



The
University
Of
Sheffield.



Late Cold War Tandems: Solidarities and Anxieties of the 1980s

4th-5th November 2016
University of Sheffield

The purpose of this workshop is to explore the possibilities of 'tandem history' (Kate Brown) as a transnational approach in new research on the final decade of the Cold War. The period was marked not only by the renewal of superpower tensions, but also by new concerns that poorly fit the Cold War framework and which have remained with us since the collapse of the binary order.

We will thus examine some of the key issues of the 1980s, such as how state institutions and civil society actors on both sides of the 'Iron Curtain' addressed emerging anxieties linked to environmental devastation and HIV/AIDS. The decade was also shaped by concerns about security inherited from earlier stages of the Cold War as well as practices of secrecy that would themselves leave a legacy after its end. Nevertheless, protest movements for peace, democratisation, and international solidarity all flourished in parallel, extending not only to different parts of Europe, but across the East-West and North-South divides both within and beyond Europe's borders.

Each workshop panel is structured to include two 'tandem partners' addressing analogous or entangled developments in different blocs, or which cut across the systemic divide. We hereby seek not to reify East-West divisions or reinforce a Eurocentric perspective, but rather to test and challenge these conventional boundaries and the binaries associated with them.

Friday, 4th November 2016

4:00 pm:

Introduction

(Jessop Building, room 215)

Andrew Tompkins (University of Sheffield)

Jan Hansen (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin)

Phillip Wagner (Universität Bielefeld)

4:15–5:30 pm:

Panel I: Environmental Aftermaths of the Cold War

(Jessop Building, room 215)

Marc Elie (CNRS)

Katastroika – How Disasters Undermined Soviet Power (1986-1991)

Karena Kalmbach (Technische Universiteit Eindhoven):

The Accident that Happened in a Different World:

Chernobyl Narratives in Western Europe

Moderator: **Kate Brown** (University of Maryland/EUI)

5:30–6:00 pm: Break

6:00–7:00 pm: Keynote lecture and discussion
(The Diamond, Lecture Theatre 2)

Kate Brown (University of Maryland/EUI)
Seeing Double: Assessing Chernobyl Health Effects from Near and Afar

7:30 pm: Dinner

Saturday, 5th November 2016

(all panels this day in The Diamond, Workroom 1)

8:30–9:45 am: Panel II: Cultures of Secrecy

Eleni Braat (Universiteit Utrecht)
Secrecy as an Institution: Organizational Culture within the Dutch Security Service, 1950s–1990s

Douglas Selvage (Bundesbeauftragte für Stasi-Unterlagen)
The Danger of Surprise – The East European Security Services and the ‘Second Cold War’, 1981-1987

Moderator: **Bernd Greiner** (Berlin Center for Cold War Studies)

9:45–10:00 am: Coffee break

10:00–11:15 am: Panel III: Negotiating Democracy? Peace Activism in the 1980s

Eirini Karamouzi (University of Sheffield)
Protest as Democratic Practice: Antinuclear Mobilisation in Greece

Ned Richardson-Little (University of Exeter)
Human Rights, Peace, and Democratization in East Germany

Moderator: **Benjamin Ziemann** (University of Sheffield)

11:15–11:30 am: Break

11:30 am–12:45 pm: Panel IV: North and South in East and West

Christian Helm (Leibniz Universität Hannover)
‘Nicaragua must survive!’ Solidarity with the Sandinista Revolution in Germany

Kim Christiaens (Antwerp University/Leuven University)
Inspired by the East? Third World Solidarity Movements, Peace Activism, and East European Dissent during the 1980s

Moderator: **Simon Stevens** (Cambridge/University of Sheffield)

12:45–1:30 pm: Lunch

- 1:30–2:45 pm: Panel V: Medicine at the Margins
Hannah Kershaw (University of Manchester)
Constructing Childhoods and Locating Risks: Depictions of HIV-Positive Identities in British Children's Media, 1983-1997
Henning Tümmers (Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen)
AIDS and AIDS Prevention in the Two Germanys
Moderator: **Chris Millard** (University of Sheffield)
- 2:45–3:00 pm: Break
- 3:00–4:00 pm: Concluding commentary and general discussion
Bernd Greiner (Berlin Center for Cold War Studies)

Abstracts

Marc Elie (CERCEC CNRS-EHESS)

Katastroika – How disasters undermined Soviet power (1986-1991)

The second half of the 1980s—corresponding to the years in power of Mikhail Gorbachev—was marked by a remarkable succession of devastating and massive natural, transport and technological disasters. From the Chernobyl meltdown in April 1986 to a massive earthquake in Georgia five years later, the Soviet public was literally assaulted by tragic news on the home front. Tens of thousands died in massive events well registered by contemporaries: earthquakes—mainly the Spitak earthquake in Armenia in December 1988—, train accidents and nuclear fallout. What is more, published statistics showed the disastrous situation of health and high mortality due to alcoholism, traffic accidents, drug consumption and the HIV virus. Suddenly, the environment appeared to many citizens as unhealthy and deadly due to air and water pollution and other environmental hazards.

The conjunction of three factors can provide a general interpretative framework for this new situation: first, there was a historically speaking contingent accumulation of disasters, which may nonetheless be linked to the worn-out state of the Soviet industrial apparatus and infrastructure and urban architecture. Second, after decades of very limited disaster reporting, *glasnost* (openness, publicity) provided unprecedented journalistic coverage of these events and of the creeping, cumulative and long-term catastrophes, as well as of criminality. The audience of TV programs and newspapers reached unprecedented levels during *perestroika* (restructuring) insuring that both extraordinary and everyday disasters were broadcast to every social group. Last, the slow decomposition of Soviet federalism and the economic crisis which led to the explosion of the Union in 1991 created a negative background for these disasters.

In this paper, I want to try and assess how the disasters of Perestroika and the reporting about them impacted the legitimacy of Soviet power. It is important to understand that the Soviet government reacted to both these new developments so that the efficacy of these measures is an important part of the answer.

Karena Kalmbach (Technische Universiteit Eindhoven)

The Accident that Happened in a Different World: Chernobyl Narratives in Western Europe

When the news about an accident in the nuclear power plant near the Ukrainian town Chernobyl reached Western Europe, governments, radioprotection and nuclear plant safety agencies, as well as industry representatives were quickly at hand with explanations for the causes of the event: inferior Soviet plant design, untrained and drunken Soviet workers, and corrupted Soviet state agencies. Chernobyl was explained to Western European citizens mainly as a Soviet and less as a nuclear accident. This narrative remained powerful and shaped Western European Chernobyl discourses in the coming decades – until it was partly challenged by the events in Fukushima. This discursive strategy of alienation and othering, however, was challenged from the 1990s onwards by most different actors: nuclear scientists stressed the important role of cooperation across the iron curtain in the coming to terms with the technical causes of the accident as well with its legacy, and numerous citizens in East and West engaged in humanitarian aid initiative for children affected by the accident.

Eleni Braat (Universiteit Utrecht)

Secrecy as an Institution: Organizational Culture within the Dutch Security Service, 1950s–1990s

Few parts of the state bureaucracy are as secretive as intelligence and security services. I analyze the practices of secrecy in the Dutch Security Service between the 1950s and 1990s and reconstruct the influence of these practices on the institutionalized working habits of street-level bureaucrats within the service. I argue that the practices of secrecy in the Dutch Security Service can be described in terms of ‘secrecy as an institution’, in the sense that institutions induce ‘stable patterns of behavior that define, govern, and constrain action’ (March & Olsen 2008), resulting in a specific code of conduct in daily practices. Practices of secrecy contributed to (a) an employee’s sense of loyalty toward the service that is less present in other, less secretive, state institutions; (b) political alienation from other state institutions including the Ministry of Interior; and generated (c) an idiosyncratic concept of political accountability. I primarily rely on interviews with former personnel of the Dutch Security Service (oral history) and historical research in the service’s internal staff magazine. The outcomes of this research are relevant beyond the specific case of the Dutch Security Service, extending to other state bureaucracies with a degree of secrecy.

Douglas Selvage (Bundesbeauftragte für Stasi-Unterlagen Berlin)

The Danger of Surprise – The East European Security Services and the “Second Cold War,” 1981-1987

This presentation will focus on the efforts of the East European security services, led by the Soviet KGB, to prevent any new surprises in the era of the ‘Second Cold War’ – a term that may have well originated with the KGB. On the one hand, the security services mobilized to obtain any potential information about surprise nuclear attack or unexpected uprisings inside the Soviet imperium. On the other hand, they sought to actively exaggerate the threat from the Reagan Administration both domestically and internationally in order to justify the repression of domestic dissent and to isolate the U.S. internationally.

Eirini Karamouzi (University of Sheffield)

Protest as Democratic Practice: Antinuclear Mobilisation in Greece

The peace mobilisation against the Euromissiles in the early 1980s constituted one of the most popular social movements in contemporary European history. The paper aims to examine the completely neglected, albeit mass peace movement in the nascent democracy of Greece. What mobilised these activists? What was the role of the socialist government? How did they frame the notion of peace? What were the political conditions under which the discourse of peace became powerful? What was the role of peace protesters, and particularly of women in renegotiating political space? The paper will use national and local press, campaign material,

oral history interviews and polls to provide rich and unique evidence on the way protesters mobilised in recently democratised Greece. Recent accounts of peace mobilisation have emphasized its pan-European character. While acknowledging the merit of transnational approaches, my archival based paper, informed by new social movements theory, aims to contextualize cycles of protest mobilization and highlight the role of national identity that transcended Cold War narratives

Ned Richardson-Little (University of Exeter)

Human Rights, Peace, and Democratization in East Germany

The dissidents of the German Democratic Republic came late to the concept of human rights as a tool of democratization. While human rights organizations sprang up across the Eastern Bloc in the 1970s, it was not until 1986 that the first independent group – the Initiative for Peace and Human Rights – was formed in East Germany. Amongst peace activists, the idea of human rights was initially seen as a political distraction from the true moral cause of international disarmament and demilitarization. Only after years of state suppression did one element of the movement conclude that certain political human rights were the necessary prerequisite for effective peace activism. Human rights were not a self-evident set of ideals driving activism, nor were they simply a PR move to gain attention in the West, but rather the conclusion to on the ground experiences of dissent and activism under conditions of late socialism.

Christian Helm (Leibniz Universität Hannover)

'Nicaragua must survive!' Solidarity with the Sandinista Revolution in Germany

During the 1980s Nicaragua became one of the hotspots of international solidarity as well as one of the last central stages of the Cold War. The Sandinista Revolution with its claim to social justice, a new kind of socialism and a Third Way attracted public, material and personal support from East and West. At the same time, solidarity activists protested against military, economic and political destabilization which the US Administration and its allies in Central America and Western Europe launched against the leftist experiment.

This paper draws on empirical research on solidarity groups in West Germany. I argue that flourishing solidarity rooted as much in Sandinista public diplomacy efforts as in the contemporary West German context. I will further explore the ways in which the support for Nicaragua challenged the framework of the Cold War. If possible, I will include insights into East German solidarity, which is still to be explored.

Kim Christiaens (Antwerp University/Leuven University)

Inspired by the East? Third World Solidarity Movements, Peace Activism, and East European Dissent during the 1980s

The 1980s have been celebrated as an apogee of transnational activism in Western Europe. Next to the Third World, peace and solidarity with East European dissident movements inspired a bandwagon of campaigns in Western Europe. Ever since, these movements have been connected into one anti-totalitarian struggle that surpassed Cold War divides and eventually contributed to its end in the late 1980s. It has been the story of a common victory of human rights and global civil society, contributing to the end of Apartheid in South Africa and state socialism in the East, symbolized by the release of Nelson Mandela and Lech Walesa. This presentation wants to cut through this homogenizing and euro-centrist narrative that became hegemonic in academia and public discourses after the end of the Cold War, by analyzing how North-South and East-West social movements diverged during the 1980s. It will assess the impact which the rise of East European dissent had on solidarity movements with an orientation towards the Third World, and reveal how East-South relations and official state socialist solidarity counterbalanced the rise of dissent on the agenda of social movements in the West by linking the Third World to peace and anti-Americanism. In sum, this paper aims to

decenter euro-centrist narratives of an anti-totalitarian struggle by including the “peripheries” view.

Hannah Kershaw (University of Manchester)

Constructing Childhoods and Locating Risks: Depictions of HIV-Positive Identities in British Children's Media, 1983-1997

The representation of HIV and AIDS to children presented a unique problem for British health educators and policy makers in the eighties and nineties. As the public health response evolved from one of nebulous risk to more explicit messages on safer-sex, the need to represent the sexual and morbid aspects of the illness and its prevention to children emerged.

With this, representations of safer-sex and HIV antibody testing materialized across children's media. This paper explores representations of safer-sex and HIV-testing specifically constructed for children and young adults, revealing the HIV positive and ‘at risk’ identities which were made and unmade through medical narratives. The paper recovers how, and why, educators and entertainers represented the personal politics which surrounded safer-sex and HIV testing and the identities they produced. It focuses particularly on the interaction between ideas which promoted children's agency with more morally conservative New Right ideologies.

Henning Tümmers (Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen)

AIDS and AIDS Prevention in the Two Germanys

Back in 1981, when the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta reported five mysterious deaths, “AIDS” had reached the public for the very first time. Further reports about the mysterious, rapidly spreading disease soon led to a deep-seated uncertainty. Even though AIDS was approaching Germany, the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic reacted quite differently to it, but their measures to prevent citizens from HIV showed also similarities.

The aim of the paper is to take an in-depth look at the development, dynamics and consequences of concepts of prevention in the two Germanys. In doing so, the focus will be primarily on the transfer of knowledge in cultures of prevention: How did physicians in the different political systems react to exactly the same threat? What effects did the alternating views of the so-called ‘Systemgegner’ have on the concepts of prevention and political measures of both German states?