

Tereza Juhászová

Post-WWII Coexistence in an East Slovak Small-Town

My project is a microhistorical analysis of coexistence in a linguistically mixed Czechoslovak border region after the end of the Second World War. It focuses on the east Slovak small town of Nižný Medzev, whose inhabitants spoke German, Hungarian, Slovak, or Romani and who, since the end of the Second World War, had to contend with restrictive measures of the Czechoslovak authorities, decreed from above but implemented by local actors on the ground. The case of this town, where a substantial part of the German-speaking population remained throughout the 20th century, enables the analysis of how the fundamental social transformations of postwar Czechoslovakia took place outside the cosmopolitan cities yet in a linguistically heterogeneous area. Based on archival documents, biographical interviews, and contemporary press, this dissertation puts into the forefront the agency of individuals and their role in shaping, restructuring but also stabilizing the intimate society across historical ruptures. The main argument of the project is that in a multilingual environment, categories based on language or nationality did not constitute a determining factor in everyday coexistence, not even during periods of significant social and political change. The dissertation argues that in a remote small town, it was personal relationships within the close-knit community and political affiliation that created divisions or enabled cooperation within the small town. Regarding the timeframe, the project focuses on the period from the end of the Second World War, when the town was hit by waves of forced migration, to the end of the 1960s as a period in which the original inhabitants coped with the influx of Slovak-speaking workers due to the industrialization of the town. The project contributes to the current state of knowledge about the functioning of societies in the periods of postwar reconciliation and political transformation, emphasizing the dynamics of coexistence in small communities in the border regions and underscoring the role of individual actors.

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