

Russia's North Pacific between Imperialism and Globalization. Institutions and Spaces

Veranstalter: Benjamin Beuerle / Sandra Dahlke, German Historical Institute Moscow; Andreas Renner, Ludwig Maximilians University, Munich

Datum, Ort: 29.03.2018–30.03.2018, Moskau

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For many researchers Russia's North Pacific is a *terra incognita*. So far, most scholars of Eastern Europe and Russia have focused on European and, to some lesser extent, Caucasian or Central Asian areas of the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union or the Russian Federation. The aim of this workshop, organized by the German Historical Institute Moscow and the Ludwig Maximilians University of Munich as the first result of a new joint research project on „Russia's North Pacific“, was to broaden and develop these existing perspectives on Russia, by highlighting transnational political, economic, social and ecologic processes, discourses and interactions between Russian actors and subjects of other countries neighbouring the North Pacific. Secondly, the workshop served to advance fundamental theoretical debates and function as a multiplier for future interdisciplinary scientific cooperation. In a total of four thematic panels, the speakers first presented their papers, which were accompanied by commentaries and joint discussions.

The first panel of the workshop approached the Russian North Pacific from an environmental historical perspective. The contribution of ROBERT KINDLER (Humboldt University, Berlin) examined the economic and political conflicts between the Japanese and the Russian Empire as well as the Soviet Union over Kamchatka's maritime resources, such as fur seals or fishing rights, at the beginning of the 20th century. Kindler argued that until the mid-1920s neither the late Tsarist Empire nor the Soviet Union had the means to prevent Japanese fishing companies from exploiting the peninsula's resources and from turning it during a number of years into a

de-facto Japanese colony. Afterwards BAT-SHEBA DEMUTH (Brown University, Providence) discussed the history of the Soviet whaling fleet from the 1930s to the 1970s. Demuth claimed that Soviet whaling developed after World War II its own ideas of socialist economy, camaraderie and future as result of the over-fulfilled quotas of the whalers. According to that, Demuth understood the whaling ship as one of the last utopian places of the USSR, in which the ideal of „real existing communism“ could be realized. The closure of the first panel was a presentation by BENJAMIN BEUERLE (German Historical Institute Moscow) on the history of climate change and air pollution in the Russian Far East since the 1970s presented. Beuerle highlighted initiatives for reducing car emissions in Primorsky Krai that took place already in the late Soviet period. In addition, Beuerle underlined the role of the region's location in the Asia-Pacific for the attention given to climate change in the Russian Far East today and referred to the increased economic and ecologic interaction between Russian, Chinese, Japanese and/or South Korean actors after the collapse of the USSR. A commentary given by JULIA HERZBERG (Ludwig Maximilians University, Munich) and the ensuing discussion elucidated the importance of specific positions and decisions on the part of actors on various (local, national, and international) levels, the relevance of taking various national perspectives into account as well as both the fruitfulness and some limits of environmental historical approaches.

The focus of the second panel extended the historical perspective to the aspects of migration and transfer. To begin with, SERGEI TKACHEV (Far Eastern Federal University, Vladivostok) presented a social history of Chinese labour migration in the Russian Far East, which developed into a mass phenomenon during the last decades of the Tsarist Empire. Chinese migrants were appreciated as cheap and effective labourers and farmers. In the same time they were feared by Russian labourers as competitive concurrence and by the Russian authorities as a potential threat to the Russian control of these territories. With the deportation of the Chinese and Korean population under Stalin, the history of Chi-

nese labour in the Russian Far East came to an abrupt end. In his paper DAVID WOLFF (Slavic-Eurasian Research Center, Hokkaido University, Sapporo) described the story of the Japanese diplomat Chiune Sugihara, who during the Hitler-Stalin Pact era made use of his position as Japanese consul in Kaunas for saving several thousand Polish, Lithuanian and Jewish refugees from the occupied Baltic States and Poland via Moscow and the Russian Far East. In contrast to many previously published studies on Sugihara, Wolff examined Japanese as well as Russian sources and could shed new light on the process of issuing transit visas, the role of the Soviet tourist company Intourist and the World War diplomacy between Japan and Soviet Union. In the following presentation FRANK GRÜNER (Bielefeld University) outlined the role of the bazaars in Manchuria at the beginning of the 20th century as an interaction space between traders, customers and visitors of different nationalities. Grüner's claim was that the market could serve as a prism for the transnational socio-political, economic and cultural relations of different actors or social groups. The subsequent contribution by TOBIAS HOLZLEHNER (Martin Luther University, Halle-Wittenberg) described the conflict-filled history of Soviet settlement policy on the Chukotka peninsula from an ethnographic and anthropological perspective. Holzlehner outlined the enormous changes provoked by the forced urbanization, the following sociocultural problems, such as strong alcoholism or the increasing decay of many settlements in the 1990s, as well as the revival of the lost spaces by the indigenous population in the last decades. The conclusion of the second panel was the commentary by SEBASTIAN LENTZ (Leibniz Institute for Regional Geography, Leipzig), who argued that the respective geographical and cultural spatial categories used during the workshop discussions should be questioned in order to reconsider their limitations and the possibilities of interdisciplinary research. In particular, Lentz called for a differentiated designation of various meanings inherent in „globalization“, and for giving attention to different connotations of centre-periphery-relations. An ensuing exchange be-

tween Lentz and Wolff shed light both on differing methods and angles of their different disciplines and on the merits of the interdisciplinary approach of this workshop.

In the third panel, which was entitled representations and norms, PAUL RICHARDSON (University of Birmingham) introduced the audience into the discourse of Russian geopolitics under Vladimir Putin, explicitly not focusing on its revanchist features but rather on Putin's readiness to concede. Richardson described this policy with the term „pragmatic patriotism“, deriving from a strong sense of economic inferiority among Russian leaders and by that the perceived need to „ideologically“ protect borders. For this reason, the Russian Federation had propagated over years the connection of territory and national identity, which is particularly reflected in the border conflicts with China and Japan or the Ukraine. Following a global historical perspective SÖREN URBANSKY (German Historical Institute, Washington D.C.) drew a comparison between anti-Chinese resentments and stereotypes in Vladivostok and San Francisco. He pointed to the discriminatory policies of local administrations in dealing with migrant workers with regard to gender – given the large preponderance of male Chinese migrants in Vladivostok in contrast to the dominant pattern of family settlement in San Francisco – as well as to anti-Asian hygiene discourses. Current Russian remembrance policy of the Second World War in Siberia and the Far East was the topic of JOONSEO SONG's paper (Hankuk University, Seoul). Three out of the 45 awarded „cities of military glory“ (Vladivostok (2010), Petropavlovsk-Kamchatskii (2011) and Khabarovsk (2012)) are located in the Russian Far East. They had in common that they were almost of no military relevance during the Great Patriotic War. Song showed that – notwithstanding the military insignificance of these cities – the central state's interest in bestowing upon them the award of „city of military glory“ was justified both by its claim to sovereignty over the historical memory as well as by the local interest of connecting local to national memories. In her commentary SANDRA DAHLKE (German Historical Institute, Moscow) set the tree papers in the

broader framework of the general conference-discussion. Concerning the papers on Chinese labour migration, which had relied almost exclusively on sources produced by the Russian and US administrations, she argued that in order to get a more balanced picture the Chinese migrant's perspective should be taken much more into account. She furthermore detected patterns of continuity between Soviet political practises in border regions (as in the case of whale hunting and the settlement policy on the Chukotka peninsula) and today's Russia's geopolitical agenda as well as its remembrance policy: a strong sense of economic inferiority and threat had led the Soviet/Russian leadership to adopt a pragmatic political strategy of „ideologically“ protecting the state's borders and sovereignty.

The last panel focused on the role of international and regional actors between cooperation and conflict. Yuexin Rachel Lin (University of Exeter) linked the history of currency policy between ruble and yen in the wake of the collapse of the Qing Empire in China and the Russian Revolution. The Chinese government tried to exploit the weakness of the Russian state in order to get rid of the ruble zone in Manchuria during the period of revolutionary turmoil. Following the question of current regional actors, NATALIA RYZHOVA (Far Eastern Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Vladivostok) described the role of Asian companies and markets in the Russian Far East economy. In particular, widespread corruption and other forms of „bad governance“ pose a huge problem for international companies and transnational exchanges in the region. Ryzhova stressed that the only way out of this plight is a closer cooperation between the cross-border and regional actors. In the last conference presentation, TAMARA TROYAKOVA (Far Eastern Federal University, Vladivostok) and JEREMY TASCH (Towson University, Maryland) considered the present and future role of Russia's North Pacific and Vladivostok in particular as the bridge and gateway for Russia and Europe to Asia. Troyakova and Tash were optimistic about the economic interests of the Russian Federation and surrounding countries as well as the various transnational companies and institutions could provide far-reaching

impacts for the development of the Russian North Pacific region in the future. In his commentary, ANDREAS RENNER (Ludwig Maximilians University, Munich) clarified the importance and necessity of trust for economic, political and cultural developments for the whole North Pacific area.

The final discussion, which was led by the organizers of the workshop, highlighted the fruitfulness of further collaboration between scholars dealing with „Russia's North Pacific“ and summed up outstanding issues that may inform their future discussions and projects. Future workshops might narrow their thematic topics and broaden the geographic focus on other (e.g. Korean, North American, and other Japanese and Chinese) actors which could not be considered during the present workshop. Of high importance were the questions of the utilization of spatial categories, historical or sociological approaches and concepts, the question of continuities and changes, as well as the necessity to sharpen further methodological access and instruments on an interdisciplinary level. Selected results of the conference will be published in the first volume of a new book series on Russia in the Asia-Pacific region which is about to be established by the organizers of the workshop.

Conference Overview

29 MARCH 2018

PANEL I ENVIRONMENT AND RESOURCES

Chair: Nikolaus Katzer (German Historical Institute Moscow)

Robert Kindler (Humboldt University, Berlin): Sushi in Petropavlovsk. Russia, Japan and the Struggle over Maritime Resources in the Northern Pacific, 1900-1941

Bathsheba Demuth (Brown University, Providence): Soviet Whaling in the Russian Far East: Making Socialist Utopia at Sea, 1930s-1970s

Benjamin Beuerle (German Historical Institute Moscow): Climate Change and Emissions in the Russian Far East: Perceptions and Approaches in Late Soviet and Post-Soviet Times, 1970s-2010s

Commentator: Julia Herzberg (Ludwig Maximilians University, Munich)

PANEL II MIGRATION AND TRANSFER

Chair: Helena Holzberger (GS for East and Southeast European Studies, Munich)

Sergei Tkachev (Far Eastern Federal University, Vladivostok): Chinese Labour Migrants in the Russian Empire (End of the 19th - Early 20th Cent.): the Point of View of Authorities and Business

David Wolff (Hokkaido University, Sapporo): Sugihara's Transit Visas and the Rise of Vladivostok Tourism Infrastructure, 1940-1941

Frank Grüner (Bielefeld University): Contested Spaces and Places of Transnational Entanglement: Bazaars and Ethnic Markets in Manchuria and the Russian Far East from 1900 until Today

Tobias Holzlehner (Martin Luther University, Halle-Wittenberg): A Coast Gone Lonesome: Forced Migration, Resistance and Littoral Reserves in Chukotka

Commentator: Sebastian Lentz (Leibniz Institute for Regional Geography, Leipzig)

30 MARCH 2018

PANEL III REPRESENTATIONS AND NORMS

Chair: Birte Kohtz (German Historical Institute Moscow)

Paul Richardson (University of Birmingham): Geopolitical Cultures, Pragmatic Patriotism, and Russia's Disputed Islands

Sören Urbansky (German Historical Institute Washington D.C.): 'The Chinese Plague'. Hygiene and Sinophobic Sentiments in Vladivostok, San Francisco and Singapore

Joonseo Song (Hankuk University, Seoul): Memory of War in the Russian Far East and Siberia

Commentator: Sandra Dahlke (German Historical Institute Moscow)

PANEL IV INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL ACTORS BETWEEN COOPERATION AND CONFLICT

Chair: Andreas Hilger (German Historical In-

stitute Moscow)

Yuexin Rachel Lin (University of Exeter): Poison Money: The Chinese Rublezone in War and Revolution

Natalia Ryzhova (Far Eastern Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Vladivostok): Asia as a Source for the Development of the Russian Far East?

Tamara Troyakova (Far Eastern Federal University, Vladivostok) & Jeremy Tasch (Towson University, MD): More than just a 'Bridge'? Russia's Asian Pivot through Vladivostok

Commentator: Andreas Renner (Ludwig Maximilians University, Munich)

FINAL DISCUSSION & OUTLOOK

Tagungsbericht *Russia's North Pacific between Imperialism and Globalization. Institutions and Spaces*. 29.03.2018–30.03.2018, Moskau, in: H-Soz-Kult 12.07.2018.