creation of European value formations.

Olaf Asbach (Augsburg) also talked about the value ‘Europe’ – its constituencies, definitions and functions, but from a political scientist point of view („Der Wert ‚Europa’ – seine Bestandteile, Definitionen und Funktionen aus politikwissenschaftlicher Sicht“). Like Krüger, he admitted the scope of the subject was big, but needed to be examined. In doing that, Asbach discussed political discourses and methodical and political problems of a culture specific, value oriented reconstruction of the history of Europe, to close with a historical-critical analysis of the value ‘Europe’. According to Asbach, value-discourses in Europe and the European Union are based on a universalistic principle on the one hand and on a particularistic principle on the other. These two different starting points are crucial in the perception of the role values play in Europe. In the universalistic approach the European Union is thought of as a political institution in which there are no ex ante political, normati-

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ve or cultural characterisations that define who can become a member of this politically framed Union. The values and institutions do not say anything about the 'Europeanness' of the European Union. Particularistic discourses depart from the assumption that specific values have come into being in a specific historical and cultural context. Consequently, the European Union is explained as a result of an explicitly European history and culture, to which certain people belong and others do not.

These particularistic discourses are dangerous when used to define and describe who belongs to this political European community and who does not, Asbach said. Discussions on European identity and mechanisms of exclusion based on these discourses do not have any objective or legitimate foundation, neither scientific nor political. Talking about Europe, about the value 'Europe', one needs to understand that Europe does not hold any substantial constitution of values. It is a notion that is used to relate and reflect on plural historical, social, cultural and political processes and structures. What the value 'Europe' means, therefore, Asbach concluded, depends on the consequences drawn from particular (historical) circumstances and experiences, as well as the position one takes with respect to the principles and forms of organisation of the modern political and socio-cultural relations in Europe. It offers the possibility of an open discourse on past, present and future of Europe and the European Union.

Herbert Uerlings (Trier) opened the first section of the colloquium, „Europe of religions", with a talk on Friedrich von Hardenberg's (Novalis) Europe speech, „A free union of independent, self-destined beings" (1799) („‚Eine freie Verbindung selbständiger, selbstbestimmter Wesen'. Friedrich von Hardenbergs (Novalis) Europarede"), more commonly known under the title „Die Christenheit oder Europa". This important speech depicts a public vision on European community. It has proved to be controversial and thought-provoking. As Uerlings noted, Novalis' Europe speech is a critique of the – influenced by the Enlightenment – separation of state and society and a description of the self-understanding, history and future of Europe. In his Europe speech, Novalis, belonging to the German Romanticists and looking back to medieval Christendom as a model, wants the role of religion to be resurrected. A renewed and transformed non-confessional Christianity can regenerate Europe: it can unite people and bears real freedom in it. When talking about a Europe of religions, reading Novalis' speech is useful. In spite of its poor impact on the contemporaries, his speech is a modern answer to the problems of Modernity and puts forward a new view of the world. Of course, this view is a product of the spirit of the time, but it also holds a modern component, that is still worth considering, Uerlings said.

Speaking in the same section, Aram Mattioli (Luzern) discussed another case-study: the Swiss historian Gonzague de Reynold (1880-1970) as a representative of a right-wing Catholic „Abendland"-thinking („Gonzague de Reynold als Vertreter eines rechtskatholischen ‚Abendland'-Denkens"). Although at present Gonzague de Reynold is hardly read anymore – also because he was sympathetic to authoritarian-despotic regimes –, he was an important historian down to the end of the 1950s. De Reynold represented an idea of Europe that has characterised Europe and European thinking for a very long time: the idea of Europe as the Christian Occident (das christliche Abendland). In his writings Catholic and humanist, but also anti-democratic ideas led the way. De Reynold criticised modern Europe and wanted it to return to Antiquity and its Christian-humanistic roots. Only then Europe could become a hegemonic, imperial power with a civilising mission again. After the Second World War, he realised that he was mistaken in his anti-democratic ideas and as a result, emphasised the Christian Occidental traditions in his later work. Nonetheless, his idea of Europe as a world-leading, civilising power never disappeared and it is good to realise that the conservative, Catholic circles in their ideas of Europe held similar views, Mattioli stated. It was not before the mid-1960s with the cultural opening up of the Western society that things changed and de Reynold was forgotten.

The last talk in this section was given by Ulrich Wyrwa (Berlin). Following a first talk about the role of Christianity in European society and a second about the influence of Christianity in ideas of Europe, it was Wyrwa's turn to address ideas on Europe in Jewish historiography („Der Europagedanke in der jüdischen Geschichtsschreibung"). Wyrwa mainly spoke about the Jewish historiography of the nineteenth and early twentieth century and discussed different notions of Europe in Jewish historiography. Analysing the works of various Jewish historians and intellectuals, Wyrwa concluded that Europe, where the majority of the

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Jews lived and where they experienced both good and bad times, is of great importance in Jewish historiography. While Jewish historiography gives an account of exile, emancipation and civilisation, it also demonstrates that Jewish culture was ‘Europeanised’. On the other hand, the contribution of the Jews to European culture is discussed by many historians, especially at times when anti-Semitism threatened their position. According to Wyrwa, most historians shared optimistic ideas on the future of the Jews in Europe. They hoped for more freedom and maybe even national autonomy. With the First World War this hope was destroyed, European culture collapsed and the growing anti-Semitism negatively affected the role Jews played in European society and culture. Wyrwa closed his talk by referring to thoughts on European unification in Jewish historiography. Although this topic is discussed only marginally, historians write that Jews contributed to a unification of Europe, also because their influence was not restricted to a national or regional space, but took trans-national forms.

A second section „Nationality – Trans-nationality – Europeanity“ was opened by a lecture of Matthias Middell (Leipzig), who unfortunately could not be there himself. Instead, Wolf-Friedrich Schäufele (Mainz) recited his lecture. Middell talked about national historiography, new tendencies in European historiography, and trans-national history („Das Verhältnis von nationaler, transnationaler und europäischer Geschichtsschreibung“). Whereas the majority of historians occupy themselves with national history, historiography on Europe has gained importance and starts to challenge the ever-dominant position of national historiography, he said. Currently, European historiography is an accumulation of knowledge on historical episodes, observed against the background of a container called ‘Europe’. Secondly, it is a further examination of European characteristics compared to other regions in the world. Also, it is a description of the intellectual, social and cultural events that gradually created Europe. Europe is not an existing entity, nor just an invention. Rather, Europe is a possible design to classify historical events. Next to these two traditions in historiography, a third way of writing history has to be pointed out: trans-national historiography. Two lines of thinking can be observed in trans-national historiography: one that examines the world as a global system. Historians from this school of thought believe that researching world history opens up the possibility of knowing the world. Another group of historians emphasises the contingency of global developments and the plurality of actors that postulate global coherence. In general, however, trans-national history characterises itself by the fact that it tries to think historical change differently. It can be seen as a post-structuralist movement. Moreover, trans-national historiography has no real definition, it relies on a trans-national praxis and it believes in a historiography beyond the national state. The three different historiographies are closely related to each other and influence each other as well. Yet, for national historians it is easier to deal with European history than for trans-national historians. Probably, Middell argued, European historiography will expand, while the break between national and trans-national examination of modern history will cross this field of European historiography.

In his lecture, entitled „From ’Europe’ to ‘Eurasia’: the Vicissitudes of 19th – early 20th Century Russian Historical Consciousness“, Sergey Glebov (Northampton, MA) addressed Russian perceptions of Europe and Asia. Both Europe and Asia played an important role in questions of Russian identity. Having examined different historians, Glebov stated that since Peter the Great, educated Russians have considered their country as being part of Europe. In various writings up to the end of the First World War, references to Russia as part of Europe or as a European nation can be found. However, the Russians had to deal with the influences of the Mongols as well, as Russia had been part of the Mongol world empire for 200 years. At first, Russian historians argued that Russian society was hardly influenced by the Mongols. Russians were portrayed as superior to the „Asiatics“. Furthermore, Russia was described as the defender of the civilised West against the barbaric influences from the East. At the end of the nineteenth century this view changed. An increasing fascination for the Orient can be observed, Glebov noted. Challenges of modernisation and the Revolution of 1905 required a different description of Russian’s history. As a result, Asia’s impact on the history of Russia gained importance. In 1917, this Asian influence became dominant. Eurasianists explained Russia as being (very) different from Europe, emphasising organic unity and attacking Europe, whi-

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le (re)constructing Russian history. Glebov concluded, however, that the Eurasian attempt to reinvent the Russian empire was nothing more than an attempt. Furthermore, he criticised the notion „Eurasia“. Instead, Glebov argued, Europe needs to be thought of as an open project. It is important to keep in mind that people attach meaning to things; history is not defining destiny.

Susan Rößner (Berlin) compared German and English historiography in relation to Europe. In her talk „National traditions in historiography as conditions of production of the German and English Europe-historiography in the 1920s“ („Nationale Historiographietraditionen als Produktionsbedingungen der deutschen und englischen Europageschichtsschreibung in den 1920er Jahren“) she analysed what place Europe took in the consciousness of German and English historians, how historians wrote about Europe, how Europe was defined in German and English historiography and what gaps, discontinuities and instructive moments can be found. In German historiography, Rößner said, statements on Europe and awareness of Europe are qualitative statements. Europe is a theme in German history, but it is examined only from a national point of view. Europe is described as the Occident (Abendland), seen mainly as a geographical, cultural and/or religious entity. A common base for European society is set against the German otherness. English traditions, on the other hand, are different from the German historiographical traditions. Whereas the Germans look inward, they look outward. Europe is described as an entity, but in the wider picture of the world. In writing about the development of the British state, the United Kingdom is not really seen as a part of Europe. Historians emphasise the British colonial history and the Commonwealth. When describing international relations, Europe is too small in the eyes of the English. British historians see their history in a global framework. In her conclusion, Rößner highlighted the fact that historians have to be read against their national background. One needs to take into account the communalities and differences between national societies.

The third and last section of the colloquium „The idea of Europe in different forms of expression and transference of historical consciousness“ was closely linked to the former section. In this section Bernd Schönemann (Münster) and Marie-Louise Gräfin von Plessen (St. Firmin sur Loire) discussed images of Europe not in historiography, but in school books and museums. Schönemann addressed the representation of European history in school books, directives and plans on education in his talk „Didactical variations of the presentation of European history in education“ („Didaktische Varianten der Präsentation europäischer Geschichte im Unterricht“). He analysed the didactical aim, the thematic model followed, the structuring patterns, the medial products and the methodological options in representing European history in school books. Following Eugen Kotte's theory, Schönemann emphasised in this analysis that Europe should be looked at in its plurality. Thus, education should not highlight Europe or images of Europe as an identity building entity, but favour cultural and historical orientation in which a plurality of identities is created. Although currently education is dominated by uniform images of Europe, plurality should be accentuated. There is no uniform history of Europe. Images of Europe are diverging, national developments are diverse and often conflicts have shaped the European history. Therefore Europe should be taught from different angles, creating different ideas on Europe. Looking next at the structuring patterns, Schönemann argued school books should not only follow a chronological order, but should also include additional thematic presentations of European history. Multiple perspectives are important to introduce in the methodology used in school books. In short, Schönemann said, Europe is always a question to which one can give different answers at different times.

Gräfin von Plessen („Die Idee Europa im Museum“) spoke about her work as a curator in various museums and how she created an idea of Europe in museums, for example in the Deutsches Historisches Museum in Berlin and Musée de l'Europe in Brussels. As she made clear by referring to various exhibitions on Europe in museums all over Europe, Europe is an important theme. In the last part of her talk, she focused on the Musée de l'Europe in Brussels, the difficulties in setting-up the museum, in thinking about the content of the exhibition and in dealing with the authorities. Opposed to Schönemann, Gräfin von Plessen defended a unitary, uniform idea or image of Europe, which invoked great discussion at the end of the section. It was a stimulating way to close the colloquium with, as this was exactly the discussion that lay at the basis of this colloquium.

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nerous allowance, will be published in due time by the Institut für Europäische Geschichte in „Beihefte online“.

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