The Review of Symposium “From Lysenkoism to Evolutionary Biology”

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The overview of the symposium 116 “From Lysenkoism to evolutionary biology”, which took place within the VII International Conference of the European Society for the History of Science (22–24 September 2016, Charles University, Prague, Czech Republic). Various aspects of the long and complex process of contacts, struggle, transitions and conceptual overlays of Lysenkoism, neo-Darwinian evolutionary biology, and unorthodox versions of the evolutionary theory, such as the theory of epigenetic inheritance, were considered. These contacts and transitions occurred in almost all countries of the Eastern bloc, including the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia. The aim of the symposium was to examine different versions of Lysenkoism and evolutionary biology in these countries and to compare the biographies of the main participants in these processes, and the consequences of their actions.

The symposium “The Big Brother Role Model? Soviet and American impulses for Central and Eastern European academic systems, 1945–1989” took place as part of the 7th International Conference of the European Society for the History of Science held in Prague, Czech Republic (September 22–24, 2016). It was organized by Martin Franc (Masaryk Institute and the Archives of the ASCR, Prague, Czech Republic), Johannes Feichtinger (Austrian Academy of Sciences, Vienna, Austria), Jakub Jareš (Charles University, Prague, Czech Republic) and included academics from Czech Republic, Austria, Slovenia, Slovakia, Russia and the United States.

In the XIX century and at the beginning of the XX century Europe, and, particularly, Germany, became the cradle of influential scientific system models which were spreading worldwide including Russia and the United States. The end of the Second World War and the profound changes in the social and economic structures in many countries led to principal changes in the prevailing scientific and educational system in Central and Eastern European countries and the situation reversed in many respects. The influence of two great powers, whose importance had rapidly grown during the conflict, played a key role in the emergence of new mechanisms and institutions. Most countries in Eastern and Central Europe found themselves in the sphere of hegemonic influence of the Soviet Union. Austria and Germany also massively adopted impulses from the United States, supported by the USA sectors of the administration of these countries. In the second half of the XX century the so-called Eastern Bloc was dominated by the Soviet model of organizing and managing science with a central Academy of Sciences playing a representative role as a coordinator of its own basic research sites. However, the degree of adoption of the Soviet model in some ways was differed in the individual countries and periods. Nevertheless, the Soviet model reflected on science management and institutionalization of Central European countries even which were outside the hegemonic influence of the Soviet Union.

A key aim of the symposium was to investigate this situation marked both the returning the original German models complemented with additional elements and the building of entirely new traditions. In particular, the symposium addressed such issue as differences between the mechanisms of the Soviet influence on the establishment of the scientific system and the mechanisms of enforcement of American models, the influence of the Soviet and American scientific policies at each other in Central and Eastern Europe, the correlation between any of the imported models and local traditions, the role of foreign impulses in an actual transformation of scientific management and institutionalization of in Central and Eastern Europe countries, the dynamics of acceptance of stimuli from the USA and the Soviet Union in the region in 1945–1989, the growing of the openness to incentives from the “other side of the Iron Curtain” in some the Central and Eastern European countries and the fixation scientific systems in the shape they had taken just after the war and during the 1950s in others.

The session began with a presentation by Martin Franc “Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences and accepting Soviet experiences and models 1956–1968”, which analyzed the transformations in the mechanisms of adoption of Soviet experience and models by the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences.
Симпозиум, посвящённый влиянию советских и американских моделей науки на академические системы стран Центральной и Восточной Европы в 1945–1989 гг.

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