

# SCIENTIFIC REPORT

ESF Exploratory Workshop on

## European Cultures of the Cold War, 1945-1990

Sheffield (UK), 3-6 September 2009

Convened by:  
**Dr Holger Nehring, Professor Adam Piette  
and Dr Erica Sheen**

## **Executive summary**

'We now know' – this is the title of John Lewis Gaddis's authoritative study that summarises a first round of sustained empirical research into the Cold War. More modesty may perhaps be in order, and it may be altogether more appropriate to state that, after a first round of research, we can now begin to reassess the Cold War and its confrontations at a similar level of empirical certainty as World War I and World War II. Substantially, this first round of investigations has itself been framed by specifically Cold War understandings of international relations.

This is where this ESF exploratory workshop started. It interrogated the ways in which - and the extent to which - the Cold War had an influence on a variety of political, social and cultural processes across Europe. It sought to explore these experiences from an interdisciplinary, transnational and comparative perspective in order to come to a more critical understanding of the ways in which the Cold War influenced Europeans' thinking about the world. While research on the two world wars in Europe has highlighted the ways in which warfare and fighting became part of the transnational social and cultural European fabric, this perspective has been curiously absent from research into the Cold War. We were not merely interested in culture in the narrow sense, such as art and literature, during the Cold War. Rather, we conceived our topic more broadly as concerned with the multitude of ways in which Europeans made sense of the Cold War within the 'Cold War predicament' (Thomas Lindenberger). By analysing European Cold War cultures as the structures of feelings, assumptions and experiences that were created by and perpetuated the Cold War across European societies and cultures this workshop sought to work out what the Cold War actually meant to Europeans.

We re-thought, from an interdisciplinary perspective, the assumptions that have undergirded scholarship on the Cold War in Europe and develop a new research agenda for analysing the European Cold War. This requires an approach that transcends the rather artificial boundaries between 'high' and 'low' politics, between diplomatic and other kinds of history, between the historiographies and literatures of Eastern and Western Europe in order to come to an understanding of what made the Cold War into a historically specific period. Such an exploration cannot be undertaken by one discipline alone, as experiences have crossed the divides between cultural and symbolic productions and representations, policy-

making and societal developments. It makes an approach necessary that is interdisciplinary, that takes the variety of European experiences into account, and that makes productive use of the variety of scientific cultures across Europe in order to come to a better understanding of the Cold War as a period of history in twentieth-century Europe.

### *Themes*

The workshop highlighted a number of themes that require more detailed scholarly attention and that will be the focus on sustained collaboration between the participants:

- any approaches that regard the Cold War as hegemonic exploratory model for the diversity of political, social and cultural phenomena should be avoided just as much as approaches that neglect the Cold War altogether. Instead, we might ask for more specific questions and settings to which the Cold War provided answers – and to those it did not
- Thus, we might highlight the complexity and diversity of the Cold War within European experience since 1945
- This will enable us to critique current memorialisations of the Cold War – and, in particular, the yearnings for Cold War nostalgia in Eastern and Western Europe – by asking more precise questions about the nature, form and content of the Cold War as a multi-layered conflict that both united and divided Europeans. In other words, by arguing from a pronouncedly post-Cold War perspective, we aim to unpack some of the key assumptions of the Cold War
- This will enable us to develop a research design that asks how (rather than assumes *a priori*) the Cold War has led to specifically European structures of feelings, assumptions and emotions about politics, culture and society that distinguish the continent from others and to analyse to what extent notions of ‘Europe’ (with or without Russia, Turkey and other countries) have been themselves products (or constructions) of the Cold War confrontation.

## Scientific content of the event

In their introductions to the workshop, Erica Sheen, Adam Piette and Holger Nehring highlighted the inter-disciplinary nature of the enterprise and drew the participants' attention to the importance of questioning fundamentally the meanings of 'Cold War' for the writing of post-1945 European history. The workshop's first panel explored the Cold War as war and deliberately transcended the geographical scope on Europe in order to be able to apply insights gained from the form and shape of the global Cold War back to European cultures of the Cold War. In his paper on the Cold War as counter-insurgency, Adam Piette discussed the meanings of the Cold War for Graham Greene and looked at how European (rather than Asian) understandings of the Cold War framed his self-interpretation as an expatriate in Asia in the 1950s. In his conceptually sophisticated paper, Claus Pias complemented these themes by highlighting the way in which the Cold War was conceptualised by the scientists employed by the RAND corporation think-tank. He highlighted the ways in which the Cold War was an imaginary war for the RAND scientists and stressed to what extent concepts of 'inter-disciplinarity', 'scenario' and certain mathematical calculations were themselves part of a specifically Cold War way of grasping the world. Pias also highlighted the *longue durée* of such Cold War frameworks of thinking by emphasising the importance of such tropes in war planning circles during the Second World War. In her wide-ranging paper, Marilyn Young stressed how the Cold War was not a 'long peace' (John Gaddis), but how states of peace and states of war overlapped in US foreign policy and society with regard to Korea, Vietnam and various other smaller-scale operations. War, she argued, was a normal condition, rather than the exception, in US foreign policy and thus provided the crucial pre-conditions for thinking about 'humanitarian interventions' and interventions to further 'regime change' in the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

In the following panel, Sari Autio-Sarasmo's paper pulled together recent research on the Cold War and developed a novel framework of Cold War scholarship that characterised her research project at the Aleksanteri Institute, Helsinki. She developed an understanding of the European Cold War not as the opposition of two discrete camps, but as a multi-layered interaction between a variety of actors that frequently avoided the barrier of the 'Iron Curtain' and developed novel forms of interaction that transgressed the geopolitical boundaries. Her focus was on 'in-between spaces' on the macro, intermediate and micro levels. Following on from this,

Malgorzata Mazurek used the subject of consumption to develop an innovative understanding of the Cold War by asking for its relationship to the Second World War and by interrogating what the concept of 'Cold War cultures' might be used on a conceptual level. In an in-depth empirical account, she analysed the ways in which 'languages of bipolarity' emerged and came to characterise debates about consumption in Eastern and Western Europe. She also highlighted how these languages found their ways into social practices and how, in turn, these social practices were coded in a Cold War context. Roman Krakovsky's paper provided a fascinating case study of these arguments. He examined how the social practice of May Day rituals came to be transformed into a Cold War tool of legitimacy in Czechoslovakia from the mid-1940s in to the 1960s.

The next session considered how crossing Cold War borders and boundaries was itself constitutive for the European cultures of the Cold War and how the activity of crossing of real and metaphorical borders between the two blocs, between countries and between genders and made these borders visible and relevant. Susan Carruthers showed in a wide-ranging paper how the US constructed Cold War refugees as key witnesses to its own version of Cold War geopolitics and how this view of the Cold War filtered back to European understandings of the Cold War. Emiliya Karaboeva highlighted the ways in which Bulgarian truck drivers both transgressed the Cold War, but also became a key instrument for Bulgarian propaganda within the national context about the attractiveness of 'really-existing socialism' as a political system. Conversely, Harm Langenkamp illustrated how Cold War divisions played themselves out in the rhetoric of a human community that accompanied international music festivals during the 1960s and the Cold War music festivals in particular.

The fourth panel interrogated ways in which the mass media quite literally produced the Cold War. Here, André Kaenel, by examining a number of Cold War films, highlighted how Berlin emerged as a synecdoche for both the destruction of the European cultural heritage during the Second World War and for the Cold War and how noir films based in Berlin in the late 1940s came to represent the structures of feelings, assumptions and experience that came to be regarded as quintessentially Cold War. Similarly, Patrick Major highlighted how German films about the Second World War took on Cold War meanings in the context of the two German states' quest for legitimacy during the Second World War and how 'the good German'

emerged as a central trope in these films, thus merging the German politics of the past with the importance of rehabilitating Germans for the political ends of both political systems. Tony Shaw highlighted a number of key themes that characterised the screening of the Cold War in Eastern and Western Europe: the justification of war; the binary opposition between 'heaven and hell'; the trope of 'bombs and monsters'; the importance of secret intelligence in Cold War film; as well as a number of alternative images that transcended these oppositions. Marsha Siefert elaborated on the transnational nature of these themes by highlighting the importance of actors and directors as cultural brokers between Eastern and Western Europe and by zooming in on the role of émigré organisations for the production of European Cold War films.

The workshop's fifth and final session considered questions of the politics of the Cold War in more detail, but avoided a narrow focus on institutional politics. Giles Scott-Smith summarised research on intelligence communities and the Cold War, in particular with regard to the way in which their covert operations influenced the production of cultural norms during the Cold War. Marie Cronqvist discussed the importance of civil defence for the production of political power in Sweden – a country that remained formally neutral, but saw itself as crucially affected by the Cold War arms race. She showed how civil defence exercises during the 1950s led to a militarisation of everyday life and how civil defence served to entrench norms of 'proper' politics both emotionally and in terms of social practice in Sweden. In his thought-provoking paper, José Maria Faraldo argued for an approach of European cultures of the Cold War that transcended the binary opposition of the Cold War as a battle between Western democracies and Eastern dictatorships. He suggested analysing the ways in which the Portuguese and Spanish dictatorships managed to write themselves into narratives of Western democracies. He also called for a fundamental re-conceptualisation of 'democracy' as an open-ended political and social process with rather than a rather rigid set of institutional characteristics and sets of norms. In his paper, Thomas Lindenberger provided both a stimulating overview of the state of the art into the social history of the Cold War and a summary of the conference proceedings. He called for a relativisation of the Cold War as a historical phenomenon in both a temporal and spatial sense. Only such an approach would open up the field for an inter-disciplinary understanding of the Cold War as a distinct period in European history, without subordinating all social and political

practices to it and without writing it into the history of European integration. Instead, he called for an understanding of European cultures of the Cold War that highlighted the diversity of experiences and that explored the Cold War within the *longue durée* of the history of statehood, ethnicity and society in European history from the late nineteenth century to the present.

## **Assessment of the results, contribution to the future direction of the field, outcomes**

### **Impact of the workshop on further collaboration**

All in all, this workshop was a very welcome opportunity to bring together a variety of senior and more junior scholars from a variety of fields, who would otherwise rarely encounter each other in academic settings and who had not met each other before. Moreover, this workshop provided an excellent opportunity to link a variety of distinct research projects within a larger framework, and it has already led to a number of new co-operations between participants, who have now constituted themselves as the Cold War Cultures network (which will soon have an own Internet presence). The report on the workshop has been circulated through a number of discussion forums in order to inform the broader academic public of our plans.

### **The next steps**

In light of the remarks made by Professor Margaret Kelleher (who attended the workshop as the representative of the ESF Standing Committee on the Humanities) in her presentation on ESF funding instruments, this exploratory workshop highlighted a number of next steps to advance further collaborations in this field:

- a core group will meet at the Aleksanteri Conference, Helsinki, at the end of October 2009 in order to discuss the immediate next steps
- upon recommendation from Professor Margaret Kelleher the convenors and the participants will write to their respective national science foundations to advertise our project and express our wish to take our collaboration forward – a letter has already been drafted and was circulated amongst the participants

- we will then, after preliminary discussions at Helsinki, form a core groups of 7-10 researchers at the beginning of 2010. Members of this group will collaborate on a broader proposal
- They will seek to develop the network formed at the workshop further in order to develop a bid for a major ESF network (responsive mode)
- The newly-founded Centre for Peace History at Sheffield, of which Holger Nehring is one of co-directors, will organise an interdisciplinary and international conference on 'Unthinking the Imaginary War: Towards an intellectual history of the Cold War' in November 2010. The call for papers for this conference as circulated amongst the participants of the ESF workshop, and it is hoped that it will form another platform to broaden and deepen our collaboration

### **Impact of the research agenda on the field and on the wider public**

Given the celebrations for the twentieth anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall over the course of this year, a critique of public tropes of commemoration that our workshop – and future follow-up activities – have been able to provide are more important than ever in order to engage the wider public with the variety of meanings that the Cold War has meant and its continued relevant for the world in which we live. Such an understanding goes beyond the understanding of the binary understanding of the conflict as a primarily ideological one that took place between the West and 'the rest'.

By asking novel questions that come from a truly inter-disciplinary intellectual endeavour, we seek to develop an entirely new research agenda for Cold War studies, that is characterised by:

- a sensitivity towards the pre-history and the aftermath of the Cold War, regarding the Cold War as a period in twentieth-century history whose roots



and consequences cannot be grasped by a period-specific focus. It will therefore not only improve our understanding of the Cold War, but also fundamentally change historiographical assumptions about twentieth-century history

- asking questions about the ways in which our own disciplinary developments, concepts and methodologies have been reshaped in response to the Cold War predicament
- write the history of European cultures of the Cold War not merely as a cultural history, but show how cultural assumptions, ways of thinking about and seeing the world across a variety of geographical locations and
- thus highlight the importance of the Cold War not merely as a dividing, but also as a unifying European experience, as a period in history that framed an 'entangled Europe' (Hartmut Kaelble)

On a pragmatic level, our collaboration will provide European policy makers with important critical historical knowledge about their own assumptions about foreign and domestic policy aims.

Thus, our inter-disciplinary and transnational European enterprise will help to overcome the rather simplistic rhetoric of learning from past mistakes and past experiences of the Cold War for the 'war on terror' or for the relationship between the European Union countries and Russia (which we would count as part of Europe) by showing the historically contingent character of this period and by highlighting the diversity of historical experiences that cannot be directly applied to the present. Hence, our project will make a crucial contribution to the understanding of the history of our own present.

## Final programme

**Venue: Halifax Hall, Endcliffe Vale Road, Sheffield S10**

**Accommodation: The Edge, 34 Endcliffe Crescent, Sheffield S10 3ED**

## PROGRAMME

### Thursday, 3 September 2009

- 14.00                    **Arrival, registration and coffee**
- 14.30-15.00           **Welcome by the convenors – The Rationale of the Workshop**
- 15.00-17.30            Afternoon Session: Militarisations**
- 15.30-15.50           **Militarisation as Counter-Insurgency**  
**Adam Piette** (Sheffield, UK)
- 15.50-16.10           **Cold War Visions: The view from RAND**  
**Claus Pias** (Vienna, Austria)
- 16.10-16.30           **Necessary Wars of Choice**  
**Marilyn Young** (New York, USA)
- 16.30-17.30           **Discussion (Chair: Holger Nehring)**
- 19.30                    *Dinner at a local restaurant: La Cubana, 34 Trippet Lane, Sheffield S1, 0114 276 0475*

### Friday, 4 September 2009

- 09.00-09.20           **Presentation of the European Science Foundation (ESF)**  
**Margaret Kelleher** (ESF Standing Committee for the Humanities (SCH))
- 9.20-10.30            **Taking Stock: Where to go from here – The Next Steps**
- 10.30-11.00           *Coffee / tea break*
- 11.00-12.45            Morning Session: Cold War Dreamworlds**
- 11.00-11.20           **Transferring Knowledge in Cold War Europe**  
**Sari Autio-Sarasmo** (Helsinki, Finland)
- 11.20-11.40           **The Moral Economy of Cold War Consumption**  
**Malgorzata Mazurek** (Potsdam, Germany)
- 11.40-12.00           **Building Dreamworlds with Symbolic Politics: The May Day Ritual**  
**Roman Krakovsky** (Paris, France)
- 12.00-12.45           **Discussion (Chair: Adam Piette)**
- 12.45-14.00           *Lunch*
- 14.00-18.30            Afternoon Session: Border Crossings**
- 14.00-14.20           **Cold War Migrations**  
**Susan Carruthers** (Rutgers-Newark, US)

- 14.20-14.40 **Truck Drivers as transnational actors in Cold War Europe**  
**Emiliya Karaboeva** (Sofia, Bulgaria)
- 15.00-15.20 **Staging East-West Encounters during the Cold War: The 1961 Tokyo World Music Festival**  
**Harm Langenkamp** (Utrecht, Netherlands)
- 15.30-16.00 *Coffee / tea break*
- 16.00-18.30 **Discussion (Chair: Adam Piette)**
- 19.00 Drinks at a local bar (West One)
- 20.00 *Conference dinner* at Pizza Express, 124 Devonshire Street, Sheffield S1, 0114 275 2755

## Saturday, 5 September 2009

- 09.00-12.30 Morning Session: Cold War Media – Producing the Cold War**
- 09.00-09.20 **Hollywood's Berlin in the early Cold War**  
**André Kaenel** (Nancy, France)
- 09.20-09.40 **Second World War Films as Cold War Films**  
**Patrick Major** (Reading, UK)
- 09.40-10.00 **Screening the Cold War**  
**Tony Shaw** (Hertfordshire, UK)
- 10.00-10.20: *Coffee/ tea break*
- 10.20-10.40 **Emigrés, Exiles and Aesthetic Entrepreneurs: Mediating Cold War Cultures**  
**Marsha Siefert** (Budapest, Hungary)
- 10.40-11.00 *Break*
- 11.00-12.30 **Discussion (Chair: Erica Sheen)**
- 12.30-14.00 *Lunch*
- 14.00-18.30 Afternoon Session: Cold War Power**
- 14.00-14.20 **Intelligence Services and Cold War Culture**  
**Giles Scott-Smith** (Middelburg, Netherlands)
- 14.20-14.40 **Framing Doomsday: Media Narratives and Civil Defence Culture in Sweden**  
**Marie Cronqvist** (Lund, Sweden)
- 14.40-15.00 **Patchwork dictatorships, media, popular cultures**  
**José Maria Faraldo** (Madrid, Spain)
- 15.00-15.20 **State, Society and Power in Cold War Europe**  
**Thomas Lindenberger** (Vienna, Austria)
- 15.20-15.40 *Coffee/ tea break*
- 15.40-16.30 Discussion
- 16.30-18.00 Discussion on follow-up activities/networking/collaboration**
- 18.00 *End of Workshop*
- 19.00 *Dinner* at a local restaurant (venue: Café Rouge, Peace Gardens)

## Sunday, 6 September 2009

*Morning* *Departure after breakfast*

## Final list of participants

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### **Statistical information on participants**

#### **a. Gender**

Male: 11  
Female: 8

#### **b. Countries of origin:**

Austria: 2  
Bulgaria: 1  
Finland: 1  
France: 2  
Germany: 1  
Hungary: 1  
Netherlands: 2  
Spain: 1  
Sweden: 1  
UK: 5  
USA: 2

**c. Age**

As not all participants were willing to classify themselves in terms of age, we have broken participants down according to functions

Junior and early-career researchers without permanent posts: 4

Mid-career researchers: 7

Established scholars, chair holders: 8