

Call for Papers

The Political Police and the Soviet System:

Insights from Newly Opened KGB Archives in the Former Soviet States

An International Conference at Georgetown University

April 3-4, 2020

Sponsors

Jacques Rossi Memorial Fund for Gulag Research, Georgetown University
Georgetown Office for Global Engagement
Russian History Seminar of Washington, DC
International Centre for the History and Sociology of WWII, Higher School of Economics
Kennan Institute for Advanced Russian Studies, Woodrow Wilson Center

This conference will assemble cutting-edge historical scholarship on newly opened secret police archives that has the potential to illuminate a major piece of twentieth-century history and its legacies. The conference aims to bring together international scholars at all career stages, including researchers from North America, Europe, and Eurasia, to discuss the significance of research on the Soviet secret police, the penal system, forced labor, and intelligence history. These archives, including the SBU (former KGB) archive in Kyiv and repositories in the Baltics, Georgia, Moldova, and other former Soviet republics, represent some of the most important archival material on modern intelligence history opened to researchers in recent years.

While the history of Stalinism and state repression is one of the most studied topics in the Soviet history, lack of archival materials about the institutions of state security, one of the pillars of the Soviet system, has remained one of the largest missing pieces in our understanding of Soviet history. Historians have been relatively slow to take advantage of these new opportunities and interpret their import. This conference represents a major opportunity showcase and explore how the hitherto classified materials change our understandings of Soviet system, its operations, and its place in the broader world.

As new sources become accessible, new problems of analysis emerge. The goal of this gathering is to explore those problems and ask how new scholarship incorporating these new materials changes our understandings of the Soviet system.

The major themes of the conference include, but are not limited to:

- The Secret Police as an Institution: Internal History and Practices
- Entering and Exiting the Gulag: Prosecution, Repression, and Return
- Police, Politics, and Society
- Policing Culture: Experts, Artists, and the Intelligentsia
- Identifying Enemies: Surveillance, Classification, and Information
- Policing Normativity: Resistance, Opposition, Non-Conformism
- Source Criticism and Methods: Intelligence Documents in the Soviet Context
- Operations Abroad and Foreign Intelligence
- Archival Access and the Politics of Declassification

On April 3, 2020 the conference will open with a book launch for the Russian (NLO, 2019) and English (University of Toronto, 2020) translations of *Jacques, le Français*, the remarkable work by

Jacques Rossi and acclaimed writer and Georgetown Professor Emerita Michèle Sarde about Rossi's life and incarceration in the GULAG. Professor Sarde will return to campus for this special event.

The working language of the conference is English. **Paper proposals** should include (1) the name of the applicant, institutional affiliation, postal and email addresses; (2) a short CV; (3) a one-page description of the proposed paper. The deadline for submitting paper proposals is **June 15, 2019**. Paper-givers will be provided round-trip travel to Georgetown, most meals, and hotel accommodations. **Proposals and inquiries should be emailed to: md672@georgetown.edu and mn837@georgetown.edu**. The organizers will assist international participants with obtaining visa invitations to the U.S.

The Jacques Rossi Memorial Fund for Gulag Research (<https://history.georgetown.edu/rossi-gulag-research-fund>) is based at Georgetown University and supports research at all levels relating to the Gulag. This conference builds on the scholarly success of the inaugural Rossi Fund conference in April 2013, "The Soviet Gulag: New Research and New Interpretations," which resulted in a special theme issue of the journal *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* and a book volume edited by Michael David-Fox, *The Soviet Gulag: Evidence, Interpretation, and Comparison* (Pittsburgh University Press, 2016).