

Jews and Muslims in the Czarist Empire and the Soviet Union

Hosts: Department of History of Eastern Europe (Prof. Martin Schulze Wessel), Department of Jewish History and Culture (Prof. Michael Brenner) at Ludwig- Maximilians-University Munich and the International Research Training Group "Religious Cultures in 19th and 20th century Europe" (LMU Munich/Charles University Prague)

June, 20th/21st 2013, Historisches Kolleg Munich

Deadline: January, 31st 2013

In the second half of the 19th century the administrative and intellectual elites of the Russian Empire became increasingly aware of its multiethnic and multireligious character. In the age of national aspirations this trait of the Russian State was often seen as a potential threat by parts of the imperial bureaucracy and in public discourse. Muslim and Jewish experiences in the Russian Empire were profoundly influenced by the administrative striving towards cultural homogenization. After the downfall of the empire in 1917, the leaders of the Soviet Union claimed to fulfil a clear break with their tsarist predecessors, but nonetheless they inherited the contradiction between cultural and religious heterogeneity and the political aim of a modern and unified state. This conference deals with the Muslim and Jewish experiences in the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union from the 1860s until the 1920s. Numerous excellent studies in recent years have enhanced our understanding of the Jewish-Russian as well as the Muslim-Russian historical encounter. The conference intends to bring together specialists from both fields to allow a comparative approach to the history of these groups who shared the experience of living in the Russian and Soviet states. By taking into account the imperial as well as the early Soviet period it wishes to show continuities and changes between the Russian Empire and its successor state. It will focus on three basic analytical questions: 1) How did the imperial and Soviet states interact with Jewish and Muslim communities? Which attitudes and ideologies shaped the policies implemented by the state? 2) How did these policies affect Jewish and Muslim communities? Which Muslim and Jewish collective identities emerged in Russia? 3) A particular fruitful point of comparison is the question of the

relationship between ethnicity and religion in the case of Jews and Muslims in Russia. Can the Russian Empire be described as a "confessional state"? In what sense were religious or ethnic categories crucial for state policies? How did the new Soviet State institutionalize and in some cases "create" ethnic and national categories and how did Jews and Muslims respond to these ascriptions?

The conference will take place on June 20th/21st, 2013, in the Historisches Kolleg in Munich. It is a joint conference of the Department of Eastern European History (Prof. Martin Schulze Wessel) and the Department of Jewish History and Culture (Prof. Michael Brenner) at Ludwig-Maximilians-University Munich. The conference is financed by the International Postgraduate Programme "Religious Cultures in 19th and 20th Century Europe" at the LMU Munich. Abstracts of no more than 500 words should be submitted to Franziska.Davies@lrz.uni-muenchen.de by the 31st of January 2013.

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