

1917 and the Consequences

International Conference at Akademie Sankelmark, 24 – 26 November 2017



BUNDESSTIFTUNG
AUFARBEITUNG



SNI Sigmund
Neumann
Institute



Friday, 24 November 2017

By 15:00	Arrival
16:00	Greetings <i>Christian Pletzing (Akademie Sankelmark)</i> <i>Thomas Wegener Friis (University of Southern Denmark, Odense)</i> <i>Steen Bo Frandsen (University of Southern Denmark, Sønderborg)</i> Introduction to the Topic <i>Katarzyna Stokłosa (University of Southern Denmark, Sønderborg)</i> Keynote Cultural Explanations of the Russian Revolution and its Implications for the History of Everyday Life 1917 – 1953 <i>Erik Kulavig (University of Southern Denmark, Odense)</i>
18:00	Dinner
20:00	Reception in Flensburg

Saturday, 25 November 2017

By 9:00	Breakfast
10:00	Panel I: The Echo of the Revolution in the Baltic Sea Region Chair: <i>Steen Bo Frandsen (University of Southern Denmark, Sønderborg)</i>
10:00	Danish Perceptions of the 1917 Revolution <i>Thomas Wegener Friis (University of Southern Denmark, Odense)</i>
10:40	Perceptions of the 1917 Revolution in the Baltic States <i>Benjamin Conrad (Humboldt University of Berlin)</i>
11:20	Whites and Reds in Finland and the German Intervention <i>Gerhard Besier (Dresden University of Technology)</i>
12:15	Lunch Break

13:00	Panel II: Effects at the Western Borders of the Russian Realm Chair: <i>Tobias Haimin Wung-Sung (University of Southern Denmark, Sønderborg)</i>
13:00	The Meaning of the Battle of Kruty of 1918 for the Current Ukrainian Nation-Building Policy <i>Lina Klymenko (University of Eastern Finland, Joensuu)</i>
13:40	Austrian Perceptions of the 1917 Revolution <i>Bernhard Bachinger (Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for Research on War Consequences, Graz)</i>
14:20	Fear of Revolution and Political Violence from the Right in Schleswig-Holstein <i>Martin Göllnitz (University of Kiel)</i>
15:00	Coffee Break
16:00	Panel III: The Resonance afar from Petrograd Chair: <i>Martin Klatt (University of Southern Denmark, Sønderborg)</i>
16:00	Reception of the 1917 Revolution in Central Asia <i>Jeremy Smith (University of Eastern Finland, Joensuu)</i>
16:40	1917, a Turning Point: Great War, Russian Revolutions and Social and Political Crisis in Spain (and a Glance at Argentina) <i>Maximiliano Fuentes Codera (University of Girona)</i>
17:20	The problematic reception of the 1917 Revolution in Democratic Switzerland <i>Irène Herrmann (University of Geneva)</i>
18:00	Dinner

Sunday, 26 November 2017

By 09:00	Breakfast
09:00	Panel IV: The Aftermath of the Revolution Chair: <i>Vincent Keating (University of Southern Denmark, Odense)</i>
09:00	November 7 in Post-Soviet Politics of History <i>Stefan Troebst (Leibniz Institute for the History and Culture of Eastern Europe / Leipzig University)</i>
09:40	Securing the Revolution in a Dangerous World <i>Jan Ruzicka (Aberystwyth University)</i>
10:30	Excursion War, Revolution and Plebiscite: Bordering the Danish-German Border Zone <i>Martin Klatt (University of Southern Denmark, Sønderborg)</i>
14:30	Departure

Abstracts

**Katarzyna Stoklosa (University of Southern Denmark, Sønderborg):
“Introduction to the Topic”**

The Russian Revolution of 1917, which actually was a series of concurrent and overlapping revolutions, remains without doubt one of the most important events of modern history. More than almost any other event, the Russian revolutions have had an impact on history and historiography, as well as current-day development. The number of bookshelves needed to house the many books about 1917 is constantly increasing.

The varying responses that will be examined during our conference will depend on a range of factors, including the extent to which the affected countries were involved in the revolutionary events. Of the Baltic countries, for example, only Estonia was directly impacted, and only Finland among the Northern European nations. Only the eastern areas were directly affected in Poland, a country that did not yet exist officially as a state, while the soon to be independent nation of Hungary was swept away by the Russian revolution for a short time.

Erik Kulavig (University of Southern Denmark, Odense): “Cultural Explanations of the Russian Revolution and its Implications for the History of Everyday Life 1917 - 1953”

For many historians of very different background and political beliefs the Russian *Sonderweg* plays a significant role in the explanations of the coming and the outcome of the Russian Revolution. In the first part of the talk this phenomenon is discussed. The second part treats the question of everyday life in revolutionary Russia, and it is argued that a certain Soviet mentality or maybe even civilization was created.

Benjamin Conrad (Humboldt University of Berlin): “Perceptions of the 1917 Revolution in the Baltic States”

“Streiks Putilowa fabrikâ” was the rather descriptive headline of the Latvian newspaper Rigas Latweeschu Awise on November 7th/October 25th, 1917 in German-occupied Riga. It reported a strike in Putilov’s factory that several days later turned out to be an overthrow of the government in Petersburg. None of the news announced that day appeared so important, that 40 years later the Soviet Latvian newspaper Cīņa described them under the headline “Slava partijai! Oktobrim slava!” (“Glory to the party! Glory to October!”) as one of the most important turning points in world history.

These two examples from Latvia may serve as a first impression of the shaping of views on 1917. The speech will not put a focus on the already well-explored Soviet use of 1917 under their rule in the Baltics 1940–1941 and 1944–1991. It will focus on the perceptions of the 1917 Revolution in the Inter-War-Period and after 1991. By a comparison of these two periods, the first one directly after the events and the second with a distance of 75 years and after more than 45 years of Soviet ideology the speech intends to point out two very different perceptions of the year 1917 in the Baltics.

Gerhard Besier (Dresden University of Technology): “The Intervention of the German Empire in the Finnish Civil War 1917/18: From Revolutionary State to Kingdom”

In the spring of 1918, military intervention from the German Empire saw German troops bring down the “Finnish Socialist Workers’ Republic” in Helsinki, ensuring the triumph of bourgeois middle class forces in Finland. This act of intervention was considered highly controversial in not just the Nordic countries, but also in Berlin. Furthermore, it is likely that had the German Empire not intervened, the

Finnish Civil war would have been resolved in favour of the “Red Guards”. The German Empire had no intention of tolerating any concept of a Socialist Soviet Republic at its borders, preferring to establish a buffer of vassal states in the form of the recently independent Russian Baltic provinces. Constitutionally, these were to be monarchies ruled by kings from the German princely dynasties. Neither resistance within Finland nor the military collapse of the German Empire and the November Revolution in Germany put an end to these plans. In both German and Finnish historiography, this nine-month affair from 1918 has been entwined with a vast array of historical-political and patriotic myths.

Lina Klymenko (University of Eastern Finland, Joensuu): “The Meaning of Kruty: Commemorating the Struggle for Ukraine’s Independence”

“The Heroes of Kruty demonstrated to all Ukrainian generations what real patriotism means”, stated the Ukrainian president Petro Poroshenko in a speech on the commemoration of the Battle of Kruty in 2016. The Battle of Kruty took place on 29 January 1918 between youth military units of the Ukrainian People’s Republic and the Bolshevik forces on their advance to Kyiv in the aftermath of the Russian Revolution. For the political leadership of post-Soviet Ukraine, the Battle of Kruty became a symbol of Ukrainians’ struggle for their country’s independence from Russia. This paper traces the post-Soviet official commemoration of the Battle of Kruty embodied in various memory sites such as museums, exhibitions, and monuments. In this way, this study helps to understand how collective remembrance works as a means of national identity construction in general and in the Ukrainian context in particular.

Bernhard Bachinger (Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for Research on War Consequences, Graz): “Austrian Perceptions of the 1917 Revolution”

By the third year of the war the situation in the Habsburg Monarchy was quite tense: the lack of food, inflation and the chaotic supply situation with regard to everyday necessities were catastrophic. In this regard, the Bolshevik Coup in October found a certain amount of resonance in Austria among peasants and workers, which was due above all to the Bolsheviks’ demand for peace, the main driving force at that time in any mass movement.

Meanwhile, retrospectively we can say, “subversive activities” by agitators taking on the task of “importing” the Russian Revolution to Austria were by means its only consequence. The pre-revolutionary situation in Austria in 1917/18 was the result, among other things, of an intensification of all the contradictions besetting the state at its core that took place independently of the wishes or the will of individual leaders, parties or classes. The Russian Revolution therefore provided additional momentum for the development of a pre-existing crisis in Austria. The Revolution’s attractions paled immediately once Social Democracy succeeded in marginalizing the Soviet-style council movement. The workers’ council dictatorships in Hungary and Munich demonstrated how acute the danger was of Austria going down the same path. To prevent this from happening, the Social Democrats passed a wealth of new social legislation, above all the Works Councils Act, which was primarily instrumental in taking the wind out of the Communists’ sails. Industry associations and Social Democrats formed a united front against leftists and Communists.

Martin Göllnitz (University of Kiel): “Fear of Revolution and Political Violence from the Right in Schleswig-Holstein”

Since the French Revolution, political elites and upmarket bourgeoisie felt subjected to the threat posed by the obscure masses whose revolutionary access to their property, political privileges, and not least physical integrity they feared. The Russian October Revolution of 1917, with its violence (not

only) against the bourgeoisie, finally turned the anxieties of the past into bloody reality, and throughout Europe the bourgeois fear of the socialist “world revolution” grew into hysteria. When, in November 1918, this was first realized in Kiel in the form of a sailors’ mutiny which developed a few days later into the German “Novemberrevolution” it was by no means unexpected. The events which led to the emergence of the Weimar Republic between 1918 and 1920 were accompanied by a high degree of domestic political violence. After the First World War, Germany did not succeed in overcoming the state of a “post-war-society”. The militant behavior of the developing political right and the swiftly founded paramilitary associations played a key role from 1919 onwards. Even though the war experiences paired with the defeat and subsequent revolution are nowadays seen as the main cause for extreme violence as well as antagonism to the Republic, many other aspects can be identified, turning the associated causes into an inextricable tangle of motifs.

Jeremy Smith (University of Eastern Finland, Joensuu): “Reception of the 1917 Revolution in Central Asia”

The peculiarities of the unfolding of the Russian Revolutions of 1917 in Central Asia stem from political and intellectual developments in the early 20th century, and the historical events either side of 1917 which overshadowed the Revolution itself. This contribution will summarise the development of nationalist intellegentsias in the Steppe and Turkestan, pointing to some differences in their approach to nationality and religion, as well as the emergence of national autonomy as the preferred solution for the future territorial organisation of the empire. The failure of these groups to find a mass base of appeal coloured their plans, which were developed against the background of severe ethnic tensions and an often brutal colonising regime in the region. The risings of 1916 and their repression so coloured the atmosphere that, with the collapse of central power in 1917 both locals

and colonists (i.e. Russians) rushed to defend their own positions against feared reprisals from the others. With soldiers leaving the imperial army also at large in the region, the situation descended into a series of ethnic massacres, and the October Revolution was barely noticed. The internal struggle became embroiled in the broader Russian Civil War as a result of the alternative government established in Khokand and the later advance of Kolchak into the region. Discourses of nationalists vs. colonisers continued to colour debates within the communist party following the establishment of Soviet power well into the 1920s. Having described these developments, the contribution concludes by looking at the ambivalent attitude today towards 1917, which is largely overshadowed by the memory of 1916 and is coloured by an understanding of the developmental benefits of Soviet power alongside awareness of the scale of repressions and the famine of the early 1930s in Kazakhstan.

Maximiliano Fuentes Codera (University of Girona): “1917, a Turning Point: Great War, Russian Revolutions and Social and Political Crisis in Spain (and a Glance at Argentina)”

This paper aims to present the main elements of the overall impact of the Russian Revolution in Spain. In this general framework, it will analyse the relationship between the Russian process and the political, social and intellectual responses to the First World War. The emphasis will be placed on the relations between positions around the neutrality and perceptions on February and October revolutions. Finally, from a comparative perspective, it will focus on some key elements shared by the Spanish and Argentine cases.

Irène Herrmann (University of Geneva): “The problematic reception of the 1917 Revolution in Democratic Switzerland”

Although Switzerland experienced many revolutions during the nineteenth century and

although it welcomed Lenin and was at first supportive of his October “coup”, Swiss workers did not emulate the Bolshevik revolution, “merely” staging a general strike in November 1918 that was not triggered by Russia, was not truly Communist and failed after only a couple of days. This begs the question of the causes behind such a turn of events and prompts an exploration of why the revolution did not occur. When one looks closely at the period’s political and economic deterioration and examines the country’s international posture, as well as how its citizens imagined the role they had played in its former prosperity, it becomes obvious that the impediments to the revolution lay not so much in fear of violence or of the worsening of living conditions but in what might be labeled a specific political psychology. In fine, this paper argues for greater attention to this specific dimension in the cascades of revolutions, for, as the Swiss case perfectly shows, such replicas depend not only on what social actors consider their best interests and what they know about the making of a revolution, but also on how they evaluate their own role in the circumstances that might/should be revolutionized.

Stefan Troebst (Leibniz Institute for the History and Culture of Eastern Europe / Leipzig University): “Post-Communist Holiday Legislation as Part of Governmental Politics of History: The Case of the Russian Federation”

The system of public holidays of the RF reflects the undecidedness of its political leadership concerning the alternatives of empire and nation-state. Obviously, Putin is of the opinion that he can have the cake and eat it—in domestic politics an ethnically homogeneous state of the Russian nation and

towards the outside world a post-Soviet empire of what in the constitution of 1993 is called the “multinational people of the Russian Federation”. In politics of history this leads to a hybridization of Soviet and pre-Soviet, Russian national and decidedly international, religious and secular elements. And with regard to the top red-letter day 9 May there is always an elephant in the room: Stalin. Whereas the prestigious Russian NGO Memorial against massive protest by Stalin nostalgics, post-communists and right-wing nationalists proposed to celebrate “victory without Stalin” (pobeda bez Stalina), since the annexation of Crimea the latest Putin opted for the version of “victory with considerable impact by Stalin”. Accordingly, the military parade on “Victory Day” 2015 for the first time since the mid-1950s carried portraits of the dictator.

**Jan Ruzicka (Aberystwyth University):
“Securing the Revolution in a Dangerous World”**

Viewed through the prism of security, revolutions present a fascinating paradox. The collapse of state structures and their fundamental reshaping are predicated on doing away with established notions of what, who, and how is to be secured. The Russian revolution was no exception to this. At the same time, revolutionaries face the challenge of securing the revolution in the face of both domestic and international opponents. Reconstructing the notions of security is imperative to a revolution’s survival. Once again, the Russian revolution fits well with this general pattern. This paper presents the argument that specific receptions of the revolution, both in Russia and internationally, allowed the Bolsheviks to secure the revolution.

Excursion

Martin Klatt (University of Southern Denmark, Sønderborg):

“War, Revolution and Plebiscite: Bordering the Danish-German Border Zone”

1917 did not have an immediate impact on the Danish-German border region. Nevertheless, it triggered events that changed the world here, too. World War I reignited hopes of a border revision previously only kept alive in a hard core of the Danish population in North Schleswig, and the individual losses in a war that was not their cause had a severe effect on the populations' attitude to the German Kaiserreich. In consequence, revolution spread to Flensburg and North Schleswig in November 1918, while the Danish minority at the same time played their network to achieve a “reunification” with Denmark. We will visit some lieux de memoire in the border region and learn more about “the most just border” decided “by the people” and its consequences dividing the Danish-German border region of Schleswig. Light lunch on the trip.