
Noticeboard

Conference

THE ANGLO-AMERICAN CONFERENCE OF HISTORIANS, at the
University of London's Institute of Historical Research,
7-10 July 1992
Theme for 1992: EUROPE AND THE AMERICAS

The Anglo-American Conference is managed by the Institute of Historical Research in consultation with a committee of scholars from both sides of the Atlantic. Its tradition, however, has been multinational ever since the informal meetings of historians in the University of London, which gave rise to the first Conference, in 1921. Since then, the Conference has met almost annually except for a break during the Second World War. Most meetings cover two days in the first week of July, but a longer 'plenary' session is held once every four or five years. Both the subject matter and the personnel of the meetings draw on historical scholarship from all over the world and from many different fields and periods of history. The Institute hopes that this tradition will continue and grow stronger in the 1990s, when so many boundaries, both political and academic, are breaking down. The theme of the Conference in 1991 was 'The Rise of the State'. This will be followed in 1992 by a plenary, four-day Conference on 'Europe and the Americas'.

The conference will consist of a mixture of general sessions and parallel seminar sessions focusing on aspects of the main theme. It will range in time from the medieval period, and concepts of the world which predated the great period of European expansion, to the present day. An advance programme will be available from about mid-December 1991. Anyone wishing to receive details should write to the Secretary & Librarian, Institute of Historical Research, University of London, Senate House, London, WC1E 7HU, UK.

Institutes

The Institute of Contemporary History in Prague

The Institute of Contemporary History was officially founded as of 1 February 1990. Its founding was part of the restructuring process within Czechoslovakia's institutions of higher learning and scholarship. It can be regarded as one of the tangible results brought about by the revolutionary changes towards democracy on all levels of Czechoslovak society after November 1989.

From February 1948 onwards, the whole field of historical studies in Czechoslovakia was forced to serve the needs of the Communist system. History was turned into an instrument

to support Communism in Czechoslovakia. As is known, the field of contemporary history was most strongly affected by the manipulation of the Communist authorities. Those who worked in the field of contemporary history were most heavily victimised by recurrent purges and persecution. The setting up of the Institute of Contemporary History was the result of the realisation within the independent intellectual community that the state of affairs in this area of research and scholarship was catastrophic.

The urgent proposal to found such an Institute within the Academy of Sciences came from a group of historians who formed an 'historical commission' within the Civic Forum in Prague. Most of the historians in this commission were independent scholars who had been purged from official institutions some twenty years earlier, and published only on samizdat or lived abroad in exile. They took it upon themselves to formulate the tasks that lay ahead in order to restructure institutionally and revitalise intellectually the discipline of historical studies in the country.

The newly organised praesidium of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences was co-operative, and their positive decision made it possible to found the Institute in a very short time. It was also agreed that the work of the Institute would cover the period since the destruction of the first Czechoslovak Republic (1938) until the present time.

The main core of the Institute's staff consisted and still consists of scholars who for twenty years were not allowed to pursue their professions in Czechoslovakia in any official way and whose reputation was the result of their engagement in independent scholarship coupled with actions of moral integrity and civic courage.

Initially the Institute had the task of deciding how to lay the foundation for work and study on all levels: to build up a specialised library; to organise an archive of primary documentary sources; to provide the Institute with technological facilities corresponding to current international standards, i.e. to computerise as much of the Institute's work as possible, cataloguing, preparing bibliographies, desktop publishing of all publications of the Institute (including a Czechoslovak journal for contemporary history); to organise research within the Institute and establish a network of research teams; and to establish working links and contacts with colleagues and research institutes abroad in order to place the Institute within the context of the international scholarly community.

It need not be stressed how difficult it has proved to build up a modern Institute of this sort during a period of struggle with the heritage of the Communist past – a heritage which extends from a dire lack of funds for culture and scholarship and lack of qualified staff, to obsolescence in technical aids, and which includes the general confusion of the nation in coming to terms with its own past during the last half century.

In spite of all these obstacles, by Summer 1991 the Institute's staff had been built up to about thirty people, half of whom are historians or social scientists. Currently the Institute's scholars are engaged in eight long-term research projects or working programmes:

(1) *Czechoslovakia and the Great Powers (1938–1948)*. Publication of a series of source books concerning Czechoslovakia's position and role in European politics from the Munich agreement of September 1938 to the division of Europe into two military blocks.

(2) *The Founding Period of the Communist System in Czechoslovakia and its First Crisis (1948–1953)*. This is a large analysis of the period after the Communist take-over: essential rejections of the rule of law, persecution, political trials, sentencing of tens of thousands, economic issues; state policy and the arts.

(3) *Political élites in the Czech Lands and in Czechoslovakia 1938–53*. The goal is to gather and analyse documentary material for a social and biographical study of political élites which had developed in the nineteenth century in Bohemia, Moravia and partly also in Slovakia and which were totally destroyed during the above-mentioned period. This research concerns between two and three thousand persons. It also includes a study about the so-called Communist 'nomenclatura' in Czechoslovakia.

(4) *Source Material for the History of the Prague Spring, 1968–9*. This involves publication

of a book series containing source materials on the crisis in the Czechoslovak political system during the second half of the 1960s in the internal and international contexts. The work is based on source material gathered by the ČSFR and Slovak Government Commissions, and the Institute of Contemporary History.

(5) *The Anti-Totalitarian Democratic Revolution of 1989 in Czechoslovakia*. The aim of this project is to analyse the causes, the development and the initial results of this revolution to the end of 1989. The research takes place on three levels: a) the history of independent civic initiatives and their role in the revolution; b) the course of events proper from 17 November to 29 December 1989 when Czechoslovakia's new President was elected; c) the international implications of the revolution, its non-violent nature, its main participants.

(6) *Contemporary Jewish Studies in Czechoslovakia*. In its current initial stages this project examines the state of research and availability of bibliographical material, locally and internationally, concerning the fate of Czechoslovak Jews after 1938.

(7) *The Role and Activities of the Czechoslovak Secret Police during 1968–89*. The aim of this project is to arrive at a complete picture of the organisational structure, scope and strategic aims of the Czechoslovak secret police ('State Security') in order to provide material for an analysis of its position and task within the Communist system in Czechoslovakia.

(8) *Slovak Studies*. The department for contemporary Slovak studies works as an interdisciplinary co-ordination team that studies continuing research and informational and educational activity concerning Slovak history, politics and economics as well as ecological issues, culture, languages and literature.

The further development of research and related tasks of the Institute depends on the creation of better personal and professional conditions (for example, the education of young scholars) and on obtaining funds and support from international institutions and foundations. The address of the Institute is

Ústav pro soudobé dějiny ČSAV

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The Institute of Contemporary British History

The Institute of Contemporary British History was founded in September 1986 to stimulate research into and historical analysis of British history since 1945 which will be of value to decision-makers, students and the wider public, and to explore the historical context in which to place contemporary themes and issues confronting Britain.

It has four main spheres of activity. Firstly, in the face of the academic fragmentation of the post-war years it is concerned to provide a forum for individuals across disciplines to analyse contemporary issues and their historical antecedents. It therefore organises major interdisciplinary academic conferences, including an annual week-long summer school held at the London School of Economics, which in 1992 will address the theme 'Britain in Europe? Britain's Search for a Role in the Twentieth Century'. The Institute's journal *Contemporary Record*, which appears three times a year, also seeks to analyse major themes in recent British history or to explore contemporary issues in an interdisciplinary and historical context.

The Institute also produces *Contemporary Britain: An Annual Review*, in which some forty expert commentators drawn from a range of disciplines explore developments in Britain over the past year in a comprehensive set of essays covering every aspect of modern British political, economic and social life and all areas of Britain's external relations. This aims to provide both a detailed analysis which will be of immediate value to policy-makers,

businessmen and women, civil servants, journalists, academics and all those interested in the changing character of contemporary Britain, and an essential starting point of reference for future historians.

The Institute also organises special academic conferences. The intention here is usually to explore existing questions in a new way, or to draw attention to under-considered forces at work in history. For instance, the perception that engineering is less highly regarded in Britain than elsewhere in Europe has led the Institute to organise a special conference for 1992 which will seek to explore why that is, and to draw attention to the considerable role played by engineering in the shaping of post-war Britain.

Secondly, the Institute, aware of the importance of contemporary history in understanding modern British society, has always sought to play an active educational role. Our concern has been to make a contribution to the teaching of history, and especially of recent history, in Britain. The Institute therefore produces two journals for use in schools and advises on another.

Thirdly, the Institute seeks to encourage the collection and deposition of valuable archival material. It both collects papers and advises owners of papers on their deposition. It is also concerned to conduct research which, it is hoped, will provide valuable resources for future generations of historians. In particular the Institute has sought to create oral history archives, partly through interviewing former civil servants, politicians and other key actors of the post-war years, and partly through witness seminars, which are round-table discussions focusing through the testimony of surviving participants on a key event or development of Britain's recent history. Recent witness seminars have been on subjects as diverse as the Battle of Cable Street in 1936, the British view of German reunification and rearmament in the 1950s, and the British response to the Berlin Crisis of 1961. The edited transcript of our witness seminar on the origins of the Eurobond Market appears in this issue of *Contemporary European History*. Full transcripts of these events are also deposited in archive collections, usually at the Institute's own archive held at the British Library of Political and Economic Science at the London School of Economics.

Finally, despite its short history the Institute has already become a valued source of advice and information both for researchers working in the field of contemporary British history and for all those with an interest in this field. The Institute would like to develop contacts with European scholars with an interest in recent British history, or British policy towards Europe. Despite our title, we are also very interested in contemporary European history; indeed, the Institute played a role in setting up *Contemporary European History*.

The range of activities undertaken by the Institute are described in much greater detail in the latest annual report. Those interested in receiving a copy of this, or information about current and future activities, may contact Dr Peter Catterall, Institute of Contemporary British History, 34 Tavistock Square, London WC1H 9EZ.

Institut für die Wissenschaften vom Menschen

The Institut für die Wissenschaften vom Menschen was established in Vienna in 1982 as a centre where scholars, intellectuals and artists from Eastern Europe can meet and work together with their counterparts from the West. As their Report for 1986–90 emphasises, it 'views itself as a place where the experiences and perspectives of Eastern Europeans can be (re-) introduced into the Western discussion as a means of rousing, changing and broadening Western culture.'

The Institut is organised as an Institute for Advanced Study with both Permanent and Visiting Fellows. Their work usually takes the form of long-term, international and interdisciplinary research projects, carried out by groups of scholars brought together for the purpose. Related conferences and seminars are held, the proceedings of which are sometimes published.

In the autumn of 1990 the Institut began publication of a bi-annual journal, entitled *Transit: Europäische Revue*, published in German. Each issue will focus on a specific theme: the first issue looked at 'Eastern Europe – Transitions to Democracy?', while the second issue looked at 'The Return of History'.

The work of the Institut covers a wide range. Two projects may be mentioned here. Firstly, there is the Patocka Project, the Archive of which contains all the known and unpublished writings of the Prague philosopher, as well as all relevant secondary literature. Secondly, a project on 'The Experience of War in East Central Europe: Social Disruption and Political Revolution' was launched in 1990. The idea is to write a social history of wartime regimes in East-Central Europe in comparative perspective.

The work of the Institut covers a much wider range than it is possible to describe here. Those interested in finding out more may write to Dr Lonnie Johnson, Institut für die Wissenschaften vom Menschen, Goldegg-Gasse 2, A-1040 Vienna, for a copy of their *Report 1986–1990* in English or German.

The Documentation Centre for the Promotion of Independent Czechoslovak Literature

The Documentation Centre for the Promotion of Independent Czechoslovak Literature (ČSDS) was founded in March 1986 by a group of Czechoslovak intellectuals living in exile as a facility run by the Association for the Promotion of Independent Czechoslovak Literature. Since November 1986, the Documentation Centre has been housed at Schwarzenberg Castle (Mittelfranken) in Bavaria, Germany. The Centre functions as a specialised library and literary archive, as well as an information and research establishment.

Among the founding members of the Centre were Jiří Gruša (Vice-chairman), František Janouch, Josef Jelinek (Secretary), Ivan Medek, Jiří Pelikán, Vilém Prečan (Curator and Executive Director), Karel Jan Schwarzenberg, Pavel Tigríd and Jan Vladislav (Chairman). The Centre's Academic Council is headed by the distinguished Canadian historian, H. Gordon Skilling. The Council's members are scholars from the USA, Canada, Great Britain, France, Austria and Germany.

Prior to the democratic revolution in November 1989, the Czechoslovak Documentation Centre maintained close contacts with independent writers in Czechoslovakia, Charter 77 spokespersons, the most active dissidents and independent civic groups, thus supporting the forces for democracy within the country. A group of well-known independent Czech and Slovak writers, including Václav Havel and Ludvík Vaculík, were honorary members of the Documentation Centre. They helped the work of the Centre and gave it moral credit.

The Czechoslovak Documentation Centre was financed by several private foundations, which included The National Endowment for Democracy (Washington), the Central and East European Publishing Project (Oxford), and the Open Society Fund (New York, through the offices of the Stockholm-based Charter 77 Foundation). (The NED is still supporting the Centre.)

Prior to the 1989 democratic revolution, the Centre devoted itself primarily to the following tasks:

(1) Systematically building up collections of Czech and Slovak samizdat literature and source material on independent cultural, political and religious activity in Czechoslovakia after 1948. The Centre has also built up a specialised book library dealing with these subjects.

(2) Disseminating this material through photocopies in the original (its annual production was approximately 140,000 A4 pages) or in translation to large libraries, universities and research establishments, editors of Czech and Slovak emigré periodicals, radio stations and individual scholars the world over. Researchers from many countries came to study the Centre's material on its premises.

(3) Commissioning or supporting research work leading to the publication of dossiers

of documentary material, reference handbooks and bibliographical works. The Centre brought out its own publications (for instance, a substantial volume of Václav Havel's essays and articles, written in 1983–9). In 1987–9, the Centre published three volumes of its own quarterly – ACTA – which appeared in two language versions: in Czech (or Slovak) and in English. The Centre helped to prepare and organise exhibitions and initiated a number of discussions on independent literature and scholarship in Czechoslovakia. (As an example, one of these discussions, which was featured in several issues of the ACTA quarterly, centred around the planned publication of the Selected Works of Czech philosopher Jan Patočka.)

(4) The Centre provided the independent intellectual community and the civic initiative and opposition groups within Czechoslovakia with books and periodicals published abroad. At the same time, it supplied information on Western intellectual developments and publication possibilities in the West. The Centre also helped to transport clandestinely into Czechoslovakia equipment for the printing of samizdat literature. It acted as a mediator between Czechoslovak independent writers and civic groups and publishing houses, research institutes and other institutions in the free world.

The Czechoslovak Documentation Centre now possesses the most extensive collection of Czechoslovak samizdat books and periodicals outside Czechoslovakia. Its archives also include a collection of documents and background material on Charter 77 (1977–89); a collection of source material on 'The Prague Spring'; information on political and cultural activities of various organisations and groups in the Czechoslovak diaspora 1948–89; videotapes, films and photographs and music recordings; newspaper cuttings, 1955–89 and extensive biographical material.

The Centre's library, which comprises many thousands of volumes, includes: complete book series brought out by Czech publishing houses in the West; foreign-language editions of works by authors of independent Czech and Slovak literature; background literature dealing with independent writing in Czechoslovakia; Czech, Slovak and foreign-language literature relating to Czechoslovakia and the movement for human rights in the Soviet bloc in the 1970s and 1980s. The Centre's library also comprises some 150 periodicals. These include entire sets of all the leading Czechoslovak emigré journals. A large selection of journals and newspapers from Czechoslovakia 1945–91 is also available.

From the outset of the November 1989 Revolution in Czechoslovakia, the Czechoslovak Documentation Centre made its resources available to the emerging democratic institutions within Czechoslovakia. At the beginning of 1990, three important publications originally brought out by the Centre were reprinted in Czechoslovakia in large print runs (for instance, one of these works, Jiří Vančura's study of the Prague Spring, *Naděje a zklamání* [*Hope and Disillusionment*], had a print run of 107,000 copies).

It is the ambition of the Documentation Centre to help towards the integration of the work of several generations of independent writers, historians, philosophers and other scholars into the cultural heritage of contemporary Czechoslovakia. Thus it is the primary aim of the ČSDS to compile a complete bibliographical survey of Czech and Slovak samizdat literature from 1970 to 1989. Furthermore, the Czechoslovak Documentation Centre also intends to encourage and foster a systematic study of the work of the Czech and Slovak cultural and political emigration between 1948 and 1989.

The Czechoslovak Documentation Centre, which continues its work from its premises at Schwarzenberg Castle, now co-operates closely with a number of scholarly and cultural institutions in Czechoslovakia, as well as with the Czechoslovak authorities. Historians and specialists in Czech literature use the Centre's collections for their work. The Documentation Centre still provides information about individual items in its holdings to universities, libraries and the media the world over. It also disseminates information from its resources to specialists in its field throughout Czechoslovakia. Within the framework of its extensive photocopying programme, the Centre is currently producing copies of its samizdat material for several large Czechoslovak libraries which wish to include a representative selection of

Czech and Slovak samizdat from the years 1970–89 in its holdings. After a year's break in publication, a new volume of the ACTA quarterly is now being prepared.

The Documentation Centre now aims to broaden the scope of its work, planning also to become an institution fostering Czechoslovak–German cultural exchange in the newly emerging Central Europe. It hopes to receive support from both the German and Czechoslovak governments to enable it to undertake this work.

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Research Projects

There is a project on 'Burdens Resulting from the War for the East German economy'. This project will be realised under the roof of the Institut für Zeitgeschichte in Munich by a group of East and West German researchers supervised by Professor Jörg Roesler from the former Institut für Wirtschaftsgeschichte of the East German Academy of Science and Dr Christoph Buchheim of the Universität des Saarlandes. It will be partly financed by the Volkswagen Foundation; work on the project has already begun.

The range of burdens of the East German economy treated is very wide: they include reparations to the Soviet Union; the effects of the disproportionate industrial structure of the East German economy left after the war; the effects of the confrontation in international trade resulting from the Cold War; the integration into the Comecon and the burdens resulting from the system of central planning and socialist property of the means of production.

There is a planned project on 'Structural Change and Innovation Processes in Divided Germany'. This project will be proposed to the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) as a so-called action-programme (Schwerpunktprogramm) with the possibility of individual proposals for sub-projects of every researcher interested. A committee writing a project report to be considered by the DFG consists of Professors Lothar Baar, Humboldt-Universität Berlin, Wolfram Fischer, Freie Universität Berlin, Wolfgang Mühlfriedel, Universität Jena, and Dietmar Petzina, Universität Bochum. The scope of sub-projects already suggested ranges from foreign trade aspects to the structure of employment in the two German economies, innovation and structural change in engineering and chemical industries, state involvement in science and research, and special problems of Berlin.