



**International Conference  
Call for contributions  
26-27th October 2017**

**Construction and deconstruction of the 1917 Revolution memory in contemporary Russia**

**Université Grenoble Alpes (France)  
Institut des Langues et Cultures d'Europe, Amérique, Afrique, Asie et Australie (ILCEA4)**

In this conference, the point will be to review the memory/memories of the revolutionary moment of 1917 kept and (re)constructed by Russian contemporary society. Through this memorial construction, Russia seeks its place in history. But this construction also unveils the transformations undergone by Russia after the fall of the USSR. The scale of the analysis will be twofold: at state level, implying the decisions by the present Russian powers in the field of Revolutionary memory; and socio-culturally, implying the analysis of the multiple modes in which people relate to the Revolution depending on the social groups, the discursive models opted for, the forms of opposition or reference, as well as the private and public contexts in which recalling the Revolution makes sense today.

Although the revolutionary moment of 1917 had repercussions on numerous geopolitical and cultural areas, this conference will focus on the sense-making process that the Revolution elicits in Russia within its present borders. The 1917 Revolution has been interpreted in various ways through the years. We shall concentrate on studying how the relation to the revolutionary period has evolved between the late 1980ies and today. The conference will also provide an opportunity to revisit the very terms used to describe the events of 1917: “revolution”, “revolt”, “putsch”, “riot”, “coup” to quote but a few.

The proposed papers could come under five major themes:

**1 – The Revolution of 1917 in contemporary political and historiographic speech**

Since the *glasnost'* years, the representations of the revolution have undergone transformations insofar as the reassessment of “revolutionary advances” and the transposition of the revolution matrix to the socio-political changes brought about by Perestroïka contrasted with the rejection of everything connected to the revolution in connection with the turmoils of the 1990ies. How can this dual viewpoint be reconciled in the political discourse by the powers that be and their spin doctors, but also in the media echoing these speeches or broadcasting those of the opponents?

**2 – The militant representations of the Revolution and their inscription in urban space**

During the protests against the “rigged” elections (2011-2012), the theme of the Revolution was put forward both by the protesters and by the government. Some have tried to get rid of the revolutionary grammar of Russian history, but also those from the countries of the post-Soviet space (orange revolution, revolution of the roses, etc.), by suggesting as an alternative the vocabulary of evolution and stability. Others pointed out the barren nature of these movements deprived of revolutionary inspiration. What memorial strategies (keep silent, reassess, identify oneself, denounce etc...) do militants resort to when shaping their careers and projects? Generally inscribed in the urban

framework, these gatherings take place amid the symbols of the Russian Revolution. What role do these places and monuments play in the memorial construction of the Revolution by the militants?

### 3 – The artistic representations of the 1917 revolution

Even though freedom of speech in the wake of Perestroïka made it possible for hitherto unspoken opinions to come to the surface, whereas before these were only expressed by some artists in “underground” creations, the artistic language changed when the USSR broke up. Whereas the motion pictures make it a central theme (*The Admiral* by Kravtchouk, *The Angles of the Revolution* by Fedortchenko), the theatrical scene only deals with it indirectly, through significant effects typical of the concept of revolution, i.e. terror, chaos and expressivity that fit the violent discourse inherent in post-Soviet culture (*Terrorism* by Serebrennikov). The vision of the revolution in visual arts can also be of interest: paintings, sculptures, drawings including political caricatures and comics), Street art, graffiti and artistic performances.

### 4 – The representations of the 1917 Revolution in Russian contemporary literature.

The Soviet Union was the product of a “utopia in power,” yet the post-Soviet representations of the Revolution now tend to come under the heading of “counter-utopia.” The images of catastrophe (*The Slynx*, T. Tolstoï ; *2017*, O. Slavnikova), apocalypse (*Maidenhair*, M. Shishkin), catharsis (*Sankya*, *The Pathologies*, Z. Prilepin ; *The Librarian*, M. Elizarov), revenge (neo-eurasist writers) in fact surround the revolutionary moment in contemporary Russian literature while other authors deconstruct the image of the revolution by twisting language and loading it with potent irony (V. Pelevin and V. Sorokin).

### 5 – The representations of the 1917 Revolution in Youth Literature

Aiming at shaping a *homo sovieticus*, Soviet youth literature was targeted by censorship, especially when describing an event like the 1917 Revolution, endowed with a high symbolic value. Have the evolutions in the political interpretation of the revolution been reflected in youth literature and the critical discourse on the latter? How were they impacted by the decision to go back to the “genuine” basics of the Revolution advocated during the Perestroïka? During the 90ies, can we blame the economic downturn for the comeback of the tramp kid figure (*besprizornik*)? Finally, from the late 2000 decade, to what extent do we find an echo of the policy aiming at bridging the gap between the Imperial, Soviet and present periods in youth literature through its historical (biographies, memoirs, etc.)?

For further information, see:

<http://www.u-grenoble3.fr/version-francaise/recherche-valorisation/evenements/appel-a-contributions-pour-le-colloque-international-construction-et-deconstruction-d-une-memoire-de-la-revolution-de-1917-en-russie-contemporaine--281559.kjsp>

The propositions for papers, approximately 5000 signs long, shall be sent to [revolutions2017@gmail.com](mailto:revolutions2017@gmail.com) before the 1st of June 2016. They shall come with a biographical notice of the author. The managing committee shall inform the authors of the selection result on the 22nd of June 2016.

Working languages: French, English and Russian.

**Scientific Committee:** Jean-Robert Raviot (Université Paris Ouest Nanterre La Défense), Vladimir Beliakov (Université Toulouse Le Mirail), Anne le Huérou (Université Paris Ouest Nanterre La Défense), Myriam Désert (Université Paris Sorbonne Paris IV), Sophie Coeuré (Université Paris 7 Paris Diderot), Hélène Mélat (Centre franco-russe de Moscou), Marie-Christine Autant-Mathieu (Université Paris Sorbonne Paris IV), Laure Thibonnier (Université Grenoble Alpes), Valéry Kossov (Université Grenoble Alpes), Isabelle Després (Université Grenoble Alpes), Ludmila Kastler (Université Grenoble Alpes), Marie Delacroix (Université Grenoble Alpes), Olga Bronnikova (Université Grenoble Alpes)