‘Central Asian Corruption’ and the Disintegration of the USSR: Soviet ‘peripheral’ response to neo-liberal economic models

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In the 1980s, the discussions on the economic self-sufficiency of the Soviet Republics went in parallel to the well-known ‘Uzbek cotton affair’ in the USSR, which produced popular notions of the malfunctioning socialist planned economy on the one hand, and the ‘cultural corruption’ of Central Asia, on the other. This talk presents a detailed analysis of the role of republican and local elites in the process which has too often been understood as the launching and fostering of economic reforms by the central authorities in Moscow. Based on archival data and interviews recorded in Central Asian capitals and provinces, the research draws a nuanced picture of centre-periphery communication in the late USSR and shows how Perestroika policies affected the disastrous social effects of neo-liberal economic developments in post-Soviet Central Asia.

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Zeit: Mittwoch, 4. Mai 2016, 18 Uhr
Ort: Invalidenstraße 118, Raum 507 (5. OG)

Alle Interessenten sind recht herzlich eingeladen.