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## **B. Genoa/Rapallo and the Reconstruction of Europe, 1922**

Washington, D.C., June 14–17, 1989

This research conference was jointly sponsored by the German Historical Institute, Washington, D.C., and the *Association Internationale d'Histoire Contemporaine de l'Europe*, an organization based in Strasbourg which promotes research on European international relations from the mid-nineteenth century to the present. Twenty-five specialists in the post-World War I era from ten countries gathered to discuss problems of the first major international effort to construct a new political and economic order for Europe.

Conference organizers were Carole Fink, Professor of History at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington, who has published *The Genoa Conference: European Diplomacy 1921–22*, and Axel Frohn and Jürgen Heideking, both Research Fellows at the GHI-Washington and authors of *Der Rapallo-Mythos und die deutsch-amerikanischen Beziehungen* and *Die Pariser Botschafterkonferenz der alliierten Hauptmächte und die Probleme der europäischen Politik, 1920–31*, respectively.

Thanks to the kind hospitality of Dr. Jürgen Wickert, Director of the Washington office of the *Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung*, all the working sessions took place in the Foundation's Theodor Heuss Room, a congenial setting, especially adorned with period documents and photographs, and just next door to the German Historical Institute's library, which featured an exhibit of international scholarship on Genoa and Rapallo.

The opening session focused on broad issues. Carole Fink's paper treated the origins and evolution of postwar revisionist sentiments among former enemies as well as neutrals, and showed how unsettled questions, such as Poland's eastern borders, the economic collapse of Austria, and the minorities question, intensified the forces of change. She described the "unfulfilled and unfulfillable" hopes raised by the Genoa conference which began as a major revisionist effort but soon turned to a "fine tuning" of the status quo and ended in failure. Peter Krüger (University of Marburg) presented new information from the records of the German Foreign Ministry about the negotiation of the Rapallo treaty and the role of councillor Albert Dufour-Feronce. Krüger's thesis that the Rapallo treaty was initiated by the proponents of a German "*Ostpolitik*" and had a disruptive influence on the Genoa conference as well as on European cooperation in general caused a lively discussion. Stephen Schuker (Brandeis University) stressed that in 1922 there was no realistic

"western" alternative to this political course, and several others doubted the importance of Rapallo for the final breakdown of the Genoa conference. As examples they pointed to the continuously strong influence of the "hardliners" in the French government and to the fact that Lloyd George was only temporarily alienated by the actions of the German delegation, so that British policy remained strongly pro-German even after Genoa.

In the afternoon the meeting turned to financial questions. Sally Marks (Providence, Rhode Island) presented a broad European perspective on the reparations issue in 1922. In his paper, "Rathenau, Stresemann and German-American Relations in 1922", Manfred Berg (University of Heidelberg, now *John F. Kennedy Institut für Amerikastudien*, Berlin) explained Stresemann's revisionist concept of German reintegration into the world economy which focused upon the financial ties between Germany and the United States. Stephen Schuker gave an acute analysis of America's preoccupation with the war-debt question. The United States chose a "business-like" approach to the problems of European reconstruction calling at the same time for disarmament, a cut in reparations payments, and the fulfillment of war-debt obligations. The ensuing debate centered upon the question whether a more conciliatory stance of the U.S. government in economic matters could have helped to break the European political deadlock in 1922.

The first day culminated with an address by Jacques Bariety (University of Paris-IV (Sorbonne)), president of the *Association Internationale d'Histoire Contemporaine de l'Europe*, on "The Financial Legacy of the Great War." Evoking the turbulence and controversies of the post-World War I era, Bariety called attention to the research that has been undertaken, and still needs to be done, and appealed especially for Soviet cooperation in opening essential archives; he also extolled the capacity of historians to deal meticulously and critically with complex economic and financial issues. Professor Bariety's discourse was followed by spirited statements calling for unfettered collaboration among European historians and for greater access to the documents.

The next morning was devoted to the "Russian question" in 1922. Alexander Fursenko (Institute of the History of the USSR, Leningrad) spoke on the "Oil Problem and Soviet-American Relations in 1922", noting his own efforts to gain access to important records of American private enterprises such as the Standard Oil Company and the difficulties that he encountered. Andrew Williams (University of Kent) investigated the official British policy toward the Soviet Union in the context of

economic aims as well as ideological and personal rivalries within the government. In particular, he noted the opposition of the conservative Foreign Office to Lloyd George's ambitious plans for European reconstruction. Anne Hogenhuis (European Institute of Public Administration, Maastricht, The Netherlands) detailed the elements of French financial and economic diplomacy toward Soviet Russia, largely conditioned by the desire to create a united front among Russia's prewar creditors. She also tried to explain the shifting position of Soviet negotiators at Genoa against the background of internal Russian developments. In his paper, Giorgio Petracchi (University of Florence) presented information on Italian political and commercial strategy toward Moscow. He distinguished the small business approach which favored recognition of the Soviet government and a small scale exchange of Italian manufactured goods for Russian raw materials from the aims of big business to recapture the Russian market and to penetrate the Soviet economy by means of large investments. The overall picture constructed by the papers as well as by the discussion was one of internal and external disunity among the Allies, which portended the unsuccessful outcome of the Genoa conference.

At the next session, attention focused upon the other participants at Genoa. In his contribution, Antoine Fleury (University of Geneva) described the aims and policies of Switzerland in particular and of the small neutral powers in general. Based on extensive archival research in the major East European capitals, Magda Adam (Institute of History, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budapest) gave a critical evaluation of the role of the Little Entente; and Frank Hadler (Institute of History, Academy of Sciences, Berlin, German Democratic Republic) reappraised the extremely active diplomacy of Czechoslovak Foreign Minister Benes. These contributions raised the question of the efficacy of small-power mediation in great power conflicts and the problems of the "successor states" after World War I.

The last day of the conference devoted itself to a general discussion based on a questionnaire circulated to all participants: What are the major sources available and still to be tapped? What are the major components (political, ideological, economic, financial, diplomatic, military, and social) of research on one particular country or problem? How do some of the larger historiographical questions, such as the problem of "restoration", the primacy of *Außen-* or *Innenpolitik*, and continuity versus discontinuity, relate to our common theme? What are the most useful means of practicing collaborative, comparative history?

In the closing session, participants presented exceptionally thorough reports on archival resources and finding aids for studying international history in 1922, including private, business, and government documents. The group also tackled several thorny questions, including the debt problem, treaty-revisionism, and the variety of structures of international peacekeeping in 1922. Several participants discussed the difficulty of democracies in responding promptly and coherently to their adversaries as well as their allies, as illustrated by painful delays together with precipitate decision-making. Using the Genoa conference as a model, considerable attention was devoted to the problem of gathering and interpreting public opinion in foreign affairs. The distorted "image of the other" was an important leitmotif at Genoa.

There was general agreement upon the value of international scholarly exchange, upon the necessity of a multinational perspective in studying twentieth-century international history, and upon the need to continue sharing resources. Regardless of specific national or scholarly orientation toward the events of 1922, the participants agreed upon the interdependence of political, economic, and social questions; upon the importance of evaluating and comparing the caliber as well as professed aims of the leadership in that year; upon the centrality of the "German problem" in the larger issues of European reconstruction; upon the significance of non-European influences (especially Japan, and the Near and Middle East); and upon the considerable human as well as material changes that overwhelmed Europe after 1914. Several elements of the Rapallo treaty remain mysterious and controversial, including its short- and long-term implications.

The Genoa conference, with its vast number of delegates, ambitious agenda, and indisputable links to today's political issues, provided a rich laboratory for a comparative study of European international relations.

Carole Fink / Axel Frohn / Jürgen Heideking