

## History of Historiography. Summerschool

**Veranstalter:** Stefan Berger, Attila Pók, European Science Foundation

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**Bericht von:** Sven de Roode, Manchester

The Summer School was related to the European Science Foundation (ESF) funded programme 'Representations of the Past: The Writing of National Histories in Nineteenth and Twentieth-Century Europe (NHIST)'. It was organized by Stefan Berger (University of Manchester) and Attila Pók (Magyar Tudományos Akadémia) and brought together representatives of NHIST such as Professor Christoph Conrad (Université de Genève), Professor Tibor Frank (Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest), Professor Chris Lorenz (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam), Professor Ilaria Porciani (Università di Bologna), external scholars such as Professor Catherine Hall (University College London) and Professor Benedikt Stuchtey (German Historical Institute London) as well as younger researchers who are occupied with the history of historiography. The Summer School provided an opportunity to promote the results of the NHIST programme to the next generation of academics across Europe and to identify new projects and researchers in the history of historiography using comparative and cultural transfer approaches. It allowed delegates from 16 European countries to interact and exchange knowledge and experience across generations and develop their themes and approaches. Tibor Frank opened the school with a lecture on Hungarian Historiography in the 19th and 20th Centuries, alluding to central aspects of the NHIST programme. The regular session started with a presentation of the NHIST programme by the present Team Leaders after which the delegates presented their works in two parallel panels. Rather than writing just a few lines on each presentation this report will highlight a few papers. More information on the NHIST programme and extended abstracts of the papers presented at the Summer School are available at [www.unileipzig.de/zhsesf/](http://www.unileipzig.de/zhsesf/)

SYNNE CORELL (University of Oslo) presented a paper on the perception of the German

occupation of Norway during World War II in Norwegian historiography. The main focus of her dissertation is on three historiographical accounts published between 1947 and 1995. Corell started off by explaining that an adequate investigation of these publications must take into account that the Norwegian state lacked a long and glorious past. The lack of historical national independence impacted on conceptions of Norwegian national identity, which to a certain extent based on essentialized notions of an ethnically homogenous, liberal and democratic people. Given that Norwegian independence was only established in 1905, the immediate post-war period was of special significance in terms of national rebuilding. Against this backdrop the historiographical examination of the occupation period became important as a tool for the moral restoration of the nation.

Corell then presented the books under investigation. Two of the works – *Norges krig* [Norway's War], published between 1947 and 1950, and *Norge i krig* [Norway at War], published between 1984 and 1987 – are multi-volume editions (three respectively eight volumes). The third publication, *Norsk Krigsleksikon* [Norwegian War Encyclopedia 1940-1945], is a one volume work published in 1995. All publications under scrutiny were edited by historians, written for a lay public and attempted to deliver a comprehensive depiction of the occupation period. Corell pointed out that in spite of the general tendency towards professionalization of post-war historiography *Norges krig* and *Norsk Krigsleksikon* included a large share of contributions written by non-professional historians. Only *Norge i krig* was exclusively written by academic historians. Despite this rather large share of contributions of non-professionals however, academic historians dominated content and shape of *Norges krig* and the *Krigsleksikon*.

In her investigation of these historiographical interpretations of the occupation period, Corell focuses on the construction of in-groups and out-groups, of 'us' and 'them'. The depiction of external and internal others is telling with regard to the prevailing understanding of the nation in the respective accounts. In this regard, Corell drew attention to the fact that

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this field of Norwegian historiography is male dominated and that the role of women – with some exceptions – was consistently marginalized and trivialized in all books under scrutiny. After World War II collaborators became a significant internal Other. In contrast to the general marginalization of women, the dealing with female fraternization with the enemy was particularly severe and women that had fraternized with German soldiers interned in special camps until 1946. In *Norges krig* there is also a tendency to humiliate collaborators, who could redeem themselves by accepting their public humiliation as morons. According to Corell, the concept of the external Other in the historiography of the occupation must be seen in the light of the emerging Cold War situation and the new threat of communism, which soon began to exceed other conflict lines.

Another focal point of interest in Corell's dissertation is the representation of death in the investigated editions. Corell scrutinizes textual as well as visual representations of death. She pointed out that with regard to visual representations of death all three editions revealed tendencies to replace depictions of harmed individuals with material damage. Moreover, she observed a general tendency to anonymize the individual. With regard to textual representations she highlighted the distinctions in the description of deaths of members of different groups such as soldiers, Jews, occupants and collaborators. The investigation of death in its visual and textual representations will provide insights in the understanding of the nation and its others.

FLORENCIA PEYROU presented a paper on republican historiography in nineteenth century Spain. All Spanish liberal historians consciously attempted to shape and form a national identity based on collective memory in order to legitimize the liberal state. In the presentation of her project, Peyrou focused on the various approaches of different liberal groups to construct a comprehensive, cohesive master narrative of Spanish history. The groups under investigation constantly contested the prevailing conservative master narrative of national history. This dominant conservative master narrative, by contrast, aimed to legitimize the centralized state

and the Bourbon monarchy by stressing the significance of the Goths, the Catholic Monarchs and the wars of independence against Napoleonic France as landmarks of Spanish history.

The republican groups under scrutiny tackled the conservative narrative by establishing essential links between an alleged national character and its supposed inclination to democracy. In order to disseminate and propagate their version of Spanish history the different liberal groups depicted the course of history as a secular war, an eternal, dialectical struggle between liberty and tyranny. Whereas the monarchy, the aristocracy and – later – conservative liberals symbolized tyranny, the restriction of rights and liberties, the people embodied liberty. According to the liberal accounts under scrutiny history was marked by a teleological drive towards progress. The paradigm of *historia magistra vitae*, the understanding of history as being authoritative for the present in the form of practical exempla, was replaced by the belief in a teleological strife for human perfection. Although the future became the focal point of practical orientation, history remained important as an educator, informing contemporaries about the necessity to actively foster progress and evolution.

Republican historiographical accounts propagated a primordialistic, essentialist understanding of an allegedly ethnically homogeneous Spanish nation. The Spanish nation was distinguished and defined by geography and climate, its customs, language, arts and history. It was marked by an eternal struggle for independence, which supposedly resulted in national traits such as the liberal and democratic character of the nation. According to republican historiographers, absolutism had only been imposed on the Spanish by the foreign Habsburg rule, whereas democracy rooted deep in Spanish traditions and history. As a consequence of such interpretations of history, liberal historians excluded the representatives of tyranny from the Spanish nation – the monarchy, aristocracy and conservative liberals were depicted as genuinely un-Spanish.

STEFAN GUTH (University of Bern) presented aspects of his dissertation project on rela-

tions between Polish and German historians from the 1930s to the 1970s. In his presentation he focussed on joint Polish-German efforts to revise history school textbooks in the early 1970s. Whereas historical master narratives had been tools of confrontation between the two countries in the past, the political détente of the period under investigation demanded a more reconciliatory approach to interpretations of the common history. The wish to abandon nationalist master narratives resulted in the establishment of the Joint Polish-German Commission for the Revision of School Textbooks. Between 1972 and 1976 the commission negotiated 'a mutually acceptable narrative' of the common past. In his dissertation, Guth focuses on the work of the commission itself, as well as on the repercussions it had in the political arenas of the two respective countries.

Whereas the establishment of the commission corresponded to the Ostpolitik of the Brandt government, the opposition in the FRG denounced it as a means to justify contested political issues such as the acceptance of the Oder-Neisse border historically. The Polish political leadership's perception of the commission was more ambiguous. On the one hand, the political establishment anticipated positive effects on political and economic relations with the FRG. Moreover, historical accounts that would relinquish to depict the Germans as an inherently aggressive and imperialist nation were perceived to foster support for Polish-German rapprochement among the Polish public. This reasoning however, contradicted an essential argument for the acceptance of the Communist regime in Poland and its subservient attachment to the USSR: potential German revisionism and the myth of a primordial Polish-German enmity justified the regime and Soviet-Russian dominance alike. By invalidating these perceptions, the regime was bound to cut the ground from under its very own feet, thus the argument of parts of the Polish leadership. Such concerns were debilitated by the composition of the Polish delegation – by appointing only lower ranking officials the government could always refuse decisions of the delegation. Moreover, the members of the Polish delegation were obliged to achieve

the revision of the German interpretations of the common past whilst keeping the Polish narrative intact.

Whereas the revision of the Polish-German past turned out to be a rather non-controversial endeavour as long as the commission was occupied with the not so recent past, substantial dissent arose about the interpretation of the last thirty years of Polish-German relations. In fact, Guth pointed out, that the first thousand years of Polish-German history had been dealt with in the commission's first year. The tackling of the thirty years between 1945 and the mid-1970s however, took another three years. According to Guth, this was largely due to the anticipated impact of according interpretations on national self-images. In contrast to earlier historical periods the interpretation of contemporary history thus was a highly politicised issue, which is reflected in increased governmental interventions in the commission's work – from the German and the Polish side alike. In spite of concrete demands to take into account the aims of Ostpolitik, German governmental control of the commission's findings was less rigid than the Polish interception. The strict political control of the Polish historians led to deteriorated depictions of the past, which caused irritations on side of the German delegation. The Polish delegation by contrast was irritated by the German historians' endorsement of the FRG, allusions to German re-unification and the lack of confirmations of the Oder-Neisse border.

Guth concluded that at first sight the results of the commission's work could make the impression that the Polish government was rather successful in its attempts to revise the German historical discourse whilst leaving the Polish communist master narrative intact. Whereas remnants of German revisionism had been abandoned the narrative of the historical Polish struggle against German expansionism and its final defeat by the united socialist-Slavonic forces prevailed. The successful establishment of continuing meetings of the commission however, increased the influence of pluralistic interpretations of the past and thus undermined the prevalence of the streamlined tale of the Communist

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Party. The long-term effect of the commission therefore was a realignment of conflict lines, which shifted from German-Polish national antagonisms over interpretations of the past to conflicting attitudes towards historiographical analysis between politicians and scholars.

BAS VON BENDA-BECKMANN (Universiteit van Amsterdam) presented his dissertation project on patterns of historiographic interpretations of the allied bombings in Germany in the GDR and the FRG. A focal point of his project is the German-German competition about appropriations of the allied bombings as 'symbol of German suffering and post-war identity' both, on the level of memory politics and in historiography. Von Benda-Beckmann argued that the allied bombings became of significance for conceptions of national identity in both German states. Public remembrance and historiographical interpretation of the allied bombings were highly politicized.

In the 1950s the GDR propaganda exploited the bombings as a symbol of brutish western imperialism and equalled them to Nazi crimes and contemporary NATO politics alike. The bombing of Dresden became a special lieu de mémoire: GDR propaganda claimed that the bombing of Dresden did not aim at the Third Reich's defeat but was supposed to intimidate Stalin and damage the future Soviet sphere of influence, turning the Dresden campaign into a symbol of ruthless western imperialism. The public depiction of the allied bombings in the GDR revealed striking similarities to the according Nazi propaganda. What had been the bravely resisting *Volksgemeinschaft* to the Nazis became the German working-class to the Socialists. Moreover, Nazis and GDR regime agreed that the bombings proved that the Anglo-Americans had been the real war criminals.

In the FRG the bombings served as evidence for German victimhood. The bombing of Dresden in particular, became part and parcel of anti-communist rhetoric, a portent of the devastations a nuclear war, which was likely to be started by the Russians, would cause. Von Benda-Beckmann explained that West-German historiography revealed continuities to Nazi propaganda in adhering to

the myth of a *saubere Luftwaffe*, which – in contrast to the terror bombings of the allies – supposedly only conducted 'humane' attacks. The myth of the *Luftwaffe* (which corresponded to that of the *saubere Wehrmacht*), German innocence, heroism and suffering served to demarcate the regular German armed forces and the German people from the Nazi regime. The Germans became victims of both, the Nazis and the allied bombings.

Von Benda-Beckmann then turned to a more thorough discussion of historiographical accounts dealing with the allied bombings. He pointed out that it was only in the 1970s and 1980s that the bombings became a topic of serious historical research. Dwelling on the examples of Olaf Groehler (GDR) and Horst Boog (FRG), he examined the ways professional historians tackled the bombings. In spite of their professional approach the work of both historians reflected elements of the prevailing popular myths. Boog for example maintained the myth of the *saubere Luftwaffe* in his work. Although he admitted terror bombings by the German air force after 1942, these had allegedly been the major responsibility of Hitler himself. Von Benda-Beckmann argued that in spite of their differences his investigation revealed strong parallels between the East and West-German historical narratives on the allied bombings and between the work of Groehler and Boog in particular. Both essentially wrote a narrative of German suffering. Therefore both narratives could be interpreted as an attempt to exonerate the Germans collectively and establish a 'counter-narrative' of German guilt. Both historians adhered to the narrative of the bombings as a German catastrophe.

The plenary discussions referred to a number of re-occurring topics among which the problem of representations of beginnings and origins of nations, (overlapping) borders, the impact of national histories on (political) competitions in transnational arenas, sub- and supranational political orders as challenges to the national framework, as well as the creation of continuity in historiographical accounts figured prominently.

The questions whether NHIST – although explicitly occupied with the deconstruction of historical master narratives – could escape to

re-confirm the nation concept has been hotly debated. The NHIST scholars emphasized that the focus of the project was the conscious reflection of the national paradigm – therefore the project did not re-assure the national framework. However, it has been acknowledged that NHIST necessarily partakes in the establishment of a historiographical canon. On the other hand the discussions of individual papers and the plenary debates alike put the national paradigm into perspective by relating it to competing concepts such as gender, class and ethnicity.

Other aspects discussed included the teaching of history and the perception of historical education as well as relations between professional and popular historiography. The debates focussed on the relation of professional historiography to the public sphere, on the intertwinement of history and politics and the impact of academic historiography on public debates. It was deemed problematic that the constraints professional historians encounter in reaching a wider public fostered the dissemination of less nuanced views on history produced by non-professional historians, who write literary histories or disseminate their opinions through the media. Synne Corell pointed out that on the other hand, paradigm changes are often initialized by less-conservative popular historians. The reciprocal influence of professional and popular historiographies was deemed beneficial with regard to its effects on the participation of professionals in public debates. The debates revealed the general politicization of historiography as e.g. reflected in the institutional affiliation of the individual historian. The inescapability of political bias in history writing (especially when dealing with the nation and/or nationalism) was widely agreed upon and led to the collectively acclaimed demand to reveal such bias rather openly instead of hiding it.

Another topic of interest was the impact of empires or non-European spatial and political orders and systems on European historiography. Investigations of European historiography remained incomplete if they excluded this aspect, claimed Catherine Hall. Closely connected to the non-European dimension of European historiography and the po-

liticization of historiography in general, was the debate on the relation and depiction of perpetrators and victims in historical discourse. The difficulty of combining perspectives of perpetrators and victims had become evident in the presentations of Synne Corell and Bas von Benda-Beckmann, and re-occurred in the general debate with regard to the discussion on slavery in post-imperial Britain.

#### **Conference overview:**

Welcome from the NHIST chair, Stefan Berger

Tibor Frank: Opening Lecture: Between Nationalism and Internationalism: Hungarian Historiography in the 19th and 20th Centuries

Ilaria Porciani: The work of team 1 in NHIST

Stefan Berger and Chris Lorenz: The Work of Team 2 in NHIST

Stefan Berger: The work of Team 3 in NHIST

Tibor Frank: The work of team 4 in NHIST

Discussion about NHIST

Guided Walk Kőszeg

Vera Sýkora: The 'Fallmerayer thesis' and the development of national history in Greece

Franz Leander Fillafer: Enlightenment as Mixed Blessing The Enlightenment and the Multiethnic State in the nineteenth-century Historiography of the Habsburg Monarchy

Biljana Ristovska-Josifovska: One Nineteenth Century Macedonian History Book (Historical Data and Mythology)

Jasper Heinzen: Paradise lost or paradise forged? Coming to terms with 1866 and the construction of national identity in the Prussian province of Hanover, 1866-1918'

Kerstin Armbrorst: Institutions for Jewish Historical Research in Eastern and Western Europe at the Turn of the 20th Century and their Perceptions of Jewish History

Olaf Müller: „The other canon. Exile experience and concepts of national literary historiography in France and Italy after the French Revolution“

Plenary Session

Stephan Petzold: A clash of different conceptions of the state and national identity: the origins of the First World War as a discursive puzzle

Andrea Griffante: Much more than a town: Vilnius/Wilno and the national boundaries in

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interwar Polish and Lithuanian Historiography

Florencia Peyrou: Republican Historiography and the Vision of Spain in the 19th Century

Caroline Marburger: German Exile Professors in Istanbul 1933-1949: Actors of Turkish Nation Building, Critics of German Historiography and Utopians of an alternative „World History“

Henning Trüper: Popularising national history in Belgium, ca. 1930-1960

Anna Gust: History writing and national imagining in the work of James Mackintosh (1765-1833)

Evelina Stoyanova Razhdavichka: Use and Abuse of History: Islamization as a Topic in Bulgarian Historiography

Synne Corell: The Norwegian historiography on the German occupation of Norway during World War II

Silviu Hariton: Beyond national history: the reception of the Annales in Romania

Irene Gaddo: Atlantic history: A way to escape historiographical traditions

Jernej Kosi: Slovene Professional Historiography: A Continuity of Anachronism

Stefan Guth: An OCSE of historians?

Adam Hudek: Constructing and deconstructing the idea of common Czechoslovak history in Slovak Marxist historiography

Bas von Benda-Beckmann: East and West German historians and the problem of the allied bombings

Ema Neimarlija: Reinterpretation of the communism past in national history

Comments on Summer School by Catherine Hall

Comments on Summer School by Benedikt Stuchtey

Concluding discussion

Attila Pók

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