

International Scientific Conference

Borders and Identities: Social and Political Changes in Eastern Europe and the Balkans during the 20th Century

**Conference Programme
and Book of Abstracts**

**Institute for Contemporary History
Belgrade
8-9 October 2026**



**CENTRE FOR
EAST EUROPEAN STUDIES**
UNIVERSITY OF WARSAW



**INSTITUTE FOR
CONTEMPORARY HISTORY**

ICH
BELGRADE

International Scientific Conference

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SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CHANGES
IN EASTERN EUROPE AND THE
BALKANS DURING THE 20TH CENTURY**

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Organisers

Institute for Contemporary History, Belgrade
Centre for East European Studies, University of Warsaw

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Bojan Dimitrijević (Institute for Contemporary History)
Boris Tomanić (Institute for Contemporary History)

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ORGANISERS

The Institute for Contemporary History (ISI), Belgrade, is a leading Serbian research institution specialising in modern and contemporary history. Its scholarly activities date back to the 1950s, while the Institute was formally established under its present name on 31 January 1969 through the merger of two research departments devoted to historical studies and the history of the Yugoslav workers' movement. Since its foundation, the Institute has retained its focus on the history of Serbia and Yugoslavia, examining political, social, economic and cultural developments within their broader Balkan, European and global contexts. In 1977, the Institute became an institution of the Republic of Serbia.

Today, ISI conducts research through institutional programmes and national, bilateral and international projects, covering historical processes, events, personalities and phenomena from the 20th century and contemporary periods. Its activities include scholarly research and publishing, the organisation of conferences, seminars and educational programmes, as well as international academic cooperation. Over the course of its history, the Institute has produced several hundred monographs, collections of papers, bibliographies, chronologies and other scholarly publications. Its publishing programme currently includes the journals *Istorija 20. Veka* (from 1983) and *Savremena istorija* (from 2026), while its digital platforms and repository contribute to the wider dissemination and preservation of its research output.

The Institute also houses a specialised research library with a collection of more than 37,000 books and over 2,800 periodicals, alongside a documentation centre containing valuable archival and documentary collections.

The Centre for East European Studies at the University of Warsaw (SEW UW) is one of Poland's leading academic centres specialising in Central and Eastern Europe, Russia, Central Asia, the Caucasus and the Balkans. It combines research and teaching with international academic cooperation, scholarship programmes and scientific exchanges.

The Centre's intellectual roots can be traced back to the underground journal *Obóz*, founded in 1981 by Jerzy Targalski, and the underground Institute of East European Studies, established in 1983 by Jan Malicki and his collaborators. Following the political changes of 1989, efforts were made to continue this tradition within the academic environment.

In 1990, the Centre for Nationality Studies of the Soviet Union and Central and Eastern Europe was established at the University of Warsaw, initiated by Andrzej Ananicz and Jan Malicki. Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the institution was renamed the Centre for East European Studies, a name it continues to use today.

One of the Centre's longest-running initiatives is the East European Summer School, established in 1991. It is an international academic programme for young researchers from Central and Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union, Western Europe and the United States, focusing on the history and contemporary affairs of the region.

The Centre offers Bachelor's and Master's programmes in East European Studies, as well as postgraduate studies. It also develops extensive international academic cooperation. Since 2006, the Caucasus Station in Tbilisi has supported Polish-Georgian academic cooperation, while the Kyiv Station, established in 2015, promotes cooperation with Ukrainian academic institutions.

An important part of SEW's activity is the coordination of international scholarship programmes, including the K. Kalinowski Scholarship Programme of the Government of Poland and the Scholarship Programme of the Government of Poland for Young Researchers.

The Centre is also an active publishing institution. It publishes and co-publishes academic journals, including *Obóz*, *Przegląd Wschodni*, *Pro Georgia*, *Nowy Prometeusz* and *Warsaw East European Review*, as well as its own academic book series.

PROGRAMME

8 OCTOBER 2026

9:00–9:30 – Registration

9:30 – Opening Ceremony of the Conference

Welcome remarks:

Magdalena Maciejewska, Deputy Director of the Department of International Cooperation at the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Republic of Poland

Roland Chojnacki, Director of the Department of Public and Cultural Diplomacy at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland

Lech Kończak, Director of the Polish Institute in Belgrade

Jan Malicki, Director of the Centre for East European Studies, University of Warsaw

Predrag Marković, Director of the Institute for Contemporary History, Belgrade

10:30 – 11:45 Session IA (Conference Room, Institute for Contemporary History, 4th Floor)

Chair: Aleksandar Zlatanov

1. Rūstis Kamuntavičius – *On the Similarities of Memory Wars in Lithuania–Poland–Belarus and Macedonia–Bulgaria–Greece*
2. Andžej Pukšto – *National Movements on the Former Area of Grand Duchy of Lithuania and on the West Balkans (the End of XIX – the Beginning of XX Century): Some Comparative Remarks*
3. David Kolbaia – *The Long Shadow of Russia: The Significance of Historical Factors and the Centuries – Long Dependence of the South Caucasus on Russia*
4. Vaida Kamuntavičienė – *Kaunas under Tsarist Rule: Reflections of Religious Change in the Urban Landscape*

10:30 – 11:45 Session IB (Library of the Institute for Contemporary History, Ground Floor)

Chair: Roman Baron

1. Olha Morozova – *The Boundaries of Settlement and the Specificity of Serb Life in the Territories of Modern Ukraine in the 20th Century*
2. Ēriks Jēkabsons – *Latvia and Yugoslavia 1921–1940: Forgotten Relations*
3. Srđan Mičić – *Role of the Press in Mutual Understanding in the Ranks of the Little Entente*
4. Boris Tomanić – *Between the Demarcation Lines of Hitler's New Order: Relations between the Independent State of Croatia and Bulgaria*

Break 11:45 – 12:00

12:00 – 13:30 Session IIA (Conference Room, Institute for Contemporary History, 4th Floor)

Chair: Srđan Mičić

1. Aleksandar Zlatanov – *Socio-Economic Changes in Central Bulgaria at the End of 19th and Beginning of the 20th century*
2. Agnieszka Stec – *The Conflict over the Identity of a Multinational State and Its Impact on the Stability of Democracy, Using the Evolution of the Political Regime in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (Yugoslavia) as an Example*
3. Oksana Pasitska – *The Role of the Church in State-Building and Political Processes in the Balkan Countries in the First Half of the 20th Century*
4. Ivana Pantelić – *"Women for Peace:" Feminist Pacifism in Interwar Yugoslavia*
5. Rade Ristanović – *Positioning the Persecution and Destruction of Jews in Occupied Serbia on the European Map of the Holocaust*

12:00 – 13:30 Session IIB (Library of the Institute for Contemporary History, Ground Floor)

Chair: Nikola Mijatov

1. Gennadii Korolov – *Reconfiguring Political, Cultural, and Social Hierarchies in Revolutionary Ukraine, 1917–1918: Nationalities' Experiences*
2. Miloš Žikić – *The Kingdom of Yugoslavia and the Internment of Ivan "Vančo" Mihailov in Turkey 1934–1938*
3. Ratomir Milikić – *U.S. Secret Negotiations on the Surrender of Third Reich Forces in the Final Phase of the Second World War: Cases of Serbia and Italy under Occupation*
4. Dušan Bojković – *The Shaping of the Idea of the Distinct Identity and Borders of the Kosovo and Metohija Region in Yugoslav Communist Thought during the Second World War*
5. Stipica Grgić – *Football and European Transnational Solidarity: The 1963 Skopje Earthquake and the Yugoslavia vs Rest of Europe Charity Match*

Lunch Break 13:30 – 14:30

14:30 – 15:45 Session III (Conference Room, Institute for Contemporary History, 4th Floor)

Chair: Boris Tomanić

1. Jan Nowinowski – *Jerzy Giedroyc on the Road to Belgrade – The Prince of the Polish Political Emigration and His Ties to Socialist Yugoslavia*
2. Aleksandar V. Miletić – *The Political Transformation of Poland in 1945–1947. View from Yugoslavia*
3. Miomir Gatalović – *The Yugoslav View of the Seventh Congress of the Polish United Workers' Party and the Social Revolt in the Polish People's Republic (1975–1976)*
4. Luka Filipović – *Solidarity with "Solidarność:" Perspectives of Belgrade Dissidents about Their Polish Counterparts during the 1980s*

Break 15:45 – 16:00

16:00 – 17:15 Session IV (Conference Room, Institute for Contemporary History, 4th Floor)

Chair: Aleksandar Rakonjac

1. Nemanja Mitrović – *Diplomatic Negotiations and Compromises: The Participation of the Danubian Countries in Financing the Navigation Part of the Iron Gate 1 Hydroelectric Power Station*
2. Dragomir Bondžić – *Across all Borders: The Repercussions of the Nuclear Disaster in Chernobyl 1986 in Yugoslavia*
3. Dimitrije Matić and Aleksa Kitić – *Yugoslav and Spanish Views on Crisis and Democratisation in Poland 1989/90*
4. Mirosław Szumiło – *The Origins and Founding of the Visegrad Group*

17:30–18:30 Presentation of Jan Nowinowski's publication on Jerzy Giedroyc and Yugoslav-Polish Relations: "Beograd–Mezon-Lafit. Sezonska linija. Ježi Gjedroć i Jugoslavija 1947–2000" (Conference Room, Institute for Contemporary History, 4th Floor)

9 OCTOBER 2026

10:30 – 11:45 Session VA (Conference Room, Institute for Contemporary History, 4th Floor)

Chair: Rūstis Kamuntavičius

1. Olga Brusylovska – *Russian World's Role after the Dissolution of the USSR*
2. Oleksandr Ruzevych – *Echoes Across Borders: Comparing Forced Migration and Identity Shifts in the Yugoslav Wars (1991–1999) and the Russo-Ukrainian War (2022–Present)*
3. Galyna Zelenko – *War as a Catalyst of State Power Transformation: Concentration, Dispersion and Democratic Resilience in Ukraine*
4. Anzhelika Savchuk-Konarska – *Ukrainian identity during the war – Beginning in February 2022: Social and Political Aspects*

10:30 – 11:45 Session VB (Library of the Institute for Contemporary History, Ground Floor)

Chair: Miloš Žikić

1. Dalibor Denda – *From Serbian to Yugoslav Officer Corps: A Case Study of the Kingdom of SCS/Yugoslavia, 1918–1941*
2. Miljan Milkić – *Religious Minorities in the Military of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (1918–1941)*
3. Aleksandar Rakonjac – *Changes in the Social Structure of the Population in Yugoslavia*
4. Marko Miletić – *Militarisation of Youth in Socialist Yugoslavia*

Break 11:45 – 12:00

12:00 – 13:30 Session VIA (Conference Room, Institute for Contemporary History, 4th Floor)

Chair: Aleksandar Životić

1. Yaroslav Hyrych – *Bordertown on the Zbruch River: A Forgotten Symbol of a Divided Ukrainian Nation in the First Half of the 20th Century*
2. Olha Shulhan – *Renaming the Borderland: Place Names and Identity Transformation in the Polish-Ukrainian Border Regions in the 20th Century*
3. Roman Baron and Roman Madecki – *Czech-Polish Border in 20th Century (Policy – Culture – Science)*
4. Aleksander Baron – *The Czech-Polish Border in the Context of the Activities of Czech University Polonists (1945–1970)*

12:00 – 13:30 Session VIB (Library of the Institute for Contemporary History, Ground Floor)

Chair: Rade Ristanović

1. Dušan Stanić – *The Dynamics of Yugoslav-Soviet Relations (May 1945–June 1948)*
2. Martin Previšić – *The Conflict with the Cominform in 1948 – Part of the Yugoslav National Question*
3. Nikola Mijatov – *The Impact of the 1948 Cominform Crisis on the Yugoslav Sports*
4. Ilija Kukobat – *Yugoslav Air Carriers and Central and Eastern Europe – A Combination of Politics and Economics 1945–1992*

Lunch Break 13:30 – 14:30

14:30 – 15:45 Session VII (Conference Room, Institute for Contemporary History, 4th Floor)

Chair: Andžej Pukšto

1. Dieter Bingen – *The Oder-Neisse Border between Germany and Poland – Political, Historical, and Cultural Divisions and New Perspectives in Central Eastern Europe*
2. Natalija Dimić Lompar – *“Border of Peace:” The Yugoslav Stance towards the German-Polish Border after the Second World War*
3. Rigels Halili – *History and Memory – the Albanian-Greek Border during the Communist Regime in Albania*
4. Aleksandar Životić – *Yugoslav-Albanian Border, 1953–1974: Problems of Regulation, Demarcation, and Security*

Break 15:45 – 16:00

16:00 – 17:15 Session VIII (Conference Room, Institute for Contemporary History, 4th Floor)

Chair: Rigels Halili

1. Aleksandar Simonovski – *From War to Statehood: The Establishment of the First Modern Macedonian State (1944–1946)*
2. Draženko Đurović – *Changes in the Communist Regime’s Policy towards the Muslim Question in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 1956–1971*
3. Nikola Zečević – *Forging Exclusive Identity: Montenegrin Nationalism in Socialist Yugoslavia*
4. Ruslana Polovynkina – *The phenomenon of Identity of the Ukrainian People during 1991–2000*

17:30 – 18:30 (Conference Room, Institute for Contemporary History, 4th Floor) Roundtable meeting of the Graduates and Lecturers of the Eastern Summer School of the University of Warsaw (Klub WSL–SEW)

20:00 – Official Dinner

ABSTRACTS

Prof. Dr RŪSTIS KAMUNTAVIČIUS
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On the Similarities of Memory Wars in Lithuania–Poland–Belarus and Macedonia–Bulgaria–Greece

Memory wars in Lithuania–Poland–Belarus and Macedonia–Bulgaria–Greece reveal strikingly similar patterns of competing national narratives constructed around shared, overlapping pasts. In both regions, states select different “foundational” moments and empires – such as the Grand Duchy of Lithuania or the legacy of ancient and Ottoman Macedonia – to claim historical priority and cultural ownership over the same territories and populations. These conflicts are intensified by memory laws, school textbooks, and symbolic politics, which sacralise particular versions of the Second World War or national awakening and criminalise or delegitimise alternative interpretations. As in the Macedonian Question, where Greek, Bulgarian, and Macedonian historiographies clash over the name, language, and even the existence of a distinct Macedonian nation, Belarusian, Polish, and Lithuanian narratives likewise contest the meaning of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania for present-day identities. In both cases, memory wars function not only as academic disputes but also as tools of domestic legitimation and foreign policy, shaping alliances, EU integration debates, and broader confrontations between “nationalising” projects and more pluralistic or shared-memory approaches.

Keywords: Lithuania, Poland, Belarus, Macedonia, Greece, Bulgaria, memory wars, conflicting history

Prof. Dr ANDŽEJ PUKŠTO
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**National Movements on the Former Area of Grand Duchy of Lithuania and
on the West Balkans (the End of XIX – the Beginning of XX Century):
Some Comparative Remarks**

This speech will present unique space of East-Central and South-Central Europe, located between the Baltic, Black and Adriatic Seas. This region was divided between four empires: Russian, Austro-Hungarian, German and Ottoman. Based on famous Miroslav Hroch theory, it makes sense to recall that the mid-19th century opened, in different ways, the door to intensive national movements. The Baltic, Adriatic or Black Sea regions did not share the same political, social or cultural conditions, but the overall course of their histories developed according to strikingly similar patterns. Medium-sized and small nations began to reclaim their histories of independence, develop their historiographies, turn to their national cultures and, most importantly, to their national languages. The First World War was a major challenge for all these medium-sized and small nations in their struggle for independence and international recognition. Questions of sovereignty or federation, as well as borders, became crucial and fundamental for the future of different nations in the context of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (Yugoslavia), Poland, Lithuania and Belarus. The research focuses on three comparative cases: Lithuanians and Croats, Poles and Serbs, Belarusians and Macedonians.

Keywords: Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, Serbian Empire, Kingdom of Serbia, Croatia, Macedonia, Republic of Poland, Republic of Lithuania, Republic of Belarus, political tradition, independence, First World War

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The Long Shadow of Russia: The Significance of Historical Factors and the Centuries – Long Dependence of the South Caucasus on Russia

The aim of this article is to demonstrate the importance of historical factors in shaping relations between Russia and the states of the South Caucasus, as well as their impact on contemporary international politics. Among the key factors influencing the position of the South Caucasus in state policy are its strategic geographical location, natural resource endowment, and security threats such as Islamic fundamentalism. Moreover, the South Caucasus constitutes Russia's so-called "near abroad," which Moscow defines as a zone of exclusive influence and vital national interests. Russia's interests in the region are indisputable, and the South Caucasus represents an area of strategic importance for the Russian Federation. Russia possesses powerful instruments for exerting influence over the entire region, as well as the capacity to destabilise it at any given moment. The dependence between Russia and the states of the region has been, and continues to be, so strong that it affects the level and nature of relations among the peoples of the Caucasus. In other words, relations between Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan are largely shaped by historical developments in Tsarist Russia and later in the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, Russia was the third power, after Turkey and Persia, to seek control over the South Caucasus. Securing control over this region was crucial for several reasons. Dominance over the South Caucasus enabled Russia to gain access to the Black Sea, providing a gateway to the Balkans and Southern Europe, as well as to the Caspian Sea, facilitating access to the markets of Central Asia. Furthermore, the region opened strategic routes to Iran and the broader Middle East. For these reasons, Russia pursued a policy of gradual expansion and subjugation of the South Caucasus.

Keywords: South Caucasus, Russia, spheres of influence, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, historical legacy, Soviet Union, Black Sea, Caspian Sea

Prof. Dr VAIDA KAMUNTAVIČIENĖ
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Kaunas under Tsarist Rule: Reflections of Religious Change in the Urban Landscape

In the 19th century, Kaunas was a city of Tsarist Russia. The Empire pursued its own religious policy, which it began to implement in the conquered territories. Until then, Kaunas had been a predominantly Catholic city, where a community of Evangelical Reformed believers also lived alongside Catholics. During the 19th century, the Orthodox Church gradually penetrated the city's landscape. This presentation aims to assess how the religious changes implemented throughout the 19th century were reflected in the urban fabric of Kaunas, what the city's religious composition was at the beginning of the 20th century, and how it transformed in the first half of that century as it sought to free itself from its imperial heritage. Using Kaunas as a case study enables a deeper understanding of the cultural and mental impact of the Russian Empire on the conquered territories of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Traces of the Russian imperial legacy can still be seen in Kaunas today, and it remains important to evaluate their influence on the culture of memory in contemporary Lithuania.

Keywords: Kaunas, Orthodox Church, Catholic Church, Russian imperial heritage, urban landscape, cultural memory

Prof. Dr hab. OLHA MOROZOVA
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The Boundaries of Settlement and the Specificity of Serb Life in the Territories of Modern Ukraine in the 20th Century

Serb settlement in the territories of modern Ukraine in the 20th century was limited in scale and area, but significant from the perspective of migration history and the nationality policy of Eastern Europe. Serbs arrived in these lands primarily as descendants of earlier waves of settlement in the 18th century (including New Serbia and Slavynoserbks), but by the 20th century their communities existed in a completely different political and social environment. Serbian settlement in Ukraine was concentrated mainly in the south-eastern regions of the country, especially in the steppe regions that had previously formed part of the Russian Empire and later the USSR. By the 20th century, compact Serbian enclaves no longer existed: settlement was dispersed, and Serbs were strongly assimilated into the Russian and Ukrainian populations. The specific conditions of Serb life during this period were shaped by Soviet policies. Industrialisation, collectivisation and Stalinist repression weakened traditional community structures and led to the near-complete disappearance of a distinct national identity. The Serbian language was gradually replaced by Russian or Ukrainian, and Orthodoxy – though still culturally important – was practised under religious constraints. In the second half of the 20th century, Serbs in Ukraine were perceived as part of the broader Slavic community rather than as a distinct national minority. Only after the collapse of the USSR did a few initiatives emerge that aimed to reconstruct the historical and cultural memory of Serbian settlement in these areas.

Keywords: Serbs, borders, settlement, Ukraine, 20th century

Prof. Dr ĒRIKS JĒKABSONS
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Latvia and Yugoslavia 1921–1940: Forgotten Relations

The paper will examine the diplomatic, economic, and cultural relations between the two countries during the interwar period of the 20th century, from their establishment and receipt of de jure recognition from Yugoslavia in 1921 until the demise of the Latvian state. The main focus will be on diplomatic relations, drawing on previously unknown and unused reports by Latvian envoys, stored in the Latvian National Archives, on their visits to Belgrade, meetings with the King of Yugoslavia, government members, and others, and on their views of Yugoslavia's domestic and foreign policy.

Keywords: Latvia, Yugoslavia, interwar period, political relations, Latvian envoys, reports

Prof. Dr SRĐAN MIĆIĆ
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Role of the Press in Mutual Understanding in the Ranks of the Little Entente

After the creation of the Little Entente, the tripartite alliance between the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, Czechoslovakia, and Romania, in 1920–1921, it became clear that these three allied nations were not well acquainted with one another. In the newly formed South Slavs' kingdom, an important internal task was to create a mutual sense of belonging to one state and same people. While Serbs had some experience with Romanians and Czechs, the people and society of the much larger Romania created after 1918 were unknown to them, while Slovaks were mostly unfamiliar, as were Slovenes to a considerable extent. Similar observations were made in the other two member states of the Little Entente. Therefore, the task of fostering closer mutual contact through the press, the most powerful medium at the time, was set in 1925. This work will address this issue through Yugoslav daily newspapers and archival documents.

Keywords: Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Little Entente, press, nations, people

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Between the Demarcation Lines of Hitler's New Order: Relations between the Independent State of Croatia and Bulgaria

Relations between Bulgaria and the Independent State of Croatia (NDH) were a direct product of the Second World War and Hitler's new European order, which came to dominate the Balkans following German aggression against Yugoslavia and Greece and their subsequent dismemberment. The quisling state of the NDH was recognised only by the Axis powers and countries sympathetic to them. In this context, Bulgaria was among the first to recognise the NDH as a sovereign state, doing so on 19 April at a session of the Council of Ministers. Shortly thereafter, in July 1941, the permanent diplomatic missions of the NDH in Sofia and of Bulgaria in Zagreb began their activities. The consolidation of relations was accompanied by frequent visits by representatives of the social and cultural spheres, mutual celebrations of national holidays, and military and economic cooperation. Nevertheless, the closest cooperation between the NDH and Bulgaria developed in the field of foreign policy, where the two states regularly adopted common positions, partly as a result of Zagreb's and Sofia's subordination to German foreign policy. Their close cooperation developed along several lines. First, Bulgaria and the NDH opposed the concept of placing the Balkans under Italian predominance. Second, the NDH sought, with Bulgarian assistance, to strengthen its position towards Hungary, while Bulgaria similarly sought, with the assistance of the NDH, to improve its position towards Romania. Third, the NDH and Bulgaria regarded Serbia as a common threat to the security of the new order and reached complete consensus that Serbia should be isolated as far as possible and ultimately destroyed. However, relations between the two countries were not uniform. The presence of former IMRO leader Ivan Mihailov in Zagreb and his activities there generated distrust and complicated relations between Sofia and Zagreb. King Boris's cautious attitude towards terrorists such as Ante Pavelić also placed a degree of strain on bilateral relations. Diplomatic relations were ultimately severed on 6 September 1944, the sa-

me day on which Bulgaria broke off diplomatic relations with Germany. This paper will examine these relations by analysing their political dimension, military, economic and cultural cooperation, as well as the activities of Ivan Mihailov through the prism of relations between the NDH and Bulgaria.

Keywords: Bulgaria, Independent State of Croatia (NDH), diplomatic relations, military cooperation, economic cooperation, cultural cooperation, foreign policy, Ivan Mihailov, Serbia, Second World War

Prof. Dr ALEKSANDAR ZLATANOV

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Socio-Economic Changes in Central Bulgaria at the End of 19th and Beginning of the 20th Century

During most of the 19th century, nowadays Central Bulgaria (the Karlovo region) experienced a sharp rise in its socio-economic, cultural and demographic spheres, to end the century, after the Liberation in 1878, with a significant decline in its economic potential, and hence the demographic situation of the region. In the first half of the 19th century, the sub-Balkan settlements of Central Bulgaria, led by the regional capital Karlovo, formed a prominent centre of proto-industrial development of the textile industry in the European part of the Ottoman Empire through a number of crafts, but mostly through braiding. For example, in the third quarter of the 19th century, there were about 2,000 braid machines in Karlovo, producing more than 339,730 kg of braid per year. Together with the neighbouring villages of Sopot and Kalofer, where approximately 1,700 additional braiding machines were located, the region occupied the leading position in the production of braid products in the Ottoman Empire during the 1860s and 1870s. The end of the Russo-Turkish Liberation War (1877-1878) found the region of Central Bulgaria in a difficult socio-economic situation. The war and its atrocities resulted in destruction and mass emigration from the main craft centres of Karlovo, Kalofer and Sopot. The new socio-economic and geopolitical reality introduced a completely new way of producing and marketing goods in entirely new markets, where the ordinary Bulgarian craftsman and trader had to compete with experienced competitors and industrialists from Central and Western Europe. The newly introduced tariffs significantly increased export prices, and thus the urban population in Rumelia gradually began to prefer cheaper imported goods and raw materials. As a result, the main livelihood of the region remained the declining crafts, most notably braid production, but neither the local nor the central government succeeded in helping to slow the economic collapse. Another significant subsistence industry in these towns was rose growing and rose-oil production, which was also widespread in the region. Apart from the

few towns, the region subsisted mainly on agriculture, horticulture and cattle breeding at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century.

Keywords: Central Bulgaria, Karlovo, proto-industrialisation, textile industry, braid production, rose-oil production, Ottoman Empire, post-Liberation economic decline.

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The Conflict over the Identity of a Multinational State and Its Impact on the Stability of Democracy, Using the Evolution of the Political Regime in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (Yugoslavia) as an Example

A multinational state operating under a political regime of democracy, to maintain the stability of the political system, should clearly define its identity, considering the internal national complexity. Disrupting the fragile balance by introducing unequal relations between individual ethnic components (dominant nation versus subordinated nation) or attempting to appropriate the state's identity by one of them, leads to internal national conflict within the state, which under certain circumstances pushes a democratic political regime towards evolution, first towards a hybrid regime (transitional, having both democratic and authoritarian features) and then towards authoritarianism. In a multinational state, internal relations based on the domination of one nation over others generate conflict all the more intensely when the subordinated nation has a strongly developed sense of distinct cultural, national, and political identity and inhabits a territory as a cohesive indigenous group. Peaceful resolution of such a conflict requires the state to adopt a common identity acceptable to all the nations that constitute it. The use of force by the dominant nation to pacify an internal national conflict does not resolve the antagonism; it only suppresses it temporarily, leading to its renewed emergence when the political power of the dominant nation at the centre of authority weakens. The above problems will be examined using the example of the functioning of the multinational parliamentary monarchy of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. Croats officially co-created this state as the second titular nation, but they constituted a subordinate nation, holding a lower position than in the collapsed Habsburg monarchy. This was the reason for the Croats' efforts to balance relations between the main (titular) nations in the state. The Croats did not challenge the very existence of the Kingdom of SHS and did not seek secession, but they rejected its centralist and unitary form, consistently demanding its transformation into a federation of equal

nations and the achievement of a co-governing position. Serbs, who held a dominant (ruling) position in the Kingdom of SHS, refused to implement the Croats' demands. The Serbs were numerically stronger, the ruling dynasty was Serbian, and they became part of a joint state whose own kingdom already had long-established and recognised statehood. They assigned specific roles to the other titular nations, which did not allow for changes, either elevating their status or expanding their rights. Croats and Slovenes were to participate in the system under strictly defined rules, without the possibility of influencing the course of state politics. The uncompromising stance of both the Croats and the Serbs, who had two different visions of the Kingdom of SHS, gradually led to its collapse as a non-consolidated democracy, functioning more as a hybrid regime, and to the emergence of an authoritarian Kingdom of Yugoslavia on its ruins.

Keywords: Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, unconsolidated democracy, authoritarianism, hybrid regime, ethnic conflict, dominant nation, subordinate nation, political system, Kingdom of Yugoslavia

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The Role of the Church in State-Building and Political Processes in the Balkan Countries in the First Half of the 20th Century

The Church was involved in state-building and political processes in Eastern Europe and the Balkan countries in the first half of the 20th century. This was a period of significant socio-political and state-building developments, national liberation movements, the spread of totalitarian ideologies, changes in political regimes, and world wars. The Church played a unifying role in unstable societies, was an integral part of socio-political processes, and also fought for a place in the political arena. This period was characterised by the Church's prestige over other institutions and, at the same time, severe trials for both the Orthodox and Catholic Churches. Clergymen belonged to political organisations and initiated various socio-political societies whose activities aimed to solve social problems. There were numerous cases in which representatives of the Church held parliamentary seats, cooperated with occupation regimes, acted as heads of state, and produced works that served as programmes for state building and development. In each Balkan country, the relationship between the Church and politics had its own local political and historical context. The Croatian and Serbian political and religious contexts were particularly prominent, leaving many images and contradictions in the historical memory of the Balkan peoples.

Keywords: politics, church, statehood, religious figures, Balkan countries

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“Women for Peace:” Feminist Pacifism in Interwar Yugoslavia

This paper explores how Yugoslav feminists articulated different forms of feminist agency through peace activism during the interwar period. It focuses on four major gatherings that brought Yugoslav feminists into regional and international peace networks: two regional conferences organised by the Little Entente of Women (LEW) in Belgrade in 1924 and the Unity of Slavic Women (USW) in Belgrade in 1933, as well as the international pacifist conference hosted by International Women’s Suffrage Alliance (IWSA) held in Belgrade in 1931, and the International Council of Women (ICW) meeting in Dubrovnik in 1936. The analysis builds on Jo Vellacott’s interpretation of pacifism as a transformative dimension of interwar feminism. I argue that pacifism was not merely one aspect of Yugoslav feminist activism but one of the central values through which feminists redefined the political meaning of feminism itself. Unlike many other feminist campaigns, peace activism created a political arena in which women sought to participate alongside male political actors. By problematising the issue of durable peace, they also stepped out of the “typically female” struggles and presented themselves, in the domain of public policy, as important bearers of the struggle for peace. The paper is based on an analysis of pacifist discourse in the feminist and women’s periodicals *Women’s Movement*, *Yugoslav Women*, *Women Today*, and *Woman and World*. It examines informative, theoretical, and literary contributions to demonstrate how the feminist press served as a key medium for promoting pacifist ideas and constructing transnational feminist networks. The paper argues that peace activism constituted one of the principal ways in which Yugoslav feminists transformed feminism from a movement focused primarily on women’s civil rights into a broader political project concerned with international cooperation, diplomacy, and the prevention of war.

Keywords: interwar Yugoslavia, feminism pacifism, transnational feminism, peace activism, international women’s conferences, women’s periodicals

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Positioning the Persecution and Destruction of Jews in Occupied Serbia on the European Map of the Holocaust

Hatred of Jews was the key driving force propelling the Nazi machinery from its inception to its ultimate demise. From this hatred emerged the monstrous project of the Holocaust, or Shoah, which was embraced by Nazi allies and resulted in the murder of approximately six million Jews. Although conceived and inspired from a central locus, the Holocaust took different forms, dynamics, and intensities across the countries of occupied Europe. These particularities were shaped by various factors, the most significant of which include the character of the regime in power, the degree of collaboration among the local population, infrastructural and logistical capacities, and both the external and internal political and military situations. In this study, I aim to highlight both the particularities and similarities of the persecution and destruction of Jews in occupied Serbia in comparison with the rest of Europe. I provide a broad contextualisation of the research topic to emphasise the decisive factors that shaped the form and dynamics of the Holocaust. I examine the establishment of the legal framework as the first step towards the persecution of Jews, seeking to determine whether, and how, legislation derived from the Nuremberg Laws was adapted to the specific conditions of this territory. I also address the role of the Wehrmacht during the initial phase of the Holocaust as an additional specificity. The analysis further considers the roles of other direct and indirect actors, including collaborators, the Jewish community, and ordinary citizens. Particular attention is given to the process of Aryanisation. I examine how the confiscation and redistribution of Jewish property was carried out, with regard to the legal frameworks, the actors responsible for implementing these measures, and the ultimate beneficiaries.

Keywords: Holocaust, occupied Serbia, persecution of Jews, destruction of Jews, Nazi Germany, collaboration, Nuremberg Laws, Wehrmacht, Aryanisation

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Reconfiguring Political, Cultural, and Social Hierarchies in Revolutionary Ukraine, 1917–1918: Nationalities' Experiences

The paper examines the reshaping and inversion of political, cultural, and social hierarchies in revolutionary Ukraine in 1917–1918, through the experiences of various national communities. The collapse of the Russian Empire and the emergence of competing state projects transformed Ukraine into a dynamic arena where old imperial structures and legislation underwent gradual change and reinterpretation, and new forms of power, citizenship, and identity were elaborated by the authorities, sometimes in collaboration with certain national groups. Focusing on Jews, Poles, Russians, and other national groups, the presentation examines how revolutionary changes affected relations between these nationalities, reshaped access to political participation and cultural representation, and altered social mobility. The paper argues that the Ukrainian Revolution of 1917–1921 was a period of struggle for Ukrainian statehood, manifested by the process of inversion the hierarchies inherited from the imperial time. The emergence of Ukrainian political institutions, particularly the Central Rada, the Hetmanate government, and the Directory of the Ukrainian People's Republic, created opportunities for certain national groups to participate in governance. At the same time, revolutionary instability and military conflict generated tensions among national, ethnic, and religious communities and gave rise to new forms of exclusion and inequality.

Keywords: hierarchies, revolution, nationalities, Ukraine, experience, statehood

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The Kingdom of Yugoslavia and the Internment of Ivan “Vančo” Mihailov in Turkey, 1934–1938

After the dissolution of the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation (IMRO) in Bulgaria in 1934 and the arrest of its members, one of its leaders, Ivan Mihailov, managed to escape to Turkey with his wife. The Turkish government did not want to accede to Yugoslav demands for his extradition, but agreed to intern him instead. To the apparent concern of the Yugoslav Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Turkish authorities assured it that Mihailov was under constant police surveillance, dismissing any possibility of his escape. Despite this, Mihailov remained in constant contact with his supporters, who frequently sent petitions to the Turkish authorities to improve the living conditions of Mihailov and his wife, Melpomena Karnicheva, and to grant them permission to leave Turkey. At the same time, Mihailov gave them instructions. Yugoslav services closely monitored Mihailov's internment in Turkey, as well as the activities of his supporters in Bulgaria. Information was also received that the Turkish government provided them with financial and material support. Having received information during 1937 about Mihailov's attempts to leave Turkey, the Yugoslav Ministry of Foreign Affairs apparently attempted to liquidate him. For this, contacts with members of the Bulgarian Agrarian National Union “Pladne” were used. However, this attempt failed at the very beginning in the spring of 1938, but the link with Yugoslavia was not discovered. Mihailov eventually obtained a visa for Poland and left Turkey in August 1938.

Keywords: Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Turkey, IMRO, Ivan Mihailov

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**U.S. Secret Negotiations on the Surrender of Third Reich Forces
in the Final Phase of the Second World War: Cases of Serbia
and Italy under Occupation**

For most of the Second World War, U.S. Allied missions operating behind enemy lines in Southeastern Europe were developed within British observer missions. Members of these missions were recruited from two newly established intelligence services, namely the British Special Operations Executive (SOE) and the American Office of Strategic Services (OSS). In the occupied territory of Yugoslavia, U.S. officers operated under British command structures. Direct radio communication was in British hands, and every American report had to be approved by British officers. Against the backdrop of Churchill's decision in 1943 that the Allies should support only one resistance movement – the Partisans – across the occupied territory of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, London was surprised to see two independent U.S. missions assigned to the Yugoslav Army in the Homeland (JVuO): Halyard and Ranger. The former was technical, set up to support the evacuation of several hundred downed Allied airmen, selflessly rescued by General Draža Mihailović's forces. The Ranger mission, led by Colonel Robert McDowell, from August to late November 1944, and authorised directly by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, was political. Apart from intelligence gathering, indirect support for Mihailović, and observation of the Red Army's advance from the East, it had another covert objective – to initiate negotiations on the surrender of German forces in the Balkans. These talks began but were interrupted by the entry of Soviet forces into occupied Yugoslav territory and the coordinated advance of Partisans into Serbia from Bosnia. The mission was terminated only after Churchill's persistent pressure, as he feared the United States might pursue an independent policy in Southeastern Europe and insisted on strict coordination between the Allies. The U.S. mission was not inconsequential after all. In November 1944, the secret Operation Sunrise was launched in occupied northern Italy using the same principles. The operation involved clandestine negotiations

with the German military leadership that led to the unconditional surrender of all German forces in Italy in early May 1945. Although the available archival documentation for the two missions differs in scope, it is not difficult to discern a common pattern. The diplomatic parameters later employed in Operation Sunrise – widely regarded as the most successful covert diplomatic action in OSS history – were first tested several months earlier in occupied Serbia. This paper is based primarily on archival sources from U.S. repositories and published literature.

Keywords: Second World War, OSS, William Donovan, Kingdom of Yugoslavia, Serbia, Operation Sunrise, Ranger Mission, capitulation

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**The Shaping of the Idea of the Distinct Identity and Borders
of the Kosovo and Metohija Region in Yugoslav Communist Thought
during the Second World War**

The article first examines the views of the Yugoslav communist leadership on the Kosovo question during the interwar period, with particular attention to the second half of the 1930s, when the Regional Committee of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia for Kosovo and Metohija was established. It argues that the Committee's territorial jurisdiction foreshadowed the borders of the future autonomous region. The article then analyses the development of the Kosovo question within the Communist Party of Yugoslavia during the Second World War, focusing on the emergence of the conception of Kosovo and Metohija as a distinct territorial unit and on the definition of its borders. Finally, it examines the establishment of the Autonomous Kosovo-Metohija Region in early September 1945, tracing the culmination of this process. The study is based on historical sources, primarily archival materials from the Archives of Yugoslavia, as well as relevant historiographical literature.

Keywords: borders, Kosovo and Metohija, Communist Party of Yugoslavia, Communist Party of Albania, Kosovo question, Albanian question, autonomy

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Football and European Transnational Solidarity: The 1963 Skopje Earthquake and the Yugoslavia vs Rest of Europe Charity Match

In July 1963, a strong earthquake devastated Skopje, taking 1,070 lives, leaving over 200,000 people homeless, and reducing most of the city to ruins. Aid for injured residents and city infrastructure began to arrive immediately. Many foreign countries and international organisations, as well as numerous others, were involved in sending aid to the Macedonian capital. Among them, the leading European and world football organisations, UEFA and FIFA, also joined in providing assistance. In September 1964, a match was organised in Belgrade between the national team of Yugoslavia and the Rest of Europe, that is the UEFA team. All income from the match, played in front of about 20,000 people at the JNA Stadium, went towards rebuilding the sports infrastructure in Skopje. The Rest of Europe team, which won 7:2, included famous players such as USSR goalkeeper Lev Yashin, Czechoslovakia midfielder Josef Masopust, West Germany striker Uwe Seeler, and Portugal striker Eusébio. Based on available archival materials and newspapers published in Yugoslavia and some other European countries at that time, this paper will detect how transnational solidarity functioned and what its limits were at that time? In addition, how did media coverage balance entertainment, empathy, and (national and transnational) prestige in this case?

Keywords: Skopje earthquake, 1960s, Yugoslavia, UEFA, football, solidarity

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Jerzy Giedroyc on the Road to Belgrade – The Prince of the Polish Political Emigration and His Ties to Socialist Yugoslavia

Jerzy Giedroyc was a key figure of the Polish political emigration after the Second World War. The monthly magazine *Kultura*, which he edited, served as a forum for the exchange of ideas among European intellectuals, especially those from Eastern Bloc countries. Although based in the small town of Maisons-Laffitte near Paris, Giedroyc managed to shape the discourse on resisting Soviet influence. Publications of the Literary Institute, which he founded, promoted freedom of expression during a time of oppression. In his homeland, Giedroyc is remembered mainly for advocating the independence of Ukrainians, Lithuanians and Belarusians, whose states were to form a buffer zone between Poland and imperial Moscow. A lesser-known aspect of his legacy was his interest in socialist Yugoslavia, sparked by the 1948 conflict between Joseph Stalin and Josip Broz Tito. Since he did not expect the communist system in Poland to collapse soon, he sought ideological fissures and enclaves of freedom within communist doctrine itself. Yugoslavia's model appeared to him an ideal example. In *Kultura*, Giedroyc published political analyses and journalistic reportages on Yugoslavia, hoping to "infect" Polish communists with Titoism. He was also inspired by Yugoslav dissidents, especially Milovan Đilas, publishing in Polish *the New Class* and *Conversations with Stalin*. Furthermore, the SFRY attracted him because of its openness to the West and its greater internal freedom. In the 1950s and after the Prague Spring of 1968, he hoped to establish in Belgrade a "socialist Radio Free Europe", which would strengthen the mood for liberalisation among Polish communists. Yugoslavia also served as an important distribution channel for Literary Institute publications, helping censored books reach Poland through cooperation with Serbian academics and journalists. Giedroyc maintained relations with citizens of the socialist federation even after its dissolution, supporting democratic initiatives in Serbia and promoting the principles of *Kultura*.

Keywords: Jerzy Giedroyc, Polish political emigration, Parisian *Kultura*, Socialist Yugoslavia, Titoism, Yugoslav dissident movement, Milovan Đilas, Mihajlo Mihajlov

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The Political Transformation of Poland in 1945-1947. View from Yugoslavia

Political changes were made very quickly in Yugoslavia after the Second World War. The Communist Party of Yugoslavia took over complete power already in 1945, established a one-party dictatorship and began an energetic transformation of society modelled on the USSR. Unlike Yugoslavia, in Poland after the Second World War there was a gradual internal political transformation from a pluralist system to the victory of pro-Stalinist forces. This transformation took place from the elections in June 1945 and the formation of the Provisional Government of National Unity (TRJN) to the elections in February 1947 and the triumph of pro-Stalinist forces. The topic of this paper is how this political process in Poland was seen from Yugoslavia, primarily from the Yugoslav diplomatic representatives in Warsaw. It focuses in particular on how Yugoslav diplomatic representatives perceived the actions of various political parties, groups and individuals, how they understood their programmes, policies and attitudes, and how they saw the influence of foreign actors on political life in Poland at that time. The paper shows how Yugoslavs saw the formation of the TRJN in 1945 and the balance of power within that government, how they interpreted the actions of the two most important parties, the Polish People's Party (PSL) and the Polish Workers' Party (PPR), and how they assessed the activities of prominent political figures such as Bolesław Bierut, Władysław Gomułka and Stanisław Mikołajczyk. Particular attention is given to the first parliamentary elections in Poland after the Second World War, on 19 February 1947, and the formation of a new government. The research is based on unpublished Yugoslav archival sources and relevant literature.

Keywords: Yugoslavia, Poland, political transformation, internal policy, communism

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The Yugoslav View of the Seventh Congress of the Polish United Workers' Party and the Social Revolt in the Polish People's Republic (1975–1976)

Based on materials from the Archives of Yugoslavia and the Diplomatic Archives in Belgrade, the paper analyses the Yugoslav state-party perception of the political decisions adopted at the Seventh Congress of the PUWP, held in Warsaw in December 1975, and the outbreak of mass protests in June 1976 following the announcement of a multiple increase in food prices. It was a period of foreign policy détente between the great powers (USA–USSR), in which Yugoslavia, under Josip Broz Tito, began to lose its former importance as a mediator state and to strengthen its presence in the Non-Aligned Movement in order to preserve independence and the system of socialist self-management, while in domestic politics it implemented reforms in accordance with the conclusions of the Tenth Congress of the LCY and the new Constitution of the SFRY from 1974. Yugoslavia's relations with Poland, which were stable in this period, largely depended on the political interests and influence of the Soviet Union. Belgrade carefully followed the Congress preparations and the rapprochement between PUWP First Secretary Edward Gierek and Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev, noting that Gierek's political platform rested on national unity, a vision of material well-being and the constant strengthening of the leadership role of the PUWP. At the Congress, there was no change in relations towards Yugoslavia, but the LCY delegation, led by Vojislav Srzentić, experienced inconvenience when the hosts requested that his welcome address be shortened and postponed from the second to the fourth day, which was rejected after a note of protest. In Gierek's report, Yugoslavia was mentioned after Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania and Mongolia. Firm attachment to the USSR and the members of the Warsaw Pact was confirmed, as well as the importance of the Conference in Helsinki (CSCE), which opened the door to the later legal action of the Polish opposition. Belgrade was taken aback by the silence on the activities of the Non-Aligned Movement, the immoderate praise of the achievements of the Polish five-year

plan and the absence of discussion about difficulties and weaknesses in the Party's work. Therefore, the outbreak of major riots in Poland in June 1976 was not seen as a surprise, but as an expression of the deep gap between the proclaimed ideal image of the Congress and a social reality burdened by a bad economic situation.

Keywords: Edward Gierek, Josip Broz Tito, Yugoslavia (SFRY), June 1976, Poland (PPR), Polish United Workers' Party (PUWP), League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY), Seventh Congress of the PUWP, Soviet Union (USSR)

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Solidarity with “Solidarność:” Perspectives of Belgrade Dissidents about Their Polish Counterparts during the 1980s

Vastly different socialist regimes in Poland and Yugoslavia almost simultaneously experienced a period of economic strife and political tensions in the early 1980s. In Poland, these events opened up new opportunities for large parts of the opposition to rally around the newly formed union-led movement, “Solidarność” (Solidarity). In Yugoslavia, the opposition remained fractured and largely ineffective, apart from its increased involvement in new forms of civil disobedience, which included protests of solidarity with its Polish counterparts. This paper aims to analyse and compare the perspectives shared among the ideologically and socially diverse groups of the Yugoslav opposition regarding the events in Poland, with particular emphasis on how left-wing dissidents viewed “Solidarność.” The following analysis will be based on archival sources, including the recently opened security service archives, on contemporary writings by Yugoslav dissidents, and on existing scholarly literature on Yugoslav and Polish opposition during the 1980s.

Keywords: Opposition, dissidents, “Solidarność,” Yugoslav socialist model, demonstrations, political repression

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**Diplomatic Negotiations and Compromises: The Participation
of the Danubian Countries in Financing the Navigation Part
of the Iron Gate 1 Hydroelectric Power Station**

The construction of the Iron Gate 1 Hydropower Plant marked one of the most significant infrastructural achievements on the Danube. In addition to generating a substantial amount of electricity for Yugoslavia/Serbia and Romania, it enhanced navigation in a sector of the river that had been a black spot for centuries. While the 1948 Danube Convention stated that each country is responsible for maintaining the waterway in its sector, both Belgrade and Bucharest considered that regulating the Iron Gates gorge required financial contributions from all Danubian countries. This paper examines their participation in financing the navigation part of the system, a question that Yugoslavia and Romania brought before the Danube Commission on 7 October 1963. Using archival materials and relevant literature, the study analyses the genesis of the financing issue and the diplomatic strategies that transformed initial rejection into a compromise solution. It also reconstructs the course of negotiations that began within the Danube Commission (1963–1966) and concluded with trilateral talks between Yugoslavia, Romania, and each member of the Commission (1969–1973). Furthermore, the study explores the circumstances and conditions that led all participants to accept the final financial model at the end of 1973.

Keywords: Iron Gate 1, Yugoslavia, Romania, Danube navigation, financing of navigation part, Danube countries, Danube Commission

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Across All Borders: The Repercussions of the Nuclear Disaster in Chernobyl 1986 in Yugoslavia

On 26 April 1986, an accident occurred at Unit 4 of the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant in Ukraine. The accident was triggered by the shutdown of the reactor to test the possibility of powering the water pump using the turbogenerator. A decrease in flow in the cooling system caused an increase in reactor reactivity and a rapid rise in power output. The reactor core entered a critical state and the fuel elements ruptured. The steam pressure blew away the steel and cement shielding, releasing fission products into the atmosphere. The force of the initial explosion was equivalent to the explosion of one tonne of trinitrotoluene (TNT). A second explosion ejected fragments of burning fuel and graphite from the reactor core. Part of the material settled on the ground, while lighter radioactive particles were carried by the wind across Ukraine, Belarus and Russia to Europe. The first radioactive cloud contaminated Scandinavia; the second spread contamination across Poland, Czechoslovakia, Austria, southern Germany and Italy; and the third affected the Balkan countries. Radioactive elements contaminated the environment and entered the human and animal food chain. The Chernobyl accident was a nuclear environmental disaster of global proportions and great historical significance. It demonstrated the immense risks associated with nuclear technology and profoundly influenced the development of environmental awareness worldwide. The consequences of the disaster were felt throughout Europe, and their spread was not constrained by the borders separating political blocs, sovereign states, or real or imagined boundaries within individual countries. The aim of this paper is to examine the initial responses of the Yugoslav state authorities and professional institutions, with particular emphasis on the differing responses of the individual Yugoslav republics to the consequences of the Chernobyl accident.

Keywords: Chernobyl nuclear accident, Radioactive pollutants, Environment, Yugoslavia, Europe, Boundaries, Crisis responses

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Yugoslav and Spanish Views on Crisis and Democratisation in Poland 1989/90

This paper examines Yugoslav and Spanish perspectives on the political transformation of Poland between 1989 and 1990. These perspectives are analysed both separately and through bilateral meetings and consultations between Spanish and Yugoslav officials and diplomats, during which developments in Poland and Eastern Europe were discussed. By focusing on how Polish events were perceived and evaluated, the paper highlights the relationship between external observation and internal political crisis or transition. The analysis concentrates on key moments of the Polish transformation: Round Table negotiations (February–April 1989), the semi-free parliamentary elections of June 1989 won by Solidarity, the transformation of the Polish United Workers' Party in 1990, and the presidential elections of November 1990 following the resignation of Wojciech Jaruzelski. These events serve as reference points for examining interpretations of political change from a non-aligned socialist state and from a Western democracy undergoing deeper European integration. The Yugoslav perspective was shaped by a profound political and economic crisis that undermined the legitimacy of communist ideology and the federal system, while republican leaderships increasingly embraced multiparty politics and ethnonational agendas. Polish developments were thus assessed in a context marked by tensions between democratisation and state disintegration. The Spanish perspective, by contrast, was influenced by the country's experience of democratic transition in the 1970s, its successes and crises, as well as by Spain's position within an integrating Western Europe. Based on archival sources in Belgrade, Yugoslav and Spanish press, and memoirs of contemporary officials, the paper highlights the coexistence of integrati-

ve and disintegrative processes in late Cold War Europe and offers insight into differing interpretations of the collapse of communism and democratisation.

Keywords: Poland 1989, Yugoslavia, Spain, foreign policy, democratic transition

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The Origins and Founding of the Visegrad Group

The presentation will discuss the circumstances of the founding of the Visegrad Group in February 1991. First, it will outline the genesis of cooperation between three countries: Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary. This idea was born in the communist opposition circles in the late 1970s. It is important to recall the contacts established between opposition activists from these three countries. These connections bore fruit when these individuals found themselves in the ruling elite after the fall of the communist regime. They referred to the common identity of Central Europe, which was being written about at the time by outstanding intellectuals such as Milan Kundera, Czesław Miłosz and György Konrád. The second strand of the presentation concerns the immediate circumstances of the creation of the Visegrad Group – the geopolitical situation of the countries in the region after the collapse of the Soviet bloc. In the years 1989–1990, concepts of cooperation emerged among Central European countries, aimed at undertaking joint actions for security and integration with European structures.

Keywords: Visegrad Group, Central Europe, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary

The Russian World's Role after the Dissolution of the USSR

At the beginning of the 1990s, post-bipolar global reordering became more complex when Russia began using hybrid mechanisms of waging proxy wars against ex-Soviet republics to justify its own vision of the future world order. Moscow's policies were based on the Russian World concept, used for the ideological justification of a new division of the world into spheres of influence. New foreign policy instruments embedded in the Russian World concept include social media, which made the production and distribution of fake news faster and more effective. Manipulation of information has become the cornerstone of Russia's aggressive policy towards Ukraine especially after Putin's description of the collapse of the Soviet Union as a major geopolitical catastrophe of the 20th century. According to the civilisational geopolitics of Eurasianism, Russia is a country with a "natural" sphere of influence, whereas the biopolitics of the Russian World emphasises the establishment of family-type relations with "compatriots" based on Orthodoxy, the Russian language and culture, as well as a common historical background and worldviews. The concept serves as an excuse for Russia's supposed "right" to supervise its neighbouring states, motivates Russia in the process of recollecting its pre-Soviet and Soviet past through reconciliation with Russian diasporas, and is an essential tool for rebranding Russia on the international stage. Aleksandr Dugin, Vladislav Surkov and Valery Gerasimov redesigned the geopolitics of Eurasian space, making the Russian World its central bloc. The negative influence of pro-Putin forces on liberal democracy is a future danger for Europe and is demonstrated by how Russian organisations such as Rosstrudnichestvo, the Russian World Foundation and the Gorchakov Foundation have created numerous centres for Russian studies at European and American universities to expand the network of Kremlin supporters in the Western academic community. These efforts are complemented by the work of the Kremlin's international PR platforms, such as the Valdai Discussion Club and the Gorchakov Foundation's Dialogue for the Future

conferences. The mutation and proliferation of think tanks, as well as the noticeable decline in ethical standards in the Western scientific community, led to the advent of the “Putinverstehers” phenomenon.

Keywords: geopolitics, Europe, the Russian World concept, Eurasianism, Orthodoxy, language, history, disinformation.

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Echoes Across Borders: Comparing Forced Migration and Identity Shifts in the Yugoslav Wars (1991–1999) and the Russo-Ukrainian War (2022–Present)

The Yugoslav wars of the 1990s and the ongoing Russo-Ukrainian conflict represent pivotal moments of mass displacement in Eastern Europe and the Balkans, reshaping borders and national identities. This paper offers a comparative analysis of migration processes, arguing that both crises reveal enduring patterns of forced mobility as a catalyst for identity reconstruction amid socio-political upheaval. Drawing on archival data, refugee testimonies and policy documents, the study examines three dimensions: (1) scale and trajectories – over 4 million displaced in Yugoslavia versus more than 6 million Ukrainian refugees, primarily to Poland and Germany; (2) border dynamics – from intra-Yugoslav ethnic partitions to EU external frontiers; and (3) identity formation – Bosnian Serbs and Croats forging ethno-national enclaves versus Ukrainians cultivating a deterritorialised “warrior nation” through digital networks. Key similarities include gendered migration (women and children fleeing first), host-state ambivalence (for example, Serbian refugees in the FRY; Ukrainians under EU Temporary Protection) and diaspora agency in sustaining resistance. Differences emerge in temporality and technology: 1990s migrations were analogue and protracted, fostering fragmented identities; 2022 displacements leverage social media for real-time solidarity, accelerating transnational belonging. Employing a historical-comparative method, the paper analyses UNHCR reports (1990s: $n = 50$; 2022: $n = 30$), 30 oral histories from each case and discourse analysis of media (*Politika* vs *Ukrainska Pravda*). The findings highlight 20th-century Balkan precedents – ethnic cleansing, safe zones – as informing current Ukrainian resilience, yet warn of “migration fatigue” echoing post-Dayton repatriation failures. Ultimately, these cases underscore migration not as border erosion but as identity fortification, with implications for European border regimes and post-conflict reconciliation. By bridging 20th-century Balkan legacies with contemporary Eastern Euro-

pean realities, the paper enriches understandings of how displacement redraws socio-political maps.

Keywords: forced migration, Yugoslav Wars, Russo-Ukrainian War, Displacement and Refugees, National Identity, Diaspora

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War as a Catalyst of State Power Transformation: Concentration, Dispersion and Democratic Resilience in Ukraine

The Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine has become a critical turning point in the transformation of the Ukrainian state and its system of public authority. The paper analyses how wartime conditions have simultaneously intensified processes of power concentration and generated new forms of power dispersion, reshaping institutional arrangements and political practices. It pays particular attention to the interaction between centralisation driven by security imperatives and the preservation of democratic mechanisms, including parliamentary oversight, local self-government, and civic participation. The research is based on an institutional and neo-institutional approach combined with elements of comparative political analysis. It examines changes in executive–legislative relations, the role of the presidency, emergency governance instruments, and the functioning of local authorities under martial law. The paper also explores the adaptive capacity of democratic institutions and the role of civil society in maintaining accountability and legitimacy during wartime. The Ukrainian case demonstrates that war does not inevitably lead to authoritarian regression. Instead, under certain conditions, it can stimulate institutional innovation, strengthen horizontal coordination, and reinforce societal cohesion. The findings contribute to broader debates on state resilience, democratic governance in times of crisis, and the long-term political consequences of war for post-conflict reconstruction and European integration.

Keywords: war, state power, institutional transformation, democracy, governance, Ukraine, martial law, political resilience

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**Ukrainian Identity during the War – Beginning in February 2022:
Social and Political Aspects**

Ukrainian identity has undergone many changes since 1991. The political events of recent years have shaped this identity, particularly its tragic aspects, long before the outbreak of the war, for example the Revolution of Dignity and Euromaidan. Russia's invasion in February 2022 marked the next stage in the formation of this multidimensional identity. The aim of this paper is to present the mechanism by which Ukrainian identity took shape during the turbulent period following the outbreak of the war, and to discuss the social changes and political conditions underlying the formation of a new identity and understanding of Ukrainianness after 24 February 2024. The author seeks to answer the question of what this multidimensional identity is, why the understanding of the country's division into East and West is important within it, and what role language and politicians play in shaping it.

Keywords: divided country, identity, politics, public opinion, society, Russian language, Ukraine, war

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**From Serbian to Yugoslav Officer Corps:
A Case Study of the Kingdom of SCS/Yugoslavia, 1918–1941**

The Royal Yugoslav Officers' Corps was a melting pot of different officer corps from armies that had fought on both sides in the First World War. Its foundation lay in the Royal Serbian Officers' Corps. Its members automatically became officers of the newly established army. All the others, essentially officers of the former Austro-Hungarian and Montenegrin armies, had to apply for admission to the new army and swear an oath to the Serbian king. At its inception, the Yugoslav Officers' Corps consisted of roughly 53% Serbian, 39% Austrian, 7% Montenegrin, and a small percentage of Albanian and Russian Imperial officers. Our historiography usually identifies former Austrian officers as Croats and Slovenes, but in fact there was also a high percentage of Serbs among them, bearing in mind that the military profession was traditionally prized in the territories of the former Austrian Military Border inhabited by Serbs and Croats. Most high-ranking Austrian officers of Yugoslav origin opted for Austrian or Hungarian citizenship, and some of those who were extreme opponents of Yugoslav unification under Belgrade, or who had committed war crimes against Serbian civilians and POW's were prohibited from entry or decided not to apply. As a consequence, the newly established Officers' Corps, although nominally Yugoslav, was predominantly Serbian in national sense. Yugoslav military authorities attempted to preserve the organisational model and traditions of the victorious Serbian Royal Army, while also incorporating the positive historical traditions of Croats, Slovenes, and Montenegrins during the celebration of unit holidays or commemorations, and to blend all these traditions into a unified Officers' Corps. Yugoslavism in the Army acted as an ideological glue. It bridged ethnic divides through centralised military academies and the intermixing of cadets from diverse ethnic backgrounds to suppress regional nationalism. By the late 1930s, the younger military academies produced a cadre of professional staff who rose through the ranks

regardless of regional background. Numerous officers of Croatian and Slovenian heritage held vital divisional and staff positions. Despite all efforts, they failed to transform the Serbian character of the Army towards the generally more acceptable Yugoslav one, and to increase to a greater extent the percentage of non-Serbs within the Officers' Corps.

Keywords: Kingdom of SCS/Yugoslavia, Army, Officers corps, integration, Yugoslavism

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Religious Minorities in the Military of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (1918–1941)

The attitude of the state authorities towards the recognised denominations was based on the principles of tolerance and equality among all acknowledged religious communities. In his proclamation marking the formation of the first government, Regent Alexander Karađorđević emphasised the values of religious freedom and equality. The denominations formally recognised by the Vidovdan Constitution of 1921 and by the Constitution of 6 September 1931 were: Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Greek Catholic (Uniate), Muslim, Evangelical of the Augsburg and Helvetic confessions, Sephardic Jewish, Ashkenazi Jewish, Orthodox Jewish, Baptist, and Old Catholic communities. According to the population census of 31 March 1931, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia had a total population of 13,934,038 people. Of this number, 6,785,501 (48.70%) were Orthodox; 5,217,847 (37.35%) were Roman Catholic; 1,561,166 (11.20%) were Muslim; and 369,524 (2.65%) belonged to other acknowledged denominations. The religious needs of soldiers in the military of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia were regulated through various aspects of everyday life in barracks and military camps. Meeting the religious needs of servicemen of different denominations served the broader purpose of strengthening combat morale and fostering a sense of unity and camaraderie among soldiers of diverse denominations and nations within the Yugoslav military. The celebration of holidays included elaborate ceremonials involving military units, which played a significant role in strengthening combat morale. Beyond the ceremonial dimension, whose significance was above all moral, the observance of holidays also contributed to the cohesion of the various nations within the Yugoslav military. The chaplaincy in the military of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia continued the organisational model previously established in the Army of the Kingdom of Serbia. The Yugoslav military was characterised by pronounced religious and ethnic diversity within its units, which made it necessary to respect

and harmonise religious and national differences. All normative documents regulated the religious rights of members of the Yugoslav peoples and those of the recognised denominations, providing detailed provisions on the observance of religious holidays, dietary regulations, dual cookhouses, and days off from duty on religious holidays. Servicemen belonging to different religious communities took the military oath of allegiance in accordance with the rites of their respective denominations. In the normative documents governing military regulations, religion was presented as a source of combat morale.

Keywords: The military of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, soldiers, religious minorities, chaplains, combat morale, religious holidays

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Changes in the Social Structure of the Population in Yugoslavia

This paper examines the profound restructuring of Yugoslav society in the aftermath of the Second World War, focusing on the period from the revolutionary transformation of 1945 to the 1961 population census. This era was defined by the consolidation of the socialist system and the implementation of the First Five-Year Plan, processes that initiated an unprecedented rural-to-urban migration. Drawing on census data from 1948, 1953, and 1961, the study demonstrates Yugoslavia's transition from a predominantly agrarian society, approximately 75 percent of the population in 1945, to an increasingly urban and industrialised one. These demographic and social shifts not only altered the occupational and class structure of the population but also laid the socioeconomic foundations for Yugoslavia's distinctive system of workers' self-management.

Keywords: Yugoslavia, social structure, rural-to-urban migration, population censuses, agrarian society, urbanization, demographic change

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Militarisation of Youth in Socialist Yugoslavia

This paper examines the militarisation of Yugoslav youth between 1945 and 1990, with particular emphasis on the role of the educational system in shaping military knowledge, defence awareness, and desirable socio-political values. Proceeding from the understanding that militarisation encompasses not only preparation for military service but also the adoption of norms, practices, and identities associated with the military sphere, the study analyses the mechanisms through which educational institutions contributed to this process. Special attention is devoted to the development and content of pre-military training programmes, as well as the school subject General People's Defence and Social Self-Protection (Opštenarodna odbrana i društvena samozaštita – ONO i DSZ), which, from the 1970s onwards, became one of the principal instruments for transmitting the concept of Total National Defence to younger generations. Through an analysis of legislation, educational curricula, textbooks, and other relevant archival and published sources, the paper explores how military and security-related content was integrated into the educational process and linked to the ideological principles of socialist self-management. The central argument of the paper is that the educational system served as one of the most important channels through which the state sought to integrate youth into the broader framework of Total National Defence and Social Self-Protection. In this regard, the militarisation of youth is interpreted as part of a wider project of political and social socialisation, in which educational, ideological, and security objectives were closely intertwined. By examining these processes, the paper contributes to a deeper understanding of the relationship between education, the military, and society in Socialist Yugoslavia, while also highlighting the role of young people in the construction of Yugoslav defence culture.

Keywords: Socialist Yugoslavia, youth, militarisation, pre-military training, General People's Defence and Social Self-Protection (ONO and DSZ), education

Bordertown on the Zbruch River: A Forgotten Symbol of a Divided Ukrainian Nation in the First Half of the 20th Century

After the Second Partition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the border between the Habsburg and Romanov empires followed the Zbruch River. This situation remained unchanged from 1793 to 1809, and from 1815 to 1917. On both sides of the border, a phenomenon of separated twin settlements emerged, the most famous being the towns of Volochysk and Pidvolochysk, as well as the two Husiatyns, and a number of villages sharing the same name. At the beginning of the 20th century, this was not just a division between different countries, but between unlike worlds, with distinct railway gauges, calendars with a 13-day gap, diverse religions, political cultures, and everyday realities. At the same time, the border status of the region led to economic revival and growth in interstate trade and smuggling. Professional smugglers (pachkars) transported grain, sugar, alcohol, and banned literature in both directions. Russian and Ukrainian cultural figures left vivid accounts of everyday life at the border. After the total ban on Ukrainian printing in 1876 in the Russian Empire, one of the ways to counteract the discriminatory measures of the Russian authorities against Ukrainian literature was the smuggling of books from Galicia, where the Austrian authorities did not introduce such restrictions. For example, in 1903 the future Prime Minister of the UPR, Volodymyr Vynnychenko, was detained in Volochysk while attempting to import banned literature into the Russian Empire. During the Ukrainian Revolution of 1917–1920, national forces did everything possible to gain independence and unite Ukrainians in their own state. On 22 January 1919, the UPR and the WUPR – two Ukrainian state formations that emerged on the territory of the former empires – announced their unification. For a time, the Zbruch ceased to be a border. However, in July 1919, the Western Ukrainians were defeated in their confrontation with the Poles and were forced to leave Galicia. The Galician army retreated beyond the Zbruch to Podolia. Later, in April 1920, the leader of the UPR, Symon Petliura, in exchange for military assistance, ceded Galicia to Poland. This meant the restoration of the bor-

der along the Zbruch River. However, the joint Ukrainian-Polish campaign of 1920 achieved few tactical successes and was ultimately repulsed by the Bolsheviks. Volochysk was the last settlement to be abandoned by the UNR army on 21 November 1920. This symbolised the defeat of the Ukrainian liberation struggle. As a result of the Treaty of Riga in 1921, the border along the Zbruch was restored, and Ukrainians remained divided between Poland and the USSR. Traditional phenomena – smuggling, illegal migration, espionage – persisted on the new border. At the same time, the Soviet side ideologised the border area in every possible way. The colonnade in Husiatyn and the House of Culture in Ivankivtsi served the interests of communist propaganda. In September 1939, the border was demolished during the Soviet annexation of Western Ukraine. Nowadays, on 22 January, the Day of Unity, symbolic acts of cohesion are held on the bridges over the Zbruch between the two Husiatyns and between Volochysk and Pidvolochysk.

Keywords: Zbruch, Ukrainians, smuggling, Volochysk, Pidvolochysk, Husiatyn, imperial border, imaginary border, captive nation, divided nation, pachkars

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Renaming the Borderland: Place Names and Identity Transformation in the Polish–Ukrainian Border Regions in the 20th Century

This article examines the processes of place-name transformation in the Polish–Ukrainian borderlands throughout the 20th century and explores their relationship with changing political regimes, ethnic identities, and cultural memory. It focuses on the historical regions situated along the Polish–Ukrainian frontier, where shifts in state borders, population movements, and ideological projects significantly influenced local toponymy. By analysing official documents, historical maps, administrative records, and linguistic sources, the article investigates how place names were modified, replaced, standardised, or restored in different political contexts. The research demonstrates that the renaming of settlements was not merely a linguistic phenomenon but also a powerful instrument of state policy and identity construction. Successive administrations employed toponymic changes to legitimise territorial claims, promote national narratives, and reshape the symbolic landscape of contested regions. In particular, the study highlights the impact of the interwar period, the Second World War, post-war border revisions, and socialist-era policies on the evolution of local place names. These transformations often reflected broader processes of nation-building, assimilation, and the reconfiguration of cultural space. The article pays special attention to the interaction between official naming practices and local traditions. While authorities frequently introduced new names to reinforce political objectives, communities often preserved historical forms in everyday usage, creating a dynamic coexistence of official and vernacular toponymy. It argues that place names function as important markers of collective memory and cultural heritage, revealing complex negotiations between power, identity, and historical continuity. By situating toponymic changes within the broader framework of borderland studies, the article contributes to understanding how language participates in the construction of social and territorial identities. The findings show that the history of place names in the Polish–

Ukrainian border regions provide valuable insight into the cultural and political transformations that shaped Central and Eastern Europe during the 20th century.

Keywords: Polish–Ukrainian borderlands, toponymy, place names, identity transformation, borderland studies, cultural memory, historical linguistics, renaming processes, nation-building, 20th century history

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Czech-Polish Border in 20th Century (Policy – Culture – Science)

The aim of this conference paper is to undertake a comprehensive examination of the Czech/Czechoslovak–Polish border during the “short” 20th century. This border underwent remarkably dynamic changes over the course of the last century. The starting point was the fact that, within the framework of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, no Czech–Polish political border existed in the sense of an interstate boundary. It was only as a consequence of the First World War and the establishment of Czechoslovakia alongside the re-emergence of Poland that the question of delineating a common border arose. Along a frontier extending for more than 900 kilometres, three regions became the subject of territorial disputes: Cieszyn Silesia (Těšín/Cieszyn Silesia), Orava, and Spiš. These disputes resurfaced during the period of the Munich Conference in 1938 and again at the outset of the Second World War. Following the end of the war, the disputes effectively re-emerged, although the interwar territorial settlement was ultimately restored. At the same time, the defeat of the Third Reich led to the creation of an entirely new section of the Czechoslovak–Polish border in the Sudeten region, bringing the total length of the frontier to more than 1,200 kilometres. Along this section, three further territorial controversies arose: the Kłodzko Valley, Głubczyce, and Racibórz. Following the peaceful dissolution of Czechoslovakia at the end of 1992 and the emergence of two independent states, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, this frontier became part of the present-day Czech–Polish border, which extends for nearly 800 kilometres. It is Poland’s longest international border and the Czech Republic’s second-longest international border. What is the current state of research concerning not only the delimitation of these borders and the related territorial disputes, but also the significance of these processes for

Czech/Czechoslovak–Polish relations in the twentieth century and the present day? This applies not only to political relations, but also to cultural and scholarly interactions. The answers to these and related questions will constitute the central focus of the authors’ discussion in this conference paper and, subsequently, in the post-conference article.

Keywords: Czech/Czechoslovak-Polish border, 20th century, policy, culture, science

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The Czech-Polish Border in the Context of the Activities of Czech University Polonists (1945–1970)

The state border played a crucial role in the lives of the people of socialist Czechoslovakia and Poland after the Second World War. Although they were officially two friendly neighbouring countries, the practical movement of the population and economic or intellectual exchange (including cultural exchange) were significantly limited. Their warm relationship was officially documented by numerous bilateral cooperation agreements and mutual visits by high-ranking representatives of both states. This included, among others, leading representatives from the field of broad science (including literary science) and representatives of national or state literatures. A different, much less favourable, situation occurred in the case of student exchanges or, more generally, official cooperation between Polish studies university centers in Czechoslovakia and Poland. The 1950s were a time of considerable isolation of the scientific community in both countries (due to the political climate, the situation after 1956 was worse in Czechoslovakia), which is why we date the beginning of the revival of cooperation to the first half of the 1960s. Examples of mutual cooperation include jointly organised symposia, published conference proceedings, short-term or long-term stays of pedagogical-literary researchers and their students – future Czech Polonists. The most prominent figure in post-war Czechoslovak Polish studies among pedagogical-literary researchers was Professor Karel Krejčí (1904–1979), a Polish studies scholar, Bohemian scholar, literary historian, and also a sociologist of literature, a respected personality (not only in socialist Poland) with pan-European influence. As an example of a fundamental Czech personality from the second category, we may mention Jan Petr (1931–1989), who, after studying at the Faculty of Arts of Charles University in Prague, became the leading Czech linguistic Polonist and Sorabist of his era. At the same time, however, unlike Krejčí, he was also a communist dogmatist, which was manifested in the academic field by

his tough advocacy of dubious Marxist methods and approaches to literary studies and to literature more generally.

Keywords: Czechoslovak-Polish border, Czechoslovak-Polish scientific contacts, Czechoslovak university Polish studies, literary studies, Prague and Brno institutional Polish studies after 1945, Karel Krejčí, Jarmil Pelikán, Zdeněk Smejkal, Polonicum summer courses, inter-university student exchanges within the Eastern Bloc countries

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The Dynamics of Yugoslav-Soviet Relations (May 1945–June 1948)

During the Second World War and in the immediate post-war period, Soviet influence permeated nearly all spheres of communist Yugoslav state-building: from military organisation and training, economic planning, and intelligence cooperation to cultural production and propaganda. After the end of the Second World War, Yugoslavia emerged as one of the most devoted and active Soviet allies, playing a significant role in advancing Soviet interests in the Balkans and aligning its foreign policy with broader Eastern Bloc strategies. At the same time, this close relationship served practical purposes, enabling the Yugoslav leadership to consolidate power domestically, suppress opposition, and secure international legitimacy. However, despite the apparent unity, underlying tensions began to surface by 1947. Growing Yugoslav ambitions for economic development, military strengthening, and regional influence gradually conflicted with Soviet expectations of strict subordination. The increasing assertion of Yugoslav autonomy, coupled with Soviet suspicion and dissatisfaction, led to a progressive deterioration of relations. The sudden withdrawal of Soviet military advisers in March 1948 symbolised the definitive rupture and exposed the fragility of what had previously been portrayed as an unbreakable alliance. The Yugoslav–Soviet split of 1948 was not abrupt, but rather the outcome of cumulative contradictions within an inherently unequal partnership. By tracing this evolution from close cooperation to open conflict, the study offers new insights into the complexities of early Cold War alliances and the limits of ideological cohesion within the socialist bloc.

Keywords: Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, Eastern Bloc, Communist Party of Yugoslavia, All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks), Yugoslav Army, Red Army, Josip Broz Tito, Joseph Stalin

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The Conflict with the Cominform in 1948 – Part of the Yugoslav National Question

With minor deviations, Yugoslav communists understood the national question within Leninist frameworks. This became especially important after 1945 and the establishment of the new communist Yugoslavia. The national framework was supposed to satisfy national aspirations, but the primary focus was on the communist transformation of society. The aggressive Stalinisation of the country after 1945, carried out more radically than in other Eastern European states, revealed the real strategic orientation of the Yugoslav communists. The prevailing belief was that the national question had been solved by the Soviet model. The rift with the USSR in 1948, caused by foreign policy motives, inadvertently paved the way for a redefinition of the national question in the country. As a strong foreign policy argument, but also as an ideological foundation, the Yugoslav communists used Yugoslav nationalism as the basis of their independence and their right to their own state and ideological course, thereby destroying the model of “proletarian internationalism” and, with it, Soviet supremacy in ideological matters. This significantly disrupted previous relations within the communist bloc, but also within Yugoslavia itself, where in the coming years the national question would emerge as a fundamental ideological problem.

Keywords: Yugoslav communists, national question, Leninism, Stalinisation, Tito–Stalin split, Yugoslav nationalism, proletarian internationalism, Soviet supremacy, communist Yugoslavia, ideological conflict

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The Impact of the 1948 Cominform Crisis on the Yugoslav Sports

In the socialist world, sport played a very important role. All the countries of the Eastern Bloc followed the development model established by Stalin's USSR. Immediately after the war, sport served as a powerful diplomatic weapon, and almost all sports cooperation was directed between socialist countries. There were even exclusively socialist sports disciplines or tournaments, such as the Balkan Cup, which took place only within the Eastern Bloc. These socialist variations of sport were of the greatest importance, while the older capitalist sporting events receded into the background or were boycotted by members of the Eastern Bloc. Thus, events like the Balkan Games were more important for the entire Eastern Bloc than the 1948 London Olympics. In the case of Yugoslavia, practically all sporting cooperation in the years 1945–1948 took place within the framework of the Eastern Bloc and the idea of socialist sport. When the crisis broke out in 1948 and Yugoslavia was expelled from the socialist world, all previous sporting ties were severed. Yugoslavia found itself isolated not only politically but also in sport. It was not until the 1950s that a new path was found, first by turning to the West and then to the Third World.

Keywords: Sport, Socialism, Eastern Block, Yugoslavia

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Yugoslav Air Carriers and Central and Eastern Europe – A Combination of Politics and Economics 1945–1992

This paper examines the development of international routes operated by Yugoslav air carriers to Central and Eastern European countries during the Cold War. Several stages can be identified in this process. From 1945 to 1948, the mentioned region was the sole international market for Yugoslav Airlines (JAT) and YUSTA. The Cominform Resolution of 1948 and the subsequent breakdown of relations between Yugoslavia and the Eastern Bloc led to an almost complete cancellation of flights. These were restored after 1955, when relations began to improve. However, while airlines from the Eastern Bloc showed greater interest in reopening flights to Belgrade in 1956 and 1957, JAT opened its routes to the region at a much slower rate throughout the late 1950s and the 1960s. Yugoslav charter airlines Adria Airways and Aviogenex also operated some tourist services between the country and Eastern Europe. Regular and charter flights between Yugoslavia and Central and Eastern European countries were operated until the breakup of socialist Yugoslavia and the imposition of international sanctions on the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Several factors will be considered: Yugoslavia's position on the world stage and the ambitions of its leadership; relations with other socialist countries; the capabilities of Yugoslavia's air carriers; and economic feasibility. Comparisons of the frequency of services operated by Yugoslav air carriers to different parts of the world (Eastern vs Western Europe and the Mediterranean) are used to show their interest in particular markets. It will be demonstrated that air transport between Yugoslavia and Central and Eastern Europe was shaped by a combination of economic and political considerations, albeit with exceptions to both.

Keywords: Yugoslavia, Eastern Europe, air transport, Yugoslav Airlines (JAT), YUSTA, Adria Airways, Aviogenex

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The Oder-Neisse Border between Germany and Poland – Political, Historical, and Cultural Divisions and New Perspectives in Central Eastern Europe

The borderline between Germany and Poland drawn after the unconditional surrender of Nazi Germany to the Soviet Union, the USA and Great Britain in August 1945 remained a bitter point of contention between Germans and Poles for many decades after the Second World War. With the establishment of the post-war order in Europe, the German-Polish territorial conflict over the border along the Oder and Lusatian Neisse rivers, or the “Oder-Neisse border,” became the subject of fierce political, international legal, moral and historical disputes in the already conflict-ridden German-Polish relationship. While the establishment of a new border along the Oder-Neisse Line was partially determined by the facts on the ground in the final months of the war, it was also motivated by considerations of military strategy and territorial policy. One condition of the Two Plus Four Agreement of 12 September 1990 (Treaty on the Final Settlement with Respect to Germany), describing the international conditions for the unification of the two German states, was that Germany and Poland ratify a binding treaty under international law confirming this long-disputed border demarcation, commonly referred to as the “Oder-Neisse Line.” The German-Polish Border Treaty was subsequently signed on 14 November 1990, six weeks after German unification. The Border Treaty paved the way for the German-Polish Treaty on Good Neighbourliness and Friendly Cooperation of 17 June 1991. This marked the end of a territorial dispute that had strained relations between the two nations for 45 years. The German-Polish Partnership Treaty was the most voluminous bilateral partnership agreement that the Federal Republic of Germany had concluded since its foundation in 1949. The treaty, comprising 38 articles, reflected the extensive need for (re-)construction work, comprising virtually all areas of cultural, social, scientific and economic cooperation, including cross-border local and regional cooperation.

Keywords: Second World War, Lusatian Neisse, Oder-Neisse border, Treaty on the Final Settlement with Respect to Germany (1990), German-Polish Border Treaty (1990), German unification, German-Polish Treaty on Good Neighbourliness and Friendly Cooperation (1991), Trans-border local and regional cooperation (Germany-Poland), Revisionism, Reconciliation

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“Border of Peace:” The Yugoslav Stance towards the German-Polish Border after the Second World War

After the end of the Second World War, Poland’s eastern border shifted on average 250 km westwards. At the same time, Poland was forced to cede large areas in contemporary Ukraine, Belarus and Lithuania to the Soviet Union. Since 1945, the Eastern Bloc countries recognised the establishment of the German-Polish border alongside the rivers Oder and Neisse. Poland and East Germany championed the new demarcation line as the “border of peace.” In contrast, the Western Bloc largely rejected the proclaimed border and, particularly in the case of the Federal Republic of Germany, sought to re-establish the border in accordance with the demarcation line of 1937. Despite being shunned by the Eastern Bloc in 1948, and forced to cooperate almost exclusively with the West and West Germany in particular, Yugoslavia exhibited significant autonomy regarding this issue that transcended its current geopolitical orientation. I argue that, in the minds of the Yugoslav leadership, the future German-Polish border was seen as more than a mere territorial dispute. By going against the wishes of their newly acquired western partners, the Yugoslavs were defending the inviolability of all post-1945 borders, especially those established in order to curb German militarism. This paper will focus on the attitudes of the Yugoslav leadership towards the German-Polish border dispute during the first decades after the end of the Second World War, in order to determine what was, or if there even was, a principled Yugoslav stance towards this issue.

Keywords: German-Polish border, Oder-Neisse Line, German Question, Yugoslavia, Yugoslav-German relations, Yugoslav-Polish relations

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History and Memory – the Albanian-Greek Border during the Communist Regime in Albania

My presentation is part of my ongoing research project on the Albanian-Greek border and borderlands in the 20th and 21st centuries. The border between the two states was established in 1913, but delimited only in 2025, while the maritime border remains under discussion, if not in dispute. The aim of my project is to examine the border as a historical artefact and to identify within it both history and memory, that is, the ways in which the border was transformed into a border regime and, as such, prevailed during the 20th century, as well as how this history is currently being transformed into collective memory. My paper will therefore present an overview of the history of the Albanian-Greek border and then, by focusing on several issues, will elaborate on this dynamic between the history of and the memory of the border.

Keywords: Albanian-Greek border, borderlands, border regime, history and memory, collective memory, border delimitation, maritime border, 20th century, 21st century, historical artefact

Yugoslav-Albanian Border 1953–1974. Problems of Regulation, Demarcation and Security

The conflict between Yugoslavia and Albania was not limited to the severing of political, economic, military and cultural ties, but also had a military dimension that repeatedly threatened to escalate into armed confrontation. From mid-1948 until the end of 1953, troop movements along the border increased, accompanied by armed incidents between Albanian and Yugoslav border troops, the infiltration of saboteurs and spies, the distribution of propaganda material and the destruction of border markers. Some incidents developed into conflicts of low and limited intensity. Following Stalin's death in March 1953, the gradual easing of Yugoslavia's conflict with the Cominform countries also contributed to a reduction in tensions with Albania. In August 1953, negotiations began at Yugoslav initiative to regulate border issues. The Albanian side proposed discussions on four matters: the demarcation and restoration of border pyramids, the joint use of border water resources, the return of stray cattle, and the prevention and resolution of border incidents. Although the negotiations initially encountered difficulties, an agreement was eventually reached through the establishment of two sub-committees. The agreement on the restoration and construction of border pyramids provided for a joint commission composed of four representatives from each side and technical personnel. The border was divided into three sectors, with a mixed sub-commission established for each sector to regulate it. Of particular importance to Yugoslavia was the agreement on the prevention of border incidents. Both sides undertook to prevent violations of each other's territory, airspace and territorial waters, as well as firing across the border. The agreement also prohibited the distribution of propaganda material and the display of slogans and posters in the border zone. Seven local mixed sub-commissions were established to monitor implementation and resolve incidents, under the supervision of a main mixed commission composed of representatives of both sides. A separate protocol regulated the use of

water resources and the return of stray cattle. Border authorities were required to return stray animals, while the use of spring and irrigation water was to alternate between the two countries. The start of negotiations on border issues represented the first step towards the gradual normalisation of Yugoslav-Albanian relations after several years of conflict. This trend continued in subsequent years through renewed cooperation in water management, the handling of border incidents, veterinary affairs and trade, marking a new phase in bilateral relations that lasted until 1974.

Keywords: Yugoslavia, Albania, Yugoslav-Albanian relations, border conflicts, border incidents, border demarcation, mixed commissions, normalization of relations

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From War to Statehood: The Establishment of the First Modern Macedonian State (1944–1946)

This paper examines the formation of the first modern Macedonian state during the Second World War (1941–1945). The state was proclaimed on 2 August 1944, during the First Session of the Anti-Fascist Assembly of the People's Liberation of Macedonia (ASNOM), at which nine documents were adopted, giving the session the character of a state-constituting assembly. A Presidium was elected and entrusted with both legislative and executive authority. In this context, it is important to highlight the following key events: the People's Liberation and Anti-Fascist War of Macedonia; the Second Session of the Anti-Fascist Council for the National Liberation of Yugoslavia (AVNOJ); the activities of the Presidium of ASNOM in establishing the Macedonian federal state; the final liberation of Macedonia during the Second World War; the integration of the Macedonian state into the Yugoslav federation; and the election of the first People's Government of Macedonia. The process of establishing the Macedonian state was concluded on 31 December 1946 with the adoption of the first Constitution of the People's Republic of Macedonia by the Presidium of the Constituent Assembly, in full accordance with the Constitution of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia.

Keywords: Second World War, Yugoslavia, AVNOJ, Macedonia, ASNOM, state, Presidium, Government, Constitution

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Changes in the Communist Regime's Policy towards the Muslim Question in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 1956–1971

Drawing on archival documents, Party records, the Muslim émigré press, and relevant scholarly literature, this paper examines changes in the Communist regime's policy towards the Muslim question in Bosnia and Herzegovina between 1956 and 1971. It analyses the gradual abandonment of earlier concepts of national identification for the Muslim population and the development of a new political approach that ultimately led to the recognition of Muslims as a distinct nation. It also considers the impact of internal political developments, inter-republic relations, and the broader Yugoslav context on the evolution of the revolutionary authorities' policy on the national question. More specifically, the paper argues that policy towards the Muslim question during this period resulted from a complex interaction of political, ideological, and social factors.

Keywords: Muslim question, Bosnia and Herzegovina, League of Communists of Yugoslavia, National policy, Muslim nationhood, Yugoslavia

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Forging Exclusive Identity: Montenegrin Nationalism in Socialist Yugoslavia

This paper explores the development and assertion of a distinct Montenegrin identity during the era of Socialist Yugoslavia, with particular emphasis on language as both a symbol and an instrument of nationalism. Although the People's Republic of Montenegro's 1946 Constitution did not define an official language, Serbian was established as the judicial language. However, this perception began to change in the late 1960s and early 1970s, when Montenegrin intellectuals such as Radoje Radojević and Vojislav P. Nikčević started advocating for recognition of the Montenegrin language. They challenged the existing Serbo-Croatian linguistic paradigm, arguing that the Montenegrin linguistic tradition dated back to the 11th century and deserved recognition. Despite their efforts, the Socialist Republic of Montenegro's 1974 Constitution reaffirmed Serbo-Croatian (of the Ijekavian pronunciation) as the official language. In this context, towards the end of the 1960s and during the 1970s, the debate among Montenegrin intellectuals on the Montenegrin national question intensified. The books by Savo Brković, *On the Origin and Development of the Montenegrin Nation* (1974) and *Ethnogenophobia* (1988), provoked particularly strong reactions. This research investigates these ethno-linguistic controversies, the political responses, and their implications for Montenegrin nationalism. This paper argues that the discourse on language and identity was more than simple terminological (semantic) debates; it was a vital element in the conceptualisation of exclusive Montenegrin nationalism within Socialist Yugoslavia.

Keywords: Montenegrin nationalism; Montenegrin identity; Montenegrin language; Socialist Yugoslavia; ethno-linguistic debates

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The Phenomenon of Identity of the Ukrainian People during 1991–2000

All successful nations possess a set of core symbolic elements that serve as a kind of “criteria of truth” for their citizens. This issue is fundamentally important both for states that emerged at the end of the 20th century and for those long been “rooted” in the global geopolitical order. Particular difficulties in realising national identity arise when a nation includes several ethnic, religious, or linguistic groups. In Ukraine, the problem of national identity has its own peculiarities, caused primarily by a long period of statelessness, the territories of modern Ukraine being under the control of various empires and state entities, and the long-term linguistic and cultural assimilation of the Ukrainian population. The defining condition for the formation of national identity is the positive perception by citizens of their nation, country, and state. During the research period, there is also a growing understanding of the need to form the political subjectivity of citizens as a defining characteristic of a political nation. According to publicist Mikola Ryabchuk, there are two “Ukraines:” citizens of the new state by their own choice (made on 1 December 1991), Ukrainian-speaking, patriots, Westerners and pro-Europeans, as well as nostalgic “sovki.” There is reason to argue that the confrontation in Ukraine is not between Ukrainian and Russian identities, but between different variants of Ukrainian identity.

Keywords: identity, Ukrainian people, ethnicity, religion, symbol, value

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