

"VWI invites the Johannes Kepler University Linz"

Wednesday, 14 December 2016, 6.00 pm
1010 Vienna, Rabensteig 3, 3rd floor

Irina MARIN

Peasant Violence and Antisemitism around the Triple Frontier between Austria-Hungary, Tsarist Russia, and Romania (1880–1914)



This presentation explores both potential and actual social violence in the borderlands between Austria-Hungary, Tsarist Russia, and Romania, namely the provinces of Transylvania and Bukovina in Austria-Hungary and Bessarabia in the Tsarist Empire, alongside Moldavia and Wallachia, the former Danubian Principalities, which merged to form the Romanian state in 1859. It offers a comparative, transnational examination of the ways in which the Jewish and the peasant 'questions' were intertwined in this region and led to social unrest and antisemitic violence in some provinces.

Given that these borderlands shared striking similarities in terms of patterns of land tenure, ethnic composition, considerably large Jewish populations, and low levels of development (literacy rates, taxation, investments), the main aim of this presentation is to account for the dissimilarities in social combustibility which affected how the Jewish population fared on the three sides of the border and how rebellious the peasantry was in this region. To this end, the presentation will look comparatively at the legislative framework of the polities around the triple frontier and the place occupied by the Jewish population in the process of economic modernization and in relation to nation-building processes. The great variations in legal status of the Jewish communities around the border will be analysed – starting with Jewish emancipation and integration in the Austria-Hungary, the limbo status of Jewry in Romania, which was debarred from citizenship and considered a foreign body within the Romanian nation, to finally the most deeply antisemitic of the systems around the border, namely Tsarist Bessarabia, where even strictly applying the already constrictive and discriminatory laws in place was deemed to be too mild and verging on philosemitism. The focus will thus be on the interconnection of episodes of peasant unrest and antisemitic violence that punctuated the history of the region at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries.

Commented by Ernst LANGTHALER

Irina Marin, Research Fellow at the VWI – Marin is an early-career historian of Central and Eastern Europe, who completed her PhD at University College London in 2009. Her academic interests include identity politics, social violence, and frontier dynamics. Her first book was a history of the Banat of Timișoara/Temesvár, published by I.B. Tauris in 2012.

Ernst Langthaler, Professor of Social and Economic History at the Johannes Kepler University Linz – Langthaler is the author of the book *Schlachtfelder. Alltägliche Wirtschaften in der nationalsozialistischen Agrargesellschaft 1938–1945*, Vienna/Cologne/Weimar 2016.

Also present: IGLR St. Pölten (www.ruralhistory.at)