

Call for Papers for the conference

**Between divergent narratives and national loyalties:
Oral History and politics of memory in Eastern Europe**

02./03. März 2017, Marburg, Herder-Institut

organized by the German Association for Historical Research on Eastern Europe (Verband der Osteuropahistorikerinnen und -historiker, e.V.) and the Herder Institute for Historical Research on East Central Europe (Institute of the Leibniz Association)

Recent political events have again exposed the key-role of politics of memory within political developments in Central and Eastern Europe. The conference will address the possible relationship between current politics of memory and oral histories. Interviews usually do not only reflect, but also depend on current political circumstances, as exemplified by the impossibility to officially practice oral history during the socialist period or by recent instances of subjugation of interview projects under current myths, for example glorifying common national heroes.

With the conference we aim to gain a broad comparative perspective on the experiences of oral historians in different countries of Central and Eastern Europe (esp. Russia, Ukraine, Poland, Czech Republic, Romania, as well as Eastern Germany). We thereby intend to illuminate not only the history and practice of oral history, but also the general politics of memory as background and context of scholarly work.

We encourage participants to address the following key questions:

- How can we describe and classify the politics of history of the respective countries? Do thematic taboos limit the work of historians and other scholars? In what form and to what extent do governments exploit oral history for political aims?
- We would like to ask the participants to reflect on the contributions of oral history to the memory and history of the Second World War, the Nazi occupation and Stalinism. What types of narratives have resulted? When narratives of interviewees deviate from authoritative views of history, how and to what extent can such results be communicated to a wider public?
- How do interviewees recall the socialist era: as “non-time” (Valeska Bopp Filimonov), as a time of suffering? What role do idealization and nostalgia play? Which discourses dominate at what stage? Can we identify transnational commonalities, or does each narrative follow its own chronology?
- The practice of oral history of the late and post-socialist era developed from a marginalized field into an officially established scholarly method. Which processes of legalization and institutionalization, but also de-legitimization and marginalization have taken place after 1991? How can we assess the current status of oral history in terms of future stability and new risks?
- During significant political events of recent years, such as for example the "Euro-Maidan" in Ukraine or the Bolotnaya protests in Russia, interview-projects on current and past events have played an important role. Under what conditions and with what effects did participants and scholars conduct, evaluate and publish such interviews?

The main conference-language will be German, but contributions in English are also welcome. A part of the presenters will be invited, another part will be recruited via this CfP. We plan to incorporate commentaries on papers by experienced experts on oral history and the politics of memory and to publish selected contributions after the conference. Funding for travel and accommodation of presenters is available.

We ask for proposals with a maximum one-page abstract and a short CV until October 20th, 2016.

Please send proposals to:

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