

## Call for Papers

### **7th Hermann Weber Conference on Historical Research of Communism (2025):**

**"War between Comrades: Unity, Division and Disintegration in the Communist World Movement since 1945".**

**Organisers:** Prof. Dr. Felix Wemheuer (Chair of Modern China Studies at the University of Cologne) and Prof. Dr. Lorenz Lüthi (McGill University, Montreal) in cooperation with the "Yearbook for Historical Research of Communism", funded by the Gerda-und-Hermann-Weber-Foundation affiliated with The Federal Foundation for the Study of the Communist Dictatorship in Eastern Germany

**Venue:** University of Cologne (in presence and digital)

**Date:** 27–29 March 2025

**Deadline for abstracts:** 30 January 2024

With the beginning of the Cold War, the Soviet leadership proclaimed the theory of the division of the world into two opposing camps: one socialist and one capitalist. Already in 1948, a break between the USSR and Tito's Yugoslavia occurred. The Greek Civil War (1946–1949) was accompanied by a factional struggle between the domestic and foreign organisations of the Communist Party, as well as being influenced by the Soviet-Yugoslav conflict. By the mid-1960s, the dream of the unity of the socialist camp and the creation of a socialist economic space based on a solidary division of labour was over. In 1963, the open polemic between the leadership of the Chinese and Soviet party leadership regarding the "general line of the communist world movement" had begun. In the Western camp, the Sino-Soviet conflict led to the rapprochement of the USA and its allies with the People's Republic of China and resulted in a multipolar reorganisation of the world, especially in the Global South.

The rift between the Soviet Union and China had repercussions on all continents and led to the division of many parties. Especially in wars in the Global South, such as the civil wars in Angola, Mozambique, Ethiopia or Afghanistan, Moscow and Beijing intervened on different sides. The Sino-Soviet conflict also disrupted the Afro-Asian solidarity movement of Bandung and the non-aligned community. Some socialist countries like Vietnam and North

Korea managed to use contradictions between the "big brothers" to get help from both sides in their armed conflicts. In developed countries in Western Europe, the US or Japan, a large number of radical parties emerged in the course of the "New Left" around 1968, which referred positively to Maoist China.

In addition to the Sino-Soviet conflict, the suppression of the Prague Spring in 1968 intensified other divisions. The national communist regimes in Yugoslavia and Romania subsequently distanced themselves even more from the Soviet Union. In Western Europe, Eurocommunist parties integrated themselves into the democratic systems. A particularly interesting special case is Albania under the leadership of Enver Hoxha, which combined a policy of autarky with an ideological struggle against Yugoslavia, the USSR and finally China. After China's rapprochement with the USA in 1971-72, Cuba, Vietnam and North Korea advocated militant anti-imperialism and saw themselves as heirs to the "world revolution". The conflict between China and Vietnam culminated in a sacrificial "fratricidal war" in 1979. This also put an end to the dream of Third World-unity against "US imperialism".

In addition to conflicts of socialist nation states, numerous splits and "fratricidal wars" also developed within the communist parties between competing political factions, exile and domestic organisations or guerrilla units.

The conference aims to bring together research on ideological clashes, geostrategic realignments, conflicts between national states, transnational entanglements, organisational history and economic consequences of the divisions in the world communist movement.

The following, and related, questions will be at the centre of the conference:

- Why did splits and "fratricidal wars" occur in many national communist movements and ideological conflicts between parties that had campaigned on the internationalist agenda of "proletarians of all countries, unite"? What role did nationalism and old territorial conflicts play in this? How were cultural justifications used to distinguish themselves as "European" or "African" communism?
- Why, in some cases, were internal factional struggles, such as in China or Cambodia, even fought out with military force? How could these conflicts be pacified again? Did factional fights always end with the expulsion of the losing side from the party or were there also attempts to ensure stability through compromises and coalitions?
- What effects did the divisions have on a multi-polar reordering of the world beyond the two camps of the Cold War, which became apparent with the Sino-American

rapprochement after 1972? To what extent did the divisions contribute to the decline of communism and the "anti-imperialist liberation movements" of Arab, South American, Asian and African countries?

- Socialist countries sometimes imposed economic sanctions on each other. What effects did these have on national economies and international trade?
- How did actors in the Western countries such as governments, intelligence services, media and academia analyse and react to the divisions in the opposing camp? To what extent did Western diplomacy seek to deepen divisions in the socialist camp, such as by upgrading the national communist governments of Romania, Yugoslavia or China?

We welcome both micro-level case studies on the topic of "war between comrades" and articles that attempt to show larger contexts regarding the world communist movement, geopolitics, global economy and transnational transfer of ideas. Please send your topic proposals (max. 300 words) in German or English and a short bio by 30 January 2024 to the following address: [felix.wemheuer@uni-koeln.de](mailto:felix.wemheuer@uni-koeln.de).

The selected contributors will be notified by mid-March 2024.

The 7th "Hermann Weber Conference on Historical Research on Communism" will take place from 27-29 March 2025 at the University of Cologne. A public panel discussion is planned for the evening of 27 March. Travel and accommodation costs will be covered by the organisers after consultation. The conference language is English. It is also possible to participate in the conference via Zoom. Draft versions of the papers are expected to be submitted by 30 January 2025. They will be presented and discussed during the conference. The conference is sponsored by the "Gerda-und-Hermann-Weber-Foundation within The Federal Foundation for the Study of the Communist Dictatorship in Eastern Germany ". Selected conference papers will be published in a revised version in German in the "Jahrbuch für Historische Kommunismusforschung" 2027 (translation resources are available; the papers will be edited). The application implies the willingness to submit a contribution for peer review for this publication.

Organisers and guest editors of the yearbook 2027

**Prof. Dr. Felix Wemheuer, University of Cologne**

**Prof. Dr. Lorenz Lüthi, McGill University, Montreal**