

# CHRONICLE

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## TRANSFERS AND CIRCULATIONS WITHIN THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY SOCIALISM

On 21 and 22 October 2022, the conference entitled ‘Transfers and Circulations within the Nineteenth-Century Socialism’ took place. It was held under the auspices of the Tadeusz Manteuffel Institute of History of the Polish Academy of Sciences, and its main organiser was Dr Piotr Kuligowski.

The principal aim of the conference was to discuss the ‘wandering’ nature of the ideas on the example of nineteenth-century socialism. Participants presented their research regarding the problem of transfers and circulation of ideas, focusing on the issues of travel, emigration, translation, and circulation of people and texts. They also discussed the infrastructure enabling this movement, which had been revolutionised in the nineteenth century by industrial development and new technologies and emphasised the global nature of socialism.

Such a narrow topic necessitated a workshop nature of the conference. Each of the four panels took quite a long time. This allowed not only for a considerable length of speeches but, above all, for an exhaustive discussion, which therefore covered all the papers. The panels were divided thematically, and the order was partly geographical and partly chronological. On the first day, the first panel was devoted to the cradle of socialism, France and Great Britain, and the second to Central and Eastern Europe. Both were discussing their early, ‘romantic’ or ‘utopian’ stage. The next day, we discussed the perspectives of both Americas and then returned to another periphery of Europe, the Balkans. Of course, the most interesting things always happened between countries and between languages, but that classic geometric scheme provided a clear background for showing the global paradoxes of socialism.

Bartosz Kaliski, the Deputy Director of the Institute, opened the conference with an extensive quote from Pierre Proudhon, in French. And while his short speech addressed the subject of the conference in general, it also served as an introduction to the first panel. Then Edward Castleton (Besançon) presented Proudhon’s views on the issue of Polish independence. A particularly interesting part of his paper was comparing the thoughts of the French anarchist with the stance of Leo Tolstoy, whose pacifism towards the Polish insurrections had remained unfavourable. Fabrice Bensimon (Paris) presented a panorama of socialist London in the times of the Chartists (1830s and 1840s).

He described the relationship of this British movement with numerous emigrants from the continent staying in the city, including Polish insurgents of the November Uprising and French republicans. The example of Étienne Cabet, who had invented his notion of communism in London, showed how being present in such a place to exchange ideas became a formative moment. Stanisław Knapowski (Poznań) focused on a French group of Fourierists who planned to organise a propaganda network and exchange ideas based on the scheduled phalansteries. He interpreted this as a manifestation of a high awareness of the need for constant transformation and evolution of ideas in contact with other thinkers. Lorenzo Costagua (Bristol) introduced us to the first North American Marxists – Joseph Weydemeyer and Adolf Cluss. He based the paper, among other sources, on their virtually known correspondence with Karl Marx. The complicated history of the development of socialism in the USA intersected with questions about the geographical context of the possibility of implementation, in a mainly agrarian country, of an idea that evolved in a completely different, European framework.

The evening panel was focused on Central and Eastern Europe. Pascale Siegrist (London) took the perspective of anarchist geography and discussed the nineteenth-century origins of the controversial term *russkiy mir*, which is related to *obshchina*, a traditional rural community in Russia, considered by some nineteenth-century socialists to be a natural model of a communist community. The speaker attached great importance to the issues of translating concepts. She concluded that translations transform the described phenomena under the influence of ideas derived from other contexts. Cody Inglis (Budapest) presented key members of the Hungarian Jacobins (József Hajnóczy and Ignjat Martinović) and the story of early socialism in Austro-Hungary up to Leon Frankl, Marx's collaborator and participant in the Paris Commune. The last speaker of the day was Piotr Kuligowski (Warsaw), who compared two peripheral thinkers, Henryk Kamieński and Vladimir Milutin and their attitude towards the centre of new ideas, i.e. Western Europe. This approach makes it possible not only to trace the path of socialism to the borderlands of Europe, namely the Russian Empire, but also to examine the key concepts of 'modernity' related to the translation problems.

The next day, Elżbieta Kwiecińska (Warsaw) began the morning panel with a paper on early Ukrainian socialists. She pointed out the visibly left-wing-populist nature of the nineteenth-century Ukrainian national movement. Then she gave a few examples of the Polish-Ukrainian transfers of ideas. An interesting one was the comparison of Mickiewicz's *Books of the Polish Nation and Pilgrimage* with Mykoly Kostomarow's *Knyhy bytiia ukraïns'koho narodu*; the latter was inspired by the former, but he also included the Polish nobility among the group of oppressors. Lucas Poy (Amsterdam) discussed translations, languages and different national perspectives as well, taking as an example the rise of socialism in Argentina. He presented unusual translation

decisions and tried to determine why the Argentinian socialists followed the lead of the Italian thinker Enrico Ferri, instead of drawing on German Marxism, which seems more understandable to us nowadays. Claudia Roesh (Washington) went beyond the purely geographical or temporal criteria of transfers. She focused on cooperation between British Owenists and local engineers, showing how the development of political thought and social theory was mutually conditioned by technological progress. The most popular subject in the discussion was Owen's interest in the tropics as the best area for developing civilisation due to their climate and natural conditions. His preference for bananas, surpassing ordinary European apples, seems to be an instructive anecdote.

In the afternoon panel, we looked at the Balkan region: Romania, Turkey and Bulgaria. Calin Cotoi (Bucharest) presented the situation in the 1870s and the exchange of ideas between Romanian socialists and Russian refugees arriving from Bessarabia. Banu Turnaoglu (Istanbul) was the only participant who presented her paper online, showing us that, just as in the nineteenth century, the transfer of ideas encounters infrastructural and legal restrictions, such as restrictive visa rules. She presented the ideas of the Young Ottoman movement, which combined socialist inspirations with republicanism. The problem of adapting Western thought to local conditions was reflected there in the agrarian question omitted by Marxists, who focused on the industrial proletariat. A much less nuanced concept of socialism was presented by Boris Popivanov (Sofia), who introduced us to Dimitar Blagoev, the leader of the Bulgarian social democrats. He pointed to the close relationship between domestic activists and foreign, mainly German social-democratic thinkers. He showed a transfer of ideas in the form of an orthodox implementation of Marxism which ignored local social conditions. This made the Bulgarian socialists focus on developing well-educated cadres while ignoring the people who, according to them, were incapable of creating an organised labour movement.

In the concluding discussion, individual detailed studies were appreciated as they provided us with interesting case studies of transfers and circulation. Wiktor Marzec (Warsaw), who chaired the last panel, postulated the need for methodological research of syntheses and models of interpretation. Of particular interest would be the study of networks, connections, mediators, and material conditions of the travel of ideas. Among the thinkers whose works have the potential to contribute to the field Pierre Bourdieu and Bruno Latour were mentioned. The most pertinent problem raised in almost every paper was the context which forced ideas to change and adapt but also changed the attitude of thinkers from different regions. The most controversial problem turned out to be the question of whether wandering ideas were attached to their source context or whether they could be transferred in a 'pure' state. Only in conclusion were there a few voices that managed to theorise

more in-depth about the conference's main theme and sought universal tools to interpret the wandering nature of nineteenth-century socialism. An interesting common feature of many papers was the question about the relationship between socialism and science. Not only in the context of the famous book by Engels but also in the positivist character of the second half of the nineteenth century, when socialism had been presented as a necessity, the realisation of which had been scientifically proven to be inevitable.

We hope all the conclusions and inspirations drawn from the two-day conference will be included in the post-conference articles, which we plan to publish as a special issue of the *Global Intellectual History* journal.

*proofreading Krzysztof Heymer*

*Stanisław Knapowski*

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3730-8688>