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Philipp Gassert/Martin Klimke (Hrsg.), 1968: Memories and Legacies of a Global Revolt (Bulletin of the German Historical Institute, Supplement 6), German Historical Institute, Washington 2009, 266 S., kart., kostenlos.

"The global" is surely among historians' favored aspirations today. It even has its own movement, the "global turn" – a phrase that recalls the "cultural (or linguistic) turn", which preceded this latest turn by two decades. As "transnational" has begun to seem an empty signifier, its thin conceptualization stretched beyond value, "global" seems safer, more rooted geographically. It promises, too, to respond to contemporary concerns outside the academy. On the other hand, ostensibly global work carries the potential of replicating Western biases. As many have observed, trends that we mark as "globalizing" are often part of the experience of barely 20% of the world's population.

The volume under review, a collection of essays edited by Philipp Gassert and Martin Klimke and published by the German Historical Institute, Washington, prompts these thoughts. Since at least the 30th anniversary of "1968", scholars have been trying to link together the disparate experiences of that year and era, beginning with studies spanning Western Europe and the United States. But can we really speak of a "global 1968" if most of the revolt was in the cities and university towns of the industrialized West? Or is it the case that the story really is global, and only our histories have been provincially confined?

Gassert and Klimke offer two answers to these questions. First, they remind us in their introduction – an extremely useful, if dry, survey of the literature – that protesting students in Western Europe "readily imagined themselves as part of the same fight against capitalist exploitation and communist repression, against colonial rule and imperialist domination" (p. 5). One thinks of the chant as police beat protesters in Chicago at the 1968 convention of the Democratic Party: "The whole world is watching!". Even if the whole world was not watching, this assumption does allow us to speak of "1968" as global in some way, no matter who was protesting.

The essays themselves, in their entirety, offer a quite different way to see "1968" as global. The editors have assembled an amazing number of perspectives, covering no fewer than 37 countries and two territories (Palestine and Hong Kong). This coverage may or may not match the actual extent of the protest movements we call "1968", but the volume makes it possible to ask whether events in, for example, Egypt, Bolivia, or Thailand belong in the same narrative as France, Italy, or Czechoslovakia.

But 39 case studies in 220 pages, plus an introduction and a panel discussion in the epilogue, could not be expected to answer these questions themselves. The essays are more than a little frustrating, in fact. Their authors (many of them journalists and writers, as well as scholars) tend to offer personal reflections on the events they witnessed in or after 1968. Some offer little context – though in these cases the editors provide capsule summaries. While most make gestures to the global story (mentioning Che Guevara, Vietnam, or Paris), they do so almost in passing. So too they offer a few general comments on how things have changed since 1968, comments heavily colored by the writer's place in the story. These brief essays are not uninteresting, but they eventually become indistinguishable from one another. One has to say, too, that memories of one's student years are not always fascinating.

There are some exceptions, usually from less-familiar cases. Dmitri Roussopoulos deftly traces the domestic and international geography of Canada's protest movements. Hans Kundnani manages in just four pages to get to the heart of the British "tranquillity". Andy Stafford's essay on Senegal raises that case to a point of centrality in the African "1968" and beyond. Essays on Syria, South Africa, and Yugoslavia are also worth mentioning. And all of the essays should at least provoke questions for the student researcher hunting for a suitable comparative case, making this a serviceable handbook. (One case was surprisingly absent: China. The Cultural Revolution was of course radically different from

anything else – but it was also an important point of reference for so many activists, and so should have been explored here.)

It was hard to avoid the conclusion, however, that such a volume (or conference) is a lazy way to approach global stories. Even the best essays are not in conversation with one another, but merely occupy adjacent (alphabetically, region by region) spaces. Of themselves, they bring us no closer to understand the dynamics and mechanics of "1968". One solution would have been to ask authors to focus on the same set of questions, more narrow than the "memories and legacies" of the book's title. Such questions could have included these: 1. How did potential protesters envision politics and the world as "1968" began, and why? 2. What local and global factors shaped actions over the course of the year? 3. Can legacies be divided into those that are political and those that are cultural?

But one can dream of a new approach. What if experts of different countries had been paired and worked in teams in familiar/unfamiliar terrains: a Germanist and a historian of Spain, or Senegal, working side-by-side in each country, explaining to one another and trying to understand similar and different factors, and turning a fresh eye onto the archives and the oral histories? Would such teams be able to uncover new factors, and trace forgotten connections? It is already time to begin preparing grants for fiftieth-anniversary conferences and volumes. This reviewer hopes to see a fresh direction by then.

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