
Noticeboard

Institute

The Institute of Contemporary History, University of Copenhagen

The historical preoccupation with contemporary history and politics has a long and good tradition in Denmark. One of the pioneers was the historian and later Secretary of State P. Munch, who at the beginning of the twentieth century wanted to combine history with the new social sciences. The study of contemporary history was first institutionalised in 1927, when the Institute for History and Economics was established. Munch was one of the initiators, together with other well-known politicians, among them Niels Neergaard, also historian and former prime minister. They both had a good reputation for their efforts to make Danish students familiar with contemporary history. The aim of the Institute was to bring history and economics together and in this way try to combine historical analysis and the new generalising social sciences in the study of the contemporary world. The focus of interest was primarily the historical and social description of Danish society, but the Institute also took up the study of international politics.

The Institute was not formally a university institute, but as a primarily research institute it was associated with the University of Copenhagen. In the 1950s the Institute was closed, and part of its activities was taken over by a new Institute for Contemporary History and Politics established in 1958. In 1953 the University of Copenhagen had established its first chair in contemporary history and politics (Sven Henningsen); now the study of contemporary history and international politics became part of the general history teaching at the university, and under his leadership the new Institute, inspired by American political science, combined the study of contemporary history with methods and theories from the political and social sciences. The Institute was split up in 1971, however, into an Institute of Contemporary History and an Institute of Civics and Politics; the latter joined the Faculty of Social Sciences in 1971, while the smaller Institute of Contemporary History remained in the Faculty of the Humanities. In reality it in a way also meant a split between historical analysis and the more theoretical social sciences.

The Institute of Contemporary History is actually part of the Faculty of the Humanities. It organises, together with the two other historical institutes (the Institute of History and Institute of Economic History), the instruction of students in history (BA and MA) and of young research historians (PhD students). In its research it is directed towards the history and politics of the twentieth century. In its educational and scientific activities the Institute now is clearly more history-orientated than inspired by influences from the social sciences or political theory. Methodologically and analytically the study of contemporary history is part of history, although in some respects it is more inspired by theoretical influences than

historians ordinarily are. Due to new institutional arrangements at the Faculty of the Humanities the Institute will from 1992 become a Department of Contemporary History in a new Institute of History, which replaces the former three historical institutes.

The Institute consequently has never had students of its own, contemporary history being part of the general study of history. It has a staff consisting of one chair (Professor Carl-Axel Gemzell) and six associate professors. There are in addition four temporarily-employed PhD students. The field of the Institute's research and teaching is Danish (and Scandinavian) and international contemporary history which institutionally and traditionally have been defined as Danish history since 1901 (the change of the political system in Denmark) and international, i.e. primarily European and American, history since 1870. But in practice the focus is primarily on Danish and international history since 1914. The main spheres of the institutional research include Danish history since 1914, especially regarding the interwar period and the German occupation of Denmark 1940–5, and in recent years also contemporary Danish history since 1945 and current Danish politics and foreign policy. Regarding international history and politics the focus is on contemporary history and politics of Western Europe in the twentieth century (the study of Slavonic Eastern Europe having its own Institute of Slavonic Studies), in particular on Great Britain, Germany, France and Italy and on European integration, and American and Japanese contemporary history. Among the research subjects may be mentioned the British welfare state, the American occupation of Japan, Denmark during the German occupation, and National Socialism and the German social democrats. For further information write to Associate Professor Karl Christian Lammers, University of Copenhagen, Institute of Contemporary History, 106 Njalsgade, DK-2300 Copenhagen 5, Denmark. The telephone number is 01-542211.

Research Projects

At the Seminar für Zeitgeschichte of Tübingen University a team of historians including Jürgen Heideking and Christof Mauch is studying the American reactions to the German anti-Nazi Resistance during World War II. This research project was initiated by Professor Gerhard Schulz and is being funded by the VW Foundation. Based on records of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) that have been transferred since 1980 from the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) of the United States to the National Archives in Washington, DC, the team is preparing both monographs and documentation that will shed new light on a still controversial chapter of German–American relations.

With the recent declassification of the OSS archives the United States Government was the first in the world to release records of its national intelligence agency. The wealth of archival material is likely to contribute significantly to a better understanding of US policy both during World War II and in the post-war period. It is the intention of the Tübingen team to provide information on OSS images of Germany, to give an idea of the kind of influence OSS exercised on strategic planning and the conduct of war, and to analyse its role in preparing for post-war reconstruction. There will be a special focus on the setting up of American contacts with anti-Nazi individuals and movements. The achievements of anti-Nazi propaganda and of intelligence on topics such as 'German morale', German opposition movements and peace feelers will also be considered. The documents reveal the existence of and competition between different perceptions of German resistance within OSS: while German immigrants in the OSS Labor Section and in the Research and Analysis Branch put their hopes on the working class as a potential force to overcome the Nazi regime and to establish a new type of socialist democracy in Germany, others, such as Allen Dulles in Berne (who was later to become head of the CIA), were suspicious of these ideas and emphasised the danger of Soviet expansion towards the West. Thus, Cold War patterns can be traced back further than 1945. This is particularly true in regard to OSS reports on the Moscow-

sponsored National Committee of Free Germany on which a PhD thesis is in preparation at the Tübingen Institute.

The project will not only provide new information on international contacts of the German opposition against Hitler, it will also give an idea of some of the most sensitive aspects of US policy such as inter-allied co-operation on political, operational and covert intelligence levels. By analysing the interaction between OSS and German resistance the various functions of intelligence which became permanent responsibilities of the US Government will be described.

The Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt in Freiburg im Breisgau has for some years been engaged in a substantial project on the origins and problems of the North Atlantic Treaty up to 1956. The project is both interesting in its own right and important, since knowledge of the history of the development of NATO throws light on the influence the treaty has had on global, European and German developments since 1949. It also has relevance to present political problems, since dramatic developments in Central and Eastern European states have led to questioning of the postwar international order and opened perspectives for these states to return to Europe.

While not setting a firm date for the beginning of the project, historians at the Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt have focused on the period after 1947–8, because the treaty has developed as a consequence of the confrontational international system of the post-war years. The year 1956 marks an end to the first phase of NATO's growth and development, as well as the point at which NATO faced its first big internal crisis. There is also the practical point that this marks a limit to access to the relevant documents.

The project seeks to turn attention to the Atlantic Alliance and military co-operation, building on important analyses of the security policy of individual Western states. This is now possible because documents have become available on the international Atlantic perspective, whereby Western foreign and security policies as well as the world economy are seen as one, and attention is also paid to the dominant position of the United States. In short, there are a great number of problems, and all are interconnected.

This project seeks to look beyond the purely military aspects of NATO and takes into account the influence of domestic political and social forces, as well as the interconnection of political, economic and armament procurement factors. The goal is to demonstrate the systemic structural problems that arise when creating a new, integrated security alliance between individual Western industrialised states, all working on their own national principles.

The publication plan includes a series of different volumes, with contributions by a number of individual authors who control their own approaches.

At present there are eighteen archives which contain useful material, fifteen of them in foreign countries. Listing of all the foreign material is nearly completed. The files from NATO's political organisation may be read, but only documents up to 1952 may at this time be quoted; Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv holds a thousand rolls of film of the alliance from the Ständigen Vertretung of the Bundesrepublik Deutschland at NATO. In addition the project has special access to the files of the Foreign Ministry barred to other scholars.

With regard to foreign holdings: in London in the Public Record office files up to and including 1960 are open. In the National Archives in Washington the papers of the Joint Chiefs of Staff up to 1961 are open, as well as most of the files of the State Department up to 1959. In the Truman and Eisenhower Presidential Libraries the White House papers as well as the papers of associated officials and advisers are open. The Canadian Archives, as everyone knows, open rapidly and are pots of gold.

Within the Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt six to eight historians are working on

the project. They are supported by other scholars in Germany and elsewhere who mainly concentrate on special topics not covered by the project. The expected date for completed manuscripts is 1993–4. For further information on the project write to Colonel Dr Norbert Wiggershaus, Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt, 7800 Freiburg im Breisgau, Grünwalderstrasse 10–14. The telephone number is (0761) 34279/33904.