

Call for Papers

European Remigrations in the Twentieth Century

International Conference at the German Historical Institute London

8–10 March 2012

Conveners: Professor Marita Krauss, University of Augsburg

Professor Andreas Gestrich, German Historical Institute London

Whenever a war is lost, an occupying force pulls out, or a revolution is successful, a fundamental change of elites is likely. This opens up chances for the elites waiting in the wings at home, but also for those who had fled or been driven out. Political émigrés mostly take a clear stance against the old regime when they leave their homelands. The knowledge of different cultural and political systems they laboriously acquire in exile seems to predestine them for positions in which they can help to shape new beginnings. If they return to their countries, those who stayed at home will welcome them with open arms—or so one might think. But it is clear that remigrants are treated very differently depending on the country and the crisis situation. The spectrum ranges from triumphant return to a sceptical wait-and-see attitude, rejection and resistance. Thus Charles de Gaulle was celebrated as a liberator in Paris in 1944, while Willy Brandt and others who returned to Germany had to face lifelong prejudice. If we compare the patterns of various remigrations, we find many striking parallels.

The more political the reasons for emigration, the more likely it is that there is a desire to return. This does not indicate anything about the success or failure of the remigration. Other factors seem to be responsible for this: perhaps the duration of the exile and its distance from home? Or the networks of remigrants, their political colour, and their elite status before or during the emigration? What part is played by international recognition as part of a government-in-exile? What is the significance of gender and generation? And how did the return of scientists, academics, and artists who had emigrated for political reasons and tried to re-establish themselves in their old sphere of activity work out? What transfers did they effect?

Much research has already been done on the significance and problems of political remigration in the case of individual European countries and upheavals. What is lacking so far is comparative work on the topic of return, and we would like to encourage this with the planned conference to be held at the GHIL. It will focus on the turning points of 1945 and 1989. Return took people to different societies: to countries which had been ruled by Nazis or fascists (Germany, Italy, Spain, Portugal); countries which had been occupied by Germany (France, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Yugoslavia); and countries which had been socialist (Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, Poland, Bulgaria, Latvia, Hungary). The aim of the conference is to draw

far-reaching conclusions about political remigrations in Europe from the parallels and differences, and to think about the chances which returnees had to influence transformation processes. A glance at comparable situations beyond Europe shows that this is a highly topical political subject.

Contributions may relate to individual countries, or to specific individuals or groups. Thematic connections should be established with the following areas in order to make a broad and comparative discussion possible:

- Networks: what effect did working for governments-in-exile have on the type of return? Did exile networks or the awareness of being a political group exist? To what extent were returnees accepted by the elites of their home countries? What part was played by political parties as a first port of call, and did they provide any assistance with integration?
- Knowledge transfer: what knowledge was transferred from where? How was it applied, adapted, changed? Were remigrants able to contribute to 'modernizing' society?
- Transnationalism: did remigrants become transnational elites? How deeply were they shaped by their countries of exile? Where did conflicts occur with the societies of their new-old homes? What opportunities did the 'view from outside' offer? Were the returnees regarded as 'nationally reliable' or not, and what impact did this have on the election campaigns of transnational politicians?

Anyone interested in participating is invited to submit a topic for a paper along with a brief outline (maximum 500 words) and a brief CV by 31 July 2011. Papers should be no longer than 30 minutes (plus 15 minutes discussion), should focus on arguments and questions, and relate to the common questions outlined above. Travel and accommodation costs will be reimbursed, and the intention is to publish the conference proceedings.

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