

Call for Papers:
Frost, Ice, and Snow:
Cold Climate in Russian History

Rachel
Carson
Center

16-18 February 2012

Sponsor: Deutsches Historisches Institut Moskau

Conveners: Julia Herzberg (Rachel Carson Center München), PD Dr. Andreas Renner (Universität Tübingen), Prof. Dr. Klaus Gestwa (Universität Tübingen)

Russia was and remains especially associated with cold. Not only do terms from recent history—like “Cold War” and “thaw”—stand metonymically for Russia and the Soviet Union, the discourses about the Russian cold stem from existential experiences. Due to its geographical location, extreme weather influences reign in Russia. In Russia and the Soviet Union, the cold was a constant cultural challenge, a phenomenon that influenced actions, everyday experiences, and mentalities, and determined both external and self-perceptions.

Focusing on the factor of climate, this conference will discuss and connect new approaches to Russian environmental history. The goal of the conference is to explore the relevance of environmental historical research questions for Russian history on the basis of climatic conditions. Furthermore, the conference will establish a network of colleagues who work on the environmental history of Russia and the Soviet Union.

The goal of this conference is to discuss the cold primarily under four aspects:

1. *Environmental Perspectives in Russian History*

The first section asks about the significance granted to the human-nature relationship in historical works on Russia and the Soviet Union. To what degree have economic explanatory models in the pre-revolutionary and Soviet historiography impeded environmental historical research questions? Why has the category of space determined the historical perception of Russia, while climate has played only a subordinate role in the historical representations of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries? How could one write a history of Russia in which climate is a central factor? This consideration of previous approaches will facilitate the location of gaps in the research.

2. *The Cold in Everyday Life*

Although cold and frost had a central importance for Russian history, there are only a few studies that have systematically explored how people reacted to the adverse climatic conditions in Muscovite and Tsarist Russia, as well as the Soviet Union. The second section investigates the practices with which people in Russia reacted to negative temperatures. The focus here is on the adaptive achievements that manifested themselves or were negotiated politically, socially, aesthetically, and economically. What role did climate play in the settlement, agricultural, technological, and transportation history of Tsarist Russia or the Soviet Union? How did religion, industrialization, urbanization, and literacy influence dealings with the cold? Contributions for this section could, for example, contrast long term adaptive practices with short term efforts to overcome, temper, or utilize the cold. In this section, adaptive strategies that were implemented or reconstituted as a result of military conflict could also be analyzed.

3. *Scientification and Climate Engineering*

The third section explores scientification processes. Which sciences focused on the cold, and what did they believe was worthy of research? How did their representatives develop and advance their scientific disciplines by speaking about climate and cold. In this section, polar research will play a central role. What value was accorded to polar research in Tsarist Russia and Soviet Union? To what extent was polar research a “weapon” in the Cold War and at what point did questions of nature protection and climate change enter the discussion? Even if the Cold War must be viewed above all as a confrontation of systems, the transnational aspects of this history should not be neglected. Research on cold can also be seen as a history of transfers. It will be investigated, if the topic of “cold” permitted the formation of strategic alliances that transcended the system conflict. This section also focuses on those world climate utopias of the 1960s and 1970s, conceived by both American and Soviet scientists, as a reaction to the fear of global cooling. Conversely, what role did the debate about global warming play in the 1970s and 1980s in the Soviet Union, a country that strongly identified itself with a narrative of coldness?

4. *Narratives, Media, and Visualization of the Cold*

The fourth section should provide an opportunity to discuss how communication about cold produced individual and collective identities, and what significance these representations of the harsh climate possessed for external and self-perceptions. The section is devoted to the narratives and media that have conveyed communication about climatic conditions in Russia. What discourses, metaphors, narratives, and iconographies did actors refer to when discussing experiences with snow and frost? When and how did cold and frost become a national symbol? How did visualizations of cold help establish new discourses about knowledge in polar research, for example. What

role did cold, ice, and snow play in novels and films about Russia? Looking at media and discourses, can the Russian winter and the Siberian cold be understood as Russian and European sites of memory?

The conference "FROST, ICE, AND SNOW. COLD CLIMATE IN RUSSIAN HISTORY" will take place at the German Historical Institute in Moscow. Travel costs will be covered by the Rachel Carson Center in Munich; accommodation costs are provided by the GHI Moscow. Abstracts (500 words) and a short CV should be submitted by 30 June 2011 to the following address:

julia.herzberg@carsoncenter.lmu.de.

Applications must be composed in one of the two conference languages, English or Russian.

Notification of conference participation will be delivered by 1 August 2011. The conference will be based on the discussion of pre-circulated contributions. These should be between 6,000 and 8,000 words (incl. footnotes) and must be submitted by 15 December 2011. To permit ample discussion time, presentations should not exceed fifteen minutes. Selected contributions will be published in the Rachel Carson Center publication series.

For questions, please contact:

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