

call for paper

Conference: "Withdrawals - the withdrawal of Soviet and Russian troops from the sphere of power of the (former) USSR since 1985".

Location: German-Russian Museum Berlin-Karlshorst

Organizers: German-Russian Museum Berlin-Karlshorst; German Society for Eastern European Studies e.V.; German Historical Institute Moscow; Center for Military History and Social Sciences of the Bundeswehr (ZMSBw); Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO)

Date: 16/17 March 2020

Languages: English – Russian – German

The end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union resulted in extensive withdrawals by the Soviet/Russian military. For the left behind cities and countries and for the regions to which the military or demobilised troops returned, these events represented not only enormous political but also economic, ecological and social upheavals, not to mention the far-reaching individual experiences of the soldiers and civilian workers.

Historical research has so far failed to take sufficient account of the broad European, Central Asian and Caucasus spectrum and the range of non-war withdrawals. Rather, it has concentrated essentially on the events in East Germany from 1990 to 1994. Selected problem areas of the troop withdrawal were discussed, but hardly any overall analysis was undertaken to analyse the perspectives and situations of those affected, stationing sites and places of retreat as entangled components of an overall process.

The conference aims to fill these gaps: Only a perspective that looks at events in the former Soviet spheres of influence in East Central Europe and in the post-Soviet space itself in a transnational context can use comparative approaches to analyse general challenges, conditions and characteristics of the processes, reveal possible interrelations and dynamics, and work out the significance of individual thematic fields for different regions and points in time. The aim is to sharpen the focus on the transnational and pan-European dimension of troop withdrawals, which are far more than just military operations.

This also includes contemporary discourses, perceptions and problems, how to deal with the legacy of stationing, the integration of repatriates, as well as the cultural remembrance and repression of remembrances. The topic is thus to be consistently opened up beyond military and security policy aspects to interdisciplinary approaches.

The comprehensive approach corresponds with a broad geographical approach. It looks at a region that includes Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary alongside all post-Soviet states.

Against this background, the following possible topics for discussion emerge, although the list does not claim to be complete:

Before and during the withdrawals:

The relationship between soldiers and civilians, the relations between the armies of the stationing countries (NPA, UPA, PPA, Bundeswehr, etc.) and the Soviet military, corresponding foreign and self-images; contemporary discourses on problems or chances of stationing (ecology; economy; law; bilateral relations; security policy, etc.).

After the withdrawals:

Transformation of offers of identification and loyalties (winners and vanquished of the Cold War; old and new allies and home armies); social, economic and military integration of repatriates; conversions of the former stationing areas and their integration into the new environments; dealing with the economic, military, security policy, ecological and social or legal "heritage"; memories and interpretations.

20-minute lectures are planned. The contributions will be published in a conference volume.

Please send your proposals in the form of a short exposé (max. 250 words, informal, German, English or Russian) and a short CV to Christoph Meißner (meissner@museum-karlshorst.de) by 8 December 2019.