



CONFERENCE

**“Clashes in European Memory:
The Case of Communist Repression and the Holocaust”
Paris, 22 to 24 September 2008**

ABSTRACT

The conference is structured around the interaction between official politics of history on the one hand and communicative memories on the other. Official politics of history is, from our perspective, primarily the result of legitimate interventions of political/state actors who, on account of their positions of power, can put forward their preferred versions of the past. Politics of history is therefore embedded in the power relations of these political/state actors and is subject to the same changes they are exposed to.

Such official politics of history is not without contradictions; mostly it is undermined or circumvented from perceptions of the past by those who are antagonistic to them. These perceptions are formed and passed on in the lifeworlds of societies; in other words in communicative memory which only partly follows the key doctrines of cultural memories. In the context of the conference, the conflicted rejections of the Holocaust and of Communist repression will be debated and compared along the abovementioned different lines of memory.

Thus far these discourses have been conducted either separately or at least largely independently of each other. The attempt to bring them together in this conference is based on the consideration that the memory cycles of the Holocaust and of Communist repression reveal through their interconnection the contours of transnational memory spaces. Such transnational memory spaces are the foundations of an evolving European public sphere. In this public sphere critical reflection upon specific memory spaces must be encouraged for a future-oriented, solidary political understanding to emerge. Remembrance and recognition form the two axes of a critical societal re-negotiation to promote, first, the convergence of memory spaces on the symbolic level and then the overcoming of real borders.



Ludwig Boltzmann Institute
European History and Public Spheres (EHP)



The Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for European History and Public Spheres (EHP), in cooperation with the University of Chicago Center in Paris, invites to the conference

CLASHES IN EUROPEAN MEMORY

THE CASE OF COMMUNIST REPRESSION
AND THE HOLOCAUST

A discussion of the overlapping and the displacement of the different memory discourses will be central to the conference. Thus far these discourses have been conducted either separately or at least largely independently of each other. The attempt to bring them together in this conference is based on the consideration that the memory cycles of the Holocaust and of Communist repression reveal through their interconnection the contours of transnational memory spaces. Such transnational memory spaces are the foundations of an evolving European public sphere.

September 22–24, 2008

Conference Site:

The University of Chicago Center in Paris

6, rue Thomas Mann

75013 Paris, France

<http://centerinparis.uchicago.edu/>

Monday, 22 September 2008

8.30	Welcome: Françoise Meltzer (Academic Director of the University of Chicago Center in Paris)
8.45	Introduction: Oliver Rathkolb (Institut für Zeitgeschichte, Universität Wien) Moderator and first discussant: Henry Rousso (Institut d'Histoire du Temps Présent, CNRS, Paris)
9.00–9.10	Introduction by Henry Rousso
9.10–9.40	1. Post-1989 clashes between official politics of history and communicative memories in Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania / Olaf Mertelsmann (Department of History, University of Tartu)
9.40–10.00	Discussion
10.00–10.30	2. Memory politics in the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary after 1989 / Muriel Blaive (LBI-EHP, Wien)
10.30–11.00	Discussion
11.00–11.30	Coffee break
11.30–12.00	3. Clashes between politics of history and communicative memories concerning the Holocaust and the Gulag in Russia / Maria Ferretti (Università della Tuscia, Viterbo)
12.00–12.30	Discussion
12.30–14.00	Lunch Moderator and first discussant: Hans-Åke Persson (Department of Culture and Identity, Roskilde University)
14.00–14.30	4. The clashes between politics of history and communicative memories of the repression of communism in post-1989 France / Marie-Claire Lavabre (Centre de Recherches Politiques de Sciences Po, CEVIPOF, Paris)
14.30–15.00	Discussion
15.00–16.00	5. Sweden's politics of history and the Holocaust / Claus Bryld (Department of Culture and Identity, Roskilde University) Austrian politics of history: From victim myth to the integration of Jewish experiences / Christian Gerbel (LBI-EHP, Wien) Beyond History? On Swiss participation and non-participation in world affairs / Georg Kreis (Europainstitut der Universität Basel)
16.00–16.30	Discussion
16.30–17.00	Coffee Break
17.00–17.30	6. The politics of history on communism by commissions and by tacit readjustment in Germany and Austria / Berthold Unfried (Institut für Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte, Universität Wien)
17.30–18.00	Discussion
20.00	Dinner

Tuesday, 23 September 2008

Moderator and first discussant: Maria Todorova
(Department of History, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign)

9.05–9.15 Introduction by Georges Mink
(Institut des Sciences sociales du Politique – ISP/CNRS,
Université Paris 10 – Nanterre)

9.15–9.40 1. Historical perception of the repression of the Holocaust in Czech,
Polish and Hungarian public opinion / Oliver Rathkolb
(Institut für Zeitgeschichte, Universität Wien)

9.40–10.00 **Discussion**

10.00–10.30 2. The Cold War in the European memory matrix / Berthold Molden
(LBI-EHP, Wien)

10.30–11.00 **Discussion**

11.00–11.30 **Coffee break**

11.30–12.00 3. Governing conflicted memories. Some remarks about the politics
of history in Germany / Thomas Lindenberger
(Zentrum für Zeithistorische Forschung Potsdam)

12.00–12.30 **Discussion**

12.30–14.00 **Lunch**

Moderator and first discussant: Marie-Janine Calic
(Abteilung für Geschichte Osteuropas und Südosteuropas,
Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München)

14.00–14.30 4. Politics of history as an instrument of ethnic nationalism in
former Yugoslavia / Heike Karge
(Georg-Eckert-Institut für internationale Schulbuchforschung)

14.30–15.00 **Discussion**

15.00–15.30 5. Change of course? Communicative memories in Croatia and Serbia /
Natalija Bašić (Berlin)

15.30–16.00 **Discussion**

16.30–17.00 **Coffee Break**

17.00–17.30 6. Salvation, Deportation or Holocaust? Bulgarian and European
debates on the fate of Bulgaria's Jews in World War II / Stefan Troebst
(Institut für Slavistik, Universität Leipzig)

17.30–18.00 **Discussion**

20.00 **Dinner**

Wednesday, 24 September 2008

Moderator and first discussant: Martin Sabrow
(Zentrum für Zeithistorische Forschung Potsdam)

- 9.00–9.30 1. Europe as a place for common memories? Some thoughts on victimhood, identity and emancipation from the past / Pieter Lagrou (Département de Science Politique, Université Libre de Bruxelles)
- 9.30–10.00 **Discussion**
- 10.00–10.30 2. Suffering as a universal frame for understanding memory politics / Natan Sznaider (Department of Behavioral Science, The Academic College of Tel Aviv)
- 10.30–11.00 **Discussion**
- 11.00–11.30 **Coffee break**
- 11.30–13.00 **Roundtable:** “Divided perceptions of memory: A transnational European memory space?” directed by Martin Sabrow (Zentrum für Zeithistorische Forschung Potsdam)
- Participants:**
Aleida Assmann (Fachbereich Literaturwissenschaft/Anglistik, Universität Konstanz);
Gabi Dolff-Bonekämper (Institut für Stadt- und Regionalplanung, Technische Universität Berlin);
Marie-Claire Lavabre (Centre de Recherches Politiques de Sciences Po, CEVIPOF, Paris);
Harald Welzer (Interdisciplinary Memory Research, KWI Essen)



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ROUND TABLE

**“Divided Perceptions of Memory:
A Transnational European Memory Space?”**

On the basis of the country-specific studies presented at the Conference the discussion will focus on the question what concepts of memory and of history are needed for an adequate understanding of the transnational European memory space that is steadily gaining in contour as the renegotiation of national interpretations of history unfolds.

According to Maurice Halbwachs and his followers, the past does not exist outside of its social reconstruction. “[The past] is not so much rediscovered (*retrouvée*) as reconstructed (*reconstruite*), and the only bits of that reconstructed past that are left are those that the society of a given period is capable of reconstructing within its specific frame of reference.” (Etienne François)

Can a clear demarcation line between memory and history, as advocated by Pierre Nora, be helpful in the context of the reconstruction of a European memory space? Is it helpful to oppose to memories – which by their very nature confer on their content a quasi-sacred aura, which are group based and focus on very specific, isolated items – a history that proceeds in such a way as to disenchant, generalize and provide a continuous narrative? Whose main agenda in other words is the “delegitimation of the lived past”?



Is the hope for a transnational European memory space therefore to be based on a “shared historical consciousness”, which is to be promoted and advanced through pedagogical interventions in schools and academies, through musealization and/or through shared, separate or indirect memory sites (*lieux de mémoire*)? Will this “generalized semantic memory” (Aleida Assmann) then really be capable of superimposing itself on specific “episodic memories” (of one’s own biography, one’s own family, generation and ultimately of one’s own nation), on specific “particularized memory formations”? Is it not rather the case that a transnational memory discourse is committed above all to acknowledging that even collective national memories need to take shape in an arena of competing and in part mutually exclusive commemorative narratives (communicative memories vs. official politics of history) that are also shaped by suppressed material and/or material that has been made taboo? Is it not incumbent on a European memory discourse as part of its foundational function to accept these internal conflicts and ambivalences at national levels as inevitable (and indeed desirable) in order to live up to the insight that conflict is the precondition for “social glue” to be generated and for the parties to the conflict to be able to experience themselves as belonging to a “shared European space”? Maurice Halbwachs has taught us to understand the contextuality and the social situatedness of memory as well as its creative, reconstructive and communicative aspects. We now know how all important it is for individual and social identity formation. Yet the conflictive aspect, which arises from different social framings – “Europe as an arena of deeply divided memories” – has not received the attention it deserves in the subsequent cultural historical research on types of memory. The discussion will perhaps also address the question how conflict or consensus based strategies with reference to history and memory can be integrated into the project of a transnational European memory space.