CALL for PAPERS

East Europe and the Middle East

A symposium run by the Association of Historians working on Eastern Europe (Verband der Osteuropahistorikerinnen und -historiker, e.V., VOH) and the Herder Institute for Historical Research on East Central Europe

Co-organizers: DFG Priority Program 1981 Transottomanica and the Giessen Center for Eastern European Studies (GiZo), in cooperation with the Center for Near and Middle Eastern Studies, Philipps University Marburg (CNMS)

Marburg, 11th - 12th April 2019

The relationship between East European countries and the Middle East was a focus of public interest before the war in Syria, but it has become particularly topical since then account of Russia’s involvement in the conflict.

It is clear that the Soviet Union’s Middle East policy - including its position against Israel, which was supported by Arab forces - is still existent in present-day politics. However, the historical relationships between the relevant empires, namely the Russian Empire, the Habsburg monarchy, Poland-Lithuania and the Ottoman Empire, have been seldom sufficiently examined, both in terms of historical depth and supra-regional breadth. Equally inadequate has been the research on the stances East European countries took towards the Middle East and “Middle East Conflict” in the 20th century.

Relevant questions and topics could include:

- Transfer, interdependence and exchange: what form did the various interconnections (political, economic, religious, historical-epistemological, literary, material) take between the great empires, with a particular focus on the Middle East during the early modern period (for example Jerusalem pilgrims, travelers to Egypt) as well as throughout the long 19th century (expeditions, Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society, painters, etc.)?

- The image of the Middle East: How was the Middle East viewed by Eastern Europe? Was it, and is it still, considered to be a region of conflict?

- The image of Eastern Europe in the Middle East: is it perceived to be a mesoregion, was (and is) Russia understood to be a European imperial power or, rather, an orientalized Asian power? What is the view of Eastern Europe’s ethno-religious diversity against the background of the Middle East’s own multi-confessional or multi-religious societies?

- Socialist “development aid” and imperialism: what roles has Russia and/or the Soviet Union played in the Middle East in the past and what roles does it play now with regard to military, technological, economic, political and religious engagement. How can we characterize the historical background of the current situation and the war in Syria? Are there particular behavioral patterns and practices that can be observed in the countries of Eastern Europe?

- System critique, reforms, unrest and war: Can the An-Nahda (Arabic cultural renaissance) be viewed in the context of other “renaissances” in the region (for example, in Bulgaria), and can the revolutions of 1905 (in Russia and Persia), as well as in 1908 and 1917 be viewed in an overarching context? Was there perhaps a partial relationship between the “Arab Spring” and the “Prague Spring” or other such “springs” that took place in other countries? How were, or are, the Balkan wars of 1912-13 and
If you are interested in participating in the symposium, please send us an abstract of (maximum) 250 words and a short CV by the 31st of October 2018. These must be sent in electronic form to: forum@herder-institut.de

the post-Yugoslav wars received in Palestine and how has the current war in Syria been received in present-day Bosnia?

Migration: what were the implications and impacts of, for example, Jewish emigration from Eastern Europe to Israel and the recent movement of migrants from Syria to Europe?

These and, if necessary, further discussions and questions will form the central focus of the symposium. The event will promote international exchange and follow an interdisciplinary approach.

Invitations will be extended to up to twelve historians and representatives of other subject areas who deal with the relations between Eastern European countries and the Middle East and who will introduce topics that span, in terms of their epochal variation, from the Middle Ages up until the present day. Travel and accommodation costs will be covered by the organizers.