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*Managing the Empire: Oblast, Republic and Eastern Bloc Countries as Soviet Peripheries and the Question of "Dependence".* Institute of Lithuanian History; Lithuanian Research Council, 05.12.2013-06.12.2013.

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### Managing the Empire: Oblast, Republic and Eastern Bloc Countries as Soviet Peripheries and the Question of "Dependence"

The 4th Vilnius Post-Sovieticum Symposium on late Soviet and Post-Soviet history was organized by the Institute of Lithuanian History with support from the Lithuanian Research Council in order to bring together scholars from the broader region to discuss the different modes of Sovietization between gaining and upholding the monopoly of power, as well as the making of a differentiated model of power distribution on various levels, such as nationally defined Soviet republics, oblast centers of larger regions and Soviet satellite states like the German Democratic Republic. Speakers were asked to discuss to what extent the interdependence between Moscow politics and its repercussions in the peripheries led to a mutual dependency that ensured Soviet power on all three levels for decades.

The title âManaging the Empireâ refers to an understanding of the Soviet Union as a modernizing entity that managed populations and economies with political, economic and cultural means / tools. These involved differing and changing degrees of coercion but were also based on investment into core infrastructures which facilitated major social change in the given societies. The concept of Empire was introduced by ZENONAS NORKUS (Vilnius). In his introductory lecture he compared the German Occupation during World War I in so called Oberost and the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic between 1944 and 1991 as two forms of forced modernization. In his view both established administrative regimes in Oberost and the post WWII Soviet Socialist Lithuanian Republic

which were run as command administrative economies: Looking at Oberost as a laboratory of a modern authoritarian administration with a monopoly in the distribution of economic resources and a strictly limited public sphere he stressed that the Soviet Union ran its periphery not by direct military rule, but by civil means.

SÃREN URBANSKY (Freiburg) described the Soviet takeover of Sachalin as an accommodation of a peripheral space, which had previously been coded as Japanese landscape / territory and was taken over by the Soviet centre first by coersion. Later a new master narrative of Soviet Sachalin was established, allowing regional and local identities which were at variance with the new Soviet projection onto the island to be expressed to a certain degree. Urbansky pointed to the close link between the Soviet take-over of Kaliningrad and Sachalin â to the Moscow centered Soviet perception both were similar attempts to include new territories.

In his presentation on the Sovietization of the rural sector in the GDR, ARND BAUERKÃMPER (Berlin) discussed how individual memories and collective narratives were major obstacles for the SED cadres in their attempt to implement Soviet structures into rural East Germany under Soviet rule. BauerkÃ¤mper stressed the relevance of private property for the local particularities of collectivization â in the presented case the attempt to adapt to German conditions.

During the symposium a central discussion was

framed by a broader perspective on how Soviet power was ensured over many decades. A common assumption was that negotiations between Moscow and the Empireâs peripheries created reliable networks of loyal communist cadres. They were established not just at the beginning, but they underwent continual readjustment and renegotiation in order to reconfirm Soviet power in the many peripheries. The specific dynamic of republic- and oblast-level networking led to the constant recreation of clientelist ties in order to uphold the legitimacy of Soviet power both in the Soviet south, Central Asia and the Caucasus, and in the new Soviet West, that is the incorporated territories of nowadays Ukraine, Belarus and Lithuania.

SAULIUS GRYBKAUSKAS (Vilnius) addressed the impact of the communist elites of the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic in their usage of nationality politics and how the implemented structure of nationality was used to raise resources for the periphery. He argued that nationality policies became one of the focal points for the negotiation between Vilnius communist elites and the Moscow center. YORAM GORLIZKI (Manchester) analyzed the link between networks and dependence. In his paper he reviewed Khrushchevâs campaign to split the territorial party apparatus by introducing additional second secretary positions in most regional party committees during the late 1950s and earlier 1960s. According to Gorlizki, the division between senior and junior first secretaries of the Communist Party granted the Moscow center more control and created at the same time more local followers of the central party committee. He stated that about one third of preexisting regional party elites were purged between the end of the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s. He argued that this ensured a high degree of overall coherence in the regions and a larger degree of overall continuity than after the Stalinist purges of the 1930s.

JEREMY SMITH (Joensuu) examined the differences between central committee and obkom level cadres. He analyzed the impact of the national question in Kremlin-Soviet Republic relations and pointed to the significant influence of national leaders, who managed to uphold local power due to their own networks based on kinship, clan or ethnic ties.

A number of papers examined how Soviet and national culture flourished alongside one another during the postwar decades, not just in the sense that many aspects of public life were designed according to the official Leninist notion âNational in form and Soviet in Contentâ. In fact nationally defined communist elites used Soviet resources to develop rather distinct cultural policies, which led to highly powerful national interpretations at the level of republics. In the course of the symposium it became obvious that the comparison of pre-WWII Soviet borderlands and those territories which were incorporated only after WWII faces some diachronically defined obstacles.

VILIUS IVANAUSKAS (Vilnius) highlighted culture as an important means of bidirectional Soviet power distribution expressed in national terms as a major tool for legitimizing further Soviet power. By analyzing networks in Soviet Georgia and Lithuania he revealed the dynamics between the center in Moscow and the set-up of client-patronage networks. After a decade of postwar deadlock where Lithuanian culture became part of Stalinist cultural production, ethnic particularism became a strategy for accommodating Soviet resources and at the same time gave a sense of a certain degree of independence for the republican level actors.

MALTE ROLF (Bamberg) described Soviet cultural policies as an ongoing process of âindigenizingâ. In his view Bolshevik attempts to run a multiethnic Empire under Stalinist rule never dismantled nationality as a core principle of Soviet politics. Rolf stressed that the question of dependency and autonomy must be analyzed as a dual mechanism. In his empirical case he analyzed the making of Soviet Vilnius as a means to implement some degree of korenizacija-like âindigenizingâ policies from the prewar Stalinist setting into post-WWII policies. Lithuanian nationality was central to the creation of the Soviet Republic with its capital in Vilnius. Thus, in the making of post-war Vilnius the construction of Soviet legitimacy and Lithuanian representation went hand-in-hand. Resistance among local nationally defined communist elites arose only after it had gained a certain degree of autonomy during the 1970s, when the creation of a Soviet people went hand-in-hand with the strengthening of Russian as the Soviet lingua franca.

A third line of questioning focused on how Soviet power was perceived by the different populations of the Soviet Empire, and how this changed the perspective on its modernization strategies. MARTINS KAPRANS (Tartu) compared public histories of the Soviet period in todayâs Ukraine, Moldova, Latvia, and Estonia by focusing on social and political collective memory practices. Today the Soviet period in Latvia and Estonia is mainly represented in terms of suffering and nationhood â the related narratives have not changed much during the last

two decades, while in Ukraine and Moldova they underwent considerable change.

RASA CEPAITIENE (Vilnius) explored Soviet Stalinist architecture as an expression of the modernist legacy combined with âtraditional elementsâ. She argued that the general approach was combined with nationally defined dÃ©cor which localized and nationalized the Stalinist architectural style. MARIJA DREMAITE (Vilnius) followed her argument and pointed to the referential nature of Soviet attempts to synchronize newly built and preexisting environments. From the late 1950s she conceptualizes âBaltic exceptionalismâ as a specifically Baltic form of modern architecture, as a cultural form of "Inner Abroad" within the Soviet Union. New symbolic geographies allowed local actors to contextualize social housing projects and other public buildings as Baltic and even Scandinavian interpretations of Soviet modernity.

The general discussion of Post-Sovieticum focused very much on the political dynamics of running the Soviet Empire and referred to culture and in particular memory as important non-material assets funded within the Soviet framework. The importance of the increase in cultural capital within Soviet institutions was stressed. But these processes took place as part of the larger process of Soviet modernization that included a range of economic policies which were no less important in reproducing loyal Soviet citizens, processes which were not discussed during the symposium beyond the Oberost introduction at the very beginning. In most cases the late and ongoing post-war industrialization triggered a massive migration of peasants to the cities. It was precisely these newcomers who became the basis for stability â and this dimension of economics, migration and acculturation requires further discussion.

The symposium actively addressed the dynamic between the center and the periphery with regard to policies of cultural economies. Agency was identified as a decisive factor in the creation of loyal cadres and the recreation of networks. For future discussion a more comparative context might explore the impact of the failure of a certain policy in one republic on changes to Moscow strategies applied in other republics.

As NERIJA PUTINAITE (Vilnius) stressed in her final comment, this discussion is relevant to the self-understanding of post-Soviet societies still trying to interpret the relationship to their Soviet past â but also to finding the Soviet man inside oneself. She underlined that historiography cannot be neutral and is by definition political. As an example she named Khrushchevâs na-

tionality policies which still influence the self-perception of post-Soviet societies: âThe Soviet building of nations led to the imagination that Lithuanian national identity was kind of resistance against the Soviet regime, while it was during Soviet times that a mixture of old ethnic symbols was adopted as national heritageâ. The value of the Vilnius symposium is to create an academic space for mutual discussion, where the Soviet past and its impact on our perception can be reconsidered. Future events might strengthen the comparative framework and introduce new perspectives, such as a stronger focus on gender and Soviet rule. But the general setting, bringing together scholars from the Baltics, Northern America, Central-Eastern and Western Europe for two days in Vilnius, creates a productive space for re-conceptualizing the Soviet in the peripheries of the Empire.

**Conference Overview:**

*Between Historical Evolution and Historical Determinism*

Zenonas Norkus (Vilnius University), Did Lithuania Escape the Same Empire in 1918 and in 1990?

Ceslovas Laurinavicius (Lithuanian Institute of History (tbc)), Lithuanian Political Elite Attitudes Towards Kremlin in 1939-1940

Aliaksei Lastouski (Institute for Policy Studies, Minsk), Contestation over Resources of Memory in Late Soviet Period: Minsk, Moscow, Kiev

*Centre Domination: creating System of Control and Dependence*

Saulius Grybkauskas (Lithuanian Institute of History), What makes the Differences between Central Committee and Obkom? The Impact of the National Question in Kremlin-Soviet Republic Relations

Jeremy Smith (University of Eastern Finland), Randomness and Order: the Authority of Leaderships in the Soviet Republics after the Death of Stalin

Jeff Jones (The University of North Carolina at Greensboro), On the Eve of War: The National Soviet Exhibit in Kabul, April-May 1979

*Making Sense of Ethno-federalism in USSR*

Vilius Ivanauskas (Lithuanian Institute of History), Three trajectories of Ethnic particularism in âDruzhba narodovâ Empire: Cases of Lithuanian, Georgian and Kyrgyzstan writers

Sören Urbansky (Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg), Where pragmatism prevailed over ideology. Sovietization on Sakhalin

Kaspars Zellis (University of Latvia), Ideological Education in the Soviet Latvian Universities (1960 - 1970s): General Soviet Practice and Particularity

*Baltic states in the USSR: from Comparison to Particularity*

Daina Bleeire (Rigas Stradins University), Dynamics of Relationship between Moscow and Republican Authorities in Matters of Cultural Policy: Latvian Case

Malte Rolf (Otto-Friedrich-Universität Bamberg), Home Rule âMade in the USSRâ? Cultural Policies the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic (1944-1991)

Marius Emuzis (Vilnius University), Republic First Secretary and Moscow: a Case Study of an Attempt to replace A. Snieckus in 1967

*Making sense of âStructural Fractologyâ*

Arnd Bauerkämper (Freie Universität Berlin), Sovietization and Self-sovietization in the GDR: the Case of Land Reform and Collectivization

Marija Dremaite (Vilnius University), The "Soviet DNA" in Architecture and Built Environment: the Case of the Baltic Republics

Rasa Cepaitiene (Lithuanian Institute of History), What is Imperial and What is National in Stalinist Architecture and Urbanism?

*Particular Peripheries with Particular Leaderships*

Yoram Gorlizki (University of Manchester), Networks, Dependence, and the Bifurcation of the Territorial Party Apparatus under Khrushchev

Andrei Kazakevich (Institute for Policy Studies, Minsk), Belarusian Soviet Elites: Crises of 1980s and its Political Consequences

Artyom Ulunyan (Russian Academy of Science), Nationhood under the Eastern Bloc: Communist Romanian Mode of Ethno-Political Construction as the Response to the "Elder Brother" (late 1960s - 1970s)

Arvydas Anusauskas (Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania), Local KGB (NKVD) Relations with Lubianka in Sovietization of the Lithuania

*Perception of Soviet Empire in Post-Soviet period: from Post-Colonialism to the Politics of History*

Ilya Kukulin (National Research University, Higher School of Economics, Moscow), The Different Versions of Orientalism in Soviet Literature: calling "Said's Orientalism" into Question

Martins Kaprans (Tartu University), Remembering the Soviet era in Ukraine, Moldova, Latvia, and Estonia: Similarities and Differences of Post-Soviet Memory Regimes

Aurimas Svedas (Vilnius University), The Relations between Lithuania and Russia in XXIst Century: the Usage of the Politics of History

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