Enise Şeyda KAPUSUZ
Ph.D. candidate at the History Department of the EUI
Enise.kapusuz@eui.eu

A Long History of Migration: Ottoman Muslim Women's activities in Vienna during and after WWI (1914-1919)

This presentation aims to introduce the findings of my research project funded by MA7 the Cultural Department of the Municipality of Vienna and hosted by the Oriental Studies Department of University of Vienna. The research aims to discover the hidden histories of Muslim women who migrated/traveled from Istanbul to Vienna during and after WWI. Even though it is hard to estimate the number, the current research shows that many Muslim women migrated/traveled from Istanbul to Vienna with different reasons for their travel; some of those women moved to study, some moved with their husbands, and some just visited Vienna for a limited time. Regardless of the reason for their journey, they all left some footprints in Vienna. There are various historical materials such as travel documents, residence records, student registries, police records, newspapers, and photographs will be analyzed as the main primary source material for this research. Writing the history of everyday lives of these multicultural women will broaden the frame of the gender and women's history of the Ottoman and the Austria-Hungarian Empires and the history of WWI.

Balázs Juhász

Associated professor, Modern and Contemporary World History Department, Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE), juhasz.balazs@btk.elte.hu

Central-European culture outside Central-Europe: Learning, exchanging knowledge and education in Italian prisoner-of-war camps (1915-1920)

During First World War the belligerents interned in large numbers foreign nationals living in their territory or captured by their armies. Previously adopted international regulations guaranteed the rights of interned military personnel on several issues, and neutral organisations sought to extend these rights to civilians. There have also been attempts by home countries to serve the cultural needs of their own people trapped abroad. The detainees were given permission to engage in a wide range of cultural activities, both theatrical performances and in-camp self-education. This, together with sport, was a way of releasing the prisoners' excess energy and distracting them. However, it was difficult to maintain cultural contact with the home environment, as censorship was extended to publications distributed to prisoners of war to control the flow of information. Nevertheless, we know of initiatives by both prisoners of war and organisations working with them to encourage the continuation of interrupted/discontinued studies. The phenomenon is well known, but localised cases and small communities have rarely been studied. The present paper will analyse the frames marked by the Austro-Hungarian POW system in Italy and, within this context, the educational and cultural opportunities of the officers' camp residents in Cittaducale. The study of a community that lived together over a long period of time and was quite diverse in terms of its membership not only allows the analysis to address the complex needs of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy's multi-ethnic army, which varied in terms of the quality of its provisions, but also to examine the usefulness of the knowledge acquired by the target individuals, broken down into individual persons.

Yevhenii Monastyrskyi
Harvard University
ymonastyrskyi@fas.harvard.edu

"Reaching the Land of the Freedom": Political Migrants, Forced Citizenship and Regimes of Belonging in the Soviet Union

"With great enthusiasm for a secure life in 'the homeland' of the proletariat," German communist Helmut Staege traversed the final 35 kilometers through the Galician fields on foot to the Soviet border, ultimately reaching "the land of freedom."[1] On June 28, 1936, when Staege illegally crossed the Polish-Soviet border in what was then Vinnytsia Oblast, the Soviet border guards—stationed at the gateway to the land of triumphant communism—were not eager to welcome the German communist refugee with open arms. Since September 1933, in accordance with the GPU (State Political Directorate) internal directive "On Germans arriving from abroad," German communists seeking asylum in the Soviet Union were "to be subjected to thorough interrogation about the circumstances of their escape, as well as about their work in the party and other party organizations" directly upon crossing the border.[2]

This paper critically analyzes the intricacies of political migration to the Soviet Union, exposing the fundamental contradictions between the state's internationalist discourse and its frequently severe and exclusionary migration policies. This analysis examines the treatment of political migrants from Central and Eastern Europe, along with those from Greece and Iran, highlighting the Soviet regime's oscillation between embracing ideological allies and regarding them as potential threats. Political migrants were either granted favorable conditions or subjected to interrogation, detention, and coerced assimilation via compulsory Soviet citizenship, a policy that became increasingly stringent from 1935 onwards.

This study examines the Soviet Union's internal migration policies before and after World War II, utilizing archival sources from Germany, Poland, Austria, Russia, and Ukraine, with a focus on the increased state control during the 1930s and its centralization following the dissolution of the Comintern. It examines how these policies mirrored overarching Soviet concerns regarding foreign infiltration, especially during the "spy mania" of the late 1930s, and evaluates the changing role of foreigners in Soviet society—both as conceptualized by the state and as experienced by the migrants themselves.

This paper analyzes forced citizenship and migration control mechanisms, providing insights into how political migration influenced concepts of belonging and identity in the Soviet Union. It enhances comprehension of the Soviet migration regime's impact on individual and collective experiences of place, attachment, and participation, while posing essential inquiries regarding the intersections of power, identity, and migration in the 20th century.

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[1] Bundesarchiv Berlin-Lichterfelde (BArch), SGY 21/39, p. 9.
[2] Branch State Archive of the Security Service of Ukraine (GDA SBU), f. 9, op. 1, spr. 2-SP, ark. 363-364. "Direktiva o nemtsak pribyvaiushchih iz-za granitsy, GPU USSR" 9 September 1933.