

Call for papers

University of Szczecin
Historical Institute
Chair of European Comparative Studies

26–28 February 2021
Kulice (PL)

International conference
'Border Fears in the Baltic, 1918–1991'

Deadline: 15 September 2020

Fear has become a major topic in studies of emotion connected with the history and historical sociology of reciprocal perceptions in international relations. One of this topic's most extensive aspects concerns the fear that major state agents inspire in their neighbours in a context of past or present distrust, enmity, or even aggression. These fears especially concern spatial issues, i.e. challenges to sovereignty over contested territories, where borders are at stake. Such issues have been – and still are – the source of most international conflicts in Europe's modern and contemporary history. Europe's history in the 'short twentieth century' (Eric Hobsbawm) is particularly replete with territorial changes, many of which occurred due to wartime and post-war situations and which resulted from planned and perceived constraints, such as sanctions or rewards, that in turn fuelled fears about potential irredentist claims and thus anticipation of territorial instability.

Central Eastern Europe is certainly the largest area on the continent to experience the most radical border changes, whether after World War I, during and after World War II, or even later, as a consequence of the end of the Cold War: the creation or rebirth of Central European states that followed the dislocation of four empires (the Second German Reich, Austria-Hungary, Russia, and the Ottoman Empire) at the end of WWI; the problem of contested territories in this large, mid-continental, post-imperial space in the Interwar period; border violations, annexations, and occupation as a prelude to WWII and systemic phenomena during this conflict; major border changes and an uncertain peace after 1945 in the wake of the Potsdam Conference, with the emergence of East-West tensions. In his famous 'Iron Curtain' speech, delivered at Westminster College in Fulton, Missouri on 5 March 1946, Winston Churchill evoked the beginning of the Cold War splitting the continent along a new dividing line 'from Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic'. Eventually, the Iron Curtain would fall farther to the west, but the powerful metaphor would shape the mental mapping of a whole generation – or two – in Europe.

However, this should not prevent us from considering other border issues which do not – directly, at least – concern the inter-systemic East-West gap. Among the European macro-regions where deeper insights into border fears are still lacking, the Baltic area deserves particular attention, both as a theatre of war during both World Wars and as an inter-systemic contact zone between East, West, and neutral countries during the Cold War.

Without excluding other potential subjects, the issues to be addressed during the conference include:

- fears concerning bilateral or multilateral border issues in the Baltic
- fear and the memory of past border conflicts

- the politics of fear in bilateral relations about border issues
- tensions between local perceptions along borders and state management of fear
- comparison of cases of (bilateral) border fears
- fears concerning territorial waters
- the discourse of fear
- fear and deterrence
- fear and confidence-building
- border fears and ‘emotional refuges’ (William M. Reddy)

We welcome proposals in the fields of history, historical sociology, international relations, sociopsychology, and other humanities. Please send your proposals of no more than 500 words to pierre.weber@usz.edu.pl by 15 September 2020. In addition, please include a brief biography of the author(s) including up to five published papers (for each author), as well as contact details. Proposals should present the submitted paper’s setting, theme, perspective or framing, and sources and methods. Successful applicants will be informed by 1 October 2020 and will be requested to submit their draft papers, within a range of 30,000–40,000 characters, in English by 31 January 2021. It is planned to publish the contributions in a double-blind, peer-reviewed, edited volume.

The conference languages are English and Polish. Simultaneous translation will be provided. The venue is the Conference and Education Centre of the University of Szczecin in Kulice, <http://kulice.usz.edu.pl>, housed in a nineteenth-century manor that was once the property of Bernhard von Bismarck (the elder brother of the ‘Iron Chancellor’), 70 km north of Szczecin and 250 km from Berlin Airport (a frequent transborder shuttle to Szczecin is available). Travel and accommodation costs will be covered for all contributors. The conference is part of the project ‘INT 198: Morze – Pomorze – Pogranicze – miejscem polsko-niemieckiego dialogu. Transgraniczna sieć współpracy w nauce i edukacji historycznej Nadodrza i strefy bałtyckiej/Das Meer – Pommern – die Grenzregion als Orte des deutsch-polnischen Dialogs. Grenzübergreifendes Netzwerk zur wissenschaftlichen Kooperation und historischen Bildung über Ostsee und Odergebiet’, funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) through Interreg V-A – Germany/Mecklenburg-Vorpommern-Brandenburg-Poland.

The organisers will monitor the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic in the period prior to the conference and will inform the participants in case of any changes imposed for public health reasons.

Please use the same e-mail address to send us any questions or queries.

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