

### The Cold War: History, Memory, and Representation

**Veranstalter:** Konrad Jarausch, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill; Andrea Despot, European Academy Berlin; Christian Ostermann, Cold War International History Project, Washington; Andreas Etges, Kennedy Institute, Freie Universität Berlin

**Datum, Ort:** 14.07.2011–17.07.2011, Berlin

**Bericht von:** Andreas Etges/Jasmin Heermann/Claudia Schumacher, John F. Kennedy-Institut für Nordamerikastudien, Freie Universität Berlin; Julia Danylow, Freie Universität Berlin

‘The past is never dead,’ William Faulkner famously wrote in 1951 in *Requiem for a Nun*. ‘It’s not even past.’ This is definitely also true of the Cold War. Its traces are still visible in many places all around the world. It is the subject of exhibitions and new museums, of memorial days and historic sites, of documentaries and movies, of arts and culture. There are historical and political controversies, both national and international, about how the history of the Cold War should be told and taught, how it should be represented and remembered. While much has been written about the political history of the Cold War, the analysis of its remembrance and representation is just beginning. Bringing together a wide range of international scholars, the conference held at the European Academy Berlin<sup>1</sup> focused on the public history of the Cold War from an international perspective, covering topics such as master narratives of the Cold War, places of memory, public and private memorialization, popular culture, and school-books. One impetus for the conference was the proposal to establish a new Museum of the Cold War at Checkpoint Charlie.

The first session, entitled ‘The Cold War: Master Narratives in East and West,’ was opened by ODD ARNE WESTAD (London), who emphasized the internationalization of Cold War historiography which has long been dominated by a Western and especially American perspective. He described how international scholars have begun to shape the field and are helping to incorporate the global impact of the Cold War into scholarship. Refer-

ring to Berlin as a place of remembering the Cold War, Westad stressed the need to understand it as a lived experience and an underlying event which European nations experienced. It was therefore crucial, he suggested, for the development of the world we live in today.

ANDERS STEPHANSON (New York) critically discussed how the term ‘Cold War’ has been used in both public and academic discourse. In his view, it should be regarded as a US concept and project with a primarily American historiography. In terms of periodization, Stephanson argued that after 1963 the term ‘Cold Peace’ is more suitable for describing relations between the two superpowers. For Stephanson, Berlin was an anomaly during the Cold War.

Next, DAVID REYNOLDS (Cambridge) presented his comparison of Cold War narratives in Britain, France, and the Federal Republic of Germany. None of these entirely accepted the superpower polarity as the necessary master narrative, instead emphasizing national, European, or colonial aspects of Cold War history. During the Cold War, Britain and France were struggling with their loss of imperial power, while West Germany focused on the issues of German unity and German guilt. VLADIMIR PECHATNOV (Moscow) discussed three narratives of the Cold War in the post-Soviet period. The standard Soviet version describes the Cold War as having been imposed on the Soviet Union by the United States. In this narrative the Soviets saw themselves as the victims of Western policies. A revisionist narrative which includes a massive rejection of the Soviet past emerged in the late 1980s and early 1990s. A third, more recent, post-revisionist narrative is less ideological and stresses realpolitik, such as Russia’s security interests.

---

<sup>1</sup> Co-sponsored by: the Berlin city government; the European Academy Berlin; the German Historical Institutes in Moscow, London, and Washington; the Centre for Contemporary History in Potsdam; the Military History Research Institute in Potsdam; the Allied Museum in Berlin; the German-Russian Museum Berlin-Karlshorst; the Berlin Wall Foundation; the Airlift Gratitude Foundation (Stiftung Luftbrückendank) in Berlin; the Cold War International History Project in Washington; and the John F. Kennedy Institute for North American Studies of the Freie Universität Berlin.

---

In his keynote lecture, JAY WINTER (Yale) discussed the Cold War between history and memory. He described memory as the intersection between family and world history, stressing that remembrance is an act of people, not of states. States can only provide an active symbolic exchange — at best, they manage to glorify those who died without honoring war itself. Winter described a booming memory industry that is driven not by the state but by society. He stated that the commemoration of war has changed over time. There is a popular disenchantment with war especially in Berlin, which is characterized by a lively but overwhelming memory landscape.

Winter's keynote lecture was followed by a panel on official versus biographical memorialization. MARIE-PIERRE REY (Paris) compared the attitudes of the French and Russian states towards the Cold War. She outlined the Cold War's intense impact on social life, since everybody had to act within a binary scheme. This also manifested itself in popular culture, in novels, music, and art. For Russia, the Cold War and its end constitute a painful memory and a collective trauma, while in France loyalty to the West and the French role (for example, in détente policy) are emphasized. SERGEJ KUDRYASHOV (Moscow) underlined that the experiences of the Cold War are an ongoing and serious issue in Russia. He drew attention to a uniquely Russian aspect, namely, the flourishing of amateur historiography. The work of non-professionals partially fills a gap in the country's collective memory of the Cold War. These amateurs to a large extent fulfill a popular demand for conspiracy and espionage histories. Serious historians find it difficult to react to these populist approaches. MATTHIAS UHL (Moscow) focused on spies as heroes of the Cold War. He presented parts of his research on double agent Oleg Penkovsky. Uhl stressed the importance of technology and espionage as the subject of a future Cold War exhibition in Berlin.

Contrasting the ways in which the superpowers remember the Cold War, THOMAS LINDENBERGER (Vienna) concentrated on border communities in Eastern Europe. He presented his oral history microstudies of ev-

eryday life, politics, and the heterogeneity of remembering the Cold War in East and West. Nation-building and communist policies played a much larger part than Cold War issues in the border communities he examined. For Lindenberger, this justified and implied a critical perspective in mapping European memory of the Cold War, which has been seen as a Western term. The conference's first day ended with the screening of the PBS documentary *After the Wall: A World United* (2011). Former Ambassador James D. Binde-nagel, who was involved in the production, took questions from the audience.

The session on popular culture and school-books was opened by TONY SHAW (Hertfordshire) who gave a presentation on Cold War films in East and West. He argued that for ordinary people films gave real meaning to the Cold War and pointed out that they still have an impact on its memorialization, even among those born after the end of the conflict. Shaw identified five categories of Cold War films: films that justify the Cold War; films of extremely positive or negative propaganda, depicting the home country as heaven and the other as hell; films about the nuclear threat; films on espionage; and films that give alternative images and provide a critique of the Cold War.

Next, CHRISTOPHER MORAN (Warwick) focused on Ian Fleming's James Bond novels. He stated that they filled a public vacuum at a time when the secret services had an even greater passion for secrecy than today. The Bond novels were in a privileged position, since there were hardly any competing spy novels at the time. Moran also analyzed the direct correspondence between Fleming and the CIA and how it affected his stories. FALK PINGEL (Brunswick) compared the depiction of the Cold War in social studies textbooks in the old Federal Republic of Germany, France, and Britain. Until the 1970s, he said, the term 'Cold War' was not used. Instead, 'East-West Conflict' was the preferred term, loaded with a great deal of meaning. National emphases differed. While French textbooks regarded the conferences at Yalta and Potsdam as crucial, German textbooks focused on Soviet policy.

The final session discussed sites of Cold War memory. WAYNE COCROFT, senior

archaeological investigator at English Heritage, talked about protecting, preserving, and presenting Cold War heritage. He discussed examples from more than thirty Cold War sites which have become nationally protected historic places in the United Kingdom. CSABA BÉKÉS (Budapest) depicted the memory landscape in East Central Europe, with a special focus on Hungary. Like others before him, he emphasized that 'Cold War' is not a term generally used in that region, where the communist experience and the memory of the communist past are crucial. The anthropologist HEONIK KWON (London) then looked at violent manifestations of the Cold War in the postcolonial world with its many millions of victims and contrasted it with the exceptionally long peace in post-war Europe, where the Cold War was more of an 'imaginary war.' He also emphasized the importance of family memory, and not just in East Asia.

Concentrating on Berlin as a place of history, memory, and representation of the Cold War, HOPE M. HARRISON (Washington) and SYBILLE FRANK (Darmstadt) both outlined the Berlin state government's memorial plan. While Harrison focused on the recurring complications Germany faces as a result of the continuing process of unification, Frank looked at the state of memorialization at Checkpoint Charlie. Both speakers pointed out that multiple and sometimes competing actors are part of Berlin's public history landscape. Harrison stressed the need to concentrate not only on the Wall and the division of Germany but also to provide a broader and multi-perspectival Cold War context. Frank compared Checkpoint Charlie with Plymouth Plantation Heritage Center and detected a special German anxiety about the 'Disneyfication' of memorial sites when private institutions step in to fill a vacuum left by the state.

Finally, KONRAD JARAUSCH (North Carolina) discussed the project for a Cold War museum at Checkpoint Charlie. Referring to some of the findings of the conference, he described the project as a major opportunity for the city of Berlin. The global nature of the conflict, including postcolonial struggles, and especially the dramatic role of individuals, he suggested, should be highlighted in a future exhibition. Jarausch described the aim

of the Berlin conference as 'to create an intellectual frame of reference and to initiate a public debate about open questions regarding the project.' In this respect, it proved highly successful.

The conference ended with a reading by the Hungarian author György Dalos, a leading Eastern European intellectual, who presented his recently published biography of Mikhail Gorbachev, *Gorbatschow, Macht und Mensch: Eine Biografie* (2011).

The conference showed how diverse and contested the memory and representation of the Cold War is in different parts of the world. Even the term Cold War is not one universally used. A future Cold War museum in Berlin should not try to tell a master narrative of the Cold War but instead it should challenge the viewpoints of both German and international visitors by incorporating different and sometimes competing interpretations.

#### Conference Overview:

*Panel 1 / The Cold War: Master Narratives In East And West*

Odd Arne Westad (London): On The Historiography Of The Cold War

Anders Stephanson (New York): The Cold War As Metaphor And Trope

David Reynolds (Cambridge): Western Europe – Probing The Cold War Narrative

Vladimir Pechatnov (Moscow): Twenty Years Of Changing Interpretations Of The Cold War In Russia

*History, Memory And The Cold War*

Jay Winter (Yale): The Cold War Between History And Memory

*Panel 2 / Official and Biographical Memorialization*

Marie-Pierre Rey (Paris): Memorialization Or Mythologization? A Comparative Approach To The Attitudes Of The French And Russian States Towards The Cold War

Sergej Kudryashov (Moscow): Painful Memories: Russian Attitude Towards The End Of The Cold War In Europe

Matthias Uhl (Moscow): Spies Which Saved

---

the World? The Construction Of Biographies  
Of George Blake and Oleg Penkovsky – New  
Approaches

Thomas Lindenberger (Vienna): The Cold  
War? I Rather Have It In My Family... East-  
West Discrepancies In Remembering Cold  
War Times

*Panel 3 / Popular Culture And School Books*

Tony Shaw (Hertfordshire): Cold War Films  
(East and West)

Christopher Moran (Warwick): Ian Fleming,  
British Spy Fiction And The Public Profile Of  
The Central Intelligence Agency

Falk Pingel (Brunswick): The Cold War In  
History And Social Studies Textbooks

*Panel 4 / Places Of Memory*

Wayne Cocroft: Protect and Survive: Pro-  
tecting, Preserving And Presenting Cold War  
Heritage

Csaba Békés (Budapest): Cold War Memory  
Sites And Museums In Central Europe

Heonik Kwon (London): The Postcolonial  
Cold War

*Panel 5 / Berlin As A Place Of Memory Of The  
Cold War*

Hope M. Harrison (Washington): The Resur-  
rection Of The Berlin Wall As A Site Of Mem-  
ory

Sybille Frank (Darmstadt): Competing For  
The Best Wall Memorial: The Heritage Indus-  
try At Checkpoint Charlie, Berlin

Konrad Jarausch (North Carolina): Project For  
A Museum Of The Cold War At Checkpoint  
Charlie

Tagungsbericht *The Cold War: History, Memo-  
ry, and Representation*. 14.07.2011–17.07.2011,  
Berlin, in: H-Soz-Kult 20.04.2012.