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Political Turning Points – Breaks in Society? On the Importance of Political Turning Points for the Social Development in East Central Europe During the 19th and 20th Century. Herder Institute, Marburg; Historical Institute of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, Bratislava, 23.05.2013-25.05.2013.

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Political Turning Points - Breaks in Society? On the Importance of Political Turning Points for the Social Development in East Central Europe During the 19th and 20th Century

On 23-25 May 2013, an international, interdisciplinary post-graduate conference was held at the Museum of Carpathian German Culture in Bratislava, titled "Politische Zäsuren - gesellschaftliche Brüche? Zur Bedeutung politischer Zäsuren für die gesellschaftliche Entwicklung in Ostmitteleuropa im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert" (Political Turning Points - Breaks in Society? On the Importance of Political Turning Points for the Social Development in East Central Europe During the 19th and 20th Century). The event was organized under the auspices of the Herder Institute in Marburg, Germany and the Historical Institute of the Slovak Academy of Sciences in Bratislava. Speakers concentrated on how significant these turning points (upheavals, major events, watersheds and reversals) were in history and their use and function in social sciences. Partial results from their research were introduced by doctoral students from Germany, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and the United Kingdom, who discussed in particular the problems associated with the impact of such upheavals on history in the context of political, cultural and social changes. The conference was divided into five panels exploring different topics (along with two keynotes and opening and closing papers), reflecting a large amount of exploratory interest, theoretical concepts and methodological approaches.

The conference was opened with a presentation by ELENA MANNOVÁ (Bratislava). In her report "Pressburg - Pozsony - Bratislava. Politische Zäsuren und gesellschaftliche Brüche in einer multiethnischen Stadt", she discussed the relationship between major events in national narratives and those on the "local scene", on an example of Bratislava. Her report pointed out that despite categorical, political and institutional turning points, there were no linear changes in the city's social life. The impact from the balance of power on the nature of language policy and how it was applied, and also on architecture and civil society, was slow and gradual (i.e. on the German, Hungarian and Slovak character of the city and its architecture, street names and associations). The first informal talk was followed by a discussion of the impact of power and violence on events and basic structures in Central and Eastern Europe after the First World War. PETER HASLINGER's (Marburg) keynote assessed in it the impact of the First World War as a major political and social event and its relationship to social changes during the interwar period. He presented the so-called brutality thesis of continuity between the two World Wars, while outlining more generally the ambivalence of these turning points and raising the issue of parallelism between them and "world systems".

The conference's first panel discussion, "The Experience of Violence as a Social Turning point", was opened by FLORIAN KRUG (Potsdam) and examined the nature of Russian language policy in the Kingdom of Poland on the eve of and during the first year of First World War, relativizing how significant the outbreak of war was in the context of the upheavals it caused. THOMAS MARTIN (Riegelsberg) focused on the transformation in the 19th century of Greece from a country occupied by the Ottomans into a European monarchy. The example of Greece was used to point out how little the political upheaval (a declared change in the social system) was consistent with the reality of community life and how little it took the needs of the people into account. The third lecture in the panel discussion by TIMO LEIMBACH (Erfurt) addressed the impact of the watershed year 1918 on Thuringia's parliamentary system during the inter-war period. He noted the link between the stranded Thuringian parliamentary system and the tension existing between society and parliament. The last lecture in this section concerned the persecution of the

Sisters of Saint Elizabeth in Bratislava during the first years of the Communist regime in Slovakia during 1948-1953. TOMÁŠ KRÁLIK (Bratislava) described the first years of totalitarianism as a permanent struggle not only for property and social posts, but also for bare existence and sense of all monastic communities. In the shorter section "Radicalization as a Response to Turning Points", JAKUB DRÁBIK (Oxford) presented "Perception of Social Changes after the First World War: the Case of Sir Oswald Mosley and the British Union of Fascists". The radical movement in Britain was used by him as a model to represent the First World War as a powerful catalyst for social change and an important moment in the process of forming an ideological world of right-wing extremists and ultra-conservative elements.

The third panel discussion, "Turning Points as a Catalyst for Development of Collective Identities", was opened by THOMAS OELLERMANN (Prague), who examined the organization, goals and conflicts of the German Social Democrats in Bohemia and Moravia after 1918. Oellermann concluded that the Social Democrats, despite their pro-German orientation, contributed significantly to the stabilization of the political situation in Czechoslovakia. JANEK MAREŠ (Prague) presented his research about gender relations in Czech society during the second half of the 19th century, which among other things focused on the construction of masculinity and femininity in sports, education and politics. The period after 1867 (along with liberalization) was considered to be a period of progress in the women's movement, with changes in social discourse and the perception of masculinity. The third discussion was concluded with "The Perception of "Religious Freedom" among Slovak Catholics Before and After 1989", delivered by AGÁTA DRELOVÁ (Exeter). On an example of the Roman Catholic environment in Slovakia, she attempted to offer a modified view of the current paradigm when studying the impact of political, cultural and social changes on the development of religious mentalities in Central Eastern Europe during the late 1980s and early 1990s.

The fourth panel, devoted to paradigm shifts as a response to turning point, was launched by CHRISTIAN SCHÄFER (Michendorf). The speaker thematized the impact of the 1970s energy crisis on the way of life in the Federal Republic of Germany and France (energy conservation in the economy and by households, in the automotive industry, policy decisions to build nuclear power plants, etc.). The energy crisis saw the end of the economic boom and is considered an excellent example of a postwar political turning point with lasting social consequences. MARIA PALME (Jena) turned to the example of *Wahrheitskommisionen* to examine extra-judicial handling of history both in the aftermath of the Communist dictatorship in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) (Enquete-Kommission zur "Aufarbeitung von Geschichte und Folgen der SED-Diktatur in Deutschland") and in South Korea ("Truth and Reconciliation Commission Korea").

In the second keynote, MICHAL PULLMANN (Prague) introduced "Konsensstiftung vor und nach 1989: Die Tschechoslowakei im europäischen Kontext". He reflected upon the legitimization of repression prior to the fall of Communism and after 1989, comparing the representation of violence and the experience of the population with police brutality in the countries of Western and Eastern Europe. He also analyzed changing ideological phrases in Czechoslovakia, where the rhetoric of class struggle was substituted during the normalization period with phrases about planning and a bright future, while discourse about class enemies was later replaced with discussions about nonconformists, parasites, hooligans and the like. Pullmann pointed out the continuing stigmatization and stereotyping of "nonconformists", even after 1989.

The final panel in the conference discussed "Social Turning Point - A Cultural Break?" and was opened by LENKA ABAFFYOVÁ (Bratislava). Her interesting talk compared the image of the industrial city of Považská Bystrica, Slovakia both before and after 1989. She also highlighted how the new political situation and the transition from socialism to capitalism were reflected in the everyday life of city residents. The relationship between art and political upheavals was thematized by GREGOR H. LERSCH (Berlin). On an example of Polish art and German-Polish relations in the visual arts, he mentioned distinct political and artistic watersheds since 1945. The final part of the program was concluded by KATARZYNA MARIA WALASEK (Cracow) with "Political Turning Points - the Collapse of the Soviet Union and Reflections on Cultural Identity of the Contemporary Russia". She discussed geopolitical and cultural concepts shaping both the image of Russia abroad and collective identification in contemporary Russia.

The conference was closed by HEIDI HEIN-KIRCHER (Marburg) with commentary and subsequent discussion. It was devoted to defining turning point/upheaval (not just as political, but also as cultural turning points, natural disasters and others), the use of appropriate terminology and the relationship and distinction between revolution and turning point which describes multivectoral changes. She showed, that some turning points are

described as caesuras already by contemporaries, while others are defined ex post. Further on, she discussed if turning points could be considered a sort of "light version" of revolution, whereupon some papers presented at the conference hinted at. Elsewhere, a question was put forward, whether any change deserved to be a turning point and whether boundaries between different historical epochs and turning points were identical. She also reflected on whether turning points as an essential element of societal development were a necessary evil or a chance for further progress and pointed out the difference between the perception of turning points when they happened and in retrospect.

In discussing historical watersheds, the international conference in Bratislava provided attending doctoral candidates with space either to present their projects or partially completed research for their dissertations. The amply used room for discussion opened many other problems and pointed out possible directions for research and the thematizing of problems resulting from major historical events. Besides individual presentations and questions, participants at the conference became aware of the need for greater sensitivity in the use of terminology not only in issues of turning point/upheaval, major events and watersheds, but also about preparation of their own dissertations and in historiography as a whole.

Conference Overview

Opening

Heidi Hein-Kircher (Marburg) and Elena Mannová (Bratislava)

Opening lecture

Elena Mannová (Bratislava): Pressburg - Pozsony - Bratislava: Politische Zäsuren und gesellschaftliche Brüche in einer multiethnischer Stadt

Keynote

Peter Haslinger (Marburg): Der Erste Weltkrieg, Demokratisierung und kleinen Kriege in Ostmitteleuropa - Systembruch oder Kontinuität?

Panel I. Gewalterfahrungen als gesellschaftliche Zäsuren

Chair: Peter Haslinger

Florian Krug (Postdam): Die russische Sprachpolitik im Königreich Polen am Vorabend des Ersten Weltkrieges und während des ersten Kriegsjahrs

Thomas Martin (Riegelsberg): Wie ein Phoenix aus der Asche?! Die Transformation Griechenlands von der orientalischen Okkupation zur europäischen Monarchie im 19. Jahrhundert und die Probleme eines jungen Königreichs

Timo Leimbach (Erfurt): Im Spannungsfeld zwischen Volksvertretung, Öffentlichkeit und Gesellschaft: Zum scheinbaren Scheitern und der realen Funktionalität des parlamentarischen Systems in der Zwischenkriegszeit

Tomáš Králik (Bratislava): The Monastic Nurses in Totalitarian Regime 1948 - 1953 in Czechoslovakia on the Example of the Order of Saint Elisabeth in Bratislava

Panel II. Radikalisierung als Antwort auf Zäsuren

Chair: Elena Mannová

Jakub Drábik (Oxford): Perception of the Post-First World War Social Changes: The Case of Sir Oswald Mosley and the British Union of Fascists

Panel III. Zäsuren als Katalysator für die Entwicklung von kollektiven Identitäten?

Chair: Michal Pullmann

Thomas Oellermann (Prague): Szenen einer erzwungenen Ehe - die deutsche Sozialdemokratie in den böhmischen Ländern nach 1918

Janek Mareš (Prague): Gender Relations in the Czech Society in the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century: Between Masculinity, Femininity and Nation

Agáta Drelová (Exeter): The Perception of 'Religious Freedom' among Slovak Catholics before and after 1989

Panel IV: Paradigmenwechsel als Antwort auf Zäsuren

Chair: Heidi Hein-Kircher

Christian Schäfer (Michendorf): Zeit des Energiesparens? Die Bundesrepublik und Frankreich in den Ölkrisen der 1970er Jahre

Maria Palme (Jena): Zum Paradigmenwechsel im Streben nach Wahrheit und Gerechtigkeit - Eine komparatistische Länderfallstudie der deutschen Enquête-Kommission zur "Aufarbeitung von Geschichte und Folgen der SED-Diktatur" (1992-1994) und der Südkoreanischen Wahrheitskommission "TRCK" (2005-2010)

Keynote

Michal Pullmann (Prague): Konsensstiftung vor und nach 1989: Die Tschechoslowakei im europäischen Kontext

Panel V: Gesellschaftliche Zäsuren - kulturelle Brüche?

Chair: Elena Mannová

Lenka Abaffyová (Bratislava): Sozialismus - Postsozialismus. Auswirkungen des Übergangs auf das Leben einer Industriestadt und ihrer Bewohner

Gregor H. Lersch (Berlin): Kunst und Politische Zäsuren - Das Beispiel Polnische Kunst und die deutsch-polnischen Kunstbeziehungen nach 1945

Katarzyna Maria Walasek (Cracow): Political Turning Points - The Collapse of the Soviet Union and Reflections on Cultural Identity of the Contemporary Russia

Summing up and discussion: Heidi Hein-Kircher (Marburg)

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