

Refugees and Citizens

New Nation States as Places of Asylum, 1914-1941

Especially over the past few decades, the refugee policies of Western states in the interwar period have been the subject of thorough examination by historians who have mostly highlighted the restrictive policies of closed borders, or 'paper walls', especially *vis a vis* Jewish refugees fleeing exclusion and mass murder. The stories of refugees turned back at the Swiss border or the destinies of the passengers on the St. Louis attracted substantial attention and generated public discussion. The central question many historians have posed is: why did democracies fail to see the consequences and why did they not extend their assistance?

Yet refugees are not a 'Western' subject and 'Western' discussion only. This workshop intends to extend the perspective by focusing on refugees and refugee policies in the new nation states created as a result of the First World War in Eastern and Central Europe and beyond, and to examine how exactly the often increasingly nationalist and authoritarian regimes became places of asylum, even if only temporary ones, for many refugees from Nazism.

In the new nation states, refugee policies were formulated against the background of new and contested rules of citizenship, freshly drawn borders, minority policies and transfers. Their creation as well as territorial revisions contributed to the problem of statelessness. Often, the idealised concept of 'the citizen' was used as an argument against those refugees and migrants deemed unsuitable for national citizenship. Moreover, many of these states – while adopting democratic institutions and processes – were increasingly nationalist, antisemitic and authoritarian.

Until now, the refugee policies as well as legislation, discourses and debates in most of these states have remained understudied and have rarely been placed in a wider transnational context. Therefore, this multidisciplinary workshop seeks to extend existing comparative research by examining refugees in the region in the context of broader population, migration and citizenship policies and discourses on legislation, starting with the mass exodus during the First World War, through the forced migrations after the Paris Peace Treaties and the population exchanges/expulsions in South-Eastern Europe as well as the politics of political asylum up to the attack on the Soviet Union in 1941. It seeks to analyse how the dynamic periods of state formation and the territorial revisions (especially those of 1938) affected the policies towards refugees. It will look at refugees and refugee policies in the states south east of the German border, with a focus on the period between 1914 and 1941 (papers covering the topic in a broader spatial or temporal context are also welcome). Possible topics for discussion include, but are not limited to:

- Refugee policies of states and their reactions in a changing political environment;
- Interplay between citizenship and refugee policies;
- Turning points such as 1914/15, 1919/20, 1933/34, 1938 and 1941;
- Border regions, refugees and identity;
- Impact on democratic procedures, the public sphere and the media;
- Relations and negotiations with international bodies and foreign relief organisations;
- Everyday reactions and strategies of refugees; and
- Relief committees, social work and (social) citizenship

This workshop, organised by the Vienna Wiesenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies, in cooperation with the Jewish Museum in Prague, will take place in Vienna 16-17 June 2016. You are invited to submit either an individual contribution or a complete panel (up to a maximum of four panellists).

The VWI will cover accommodation fees. The Institute is also endeavouring to find separate funding for travel costs.

Applications should be written in German or in English and include an outline of the topic in no more than 600 words as well as a short CV and a list of publications. Please send your application by email with the subject "Workshop 2016" to cfp@vwi.ac.at by 13 March 2016 at the latest.

The conference will be conducted in English and German. A publication is planned.