



7.5. Rural Russia: 1880s to present day

Panel organiser: Bruisch, Katja, German Historical Institute Moscow, Russia

Although until the 1930s Russia was predominantly agrarian and a comparably high share of its population maintained close ties to agriculture throughout the Soviet period, there is a lack of historical investigation on the country's rural regions. While there are studies on the far-reaching attempts of transforming the Russian countryside by the central state, 19th and 20th century rural Russia keeps standing in the shadow of its urban counterpart. If any, it was framed within the narrative of "Russian backwardness" or the idea of a Russian "Sonderweg". The historical investigation of the village thereby often served as a means to explain the country's failure in becoming a modern nation. Bringing together approaches from the field of Russian history and from a methodologically advanced economic history this panel seeks to discuss, how the country fits within a pan-European picture of rural development during the 19th and 20th centuries.

Chair: Katzer, Nikolaus, German Historical Institute Moscow, Russia

Wednesday, 21 August 2013 // 0900 – 1030 // Session 7 – Room A 027

7.5.1. Where is the backward peasant? Regional crop yields on peasant and private land in Russia 1883-1913

Kopsidis, Michael, Leibniz-Institute of Agricultural Development in Central and Eastern Europe, Halle/Saale, Germany
Shilnikova, Irina, Higher School of Economics Moscow, Russia
Bruisch, Katja, German Historical Institute Moscow, Russia
Bromley, Daniel W., University of Wisconsin, USA

This paper deals with agricultural growth rates in late Imperial Russia. Based upon a comprehensive micro-level data set on agricultural crop yields between 1883 and 1913 it provides insight into the regional differences of agricultural growth and the development prospects of peasant agriculture before WWI. Making use of the fact that, unique in Europe, contemporary Russian statistics distinguished between "privately owned" and "peasant" land, we test, whether peasant agriculture, which in wide parts of European Russia was communally organized, can be regarded as an obstacle for agricultural growth. In a broader sense, the paper seeks to challenge the stereotype of peasant backwardness, which allegedly made Russia an exceptional case within pan-European development trends during the era of industrialization.

7.5.2. Russia's rural modernity and how it was sacrificed

Bruisch, Katja, German Historical Institute Moscow, Russia

This paper attempts to show, that the history of rural areas is also a history of how these are intellectually and ideologically approached. It explores, how the idea of a "rural modernity", based on market-oriented family production, cooperatives and local self-government, was at first integrated in early 20th century policy-making and how it was sacrificed for an industrial and urban vision of modernity in the late 1920s.

7.5.3. From Heartland to Hinterland: Transformation of the Russian Countryside in the late Soviet and Post-Soviet Period

Nikulin, Alexander, Center for Agrarian Studies, Russian Academy of National Economy and Public Administration, Moscow, Russia

The paper deals with the main stages of rural transformation between 1960 and 2010. It analyzes the evolution of the Russian countryside not only from above, from the point of view of Soviet and post-Soviet policy makers, but also from below in terms of the everyday behaviour of rural inhabitants. Special attention is given to regional differences in the transformation of the Russian countryside.

Participants

Bromley, Daniel W.

Professor (Emeritus), University of Wisconsin, and Visiting Professor, Humboldt University-Berlin. He is a Fellow of the Association of Environmental and Resource Economists, and of the Agricultural and Applied Economics Association.

Bruisch, Katja

PhD in History, Research fellow at the German Historical Institute Moscow. Studied Eastern European History and Economics in Berlin, Kazan and Goettingen. Worked on Russian agricultural experts in the early 20th century.

Katzer, Nikolaus

Director of the German Historical Institute Moscow and Professor at Helmut Schmidt University Hamburg. His primary research interests are modern Russian history, with a particular focus on the political, cultural and social history of the early twentieth century, the Russian Civil War and the Brezhnev period. Current project: The history of the Soviet countryside from the 1960s to the 1980s.

Kopsidis, Michael

Senior Researcher at the Leibniz-Institute of Agricultural Development in Central and Eastern Europe (IAMO), Halle/Saale, Germany. He works on agricultural growth and peasants in market integration processes during the 19th and 20th centuries in Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe.

Nikulin, Alexander

PhD in Economics, MA in Sociology, Director of the Centre for Agrarian Studies, Russian Academy of National Economy and Public Administration. Research interests: historical sociology, economic sociology, agrarian sociology. Initiator of many international field research projects in the Russian countryside. Visiting fellow at the universities of Oxford and Manchester (GB), Yale (USA), Frankfurt (Germany) as well as at the Institute of Social Anthropology in Halle (Germany).

Shilnikova, Irina

PhD in History, Associate Professor at the Higher School of Economics Moscow, Department of Theoretical Economics. Research interests: Russian economic history, labor history, business history, Tsarist Russian agrarian history, cliometrics.