Carole Fink, Frank Hadler,
Tomasz Schramm (Eds.)

1956

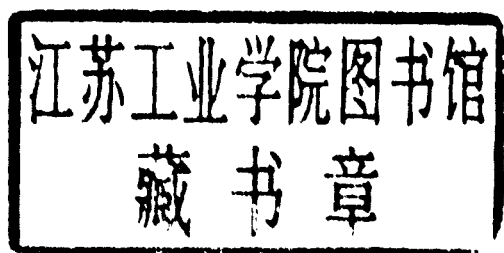## European and
Global Perspectives

Carole Fink, Frank Hadler, Tomasz Schramm (Eds.)
1956: European and Global Perspectives

Global History and International Studies

Edited by
Ulf Engel, Frank Hadler and Matthias Middell

Carole Fink, Frank Hadler,
Tomasz Schramm (Eds.)

1956

European and Global Perspectives

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Preface

Almost six years ago, in November 2000, the three editors embarked on the challenging project of revisiting the year *1956* in time for the half-century commemoration. Thanks to electronic technology, we were able to announce our project to a broad community of historians and received many excellent proposals from all parts of the world. Our goal was to assemble new scholarship based on original research, which transcended national borders and provided a long-term perspective on the events of that epochal year.

This volume is based on two preliminary conferences organized on behalf of the Association Internationale d'Histoire Contemporaine de l'Europe in 2005, at Smolenice, in cooperation with the Historical Institute of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, and at Sydney, in the framework of the International Congress of Historical Sciences. The first conference was centered on "The European 1956," and the second one on "The Global 1956." As organizers and editors we express our deepest gratitude to our Slovac hosts, Edita Ivaničková, Dušan Kováč, and their associates, for their warm hospitality.

To create this volume, we drew up a new structure. We added missing topics and, with considerable regret, omitted some papers. This has been a remarkable collaboration among the three editors and thirteen authors coming from Australia, Canada, Europe, Israel, South Africa, and the United States. We present our findings here on the principal issues of 1956: the Cold War, decolonization, and the new global culture that emerged a half century ago.

The editors wish to thank our institutions, The Ohio State University, the Geisteswissenschaftliches Zentrum Geschichte und Kultur Ostmitteleuropas (GWZO) at Leipzig University, and the Adam Mickiewicz University of Poznań, for providing logistic and financial assistance for this volume. We thank everyone who presented papers at the two conferences and the authors in this book who have been scrupulous in meeting our tight publication deadline.

Finally, we should like to dedicate this book to the memory of our colleague, Hermann-Josef Rupieper of the University of Halle, who died before the meeting at Smolenice, where he was to have discussed the German problem in 1956. A truly international historian and great teacher, Rupieper epitomized the zest of an avid researcher and the gifts of a fine writer and analyst.

April 2006

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1956: New Perspectives
An Introduction

Carole Fink, Frank Hadler, Tomasz Schramm

Some scholars have come to regard historical dates as a relic of the narrow study of political history and rejected the confines of a single year, decade, or even century.[1] Nonetheless, these numbers, however arbitrary and geographically limited, still resonate in human consciousness, signifying moments of disjuncture and continuity, as exemplified by the years 476, 1492, 1648, 1789, 1917, and 1989.

Over the past fifteen years since the end of the Cold War, historical research has expanded in several significant ways. One important new field is the study of globalization, which has focused on international structures and institutions as well as on worldwide economic and social trends.[2] Under the label of International History, another field has moved beyond the practice of diplomacy to investigate other significant aspects of inter-state relations.[3] A third approach has been the study of transnational history, concentrating on non-state actors and probing such topics as race, religion, gender, culture, technology, science, the environment, borders, and shifting national identities, often in a comparative perspective.[4]

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1 One of the pioneers in breaking the bonds of temporal boundaries was Fernand Braudel in *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II* (Paris: Colin, 1949).

2 Laren Benton, "From the World-System Perspective to Institutional World History,"*Journal of World History* 7 (1996): 261-95. See also Michael Geyer and Charles Bright, "World History in a Global Age," *American Historical Review* 100 (1995): 1034-60; James H. Mittelman, ed. *Globalization: Critical Reflections* (Boulder, CO: Rienner, 1996), Anthony G. Hopkins, ed. *Globalization in World History* (London: Pimlico, 2002); Jürgen Osterhammel and Niels P. Petersson, *Geschichte der Globalisierung. Dimensionen, Prozesse, Epochen* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2003).

3 Jürgen Osterhammel and Wilfried Loth, eds. *Internationale Geschichte: Themen – Ergebnisse – Aussichten* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2000).

4 Matthias Middell, "Transnationalisierung und Globalgeschichte", *Traverse: Zeitschrift für Geschichte/ Revue d'histoire* 12, no. 1 (2005): 9-49. Also: *The Na-*

These approaches have posed a challenge to the traditional methods of historical inquiry, to "event-history" (*Ereignisgeschichte*), which presents a chronological narrative within a specific time frame and temporal boundary, and also to microhistory and the study of "everyday life" (*Alltagsgeschichte*), which look at major events "from the bottom up." Some historians have attempted to bridge the gap by studying global trends in the 20th century[5] or by analyzing the local, national, and international impact of events in a specific year.[6]

Another important new task is to identify signposts that transcend particular nations and continents. In post-World War II European history, the years 1945, 1968, and 1989 have been labelled the three transformative moments.[7] However, in a larger perspective – and this is our hypothesis – the year 1956 was a marker of *global* change. Just past the mid point of the twentieth century, this was not only the year of Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin, the Polish and Hungarian revolutions, and the Sinai and Suez invasions and retreats. In the global history of the Cold War, 1956 was one of the most violent of years, when the Super Power rivalry – ideological, political, geopolitical, and military – affected every aspect of human life on the planet.[8] On the other hand, in that tumultuous year global movements and a global consciousness were developing. Even the most powerful nation-states, once the ultimate sources of power, wealth, and authority, faced a world of increasingly

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tion and Beyond: Transnational Perspectives on United States History (Bloomington, IN: Organization of American Historians, 1999). See also Thomas Bender, ed., *Rethinking American History in a Global Age*, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002); Sebastian Conrad and Jürgen Osterhammel, eds., *Das Kaiserreich transnational. Deutschland in der Welt 1871–1914* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004).

5   Charles Bright and Michael Geyer, „Globalgeschichte und die Einheit der Welt im 20. Jahrhundert," *Comparativ* 4 , no. 5 (1994): 13-45; Charles Maier, "Consigning the Twentieth Century to History: Alternative Narratives for the Modern Era," *American Historical Review* 105 (2000): 807-31.

6   Carole Fink, Philipp Gassert and Detlef Junker, eds. *1968: The World Transformed.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); also John E. Wills, *1688: A Global History* (New York: Norton, 2001) and Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, *In 1926. Living at the Edge of Time* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997).

7   Gerd-Rainer Horn and Patraic Kennedy, eds., *Transnational Moments of Change: Europe 1945, 1968, 1989* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004).

8   Georges-Henri Soutou, *La guerre de cinquante ans. Les relations Est-Ouest, 1943–1990* (Paris: Fayard, 2002), p. 9.

porous frontiers, which goods, people, and ideas – as well as the loom-
ing nuclear cloud – could now penetrate.

In this volume we have undertaken a fresh look at several major his-
torical questions emanating from the year 1956. Our book is organized
into four sections containing essays that integrate new archival findings
with the questions and approaches of contemporary international histo-
riography. Part one takes us inside the heart of the Cold War. Part two
deals with the first major upheaval in European communism. Part three,
moving towards the future, covers the birth of the Common Market, the
crisis in the Middle East, and the onset of decolonization in Africa. Part
four discusses other global issues marked by but also transcending the
Cold War, which lay the basis for the next half century.

<div align="center">I</div>

Although the Cold War was a global phenomenon, it began and ended in
Europe, and there its impact was direct and overwhelming. Not only did
the "Iron Curtain" split the continent with barbed wire, mines, guard
dogs, and machine guns but it also created substantial political, material,
and spiritual barriers between East and West. In Communist Eastern
Europe, up to Stalin's death there had been major efforts to "engineer
human souls" by emulating Soviet models promoting a socialist lan-
guage, science, and aesthetics and rejecting decadent Western ways.[9] In
Western Europe, the United States parried Moscow's message by ex-
porting its consumer products and popular culture and by mobilizing
liberal spokesmen against the new totalitarianism of the East.[10] This
political and cultural atmosphere is depicted in Carole's Fink's chapter,

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9 Mikhail Trifonovich Iovchuk, *Socialist Culture and Educating a New
   Personality* (Moscow: Novosti Press Agency Publishing House, 1966); also
   Valerii Soĭfer, *Lysenko and the Tragedy of Soviet Science*, trans. Leo Gruliow
   and Rebecca Gruliow (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1994).

10 Alexander Stephan, ed. *The Americanization of Europe: Culture, Diplomacy,
   and Anti-Americanism after 1945* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2006); also
   Hannah Schissler, ed., *The Miracle Years: A Cultural History of West Germany,
   1949–1968* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 2001); Ute Poiger, *Jazz, Rock,
   and Rebels: Cold War Politics and American Culture in a Divided Germany*
   (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000); Frances Stonor, *Who Paid
   the Piper? The CIA and the Cultural Cold War* (London: Granta Books, 1999);
   Giles Scott-Smith, Hans Krabbendam, eds., *The Cultural Cold War in Western
   Europe, 1945–1960* (London and Portland, OR): F. Cass, 2003; Hilton Kramer,
   The Twilight of the Intellectuals: Culture and Politics in the Era of the Cold War
   (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2000).

which discusses the struggle of artists and intellectuals in Eastern and Western Europe to escape the Cold War straitjacket. Using four illustrations from two generations, the author shows similarities and differences on both sides of the Iron Curtain.

The Super Powers, using a barrage of propaganda, penetrated their enemy's territory. From the Kremlin came torrents of cheerful imagery and upbeat economic reports as well as attacks on Western racism, capitalism, and imperialism, and communist "fellow travelers" in the West echoed these pro-Soviet messages. The United States and its allies waged their propaganda struggle at a distance, sometimes in such fanciful forms as meteorological balloons that dropped leaflets but also, far more effectively, through radio broadcasts in the national languages of Eastern Europe from the BBC, Radio Madrid, Voice of America, and the US-sponsored Radio Free Europe. Despite the jamming and despite the threat of arrests to their listeners, these transmissions became an important source of contact between one side and the other.[11] In Poland, for example, the words of Józef Światło, a high-ranking security officer who defected to West Berlin in 1953, played an important role.

After Stalin's death, the "thaw" in Eastern Europe stimulated an increase of Western cultural initiatives.[12] Private institutions became involved from a variety of motives, ranging from a firm ideological opposition to communism, to attempts to eliminate the risks of war, to the conviction that Europe, despite its political division, remained *one* community. As Volker Berghahn's chapter on the Ford Foundation well illustrates, some of these private initiatives in the mid-1950s had significant long-term consequences.

In 1956, the specter of a nuclear conflagration in Europe was extremely vivid. Both Super Powers possessed atomic arsenals and threatened to use these weapons to defend their respective spheres.[13] It is this

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11 Gary Rawnsley, *Radio Diplomacy and Propaganda: The BBC and VOA in International Politics, 1956-64* (New York: St. Martin's, 1996), pp. 1-108.

12 John W. Young, *Longman Companion to Cold War and Détente, 1941-91* (London and New York: Longman, 1993), pp. 39-46; also Liudmila Aleksseva and Paul Goldberg, *The Thaw Generation: Coming of Age in the Post-Stalin Era* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1990). The term "thaw" was coined by the Soviet writer, Ilya Ehrenburg, *The Thaw*, trans. Manya Harari (Chicago: H. Regnery, 1955).

13 David Miller, *The Cold War: A Military History* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, St. Martin's Press, 1999); Norman Friedman *The Fifty-Year War: Conflict and Strategy in the Cold War* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2000); Vojtech Mastny and Gustav Schmidt, *Konfrontationsmuster des Kalten Krieges*

aspect that Norbert Wiggershaus presents in his chapter. Using NATO documents, he discusses the scenarios envisaged by Western policy makers as they prepared for a Soviet attack and their counter-offensive. Underlining the "horror and hope" implicit in these plans, Wiggerhaus reminds us how then as well as now the wars we prepare for are rarely the ones we must face.

At the heart of the Cold War was "the German problem,"[14] namely the creation of two separate states in 1949 and the unsolved issue of reunification. Moscow, sometimes reluctantly, championed its satellite state, East Germany, thereby enabling it to survive the crisis of June 1953. But also, between 1952 and 1954, the Kremlin launched a still controversial initiative to create a united and neutral Germany.[15] The West responded with the *Deutschlandvertrag* of 26 May 1952 and the Paris agreements of 23 October 1954, restoring sovereignty to West Germany and preparing its entry into NATO. Moscow's next move, on 8 February 1955, was directed at Austria, which was restored to full sovereignty but also neutralized; and on 11 May, the Kremlin agreed to a "Big Four" summit meeting in Geneva, the first since Potsdam. At the same time, however, as a direct response to Germany's entry into NATO, the Soviet Union created the Warsaw Pact to "unite the ranks" of socialist governments for the Cold War confrontation.[16]

1946 bis 1956 (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2003); Robert Cowley, ed., *The Cold War: A Military History* (New York: Random House, 2005).

14 The author of this chapter, Professor Hermann-Josef Rupieper of the University of Halle, died tragically before completing his contribution to this volume.

15 For German historiography, after the older Hans-Peter Schwarz, *Die Legende von der verpassten Gelegenheit: Die Stalin-Note vom 10. März 1952* (Stuttgart: Belser, 1982) see the interpretations of Rolf Steininger, *Eine vertane Chance. Die Stalin-Note vom 10. März 1952 und die Wiedervereinigung. Eine Studie auf die Grundlage unveröffentlicher britischer und amerikanischer Akten* (Bonn: Dietz, 1990) and Gerhard Wettig, *Bereitschaft zu Einheit in Freiheit? Die sowjetische Deutschland-Politik 1945–1955* (Munich: Olzog, 1999). In Russian historiography, see Gennadii Melnikow, „Illusionen oder eine verpasste Chance? Zur sowjetischen Deutschlandpolitik 1952," *Osteuropa* 40 (1990): 593-601 and W.K. Wolkow, "Die deutsche Frage aus Stalins Sicht (1947–1952)" *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 1 (2000): 20-49; also Nadejhda I. Yegorova and Aleksandr O. Chubarian, eds., *Kholodnaia voina 1945–1963:istoricheskaia retrospektiva: sbornik statei* (Moscow: Olma-Press, 2003).

16 Vojtech Mastny and Malcolm Byrne, eds., *A Cardboard Castle? An Inside History of the Warsaw Pact, 1955–1991* (New York: Central European University Press, 2005).

The impasse over German reunification became a fixture of the Cold War in Europe,[17] and the Bonn government was forced to adjust. Thus, in September 1955 Chancellor Konrad Adenauer visited Moscow, where he established diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union and also secured the release of some 10,000 German prisoners of war. The Moscow visit was, on the one hand, a clear Soviet victory – an important breach of the Hallstein doctrine; but it was also a triumph for the Federal Republic, whose growing economic prowess and independence in the international arena were now acknowledged.

II

Stalin's death on 5 March 1953 produced an intense rivalry among his would-be successors. The first victim was his fellow Georgian and close ally, Lavrenty Beria, whose fall and whose post-Stalinist policies have created considerable debate among historians. The victors, Nikita Khrushchev and Georgi Malenkov, competed for power until February 1955. Khrushchev's victory was signaled during the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of Soviet Union (CPSU). Held between 14 and 25 February 1956, this meeting has been considered one of the most important in Soviet history.[18]

The new first secretary of the CPSU enunciated a new way of fighting the Cold War. First, he stated that in the nuclear era the Super Powers – representing two distinctly different ideological systems – could and ought to coexist peacefully. Second, he announced that there could be many different ways to socialism, not necessarily emulating the Soviet model of revolution. Khrushchev's words, undoubtedly more tactical than reformist, nonetheless represented a clear departure from Stalinism.[19] Moreover, his assertion that by 1970 the communist countries would outdistance the capitalist ones was at best a brave boast. The most

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17 Soutou, *La guerre de cinquante ans,* p. 314, describes this as a victory for Moscow.
18 Donald Filtzer, *The Khrushchev Era. De-Stalinization and the Limits of Reform in the USSR 1953–1964* (London: Macmillan 1991); William Taubman, *Khrushchev. The Man and His Era* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2003); Nikolai Aleksandrovitch Barsukov et al. eds., *XX s'ezd KPSS i ego istoricheskie real'-nosti* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1991); Aleksandr Vladimirovitch Pyshikov, *Khrushchevska'a "ottepel""* (Moscow: Olma-Press, 2002).
19 Soutou, *La guerre de cinquante ans,* p. 326.

sensational moment occurred during the so-called "secret speech" at the very end of the Congress, on the night of 24-25 February. Khrushchev, who had been one of Stalin's acolytes, now took aim at his former allies and potential rivals. This violent attack against the *"vozhd"* was also a blow at the whole system that he himself personified. The ramifications would be felt throughout the communist world.

One notable place was Yugoslavia, which Stalin had brutally banished for its non-conformity. In a significant shift, after Khrushchev and Nikolai Bulganin's visit to Belgrade in May-June 1955, the final communiqué had made no reference to proletarian internationalism and recognized different forms of socialism. Moscow had thus signaled its desire for a Soviet-Yugoslav rapprochement. Andrey Edemskiy in his chapter relates the complicated personal and political game between Khrushchev and Tito in 1955-56, in which the two leaders struggled for the upper hand over leadership in the communist world.

Of all the countries in the Soviet bloc, Hungary had undoubtedly suffered the most under Stalinist totalitarianism.[20] This was partly due to the personality of its communist leader, Mátyás Rákosi, who considered himself Stalin's "best disciple." Moreover, Hungary in 1945 was the only communist satellite that had been defeated, conquered, and treated like an enemy, especially in the first years. Hungary's Stalinists, the so-called "quadriga" (Rákosi, Ernő Gerő, Mihály Farkas and József Révai), were the first to be denounced after Stalin's death. On 4 July 1953, Imre

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20 The bibliography of the Hungarian 1956 is rich; the first wave of publications appeared in the late 1950s and was visibly marked by recent events and written predominantly by Hungarian refugees. In the next decades, interest in this question diminished. A new historiography began in the 1990s with the opening of the archives. The main Hungarian study, *The Hungarian Revolution of 1956. Reform, Revolt and Repression 1953–1956*, was produced in the early 1990s by The Institute of the Hungarian Revolution under the direction of György Litván and his collaborators and subsequently published in an enlarged English version (New York: Longmans, 1996). See also works of László Borhi, *Hungary in the Cold War, 1945–1956: Between the United States and the Soviet Union* (Budapest and New York: Central European University Press, 2004) and "The Great Powers and the Hungarian Crisis of 1956," *Hungarian Studies* 12, nos. 1-2 (1997): 237-77 as well as of Johanna Granville, *In the Line of Fire: The Soviet Crackdown on Hungary, 1956–1958* (Pittsburgh: The Carl Beck Papers in Russian & East European Studies, Vol. 1307, 1998) and *The First Domino – International Decision Making during the Hungarian Crisis of 1956* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2004). In Russian: Aleksandr Sergeevich Stykalin, *Prervannaja revolucija: vengerskij krizis 1956 goda* (Moscow: Novyi Khronograf, 2003).

Nagy succeeded Rákosi as Prime Minister. Nagy, a sincere communist, was convinced that the only possible political method was to adhere to the will of the people instead of ruling by terror. In the following months, there was an intense rivalry between Nagy and Rákosi, who remained the first secretary of Hungarian Workers' Party. Rákosi prevailed, and on 14 April 1955 Nagy was deposed from all his posts. Nonetheless, the population supported Nagy and hated Rákosi.

Khrushchev's speech to the 20th Party Congress had far reaching consequences in Hungary. There was considerable intellectual and political ferment, centered in Petöfi Club and also in street demonstrations. On 17 July 1956 Rákosi was dismissed, but his closest collaborator, Ernő Gerő, succeeded him. A discontented populace complained, "After the fat Rákosi, we now have the slim one." The events in Poland, where the reformer and patriot Władysław Gomułka had returned to power, had their effect. On the night of 23-24 October, Nagy again became Prime Minister. Although the position of first secretary was given the next day to János Kádár, Nagy had become the unquestionable leader of Hungary.

The Hungarian Revolution erupted in violent fighting, and Nagy suddenly moved towards democracy and pluralism. The climax of the anti-Soviet protest was reached on 1 November with Hungary's withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact. Three days later, on 4 November, a massive Soviet military intervention ended the revolt. Nagy and his companions took refuge in the Yugoslav embassy, while Kádár formed a new, pro-Soviet government. On 22 November the Hungarian leaders left the embassy; despite the guarantees given to the Yugoslavs, they were immediately arrested. The trials, which began in 1958, dragged on for two years. 26,000 people were brought before the courts, 22,000 were sentenced, several hundred people were executed,[21] and 13,000 were imprisoned for varying lengths of time. Over 200,000 Hungarians fled the country.

The Revolution of 1956 was a trauma in the history of Hungary. It also created a great shock in Western Europe and North America. Outside support for the Hungarian people took the form of verbal protests and aid to the refugees. Indeed, Poland was one of the countries which

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21 At least 350, say the authors of *The Hungarian Revolution*, but approximately 600 according to a Russian publication (in *Most* 1992, nos. 1-2) quoted by Granville, *In the Line of Fire*, p. 30), who thinks however that "the numbers may be too high."