ABSTRACT

Annual Convention
of the Leibniz Graduate School
"History, Knowledge, Media in East Central Europe"

THE KNOWLEDGE FACTOR: Refugees in Central and Eastern Europe, 1912-2001

Lessons learned? The Balkan states narrations on the Kosovo Refugees Crisis

In 1999 the Kosovo refugee crisis and NATO's intervention in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia put the Balkan region at risk. During 78 days (between 24 March and 10 June 1999), NATO bombed Yugoslavia in order to force Serbian troops from Kosovo and ultimately to halt Slobodan Milosevic's policy against the ethnic Albanians living in Kosovo. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) there were more than 750,000 refugees spread across the Balkan states. Albania took in most of them, around 440,000. The total number of refugees and displaced persons from and within the territory of the former Yugoslavia was estimated at more than three million people. Undoubtedly, the Kosovo crisis had an overwhelming effect on the region. Until today it remained unique in terms of its unprecedented magnitude.

The aim of the paper is to analyze the each country's reaction to the massive influx of Kosovar refugees in 1999. I begin by defining what the narratives analysis is. Next, by using this analysis, I will examine how Albania, Macedonia and Montenegro built its own narrative. Understanding the narrative is essential in explaining the country's policy too. Finally, I will summarize the paper with some conclusions regarding the need for further research.

Establishing the conditions necessary for large scale migration took a long time and required enormous resources. It was not an easy task for political leaders who work through the appropriate humanitarian response.

Taking a look back at the Balkan states response seems crucial on the occasion of the humanitarian disaster we are facing as the Europeans. Currently, Europe as a whole struggles to table proper proposals on how to deal with the crisis.

Agata Domachowska

Challenging and solidifying: the dynamics of notions, stereotypes and prejudices about forced migration in Subotica

During and after the Yugoslav wars around 10 thousand forced migrants have moved permanently from Croatia, Bosnia and Kosovo to the Serbian town of Subotica. The town has a solid multiethnic character. In the paper I chiefly use material from about three and a half dozen semi-structured interviews conducted with middle-aged and elderly former Serbian forced migrants and 'autochthonous' locals of Serbian, Croatian and Hungarian nationalities in Subotica. I focus on their memories about the 1990s and their interpretations regarding the society of Subotica, the region of Vojvodina and forced migration in general.

Subotica and the northern province of Serbia, Vojvodina, are generally regarded as places with high level of tolerance and historical coexistence in interethnic relations. The locals generally tend to defend this notion in the past and in the present by verbally – but not physically – distancing themselves from the refugees, who "were not able to identify themselves" with these values and they "changed the athmosphere" of the city. The historical context – series of wars and the revival of nationalism – adds more anger to this stance. Political, ethnical and cultural arguments are dominant in the natives' discourses. They neglect the skills and knowledge of the refugees – indeed, there are usually very suspicious notions regarding whether the immigrants were 'real' refugees. Still, there are narratives with alternative registers as well, where the informants recognize the Serbian forced migrants as a typical immigrant group in Vojvodina with a potential to 'enrich' the town and the region.

The once forced migrants openly speak about the multiethnic characteristics of the region. The interethnical peace in Subotica is much appreciated by them. Their devotion to Serbian national values, traditional and popular culture is emphatic. However, this makes them even more suspicious in the eyes of some of the locals. Nearly all of the informants managed to find a job and to sustain their social status during and after the war and many of them managed to become nearly 'invisible' in the city.

The findings highlight the delicate nature of mass-refugee movements, challenging and forming the general notions about a traditionally multiethnic region.

Peter Vataščin

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From Politician to Sociologist: Mykyta Shapoval and the Ukrainian Sociological Institute

Mykyta Shapoval, a Ukrainian politician during stormy times of the Ukrainian revolution, came to Prague as a political refugee in 1919. He was a member of the Ukrainian Social Revolutionaries party, one of the most important parties during a period of the Ukrainian independence struggle in 1917-1919.

Shapoval started his activities in Czechoslovakia as a politician and became the head of the Ukrainian Civic Committee which was established in the summer of 1921 to provide aid for immigrants, flooding into the country from the former Russian Empire. Shapoval used his connections with Czechoslovakian authorities to get government funds for the committee's relief work.

Nevertheless, he believed that "cultural work" is much more important than this kind of social aid. He saw two main tasks in this area: to guarantee possibilities to train Ukrainian specialists in schools with Ukrainian language of instruction and to set up an institution for a research of the Ukrainian society.

With the financial help of the Czechoslovak government, he managed to establish a couple of Ukrainian schools of different levels in Czechoslovakia, and he also founded the Ukrainian Sociological Institute in Prague, which became a serious scientific institution.

As a sociologist, although he was almost autodidact, he earned recognition of his Czechoslovak colleagues, and, except his studies on Ukrainian topics, he also became one of important interpreters of T.G. Masaryk's sociological ideas. Today, he is still respected for his insightful criticism of certain Masaryk's ideas. He is one of the first ones who pointed out the inherent limitations of Masaryk's philosophical sociology.

He used different methods to get recognition as a scientist and indispensable financial support. Firstly, it was his informal contacts with Czechoslovak policymakers. Secondly, he also maintained contacts with respected sociologists both abroad and in Czechoslovakia and published his works in journals and as books until his death in 1932.

Although it would seem that Shapoval had the best conditions for his activities, he was quite critical to Czechoslovak government and individual officials. He was convinced that Czechoslovak authorities had much more positive attitude to Russian refugees, which was definitely true at least for the Czech society in general. Although he got certain recognition as a scientist, he was not really able to establish himself in Czechoslovak academia and loss of financial support from Czechoslovak government for his Sociological Institute caused serious decline in his activities.

Miroslav Tomek

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Refugees in Power: Red Finns and the Making of Revolutionary Karelia

In 1918, the borderland territories of North Russia saw a massive influx of refugees from neighbouring Finland. This exodus was caused by the Finnish Civil War, in which the Finnish Reds, led by the Social Democratic Party, clashed with nationalist forces. The German military support secured the victory of the nationalist camp, and in April and May 1918, ca. 6,000 refugees – mostly Finnish Communists and their families – fled to Petrograd. In the aftermath of the Civil War, the nationalist Finnish government unleashed a campaign of terror against Communists and their supporters, and an additional 7,000 refugees crossed the Soviet-Finnish border in the next several years.

Initially, the Soviet government – which had its own Civil War to wage – employed Finnish refugees in the Red Army where they formed separate Finnish detachments. By 1920, however, the Russian Civil War was drawing to its end, and the victorious Bolsheviks faced a whole set of new problems related to the peacetime administration of the vast territories that they had inherited from the Russian Empire. In many respects, Bolshevik tactics after 1920 resembled methods of colonial administration, with the main difference that functions of colonial officials were performed by the Communist bureaucracy. Dark, illiterate, petty bourgeois, and sometimes openly counterrevolutionary post-Civil War Russia had to be colonized by new Soviet ideas, a new Soviet way of life, and new Soviet people who could be forged from "old" people but also come from elsewhere. In Soviet Karelia, a region in northern Russia with an ethnic Karelian population, these new people were Finnish Communist refugees. Educated and skilled, refugees from Finland were regarded by Soviet authorities as agents of revolutionary transformations who would modernize the political, economic and cultural life of the ethnic Karelian population. When in 1920 the Bolshevik government established Soviet Karelia as an autonomous region, it appointed Finnish Communists to the top-level positions in its administration.

This paper will use archival documents, memoirs, press accounts, and secondary literature to examine how and why the Soviet government appointed Finnish refugees as a quasi-colonial administration of Soviet Karelia, and how these refugees became active proponents and agents of socialist transformations in northern Russia in the 1920s and early 1930s.

Alexey Golubev

Germanizing Universities and Imperial Knowledge: Theodor Schiemann, *Ostforschung*, and the University of Dorpat at the End of the First World War

Theodor Schiemann, historian of Russia and founder of the Seminar for the Study of Eastern Europe (*Ostforschung*) at the University of Berlin, returned to the Baltic in 1918 as the rector of the Germanized University of Dorpat. Schiemann had been educated at the University decades before, but had fled to Berlin in the 1880s as a result of Russification policies on academics in the Baltic States of the Russian Empire. In the interim, the University had been renamed the University of Yuryev (today's University of Tartu in Estonia) and Russian history and language dominated instruction. Thus, Schiemann, a Baltic-German émigré and refugee from one state-enforced nationalization policy, returned on behalf of the expanding German Empire in Eastern Europe to solidify his career as a proponent of a historical and contemporary narrative of German dominance in and expertise about the region. The University was to be at the forefront of a German imperial landscape that sought to spread *Kultur*, denigrate Slavic and Russian influence and history, and often relegated local Baltic populations to minor roles in the historical development and contemporary politics of the region.

My presentation explores the colonial dimensions of the use and abuse of history in this, as Schiemann saw it, push-and-pull between German and Russian influence within East Central European history. Instrumental for Schiemann, his like-minded colleagues, and many Baltic Germans, was for the history and institutions of the region to be written and spoken in German and to, accordingly, offer a story of the German 'civilizing mission'. An academic refugee from Russification, Schiemann, with direct backing from Kaiser Wilhelm II, countered with a violently Russophobic discourse and institutionalization of Germanization. This presentation examines colonial knowledge production, constructed historical and racial narratives, and the role that empire has played in moving, defining, and controlling local and outside populations in East Central Europe.

Brian Gebhart

Returnees or Refugees?
The Reception of Soviet Repatriates in the USSR, 1945-1946

At the end of World War II, almost six million Soviet people were outside the Soviet Union, displaced by the war as prisoners, forced laborers or willing migrants in Germany and allied states. The overwhelming majority of displaced Soviets returned to the USSR, most in a massive population transfer in the summer of 1945. Although scholars have examined the diplomatic process that allowed a minority of these would-be Soviets to remain abroad, what remains unstudied is the experience of return. How did returnees' time as refugees alter their reception by the Soviet state and society? To what extent were repatriates still considered Soviet citizens and to what extend had they become refugees? How did their former neighbors receive returnees as they transformed into refugees who placed an additional burden on the local postwar economy? The case of Soviet repatriates reveals how the return of a displaced population reflects aspects of a more general refugee experience.

Repatriates received a mixed reception among various Soviet official and social actors in 1945. Bureaucrats in the Soviet government's Administration for Repatriation attempted to integrate repatriates into Soviet life as part of postwar reconstruction efforts, even providing some skilled repatriates with recognition as qualified laborers. As these Soviets returned to their villages and towns, though, their neighbors viewed them skeptically or with outright hostility. Fearful that Soviet policing administrations like the NKVD and SMERSH would uncover incriminating materials about the returnees, locals branded repatriates as "traitors" and "Germans," suggesting that their own loyalty had been greater. Although this reception was partially a product of the postwar Stalinist environment, I argue that these labels in part reflected the broader phenomenon of social reception of refugees. As in the recent refugee crises in Europe and the United States, hostile reactions to repatriates revealed an attempt to demonize a marginal outsider population, which in turn justified the withholding of resources to a group that the local population feared would become a burden.

Seth Bernstein

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Pioneers, Repatriants, Refugees: The Settlement of Poland's Former German Territories in Socialist-era Polish Sociology

This paper explores the representation in Polish socialist-era sociology of the experiences of Poles who came from territories annexed by the Soviet Union to settle lands acquired by Poland from Germany following post-World War II border changes. These refugees and forced migrants were often referred to at the time as "repatriants", reflecting the official view that they had effectively moved from non-Polish to Polish lands. Since 1989, eastern Poles, including those also deported to Siberia, have been central to a narrative of national victimhood, which was deemed legitimate as it supposedly filled in blank spaces produced by communist censorship and memory politics.

In this presentation, however, I consider socialist-era sources produced by sociologists, including field research and mass autobiography, together with the subsequent analysis, as a pioneering example of migration studies and interdisciplinary contemporary history. I thus consider the work of sociologists in the Polish Academy of Sciences (PAN), at the Institute of Western Affairs in Poznań working in, effectively, "Westforschung", or studies of former German territories, and also the work of young historians at the PAN Institute of History, who acknowledged the historical value of sociological work in the 1960s already. Contrary to today's dominant public history and memory claims, I suggest that there was not "forced forgetting" or suppression of experiences in lost Polish homelands in the east. Instead, experiences of victimhood intersected with agentic practices in the new lands, where homes and families were eventually rebuilt while Polonising alien, once-German environments. Communist-era scholars succeeded in framing this ambivalent situation of victimhood and agency, while producing analytical frameworks for contemporary historical investigation of forced migration.

This paper highlights, then, not only the production of a heteroglot published sphere in People's Poland but also how the postwar communist state emerged in conditions of ongoing nation-building. Ethnic homogeneity in Poland after 1945 was thus no guarantor of national solidarity, as those arriving from the eastern peripheries were often not offered support nor even recognised as Poles by their fellow nationals from the central regions. The sources also suggest unexpected traces of transnational solidarity in the brief encounters between Polish refugees and Germans facing impending expulsion. This paper thus queries the place of 1989 as a mnemonic caesura that enabled the rise of, paradoxically, both a Polish national memory of victimhood and also Polish-German reconciliatory tropes. Instead the aim is historicizing memory and academic discourse by turning away from state-sanctioned discourses to the heteroglot narratives of vernacular and popular remembering, an approach worthy of revival in a new age of mass migration.

Paul Vickers

The Adaptation of Refugees from Greece in the Polish Bieszczady Mountains (1951-1970)

In the years 1946-1949 the Greek Civil War was fought between the Greek government army and the communist Democratic Army of Greece (DSE). Poland dominated by Soviets extended support to the Greek communist guerrillas through secret operations. As a result of the civil war 13-15 thousand refugees from Greece (ethnic Greeks and Macedonians) came to Poland in years 1948-1956. Most of them was settled in the region of Lower Silesia.

In 1951 Poland held an exchange of border areas with the USSR. As a result Polish authorities set up a new district (Ustrzyki poviat) in the province of Rzeszow (Rzeszów voiewodship). New district covered depopulated area in the Bieszczady Mountains. Earlier the authorities displaced indigenous Ukrainian population from the Bieszczady mountains in operation against Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA). In late 1951 Polish authorities started to settle first refugees from Greece in this area. According to Polish authorities plan it was natural to settle refugees from mountainous Greece to depopulated area of the Bieszczady mountains. Most of the refugees were shepherds and peasants prior to the Greek Civil War. In 1953 there was 3000 refugees from Greece in the Bieszczady Mountains. In some small towns (e.g. Krościenko) and surrounding villages refugees from Greece were majority of the population. The paper analyses adaptation of refugees from Greece in the area of the Bieszczady mountains with special focus on economic (e.g. cooperatives), political and educational spheres of life.

The paper is mostly based on source literature and Polish archival materials from archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Institute of National Remembrance and the Archives of Modern Records in Warsaw.

Robert Andrzejczyk

From Students to Refugees: African Immigration to the USSR and post-Soviet Russia

The Soviet Union knew only educational migration from Africa and no refugees. In the 1990s, some former students had to remain as refugees (Rwanda) in Russia after their graduation or had to flee from their homeland (Congo) back to Russia, as wars broke or regime changes took place out in their countries.

Since the 1990s, people from sub-Saharan Africa have been living in Russia, especially in Moscow and St. Petersburg, as refugees from the war regions (Somalia, the both Congos, Rwanda) who came from their home countries directly to Russia without knowing this land before. Also, there are increasingly other refugees who are known as tranzity ("transit travelers") in Russia because they are coming from Nigeria, Cameroon and other countries mainly to St. Petersburg because of its proximity to the EU border, mainly for economic reasons. They intend to remain in Russia for the short term only and plan to travel to the EU (Finland, Baltic countries, Germany or France) as soon as possible to apply there for asylum.

The majority of African refugees in Russia, however, still consist of former students. Their first generation is formed by men who had studied and remained in Russia in the Soviet time or in the first half of the 1990s. The second, post-Soviet generation is formed by young men who broke off their studies mainly because of financial problems and remained in Russia without legal status and income.

Svetlana Boltovskaja

Channels of Transnational Democratisation?
Political Remittances, Knowledge Transmittance and Civic and Political Participation of Russian Political Migrants in Europe

Russia has recently faced a considerable wave of emigration for political reasons, associated with the worsening state of democracy, crack down on the civil society (Chawryło, Domańska, 2015) and political opposition, especially after the protests on Bolotnaya square and protests against the Crimea annexation and war with Ukraine (Sergeeva, 2015). The paper focuses on the analysis of civic participation and political activism of Russian political refugees in Poland as part of a broader pan-European study, the ensuing transnational political remittances as well as the factors that shape these activities. Political remittances can be understood as the transnational exchange of knowledge, ideas, values, norms, patterns of behaviours and identities (Levitt, 1989). The study analyses how the activities of political migrants increase the knowledge and understanding about the situation in Russia among the Polish public, shape the public and political debate on the policy towards Russia and Russians, on the one hand. On the other, it examines how Russian refuges' political activism in the host country contributes to the democratisation process in Russia as well as affects the situation of dissidents remaining in Russia. The analysis is mainly focused on, but not limited to the activities of civil society organisations set up by Russian refugees in Warsaw and relies on a series of in-depth qualitative interviews with representatives of the organisation and members of their networks in Poland and selected EU states as well as in Russia, including civil society actors, journalists and policy-makers.

Joanna Fomina