## 1917 and the rise of Russia and the United States

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The ideological framework of the cultural change that has become epitomized by '1917' was constituted by Bolshevism and Wilsonianism. Lenin's ultimate goal was the establishment of a global communist society. Wilson's goal was to make the world safe for democracy and capitalism with the United States as the hegemon. Lenin's goal implied world revolution, Wilson's goal was to promote a smooth continuation of societal trends in Europe and in North America, Jörg Nagler observes in his article in *Krieg und Revolution* (War and Revolution).

The Russian word soviet means "'council'. Lenin regarded the Paris commune in 1871 as a model for the dictatorship of the proletariat. The Parisian model was emulated in the Russian revolution in 1905 in the shape of soviets of workers, peasants and soldiers. In October (November) 1917 the Bolsheviks took power in Russia in the name of the soviets. They gave name to the new state. At the same time as Lenin appropriated the 'soviet' label his party established its dictatorship. It must keep power in Russia waiting for the socialist revolution to occur in Germany.

The socialist revolution did not materialize in Germany. However, Germany and Russia would share a fateful history throughout the next seventy years. The Weimar Republic remained paramount in Soviet foreign policy. The Russian communist project became

paramount in the cultural life of the Weimar Republic. The central message of the anthology Krieg und Revolution is that in the 1920s Russia and Germany belonged together not only as a historical entity but also as a cultural space. Stalin's turn towards Russian nationalism and the assault on the social democrats in Germany by the Comintern from 1929 onwards were fateful political mistakes.

Krieg und Revolution is a compilation of twelve disparate lectures from a conference in Leipzig in November 2017. A central theme is the impact of the Russian revolution on the cultural scene in Germany and the Soviet Union. The main stage is occupied by Berlin, St. Petersburg/Leningrad and Moscow. A related theme is the significance of the entry into the Great War by the United States in 1917. This sideshow meanders through Paris, Hollywood, New York and Paterson, New Jersey. Secular trends in serious and popular music are pressed into the Procrustean bed of 1917 in articles by Helmut Loos and Wolfgang Hirschmann, respectively.

The gist of the two contributions on music is well caught in the titles of the articles (translated here), 'Holy sobriety: The composer in modernism. Continuity instead of rupture' (Loos) and 'Avant-garde without any epoch year: Eric Satie's piano cycle Sports et divertissements (1914/1923)' (Hirschmann). Loos argues that 'the new objectivity' of the 'new music' and its rupture with tonality certainly was an expression of modernism. However, it did not entail hegemony. Suffice it to mention that the debates associated with the name of Theodor Adorno emerge as the summarizing focal point of Loos's catalogue of names. Hirschmann starts from the well-known musical uproars in Europe in 1913 and Stravinsky's The Rite of Spring. He then evokes the work of Satie as an oppositional 'soft avant-garde'. He argues that time is ripe for 'a historical-critical Satie-edition' as an ironic 'academic' rescue of the œuvre of the erstwhile maverick.

In the anthology two articles on the cultural scene in late imperial Russia and the early Soviet Union and one on Weimar Germany stand out as especially intriguing. A fourth, on painting in the GDR, is a fine post mortem, a tale about the sad outcome of the prospects.

Frank Zöllner shows that public art in the GDR was a parody of the avant-garde art of the 1920s. He highlights the peculiar eschatological character of the Sinnstiftung (propagandist) art in the GDR. The acknowledged painters excelled in historical paintings in the style of socialist realism. The main themes were defeats of revolutionaries: the peasant wars in Germany in 1524–25, the March revolution in Germany in 1848, the Paris commune in 1871, the November revolution in Germany in 1918 and the communist revolts in some German cities in the early 1920s.

Zöllner notes how historians in the GDR described the portrayed events in a teleological manner. They declared that although all attempts had been unsuccessful, they had created a revolutionary German identity and prepared preconditions for the success of the revolution which led to the creation of the GDR in 1949. No matter that the GDR was a creation of the Soviet Union and not by German workers and that the state was the satellite of its creator.

Hannes Siegrist discusses the opposite cultural policies in the Soviet Union under Anatoly Lunacharsky and Stalin. He shows that the first commissar for culture promoted revolutionary anti-Sinnstiftung art. When Stalin consolidated his power, anti-Sinnstiftung art was eradicated. What became known as socialist realism was a re-affirmation of Sinnstiftung-art.

Lunacharsky remained true to the 'anti-regulation' pluralist trend in art that had developed in Europe from the French revolution in 1789 onwards. The Soviet authorities should not prescribe what the artists should do, because if they did the result would be 'falsifications of revolutionary art'. Art remained a competitive field in the Soviet Union in the 1920s.

Tanja Zimmermann highlights a prominent feature in Russian Soviet modernism: its profoundly religious character. The issue has certainly been approached in earlier research. However, it was not understood by people in other countries who persevered in the belief that

the Soviet Union was a socialist state in the normal sense of the word. Zimmermann shows how phantasies of the conquest of the universe became paramount among the Russian intelligentsia in socio-political utopias and in the aesthetic doctrines. In both instances the issue was cosmos and not Heaven. In their manifests the Russian 'biocosmists' presented the sun as a symbol of enlightenment and emancipation. Mankind's future lay in the space.

One of the protagonists in Zimmermann's story is the painter Kazimir Malevich. He is very well known for his 'suprematism' and paintings such as 'black quadrangle on white,' 'white quadrangle on white' and 'black quadrangle on black'. Zimmermann notes that the point of departure for Malevich was the great nothing which harboured the 'immaterial future'. This would replace paradise and help man transform himself, engulf Heaven and become God. This esoteric thinking in a certain respect became part of the worldview of artists that were directly involved in the creation of the iconography of the Soviet Union as the center of the universe. The best-known example is Vladimir Tatlin's design in 1919 for a monument to the Third International (the Comintern).

The Monument to the Third International would be placed in the Peter and Paul fortress in Petrograd. It would adumbrate the Petrine cathedral and be a 400 meters high double spiral of steel around a vertical pole. The double spiral was a symbol for the opposition between the sun and the moon and also a symbol of the fact that the proletariat had broken their chains.

Tanja Zimmermann demonstrates that the worldview that informed the paintings by Malevich and the monument which Tatlin designed had their counterparts in ideas of a similar kind in the Soviet ruling circles in the early 1920s. The bogostroitel'i, the builders of God, believed that the Soviet Union would defeat death. These people saw to it that the corpse of Lenin was embalmed in order for him to be resurrected in the future. Zimmermann does not mention this example but concentrates instead on the 'cosmic' dimension of Soviet self-understanding. She places the iconography around the Soviet space satellites that were named Sputnik in this framework of interpretation. She shows that this iconography was well and alive in Russian propaganda for the matches in the World Football Championship, which was held in Russia in 2018.

It is not a coincidence that the people who were launched into the orbit were called cosmonauts in the Soviet Union. It is no coincidence either that the first Soviet cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin declared that he had not seen God during his flight in the cosmos.

The Bolshevik revolution in Russia in 1917 was conceived by the protagonists as the first step to conquer not only the world but also the universe. Soviet communism as an ideology was a conscious antithesis to the teaching of the Russian Orthodox Church.

Michail Warstatt presents the implicit alternative to the Soviet Union that never came true. The title is, in translation, 'Between class and community. Revolutionary forms of staging in assembly culture and in theater in the Weimar Republic'. The author gives a vivid picture of the vibrant cultural scene in Germany in the 1920s. He makes clear that people like Erwin Piscator were conscious of the problems of attempts to transform the staging of mass movements and theatre performances into goal-oriented political actions. Warstatt notes that the élan evaporated as a consequence of the political changes in Germany in the early 1930s. The revolutionary movement ended in 'a comprehensive cultural defensive'.

Christopher Hust presents the antipode of the Russian/German utopia in an analysis of the American racist motion picture The Birth of a Nation by David Wark Griffith from 1915.

All the articles in Krieg und Revolution are equally saturated with facts and immanent analyses as those that have been mentioned in this necessarily brief review. They are equally abundantly annotated – there are more than 500 references to previous research – and highly informative.

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