

# The War in Ukraine. Views from the (Eastern) Border of Europe

EHESS Symposium – 17-20 October 2022

Amphithéâtre de l'Institut Protestant de Théologie, 83 Bd Arago, 75014 Paris

On 24 February 2022, Europe's prolonged era of "peace" was put to an end. Yet by no means should one overlook other conflicts that have broken out on the old continent since the end of World War 2; to name but a few: the Greek civil war, the occupation of Budapest and Prague, as well as the wars involving the republics of the former Yugoslavia. However, for seventy-seven years there had been no large-scale conventional war where one sovereign state invaded another country.

Nevertheless, the impact of the war has not been felt identically across the continent. Because of their geographic and historical connections with Ukraine and Russia, Central and Eastern European countries --where confrontations interlocked with the past have always loomed large -- have immediately found themselves on the frontline. They have rapidly emerged as the refuge for millions of people. The sieges of Kharkiv, Kerson and Mariupol, as well as the Butcha massacre, echo with their histories made of sufferings, more or less remote in time, in the wake of invasions, forced population displacements, urbicides and mass massacres. This is the very place where the boundaries of Europe are at issue.

**Keynote lecture:** Olesya Khromeychuk

## **Round-Table: Migrations**

The arrival *en masse* of Ukrainian refugees has, in a matter of days, overturned the "anti-migrant" policies that had been the linchpin of the "Visegrad Group" since the "migrant crisis" of 2014. It has also shed light on the existence of facilities and associations engaged in welcoming migrants in Eastern Europe, whose operations date back to the Fall of the Berlin Wall. These practices interrogate the policies of solidarity implemented by a wide array of actors, as well as the states' unwavering refusal to institutionalize welcoming policies. How do the refugees apprehend their experience of exile? How do Eastern European civil societies deal with the arrival of the refugees? How comprehend these issues in light of the experiences of displacement and war-related migrations in the region across the 20th century?

### **Round-Table: Minorities**

The war raises questions connected to the existence and the future of ethnic and cultural minorities in Central European countries. Some of them are cross-border national minorities who have arisen from the territorial divisions drawn in the wake of World Wars 1 and 2, such as the Magyar-speaking and Romanian-speaking minorities in Ukraine. These minorities are 'shored up' either by forms of cross-border solidarity, or along irredentist claims. Other transnational minorities (such as the Jews and the 'Roma'), who have played a structuring role in these societies, raise the question of the very status of 'minority' they have long been unable to acquire. Finally, the influx *en masse* of Ukrainian refugees into Poland has entailed the reconstitution of a Ukrainian minority, which calls into question the homogenization policies of the country undertaken after 1944. What are the more or less explicit issues raised by the emergence of this minority engendered by the war and its violence? How do they echo, or not, the national conflicts of the past, and the violence entailed, in these territories?

### **Round-Table: The landmark events of the 20th century in light of Ukraine's invasion**

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has immediately elicited many historical analogies around the world, which vary according to the various social (whether academic, media, political, or mainstream) and national contexts. The uses of the past are particularly intriguing in countries that have themselves been victims of Soviet invasions. While the official Russian narrative references World War 2 and liberation from Nazism, Central and Eastern European countries evoke examples of previous Russian aggression: the Winter War between the Soviet Union and Finland, the annexation of Polish territories in 1939, the invasions of Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968, as well as the heightened tensions in the years following the collapse of the Iron Curtain in 1989-1990. However, today's circumstances are not that straightforward, if we place the current Ukrainian tragedy into the matrix of the (four) social contexts and of its surrounding countries. How are we to analyse the interpretations of the war in Ukraine? Are historical references and analogies indicators that expose political stances, motivations and demands?

### **Round-Table: Controversial urban memorial and monumental spaces**

In 2014, in the wake of the Maidan revolution, the Ukrainian government implemented a policy of removing monuments dating from the Soviet Union from the public space. Communist mottos were banned under 'de-communization' laws passed in parliament. Eight years later, following their strategy to systematically re-Sovietize annexed territories, the Russian occupation troops have re-installed Lenin's statue in the town of Henichesk. The brutality, swiftness and ideological content of the Russian takeover of urban spaces are quite outstanding. However, the reconstruction and re-installation of past monuments appears to have become rather common in this region of Europe. How are we to comprehend the complex ethnic and ideological issues of today's war through controversial urban memorial spaces? Who are the main actors of these urban memory re-manipulations and how do public opinions receive them? How are Ukrainian cases characterized, and how do they align with similar trends in Eastern Europe?

## **Round-Table: The war, the Central European political arenas, and the European Union**

Central Europe has for long been criticized for its political instability. Moreover, the challenges to the rule of law, enacted in some countries, as well as the Euroscepticism of some of its leaders has raised alarms. The European narrative of the 1990s seems to have presently been revived: until a few months ago, it was quite unthinkable that Central European governments should be so strongly advocating Ukraine's swift integration into the European Union. Whether such eagerness is mere wishful thinking or a clever political move in a context where anything is possible, it is anyhow worth probing. How does the war alter to Central and Eastern European political life and how do the political actors in these countries grapple with the war? Beyond the humanitarian crisis linked to the tragic exodus *en masse* or the question of military support to Ukraine, what is the fallout from the conflict onto the domestic political scenes of Central Europe's countries? One will pay particular attention to the evolution of the policies implemented in Poland and Hungary, where the context of the war in Ukraine is likely to reinforce the authoritarian trait of their conservative revolutions. Besides, what are the effects of the war on foreign policies, especially in relations with the European Union and NATO?

### **Round table: Research faced with war. Supporting academic solidarity on the European scale**

Organized by CERCEC (Centre for Russian, Caucasian and Central European Studies - EHESS / CNRS), this round table will gather together researchers whose lives have been endangered and who have been in exile since the beginning of the war in Ukraine, staff of academic institutions in charge of offering them shelter and scholars engaged in reflecting on scientific cooperation in Eastern Europe. This panel will first be dedicated to reviewing the human, material and scientific challenges arising from the war in Ukraine and to presenting the schemes for providing assistance and shelter to researchers whose lives are at risk and who have gone into exile. It will then provide an opportunity to reflect collectively on long-term responses to these challenges at the European level in order to pave the way for the future of research in Eastern Europe in the short and longer terms.

*This panel is sponsored by INSHS - CNRS.*

Scientific Committee: Gilles Bataillon, Falk Bretschneider, Masha Cerovic, Gabor Czoch, Catherine Gousseff, Jean-Yves Grenier, Jérôme Heurtaux, Morgane Labbé, Sabina Loriga, Marie-Vic Ozouf, Gabor Sonkoly, Florin Turcanu.

This event is organized by EHESS, in partnership with the University of Bucharest, the University of Warwaw, the Umifre CEFRES in Prague and Eötvös Loránd University of Budapest.

# Program

## Monday 17 October 2022

**14H: Welcome Speech:** Christophe Prochasson

**14H15: Keynote Lecture:** Rose-Marie Lagrave, « Revisiting EHESS's commitment to Central Europe after 1989 in the face of the current situation »

**14H30: Keynote Lecture:** Olesya Khromeychuk (Ukrainian Institute, Londres), « Discovering Ukraine and Reimagining Europe in the context of Russia's War in Ukraine »

### **15H15: Round-Table: Migrations**

Chair: Catherine Gousseff

Speakers: Yuliya Abibok (University of Kyiv), Tomas Balkelis (University of Vilnius), Michal Frankl (Masaryk Institute and Archives of the Czech Academy of Sciences)

## Tuesday 18 October 2022

### **9H30: Round-Table: Minorities**

Chairs: Masha Cerovic and Morgane Labbé

Speakers: Radu Carp (University of Bucarest), Ezster György (Eötvös Loránd University of Budapest), Olena Palko (University of Basel), Svetluša Surová (Bratislava Policy Institute)

### **14H: Round-Table: The landmark events of the 20th century in light of Ukraine's invasion**

Chair: Alain Blum

Speakers: Gabor Czoch (Eötvös Loránd University of Budapest), Ota Konrad (Charles University in Prague), Florin Turcanu (University of Bucarest)

## Wednesday 19 October 2022

### **10H: Round-Table: Controversial urban memorial and monumental spaces**

Chair: Marie-Vic Ozouf Marignier

Speakers: Błażej Brzostek (University of Warsaw), Gabor Sonkoly (Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest), Iryna Sklokina (Center for Urban History de Lviv)

### **14H: Round-Table: The war, the Central European political arenas, and the European Union**

Chair: Jérôme Heurtaux

Speakers: Cristian Preda (University of Bucharest), Michał Kozłowski (University of Warsaw), Daniel Veress (University of Budapest)

**Thursday 20 October 2022**

*Different location : "salle du conseil" of the EHESS, 54 Boulevard Raspail 75006  
Paris*

**9H30: Round-Table: Research faced with war. Supporting academic solidarity  
on the European scale**