

**CZECHOSLOVAK
STUDIES
ASSOCIATION**

**Newsletter of the Czechoslovak Studies
Association**

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**Prize Announcements
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Plešné Lake from Stifterova památníku in the Šumava,
via Wikipedia

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“The Newsletter of the Czechoslovak Studies Association exists to express interests in the history of Czechoslovakia, its predecessor and successor states, and all its peoples within and without its historic boundaries.”

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Greetings from the President

For many of us, summer is a time for renewal: a time to recharge the batteries, see old friends who live in faraway places, and perhaps have a fresh idea or two. It can also be time to peruse old documents, to enjoy the thrill thinking with and about the past. I thus turn your attention to Julian Adoff's inspiring article about his work in Czech archives. Summer is, finally, a great time to slow down and read, be it crime novels or new scholarship. Regarding the latter, I recommend the books reviewed herein and the

many recent publications by CSA members, which include last year's best book co-winners, Rosamund Johnston (*Red Tape: Radio and Politics in Czechoslovakia, 1945-1969*) and Claire Morelon (*Streetscapes of War and Revolution: Prague, 1914-1920*). So, here is wishing you all a good read, and many thanks, as always, to Karla Huebner for curating and editing this newsletter.

--Chad Bryant
President



2025 Annual Social and General Meeting

On Friday, November 21, the Czechoslovak Studies Association (CSA) and the Slovak Studies Association (SSA) co-hosted an ASEES conference reception at Madam's Organ, in the District of Columbia, not far from the conference hotel. Winners of this year's book prize and the Emerging Scholars award were announced at the reception.

These annual receptions are possible thanks to your dues and generous donations. Support for the 2025 event was also provided by the Center for Slavic, Eurasian, and East European Studies and the Center for Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies at the University of Texas at Austin.

The **annual membership meeting** of the Czechoslovak Studies Association took place via Zoom on December 5 at 10:00 A.M. Eastern Standard Time.

Members are automatically enrolled in the Google Group listserve, which is our primary means of quick communication within the CSA. People may opt out of the listserve, but the hope is that it proves useful for communication among members rather than being a top-down method of making announcements. Members are added automatically, but non-members can email CSA to be added to the group.

The CSA's twitter handle is:

@CzechoslovakSA

The CSA has two Facebook pages:

Our institutional information page:

<https://www.facebook.com/czechoslovakstudies>

Our community group, for news/discussion:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/561860507278186>

CSA Prizes

Stanley Z. Pech Prize

At the 1985 annual meeting in Washington, D. C., the CSA adopted a motion by Stanley Winters to create an award to be given every two years for an outstanding article published, or accepted for publication, by a member of the Czechoslovak History Conference, now the Czechoslovak Studies Association. It was later determined to name the award in honor of Stanley Z. Pech.

Eligible for the biennial prize is any peer-reviewed article or essay (including a chapter in an edited volume) concerning the history of Czechoslovakia, its successor states, or its predecessor provinces, or any of its peoples within and without its historic boundaries. To be eligible for consideration in this cycle, the piece must have appeared in print or online, or has been accepted for publication, in calendar years 2024 or 2025. The Pech Prize Committee welcomes submissions from all academic disciplines, provided that they contain a substantial historical component. Authors should be members of the Czechoslovak Studies Association when they submit their publications. Works may be submitted in either pdf or doc/docx format. If the work is scheduled for publication after 2025, it should be accompanied by evidence that it was accepted for publication during the years under consideration. The current award is \$300.

Email all entries by June 26, 2026 to the prize committee chair, John Paul Newman, at JohnPaul.Newman@mu.ie.

Current Committee Members

Alice Lovejoy, University of Minnesota
John Paul Newman, Maynooth University
Peter Zusi, New York University

CSA Book Prize

The next, biennial, Czechoslovak Studies Association Prize for the Best Book in the Field of Czechoslovak Historical Studies will be given in 2027. To be eligible for consideration, books must be primarily concerned with the history of Czechoslovakia, its predecessor and successor states, or any of its peoples within and without its historical boundaries. The field of historical studies will be broadly construed, with books in all fields considered for the prize if they are substantially historical in nature. The prize committee will decide whether a book matches these criteria. Books under consideration must be new works by a single author written originally in the English language. Books published in 2025 and 2026 are eligible for the 2027 competition.

To be eligible, you must be a member of the CSA. If you are uncertain about your membership status, please contact CSA Treasurer Zachary Doleshal at zad007@SHSU.EDU. Authors are responsible for providing the committee with the book they wish to enter the competition. Books for consideration should be submitted to committee chair no later than June 30, 2027. The current award is \$400.

Emerging Scholar Prize

The Czechoslovak Studies Association is pleased to announce the Emerging Scholars Essay Prize. This prize will be awarded to the author of a distinguished article, essay, or chapter on a topic related to the history and culture of Czechoslovakia, its predecessor and successor states, and its peoples. Papers that place these topics in a compara-

tive or transnational context are welcome. Submissions should be an essay, journal article, book chapter, or chapter of a recently completed dissertation or master's thesis from 2023, 2024, or 2025 (they may not also be submitted for the Pech Prize).

They must be no more than 10,000 words in length inclusive of references/footnotes, and written originally in Slovak, Czech, or English. Dissertation or thesis chapters can be edited to meet the maximum word count. Applicants must be current Ph.D. students or have earned a Ph.D. or master's degree in or after 2022. The competition will be open to members and non-members of the CSA, and the prize committee will not be provided information about an applicant's membership status. We encourage non-members,

however, to see this as an opportunity to join the CSA. Please use [this page](#) to apply for membership. If you are uncertain about your membership status, please contact CSA Treasurer Zachary Doleshal at zad007[at][SHSU.EDU](mailto:zad007@SHSU.EDU).

Email submissions by June 26, 2026 to prize committee chair, Rosamund Johnston, at rosamund.johnston@univie.ac.at.

Prize value: \$200

Current Committee Members

Patricia Fogelová, Slovak Academy of Sciences

Rosamund Johnston (chair), University of Vienna

Jonathan Parker, University of Basel



Other Prizes of Interest

Slovak Studies Association Lifetime Achievement Award

The Slovak Studies Association annually presents a deceased or living SSA member with the Slovak Studies Association Lifetime Achievement Award. Any member may nominate an individual for the award and present a brief rationale explaining the nominee's eligibility at least one month before the annual SSA meeting. The SSA Executive Committee (the president, vice president, secretary, treasurer, and newsletter editor) evaluate the nomination. Approval requires a majority of all members attending the annual meeting. The SSA shall present those receiving an SSA Lifetime Achieve-

ment Award with a plaque and shall update the SSA website with the names of the winners. Send nominations or inquiries to slovakstudies@gmail.com.

Center for Austrian Studies Biennial Book Prize

The Center for Austrian Studies holds a biennial book prize competition. This year, books published between January 1st, 2023 and December 31st, 2024 were eligible for submission. Eligible works may be from any discipline in the humanities, social sciences, or fine arts.

The subject matter may deal with the past, present, and/or future of Central Europe, including topics pertaining to Austria and any regions historically part of the former Habsburg Empire.

The language of the publication must be English. Multi-authored studies or multi-author collections of essays are not eligible for this competition. This award is not restricted to U.S. citizens or permanent residents, but is meant to promote scholarly works published in North America. Please contact the Center with eligibility questions.

For additional questions, please contact Dr. Meyer Weinshel at casahy@umn.edu.

The CAS Book Prize has been made possible thanks to a generous donation from David and Rosemary Good.

BASEES Book Proposal Prize

A Prize for Best First Book Proposal in Minority History, launched by the BASEES Study Group for Minority History (SGMH),

recognizes scholarly excellence among early career academics seeking to publish their original research with a major English-language academic press.

The biennial prize is offered by the SGMH for a book proposal of high quality dealing with any aspect of minority history (broadly defined) relating to Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe.

The deadline for the next cycle is anticipated to be in January 2027. For more information about the prize, see:

<https://studygroupforminorityhistory.com/sgmh-first-book-proposal-prize/>

Please send any queries to:
sgmh.basees@gmail.com

The BASEES Study Group for Minority History (SGMH) is a forum devoted to the study of minority groups in the national and regional histories of Central, Eastern and Southeastern European from the Napoleonic Wars to the contemporary past.



Josef Čapek, set design for Leoš Janáček's opera *The Makropulos Secret*, 1928. Paper, wood.

Twenty-fifth Annual Czech & Slovak Studies Workshop University of Nebraska

The Twenty-Sixth Annual Czech and Slovak Studies Workshop was held at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln April 23-25, 2026.

This year's program featured a keynote by Jindřich Toman (University of Michigan): "Bohemia's Jews and Their Nineteenth Century" plus roundtable "Bohemian Jewishness: From Poetics to Politics" with Jindřich Toman, Veronika Tuckerová (Harvard University; author of *Reading Kafka in Prague*, 2025) and Jacques Rupnik (Sciences Po; author of *The Fates of Central Europe Between Hitler and Stalin - in the writings of Josef Guttman*, 2026).

Participants also had the opportunity to discuss documentary film *The Art of Dissent* with filmmaker James D. Le Sueur and to attend a reading from Josef Váchal's *Krvavý roman* with Stephen Lahey, as well as to visit Wilber, the "Czech Capital of the USA."

The annual Workshop welcomes papers on Czech and Slovak topics, broadly defined, in

all disciplines. In the past, our interdisciplinary conference has drawn participants from colleges and universities in the United States and abroad. Areas of interest have been anthropology, architecture, art, economics, education, film, geography, history, Jewish studies, literature, music, philosophy, politics, religion, society, sociology, and theater. Work in progress is an appropriate format for our workshop. Junior faculty and advanced graduate students are particularly encouraged to apply. Hotel accommodation will be provided for participants presenting at the workshop, and some travel assistance will be provided to those in financial need.

The 2026 Workshop was sponsored by the Czech Studies, Department of Modern Language and Literature, History Department, the Harris Center for Judaic Studies, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, as well as the Czech Language Foundation, the Czechoslovak Studies Association and the Slovak Studies Association.



Opportunities

The Michael Kopanic PhD Fund Scholarship

Students currently studying Slovak courses in the University of Pittsburgh's Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures are invited to apply for the Michael Kopanic PhD

Fund Scholarship. Recipients must be in good academic standing, currently enrolled in a Slovak course, and have committed to taking Slovak course(s) within the next academic year.

For more information, see:
<https://www.slavic.pitt.edu/michael-kopanic-phd-fund-scholarship>

Calls for Papers

Central Europe Yearbook, an open-access journal for undergraduates working on Central European topics, provides an opportunity for them to publish their scholarship and work in tandem with professors, independent scholars, graduate students, and other undergraduates. The Yearbook's online platform provides an outlet for a wide array of scholarly projects. Please encourage students to submit projects and proposals. Submissions can include academic articles, GIS maps, interactive resources, games, VLOGs, or any other compelling union of technology and research.

More information about the journal can be found on the journal's website:

<https://pubs.lib.umn.edu/index.php/cey/>.

If you have any questions, please contact the editors at ceuy@umn.edu.

Canadian Slavonic Papers welcomes submissions from anyone in the world and from any disciplinary perspective on the Slavic area. Editor James Krapfl is particularly keen to revitalize the book review section, so anyone (including graduate students) who might like to write a review should get in touch with him.

James Krapfl, Editor, *Canadian Slavonic Papers* / *Revue canadienne des slavistes*
Dept. of History | McGill University | 855,
rue Sherbrooke O. | Montréal (Québec) H3A
2T7 | Canada | tel. +1 514 769 8548 (home)



Wenceslas Square on the 28th October 1918

Plan to be Gone for Four Months, Stay for Seventeen!

By Julian Adoff

In January, I returned from a seventeen-month-long research stay in the Czech Republic as a part of my dissertation research. My dissertation constructs a network of cross-cultural Habsburg artists spanning the period from the establishment of the Austro-Hungarian dual monarchy in 1867 to the eve of WWII and reevaluates the art world of an era commonly understood as marking the empire's downfall and the dawn of the nation-state. With a particular focus on Mucha's participation in Austria-Hungary's presentation of the newly acquired territory of Bosnia-Herzegovina, this dissertation connects this single commission to Mucha's boundary-crossing career alongside other imperial artists and architects within and beyond the empires' borders to unpack a more nuanced and complicated history of nationalizing, orientaling, and colonizing impulses in the late-Imperial era of the Habsburg Empire. Constructed around the idea of the entrepreneurial nationalist artist, the dissertation places Mucha in conversation with arts workers from within the empire (Czech, Polish, Austrian, Hungarian, and Jewish actors) and beyond, who conducted art as an entrepreneurial enterprise. Through this project, I seek to revitalize the nuances in the artists' actions by constructing this cross-cultural network.

Two months into a four-month trip funded by a fellowship from my department at the University of Illinois Chicago, I learned that I had been awarded a Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Award. The Centre for Modern Art and Theory at Masaryk University was my host during my time

in the Czech Republic. My time as a part of the Centre was invaluable, for I was able to formally present works in progress through their Works in Progress programming, and informally through day-to-day discussions with the other scholars in residence. A year into my time there, I wrote a [short piece](#) for the Centre's website about my experience in the Czech Republic, as well as a brief account of my research project.

My Fulbright-Hays was jointly hosted in the Czech Republic and Poland, with my main institutional affiliation being at Masaryk University. The local Fulbright commission staff in the Czech Republic and Poland were great resources, and Masaryk's Faculty of Arts International Office was a great help, even after I returned to Chicago and had additional questions while wrapping up different portions of my research. After my stay was extended, I found [Foreigners' Services](#) to be a great resource for tasks like apartment searches and setting up necessary accounts for longer-term living.

The state of research has undoubtedly changed in recent years, so I would like to talk here about my experiences conducting research in archives and libraries in the region. As an American scholar, my greatest surprise concerned the organization of university libraries. Rather than have a large central library where most of the material was lendable, like we have at UIC, my most readily available library, Masaryk University's, was split up by department, with most departments' holdings being non-lending. This took a lot of getting used to, but it also

helped create a firm work-life balance since I really could not bring materials home with me.

On a similar note, I was quite impressed with the digital library offerings at both the Czech National Library (*Národní knihovna České republiky*) and the Moravian Regional Library (*Moravská zemská knihovna*). With a library card from each, I was able to gain access to digital versions of many volumes. While some volumes, especially newer publications, required me to be physically present in either library, the ability to gain access to a host of materials—access that continues while I am back in the US as long as I maintain the status of my library cards—was a welcome surprise. I also research Polish material, and while Poland has a great resource, *Polona*, for archival materials such as newspapers, the Czech resources are unmatched. This was especially surprising to me when I compared the relative numbers of Polish and Czech speakers worldwide.

In terms of archival research, digital offerings similarly changed their dynamics. Most of the time, I was able to email an archive or institution and receive materials. Some institutions, such as the National Theater (*Národní divadlo*) and the Vienna Secession—the latter of which published its materials during my stay in Brno—have made their extensive archives available online. My research took me to only two physical archives: Prague's Municipal Archive (*Archiv Hlavního Města Prahy*) and the Archives of the Jewish Museum in Prague (*Židovské muzeum v Praze*). I visited the Municipal Archives twice, first to consult their materials on the Municipal House (*Obecní Dům*) and its construction, and second to view similar materials for the construction of the

Jubilee Synagogue/Jerusalem Synagogue (*Jubilejní synagoga/Jeruzalémská synagoga*).

The Municipal Archives offered a very traditional archival visit. After arranging an appointment with them in advance, I checked in with security and secured my belongings before going to their reading room. The materials I had requested were prepared in advance, and I was able to consult them at my leisure, taking note of any documents I photographed for closer inspection later (they also offer their own photographic services for a fee). My visit to the Jewish Museum Archives proceeded in much the same way, albeit a bit more casually.

The state of archival research has also changed over time. I was shocked that I didn't have to wear gloves in many of the archives I visited. Upon talking to a few people there and back at home, it appears that most institutions no longer require them, as newer scientific studies have concluded they are unnecessary.

Since my return, I have been working to finish my dissertation, aiming to defend it in early spring 2027. While I was in the Czech Republic, I not only conducted research but also wrote a lot. This allowed me to return to the States with drafts for numerous sections of the project. As a result, much of my time since January has been spent honing arguments and streamlining the progression of ideas, making my spring 2027 goal even more attainable. More generally, I think that my time in the Czech Republic led me to consider longer-term work outside the US as a viable option. As I consider my next steps after I complete my PhD, I have added the

possibility of finding a post-doc or employment abroad to my search parameters for life after my PhD. The Czech Republic's GAČR

(Czech Science Foundation), for instance, offers varied and extensive opportunities for both Czech and international researchers.



Archival documents at Prague's Municipal Archive (*Archiv Hlavního Města Prahy*) in their collection of materials on the construction of the Municipal House (*Obecní Dům*).

Recent Book Reviews from H-Net

Book reviews pertinent to our geographic interests can appear on a perhaps surprising variety of H-Net networks. It's easy to miss some of them, so thanks to H-Net's Creative Commons licensing, we are reprinting reviews relating to Czechoslovak studies.

Members are encouraged to review for H-Net and elsewhere! While some H-Net networks have someone charged with commissioning reviews, not every H-Net network actively pursues reviews; yet all can benefit from them.



Pia Koivunen. *Performing Peace and Friendship: The World Youth Festivals and Soviet Cultural Diplomacy.* [De Gruyter Oldenbourg](#), 2023. Illustrations. 303 pp. \$116.99 (cloth), ISBN 978-3-11-075844-3; Free (open access), ISBN 978-3-11-076116-0.

Reviewed by Vincenzo Colaprice (University of Turin)

Published on H-Socialisms (March, 2026)

Commissioned by Gary Roth (Rutgers University - Newark)

Youth Festivals and Soviet Diplomacy

On December 24, 2025, the World Federation of Democratic Youth (WFDY) issued a call to participate in the Twentieth World Festival of Youth and Students (WFYS), scheduled to take place in Caracas (Venezuela) from July 24 to July 31, 2026.[1] The announcement came only days before the widely reported events of January 3, when the US military operation “Absolute Resolve” resulted in the extraction of President Nicolás Maduro and his wife, Cilia Flores, and their transfer to a detention facility in the United States. Although the concrete political and ideological repercussions of this event on the persistence of the Bolivarian Revolution remain to be assessed, the festival has been confirmed and preparatory committees have already been established in several countries.

Caracas is thus set to become the twentieth host city of the WFYS: nine years after the previous edition held in Sochi in 2017 on the centenary of the October Revolution; twenty-one years after the last edition hosted in the Venezuelan capital (2005); and seventy-nine years after the first festival in Prague in 1947, then capital of Czechoslovakia. Rooted in a communist-inspired anti-imperialist political culture, the festival returns at a moment when imperialism has once again moved to the center of political debate as an analytical category, as the international press has revived the term to frame the foreign policy of the United States under Donald Trump.[2]

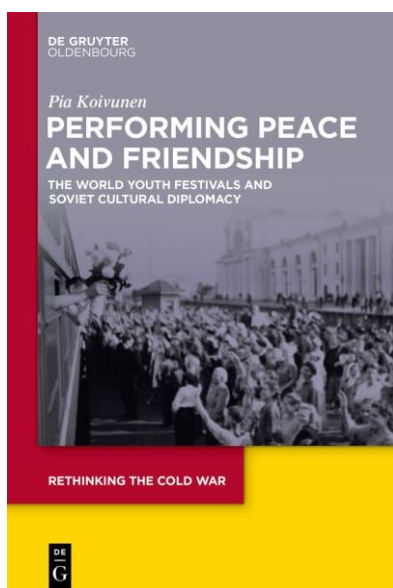
Considering these developments, it is timely to revisit the history of the WFYS through Pia Koivunen’s volume, *Performing Peace and Friendship: The World Youth Festivals and Soviet Cultural Diplomacy*. Although several reviews of Koivunen’s book have

already appeared, this review is warranted not only by the scholarly rigor and relevance of her work but also by its distinctly seminal character.[3] The volume lays the groundwork for a systematic and historically grounded study of the festivals as a whole. In this respect, it constitutes an indispensable reference not only for research on the festivals themselves but also, in my view, for the history of the two international youth organizations that established them: the WFDY and the International Union of Students (IUS).

To date, a comprehensive history of the festivals remains unwritten. With this volume, based on nearly two decades of research and developed from her doctoral dissertation at the University of Tampere, Koivunen partially fills this gap by focusing on the first decade of the festivals (1947-57), which forms part of the broader cycle of thirteen editions held during the Cold War up to 1989. During these decades, the festivals were embedded in the world communist movement and closely connected to the structures of socialist internationalism. By contrast, the six editions organized between 1997 and 2017, in the aftermath of the collapse of state socialism, retained their anti-imperialist rhetoric but lacked both a comparable international framework and the political appeal the festivals had enjoyed during the Cold War.[4]

For readers less familiar with the subject, a preliminary question is necessary: What was the WFYS? Koivunen offers a clear interpretative framework, first presented in a 2020 article and further elaborated in her volume.[5] In their Cold War configuration, the festivals can be defined as socialist-internationalist mega-events periodically

convened by the WFDY and the IUS and hosted in socialist or neutral capitals. Their declared aim was to gather participants from across the globe under the banners of peace and friendship. In practice, they succeeded in bringing together tens of thousands of young participants from around the world in the host cities, alongside millions of visitors, predominantly from the host country itself.



However, as Koivunen demonstrates, the festivals were far more than mere gatherings of the international left-wing youth. While fully acknowledging the political and ideological dimensions that accompanied these events, she foregrounds their cultural character, interpreting them as carefully orchestrated spaces in which Soviet and broader socialist cultural models were publicly staged. In this capacity, the festivals mirrored the priorities of Soviet foreign policy and sought to project the USSR and the socialist world as a civilizational alternative to what was portrayed as Western “decadent and commercialized” culture (p. 11). Yet this contrast was neither rigid nor impermeable. The festivals selectively appropriated

Western forms and practices, reworking them within a socialist ideological framework. This interpretative line is developed most fully in the introductory chapters, where Koivunen presents the WFYS as an expression of Soviet cultural diplomacy’s ambition to create a distinctively Soviet cultural product endowed with global meaning and relevance.

The distinctly Soviet character of this cultural product did not derive solely from the fact that it was organized by two pro-Soviet international organizations within the broader socialist transnational NGO network, nor merely from the supervisory role exercised by Soviet authorities.[6] Rather, it stemmed from the originality of the festivals themselves, which relied on symbolic repertoires, aesthetic forms, and institutional practices deeply rooted in Soviet political culture and in the socialist countries and capitals that hosted them.

The presence of these elements and the centrality of the political dimension, together with the anti-imperialist and peace-oriented message, understood as a unilateral and pro-Soviet conception of peace in Silvio Pons’s terms, provided fertile ground for the event’s propagandistic potential.[7] For this reason, during the Cold War and even afterward, many Western analysts and historians dismissed the festivals as mere instruments of Soviet propaganda, designed for the “mass brainwashing” of naive youth (p. 12). Such reductive interpretations, shaped by Cold War ideological conflict, long overshadowed the historiography, obscuring the transnational exchanges that occurred at institutional and individual levels, and as Koivunen convincingly demonstrates, often transcended the rigidities of the two blocs.

Above all, the festivals functioned as arenas of encounter and exchange among young people during years marked by the tensions, contradictions, and conflicts of the Cold War. Koivunen's principal contribution lies in bringing this dimension to the forefront. In doing so, Koivunen advances a multidimensional and dialectical interpretation that challenges long-standing assumptions about the monolithic nature of the Soviet system. Her approach is explicitly both top-down and bottom-up and is grounded in the observation that the festivals were shaped by an osmotic process. Although Soviet political leadership defined the overarching message and ideological orientation, the performance of "peace and friendship" also depended on the participation of affiliated national organizations and individual actors. Their involvement introduced dynamics that were not always easily manageable by the organizers and did not invariably align with Soviet expectations. This dynamic unfolded within a Cold War framework characterized not only by ideological and political competition but also by cultural rivalry, involving postwar generations whose experiences and aspirations were shaped by the recent memory of global conflict.

This analytical duality is reflected in the book's structure. The first part reconstructs the first five festivals. It distinguishes between the late Stalinist phase—Prague (1947), Budapest (1949), Berlin (1951), and Bucharest (1953)—closely connected to the Cominform's peace campaign, and the period of de-Stalinization, focusing on Warsaw (1955) and its implications for the WFDY and the IUS. Drawing on archival sources, Koivunen illuminates internal Soviet reassessments of these organizations' activities,

their reception within the WFDY and the IUS, the debates surrounding de-Stalinization and the persistence of Soviet influence, and dialogue with the Global South and the reaction of Western organizations. This reconstruction challenges the long-standing portrayal of the WFDY and the IUS as mere front organizations largely controlled from Moscow, demonstrating instead that they were characterized by a discernible, and at times lively, internal debate.

The second and more extensive part is devoted entirely to the 1957 Moscow festival. This edition symbolized Nikita Khrushchev's thaw and the spirit of post-Twentieth Party Congress reform. As Koivunen notes, many participants remembered it as "a moment when the Soviet Union was reattached to the rest of the world culturally, socially and politically" (p. 254). Its impact was profound and, in Koivunen's reconstruction, can be traced across political, cultural, and social dimensions. The festival left a lasting imprint on Soviet society and on the memories of its participants and later served as a precedent for the 1980 Moscow Olympic Games, the only other major international event hosted by the Soviet capital after the 1957 festival.

In the epilogue, Koivunen traces Soviet efforts to transcend the East-West divide by hosting festivals in neutral European capitals located within the broader Western sphere, such as Vienna (1959) and Helsinki (1963). She examines the structural constraints encountered in exporting this distinctly Soviet cultural product, the reactions and countermeasures of Western states, and the eventual return to socialist capitals following unsuccessful attempts to stage the ninth edition in

decolonizing Africa. Ultimately, she contends that the Soviets were unable to universalize the festivals as genuinely global events open to youth across political divides, as participation remained largely confined to politicized and predominantly left-leaning constituencies. Yet, notwithstanding these structural limitations, the interpersonal exchanges that unfolded among participants frequently exceeded the rigidities of Cold War bipolarity, leaving durable traces in individual memory.

What, then, might be said to remain underexplored in this reconstruction? In my assessment, no substantial shortcomings emerge. The sustained focus on the cultural dimension of the festival, as a performative space in which “peace” and “friendship” were enacted from above and from below, is both methodologically coherent and analytically persuasive. One might nevertheless have welcomed a more systematic inquiry into the debates within international preparatory committees and among affiliated national organizations, particularly regarding mobilization strategies in Western countries during the peace campaigns of the 1950s. Such an extension, however, would have presupposed access to archival materials that remain partially dispersed or inaccessible, a constraint that cannot reasonably be attributed to the author.

Indeed, the volume’s principal strength lies in its generative and foundational character. It furnishes a robust analytical framework for future research on international and national preparatory committees; state involvement; patterns of participation across Western, socialist, and Global South contexts; and the long-term memory of individual participants. By situating the festivals

within a wider constellation of transnational interactions, it also opens promising avenues for the further study of the WFDY and the IUS themselves, as recent scholarship has already begun to demonstrate.[8]

Notes

[1]. WFDY, “To the Youth and Students of the World: A Call for Participation; XX World Festival of Youth and Students Venezuela/2026,” WFDY, December 24, 2025, <https://wfdy.org/statements/2025/12/24/to-the-youth-and-students-of-the-world-a-call-for-participation-xx-world-festival-of-youth-and-students-venezuela-2026/>.

[2]. See “The Return of the US’s Predatory Imperialism,” editorial, *Le Monde*, January 4, 2026,

https://www.lemonde.fr/en/opinion/article/2026/01/04/the-return-of-the-us-s-predatory-imperialism_6749061_23.html#; Jin Xiaowen and Zhao Pu, “US Actions Signal a Return to Imperialism, Colonialism,” Opinion, *China Daily*, January 4, 2026, <https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202601/04/WS695a2881a310d6866eb31d6c.html>;

Zachary B. Wolf, “Trump’s New Imperialism Recalls a Dark Period of US-Led Regime Change,” *CNN*, January 6, 2026, <https://edition.cnn.com/2026/01/06/politics/regime-change-maduro-venezuela-noriega-panama-analysis>; David Pilling, “The New Era of Resource Imperialism,” *Financial Times*, January 10, 2026; and Mehdi Hasan, “Forget Maga: Welcome to Mega; Make Empire Great Again,” Opinion, *Guardian*, February 17, 2026, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2026/feb/17/maga-marco-rubio-munich-security-conference>.

[3]. For recent reviews, see Susanne Schattenberg, “Performing Peace and Friendship: The World Youth Festivals and Soviet Cultural Diplomacy by Pia Koivunen,” *Jahrbücher Für Geschichte Osteuropas* 72, no. 1 (2024): 147-49; Mikuláš Pešta, “Anatomy of a Socialist Mega-Event: World Youth Festivals as a Product of Soviet Cultural Diplomacy,” *Soudobé Dějiny* 31, no. 3 (2024): 857-61, <https://doi.org/10.51134/sod.2024.038>; and Jinquan Yu, “Performing Peace and Friendship: The World Youth Festivals and Soviet Cultural Diplomacy,” *Europe-Asia Studies* 77, no. 6 (2025): 1001-3, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09668136.2025.2517995>.

[4]. On the 2017 edition and its implications for Vladimir Putin’s Russia, along with the contradictions it generated, see Pia Koivunen, “International Events in the Service of Cultural Statecraft: The Sochi Olympics and the World Festival of Youth and Students,” in *Russia’s Cultural Statecraft*, ed. Tuomas Forsberg and Sirke Mäkinen (Routledge, 2021), 184-205.

[5]. Pia Koivunen, “The World Youth Festival as a Soviet Cultural Product During the Cold War,” *Quaestio Rossica* 8, no. 5 (2020): 1612–28, <https://doi.org/10.15826/qr.2020.5.548>.

[6]. On the concept of a socialist transnational network as an analytical framework within which organizations such as the WFDY and the IUS are best situated, see Mikuláš Pešta, “A Hub of Anti-Colonialism: Prague’s International Organizations in the Transnational Socialist Network and Global Cold War,” *Journal of Contemporary Histo-*

ry 59, no. 3 (2024): 492-513, <https://doi.org/10.1177/00220094241234583>

[7]. Silvio Pons, *The Rise and Fall of the Italian Communist Party: A Transnational History* (Stanford University Press, 2024), 137.

[8]. For instance, the first full historical account of the IUS has recently been published by Mikuláš Pešta, *Student Internationalism and the Global Cold War: The International Union of Students in Socialist Prague* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2026).

Errata: The original published version of this review included an error.

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at: <https://networks.h-net.org/h-socialisms>.

Citation: Vincenzo Colaprice. Review of Koivunen, Pia, *Performing Peace and Friendship: The World Youth Festivals and Soviet Cultural Diplomacy*. H-Socialisms, H-Net Reviews. March, 2026.

URL: <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=62292>

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Briefly Noted

An unusually small number of books relating to Czechoslovak topics have been reviewed on H-Net during the past year or so, although books in our area continue to be published. Some H-Net areas actively commission reviews; others do not. Please consider reviewing books of interest for appropriate H-Net lists!

The following books were reviewed on H-Net and while not focused on Czechoslovak topics, will be of interest to some of our members for their connections to our area. Enough of each review is cited to give a sense of the book's topic.

Brandy Schillace. *The Intermediaries: A Weimar Story*. W.W. Norton & Company, 2025. x + 340 pp. Ill. \$31.99 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-324-03631-9.

Reviewed by Ben Weiss (Independent Scholar)

Published on H-Sci-Med-Tech (December, 2025)

Commissioned by Penelope K. Hardy (University of Wisconsin-La Crosse)

Brandy Schillace's *The Intermediaries: A Weimar Story* is a work that manifests the complexity of German gender science in the first third of the twentieth century. For the ordinary reader, each individual narrative addressed in the book is approachable, but the collective timeline can be overwhelming, as Schillace necessarily traces relevant themes backward and regularly repositions her temporal focus. However, academics enmeshed in this intricate field will appreciate the skill with which she attends to a

staggering number of intertwined topics, rendering an attentive and effective compositional achievement. Gender is both historically and socially dynamic, and *The Intermediaries* reflects the difficulties of articulating a history of such complexity by drawing together an analysis of nationalism, criminality, masculinity, legislation, social and political movements, economic upheaval, and the private lives with which these facets intersect. [...]

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at: <https://networks.h-net.org/h-sci-med-tech>.

Citation: Ben Weiss. Review of Schillace, Brandy, *The Intermediaries: A Weimar Story*. H-Sci-Med-Tech, H-Net Reviews. December, 2025.

URL: <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=62316>

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Michael Geheran. *Comrades Betrayed: Jewish World War I Veterans Under Hitler*. Cornell University Press, 2020. 294 pp. \$34.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-5017-5101-1.

Reviewed by Christopher Harrison (Arizona State University)

Published on H-War (December, 2025)

Commissioned by Margaret Sankey (Independent Scholar)

In *Comrades Betrayed*, Michael Geheran adds to the emerging paradigm of post-survivor Holocaust literature by providing further contradictory research that compli-

cates the largely outdated monolithic representations of wartime Europe. Further emphasizing the connections that fused widespread violence across both world wars, the story of retributive betrayal is one that Geheran masterfully portrays in this exceptional case of the malleable varying treatment by which the Nazi regime manipulated the legitimacy of Jewish German veterans. This group became the focal point of a negotiation ploy used to settle disputes among officers throughout the Wehrmacht that had questioned Adolf Hitler's answer of "the Final Solution" (p. 205). At first evading deportation through bureaucratic intervention in 1941, wounded and decorated Jewish soldiers of the Great War were sent by the state to serve as forced laborers at Theresienstadt. The notoriety of this location in what was then the annexed territory of Czechoslovakia rests on its performative role of what the US Holocaust Memorial Museum describes as a deceptive "spa" town camp at which the elderly, veterans, and celebrities could "retire" while simultaneously producing artifacts useful to the Reich and assisting laborers as they passed through on their way to the East.[1]

Note

[1]. *Holocaust Encyclopedia*, "Theresienstadt," United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, accessed January 1, 2025, <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/theresienstadt>.

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at: <https://networks.h-net.org/h-war>.

Citation: Christopher Harrison. Review of Geheran, Michael, *Comrades Betrayed:*

Jewish World War I Veterans Under Hitler. H-War, H-Net Reviews. December, 2025.

URL: <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=60689>

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Patrick Ferrucci. *The Organization of Journalism: Market Models and Practice in a Fraying Profession*. University of Illinois Press, 2024. xi + 219 pp. \$26.00 (paper), ISBN 978-0-252-08829-2.

Reviewed by Jon Bekken (Albright College)

Published on Jhistory (April, 2026)

Commissioned by Zef Segal (Media Studies School, College of Management Academic Studies // Bates College)

University of Colorado Boulder journalism professor Patrick Ferrucci has written a useful book exploring how different market models are reshaping organizational cultures and journalistic practices. The newspaper industry's financial crisis serves as the backdrop to many of these initiatives, though its causes are largely unexplored. As Ferrucci notes in his chapter on *The Denver Post*, "the overwhelming success of journalism in the twentieth century was the direct cause of the ills that many legacy media newsrooms currently face. By the early 1980s, the business of journalism was booming, so much so that its profit margins ... exceeded those of almost every other industry" (p. 139). This led to a flurry of corporate acquisitions, expansion of chain ownership, and a growing separation between newspapers and the communities

they served. When profits started to decline a few years later many newspapers closed and the industry entered a period of retrenchment that accelerated in the early 2000s under the impact of the internet on both advertising and subscriptions.

[...]

The book might have benefited from a better grounding in media history and political economy. While newsgathering practices and journalistic ideology might have been fairly uniform across general interest metropolitan dailies, journalism was historically far more diverse than is often recognized. Country and neighborhood weeklies were of necessity more engaged with their communities and often relied on readers for content. Immigrant dailies were similarly embedded in their communities and experimented with a wide range of organizational structures. In the 1920s, the New York-based Yiddish-language *Forverts* published eleven zoned editions in cities as far west as Chicago. It and many other foreign-language papers were structured as cooperatives, with shares owned by unions, fraternal societies, singing societies, and other community institutions. Similarly, the *Chicago Daily Socialist* was owned by local socialists who in 1912 decided to declare bankruptcy rather than accept the paper's sale to corrupt politicians looking for friendly coverage. The ethnic societies that owned the Lithuanian-language *Naujienos* debated policy and elected editors at annual meetings before adjourning to dance the night away. Many labor papers published guidance to readers on how to prepare articles for publication, stressing the need for details and analysis rather than hyperbole.

There were other models as well. The Czech-language daily *Denni Hlasatel* was launched by its typesetters and printers after a failed strike against the privately owned *Svornost* in which the chief demand was that the owner surrender control of the paper (as the paper grew and its founders retired, fewer workers held ownership). The *Milwaukee Leader* was owned first by the Socialist Party and in its final decades by the city's labor federation. The *Chicago Sun* was launched by a department store mogul who felt the city needed a morning alternative to the fiercely Republican *Chicago Tribune*. It was far from being alone as a daily published by a mogul with extensive local interests. And while Southern newspapers may have employed the forms of objectivity in their defense of white supremacy, many Black papers and not a few Northern journals instead focused on conveying the truth—a commitment that required very different sourcing patterns.

[...]

Ferrucci's concluding chapter points to the need for strong leadership to navigate organizational change, to preserve a sense of journalists' autonomy over their work, shared decision-making, a commitment to (and shared understanding of) audience engagement, and work-life balance. "The disruptive changes experienced by the American news business ... caused a destabilization process across the field of journalism.... [As a result] American journalism finds itself in a process of deprofessionalization" (pp. 170-71). Ferrucci argues that this started with broad adoption of the internet, erasing barriers to entry and giving rise to new media that do not follow journalism's historical norms. This requires that

future researchers focus on specific organizations, rather than media ecosystems that no longer share a common ethos or market model.

This, it seems to me, is work that media historians are uniquely qualified for.

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at: <https://networks.h-net.org/jhistory>.

Citation: Jon Bekken. Review of Ferrucci, Patrick, *The Organization of Journalism: Market Models and Practice in a Fraying Profession*. Jhistory, H-Net Reviews. April, 2026.

URL: <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=62733>

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Pedro Cameselle-Pesce, Debbie Sharnak, eds. *Uruguay in Transnational Perspective*. Routledge, 2023. Illustrations. xix + 391 pp. \$152.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-03-222169-4.

Reviewed by Teresa Huhle (Universität zu Köln)

Published on H-LatAm (May, 2026)

Commissioned by Agustina V. Carrizo de Reimann (Department of Iberian and Latin American History (IHILA) at the University of Cologne)

In this compilation of seventeen essays, coeditors Pedro Cameselle-Pesce and Debbie Sharnak set out to shed light on “the multidirectional flow of ideas, people, and movements to see both how they shaped

Uruguay, but also how Uruguay shaped the world” (p. 3). They promise to present “a challenge to narratives that either ignore or tokenize the country” (p. 5). By “ignorance,” they mean their diagnosed lack of attention to the República Oriental de Uruguay and its significance for larger units of analysis among historians based in the United States. “Tokenization” refers to the tendency to repeat stereotypes about Uruguayan exceptionalism among foreign scholars and the media alike.

[...]

In a total of six contributions—five of them covering the Cold War period—the last section puts the tension-filled transnational connections of public intellectuals, political parties, and labor organizations into focus. Whereas Cuba only appears in one of the chapter titles (Roberto García Ferreira), one remarkable lesson of the joint lecture of the section is the extraordinary impact that the Cuban Revolution of 1959 had on Uruguayan diplomacy, imaginations, and scopes for action. Aldo Marchesi and Vania Markarian’s intriguing and illuminating chapter on intellectuals Aldo Solari and Vivian Trías and their collaborations with secret services from both sides of the Iron Curtain does not center on Cuba. However, in their conclusion, they highlight the decisive impact of the Cuban Revolution on both figures: In the case of social scientist Solari, it made him turn to collaboration with US peers financed by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), whereas for Trías, Cuba’s alliance with the Soviet Union facilitated his work for the Czech secret service. This second cooperation is further analyzed in Michael Zourek’s chapter, which situates Trías’s recruitment within the overall ac-

tivities of the Czech service in Uruguay—a stronghold of the Eastern Bloc’s intelligence networks in Latin America. [...]

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at: <https://networks.h-net.org/h-latam>.

Citation: Teresa Huhle. Review of Camelselle-Pesce, Pedro; Sharnak, Debbie, eds., *Uruguay in Transnational Perspective*. H-LatAm, H-Net Reviews. May, 2026.

URL: <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=61911>

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Sudesh Mishra, Caitlin Vandertop. *Commodities and Literature*. Cambridge University Press, 2025. 362 pp. \$120.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-00-943232-0.

Reviewed by Sarah Kimmet (Chiang Mai University)

Published on H-Environment (May, 2026)

Commissioned by Daniella McCahey (Texas Tech University)

The admirable intention of the contributors to *Commodities and Literature*, as proclaimed by Caitlin Vandertop and Sudesh Mishra in its introduction, is to restore a Marxist framework to the study of objects in literature—or rather, to highlight the post-2008 restoration of “the commodity as a critical concept,” which is itself a manifestation of “the explosive return of the economic in cultural life” (p. 10). Commodity culture is a young field in literary studies, emerging toward the end of the 1980s, but its initial offerings avoided Marxist

readings for their “alleged economic reductionism” and “failure to recognize that the object is *more than* a commodity” (pp. 7-8, 9). In contrast, Vandertop and Mishra remind us that objects cannot be divorced from the conditions and relations of their production *but* that attention to these relations enriches, rather than detracts from, our appreciation of these objects’ sensual, social, psychological, and aesthetic properties. Consequently, the overarching goal of the individual essays that make up this collection is to “return to and enlarge the social questions at the heart of existing materialist traditions” (p. 10).

[...]

Granted, recuperating the “humanizing, civilizing use-value” of commodities in literature is not the same as recuperating their value in real life—nor is recuperating their value in real life always a politically subversive activity, as many eco-villages comfortably nestled within late capitalism can attest. But there is a moment in the penultimate chapter of *Commodities and Literature* when Myka Tucker Abramson identifies a subversive *and* progressive politics of decommodification in relation to the road, the road novel, and the commodities that traverse both. After dismissing Jack Kerouac’s *On the Road* (1957) for its implication in the systems of oppression its protagonists are ostensibly attempting to escape, Abramson turns to Iva Pekárková’s *Truck Stop Rainbows*, a 1989 Czechoslovakian novel about a young girl who starts traveling after the fall of the communist regime as an exercise in self-expression but soon finds herself “monetizing her sexual escapades” to help pay for a friend’s wheelchair (p. 269). The novel thus

transitions from “a critique of Soviet imperialism to an exploration of a frontier encounter with the capitalist marketplace” (p. 269). Yet neither the novel nor Abramson’s analysis concludes with this demystification of nascent Czech capitalism; rather, the protagonist is allowed to “reclaim her sense of self through a sexual encounter with a stranger on a bus,” thus transcribing “a socialist erotics of public space” as an alternative to “the binary between a dehumanizing public space and privatized spaces of self-expression” (p. 271). Marx probably would have approved.

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at: <https://networks.h-net.org/h-environment>.

Citation: Sarah Kimmet. Review of Mishra, Sudesh; Vandertop, Caitlin, *Commodities and Literature*. H-Environment, H-Net Reviews. May, 2026.

URL: <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=62502>

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Anton Weiss-Wendt, ed. *A People Destroyed: New Research on the Roma Genocide, 1941-1945*. University of Nebraska Press, 2025. 342 pp. \$70.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-4962-3453-7.

Reviewed by Ilse About (École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales)

Published on H-Diplo (February, 2026)

Commissioned by Seth Offenbach (Bronx Community College, The City University of

New York)

A People Destroyed: New Research on the Roma Genocide, edited by Anton Weiss-Wendt, may mark a turning point in the academic institutionalization of historical studies devoted to the genocide of Roma in Europe during the Second World War. During the 1990s and 2000s, a first series of edited volumes made it possible to bring together the state of knowledge, which at the time was particularly fragmented.[1] Since the 2010s, the work of a new generation of scholars has marked a new stage and has led to several major collective publications, opening up numerous innovative perspectives.[2] Special journal issues have also more recently demonstrated this inclusion within the academic field by addressing specific territories in Europe and calling for consideration of the different, and often autonomous, dynamics that were at work.[3]

This new volume, following an initial collection published in 2013, has as its principal merits the ability to make visible the current state of knowledge, to highlight the differentiated methodologies mobilized by historians, and to propose a significant advance in assessing the human toll of the genocide at the European scale. In several cases, this volume also brings together research sometimes already known to specialists but previously available only in their original languages. Indirectly, this collection of essays also illustrates some of the imbalances that characterize knowledge production in this field of research and invites a rebalancing of the state of knowledge.

[...]

Indirectly, these chapters also reflect the many questions that remain under discussion for other countries in Western Europe (France, Italy, the Netherlands), Central Europe (Austria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia), and the countries emerging from the former Yugoslavia, which are not represented in this volume. The scale of decision-making, the diversity of authorities involved, the intensity of repression, and the diversity of individual and collective trajectories all remain areas requiring further investigation, despite recent studies devoted to these countries.[6]

[...]

[6]. For France, see Lise Foisneau, *Les Nomades face à la guerre (1939–1946)* (Klincksieck, 2022); for the Netherlands, see Amanda Kluvel, “Le Zigeunertransport du camp de transit de Westerbork: La déportation des Sinti et Roms des Pays-Bas en mai 1944,” *Revue d’histoire de la Shoah*, no. 217 (2023): 51–80; for Italy, see Paola Trevisan, *La persecuzione dei rom e dei sinti nell’Italia fascista: Storia,*

etnografia e memorie (Viella, 2024); and for Hungary, see László Csősz, “Slaughtering the Scapegoats: Anti-Roma Violence in Hungary in the Last Months of World War II,” *Holocaust: Studii și cercetări* 16, no. 1 (2024): 233–74; and Anders E. B. Blomqvist, “Deportations of Roma from Hungary and the Mass Killing at Kami-anets-Podilskyi in 1941,” *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 38, no. 2 (2024): 200–15.

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at: <https://networks.h-net.org/h-diplo>.

Citation: Ilsen About. Review of Weiss-Wendt, Anton, ed., *A People Destroyed: New Research on the Roma Genocide, 1941-1945*. H-Diplo, H-Net Reviews. February, 2026.

URL: <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=62342>

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Interviews on New Books Network

We point out some of the existing interviews on the New Books Network podcast that relate to our region. *Note that the site does not always make it easy to locate the full range of past interviews of interest. Searching by author or interviewer name provides the best results. Or use* <https://newbooksnetwork.com/category/people-places/eastern-european-studies>



Bruce Berglund, *Castle and Cathedral in Modern Prague: Longing for the Sacred in a Skeptical Age*

Hosted by Marshall Poe, Nov 9, 2017

Summary

As Bruce R. Berglund, points out in his terrific book *Castle and Cathedral in Modern Prague: Longing for the Sacred in a Skeptical Age* (CEU Press, 2017), the Czech Republic is an odd place, religion-wise. It's

among the most secular in the world, yet Czechs have a long tradition of believing in "Something." They even have a thing called "Somethingism." Just what that Something is and what that Something means for Czechs to do, of course, is and long has been the subject of debate. Bruce takes us into the heart of that debate in the interwar period, a time of great intellectual ferment and creativity in what was then Czechoslovakia. It turns out Czech intellectuals (Masaryk being the foremost of them) wanted the Czechs to be guided by Something in all their affairs. Bruce does a great job of telling us why and how.

Marshall Poe is the founder and editor of the New Books Network. He can be reached at marshallpoe@newbooksnetwork.com.

Listen to the full interview at:

<https://newbooksnetwork.com/bruce-berglund-castle-and-cathedral-in-modern-prague-ceu-press-2017>



Victoria R. Schmidt and Bernadette N. Jaworsky, *Historicizing Roma in Central Europe: Between Critical Whiteness and Epistemic Injustice*

Hosted by Steven Seegel, Mar 31, 2021

Summary

In Central Europe, limited success in revisiting the role of science in the segregation of Roma reverberates with the yet-unmet call for contextualizing the impact of ideas on everyday racism. This book attempts to interpret such a gap as a case of epistemic injustice. It underscores the historical role of ideas in race-making and provides analytical lenses for exploring cross-border transfers of

whiteness in Central Europe. In the case of Roma, the scientific argument in favor of segregation continues to play an outstanding role due to a long-term focus on the limited educability of Roma.

In *Historicizing Roma in Central Europe: Between Critical Whiteness and Epistemic Injustice* (Routledge 2021), Victoria Schmidt and Bernadette N. Jaworsky trace the long-term interrelation between racializing Roma and the adaptation by Central European scholars of theories legitimizing segregation against those considered non-white, conceived as unable to become educated or "civilized." Along with legitimizing segregation, sterilization and even extermination, theorizing ineducability has laid the groundwork for negating the capacity of Roma as subjects of knowledge. Such negation has hindered practices of identity and quite literally prevented Roma in Central Europe from becoming who they are. This systematic epistemic injustice still echoes in contemporary attempts to historicize Roma in Central Europe. The authors critically investigate contemporary approaches to historicize Roma as reproducing whiteness and inevitably leading to various forms of epistemic injustice. The methodological approach herein conceptualizes critical whiteness as a practice of epistemic justice targeted at providing a sustainable platform for reflecting upon the impact of the past on the contemporary situation of Roma.

Victoria Schmidt brings together the issue of historical roots of segregation with the legacy of colonial and socialist policies in Central Eastern European countries. Since 2019 Victoria leads the project "Race science: Undiscovered Power of building the nations" at the University of Graz.

Bernadette Nadya Jaworsky is associate professor of sociology at Masaryk University, Brno (Czech Republic), and Faculty Fellow at Yale University's Center for Cultural Sociology.

Listen to the full interview at:

<https://newbooksnetwork.com/historicizing-roma-in-central-europe>



David Petruccelli, *A Scourge of Humanity: The Origins of Interpol and the End of Empire in Central and Eastern Europe*

Hosted by Miranda Melcher, May 31, 2026

Summary

As the First World War came to a chaotic end, Europeans feared that a wave of crime and anarchy would sweep across their continent. The upheavals of the war and of the subsequent violent breakup of the Habsburg, German, and Ottoman empires magnified longstanding fears that an increasingly interconnected world offered the enterprising and unscrupulous new opportunities to break the law and evade capture. New kinds of international criminals and criminal enterprises demanded novel forms of international co-operation. Thus was born the International Criminal Police Commission, known today as Interpol. In the 1920s and 1930s, Interpol's police officials and the lawyers who collaborated with them created lasting programs to combat counterfeiting, sex and drug trafficking, terrorism, and human smuggling, and other forms of international crime, which they labelled "a scourge of humanity."

Drawing on press reports, police files, and criminal records in numerous languages and

across multiple countries, in *A Scourge of Humanity: The Origins of Interpol and the End of Empire in Central and Eastern Europe* (Oxford University Press, 2025), Dr. David Petruccelli explores the origins of Interpol and the role Central and Eastern European actors played in developing criminal policing and law during the interwar period to bring stability to their region and reshape international institutions and norms. He shows how legal experts replaced a liberal focus on individual rights with an emphasis on a collective of international societies and of police officers who looked to the international sphere as a space for eluding the constraints of the rule of law at home. In doing so, their initiatives posed an alternative to the imperial and liberal internationalist programs pursued by many Western Europeans and Americans and laid the groundwork for more radical forms of persecution during the Second World War.

While bringing to life the stories of individuals involved in shady activities across borders, *A Scourge of Humanity* explores the vigorous policing and harsh criminal laws established by Interpol to combat their crimes and highlights illiberal forms of internationalism that have left a lasting mark on our world.

This interview was conducted by Dr. Miranda Melcher whose book focuses on post-conflict military integration, understanding treaty negotiation and implementation in civil war contexts, with qualitative analysis of the Angolan and Mozambican civil wars.

Listen to the full interview at:

<https://newbooksnetwork.com/a-scourge-of-humanity>



Shaul Stampfer, “My Heart is in the East”:
How Yiddish Speakers Moved to the East

Hosted by YIVO Institute, May 19, 2026

Summary

The question of origins is often difficult to study because originators do not always leave a paper trail. Therefore, uncovering origins can be challenging – and the story of the background of Yiddish-speaking Jews in Eastern Europe is no exception. It is complicated by the fact that in the recent past the Jewish population of the area was in the millions and it is not obvious where they came from. It is tempting for some to see them as having come from the Rhineland in search of safety and security but there are many reasons to be dubious about this. What is much more likely, as we shall see, is that the basis for the Yiddish-speaking Jewish population of Eastern Europe was the Jewish population of what is now the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Austria. They came in dribs and drabs because of economic pressures. We will examine various pieces of evidence that support this picture. While not dramatic, it was pragmatic and successful. Economic changes in the Polish-Lithuanian lands offered new opportunities to Jews and this in turn, led to conditions of rapid population growth – rapid enough to create a massive population within several centuries.

This lecture was originally held on July 22, 2021.

The YIVO Institute for Jewish Research featuring talks, lectures, and cultural programming on Jewish history, language, and culture.

Listen to the full interview at:

<https://newbooksnetwork.com/my-heart-is-in-the-east-how-yiddish-speakers-moved-to-the-east>



Claire Morelon, *Streetscapes of War and Revolution: Prague, 1914–1920*

Hosted by Miranda Melcher, Feb 13, 2026

Summary

Prague entered the First World War as the third city of the Habsburg empire, but emerged in 1918 as the capital of a brand new nation-state, Czechoslovakia. In *Streetscapes of War and Revolution: Prague, 1914–1920* (Cambridge UP, 2024), Dr. Claire Morelon explores what this transition looked, sounded and felt like at street level.

Through deep archival research, she has carefully reconstructed the sensorial texture of the city, from the posters plastered on walls, to the shop windows' displays, the badges worn by passers-by, and the crowds gathering for protest or celebration. The result is both an atmospheric account of life amid war and regime change, and a fresh interpretation of imperial collapse from below, in which the experience of life on the Habsburg home-front is essential to understanding the post-Versailles world order that followed. Prague is the perfect case study for examining the transition from empire to nation-statehood, hinging on revolutionary dreams of fairer distribution and new forms of political participation.

Listen to the full interview at:

<https://newbooksnetwork.com/streetscapes-of-war-and-revolution>



Agata Fijalkowski, *Law, Visual Culture, and the Show Trial*

Hosted by Alex Batesmith, Dec 30, 2025

Summary

Addressing the relationship between law and the visual, this book examines the importance of photography in Central, East, and Southeast European show trials.

The dispensation of justice during communist rule in Albania, East Germany, and Poland was reliant on legal propaganda, making the visual a fundamental part of the legitimacy of the law. Analysing photographs of trials, Agata Fijalkowski's *Law, Visual Culture, and the Show Trial* (Routledge, 2023) examines how this message was conveyed to audiences watching and participating in the spectacle of show trials. The book traces how this use of the visual was exported from the Soviet Union and imposed upon its satellite states in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War. It shows how the legal actors and political authorities embraced new photographic technologies to advance their legal propaganda and legal photography. Drawing on contemporary theoretical work in the area, the book then challenges straightforward accounts of the relationship between law and the visual, critically engaging entrenched legal historical narratives, in relation to three different protagonists, to offer the possibility of reclaiming and rewriting past accounts. As its analysis demonstrates, the power of images can also be subversive; and, as such, the cases it addresses contribute to the discourse on visual epistemology and open

onto contemporary questions about law and its inherent performativity.

Alex Batesmith is a Lecturer in Legal Profession in the School of Law at the University of Leeds, and a former barrister and UN war crimes prosecutor, with teaching and research interests in international criminal law, cause lawyering and the legal profession, and law and emotion.

Listen to the full interview at:

<https://newbooksnetwork.com/law-visual-culture-and-the-show-trial>



Lucy Jeffery and Anna Váradi, *Replaying Communism: Trauma and Nostalgia in European Cultural Production*

Hosted by CEU Press, Dec 17, 2025

Summary

In this episode, host Andrea Talabér (CEU Press) sat down with Lucy Jeffery and Anna Váradi to talk about their edited volume, *Replaying Communism: Trauma and Nostalgia in European Cultural Production*. The volume explores the lasting impact of the communist era across Central and Eastern Europe, with chapters thematically threaded through by concepts including curation, immersion, interaction, humor, and authenticity. In the podcast we talked about what it means to “replay” communism, about the trauma/nostalgia paradigm in relation to cultural production, and about intergenerational experiences of media depicting the communist period.

The CEU Press Podcast delves into various aspects of the publishing process: from crafting a book proposal, finding a publish-

er, responding to peer review feedback on the manuscript, to the subsequent distribution, promotion and marketing of academic books. We also talk to series editors and authors, who will share their experiences of getting published and discuss their series or books.

Listen to the full interview at:

<https://newbooksnetwork.com/replaying-communism>



Marek Kohn, *The Stories Old Towns Tell: A Journey Through Cities at the Heart of Europe*

Hosted by Miranda Melcher, Nov 24, 2025

Summary

Historic quarters in cities and towns across the middle of Europe were devastated during the Second World War—some, like those of Warsaw and Frankfurt, had to be rebuilt almost completely. They are now centers of peace and civility that attract millions of tourists, but the stories they tell about plac-

es, peoples, and nations are selective. They are never the whole story.

These old towns and their turbulent histories have been key sites in Europe's ongoing theater of politics and war. Exploring seven old towns, from Frankfurt and Prague to Vilnius in Lithuania, the acclaimed writer Marek Kohn examines how they have been used since the Second World War to conceal political tensions and reinforce certain versions of history.

Uncovering hidden stories behind these old and old-seeming façades in *The Stories Old Towns Tell: A Journey through Cities at the Heart of Europe* (Yale University Press, 2023), Dr. Kohn offers us a new understanding of the politics of European history-making—showing how our visits to old towns could promote belonging over exclusion, and empathy over indifference.

Listen to the full interview at:

<https://newbooksnetwork.com/the-stories-old-towns-tell>



Member News

Felix Jeschke

On 1 July, starts 3-year research project at the Collegium Carolinum in Munich funded by the German Research Foundation and entitled “Peripheral Imperialisms? Ruling the Soil in Hungarian and Czechoslovak Ruthenia (1867–1939)”. The project seeks to better understand centre-periphery relations in dualist Hungary and interwar Czechoslovakia and the (dis-)continuities between empire and nation-state. A short abstract of the project is [here](#). I'm open to cooperation,

for instance in conference panels or publication projects.

Karla Huebner

Interviews:

Podcast “Man with a Mentor,” May 2026
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yuwlLxSVU3w&list=PLS6990LFj5C5CbEne_pi3YyZxYAA_rHYP&index=7

Jiří Hutečka

With Michael Viktořík, Olomouc ve válce 1914-1919 (České Budějovice: Veduta 2026).

Hillel Kieval

Publications:

“Was There a Habsburg Jewish Experience?” *Austrian History Yearbook* 56 (2025), 1–10.
doi:10.1017/S0067237825000219

“Franz Kafka, Talmudist? Czech Language, Yiddish Theater, and Rabbinic Narrative in the Life and Writings of a Central European,” *The 65th Leo Baeck Memorial Lecture* (New York and Berlin: Leo Baeck Institute, 2024).

“Village Memories and National Renewal: Prague to Jerusalem via Chraštica and Galicia,” in *Shmuel Hugo Bergmann: A Life between Prague and Jerusalem*, edited by Boaz Huss, Marcela Menachem Zoufalá, and Olaf Glöckner. Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2024, pp. 9-22. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111046013-002>.

Michael Kopanic, Jr.

Honors

Nominated as candidate for the Medzinárodná cena SAV 2026 (The International Prize of the Slovak Academy of Sciences 2026) by the Embassy of the Slovak Republic in Washington, D.C.

English translation editor and contributor to Javor, Martin, *A History of the First Catho-*

lic Slovak Union to 1945. Prešov: University of Prešov, 2025.

Presentations:

“The History of Slovak Immigrants in Pennsylvania,” presented at the Cresson Area Historical Association, February 16, 2026.

Historical presentations on “Slovak and Czech Notes,” an online radio program that airs every two weeks at:
Slovak and Czech Notes
<https://slovakandczechnotes.com/listen-now>

Kevin J. McNamara

Joined the Board of Directors of the Slovak American Society of Washington (SASW), Washington, DC.

Publications:

“The EU: A Bias Against Central and East Europe,” *Europe’s Edge* (Center for European Policy Analysis, Washington, DC), April 20, 2026.

Link: <https://cepa.org/article/the-eu-a-bias-against-central-and-east-europe/>. Reprinted in *Transitions* (Czech Republic), April 22, 2026.

Link: <https://tol.org/client/article/the-eu-a-bias-against-central-and-east-europe.html>

“The Paradox of Great Power Diplomacy,” *Modern Age: A Quarterly Review*, March 9, 2026.

Link: <https://modernagejournal.com/the-paradox-of-great-power-diplomacy/254628/>, a review of *Great Power Diplomacy: The Skill of Statecraft from Attila the Hun to Kissinger*, by A. Wess Mitchell (Princeton University Press, 2025).

Marty Manor Mullins

Presentations:

“East or West?: Slovakia’s Position in Europe, Past and Present,” Panel Presenter: Assoc. for Slavic, East European and Eurasian Studies Conference (ASEEES), 2025.

Daniel E. Miller

Retirement

As Professor Emeritus of History, from the University of West Florida

Cynthia Paces

Publications:

Paces, Cynthia. 2026. “A Window to the West? Public Health, American Progressivism, and De-Austrianization in Interwar Czechoslovakia.” *Austrian History Yearbook*, May 12, 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0067237826100873>.



Jesse Siegel

Dissertation defense

“Gambling Against the Dark: German-Czechoslovak Businessmen in Europe, 1918-1948,” at Rutgers. Committee chairs: Melissa Feinberg and Belinda Davis; other committee members were Paul Hanebrink and Caitlin Murdock.

Honors

For 2026-2027, he will be a Max Kade Fellow at the Berlin Program for Advanced European and German Studies at the Freie Universität Berlin.

Matthew Slaboch

Publications:

“The Influence of American Ideas and Institutions on TG Masaryk, Philosopher and Statesman” in *Global Intellectual History*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23801883.2026.2677538>

Presentations:

Invited talk on “Czechs, Slovaks, and Americans and the Making of a Republic,” as part of the conference “Liberty’s Echoes: Global Reverberations of the Declaration of Independence,” hosted by the Center for Civics, Culture, and Society at Miami University, April 2026.

Veronika Tuckerova

Honors:

Veronika Tuckerova’s [*Bedekr Kafka*](#) (Revolver Revue, 2024) received honorable mention for the [*Otokar Fischer Prize*](#), awarded to outstanding books in Czech-German studies, on May 18, 2026, at Prague’s Goethe Institute.

Presentations:

Plenary speaker, along with Jindřich Toman and Jacques Rupnik, at the 26th Czech Workshop at the University of Nebraska in Lincoln, April 23-25, 2026.