

14. Berliner Colloquium zur Zeitgeschichte

**Farewell to Despotism: De-Stalinization in the Soviet Union
and East-Central Europe**

Convenor: Jörg Baberowski (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin)

Conference language: German

21 and 22 February 2014

Questionnaire

**Session 1 Trust, Mistrust and Stabilization:
Transformation of the State Apparatus**

Introduction Jörg Baberowski

Chair Bettina Greiner

- * What did the death of the dictator mean in terms of redefining the sources of legitimacy for the rule of power? Is trust a source of legitimacy? What kind of trust would that be?
- * What did the renunciation of force and the resuscitation of party structures mean for orderly, regulated decision-making among the leadership?
- * Of all people how did Khrushchev manage to become the first among equals?
- * Were they able to overcome the distrust that existed among members of the leading circles and develop procedures based on calculability as well as on the predictability of expectations and a secure sense of order? In what way did distrust act as a stabilizing factor?
- * How were elections, discussions and decisions carried out in the Central Committee?
- * What effect did the predictability of expectations and a secure sense of order have on discussions and how conflicts were decided?
- * How did this trust-building process by means of calculable procedures spread from the top downwards and what did this imply for the stability of the rule of power in the Soviet Union?
- * Who saw de-Stalinization as a risk? Were there »losers« as a result of the de-Stalinization process? And if so, what was their significance?

Session 2 Integration and Loyalty: Pacifying Society

Introduction Stefan Plaggenborg

Chair Claudia Weber

- * To what degree was Soviet society stabilized by opening the camps and returning to criminal prosecution as a legal procedure?
- * What impact did the return to a policy of nationalization have on the periphery of the empire?
- * What changes did consumer and housing-construction policies trigger? What were the consequences of easing the hold in cultural and daily life?
- * What was the role played by the inner pacification through amnesty and forgetting? Was forgetting and silence a successful strategy for re-establishing social harmony?

**Session 3 De-Stalinization in the Soviet Union
 and East Central Europe: Similarities and Differences**

Introduction Pavel Kolar

Chair Mischa Gabowitsch

- * In view of the varying experiences of Stalinization, were there also different varieties of de-Stalinization?
- * How central to the transformation process was the past experience of violence? What role did the debate on the Leninist model of political rule play?
- * Were the relaxations in Poland and Hungary perceived as a gain? What was the role played by memories of the pre-Soviet period?
- * What importance did Polish, Hungarian, Czechoslovakian or German debates have for de-Stalinization in the Soviet Union?
- * How was Khrushchev perceived in Central and Eastern Europe and what possibilities emerged for the local regimes to expand their latitude? Who saw themselves as winners and who saw themselves as losers of the de-Stalinization process?

**Session 4 What Was the Importance of De-Stalinization
for Western Countries?**

Introduction Brunello Mantelli

Chair Felix Schnell

- * What did de-Stalinization mean for Soviet foreign and security policy?
- * How was de-Stalinization received in the West?
- * What was the impact of de-Stalinization on international relations and particularly on the relationship with the United States?
- * What was the impact of de-Stalinization on West Germany? Did it de-demonize the Soviet Union's image? Or did the cumulative effect of the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Hungarian uprising of 1956, and the Berlin Wall eclipse all other images?
- * How did people perceive de-Stalinization in countries like France and Italy where there were strong communist parties and advocates as well as adversaries of the Soviet brand of socialism?
- * In the eyes of Western observers was Khrushchev a benefactor or a traitor?

Suggested Reading

Chruschtschow erinnert sich. Die authentischen Memoiren. Hrsg. von Strobe Talbott. Reinbek bei Hamburg: rororo, 1992; 489-446

François Fejtő, Die Geschichte der Volksdemokratien. Buch 2: Nach Stalin, 1953-1972. Frankfurt am Main: Eichborn, 1972; 91-121, 201-228, 556-558, 562-563

John Lewis Gaddis, The Unexpected John Foster Dulles: Nuclear Weapons, Communism, and the Russians. In: Richard H. Immerman, John Foster Dulles and the Diplomacy of the Cold War. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1990; 47-77, esp. 67-77

Michael Jochum, Eisenhower und Chruschtschow. Gipfeldiplomatie im Kalten Krieg 1955-1960. Paderborn: Schöningh, 1996; 70-80

Stephan Merl, Berija und Chruščew: Entstalinisierung oder Systemerhalt? Zum Grunddilemma sowjetischer Politik nach Stalins Tod. In: Geschichte und Wissenschaft im Unterricht. 52(2001),9; 484-506

Vladislav Zubok, Zhivago's Children. The Last Russian Intelligentsia. Cambridge, MA, London: Belknap Press of Harvard UP, 2009; 60-120, 376-390