Centre for Advanced Study Sofia

Newsletter

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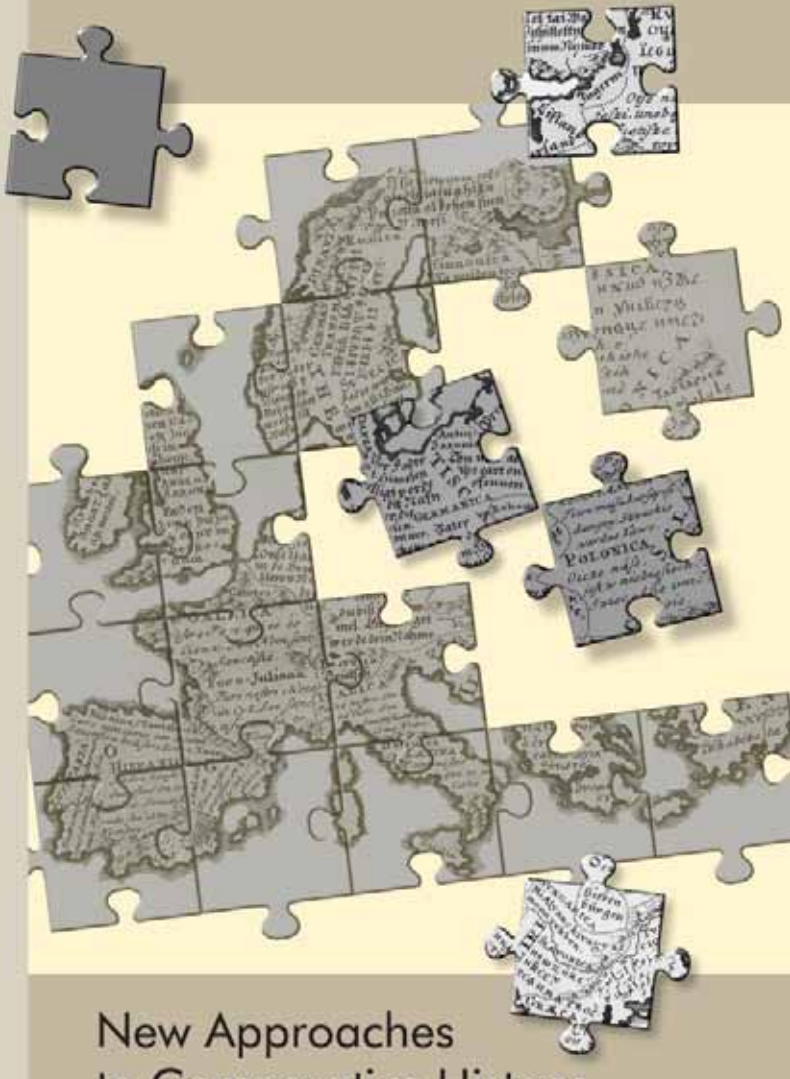
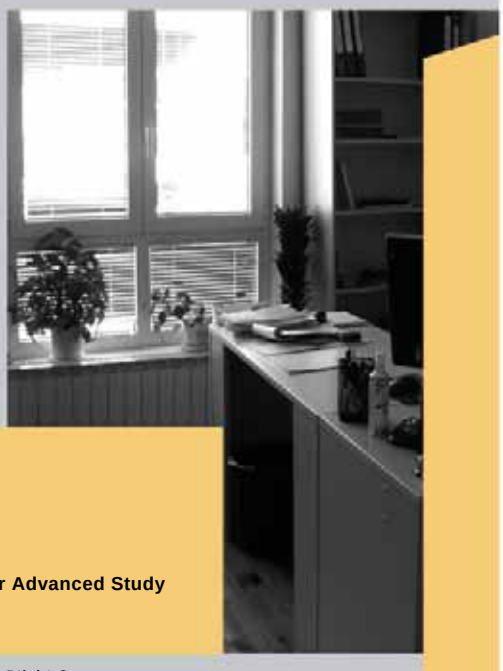


New Approaches to Comparative History in Central and Southeast Europe



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Although the present edition of the CAS *Newsletter* focuses on the major events and activities of the Centre for Advanced Study Sofia for the period January – July 2008, there are some important news concerning the coming academic year, which we would like to take note of here.

CAS has launched the academic 2008-9 year with an unprecedented number of fellows – twenty-four – who will carry out research within the framework of its three ongoing projects: the *Shaken Order* project, *Regimes of Historicity, and Negotiating Modernity*.

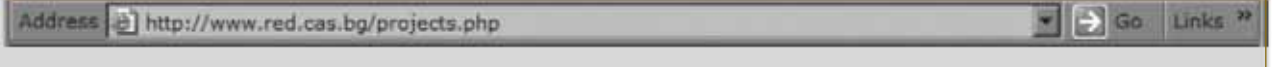
We would like to express our deep appreciation to our sponsors, the Austrian Ministry of Education, the Central and East European Trust for Civil Society, and the Rule-of-Law Program South East Europe Konrad Adenauer Foundation, for their generous response to our request for additional financial support for the high-quality research applications that we received.

We are also pleased to introduce two new members of CAS management team – Ralitsa Petrova and Silvia Velinova. Ralitsa and Silvia will take over the functions of Neliya Kolarska, our former CAS Administrator, who, albeit resigning from her permanent position, we shall keep among our closest friends and co-workers.

With a touch of sadness, the Centre for Advanced Study Sofia is bidding farewell to Dr Wouter Hugenholtz, a founding member of CAS and former Executive Director of the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study, upon his leaving CAS Board of Trustees. We would like to thank him most cordially for his sustained, unwavering support during all these years. Our wholehearted welcome goes to Dr Johannes Hahn, Federal Minister of Science and Research of Austria, who joined CAS Board of Trustees at the beginning of this year. We wish him a long-standing and fruitful collaboration. ■

New Associates

The Centre for Advanced Study Sofia would like to thank **Dr Roumen Avramov** for his long-standing collaboration with our Centre. Dr Avramov was with us since the very establishment of CAS in 2000, first as a senior fellow of the NEXUS Project and then as a CAS Academic Associate. Although formally resigning from his position, we are convinced that our productive cooperation and friendship will continue in the future.



CAS welcomes Dr Georgi Ganev and Dr Georgi Kapriev as its new Academic Associates.

Dr Georgi Ganev is an economist and Programme Director for economic research at the Centre for Liberal Strategies in Sofia. He has been Chair of the Governing Council of the Bulgarian Macroeconomics Association since 2005.

Dr Ganev lectures at the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, Sofia University. His academic interests are in the fields of macroeconomics and monetary theory and policy, political economy, transition, development and growth economics and new institutional economics.

Dr Georgi Kapriev is Professor in Medieval Philosophy at the Faculty of Philosophy, Sofia University, and President of the Section on Byzantine Philosophy of Société Internationale pour l'Étude de la Philosophie Médiévale. He is a co-founder of the Institute for Medieval Philosophy and Culture, Sofia.

Dr Kapriev is also a co-founder of the European Graduate School for Ancient and Medieval Philosophy (2006), and a co-founder and co-publisher of the journals *Medieval Philosophy and Culture File* (1994) and *Christianity and Culture (2007*).

Second Annual Conference of the OSI-CEU Comparative History Project, 17–19 April 2008, Sofia:

New Approaches to Comparative History in Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe

Within the last decade Comparative History has become an established approach in East/Central and Southeast European historiography, with the Central European University, Budapest, and the Centre for Advanced Study Sofia playing a decisive role in its dissemination and institutionalisation in the academic curricula of the universities and research units in the Region.

In 2006, a three-year project was launched by CEU and the Open Society Institute, Budapest, to further the development of Comparative History as a stream of courses within a set of target departments in the Region. In April 2008, the Comparative History Project held its second annual conference in Sofia, Bulgaria. By no means was the host-institution – CAS – chosen accidentally: ever since its establishment, the Centre for Advanced Study Sofia has cherished deep interest in original comparativist research, and promoted intellectual creativity and innovation in the field of the Social Sciences and Humanities. Its strongly interdisciplinary and international orientation, aiming at integrating Regional scholarship in cross-cultural studies at a global scale, turned CAS into an ideal organisational partner of the Comparative History Conference.

The conference brought together twenty-three scholars from fifteen countries, engaged in historical case studies from a European perspective. It was opened by Balázs Trencsényi, Constantin Iordachi and Péter Apor – historians, lecturers and research fellows at the Central European University, Budapest, and coordinators of the CEU-OSI Comparative History Project.

The first panel outlined the academic frame of the papers and discussions to follow, namely, the merits of historical and anthropological research from a broader European angle (Karl Kaser), problems related to the transfer of concepts and ideas in comparative work and the role of the historian's handicraft in it (Augusta Dimou), reflections on missed opportunities when doing comparative history in East/Central Europe (Béla Tomka). Further on, the speakers addressed issues of historical relevance which proved to still highly resonate in the politics and international relations of our twenty-first-century globalising society. Such were the deconstruction of national canons and the transcendence of the nationally-defined mental map in historiography, the entangling historical impact of empires in the recent past as well as the scholarly path towards the construction of a supranational history. The summarising conclusions looked into the opportunities – controversial, yet rewarding – of teaching the comparative history of the Region. ■

From 'within':

Impressions and Recommendations on Future Developments in the Comparative History Field: Péter Apor, Pasts Inc.

Dr Péter Apor is a Research Fellow in the Past Inc. Central European University's Centre for Historical Studies in Budapest, Hungary. He graduated in History and Literary Studies at the Eotvos Lorand University, Budapest, and the Central European University, Budapest. He received his doctoral degree in History and Civilisations at the European University Institute in Florence, Italy (2002). His academic interests centre on contemporary history, historical anthropology, historiography, and he has published his research results in numerous Hungarian and international journals and collections. Péter is co-editor (with Sorin Antohi and Balázs Trencsényi) of *Narratives Unbound: Historical Studies in Post-communist Eastern Europe* (Budapest – New York, 2007), (with Oksana Sarkisova) of *Past for the Eyes: East European Representations of Communism in Cinema and Museums after 1989* (Budapest – New York, 2008), and (with Balázs Apor and Arfon Rees) of *New Perspectives in Sovietisation and Modernity* (Washington, DC, 2008) (forthcoming). Currently, he is in charge of various research projects in social and cultural history of twentieth-century Central and Eastern Europe in their broader European context.

Péter Apor agrees to share his impressions on the conference and the merits of the comparative history approach with us.

The region, which we usually call Eastern Europe, but for the sake of the Comparative History Project and also because we consider the term to account more aptly for the internal heterogeneity of the area we prefer to call East, Central and Southeastern Europe, is made up of numerous ethnic, national, linguistic or cultural traditions. On the one hand, this variety of traditions is not confined to any single national society or state. On the contrary, East, Central and Southeastern European societies are extremely mixed in terms of ethnicity, language and culture. On the other hand, there are many aspects – the influence of cultural, art and intellectual traditions arriving from East and West – that form shared experiences of these societies. The history of the region and, hence, each of the states comprising it, is a history of constant overlapping processes, transfers and entanglements.

Comparative history, therefore, has a peculiar context in East, Central and Southeastern Europe, where history has been often used and abused to justify anti-democratic politics. Comparative history is first of all an approach that accounts for the plurality and similarity of historical experiences in the region. On the one hand, comparing either political units, like the nation state, or cultural communities, like the nation or religions, or smaller units of society, like urban or village communities, one can recognise that beyond each alleged national par-

ticularisms there are similar patterns of historical development. What may seem uniqueness confined within the borders of the nation proves to be a broader regional tendency from the perspective of comparative analysis. On the other hand, comparison can reveal that phenomena, which may seem sweeping general tendencies at first sight, have very different social and cultural contexts in various settings, therefore, comparative history is the means to describe accurately the particularities of individual societies.

The conference *New Approaches to Comparative History in Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe* demonstrated the advantages of comparative history, particularly, in the region. Many papers proved that if going beyond the nation-state, the place of East, Central and Southeastern Europe and its historical particularities in the general European development can be assessed better. Participants highlighted frames for regional histories based upon entanglements and transfers.

Furthermore, many of the papers signalled a move towards cultural analysis and social history. This fact reflects one of the major strengths of comparative history: comparison that reveals broader cultural or social tendencies and highlights cultural and social particularities logically leads to a refinement of historical analysis. To understand properly the process of cultural transfers or the entanglements of traditions and the similarities or dissimilarities of social structures or mentalities one needs to master the modern toolkit of the historian, which contributes to a considerable sophistication of method and theory.

Exactly, the furthering of this theoretical and methodological awareness and clarity is the task, which the *Comparative History Project* is facing in terms of professional standards. The appropriation of theoretical basis, the clarification of conceptual tools and the refinement of the methods and units of the actual comparison will result in laying the grounds for an honest discussion of historical matters of common interest for the region. If we can define the objectives in proper scholarly terms, we can dispute with the sincere intention of understanding each other's position, agree on many issues and, possibly, disagree on others. ■

The Importance of Being a Comparative Historian:

Comparative History and the Comparative Approach in Theory and Practice

Our Electronic Interview with
Professor Zenonas Norkus,
University of Vilnius,
and **Dr Béla Tomka**,
University of Szeged

Zenonas Norkus (Dr Hab.) is Professor of Sociology at the Faculty of Philosophy of Vilnius University, Lithuania. His academic interests are in the field of social science, historical sociology and comparative history, and he has published widely in native and international journals on problems of capitalism and capitalist developments in Western and Eastern Europe, consumer sovereignty, Max Weber and rational choice, various topics in the meta-historical studies, e.g. mechanismic approach in social history, historical narratives as pictures.

Béla Tomka (Dr Hab.) is Associate Professor of Modern Economic and Social History at the Department of History, University of Szeged, Hungary, member of the Editorial Board of *Esély, Journal of Social Policy*, Budapest, and co-editor of *Aetas*, a *Quarterly Journal of History and Related Disciplines*, Szeged. He has been working on the evolution of demographic trends, welfare policies and social security in twentieth-century Eastern and Central Europe.

Why do you consider the comparative history method important for studying the history of our Region?

Zenonas Norkus: There are two kinds of reasons, one related to the internal intellectual logic of the change of history as a discipline, and another linked to its social context. Each field of research is subject to the law of diminishing returns. The new generations of researchers are searching for new approaches, fields, methods. Comparative history is one of them. It has an obvious capacity to enable researchers to meet challenges of integration of the former communist countries into EU and NATO, making nationalist assumptions of the traditional ('historist') historiography outdated.

Béla Tomka: The comparative analysis could have the same benefits in Central and Eastern Europe that we attribute to it in the case of international historiography. In addition, historical research in Central and Eastern Europe has some special problems and, in my view, the comparative approach can provide help for solving several of these problems. First, the use of comparative methods could help counterbalance the overwhelmingly descriptive features of Central and Eastern European historical research and strengthen theoretical awareness or consciousness in the discipline. Second, comparisons could play a great role in correcting ideological biases in historiography. Third, comparative research demands and at the same time promotes international co-operation and thus can increase the international

embeddedness of Central and Eastern European historical research.

What are the benefits and possible pitfalls of the comparative history method?

B.T.: According to the standard account, comparison might play several roles in historical research, including a heuristic one: it helps identify questions and problems that have been neglected by historians so far. Comparison is useful for causal explanations and their criticisms as well, although historians take advantage of this function of comparison less often than other social scientists. It also serves to define more precisely the special features of a specific case. Finally, comparison creates a distancing effect as it offers another perspective to observation and analysis. Of course, the comparative method has its limits and even dangers. Most importantly, comparative projects necessarily select a very limited number of variables to study and neglect much of the context of historical phenomena.

Z.N.: Most obvious benefits are its ability to generate new questions and insights, and to force the interested audience to take more seriously social theory, thus providing more space and incentives for international cooperation. Pitfalls are related to the dilemma of the scope and of the depth – as the scope increases by encompassing more and more cases, it becomes more and more difficult to know equally well all of them. Comparativists become increasingly dependent on secondary sources and vulnerable to the criticisms of the traditional historians who specialise in one particular country and one particular period.

Does comparative history have any limitations in terms of geographical, temporal and cultural boundaries?

Z.N.: As the scope of the comparative historical research increases, it can be done only by the quantitative (statistical) methods, so at some specific point it ceases to be **history**, and becomes social science known as 'holonational' or 'hologeistic' quantitative research. There, cases are just rows in the data matrix. Of course, one can change units of analysis or observation (say, replacing countries or cultures by civilisations), but comparative civilisation research seems to be more like philosophy of history than history *sensu strictu*. So, again, one has to struggle with the scope/depth dilemma.

To what extent has the comparative history method been applied at your research institution?

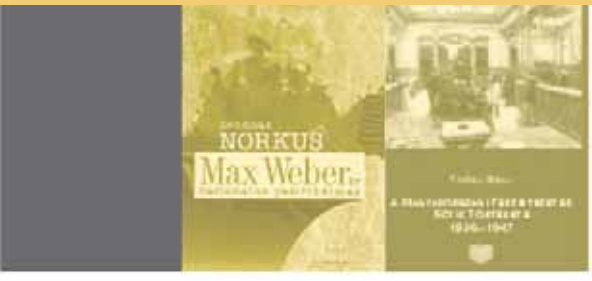
Z.N.: Its application is increasing, especially in the work of younger researchers.

B.T.: As in the Region in general, comparative history is not unknown in Hungary, but quite rarely practiced in a systematic way. That is why I consider the Comparative History Project initiated by the CEU, important. At the History Department of my home university, University of Szeged, there is a newly emerged interest in comparisons among doctoral students.

Have you applied the comparative history method in your own work and if so, how did the comparative history method contribute to your research results? Did the comparative history method alter your initial work hypothesis in any way?

B.T.: I have carried out several comparative projects in the last couple of years. They were led by my research interest in social and economic convergences and divergences in twentieth-century Europe. Needless to say, convergences can only be investigated in a comparative way. In this framework, I have studied Hungary compared to other European societies in the area of population history, family history and social welfare. My research has already materialised in books and articles – now, I am planning to conclude this project.

Z.N.: Early in June 2008, Vilnius University Press will publish my book *Which Democracy, Which Capitalism? Post-communist Transformation in Lithuania from the Viewpoint of Comparative Historical Sociology*. As the very title of the book announces, the design of the research providing the infrastructure of the book was comparative. I was guided by two questions: (1) how do the achievements of the international comparative research help to illuminate Lithuanian case? (2) In which respects is Lithuania an interesting and important case for the comparative research aiming at broader generalisations? These questions involve four research areas: (1) communism; (2) exit from communism; (3) post-communist democracy; (4) post-communist capitalism. The topics from the first area are discussed in the third, those from the second – in the fourth, those from the third – in the fifth, and those from the fourth – in the sixth and the seventh parts of the book. The discussion of all these topics is



guided by the two questions put above, formulated more specifically as: what were the specific features of the communist regime in Lithuania? In which respects is the country of interest for comparative communism studies? What are the specific features of Lithuania's exit from communism? How and why is she important for transitological research? How should post-communist democracy in Lithuania be classified? In which respects is it important and interesting for the comparative research on post-communist democracy and on liberal democracy generally? What kind of capitalism exists in contemporary Lithuania? How can the research on contemporary capitalism in Lithuania enrich comparative research on capitalism in general? The discussion of these questions are instrumental for achieving the main goal of this book – to provide a macrosociological diagnosis of the present state of Lithuanian society that is a subject of the ongoing public discussion in this country, displaying a broad range of opinions from the triumphant optimism to the apocalyptic pessimism, describing recent transformations in Lithuania as a social catastrophe leading to the extinction of Lithuania as a distinct state and nation in the wake of the ongoing globalisation and europeanisation. The book was inspired by my conviction that the creation of an objective image of the present state of Lithuanian society is not possible without its thorough comparison to the economic, political, and social changes in other post-communist countries. This is the only way to find out in which respects Lithuania's development is 'normal', and in which it is not. Although comparative research has some traditions in Lithuania, it has been mainly carried out in the field of comparative civilisation analysis, where civilisations are treated as the biggest possible units of comparison, thus straggling the line between social science and speculative philosophy of history. To introduce Lithuanian readers into other, more down-to-earth styles of comparative research, I have reserved two opening parts of my book for the methodological prolegomena, including discussion of the basic concepts (categories), techniques, and directions of international comparative social research in its historical development.

What were your expectations from the conference and to what extent were they met by the presentations?

Z.N.: I expected to meet colleagues from neighbour countries with similar interests, and to make myself acquainted with their work. My expectations were met. Curiously, after Lithuania joined the EU and NATO, the connections with institutions and colleagues from former republics of the USSR to the East (especially from Russia and official academic institutions of Belarus) have weakened. The conference provided a unique opportunity to meet a lot of interesting people from countries that are growing increasingly apart in political terms, although remaining geographically quite close.

What are your recommendations to the conference participants regarding the future of an international comparative history project on the Region? Are there any particular areas of research which should be enhanced?

Z.N.: Well, I cannot avoid being subjective and partial while answering this question. Due to the subject matter of my current research (see the answer to the next question), I am most interested in the so-called comparative imperial history.

What topics are you currently working on and what are your future plans?

Z.N.: Currently I am working on the book project (to be finished during the next two-three years) *The Rise and Downfall of the Medieval Lithuanian Empire. Grand Duchy of Lithuania from the Viewpoint of the Comparative Imperial History* (working title). ■

Interviewed by the Editor

Scholars and Comparative Life Experiences

Comparison is more than a scholarly methodological approach – it is also an intrinsic part of our day. The literal and symbolic fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 changed the lives of millions of people both in the East and in the West, by removing physical and mental borders, opening up closed spaces, and turning once foreign regions and cultures into part of our personal everyday lives. Comparison becomes instrumental in the process of adjustment to the globalising effect of our post-modern world.

We are glad to present to our readers three interviews with scholars, participants in the Comparative History Conference, coming from different generations and from different European regions to let them voice their comparative life experiences while moving within Europe, continents and time.

An Austrian Anthropologist in the Balkans:

An interview with Karl Kaser, Professor at the Department for Southeast European Studies, University of Graz

Professor Karl Kaser (Dr. Hab.) needs little introduction to the academia of Southeastern Europe. He is the renowned Director of the Centre for the Study of Balkan Societies and Cultures at the Department for Southeast European History, University of Graz, Austria; author of various articles and monographs on Southeastern history and anthropology, and co-/editor of numerous books on the multifaceted culture of the Region. Among his best known works are *Macht und Erbe. Männerherrschaft, Besitz und Familie im östlichen Europa (1500-1900)*, 2000. – (Zur Kunde Südosteuropas, II/30), and *Freier Bauer und Soldat. Die Militarisierung der agrarischen Gesellschaft an der kroatisch-slawonischen Militärgrenze (1535-1881)*, 1997. – (Zur Kunde Südosteuropas, II/22). He is also the co-editor of a number of popular fieldwork collections – to mention only a few – *Vom Nutzen der Verwandten. Soziale Netzwerke in Bulgarien (19. und 20. Jahrhundert)*, 2001. – (Zur Kunde Südosteuropas, II/31) (together with Ulf Brunnbauer); *Between the Archives and the Field. A Dialogue on Historical Anthropology of the Balkans* Bd. 1, 2004 (with Miroslav Jovanovic and Slobodan Naumovic); *Die weite Welt und das Dorf. Albanische Emigration am Ende des 20. Jahrhunderts*, 2002. – (Zur Kunde Südosteuropas 32, Albanologische Studien, 3) (with Robert Pichler and Stephanie Schwandner-Sievers), and others.

Professor Kaser, this is one of your numerous visits to Bulgaria. Do you remember your first visit to Sofia?

Yes, it was in the 1980s, when I came as a visitor. The second time was already in September 1989, i.e., a couple of months before the Big Changes. I attended the Southeast European Association Conference that took place in the National Palace of Culture in Sofia. I was invited by the Austrian branch and was member of the Austrian delegation.

How long have you been interested in Southeast European studies? Were they your primary choice of an academic career?

Yes, the decision took place in the middle of my studies at Graz University – in 1976, I think – when I switched to a combination study of history and Slavistics. It was there that I met a professor from Sarajevo, who impressed me very much. I decided to do my PhD on Bosnian history and in 1978, I went to work in the State Archive of Sarajevo…This means that I have been in the business for thirty years.

What made you choose Slavistics?

I first began a study of English and history, but the courses at the English Department were crowded and the environment felt anonymous, too. In contrast, the Institute of Slavistics was rather small and the context was very familiar. I remember that for two semesters I was the only student in the language course, while for the next semesters we increased to three or four. The courses were taught in a kind of Balkan style – they were very relaxed. I appreciated that very much.

Have you witnessed a significant change in the methodological approach to Southeastern Europe for the last thirty years?

I began my studies with traditional political history. Then, while I was doing my work on the Croatian military border, I changed to a kind of social history. Around 1990, I changed again, this time to historical anthropology, which in the German-speaking academic world was something completely new. It opened new questions and new fields of research, almost untouched until then. I think that the historical anthropological approach is very fruitful.

Has the image of Southeastern Europe changed in Austrian historiography over time?

The image changed radically after 1989. Before, our image of Southeastern Europe was shaped by the Communist regimes because we were not allowed to travel freely there. Travelling was very complicated: we were always confronted by bureaucracy and had to explain our travel route in advance. We could not get a free impression of Southeastern Europe – what we got was merely a façade… In Albania, for instance, it was impossible to speak to ordinary people… Then the façade broke down in 1989 and that changed our Balkan image insofar it became possible to work there and get directly to the people. Of course, this was a new atmosphere. In the first years after 1989, it was very difficult for the academia in the Balkans because their salaries were very low and the infrastructure was just beginning to computerise. Things have improved significantly by now.

Balkan scholars are familiar with the Western impact on interpreting the history of Southeastern Europe. However, could the contemporary status of Austrian history, too, be influenced by the new research findings of Southeast European historians?

Sure. There is an impact coming from the countries of the former Habsburg Monarchy, especially from Slovenia, Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic. Not from the rest of the Balkans, though.

You are well-known for your research on the Balkan family and Balkan fam-

ily structure. Do you believe that a particular family structure can shape or influence the politics, economy and society of a region as a whole?

This is a rather tricky question. I would answer that, on the one hand, the family is shaped by the political and economic context, but on the other hand, the family itself is shaping political culture and even economic structures. The influence is going vice versa and I would reject the notion that there is a one-way impact from a specific family form on economy and politics. The macro-context cannot be completely shaped by a kind of specific family structure. A nuclear, stem-family and complex family structure can yield very similar results in the field of politics and economy.

However, if we go to the field of social relations, things are different, as family structures are directly connected to social relations. Imagine family groups consisting of twenty, thirty family members. One can expect that they would produce a very, very close context and sense of solidarity, as their members would not need the help of neighbours and non-kin. Every job could be done by the family group themselves. If I compare Austria to the Balkan countries, I see the Balkans much more family-centred in their everyday life, with much closer kinship relations. In Austria, family and kinship ties are comparatively weak.

From a modern anthropological point of view, can we presume that a new European family structure is evolving in the EU framework?

It is obvious that family structures in Europe are becoming much more similar. However, this is only on a structural level. If we compare the essence of the family, then we still see differences. For instance, in the Mediterranean countries, generational relations are still strong. This has to do with the economic background, as the young generation cannot leave their parents' home because of their (low) salaries. However, in general, demographic developments are becoming more similar. Most of the countries have almost no population increase, and the fertility rates and reproductive activities are becoming similar, too. What strikes me, though, are the high abortion rates in most of the former Communist countries. One of the main means of birth control there is abortion… But all other significant data are becoming much more similar.

Southeastern Europe has been subjected to extensive research so far. Are there any relevant topics, which you would like to see further explored?

I think that research here, in the Balkan countries, still overemphasises political history and history of the nation and the state. Economic history and social history are still underinvestigated. Hence, there is much more to be done in these fields.

A final question regarding your own work: is there any interesting research project you are involved in or are currently advancing?

I am thinking about visual history, using the photograph as a primary source. Almost nothing has been done in the field of visual history so far. I am planning a project in this direction, hoping to visualise family and gender relations in the Balkans.

Which particular countries will you address?

We will start with the photo archives in Sarajevo, in Sofia and Belgrade.

When is the project expected to start?

We need funding and the application is still running. Hopefully, we will receive a positive answer… ■

Interviewed by the Editor

A Balkan Historian in a Baltic Country:

Between friends:
Vladislav Sotirovic,
Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Vilnius

Vladislav, you were called a 'transfer on two legs' by one of the conference participants today – 'a transfer' between Serbia and Lithuania. You graduated from Belgrade University, then did your Master degree at the History Faculty of Central European University, and eventually received your doctoral degree at Vilnius University. You are married to a Lithuanian historian and have lived and worked in Lithuania ever since. Has your 'international' life path influenced your perspectives on Southeastern Europe and Southeast European history?

(Laughing) Well, I fell in love with Southeast European studies when I went over to Lithuania. Currently, I am the only scholar teaching Southeast European studies at Vilnius University and it is a kind of pleasure to be the only expert covering the Area. It gives me the sense of being a 'very important person' and makes me feel unique. I am appreciated as a specialist on the history of Southeastern Europe and as an authority on the current political developments in the Region. Hence, I am frequently invited by the Lithuanian National Television and Radio to comment on hot Balkan issues. This gives me special satisfaction.

You have been exposed to a comparative lifestyle in the last ten or twelve years…

Actually, fifteen years… Within this period, I changed three countries and three regions…

What is it like to look back at ex-Yugoslavia, your home country, from the outside then?

It is common psychology for our *Homo Balkanicus* to pay tribute to everything from the outside as being better and superb to the domestic one. Everything coming from the West is 'amen' to us, a dogma, which should be unquestionably accepted. I, too, used to share this mentality while living in Serbia. However, from a psychological point of view, this is a big mistake. Once you leave the country and live abroad for a while, you start understanding that our Balkan type of life is certainly not backward. Actually, it has numerous privileges and we really, really have many things to offer to other nations, too. Being outside, you understand how wrong it is to reject your own culture, your native habits and replace them with foreign ones. Why should we constantly borrow from others, when we have so much to offer ourselves? The best approach is to combine the finest qualities of our native lifestyle with those positive influences from the outside. This will best contribute to our personal achievements and this is what I have been trying to do so far.

Vladislav Sotirovic is Associate Professor of Southeastern Europe at the Department of Political Science, Faculty of Strategic Governing and Politics, Mykolas Romeris University, Lithuania. He is a native Serb married to a Lithuanian historian and father of two charming little girls.

V.Sotirovic graduated in history from the University of Belgrade and the Central European University, Budapest, Hungary. In 2002, he received his doctoral degree from the University of Vilnius, Slavic Philology Department. He has worked on Balkan security issues, ethnicities, multiculturalism and globalisation, nationalism, the creation and disintegration of the Yugoslav state. He has published in English, Serbian, and Lithuanian in various local and international journals and is the author, among other works, of *Sociolinguistic Aspect of Dissolution of Yugoslavia and Serbian National Question* (Vilnius University Press, Vilnius 2006; Нови Сад-Србиње, Добрица књига, 2007) and *Creation of the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, 1914–1918* (Vilnius University Press, Vilnius 2007).

How are Southeastern Europe and Southeast European studies represented in Lithuania?

As for Southeast European studies in general, there is a separate department of Slavic studies at the Faculty of Philology at Vilnius University. It is dedicated to studying several Slavic languages - Slovenian, Bulgarian, Croatian and Serbian. The linguistic part of these South Slavic philologies is covered relatively well. However, as for their history – I am the only lecturer there. I teach the history of the Balkan peoples and nations either in Serbian or in Lithuanian, or in English to local and *Erasmus* students. I also teach courses in Balkan nationalism and Balkan security, the comparative history of Central and Southeast Europe and the history of the Byzantine Empire. Nearly ten years ago, there used to be a special programme at Vilnius University devoted to the history of Southern Slavs. However, the programme was cancelled. The situation at Mykolas Romeris University in Vilnius is similar.

Is there no interest to Southeastern Europe outside the linguistic aspect then?

I would not say that. It might be due to a shortage in experts.

How does comparative history contribute to a better understanding of the recent history of ex-Yugoslavia?

If you want to find the truth about the history of ex-Yugoslavia, you have to deal with numerous primary, domestic sources. You have to be fluent in the native languages and be able to read the originals. However, if you are out there for the truth, you also have to be aware of other, foreign approaches to your native history and be able to apply them to the sources. Usually, these new methodologies are not familiar to our native historiographers because the relevant literature cannot be found in the local libraries. It is either intentionally not translated into Serbo-Croatian, or simply technically, not sold in the local bookstores.

In my opinion, foreign scholars often lack the linguistic subtlety of the Serbo-Croatian language when dealing with archival materials. My reading methodological approach as a historian is to go through the bibliography of a book first and check the cited sources. I am especially interested to see what type of historical sources the author has used. The text itself is relevant, too, but it should be based on and develop from the sources. Occasionally, when I read some much-praised work on Kosovo by western historians, I immediately recognise that they do not read the native language. This means that a big part of the truth rooted in the native documents is missing.

On the other hand, historians in Serbia and the domestic reading audience in general, lack the neutrality of a non-partisan interpretation, the non-political and non-nationalistic impartiality of the foreign approaches. I believe that the best way is to combine our knowledge of the local languages and hence understanding of the authentic documents, with a broad awareness of foreign methodologies. The synthesis between local archival materials and foreign literature will help us achieve neutrality in our interpretations. This is what I have been trying to do so far.

Kosovo has become a red-hot topic of discussion in the last few weeks. How would you comment on the emergence of this new state in the Balkans from your insider's perspective of an ex-Yugoslavian, and from the new perspective from the outside that you have gained now?

Kosovo today is both part of the dissolution and of the destruction of ex-Yugoslavia. You should be careful which term you use. If you talk about 'dissolution', it means that the country has been dissolved by inside forces. If you use 'destruction', it implies that the country has been destructed from the outside. From my perspective, ex-Yugoslavia has been subjected to both processes. The question – at least from my point of view now – is what comes beyond the dissolution and destruction. Will the small, rearranged territories of ex-Yugoslavia

be economically and politically reduced to foreign dependency?

Is our Region still suffering from the syndrome of 'small-statism' then?

We ARE small! We are never to become big and powerful. The mid-nineteenth century saw the idea of a Yugoslav Empire, where all South Slavs, including Bulgarians, were supposed to unite in one state. But we know the outcome and all the arguments about Macedonia: the Second Balkan War, the First World War, the Second World War … Bearing in mind the peculiarities of inter-Balkan relations, I am not optimistic about the advent of a new, prosperous idea to create some kind of *Balkania*, or some kind of *South Slavia*, or even another kind of Yugoslavia – not even in the distant future. Without such a big state, however, there is no way to become powerful. We will remain clients to some great powers. This is our reality and our destiny.

Wouldn't the accession of the ex-Yugoslav countries to the European Union channel their destiny more favourably?

I doubt it. ■

Interviewed by the Editor

Christopher Karadjov teaches Global News Media, Reporting and Information Gathering, Investigative Reporting, Mass Communication Research Methods, and Mass Communication Theory at the Journalism Department of California State University. He started school near Moscow, in the former Soviet Union, moved back to Sofia, and completed his master's in journalism/mass communication at Sofia University, Bulgaria. During the 1990s, he was a reporter for the Bulgarian National Radio and the *24 Chassa* daily, a domestic news editor for *Standart News*, and a deputy-editor-in-chief in charge of reporting for Sega, a renowned Bulgarian weekly political magazine. He also worked as a reporter for *The Dallas Morning News* in Dallas, Texas and the *BBC World Service*.

In 1997, Karadjov quit journalism for a doctorate study in mass communications at the University of Florida, in the United States. His dissertation researches Bulgarian journalists' attitudes toward neighbouring Macedonia, a problem of not just theoretical, but also of practical importance to the regional stability.

In 2005, he joined he joined the Faculty at California State University, Long Beach, after teaching at the State University of New York before that. He got actively involved in the International Communication Association, especially its Journalism Division; he is a member of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication and several other professional organisations, including the American Association for Public Opinion Research, which reflects his interest in surveys and political communication.

Karadjov's's teaching ambition is to create short-term study-abroad courses, so that he could put his American students 'in the shoes' of foreign reporters from the countries of post-communist Eastern Euope.

Educated HERE, Teaching THERE: East European Academics in the USA

Chris, how did you 'end up' teaching at an American university?

I received my PhD in the United States and started in that system outright. I was a journalist in Bulgaria and the United States before that.

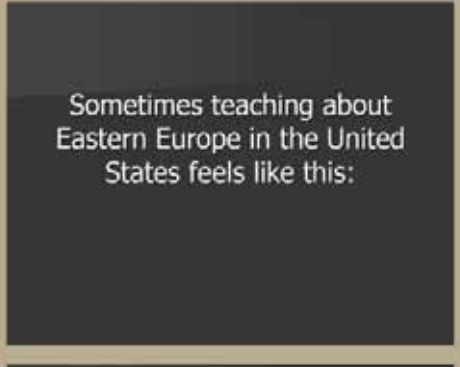
What is it like to be an overseas professor at an American university? Have you ever been perceived as 'different' there?

I have never felt as being perceived as different. To get an academic job in the United States, you must go through a fairly open competition, which does not pay attention to your national origins – only to your qualifications. If you make it there, you have beaten all others based on your credentials, work, presentation, promise and compatibility with the university – period. Students like my accent and the idea that I am from somewhere else, but work and live in the States. I have heard of colleagues (especially of Chinese, Taiwanese or Korean origin) whose accents were too 'thick'. It impeded them in the classroom interaction, but I have never had this problem.

Can you compare the academic curricula at an (East) European and an American university? Are the teaching methods and approaches similar or very different?

I cannot compare curricula as a professor*, since I have not been such in Eastern Europe. However, I can see differences from a student's perspective, since I have been a student on both sides of the Atlantic. In my view, the US system is a lot more flexible, because students can choose their majors and then opt out, while in Europe you are locked into a path from early on. This is true even at the doctoral level. I had a lot of flexibility in my work as a graduate student, while my friends in Germany, Slovakia, Bulgaria, etc., had to follow strictly their advisors' research interests. American professors are also a lot more approachable than European ones. US professors have to keep students' interest at all times, which means that the best ones are also great presenters and entertainers. European professors are a

* professor (Am.E.) – lecturer.



lot more traditional in the classroom, with student interest being assumed, not actively sought. Academic integrity is taken very seriously in the United States as well – for instance, you can fail a student for not using a proper citation system throughout a paper. I have never heard of such a strict approach in Europe (of course, you will fail a student for cheating on an exam on both sides of the Ocean).

How would you comparatively comment on East European academic textbooks?

Again, I have no serious experience with European textbooks from a professor's viewpoint, but in America, textbooks are abundant and changing all the time. Professors have great liberty in choosing texts, and that is why publishers' representatives can be seen often in professors' offices (just like drug manufacturers' reps hang around doctors' offices all the time). US textbooks have very colourful layouts as a rule, and nowadays all of them have some sort of web component with additional information and exercises. A big plus nowadays is the availability of so many resources through online search. I remember having to carry volumes of academic journals around as late as 1999… now I get all I need as PDF files.

If you considered returning to an East European university, which peculiarities of the American university system would you implement in your native context?

I will definitely try to be entertaining, not in the sense of diluting the material, but by making it interesting to students. This is a huge challenge – I am teaching research methods in mass communication, for instance, or mass communication theories, and I have to figure out how to spruce the material up and make relevant some rather obscure concepts. It is an acquired skill and one that should be practiced a lot. I will also try to be very approachable, so students can talk to me at all times and reach me via e-mail, text messaging, or whatever means are appropriate. I think that bringing down the wall of separation between students and professors while maintaining academic standards of the highest order is the most important challenge to East European universities. Not the least, if I were to teach in Eastern Europe, I would like to maintain the pay, benefits, library access and research funding I receive in the United States. ■

Interviewed by the Editor

Workshop of the Atelier
for Biographical Research and the History Club:

Childhood under Socialism

7 March 2008 and 6 June 2008

Childhood has long ceased to be considered an uncomplicated, early period in a human's life cycle, alternatively bestowed with Arcadian happiness and simplicity, or Dickens-onian innocence and suffering. Ever since Philippe Aries identified childhood as a category endowed with a sense of history and with a history in its own right, historians and social scientists have been analysing this particular life-stage as a socio-cultural construct, with a distinctive image and role in place and time. It became the objective of the Atelier for Biographical Research and the History Club to raise the issue of the nature of the tender-life experiences of a vast segment of the modern-day Bulgarian population, by presenting, investigating or simply discussing sets of oral, written or visualised sources on childhood and childhood memories, collected by historians over the last years.

During the debates it emerged, that there was more in the ultimate goal of the Childhood seminar: soon the scholarly attempts burst the strictly academic shell of discussions and headed towards self-reflection and the analysis of a controversial, bygone society. If socialism in its recent totalitarian clothing was devoid of democracy, diversity and public tolerance, then why does a sense of happiness nevertheless pervade our childhood memories of those times? No clear, satisfactory answer could be suggested to the question, though.

Yet, the undeniable success of the seminar in March 2008 'begged' for its further continuation in early July – despite the severe thunderstorm outside and the subsequent power-cut throughout half of the city that framed the environment of scholarly dispute.

Twelve Bulgarian scholars of varied academic backgrounds, assiduously convened by Dr Daniela Koleva, lecturer in Cultural Studies and associate professor at Sofia University, presented their viewpoints in the Childhood seminar. Roughly, their papers followed two broad topics of interest: political projects and representations surrounding childhood under socialism, and moves from (impersonal) politics to (personalised) biographies.

Theoretical issues on the history of childhood in Bulgaria – some illustrated by case-studies – were captured by Kristina Popova, Ivan Elenkov, Anelia Kassabova, Svetla Baloutzova, Irina Radeva and Bilyana Raeva. In particular, the first category of papers challenged some ideologically inbred concepts such as equality, general justice and uniqueness attached to Soviet-modelled socialism in Bulgaria, and provided a brief, yet thought-provoking survey of official state attitudes towards children and childhood in the recent socialist past. They focused on the evolution of approaches towards childhood in modern, twentieth-century social and political thought and on the history of children's organisations under socialism (Popova), including peculiarities of the young-Communist 'brigadier' movement at the dawn of the 'new era' 'under construction' (Raeva). They unearthed a Janus-two-facedness of Bulgarian socialism towards 'deserving' young communist activists and 'undeserving' 'common' Bulgarian children during the celebrations of the acclaimed International Assembly of Peace (Elenkov), and posed the uneasy question about a semi-concealed intolerance towards the category of 'state-children' – children born out of marriage in the otherwise child-friendly Bulgarian socialist culture (Kassabova; Radeva). They also defied the myth of the socialist foundations of Bulgarian pronatalist policy by tracing their roots and legacy down to an earlier, pre-communist decade (Baloutzova).

The number of case-studies resting on the shift from politics towards personal, biographical experiences provoked more than a laugh and more than just one thought amongst the audience. They brought to the surface memories of the participants' childhood days, incorporated in semi-forgotten rhymes and tunes – once part of the obligatory repertoire of every young pioneer. However, at second thought, the papers of Albena Hranova, Nadezhda Gulubova, Diana Karabinova, Diana Ivanova, Miladina Monova, and Svetla Kazalarska also revealed the rigid presence or alternatively, absence of ideologically hierarchical structures in an ex-socialist child's life. The paternalistic notion of an explicitly formulated requirement for subjection and obedience to communist authorities was exceptionally strong in the 1940s and 1950s, assuming the significance of a kinship ('blood') relationship between the child and the Communist party (Hranova). However, it gradually subsided with time to leave a feeling of fair treatment and nostalgia for the socialist type of school (Gulubova), the socialist type of institutionalised youths' socialisation (Karabinova) and for some aspects of the socialist way of existence (Ivanova; Kazalarska) amongst those Bulgarians hitting their late thirties, early forties and plus. Museum expositions (in Germany rather than in Bulgaria, though), presenting everyday culture under socialism in a rather too simplistic, infantilised way, proved to generate a split between the exhibition organisers and the general public – the latter enthusiastically recalling and recording their childhood memories in the visitors' book (Kazalarska).

Nostalgia for the socialist days of their childhood emerged even out of the memories of those Greek refugee-children having escaped the Greek civil war, thus causing them to reunite regularly to sustain their bonding throughout life (Monova).

Childhood under Socialism provoked lively response amongst the attendants, with excited debates continuing in an informal setting. Our readers might be looking forward to the written versions of the seminar papers, to be edited by Daniela Koleva and Ivan Elenkov, and planned for publication under the CAS-Riva 'Research Forums' Series in 2009. ■

A collection of visual mementos from Bulgarian socialism.

Our New Discussion Series

Consolidation and Disintegration of the Public Institutions and the Political Process

In January 2008, a new, interdisciplinary Discussion Series was given the start at the Centre for Advanced Study Sofia. Its realisation has been conceived as part of the CAS *Shaken Order* project on *Authority and Social Trust in post-Communist Society*, commenced in 2007; yet the Discussion Series intends to focus in-depth on some of Bulgaria's major socio-political, juridical and economic realities and contemporary transformations.

The framework of discussion, convened by Dr Ivo Hristov, sociologist, and Atanas Slavov, doctoral student in law, has been broadly defined as *Consolidation/Disintegration of the Public Institutions and the Political Process* in twenty-first-century Bulgarian society, thus prompting reflection on and research of the nature of institutional changes and social developments after Bulgaria's accession to the European Union.

Specific interest so far has been placed on populism, the party-system and frustrated democracy in Bulgaria (Daniel Smilov), law and transition, and the everyday legitimation of state power in Bulgaria (Ivo Hristov), and studies of the strong nature of the Presidential institution in the Bulgarian Constitutional model (Natalia Kiselova, Atanas Slavov).

The *Consolidation/Disintegration* Series continues in the 2008-9 academic year, enrolling the newly selected fellows of the *Shaken Order* project in its seminars and discussions. ■

CAS Guest Lecture Series

Professor Michael Herzfeld on Social Science and Ethnographic Practice

On 10 June 2008, CAS Sofia became the site of an exciting encounter with Prof. Michael Herzfeld, an internationally renowned anthropologist and member of CAS Academic Council. It started with Prof. Herzfeld's stimulating talk on Social Science and Ethnographic Practice: Methods, Myths, and Mastery.

A major motif permeating Prof. Herzfeld's talk at CAS was the self-/reflective nature of the ethnographic method. For him, the anthropologist's job is more than a process of simply discovering facts about others. Unlike the methods applied by other social sciences, the ethnographic method, in his opinion, is based on 'serendipity', i.e. the anthropologist's ability to seize an opportunity as a research tool whenever it occurs. Furthermore, while macro-sciences such as sociology and economics rely on statistical data gathered by anonymous researchers, the interaction between the anthropologist and the community under research is vital for a successful fieldwork and bears complex significance for the project's outcome.

The study of ethnography is not the study of cultures and of a society *per se*, but is the study of culture as a process-in-making. Human reactions are not universally normative, but are culturally framed; they are not constants, but are in constant negotiation. Excessive courtesy paid by the locals to the anthropologist should provoke academic

Prof. Herzfeld's name and work are well-known to the Bulgarian public. Holding degrees in archaeology and anthropology from the Universities of Oxford and Birmingham, he has specialised in the ethnography of the Balkans and the cultures of Southern Europe (especially Greece and Italy), and Thailand. Amongst his popular monographs are *Ours Once More: Folklore, Ideology, and the Making of Modern Greece* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982); *The Poetics of Manhood: Contest and Identity in a Cretan Mountain Village* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985); *A Place in History: Monumental and Social Time in a Cretan Town* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991); and *The Body Impolitic: Artisans and Artifice in the Global Hierarchy of Values* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

His *Cultural Intimacy: Social Poetics in the Nation-State* (New York: Routledge, 1997) has undergone two editions in English and has been recently translated into Bulgarian by anthropologist, Dr Ilya Iliev, former CAS fellow.

wariness, as politeness might be instrumental to hold off intruders and isolate them from the community's deals and everyday life. Similarly, expressions of aggression are differently interpreted in different societies, and could serve as a prelude to friendship in some.

Anthropologists themselves could unconsciously act as a representative sign of their own culture. In a non-American community, an American anthropologist might be related to the role which the US international affairs play in the respective part of the world, thus involuntarily provoking a specific set of favourable or less favourable feelings in the native population. A modest self-identification as 'a student' on the part of a young anthropologist could equally invoke the image of riot and danger within the local community, especially in the limelight of recent violent youth movements and protests. Hence, anthropologists have to learn to 'destabilise received categories', i.e. to break down pre-established assumptions about codes of behaviour, and scrutinise people's responses in the concrete setting.

Placing oneself reflectively in the fieldwork picture as one who 'saw, did and was there' and to whom the local community was (inadequately, though) reacting had its academic advantages, too. Analysing the nature of reciprocity in fieldwork and especially its pitfalls, the anthropologist could extract valuable knowledge about his/her own culture, too. Hence, in Prof. Herzfeld's opinion, the presence of a higher degree of scholarly self-centredness in anthropology was a necessary requirement to justify the academic honesty of the fieldwork results.

Within the academic community, Prof. Herzfeld is known for his strong feelings for engaged anthropology – as contrasted to applied anthropology whose academic results, in his reasoning, usually serve governments and the World Bank. On the contrary, engaged anthropology, as seen by him, is about 'getting deeper', 'getting friends' with the people under study, and hence, write-up one findings in the emotional first person, too. In his conviction, rather than simply submerging in theories of agency and practice, the anthropologist's job implies accepting responsibility for what one is saying.

It might have been this scholarly attitude of his, Prof. Herzfeld admitted, that had made him break his self-promises formulated at the start of his career, namely, never become an activist and never make ethnographic films. His research in Thailand and especially in Italy, confronted him with the sorrows of the 'little' people, wronged by the financially mighty of the day. The resultant documentary, *Monti Moments: Men's Memories in the Heart of Rome* (2007), produced by Herzfeld and screened during his seminar at CAS, provides a unique, heart-grasping insight on the changes in an increasingly socially differentiating European community.

We are eagerly looking forward towards similarly stimulating meetings and interactions with Prof. Herzfeld in the future. ■

Professor David Kushner on Nationalism and Modern Turkish History

(an Interview)

In May 2008, CAS had the pleasure to welcome Prof. David Kushner, University of Haifa, in the framework of its Guest-Lecture Series.

Professor David Kushner (Emeritus) has lectured at the Department of Middle Eastern History of Haifa University, Israel, since 1968. He holds a doctoral degree in Islamic Studies from the University of California, Los Angeles, and his major academic interests are in the field of late Ottoman History, Ottoman Palestine and the political and intellectual history of Modern Turkey.

Besides subsequently chairing the Department of Middle Eastern History and the Jewish-Arab Centre at the University of Haifa in the period of 1972-1984, Prof. Kushner was also Dean of the Faculty of Humanities (1991-94), Haifa University, and Director of the Israel Academic Centre, Cairo (2001-3). Since 2005, he is Director of the *Gottlieb Schumacher Institute for the Study of the Ties between Europe and Palestine in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries* at the University of Haifa. His works on *The Rise of Turkish Nationalism, 1876-1908* (London: 1977) and *To Be Governor of Jerusalem: The City and District During the Time of Ali Ekrem Bey 1906-1908* (Istanbul 2005) have been widely appreciated and cited in the international academic world. Prof. Kushner is also editor of the volume *Palestine in the Late Ottoman Period: Political Social and Economic Transformation* (Jerusalem and Leiden: 1986).

Prof. David Kushner's lecture, entitled *Turkish Nationalism – A Historical and Contemporary Overview*, dwelled on two aspects of Turkish nationalism – the 'territorial' and the 'cultural' one. Prof. Kushner argued that the first grew out of the Ottomanist doctrine adopted in the nineteenth century by Ottoman statesmen, while the other had its roots in ideas developed by the early 'Turkists' toward the end of the Ottoman period. In the Turkish Republic, both aspects played their role in formulating the modern concept of Turkish identity and they continue coexisting down to our own day. In recent years, they have been reinforced by the latest events such as the upsurge of minority problems in Turkey and the new relations established with Turkish communities outside the state's borders, especially in the Muslim republics of the former Soviet Union.

Professor Kushner, what motivated your first visit to Bulgaria – some interest in the Ottoman legacy in the Balkans, perhaps?

I am a historian of the Ottoman Empire and Turkey, and I always felt that I lacked something because I did not get to know one important part of the Ottoman Empire – and that is Bulgaria. I also have heard about Bulgarian people a lot as we have good friends in Israel who come from Bulgaria.

What kindled your academic interest in the Ottoman Empire and in Turkey, in particular?

I have been working on this subject for a long time… It was a combination of reasons that made me take up Turkish studies. One factor was a visit that I undertook as a student to Turkey: I was impressed by what I saw – the country, the hospitality of the people. Second, I was already a student of Middle East history at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem at that time. I also had a very charismatic teacher – Professor Jurial Heed – he was an expert of Ottoman and Turkish history and he attracted me to this subject. Sometimes you can be influenced by a teacher.

Looking back now, perhaps still another factor was that at that time, it was generally difficult for us to get access to some of our neighbour Arab countries. The only place we could go to as Israelis was Turkey. Turkey was also important in the sense that the Ottomans had ruled my country for four hundred years, so I could work in Turkey more easily in the archives and libraries than I could do in other places….

Have you revisited Turkey frequently over all these years?

Yes, I have. Actually, I still go to work there in the libraries and archives, or to participate in conferences. Sometimes I lead my students at Haifa on tours to Turkey. I also go to visit friends there. After all, Turkey is part of the Ottoman history, which is my field. I have been connected with what goes on in Turkey.

On the level of everyday life, have you noticed significant changes in Turkey over the decades?

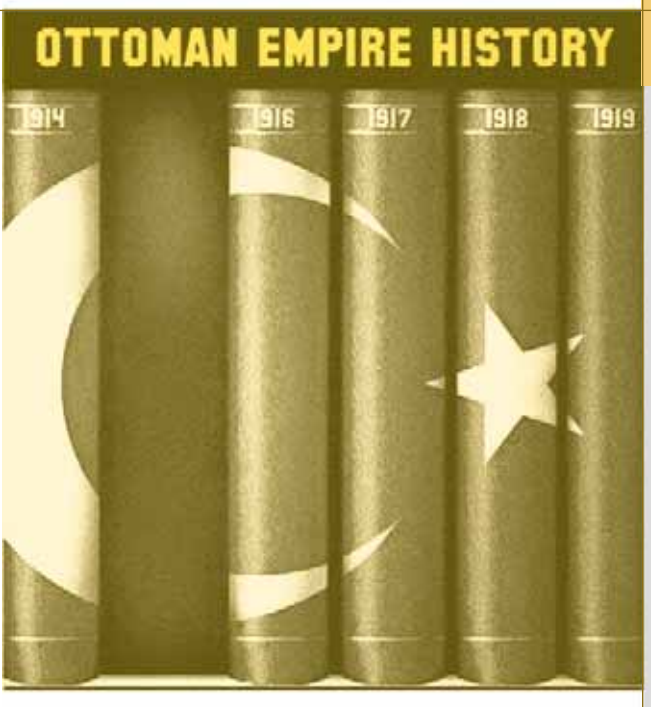
Yes, there has been a change in Turkey if you compare her to fifty years ago. I think that Turkey has moved in a much quicker pace towards westernization and modernization in the last few years. She tried to liberalize her economic system, to give more room for private initiative, and for investment from the outside. She has created a very dynamic kind of spirit, which was not there before and which is very typical of the last decade or two. You see the changes, you see development, you see Turkey increasing her trade with other countries, and developing her industry. Of course, Turkey wants to be accepted into the European Union – there is a political motive behind all this.

Where do you see Turkey's future – inside or outside the EU?

I take your question as what I think will happen. I think that Turkey still has some difficulty to overcome in order to be a member of the European Union. It is not an easy way and I cannot predict for sure what the outcome will be. I wish I could be more certain about it but I am not. It depends on Turkey, on the one hand, and on Europe, on the other.

You are an expert on nationalism. Since World War Two, nationalism seems to have lost its once positive appeal. Do you think that there are any positive qualities to this political development?

I know that in some places today, nationalism has become a bad word. We live in an era, where nationalism is seen as something in the past. Now we are into multinationalist frameworks, unions, globalisation, liberalism, etc., and nationalism is not regarded as something positive. However, I think that history does show even in places like Europe or America, that nationalism is still relevant to an extent. I think that nationalism is a natural will of self-expression, and nations – as long as they are different culturally and linguistically – want to keep their identity. I do not think that France, Germany, Bulgaria or any country would want to lose her identity as a nation. Nationalism is an inborn kind of instinct, so I do not see it as wrong *per se*. I think there is no danger in nationalism as long as it is a positive force. Nations do not need to fight with each other; they can live in harmony with each other, they can cooperate and collaborate. What is wrong with that? If you keep your identity and at the same time cooperate with your neighbours, collaborate in creating a – maybe better, united world – what is



wrong with that? Nationalism in itself is not a negative phenomenon, in my opinion. If it becomes chauvinistic, nationalistic, if it becomes extreme … then I don't particularly like nationalism.

Some scholars would talk about Arab nationalism. How different is it from Turkish or European nationalism?

There is nothing particular in Arab nationalism. Nationalism happens everywhere – among Arabs, among Jews, among Bulgarians…

What are your future scholarly plans?

I am working on a topic connected with my traditional subject – Ottoman history and Turkish history. It is on the Ottoman period in a city not far from my own city Haifa – Inkan. I want to see what life was like there in the late Ottoman period in the nineteenth century. There are many documents on it.

I also have some smaller projects. However, I don't have grandiose plans any more.

You are leaving for Veliko Turnovo tomorrow…

Yes, and then to Plovdiv and back to Sofia... It is a very short visit, unfortunately. ■

Interviewed by the Editor

Swiss Doctoral Students Lecturing at Sofia University

Thomas Metzger and **David Luginbühl** are doctoral students at the University of Fribourg, Switzerland. Within the last two years, they have been participating in the Faculty Exchange Scheme of the CAS-Fribourg SCOPES programme dealing with the institutionalisation of scientific networks and scholarly activities for the promotion of cross-cultural and interdisciplinary approaches to nationalism in the Europe of 'small states'. In May 2008, they lectured in their fields of study in front of a student audience at the Department of Sociology and the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communications at Sofia University St 'Kliment Ohridski'.

Thomas Metzger's lecture addressed Structures of Antisemitism and the Example of Switzerland. These he viewed against the background of religiously motivated Christian antijudaism dating back to the process of differentiation of Christianity from Judaism in the first centuries A.D. In modern time, Th. Metzger argued, new forms of antisemitism evolved that no longer used religious but socio-economical, socio-cultural, nationalist or racist argumentations. To exemplify his theoretical considerations, he focused on the antisemitic tendencies in Switzerland in the period of 1918-1945 which could be detected in the Swiss policy towards Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe or in the so called 'spiritual defence' conception in the 1930s, propagated against political, ideological, cultural influences labeled as 'foreign'.

We could not withhold from interviewing our young Swiss colleagues about their Bulgarian lecturing experience....

With me are Thomas Metzger and David Luginbühl from Fribourg University…

David Luginbühl: …and even from the same office…

… And you are also participants in the SCOPES Project …

Thomas Metzger: Not from the very start, but we both participated in a SCOPES conference that took place in Switzerland in September 2007. Now we got the opportunity to come to Bulgaria for a lecture on a teaching-exchange scheme within the SCOPES Project. Several young scholars had the chance to get involved in it in the last three years.

Did you have any expectations about your stay in Bulgaria prior to your visit?

T. M.: We already knew some things because we had had contacts with scholars from Bulgaria. For example, we have known Tchavdar Marinov for two years and also Gergana Mircheva. They told us about Sofia and Bulgaria. But, basically, we came here very open and really enjoyed the stay. It was a great time.

D. L.: The people here were very helpful and friendly. Everything was well organised and we had no problems.

How did your lectures go? Both were at Sofia University.

T.M.: I had mine in a seminar of Professor Lilyana Deyanova and Tchavdar Marinov at the Sociology Department. The lecture went well and the students were very much involved in the discussion. There were even more discussions afterwards in the café, which was great. A very good atmosphere…

D.L.: I had my presentation in Professor Orlin Spassov's class. I talked about media and politics in Switzerland in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The students were really interested, and a lot of questions afterwards focused on Switzerland, on the Swiss state, and Swiss federalism. I found out that many Bulgarians knew much about Switzerland, about Swiss right-wing parties, and were informed about some Swiss bank problems or the sometimes difficult relationship with the EU. Switzerland is no longer the country of chocolate, but knowledge about it is much more sophisticated.

Was this your first teaching experience? Is lecturing or tutorial experience included in the Swiss doctoral programme?

T.M.: We don't teach classes. So, it was our first teaching experience. Our PhD contracts involve 50 per cent work for our professor and 50 per cent own research time. We are both assistants to Professor Urs Altermatt, who is member of the Academic Advisory Council of the CAS and is involved in the management of the SCOPES Project.*

D.L.: Until now, we were limited to presenting at conferences or to other PhD or MA students. Our lecturers at Sofia University are our first teaching experiences.

How does it feel like at 'the other side'?

T.M.: You have to get accustomed to it, but still it is a good feeling, espe-

* Prof. Urs Altermatt's work *Das Fanal von Sarajevo. Ethnonationalismus in Europa* (Zürich 1996) was translated into Bulgarian in 1998 as *Etnonatsionalism v Evropa* (Sofia 1998). On 21 November 2003, Prof. Altermatt, who is a member of CAS Academic Council, was awarded the *Doctor Honoris Causa* at Sofia University 'St Kliment Ohrdiski'.

David Luginbühl's lecture on Media and Politics related to a historically closer period, providing an overview of the development and characteristics of party press in Switzerland since the 1970s. In particular, he addressed questions such as how did the parties react to the loss of their media 'platforms' after the last third of the twentieth century? How did political communication change?

By the 1970s, D. Luginbühl explained, most of the leading dailies in Switzerland described themselves as organs of a certain party. Political analysts of the time saw this dense network of party-associated newspapers as indispensable for direct democracy in the Swiss federal state. As more and more newspapers disappeared or were forced to cooperate in the course of the economic crisis of the 1970s, politicians interpreted this concentration process as a major threat to democracy. Since the 1990s, however, the concentration process reached new proportions, leading to regional monopolies.

cially when the start has been done. It is a great feeling that you do not do research just for yourself but that you can also share your results in class and explain things to students.

D.L.: Doing research, you can get lost in various theoretical items. Breaking your thoughts down for a lecture and presenting things in a clear and understandable way to scholars that are not familiar with the specific topic can sometimes help to get a better idea of what you are actually doing. So, there is a benefit for both sides.

Will your academic career gain from your participation in the SCOPES Project?

T.M.: Absolutely. This was a real chance for us not just to present, but also to get practice and meet people from abroad who do similar research. If you work without international contacts, you might get lost into books. Meeting scholars from Bulgaria and Romania is very important because they might have different approaches.

D.L.: And we hope that the discussions have been important not just for our own work but also for the research of others in the network.

You both are historians. How relevant are your topics of research for our multicultural world today?

T.M.: My focus of research is on antisemitism. My PhD project deals with antisemitism in Swiss Protestantism. Antisemitism still is very vivid in societies throughout the world; sometimes very visible but often also in latent and rather veiled forms. The racist, nationalistic, socio-political, religious etc. anti-Semitic discourses are very persistent.

D.L.: I am working in the field of media history. A lot of contemporary research on media and politics does not use the historical perspective, even if a countertrend is emerging ... Looking at the relationship over a longer period might make things a bit clearer. In the example of Switzerland, which is comparable to a lot of cases especially in north-western Europe, the media in the past was organised according to party political logic. This has certainly changed since the 1970s and especially since the 1990s when we had a trend towards big enterprises getting active in the field of newspapers and media in general. Now it is politics, which nearly follows the media logic. From a historical perspective, this could present an interesting point of discussion. What is the connection between the media system and the political system? Does a change in the media system change the way democracy works? What effect has the concentration process in the field of media, for example on federalism?

Your research touches upon nationalism. Do you think today we can talk about the end of nationalism in Europe and in the European Union?

T.M.: Not at all. Ethnically and culturally defined nationalism is very present in Europe today. It is very vivid.

D.L.: There were recent wars for new states in Southeastern Europe, wedged along the national ethnic line... However, we can find the same mechanisms in Western Europe too. Nationalism is not reduced to a regional problem in Europe, but you can see it everywhere, especially in right-wing populist ideas about essentialised definitions of what is Swiss, what is German ...

How do you see Europe in ten years time?

T.M.: I would like to see Switzerland as part of the European Union though I am rather pessimistic about this to happen in the next years since, at the moment, the majority of the Swiss people do not want to join the Union.

As for the European Union, some states from Eastern or Central Europe are developing very fast, I think, and this might change the old economic hierarchies within the EU. Bulgaria is at the beginning of its membership and hopefully, the country will profit from its link to Brussels and Europe.

D.L.: If we go back to media, I think there is a lack of europeanisation of the public spheres. The media still has a narrow national focus on the processes in the EU. This might change in the next decade. The now national parties might become better integrated on a European level, and there could be some europeanisation of the national public spheres, too.

Do you have any particular plans for the near future?

T.M.: I am thinking about an academic career. I hope that by the end of my PhD project I will have had good experiences, will have met interesting people – as I did now in SCOPES – and will have established good networks that will bring me further as a scholar.

D.L.: Ten years is a huge period … I am very open to whatever happens, but still, I, too, would like to stay in academia. I would like to leave Switzerland after finishing my thesis to get the relevant experiences for an academic career. One should have experience in other cultures of teaching and collaboration because the more you see, the better you can compare. Then you can take the best out of everything for your own way.

T.M.: There are also new projects now developing in countries like Romania, with the New Europe College or the Central European University in Budapest. There is an internationalisation of scholars going on … It is getting very global.

D.L.: This was our general experience here. All the time, we met somebody who had been either in Fribourg or in another town in Switzerland. People are getting very mobile. The world has become very small, indeed… ■

Interviewed by the Editor

Reflection: Self-Referentiality in Epistemology and the Social World

(Centre for Advanced Study Sofia/Riva: Sofia, 2008)

'Reflection' and 'self-referentiality' in epistemology are well-established concepts in western social sciences; yet, they are still largely unfamiliar to the Bulgarian audience. It was precisely their state of relative novelty that inspired Blagovest Zlatanov, lecturer in Theory of Literature at Sofia University and former CAS fellow, to bring together a team of Bulgarian and international scholars in early 2004 to promote knowledge on the two concepts and their instrumental research potential in the local academic setting. CAS became a natural host of the discussion series, which, stretched from autumn 2004 to summer 2006. Papers presented at the seminar formed the bulk of the collection, the second in the 'Research Forums' publication series of CAS-Riva, which 'hit' the Bulgarian academic writings market in spring 2008.

The collection comprises thirteen essays in psychology and psychoanalysis, in sociology and philosophy, in theory of literature and translation theory. The papers fall into two major groups dealing with the academic substance of reflection and self-referentiality, on the one hand, and with their application as research tools, on the other.

The studies of Margarita Dilova and Orlin Todorov, Boris Grozdanoff, David Durst, Deyan Deyanov, Lilyana Deyanova, Svetlana Sabeva, Todor Petkov and Ina Dimitrova link the concepts of reflection and self-referentiality to the 'social world'. They elaborate on the criteria of authentic self-knowledge and the ego-image viewed as an impediment to self-knowledge (Dilova), enquire into the ways we reflect on our personal psychological processes and make sense of the psychological reality of others (Todorov), pose questions about possible conflicts between two or more moral rights (Grozdanoff), and approach diverging responses to reflexive modernisation in political theory, deliberative democracy and neo-conservatism (Durst). Bourdieu and aspects of his work form an essential research focus in the first part of the collection. The interest centres on the problem of *ontological complicity* between the *habitus* and the object of examination (Deyanov), on the *sociology of sociology* and the social conditions of critical reflexivity (Deyanova), on the reflexive sociology of the late Bourdieu as a hermeneutically founded programme (Sabeva), and the relation between practical logic of the world and the 'effect of theorisation' in sociology (Petkov). Resting on Bourdieu but also touching upon Ian Hacking, David Bloor and Barry Barnes, Dimitrova conceptualises the notion of reflexivity in a post-foundationalist perspective and considers its role as an instrument for rethinking the ontology of social reality.

The second part of the collection deals with the nature and capacities of reflexivity and raises questions about some still unresolved methodological challenges. What does an empirical analysis of human knowledge imply? Which devices should be resorted to for the further objectification of knowledge? How do the explanatory potentials of the reflexive and supra-reflexive positions differ? (Dominica Yaneva). What is the role played by images in the growth of scientific knowledge? Can modes of visual representation legitimately intervene in the process of formulating and conveying theories, and if so, how does it take place? (Luca Zucchi) Bearing in mind the absence of a uniform translation theory to approach the problems of 'equivalence' and 'translatability'/'untranslatability', how does reflexability bridge the gap between native and alien experience in order to allow language to grow and unfold and perfect its capacity to express the inexpressible? (Elena Alexieva)

Last but not least, Blagovest Zlatanov's essay addresses reflexivity as an instrument to throw additional light on German Romanticism. It elaborates on Fichte's 'science of knowledge', by tracing the outlines of his transcendental reflection, explicating the basic principles of knowledge derived from it and illustrating how Fichte's absolute principles justify Novalis's poetic vision.

Reflection: Self-Referentiality in Epistemology and the Social World is a timely theoretical and methodological endeavour to introduce to the Bulgarian public two rare concepts in Bulgarian social sciences and reveal their potential. We hope that the approaches and ideas in the collection will make a useful and interesting reading, which could successfully serve its readers' own academic work. ■

CAS CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Centre for Advanced Study Sofia

January 2008 – July 2008

January 2008

19 January 2008
CAS Discussion Series
'Natural Sciences and Social Worlds'

23 January 2008
Start of a new CAS Discussion Series on 'Consolidation/ Desintegration of Public Institutions and the Political Process: Institutional Changes in Bulgaria after the Accession to the EU'

February 2008

18 February 2008
CAS Discussion Series
'Consolidation/Disintegration of Public Institutions and the Political Process'
Daniel Smilov: 'Populism in Bulgaria'

22 - 23 February 2008
The 'Homo Byzantinus' Workshop, supported by Mellon-FMSH Paris.

March 2008

7 March 2008
CAS Joint Workshop of the Atelier for Biogarphical Research and the History Club: 'Childhood under Socialism' (I)

19 March 2008
CAS Discussion Series
'Consolidation/Disintegration of Public Institutions and the Political Process'
Ivo Hristov: 'Law and Transition'

21 - 22 March 2008
Second Working Session of the 'Shaken Order: Authority and Social Trust in Post-Communist Societies' Project 2007/2008

April 2008

17 - 19 April 2008
Second Annual Conference 'New Approaches to Comparative History in Central and Southeast Europe' – a Comparative History Project, co-organised with the History Department of the Central European University, Budapest, Hungary

22 April 2008
CAS Discussion Series
'Consolidation/ Disintegration of Public Institutions and the Political Process'
Natalia Kiselova and Atanas Slavov: 'The President in the Bulgarian Constitutional Model'

May 2008

8 May 2008
History Club Meeting
Lilyana Deyanova: 'Ideological State Apparatuses of Communism – an Approach to Historical Sociology'

12 May 2008
Thomas Metzger (University of Fribourg), lecture under the CAS guest-lecture series 'Structures of Antisemitism and the Example of Switzerland'

14 May 2008
David Kushner (University of Haifa, Middle Eastern History Dept.), seminar under the CAS guest-lecture series 'Turkish Nationalism – A Historical and Contemporary Overview'

David Luginbühl (University of Fribourg), lecture under the CAS guest-lecture series 'Media and Politics'

June 2008

6 June 2008
CAS Joint Workshop of the Atelier for Biographical Research and the History Club: 'Childhood under Socialism' (II)

10 June 2008
Michael Herzfeld (Harvard University), seminar under the CAS guest-lecture series 'Social Science and Ethnographic Practice: Methods, Myths, and Mastery'
CAS Academic Advisory Council Meeting

25 June 2008
CAS Discussion Series
'Consolidation/ Disintegration of Public Institutions and the Political Process'
Todor Hristov: 'The Everyday Legitimation of Bulgarian State Power'

July 2008

10 July 2008
CAS Discussion Series
'Consolidation/Disintegration of Public Institutions and the Political Process'
Daniel Smilov: 'The Parties and Frustrated Democracy'