DECLINES AND FALLS

Perspectives in European History and Historiography

Twenty Years of the European Review of History / Revue européenne d'histoire: An Anniversary Conference
Central European University, Budapest, 15-17 May 2013
Organizing committee: ERH/Reh editorial committee
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Cover illustration: “Eros blindfolded”, by Polish artist Igor Mitoraj (Valley of Temples, Agrigento, Sicily, Italy)
WHY DECLINES AND FALLS?

It is not mere irony, let alone pessimism, that motivates the European Review of History / Revue d'histoire européenne to devote this anniversary conference to the theme of “decline”. It is a theme that looks both highly topical, and one that lends itself naturally to being explored in diverse historical perspectives.

Barely two decades after the process of European integration entered its advanced stage with the Treaty of Maastricht, and at a time when the process of EU enlargement is still moving ahead, the voice of sceptics is stronger than ever. The countries of the European Union, individually and as a collectivity, are seen to be undergoing a structural crisis of political institutions, economic and social relations, cultural and moral values. The continent is struggling with a complex web of strongly interrelated challenges, not triggered but amplified by the recent global economic crisis, ranging from the pressures of immigration and inequality, through the fluctuation of markets and the ailing condition of the shared currency, to the broken confidence in institutions and politicians, and beyond. A pan-European trend of anti-integration movements is emerging ever more robustly, while mainstream political leaders, including ones of the new accession countries, speak of the ultimate Spenglerian Untergang des Abendlandes, when European nations need to seek their separate paths and relationships in finding their place in a new global order.

Neither the experience of structural tensions, nor the atmosphere of gloom generated by those tensions, is unprecedented in European history. Cultural-intellectual responses to decline were central to the thought of ancient Greek philosophers and historians, whose legacy was a critical impact on certain strands of medieval and early modern thought. Roman moralists and Christian church fathers lamented the corruptions that exposed Roman civilization to the blows of barbarian vigour – a theme keenly embraced a millennium and a half later by Edward Gibbon in the work whose title is echoed in our conference call, at a time when the overall enthusiasm about progress inevitably fed an interest in its counterpart, decline, as well. In the intervening centuries, the vision of impending apocalypse was kept vivid, in the Middle Ages by the combined impact of baronial feuds, famines and epidemics, and in the early-modern period by that of endemic, large scale religious, civil and international warfare. In modern and contemporary times, self-styled apostles of progress, from Jacobins through Bolsheviks to National Socialists, presumed to be saving European civilization from decline, only to throw – and to be seen throwing – it into the hitherto unseen and incomprehensible, barbarous abysses of revolutionary terror, world wars and the Holocaust.

Such an abyss is hopefully far from being a real threat today, while the sense of living in a fragmented and uncertain world, and the loss of self-confidence on the part of Europeans as Europeans, which the phenomena synoptically listed above denote, is undoubtedly present. “Absolute” decline – whether of demographic trends, the gross national product, or habits of religious devotion, to mention but a few areas – should not be mistaken for “relative” decline or mere retardation (a slowdown of growth in the first two cases, and a shift in denominational balance in the third one). Nonetheless, the perception of the latter could be as alarming, and as likely to be caught up in alarmist discourses and representations as the former. It must be
added, however, that today, as in the past, “decline” and its companion terms that define a whole conceptual area – such as “crisis”, for example – have not necessarily been invested with negative connotations. The decline of e.g. the Habsburg, Ottoman or Soviet empires was viewed with optimism (at any rate by outsiders), and their fall, celebrated; the “crisis of the seventeenth century” diagnosed by modern historians has been understood by them as a catalyst for accelerated progress; etc.

We have in mind a conference that historicizes the current experience and discussion of “decline” in each of these senses. While there is scope for addressing “real” processes in the economic, social and political realm, we are more interested in the conditions under which the perception of “decline”, “crisis”, “decay”, “disintegration” etc. has tended to become prominent in public discourse; more generally, in the ways in which such perceptions have shaped mentalities and cultural-intellectual responses of Europeans over the past three millennia.

The Organizers
DECLINES AND FALLS
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CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

WEDNESDAY, 15 MAY

12:00-13:30: Registration (Octogon)

13:30-14:00: Welcomes (CEU Auditorium)

John Shattuck (Rector and President, Central European University); Bertrand Taithe (University of Manchester and ERH); László Kontler (Central European University and ERH)

14:00-15:20 Session I (CEU Auditorium)

Chair: Stephen Hodkinson (University of Nottingham and ERH)
Keynote lecture: The Decline and Fall of Rome since before Gibbon - Ian Wood (University of Leeds)

15:20-15:40 Coffee

15:40-17:10 Session II (CEU Auditorium)

Panel 1: Theoretical approaches to the problem of decline
Chair: Bertrand Taithe (University of Manchester and ERH)

Weber’s Long Shadow: Reformation, Routinization, and the Narrative of Decline - Phillip Haberkern (Boston University)

Arnold J. Toynbee’s A Study of History in a British Perspective - Alexander Hutton (University of Cambridge)

Reassessing Decline through a Dialectical Standstill - Sinkwan Cheng (Chinese University of Hong Kong)

17:10-17:30 Coffee
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<th>17:30-19:00 Session III</th>
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| **Panel 2: The theme of decline in Enlightenment historiography** *(Gellner Room)*  
Chair: László Kontler (Central European University and ERH) | **Panel 3: “The decline of the West”** *(Popper Room)*  
Chair: Katalin Szende (Central European University) |
| The Perceptions of Decline and the Legacy of Stoicism in Late Eighteenth Century Russia - Vladimir Ryzhkov *(St. Petersburg State University)*  
Progress and Decadence: Interconnections Between Two Historical Narratives During the Long 18th Century - Theo Jung *(Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg)*  
The Decline and Fall of Athens in Ancient Greek and Eighteenth-Century Historiography - Ben Early *(Bristol)* | On wanderings and invasions. Migrations as explanation for declines and falls in European classical and ancient studies - Felix Wiedemann *(Freie Universität Berlin)*  
The ‘Decline’ and ‘Fall’ of the Roman West from a Eurasian Perspective - Hyun Jin Kim *(University of Melbourne)*  
Before the Decline of the West: Zivilisationskritik from non-Western Intellectuals at the Beginning of the 20th Century – Erdal Kaynar *(CNRS, Paris/IFEA, Istanbul)* |

| 19:00 Reception |

**THURSDAY, 16 MAY**

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<th>9:30-11:00 Session IV</th>
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| **Panel 4: Crisis and war: twentieth-century anxieties (1)** *(Gellner Room)*  
Chair: Ilse Josepha Lazaroms *(Imre Kertész Kolleg, Jena and ERH)* | **Panel 5: Decline and contemporary European history (1)** *(Popper Room)*  
Chair: Susan Zimmermann (Central European University) |
| The Politics of Impending Doom: Decline and Salvation in the Habsburg Monarchy on the Eve of the First World War - John Dáék *(University of Notre Dame)*  
The Theme of Decline in Hungarian Historiography and Historical Thinking in the First Half of the 20th Century - Vilmos Erős *(University of Debrecen)*  
The Interwar Crisis: Malaise Alsacien, malaise international - Alison Carrol *(Brunel University)* | Twilight of Capitalism or Decline of the West? Transatlantic Perceptions on the Crisis of the 1970s in Western Europe - Frédéric Heurtebize *(Université Paris Ouest Nanterre)*  
The Crisis of Western Europe’s Global Standing in the 1970s: EC’s Elites Perceptions of Decline and Strategies to Counter It - Lorenzo Ferrari *(IMT Institute for Advanced Studies, Lucca)*  
Shaping a European Social Model in the Ruins of the Golden Age: European Social Policy and Rising Unemployment in the 1970s and 1980s – Aurélie Andry *(European University Institute, Florence)* |
11:00-11:30 Coffee

11:30-13:00 Session V

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<tr>
<th>Panel 6: Crisis and war: twentieth-century anxieties (2) (Gellner Room)</th>
<th>Panel 7: Decline and contemporary European history (2) (Popper Room)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Chair: Jean-Marc Dreyfus (University of Manchester and ERH)</td>
<td>Chair: Cornelius Torp (Martin-Luther-Universität, Halle and ERH)</td>
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<td>“Untergang des Abendlandes” or Temporary Decline? The “European” Crisis during the Second Thirty Years War in German, British and US American Print Media Coverage (1914-1945) - Florian Gréener (University of Augsburg)</td>
<td>“A Rising Tide Lifts All Boats”: Chartering Ireland’s Turbulent Voyage From Despair to Hope in the 1950s - Barry Whelan (National University of Ireland)</td>
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<td>A Crisis for Eurocentrism: The Decline of the League of Nations, the Second World War and the Post-War Eclipse of Europe in the United Nations Organisation - Emma Edwards (National University of Ireland, Maynooth)</td>
<td>Enoch Powell, British ‘Decline’ and Opposition to the EEC – Paul Corthorn (Queen’s University Belfast)</td>
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13:00-14:00 Lunch

14:00-15:30 Session VI

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<th>Panel 8: Decline and/of empire (1) (Popper Room)</th>
<th>Panel 9: Decline and contemporary European history (3) (Gellner Room)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Chair: Aziz Al-Azmeh (Central European University)</td>
<td>Chair: Marsha Siefert (Central European University)</td>
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<td>Ruin Gazing: (Post-)Roman Empires and the Fall of Rome - Julia Charlotte Hell (University of Michigan)</td>
<td>Making Time During Communism’s Demise: 1989 and its temporality – Piotr Wcislik Central European University, Budapest)</td>
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<td>Ottoman Decline Paradigm as Derivative of the Progressivism of the Habsburg and Russian Historiography – Yasir Yilmaz (Purdue University, West Lafayette)</td>
<td>Demythologization of the Romanian Historical Discourse after 1989. Intellectual Origins, Arguments and Critics – Eugen Stancu (Bucharest University)</td>
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<td>Long Decline or Sudden Shock? The Holy Roman Empire from Middles Ages to 1806 - Joachim Whaley (University of Cambridge)</td>
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15:30-16:00 Coffee

16:00-17:00 Session VII

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<th>Panel 10: Decline and the Middle Ages (Gellner Room)</th>
<th>Panel 11: The body and the theme of decline (Popper Room)</th>
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<td>Chair: Karin Tilmans (European University Institute, Florence and ERH)</td>
<td>Chair: Rachel Ritchie (Brunel University and ERH)</td>
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<td>Letter-Writing as a Response to Intellectual Decline in Merovingian Gaul - Hope Williard (University of Leeds)</td>
<td>Concrete Degeneration: The Birth of the “Criminal Appearance” in 19th century France - Patricia Bass (Paris 3: La Sorbonne Nouvelle)</td>
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<td>Medievalism in the Age of ‘Progress’ - Stephen L. Keck (American University of Sharjah)</td>
<td>Empire of Decadence. The Masculinisation of German Politics before the First World War - Norman Domeier (Universität Stuttgart / University of Cambridge)</td>
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17:00-17:30: Coffee (hall outside Gellner Room)

17:30-19:00 Session VIII (CEU Auditorium)

Chair: Nadia Al-Bagdadi (Central European University)

Keynote lecture: The Discourse of Decadence as Historical Metaphor and Cultural Criticism in the European Fin de Siècle - Mary Gluck (Brown University, Providence)

19:30 Dinner

FRIDAY, 17 MAY

9:00-11:00 Session IX

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<tr>
<td>Chair: Victor Karady (Central European University)</td>
<td>Chair: Gábor Klaniczay (Central European University)</td>
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<td>“Op de Dood en Begraving van het Credit”? Contemporary Reactions to the “Financial Disaster” of 1763 in the Dutch Republic - Lina Weber (Ruprecht-Karls-Universität, Heidelberg)</td>
<td>Ultimate Decline, Universal Destruction, and Radical Reform – Late Medieval and Early Modern Transformations of the Apocalyptic Narrative - Matthias Riedl (Central European University, Budapest)</td>
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<td>The Creation of Population Crises in Modern Germany - Amanda M. Brian (Coastal Carolina University, Conway)</td>
<td>Making Sense of the Fall: Historical Interpretations in Early Modern Constantinople - Ioannis Kyriakantonakis (Centre of Asia Minor Studies, Athens)</td>
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### 11:00-11:30 Coffee

### 11:30-13:00 Session X

#### Panel 14: Decline and/of empire (2) (Gellner Room)
Chair: Alfred Rieber (Central European University)
- Foreshadowing the Doom of Imperial Compromise? Irish Perceptions of the Decline and Fall of Austria-Hungary – Zsuzsanna Zarka (National University of Ireland, Maynooth)
- Imperial Fall, Southern Emergence: Decolonization, History and North-South Disjunction – Caio Simões de Araújo (Graduate Institute for International and Development Studies, Geneva)
- Republican Decadence or Imperial Decline? The Optimism of British Edwardian Pessimism – Eva Marlene Hausteiner (Humboldt Universität, Berlin)

#### Panel 15: The discourse of decline on the interwar extreme right (Popper Room)
Chair: Balázs Trencsényi (Central European University)
- ‘Blüte und Zerfall’?: ‘Schematic Narrative Templates’ of Decline and Fall in National Socialist Racial Ideology – Helen Roche (University of Cambridge)
- Racial Education for the Nazi Elite: The Discourse over Demographic Decline in the SS – Amy Carney (Pennsylvania State University)
- To Wither or to be Reborn. The Historical Weltanschauung of Hungarian Fascism in the 1930-40’s – Áron Szele (Central European University, Budapest)

### 13:00-14:00 Lunch

### 14:00-15:30 Session XI (CEU Auditorium)
Chair: Constantin Iordachi (Central European University)
**Keynote lecture: Rise and Decline in the History of Capitalism and its Critique** – Jürgen Kocka (Freie Universität, Berlin / Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung)

### 15:30-16:00 Conclusion, farewell