

The International Community of Experts and the Transformation of the Fatherland. Central Eastern Europe in the European Context since World War I

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Held at the German Historical Institute in Warsaw (GHI) and funded by the European Science Foundation (ESF) and the GHI, the workshop „The International Community of Experts and the Transformation of the Fatherland. Central Eastern Europe in the European Context since World War I“ explored the relationship between the evolution of an „international community of experts“ and the formation of states in Central Eastern Europe (CEE), which was marked by many breaks, during the „short“ twentieth century. Bringing together 27 mainly young scholars from 12 European countries as well as Canada and the United States, the workshop aim was to integrate the until now often neglected eastern part of the continent into a comprehensive European history and to analyze the phenomenon of the transfer of knowledge and technological expertise in Europe after World War I. In accordance with this focus, the workshop analyzed the relations CEE established and maintained with its eastern as well as western neighbors during the interwar and postwar years.

In their outline of the workshop's conception, the convenors pointed out that despite the great incursions of World War I, the interwar period was marked by a tremendous increase in professional communication. Forums developed in existing and specially created organizations which were driven by the need to keep up with the accelerating pace of technological development. For this time period, we can observe a tense interrelationship between nation states and expert knowledge: On the one hand, expert knowledge was developed in the framework of a universal understanding of knowledge. On the other, it was intended to serve the progress-oriented development of the respective national societies. Especially in the case of the

newly founded states of CEE, these issues are of high relevance for understanding the history of the 20th century.

EVA HORN (Basel) gave the introductory lecture „Experts or Impostors? Blindness and Insight in Secret Intelligence“. Secret intelligence is in many ways an extreme case of expert knowledge. Therefore it is a good example to illustrate the specific characteristics of experts and expertise. According to Horn's definition, expertise is highly exclusive and the institutionalized knowledge management in secret services leads to epistemological pathologies, i.e. to a blindness that consists in asking the wrong questions or looking for answers in the wrong direction. In his comment, JOHANNES PAULMANN (Mannheim) stressed the role of the secret agent as a „self-proclaimed expert“. He pointed out that, when analyzing if states are willing and able to learn from experts, we should make a distinction between democratic states and dictatorships. On the one hand, due to public debate in democracies, expert knowledge is not always translated into decision-making. On the other, knowledge does not have the same epistemological quality in authoritarian societies as it does in democracies.

The second session focused on examples from CEE, although questions of general importance remained at the center of attention. PAUL WEINDLING (Oxford) commenced the section with a paper on „Public Health in Central Europe. National and International Expertise“. The paper dealt with the example of eugenics and showed to what a striking extent discourse on this topic not only abounded in CEE and can thus not be described as following a simple pattern of transfer from West to East. The respective states were rather subjects than – as is commonly assumed – objects in this discourse. Weindling interpreted this as part of the extremely important role public health played in the region's newly established states. Weindling presented public health as a very dynamic area and stressed the importance of the international transfer of organization models. Taking up this matter, ERIK INGEBRIGTSEN (Trondheim) examined an intriguing example of such a transfer in his paper on „The Agency of Knowledge Transfer: Hungarian Fellows of the Rockefeller Foundation, 1922-1939“, which offered much more than a case study. Ingebrigtsen demonstrated the tremendous influence Hungarian Rockefeller fellows were able to exert at home due to the reputation of

their international research and the reputation of the Foundation, but also against the background Weindling had highlighted before, i.e. the general importance of public health. Among many other points addressing general problems of knowledge transfer during the interwar period, this example clearly demonstrated the symbolic dimension of expert communication in its international dimension. This aspect also loomed large in MICHAL PULLMANN's (Prague) paper on „The Economic Debates in the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia in the 1980s: Between Affirmation of Facticity and Critical Approach“. Pullmann directed the workshop's attention to specific languages and codes employed by Czechoslovakian experts in a deeply hierarchical discourse with the Soviet Union and touched upon a central question of expert cultures, how the system can effectively be criticized from within.

In his comment, KARL HALL (Budapest) stressed the intentional use of prestige for example by referring to the United States or – in the case of Pullmann's examples – to the Soviet Union. Moreover, Hall stressed the role of utopian concepts, of „*Zukunftsmusik*“, as a driving force in the communication between experts. Experts always also have to be regarded in their public capacity and in their need to strive for funds that allow them to pursue their goals.

The third session considered examples that got beyond the region. MARCUS FUNCK (Toronto) began with a paper on „The Role of the League of Nations in the Internationalisation of Aviation during the Interwar Period“. As recent studies have stressed, the League was one of the major agents of technical standardization and scientific exchange during the interwar period. Broadening this point, Funck presented aviation as a highly significant arena of interplay between national and international factors. The significance of the example of aviation in CEE thereby went beyond technical aspects. Against the backdrop of international relations, the Eastern routes were of political importance and were thus subsidized. In turn, the new states of CEE regarded aviation as a matter of both strategic and symbolic significance.

ALBERT PRESAS I PUIG (Berlin) connected to these topics in his paper on „Technical Relations between Germany and Spain: Technological Transfer and International Policy in the 20th Century“ and demonstrated how mechanisms of exclusion – in this case of Germany after World War I –

brought about new forms of exchange. Spain served as a testing ground and place of experimentation for technologies prohibited in Germany by the Treaty of Versailles. The Spanish government in turn hoped to obtain key technologies. In his comment, Ronald Pohoryles (Vienna) pointed out the importance of national innovation cultures. In the discussion, participants stressed the importance of the self-perception of experts, but also the significance of different expert styles, which goes beyond the phenomenon of tacit knowledge and national innovation cultures. Moreover it was pointed out that international exchange does not necessarily – as is often assumed – have a positive character.

The following two sections considered „The Role of the State“ for the mobilization of expert knowledge, taking into account the tensions between the newly evolving international expert cultures and the framework of the nation state within which the experts acted, the self-understandings of the experts in question and the states' management of knowledge and experts in various areas. STEFAN ROHDEWALD (Passau) in his talk on „Networks of Technocracy and Scientific Management in Poland between the Wars?“ introduced the concept of technocracy and showed how this concept, which implies governing by technical decision-making in numerous variations, made its way from the Czechoslovakian Republic, where in 1924 the First World Congress of Management had been organized, to Poland. The transfer of knowledge functioned by adjusting foreign concepts to the local conditions of the Second Republic of Poland. Carrying on the example of Poland INGO LOOSE (Berlin) took a closer look at „How to Run a State: The Question of Know-How in Public Administration in the First Years after Poland's Rebirth in 1918“. Examining the experts of the Wielkopolska region, Loose, instead of perceiving this period exclusively as a period of Polish-German hostility, showed that the process of exchange of elites and groups of experts was gradual and accompanied by intense German-Polish communication. Loose chose a vantage point that demonstrates how fruitful the focus on experts in a micro-perspective can be in challenging established historical narratives. KENNETH BERTRAMS (Brussels), focused on the transnational circulation of ideas that took place in the two postwar eras between Western Europe and the United States in the fields of economic policy, social regulation, and planning. This example from Western Europe demonstrated

the state's eagerness for more efficient administration and the ways in which the „expert“ was implicated in state policies. Bertrams also showed a dialectic legitimacy: The state offers social recognition to the experts and the experts in turn legitimize the state. And as GEORG WAGNER-KYORA (Hanover) stressed in his comment to the section, these are examples for a broadening of perspective in European history, taking into account different forms of state modernization. The idea of Europe was also taken up by DAGMARA JAJEŚNIAK-QUAST (Erfurt). In her paper „Polish Economic Circles and the Question of the Common European Market after World War I“, she outlined the fate of the Pan-European idea in Poland – the universal idea of giving up the nation state in favor of a common European market. Jajeśniak-Quast made clear that the tensions between national interests and the intended European union were too radical: the Pan-Europeanists, a group of various experts often from economic circles and often high-ranking freemasons, were accused of being traitors to the Polish nation. This time, and this underlines the assumption that the success or failure of an expert is highly dependent on the environment and the circumstances in which he is able to act, the state turned out to be an obstacle for expert ideas.

In her talk on „Knowledge through the Iron Curtain. Transferring Knowledge and Technology in Cold War Europe“ SARI AUTIO-SARASMO (Helsinki), advocated a new perspective on the history of the Cold War and a reevaluation of the Iron Curtain as a strict and impermeable dividing line splitting Europe into two blocs. Again, focusing on actors from a micro-perspective on the transfer of ideas, knowledge and technology, Autio-Sarasma emphasized the dynamics of a continuously changing interaction between East and West. Concentrating on the topic of consumerism, MAŁGORZATA MAZUREK (Potsdam) raised yet another challenge to the state of the art in research on these questions in her paper „Between the International Community of Experts and National ‘Carnival of Revolution’: Consumerism and the Decline of the Communist System in Poland“. Research mainly focuses on the politics of consumption in the capitalist world. In contrast, Mazurek pointed out state-consumer relations in Poland using the example of „The Federation of Consumers“ in Poland from 1981 that, due to the existence of the Solidarity movement, evolved into a quite unique phenomenon: a semi-autonomous consumer movement that

acted not as a state agent but as an intermediary organization. Here, the micro-perspective on the experts allowed for an insight into the functioning also of civil society, as CATHERINE GOUSSEFF (Berlin-Paris) pointed out in her comment to this section. She also stressed the importance of considering the countertendencies in history that often deconstruct the master- or established narratives.

The sections on „Communication and Transfer of Knowledge“ explored communication and translation structures that enabled knowledge transfer across state borders. In her paper „People's Cars and People's Technologies: Škoda and Fiat Experts face the American Challenge (1918-1948)“, VALENTINA FAVA (Florence) showed that studying and promoting Taylorism, Czechoslovakian and Italian engineers were aware of the fact that the American model of production had to be adapted to local conditions in order to be effective. Whereas the loyalty of Fiat's experts was to their company, Czechoslovakian engineers regarded Americanization and „Scientific Management“ as a means of nation-building. Following a similar line of argumentation in her paper on „Engineers without Borders? Scientific Management in Interwar East Central Europe“, ELISABETH VAN MEER (Charleston) stressed the anti-German impetus of the idea of „Scientific Management“ and its character as a strategy to develop the whole region of CEE. In comparison to this, PÁL GERMUSKA (Budapest) argued in his paper „Copy-paste in Technologies? Soviet Advisers in the Hungarian Military Industry in the 1950s“ that the Hungarian case of „copy-paste“ of Soviet military technology reflects a development imposed from the outside. The Soviet Union tried to establish power relations with its new satellite by means of the forced export of second-rank technology and the reproduction of its own production model without taking into account the existing structures. As CHRISTOPH MICK (Warwick) remarked in his comment, (Stalinist) Soviet science was organized in a very specific manner: Whereas Western engineers experimented extensively and progressed by „trial and error“, in Soviet science failed experiments and a „waste“ of raw materials could be deadly for the researcher.

The Soviet-Hungarian case also reflects the problem of *lingua franca* in international exchange of expertise. Three decades earlier, the outcome of World War I also led to important changes in the usage of languages in the multinational scien-

tific community. The boycott of German science at the beginning of the interwar period went hand in hand with the decline of German as a means of transnational scientific communication. As ROS-WITHA REINBOTHE (Duisburg-Essen) pointed out in her talk on „Languages of International Scientific Communication in Central Eastern Europe after World War I“, this was a result of the policy pursued by the winning coalition and the newly formed states in CEE.

JUSTYNA GÓRNY (Berlin) introduced the topic „The Life and Thinking of Ludwik Fleck in and outside Poland (1896-1961)“, whereas GUIDO HAUSMANN (Dublin) presented a case study entitled „Political Geography Travels East: Stepan Rudnytsky and the Emergence of an Ukrainian Political Geography, 1914-1926“. Scrutinizing the biographies and analyzing the scholarly work of these two figures – a Polish-Jewish microbiologist and philosopher of science and a Ukrainian geographer – again allows us to explore the micro-level of knowledge transfer and transnational networks during a period of war, the redrawing of borders, and the formation of new states. Rudnytsky's reputation at home clearly depended on the fact that he successfully addressed an international community of peers, but his Ukrainian origin was an obstacle for him to become a geographer of European renown.

The final discussion of the workshop stressed that researching the phenomenon of the expert leads directly to essential problems of Europe's age of extremes. There was a common understanding that the term expert – with all its various meanings and strong normative connotation – serves as a useful tool of investigation, especially when starting from micro-level case studies in the region CEE and embedding the results into a larger European framework. Examining experts in action implies challenging historical master narratives such as the dominant role of the nation state or the impermeable border between East and West during the so-called Cold War. The various perspectives adopted by the conference participants allowed for an innovative, comparative history of transfer and intertwining between East and West, which facilitated new approaches.

However, a number of questions are in need of further research, for example if the CEE region requires special treatment or if the developments addressed can also be encountered in other parts of Europe in similar ways. Beyond that it should be

examined if it makes sense to look at the long-term perspective or if the changes World War II and the rise of communism brought about were so substantial that one should rather look at both periods separately. The two aspects that repeatedly came up in the course of the workshop in favor of emphasizing the special character of the region were the deep and numerous breaks in the political systems – with the most radical form being occupation – and the legacy of the empires. The imperial heritage produced multiple loyalties, but also a strong nexus between a seemingly neutral technological rationale and political convictions.

Above that it was underlined that the state played a relatively prominent role in the region, and we face the problem of the significance and the implications of nation states that – on a European scale – came into being rather late in the sense of territorialization. The state as an agent of modernization processes offered chances for experts to attain a higher status, but also entailed manifold politics of force. The complex power relations between the state and the expert as well as the bargaining position of experts are yet to be thoroughly researched. The tensions between an emerging international scene of experts and the national frameworks in which these experts acted have to be examined as well as the loyalties of experts vis-à-vis the state and/or the nation and attempts by the state or the nation to exploit the experts for its purposes; or whether or not there even existed such a dichotomy at all. Last but not least the question arose how perhaps a typology of experts could be contrived and how different „thought-styles“ are to be classified and interpreted. For this purpose, it would be necessary to include more explicitly questions of gender, ethnicity, and also of age and generation. Biographies or collective biographies appear to be useful in order to refine the analysis in this respect. A further question concerns the assessment of failure and success: Whether an expert was successful or whether he has failed is not always easy to define and there is always the question of who defines this. Another area of research to be explored in the future is the system of expert transfer itself and the systems in which expert transfer occurred, the communication strategies that lay behind these processes and the different societal layers and spheres that were affected and involved such as the public, civil society, private initiatives, or the state. It is intended to follow up the questions outlined above with further research,

with a focus on the region CEE. A publication of the conference papers is planned.

Programme Overview:

Welcome Address

Eduard Mühle (Director of the German Historical Institute)

Presentation of the European Science Foundation (ESF)

Jacques Dubucs (Standing Committee for the Humanities)

Introduction by the Convenors

SESSION 1:

Transnationalism and Knowledge-Transfer – A Theoretical Approach

Experts or Impostors? Blindness and Insight in Secret Intelligence

Eva Horn (University of Basel, CH)

Comment: Johannes Paulmann (University of Mannheim, DE)

SESSION 2:

Experts and Expert Groups I

Public Health in Central Europe: National and International Expertise

Paul Weindling (Oxford Brookes University, UK)

The Agency of Knowledge Transfer: Hungarian Fellows of the Rockefeller Foundation, 1922-1939

Erik Ingebrigtsen (Norwegian University of Science and Technology Trondheim, NO)

The Economic Debates in the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia in the 1980s: Between Affirmation of Facticity and Critical Approach

Michal Pullmann (University of Prague, CZ)

Comment: Karl Hall (Central University of Budapest, HU)

SESSION 3:

Experts and Expert Groups II

The Role of the League of Nations in the Internationalisation of Aviation during the Interwar Period

Marcus Funck (York University, Toronto, CA)

Technical Relations between Germany and Spain: Technological Transfer and International Policy in the 20th Century

Albert Presas i Puig (Max Planck Institute for the History of Science Berlin, DE)

Comment: Ronald J. Pohoryles (ICCR Vienna, AT)

SESSION 4:

The Role of the State I

Networks of Technocracy and Scientific Management in Poland between the Wars?

Stefan Rohdewald (University of Passau, DE)

How to Run a State: The Question of Know-how in Public Administration in the First Years after Poland's Rebirth in 1918

Ingo Loose (HU Berlin, DE)

The 'Techno-Corporatist Bargain' in Western Europe and the United States, 1914-1944. A Case for a Transnational Transfer of Knowledge?

Kenneth Bertrams (University of Brussels, BE)

Comment: Georg Wagner-Kyora (University of Hannover, DE)

SESSION 5:

The Role of the State II

Polish Economic Circles and the Question of European Common Market after WWI

Dagmara Jajeśniak-Quast (University of Erfurt, DE)

Knowledge through the Iron Curtain. Transferring Knowledge and Technology in Cold War Europe

Sari Autio-Sarasma (University of Helsinki, FI)

Between the International Community of Experts and the National 'Carnival of Revolution': Consumerism and Decline of the Communist System in Poland

Małgorzata Mazurek (Center for Research on Contemporary History Potsdam, DE)

Comment: Catherine Gousseff (Centre Marc Bloch Berlin, DE)

SESSION 6:

Communication and the Transfer of Knowledge I

Languages of International Scientific Communication in Central Eastern Europe after World War I

Roswitha Reinbothe (University of Duisburg-Essen, DE)

Copy-paste in Technologies? Soviet Advisers in the Hungarian Military Industry in the 1950s

Pál Germuska (Institute for the History of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution, Budapest, HU)

People's Cars and People's Technologies: Škoda and Fiat Experts face the American Challenge (1918-1948)

Valentina Fava (European University Institute Florence, IT)

Comment: Christoph Mick (University of Warwick, UK)

SESSION 7:

Communication and the Transfer of Knowledge II

The Life and Thinking of Ludwik Fleck in and outside Poland (1896-1961)

Justyna Górny (Independent Scholar Berlin, DE)
Political Geography Travels East: Stepan Rudnytsky and the Emergence of an Ukrainian Political Geography, 1914-1926

Guido Hausmann (University of Dublin, IE)
Engineers without Borders? Scientific Management in Interwar East Central Europe

Elisabeth van Meer (College of Charleston, US)

Tagungsbericht *The International Community of Experts and the Transformation of the Fatherland. Central Eastern Europe in the European Context since World War I*. 11.09.2008-13.09.2008, Warsaw, Poland. In: H-Soz-u-Kult 18.12.2008.