

From the Editors

A Topical Index

The Program of the American Historical Association's 117th Annual Meeting is an interesting document. This is the bulky and informative booklet that is usually quickly scanned between sessions of the AHA's annual gathering, but it deserves a bit more attention than it normally gets. The record of the 168 panels and numerous other meetings associated with the 2-5 January 2003 conference in Chicago offers something like a snapshot of the discipline as well as a sense of the fields and topics represented at the U.S. historical profession's premier conference. Most interesting from our perspective is the "Topical Index" in the back. There one can find the papers presented at the conference cross-referenced under various identifying categories, including geographical focus by country. Unsurprisingly, there are dozens of papers listed under "United States," which in fact comprises a substantial chunk of the index. The distribution of papers on some of the other countries and regions listed is as follows: Germany -- 19; Great Britain -- 15; France -- 9; Asia -- 7; Spain -- 6; Austria, Japan, and the Ottoman empire -- 4 each; Egypt and Canada -- 3 each; and Poland, Hungary, and Italy -- 1 each. The substantial listing for "Europe" contains several dozen entries broken down by period. Under "Russia/USSR" we find only two, a number that represents individual papers, not panels.

This sad showing prompts a number of observations. The first concerns the failure of Russian and Eurasian specialists to engage with the broader historical profession. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, there has been a concerted effort in our field to integrate it more tightly with the historiography of other areas. This has included not only reconfigurations of the traditional comparisons with Western Europe; it has featured new types of comparisons (the lively areas of comparative empire and world history spring to mind), new initiatives in areas like transnational history, and in general an attempt to write the history of Russia and the USSR in a broader international context. At its best, this new cosmopolitanism has served to open up the field. It also suggests how material based on the Russia -- the quintessential liminal society, both part of Europe and not of it, as well as the world's first country to "Westernize" -- can enrich and alter, not merely imitate, historical theorizing on key problems. Indeed, while Russian and Soviet uniqueness are no longer taken for granted, there is nonetheless no consensus in the historiography today about the extent to which one can erase Russia's distinctiveness. This new uncertainty would seem to make engagement with the broader historical discipline all the more essential at the present juncture. Indeed, we had thought that, institutionally speaking, the "opening" of the field was, if anything, overdetermined: faced with declining cachet after the end of the Cold War, shrinking resources, and the concomitant need to justify Russian and Eurasian history to new audiences, Russianists were bound to launch a perestroika of their own. The AHA Program suggests that in terms of at least one key institutional benchmark this restructuring has been less extensive than we imagined. To some extent, this is a failure that can be blamed on us.

It will be objected that there are many specific, practical reasons why more papers from the Russian and Eurasian field were not represented at the recent conference. For example, why should Russian and Eurasian specialists be expected to present papers at the AHA when there is so much to do at the AAASS? Ultimately, these and other objections excuse more than they

explain. The German field hosts its own lively annual conference, and yet, as we have seen, it is also amply represented at the AHA.

To be sure, the AHA meeting will differ somewhat from year to year, as will the conference program committee. An important piece of evidence we are missing is how many Russian and Eurasian proposals were submitted as compared to the two papers that were accepted in 2003, and we shall never know how qualified those submissions were. Nonetheless, it is relevant to note what seems to be a sign of disciplinary status: the German field can (or at least does) organize entire panels devoted to German history, while for scholars giving papers on Russia and in other marginalized fields it seems to be almost a requirement to appear on a comparative panel consisting of three geographically diverse cases. In addition, the "Topical Index" also reflects some longstanding disparities in disciplinary coverage that have provoked festering criticism of the professional association itself: there are, most glaringly, 42 entries under "Culture," 6 under "Economic," and 1 for "Diplomatic/Foreign Policy." The sneaking suspicion arises that the same kinds of institutional orientations shunting certain types of histories to the margins do the same for scholars of certain parts of the world. In the end, however, it can be up to no one else but us to make the case for our own relevance, reach out to engage scholarship in other fields at prominent venues, and attempt to overcome the existing barriers standing in the way.

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Readers may have noticed that *Kritika* has begun to provide translations into English of the titles of all books reviewed in the journal, including those in Russian and the major European languages. This represents an attempt to make the journal's reviews and review essays more accessible to scholars in all fields..