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Internationalismus

THE MECHANICS OF INTERNATIONALISM: CULTURE, SOCIETY AND POLITICS FROM THE 1840S TO WORLD WAR I

German Historical Institute London in co-operation with the German Historical Institute Washington, conference held at the GHIL on 12-15 December 1996

All over the world we are seeing a revival of national movements and nationalism. At the same time we live in an era of globalization which deeply affects every country. The re-emergence of nationalist sentiments and the all-pervasive process of globalization seem to be contradictory at first sight. However, they are anything but mutually exclusive. Looking afresh at the emergence of internationalism will further the understanding of its latest developments and may also lessen astonishment at its apparent demise.

The conference organized by the German Historical Institute London in co-operation with the German Historical Institute Washington took a new approach to internationalism by focusing on the mechanics of international ideas, movements, and activities. What in the nineteenth century was called internationalism is today termed transnationalism and globalization. In the nineteenth century the concept of internationalism still, though in an increasingly uncomfortable way, encompassed both the political movements trying to create international identities and to reform society and politics, and the process of internationalizing cultural, political, and economic practices. By concentrating on the mechanics of internationalism the organizers hoped to shed light on the interaction between these two sides, and to point out the underlying structure.

The conference brought together some twenty historians working on different international movements and areas of internationalization with the intention of making the structures, the varieties of international regimes, and the connections between them apparent. Rather than approaching the relationship between internationalism and nationalism head on and coming to the common-place conclusion that international movements were always a weak alternative to the power politics of the nation states, this conference examined the question from a different angle. It took the increased interlinking of societies from the middle of the nineteenth century as a starting point. Although this development may have started earlier in some areas it was only the conscious creation of international movements and the cross-national dissemination of people, commodities, and culture over large areas of the world that laid the foundations for the globalization we are still witnessing today. Improved communications and intensified economic exchange allowed an increasing number of international regimes to develop during the nineteenth century; more and more norms, rules, and procedures in diverse areas were set at an international level; and numerous cultural practices were disseminated across the world. This was achieved by various forms of association ranging from formal governmental or non-governmental organizations to the informal personal networks or marketing strategies of individual firms. By the turn of the century communications had created an international order on a European, trans-Atlantic and, indeed, worldwide scale. Its scope covered culture, society and politics.

The conference started with what may be called the mechanics of internationalism per se, that is, the forms internationalism took, the means employed, and the paths travelled by ideas, commodities and people, in short: the underlying structures on which internationalism was based. Did a world without borders emerge during the course of the nineteenth century? At first sight this appeared to be the case: world trade increased about 44-fold between 1800 and 1913 (Sidney Pollard, 'Free Trade, protectionism and the world economy'). The creation of universal standards for measures, money and time were attempts to transcend local, regional and national borders, and to build international regimes to supervise these standards. Although symbols of internationalism, these standards were strongly embued with national pride and thus highly contested (Martin Geyer, 'Internationalism and the politics of standards for measures and weights, time and money, 1850-1914'). 'The development of a world news order' (Joerg Requate) accelerated communication in such a way that physical proximity lost its advantage. Towards the end of the century, news from Paris, for example, reached New York before it got to provincial France. The volume of migration in Europe, across the Atlantic, and in other parts of the world as well has led many to believe that migration regulations were completely abolished some time after mid-century. Yet like the aforementioned papers and those following, Andreas Fahrmeir's contribution on 'Limits and possibilities of travel and migration: passports and the status of aliens' demonstrated the ambivalent character of internationalization. Movements across national borders increased enormously, but the opening up of the world at the same time was a process involving issues of (national) authority, of building formal as well as informal regimes. The mechanics pure of internationalism were intimately connected with national issues. They also involved a process of inclusion and exclusion. Looking at nineteenth-century international law Joerg Fisch demonstrated the course of 'Internationalizing civilization by de- internationalizing international society'. Especially from the middle of the nineteenth century, the Europeans introduced new standards in international relations. States had to provide the framework for all legitimate activities of men, from safe trading to a just legal system, based on enlightened western concepts of law. This was defined as civilization. Where there was no civilized state, territories were open to occupation by any civilized state. Thus international law, which had earlier recognized non-European political entities as, in principal, equal, was dismantled in the name of a farther-reaching internationalism of civilization.

The ambivalent nature of the process of internationalism also became obvious when looking at that nineteenth-century invention, the world exhibition, which typified the mechanics of internationalism in many ways. From very early on exhibitions were discussed in terms of a 'global village' (Anne Rasmussen, 'The world on display: international practice and the representation of nations'). These exhibitions at the same time showed that 'international' for contemporaries clearly meant 'European' (including North American) rather than 'global'. They were showcases for nation states displaying their own culture and their view of the rest of the globe. The various forms of multinational co-operation did not serve just economic or cultural ends. The politics of the nation state were also a prime motive. New issues and institutions were often initiated or strongly influenced by governments, so much so that it is justified to speak of 'Governmental internationalism and the beginning of a new world order in the late nineteenth century' (Madeleine Herren). For many smaller states like Switzerland and Belgium the growing internationalism was a means to make their influence felt.

These conclusions, which emerged from looking at the opening out of the world and the provision of information and space for an international audience, were by and large confirmed in the following sessions on particular international regimes in politics, society, and culture. The mechanics were applied to different ends; various groups used them to shape their political identity, not always successfully, as it appeared. One of the earliest examples of internationalism as a political movement was the search by European monarchs for close co-operation after the Napoleonic wars. 'Searching for a Royal International' (Johannes Paulmann) proved rather difficult. Certain factors limited the chances of achieving a united strategy against revolution: restrictive conditions and different lines of communication, dynastic and memorial links and dissensions, although most of the means were at the same time factors that facilitated some form of transnational relations between heads of state. The issue of success and failure was brought to the fore in this context. What are the categories for judging it? Moira Donald raised the question directly in 'Workers of the world unite? Exploring the enigma of the Second International'. Rather than regarding it as a doomed attempt to revive the idea of Marx's Working Men's International, she put the Second International into the context of the development of European society. Correspondence between leading figures, statistics on the translation of articles, or data on participation at congresses provided dif-

ferent yardsticks than arguments about socialist ideology. The point was re-iterated by Leila Rupp's paper on 'The making of international women's organizations'. It is true that before World War I women did not achieve what their international organizations set out to gain. Yet the organizational identity created by the numerous international associations did much to further women's progress after the Great War. The international identity of women, yet again, was broken through national identities. To some extent the success of an international movement could be defined in terms of the unity of the powerless, thus regarding the means as an end in itself. The session on international movements ended by looking at that organization which so often served as a yardstick for all forms of internationalism, that is, the peace movement (Sandi E. Cooper, 'Patriotic pacifism: the ideology of liberal internationalism, 1889-1914'). It soon became apparent that this was largely a moral stick with which to beat one's opponents. Were internationalists automatically 'good', both intentionally and functionally? Was a war to end all wars, that is, a kind of totalitarian paficism, legitimate? The section on international political organizations led towards two new conclusions: first, that any judgement about their success ought clearly to state the criteria applied, rather than simply assume the moral goodness of any kind of internationalism. Reactionaries could well be good internationalists; forming a transnational organization might in some cases be regarded as an achievement in itself. Second, earlier contributions to the conference and comments from those working in other areas pointed to a revision in so far as pacifism or the Red Cross were less suitable organizational models for portraying nineteenth-century internationalism than the Universal Postal Union, for example.

Some international movements consciously set out to reform society. This often came close to creating political identities, as the case of Freemasonry illustrates. Enlightened concepts such as mankind, humanity, universal brotherhood, or moral progress persisted well into the early twentieth century but they had been transformed since their earlier invention. 'Nationalism and the quest for moral universalism: German Freemasonry, 1860-1914' (Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann) discussed the forces involved: the nationalization of European societies and their simultaneous integration with each other. Under these circumstances inclusion and exclusion operated under the supranational creed of a moral international. Gender, social stratification, and nationality in effect separated Freemasons from other people, and in the case of nationalism, from one another. Universalism was

not merely an earlier stage or an alternative to nationalism, but was in fact incorporated into the nation state and its society - so much so that during World War I French and German Freemasons were each able to claim to fight on the side of humanity, apparently without noticing any contradiction. Rather more concrete social reforms were pursued at international level in numerous areas. The moral improvement of prisoners was one of the earliest examples (Rudolf Muhs, 'Towards a brave new world: the case of prison reform'). In the context of the conference this proved to be a particularly suitable example for analysis as it went through consecutive, albeit partly overlapping stages, which may be regarded as distinct types of internationalism. Voluntary internationalism was driven beyond national boundaries because the proponents of a particular case were marginalized in their native environment. Professional internationalism was supported by a fraternity of self-selected (penal) experts who were in regular communication with each other and started a series of international meetings in 1846. Their internationalism was part of the domestic lobbying for their ambitious and costly schemes. Institutionalized internationalism brought government involvement for a system of peridodical congresses and the exchange of information and statistics. How far this was possible was largely determined by the role the particular issue was likely to play in terms of power politics. If it was neutral, co-operation would be easiest. But even then, the institutions could become a forum for national rivalries at a certain level. Another case of official collaboration was 'Fighting white slavery: the beginning of international police co-operation'. In terms of power politics the trade in prostitutes was neutral; in terms of moral reform it provided ample opportunity to pursue all sorts of causes. Peter Becker demonstrated how the police used the media attention and moral panic to tighten controls on prostitution and to achieve closer international police co-operation, separating police activity from the diplomatic channels on which it had to rely until after 1900. Another case of moral reform, not discussed at the meeting, was the missionary activities of the churches. This would be a suitable area in which to look for some of the issues touched on by other papers: the involvement of women in international moral reform, the contribution of the voluntary sector, the separation between denominations, between nations, and the exclusion or inclusion of European and non-European actors as well as relations with governments.

The facilitation and growth of communication during the nineteenth century led to an increase in the availabil-

ity of knowledge about other countries. Internationalism not only benefited from this process, it contributed to it and might well be examined, in part at least, as a method of collecting and transferring knowledge. Intercultural transfer was not a neutral operation. Knowledge was aquired for particular reasons, its selection was determined by certain criteria, and its use served special purposes. During the nineteenth century, the attempt to bring over social institutions from other countries, the spreading of cultural practices, the transfer of goods, and the dissemination of science were important activities. Nicholas Stargardt examined one example linked to the social reform movements: 'Pedagogical reform: the Kindergarten and the cult of the child.' The ideas of Friedrich Froebel played an important part in the rise of a child-centred pedagogy. They provided a key component which, stripped of its original contents, was conveyed to other countries where it was re-filled with new ingredients. Thus an imported and internationally widespread concept could be charged with national and imperialist overtones. The enormous growth in the natural sciences also depended on transfer operations. 'The next great task of civilization: popularizing science in the international context, 1850-1900 - the transatlantic case' (Andreas Daum) took place in a setting which lacked an overall institutional structure and any affiliation with international organizations. Taking into account the specific cultural, political, and legal conditions, we note similar demands for popular presentations of natural sciences, common topics and modes of communication on both sides of the Atlantic. Informal exchanges dealt not merely in new scientific discoveries via learned journals but in specimens, in popular books, in travelling 'scientific theatres' which put natural phenomena on stage, and in technical toys. It was a polycentric, heterogeneous process driven by various motives ranging from enlightening ideals to business interests. More strictly professionally motivated were the international congresses organized by experts. Godelieve van Heteren looked at 'London (1881), Berlin (1890), London (1913): British responses to organized modern medical internationalism'. The reshaping of medicine at national level in regard to diagnosis, therapy and prevention, new techniques of professional communication, and competition between schools took place at the same time as congresses provided a novel international platform. What purpose did these gatherings serve that would not have been achieved by written communication alone? How were they organized? Which role did material culture, that is, medical objects or instruments play? Who was included, and who was excluded from this international stage? These

were the general questions which could also be put for other conferences, a type of international activity only invented (outside diplomacy) during the nineteenth century.

A theme touched upon in several papers was lucidly elaborated by Hartmut Berghoff in his contribution on 'Harmonicas for the world: the creation and marketing of a global product'. This could be termed 'the global village', that is, a direct link between localities or regions and the international level which by and large was not mediated through national institutions. Seventy-five per cent of the world's harmonicas produced in 1913 were manufactured in two small towns in remote parts of rural Germany. Studying the marketing activities of the resident firms allows us to explain how apparently disadvantaged areas managed to sell a non-essential product to the men (!) of almost all nations. The effects of another, though quite different, case of the transfer of products was presented by Rachel Esner: 'Art knows no fatherland: the reception of German art in France, 1870-1900 - a case of unexpected cosmopolitanism.' Exhibitions of German art and its reception by French art critics played an important part in the re-definition of French culture after the war with Germany in 1870/71. Praising German art rather than denigrating it, French critics claimed that it was through the reception of French art that German artists developed further. They thus created an international fraternity of artists under French leadership incorporating foreign painters into their definition of modernism. This is another case of universal phenomena being integrated into a national context without possible contradictions being noticed.

Cultural and social practices travelled from one country to another, often to several at the same time. 'The rise of internationalism in sport' (Christiane Eisenberg) illustrated this well. Modern disciplines developed in Great Britain, the 'motherland of sport', and then, as 'English sport', spread throughout the world, to British colonies, to other nations and at an international level. In general the diffusion of sports led to changes in the meanings attached to their performance. The social background of the activists varied (aristocratic in one place, middle-class in another, and working-class in a third place), economic interests differed, and the ideological context changed when sporting activities were transferred (for example, democratic, authoritarian, or militaristic). International meetings were not necessarily peaceful gatherings of individual sportsmen (not women) but were prone to develop into competitive events between nations. The spread of sports demonstrated all the ambiva-

lence of internationalism, its varying meanings, and its individual and social actors.

The period under investigation saw a large increase in people travelling, and writing about their journeys. This quantitative change also involved a qualitative development. Alexander Schmidt presented 'International travel and travel reports in the nineteenth century' as an evolution 'from investigating the world to exploring the self'. Taking one example from the late eigtheenth century, Georg Forster's account of his voyage around the world, and one from the early twentieth century, Hermann Keyserling's Reisetagebuch eines Philosophen, the differences became obvious in several respects: purpose of the journey, role of the experiencing subjects, perception of foreign cultures, definition of cultures in terms of time and space, and the question of identification. The conclusions pointed to one of the paradoxes of the time, namely, that the increasingly close connection of the world - of which Jules Verne's Round the World in Eigthy Days presented a fictional account - gave rise not to a heightened awareness of universalism, but to an ever stronger sense of particularity and individuality. The complex link between material developments - the physical reshaping of the nineteenth-century world - and cultural phenomena - the perception and interpretation of the environment - were both the subjects of David Blackbourn's 'Taking the waters: meeting places of the fashionable world'. Again, certain localities became global, though in the case of the numerous spas not mainly by exporting a product but by inviting people into their town. There they could purchase a range of services from curative products to sexual intercourse. There were many national spas with modest people, and a few international ones where old and new =E9lites met. In the space of a town and its surroundings a virtual reality was created. This small world offered local colour to a fabric that was basically interchangeable: same hotels, same food, same pastimes, same architecture, same musical entertainment, same fashions. A regional tradition was invented in order to compete with other localities for an international =E9lite which expected a range of transnational goods to be at its disposal. As many contributions to the conference showed, intertnationalism operated at different levels, not merely at the transnational and the national, but also at the local.

The concluding discussion was introduced by Bruce Mazlish. He proposed a distinction between internationalism and globalization. In terms of dates, World War I could be regarded as the turning point, or at least as one step towards a different world. While internation-

alism is Euro-centric and tied to the nation (state), globalization transcends nations and uses them. It is a synchronic and synergetic process in which the mechanics are secondary to a rather impersonal combination of actions and events. Internationalism appeared, after what had been discussed at the conference, as the pursuit of national power by other means. Yet the functional aspect should perhaps not be seen as the only effective one. People's consciousness also changed. This transformation was often mediated through things: material and visual culture, best exemplified in the world exhibition but present in most topics discussed, was an integral part of internationalization during the nineteenth century. Internationalism emerged just at the time when nationalism was developing into a major force in domestic and foreign affairs. Looking at the mechanics, we realize that the means which enabled nationalism were the same that furthered the invention of internationalism. Internationalism thrived on nationalism and vice versa. How far this relationship was gendered merits further discussion. Several contributions made clear that women were not excluded a priori but rather as particular fields were internationalized. Some marginalized groups succeeded in creating their own separate mechanism at an international level.

One general conclusion to which the conference gave rise was that some phenomena skipped the nation state altogether, going straight from the local to the transnational world. Taking up Mazlish's distinction we might profitably use the image of the 'global village' in these cases. The nineteenth century thus witnessed not merely the rise of internationalism and nationalism, but also the beginnings of globalization. All three could be interpreted as part and parcel of structural modernization during the last two hundred years.

In his concluding remarks Peter Wende, director of the GHIL, drew attention to the successful transatlantic co-operation between the two Institutes in London and Washington. It was worth noting that international experts from diverse fields of research had come together, and that they had learned from each other. The conference not merely confirmed what everybody knew beforehand, but in congenial discussions developed the theme further and brought unforeseen aspects to light. The organizers are planning a publication in the Studies of the German Historical Institute London. Johannes Paulmann (Muenchen) Martin Geyer (Muenchen, D.C.)

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