**SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE**

 **NEW PERSPECTIVES ON NATIONAL NARRATIVES AND POLITICS OF MEMORY**

On November 28th-29th, 2013, an international conference “The Construction of National Narratives and Politics of Memory in the Central and Eastern European Region after 1989” organized by the Department of History, the Faculty of Humanities according to the Operational Programme for the Development of Human Resources 2007-2013 “Support to Research Activities of Scientists and Other Researchers (Global Grant)” took place in Vytautas Magnus University. The aim of the conference was to present the comparative research of national narratives and memorialisation processes in Central and Eastern Europe, with a particular attention on the conflicting narratives and their analyses. The variety and focus of the presentations on the post-soviet period have revealed the decline of the earlier national narratives and the formation of new historical narratives and memory as well as their differences.

Conference participants were welcomed by the Dean of the Faculty of Humanities Prof. Ineta Dabašinskienė and the chair of the scientific committee of the conference Prof. Egidijus Aleksandravičius. In the first section, the theoretical problems of the relations between memory and history were discussed by Dr. Jurga Jonutytė (Kaunas) in her presentation “Memory Practices in Post-Soviet Space: Regaining Rights to the Own Past”. The speaker focused on the intersections and confrontations between the official historical narrative and personal memories of the Lithuanian border zone inhabitants and national and religious minorities. Further on, Dr. Moreno Bonda (Kaunas) read a paper “From Conscience to Sign: Logic and Rhetoric in the Process of Translation of Memory into a Written Text” in which he presented the development and transformation of thoughts from their first emergence to appearance as written text. The second section “Ideological and World-View Vectors of National Narratives” was opened by Dr. Kazimierz Wójcicki (Warsaw). His report on the “Polish Nation Building Process – Stereotypes and New Approach” presented the conflicting narratives prevailing in contemporary Polish historiography. The presentation of Prof. Egidijus Aleksandravičius “Lost in Freedom: Competing Grand Narratives in Post-Soviet Lithuania” also revealed the existence of two narratives. The first one exists since the inter-war period and prevails in the public space of contemporary Lithuania, whereas the second narrative of the Lithuanian history is formed by the academic society. The final report of the section was Dr. Leonas Tolvaišis’ speech “Historical Memories of Kosovo Serbs in the Post-War Period and Conflicting National Narratives about Kosovo”. The researcher concentrated on the changes of the Serbian historical narrative after the Kosovo declaration of independence.

The work of the next section was devoted to the conflicting representations of the past in the national narratives. Dr. Aleh Dziarnovich (Minsk) read a paper “‘Lithuania’ and ‘Rus’ as the Concepts of Modern Belarusian Historiography” which presented two competing tendencies of historical narratives in Belarus and the related political realia of the country. Two historiographical schemas were introduced by Dr. Marius Sirutavičius (Kaunas) in his report “The Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Historical Region: the Search for New Coordinates in the Post-Soviet Lithuanian Historiography”. The research compared the schemas of geopolitical approaches to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania by two Lithuanian historians - Jūratė Kiaupienė and Alfredas Bumblauskas. Assoc. Prof. Rūstis Kamuntavičius (Kaunas)read a presentation on“History of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania: Interpretations of Young Belarusians and Lithuanians” where he introduced the research conducted in 2011, in Lithuanian and Belarusian universities which revealed two differing approaches to common history. Dr. Tetiana Shevchenko’s (Kiiv) report “Between the Paradigm of Catholic Permanent Oppression and Incompetency: Religious Discourse of the National Historical Narrative of the Early Modern Times in Contemporary Ukrainian Schooling” overviewed the situation when religion influences the creation of the public historical narrative and the position of Ukrainian history heroes, the Roman Catholics, in this narrative.

The final section of the first day was preoccupied with the national narratives of the past. In the presentation, “Searching for a Meaningful Comparison: the Comparative Studies of Modern East-Central European Urban History and the Changes of Historical Narrative”, Dr. Halina Beresnevičiūtė-Nosalova (Brno) discussed the influence of town society on the process of national revival which took place in the Central and Eastern European region. Dr. Gábor Lagzi (Budapest-Veszprém) read a report on “Multicultural Past and Present in the Cities of Central Europe – the Case of Wrocław/Breslau and L’viv/Lemberg/Lwów” which analyzed the confrontations of the different national cultures in the cities, their heritage and the problems of history writing resulting because of the changing state borders. Dr. Liudas Glemža focused on the different evaluations of the national narratives of the 18th century history, their changes, construction specificities, differences and similarities in his presentation “Constructing the National Past of Enlightenment: Cases of Lithuania, Belorussia, Ukraine and Slovakia”.
On the second day of the conference, the section on “The Problems of Autochthonic Approach” was opened by Corine Geering (Giessen), who read a report on “Where has the Post War Era Gone? Displaying the Past at Heritage Sites in Post-Soviet Russia”. Drawing on the example of Karelian Kizhi monastery, Geering depicted the changes of history representation in Russia after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The topic was continued by Dr. Kąstytis Antanaitis who analyzed the newest directions and tendencies of the Russian historiography devoted to the Kaliningrad city and region in the report “Inventing New History for the New People: Creating History for Kaliningrad (Königsberg) District after 1990”.
Andrzej Tichimirow’s (Grodno) paper “"West-Rus'ism" in Belarusian Politic of Memory” opened the section on the investigations of memory forms and national identity. The researcher presented one model of Belarusian historiography and discussed how it is influenced by politics. Dr. Tomasz Błaszczak’s (Kaunas) report “Polish Memory of Inter-War Period After 1989” analyzed the changing perception of the inter-war history in Polish consciousness during the last two decades and presented its latest commemoration forms.
In the section “The Reflections of Post-Communist Transformations in Contemporary National Narratives”, Adam Slabý’s (Chemnitz) presentation “Not Coming to Terms with the Past? – The Demise of Anticommunism in the Czech Republic and its Consequences for the Narration of the Communist Past and for the Future” introduced the tendencies of historical narrative construction during the communist period in Czech Republic and its use in politics. It was noticed that a similar situation can be observed in Lithuania. In the presenation “Emotional Labelling in Polish Remembrance Narrations: a Case Study of the Stalinist Crimes”, Patryk Wawrzyń (Toruń) was interested in the Polish opinions about historiography. Dr. Andrius Švarplys‘s (Kaunas) presentation “Who is Telling? Economical, Political and Cultural Conditions for National Narratives in Post-Soviet Lithuania” showed the importance of environment, especially the influence of poverty and divide for the construction of the soviet narrative. The work of the section was finished by Laima Venclauskienė (Kaunas), who talked about the model of the past, specifically, the relations of Lithuania and Russia, periphery and metropolitan in her presentation “Collective Memory: the Choices and the Nature of Representations of the Past in “Sąjūdžio žinios” 1988–1989”. The last section of the conference “Between a Legend and Political Order” was begun by Dr. Katarzyna Kącka’s (Toruń) report “New Symbols. The Role of Power in the Creation of the Symbolic Space During Transition: the Example of Poland”. The researcher overviewed the Polish politics of memory after 1989 and tried to identify the reasons which determined the exaltation of Józef Piłsudski, the Warsaw uprising, or the inter-war period and devaluation of the Jegiellonian Poland. Dr. Aleksej Lastouski (Minsk) analysed the changes of history representation in the official speeches given on the occasion of the independence day of Belarus in his report “Creating Belarusian Past Through Official Speeches”. The work of the section and conference was closed by Dr. Andrea Griffante‘s presentation “Jestem. Pamiętam. Czuwam” on John Paul II and Polish Memory” on the development of the narrative about Karol Wojtyła in contemporary Poland and its division into the conservative and liberal narration.
Conference reports attracted great interest from the audience and evoked discussions. As due to time restrictions it was not possible to answer all the questions, it is believed that the 60thvolume of “Deeds and Days” containing the articles based on the conference reports will continue the discussion.

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