



World War II on Trial:

The Prosecution of War Criminals and Collaborators in the USSR

International scholarly conference

International Research and Documentation Centre for War Crimes Trials, Marburg, Germany

October 6-7, 2022

Organizers:

- International Research and Documentation Centre for War Crimes Trials, Marburg, Dr. Wolfgang Form
- HSE University, Moscow, International Centre for the History and Sociology of World War II and Its Consequences, Prof. Dr. Oleg Budnitskii, Dr. Liudmila Novikova
- German Historical Institute Moscow, and the German War Graves Commission within the framework of of the joint Russian-German project “Soviet and German prisoners of war and internees”, Dr. Esther Meier, Dr. Dmitri Stratievski, Dr. Heike Winkel

The German attack on the Soviet Union started a war marked by unparalleled brutality. The Soviet people became victims of exceptionally cruel crimes during World War II. The Holocaust, executions, tortures, deportations, cruel treatment of the prisoners of war, executions of partisans and other groups of the population resulted in the deaths of millions. Although these facts are well-known, the legal prosecution of war criminals by the Soviet justice system remains largely unexamined, especially in western historiography. While a considerable number of works deal with the prosecution of war criminals by the western Allies, including trials in Western Germany, the work of the Soviet justice system in this area has not been sufficiently explored. Existing studies primarily focus on the participation of Soviet investigators in the Nuremberg and Tokyo trials.

The conference aims to fill this gap. We are particularly interested in contributions exploring the lesser-known trials of Nazi criminals, such as the trials in Krasnodar and Kharkiv in 1943, postwar trials in Soviet Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, and Latvia, and legal proceedings under Khrushchev, Brezhnev, and Gorbachev. The conference will focus on the political and legal foundations of the criminal prosecution of foreign war criminals and the Soviet citizens who collaborated with the enemy. On what evidence were the legal proceedings based (documents, eyewitness testimony, etc.)? What role did media coverage of the trials play, given that parts of the trials were staged for filming?

Another key set of questions centres on the “filtration” of returning Soviet prisoners of war and deported forced laborers, who faced accusations of “treason.” Documents dealing with the filtration of repatriates have become partially accessible in the former Soviet republics. How were the defendants of these trials singled out, including both real collaborationists and those accused of crimes they did not commit? How was the prosecution’s case built?

The conference aims to discuss the contribution of the Soviet justice system to the investigation of the crimes committed during World War II, the internal and foreign politics of the legal proceedings, the periodization of the Soviet juridical practice, and its changes from Stalin to Gorbachev.

The conference will take place in Marburg, Germany.

We invite contributions on the following subjects:

- Trials of German and Japanese war criminals and their associates in the USSR
- Filtration of the Soviet prisoners of war and civilian forced laborers
- Trials of collaborators in the USSR from Stalin to Gorbachev
- Amnesties, revision commissions, and rehabilitation - from the Khrushchev era onwards
- Release of German prisoners of war convicted of war crimes in the USSR

Working languages: Russian and English

Please submit your proposal, including your title and abstract (not exceeding one page) and brief CV, in Russian or English to worldwar2@hse.ru

The deadline is October 15, 2021.

Applicants will be notified of the results of the competitive selection process by December 1, 2021.

Foreign participants will be provided with visa support (a letter of invitation for visa purposes). The organizers will provide coffee breaks during the conference. A limited number of grants covering living and transportation costs (in whole or in part) are available. Please indicate in your application whether you require financial assistance to attend the conference.