

Summaries

Frank Bösch, Transnational Revolutions. The Federal Republic of Germany and the System Changes in Iran and Nicaragua

The comparative study of revolution often focused on internal preconditions and processes of revolutions based on diachronic comparison. In contrast, this article also takes into account their transnational dimension and connections between simultaneous revolutions. With the emergence of the revolutions in Iran and Nicaragua and their relations with the Federal Republic, it takes a closer look at two system changes that can also be seen as a consequence of the intensive interconnectedness of the world since the 1970s. The article will show how Nicaraguan and Iranian emigrants living in the Federal Republic contributed to internationally discrediting the two regimes and thus became key opponents in the West. They also bolstered the development of transnational networks that provided significant support during the outbreak of the revolution. Economic, political and cultural relations helped to embed the revolution globally. Economically, the importance of certain export goods (coffee and oil respectively) proved crucial, facilitating cross-border networks and attention even after the system changes. On a political level, the Cold War underpinned a competitive environment, which fostered international relations with East and West Germany while the USA became a mobilising adversary. It was precisely this anti-Americanism that proved a unifying element within the German Left. The article also discusses the transnational significance of a politicised religion that unfolded a mobilising power in both revolutions and radiated across borders.

Willy Buschak, »Socialism and Freedom«. How a Small Group in Mexican Exile Developed a New Understanding of Revolution during the 1940s and the Consequences for Europe

This article describes a rather rare incident within the history of the labour movement: some independent Socialists in Mexican exile met during the Second World War to come to terms with and share their experiences of the revolutions in Russia, Germany and Spain, beyond previous party political affiliations and different nationalities. They increasingly realised that traditional socialist concepts developed by Marx, Lenin, Luxemburg and others were no longer sufficient and so developed a new understanding of concepts such as revolutions, party, class and Socialism. Traditional questions such as those of the role of violence during revolutions were answered anew. Human freedom and dignity emerged as central aspects of this new socialist concept, with the unification of Europe as the precondition for its realisation. The magazine »Socialismo y libertad« (Socialism and Liberty), published from 1943 to 1945, spread these new ideas across Latin America and Europe. The article outlines the history of this publication and the figures behind it, men and women alike. It investigates the influence of these ideas on workers' organisations that newly emerged after 1945, on the European labour movement and their role within the New Left.

Etienne Dubslaff, East German Social Democracy and the »Peaceful Revolution«

Using the example of the Social Democratic Party of the GDR (SDP), this article investigates whether applying the – at the very least – paradoxical notion of a »peaceful revolution« serves, in an analytical manner, the historical understanding of the events between 1989 and 1990. This question is all the more relevant because neither SDP nor SPD originally used the term »revolution«: only in hindsight did the founding generation of the SDP claim to have (successfully) carried through a revolution together with the citizen movement – precisely at a time when its members were no longer key figures in the political

arena of the GDR and the FDR respectively. The contribution will analyse the development of the SDP/SPD regarding its social democratic self-understanding, enemy stereotypes, political aims, and means of political struggle and alliances with other actors in the GDR and the Federal Republic during the former's last year, in order to illuminate the historical framework of this revolutionary ethos.

Christina Ewald, *The Fight for Schools. Momentum and Scopes of Action during the Revolution of 1918–19 by the Example of School Policy in Hamburg*

When the sailors mutinied in November 1918 and workers' and soldiers' councils sprang up across the country, Hamburg, second largest city of the perishing Imperial Germany, was, like everyone else, swept up by the events. During the five months from November 1918 to March 1919 of being in office, the Hamburg workers' and soldiers' council not only dealt with big questions such as the restructuring of the state but also with concrete political problems of everyday life. Although school policy was not among the most pressing topics, different progressive educational currents that had already emerged during Imperial Germany sought to fight against class differences through school policies. During the period of upheaval after the First World War, ideas of a new society, that were also supposed to be mirrored in schools, reached their culmination. By taking the debates and decisions of the workers' and soldiers' council as an example, different dynamics and supposedly revolutionary practices of action can be identified. Examining the interaction between the workers' and soldiers' council with forces of inertia, but also with the council of teachers that was established during the revolutionary period, illuminates potentials, possibilities and limits that were faced by contemporaries. It simultaneously enables a clearer picture of their respective understanding of revolution. In so doing, the article answers key questions such as how revolutionary politics was done and how revolutionary the revolution of 1918–19 – at least in Hamburg – actually was.

Andreas Fahrmeir, *Patterns of Revolution?*

This contribution examines the question of whether there are typical patterns of revolution, based on the observation that various attempts have been made to identify these without producing reliable theories because future projections derived from previous experiences of revolution almost never occurred as predicted. The article firstly gives reasons for why revolutions rarely develop in the same vein – despite structural analogies that arise from the concept of revolution. General problems of comparability between events far apart in time, disagreement over the way of how to describe the cause and effect of specific revolutions, as well as the self-reflexivity of revolutionary actors and events play a crucial role in this respect. The second part of the contribution explains why the search for regularities of revolutionary events goes on despite these fundamental objections and how it will lead to the identification of certain, generalised patterns. This applies, for example, to the interaction of political and economic processes as well as the role of military officials or rather, more generally speaking, of officials of the previous regime.

Jan de Graaf, *Strikes as Revolutionary History? Probing the Potential for a Revolution in Post-1945 Europe through Wildcat Strikes*

This article probes to what extent the wildcat strike waves that swept Europe in the wake of the Second World War were a symptom of a revolutionary situation. Contrary to conventional wisdom on the topic, which tends to view these strike waves as a show of strength and unity on the part of radicalised workers, it questions the revolutionary aspirations of the postwar working class and draws attention to the profound divisions between different groups of workers. It does so by focusing upon five sets of radical and/or political demands

that have often been ascribed to the postwar working class: a root-and-branch purge of political and economic life, the unification of the trade union (and broader labour) movement, the abolition of piecework and other (individual) performance bonuses, the socialisation of industry and worker participation in industrial management, and claims for workers to have a decisive voice in the political arena. In exploring these questions in the context of five industrial regions in East and West, the article sheds fresh light on the labour movement's failure to mount a revolutionary challenge to (state) capitalist reconstruction in postwar Europe.

Veit Groß/Julian Zimmermann, A »Revolutionary Movement« in Trecento? The Importance of Two Anachronisms for the Interpretation of the Roman Tribune Cola di Rienzo (1313–1354)

The 1347 seizure of power by the notary Cola di Rienzo in Rome has in earlier years often been seen as a revolution without critically scrutinising the use of this term. This coup was carried out, with papal consent, by a coalition of Populares against powerful barons from the vicinity of the Eternal city. However, instead of being regarded as causing the complete upheaval of the political order, it should instead be placed in the context of a long-term transformation process. The article explores the actions of a political movement that mobilised against the power of these aristocrats according to the principle of »trial and error«, experimenting with existing resources of legitimisation. Transforming the antique heritage of the city into a powerbase independent from the Pope during the 1340s, created a specific momentum that intensified the revolutionary nature of the movement's rhetoric which, however, came into conflict with the movement's potential for mobilisation and undermined its scope of action rather than bolstering it.

Theo Jung, The Voice of the People and Its Silence. 1848–49 as a Communication Revolution between Expectation and Experience

By considering the key role of communication acts within the revolutionary process, recent research has increasingly regarded revolutions as communication events. This article argues to consider the German revolution of 1848–49 – in an even more expanded, emphatic sense – as a communication revolution. Contemporaries considered the revolution as one predominantly geared towards the transformation of political communication processes. The objective of an overdue ›having one's say‹ of the vox populi shaped revolutionary actions as much as the expectations attached to it. The contribution examines the consequences of this changed constellation by taking a closer look at the Frankfurt National Assembly, which results in a different picture of this paradigmatic »talking parliament«. Despite high expectations, an extremely large silent majority continued to prevail in the plenary of the Paulskirche, whose character, however, changed fundamentally over the course of the months. Owing to the experiences of an unbounded debate creating operational problems in the light of the limited time frame of political processes, the talking parliament turned, within a short period of time, into one that was disciplined and efficiently working. However, from the outside, the Paulskirche was still viewed as a »parliament« in which revolutionary momentum petered out and turned into empty words. It was precisely these overstretched expectations about the power of the political word that made disenchantment almost inevitable. Thus, the failure of the revolution resulted in general disappointment regarding the power of the political word both on the left and the right of the political spectrum. This development fuelled new hopes of a policy of silent energy, which would shape the legacy of 1848 for German history on a long-term basis.

Thomas Mergel, *Replica-Locomotives. Modern History of Revolution as Mimesis History*

This article attempts to historicise the history of modern revolution as a process of re-enactment, as (both negative and positive) mimesis, and as a deliberate role model. Only this – with the French Revolution as a powerful role model – made an understanding of revolution possible that became a myth during the nineteenth century and seemed to be a natural and supra-historical phenomenon. The fact that »the« revolution was singularised manifests this myth. This was primarily due to the role of revolutionary violence which was attributed the power of accelerating history. However, over the course of the twentieth century, this myth faded away when revolutions became a global phenomenon. This is illustrated by the growing problem of legitimising revolutionary violence. From the second half of the twentieth century onwards, revolutionary movements increasingly derived their legitimate power from their commitment to non-violence. Real-time and visual global media coverage has been said to be one of the crucial reasons for this: the medialisation of revolutionary events causes a momentum of civil protest. The myth of »the« revolution that was powerful during the nineteenth century has arguably come to an end.

Andrea Müller, *Church, Ethnicity and Myth. The »Revolution of the Poncho« in Ecuador (1960–1990)*

Since the waves of protest in the 1990s, the indigenous movement of Ecuador has not only become firmly established in the political arena but is also a well researched subject as a new social movement. By contrast, it is lesser known that the representatives of the Catholic Church of Ecuador celebrated the strengthening of the indigenous movement as a victory of the »revolution of the poncho«. Based on the »option for the poor«, proclaimed by the Latin American clergy in 1968, the Ecuadorian Bishop Leonidas Proaño saw the »liberation of the indigenous« as his mission. This resulted both in the fascination for the »bishop with the poncho« and the mythologisation of the role of the Church in the context of the foundation of the indigenous movement. By looking beyond the impact of single actors, this article argues that the concept of revolution which is centre stage here has created a powerful myth and discourse of remembrance, describing the mobilisation of the Ecuadorian indigenous as the result of liberation theology. To illuminate the emergence and characteristics of the myth of the »revolution of the poncho«, the contribution will examine in particular the definition and use of the notion of revolution within the milieu of liberation theology, as well as the increasing focus of pastoral work on »the indigenous«. Thus, it questions existing narratives of resistance, discusses interpretations of the term »revolution« and provides a new approach to investigate ethnicity as a political resource.

Mike Schmeitzner, *The Chancellor as Historian. Hermann Müller and the History of the November Revolution*

The book »Die Novemberrevolution. Erinnerungen«, written by the then Reich Chancellor Hermann Müller and published in late 1928, is a documentary-style history of the revolution incorporating some personal experiences and insights. As the title suggests, the book was intended to be both reminiscences from this time and an analysis of the revolutionary events. By also drawing on remote (personal) source material, this publication was a hybrid that furthermore intended to justify the principles of the MSPD revolutionary policy and to be a reply to Richard Müller's left-wing socialist inspired revolution trilogy. However, Hermann Müller never achieved the same analytical quality as Eduard Bernstein or Heinrich Ströbel in their studies on revolution. Müller's book still attracted the interest of both contemporary and present-day historians. The book was widely received in its time, presumably owing to Müller's position as chancellor. Having said that, it is striking that Müller also used his networks to distribute the book. Its main value is its emphasis on the

chances and potential of the republic on the eve of its final crisis and seeing the turning point of 1918–19 as a democratic revolution and the starting point of a seemingly open development. At party level, Müller's book was also an offer of integration towards the section of the USPD that had (re-)joined the majority party in 1922. Müller deliberately appreciated the leaders of this party wing who advocated parliamentary democracy just as the MSDP did. This offer resonated well, at least with the majority of the party.

Kerstin Wolff, A Women's Revolution? The Women's Movement Press and Its Coverage of the November Revolution

This article focuses on the views that different wings of the women's movement took on the November Revolution in 1918–19, how they covered it in the outlets of the women's movement and which interpretations they offered to their audiences. Based on research of this press coverage, it will be examined whether the actors of the different wings of the women's movement saw themselves as revolutionaries. What did they think about the revolution and what did it mean for the activists? What did they talk about? Centre stage of the analysis is the »Centralblatt« of the BDF, »Die Frau« edited by Helene Lange and Gertrud Bäumer, »Die Frauenbewegung« edited by Minna Cauer, and the SPD outlet »Die Gleichheit«, at that time edited by Marie Juchacz. It is striking that all articles – regardless of the newspaper being conservative, liberal or socialist – mainly focused on the implementation of women's suffrage rather than on the revolutionary events. This is underlined by commemorative articles published ten years later in remembrance of the revolution. Thus, the article will argue that activists of the women's movement spoke about the revolution by referring to the implementation of women's suffrage. This can therefore be seen as the »female« side to the revolution.