

KANDERSTEG

The Future of Europe's Past A Symposium

Wednesday, March 29th - Sunday, April 2nd, 2006
Kandersteg, Switzerland

Remarque Institute, New York University

Programme

Wednesday, March 29th: Arrival of participants by train in Kandersteg

Check in: Waldhotel Doldenhorn
CH- 3718 Kandersteg
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19:00 Welcome reception and dinner at Hotel.

Thursday, March 30th

Session I

09:00 - 12:00

Re-casting post-World War II European history

Since 1989 there has been much talk of overcoming the East-West European historiographical schism that reflected the political divisions of the Cold War. But it is not self-evident how to unite (re-unite?) the study of the recent European past without obscuring very real differences. Some aspects of post-war social policy, for example, or the consequences of rapid urbanization, bridge the Cold War divide. In most other respects the two halves of Europe clearly diverge: but beginning in 1948? 1945? 1939? Or well before? What is gained - and what is potentially lost - by insisting upon Europe as a single historical unit?

12:15 Transfer from the Hotel to the chair lift for Oeschinensee.
Lunch at restaurant on Lake Oeschinensee.
Free afternoon.

19:00 Dinner at the Hotel.

Friday, March 31st

Session II

09:00 - 12:00

War and Atrocity in Europe, past and present

In recent years the history of modern Europe has seen a marked emphasis upon the non-military experience of war: occupation, torture, ethnic cleansing, genocide, war crimes. With this greater attention to the human and moral consequences of war (including civil war) has come greater attention to issues of rights, reparations and justice. 'European identity' today is intimately bound up with the claim to have addressed and overcome such traumas. How are our understanding of 'atrocity' and 'political crimes' in the recent past influenced by contemporary concerns and collective memory? How have different European (or aspirant European) nations (Germany, former Yugoslav republics, Turkey but also e.g. Spain) addressed - or failed to address - these aspects of their recent history?

12:15 Lunch at Hotel

Session III

16:30 - 19:30

Borderlands

Since the 1960s it has become commonplace to assert that 'core Europe' has overcome Europe's past propensity for inter-state conflict, ethnic antagonism, economic insecurity, civil division, etc. Since 1989 the same is now often postulated for former central Europe. But such assumptions do not hold for Europe's borderlands: its uncertain frontiers with Asia and the Near East and its Mediterranean edge, from the Balkans to Morocco. Moreover it is at these margins that the meaning of 'Europe' and its immediate past is most ferociously debated and contested. Today the unstable 'edges' of European identity have re-surfaced at the continent's core, with attendant conflicts and antagonisms in France, the Netherlands and elsewhere: are not its frontiers - religious, ethnic, historical - once again at the very centre of the study of contemporary Europe?

20:00

Dinner at restaurant Landgasthof Ruedihus.

Saturday, April 1st

Session IV

10:00 - 13:00

Is European History Possible?

Europe today is an exemplar of post-national, inter-state cooperation and trans-national identity formation. In the eyes of many observers, historians included, this development spells the end of separate national histories, deprived of their point of reference by the steady diminution of the place of the autonomous nation-state in international affairs and individuals' lives. But what of 'Europe' itself as a unitary frame of reference? Is there now - will there be in the future - a sufficiently common European experience and European identity for contemporary European history to be written? Can European history today be studied except as part of broader themes and narratives incorporating the non-European world? Or is this to read backwards (and forwards) the fashions and emphases of a passing moment? Does Europe's past have a future?

13:15

Lunch at Hotel.

Free afternoon

20:00

Final Dinner at Hotel.

Sunday, April 2nd

Morning departure of participants.

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