

**FP7 - International Workshop “NATIONAL MODELS OF POLITICS OF MEMORY WITH REGARD TO THE RUSSO-OTTOMAN WAR AND THE PEACE TREATIES”
(University of Graz, Austria, 2012)**

The Russo-Ottoman War of 1877/1878 (ROW) played a major role in forming and establishing national narratives both in Southeastern Europe as well as in the Caucasus region in the 19th and 20th centuries. The consequences of the war between the Russian and the Ottoman Empires did not solely influence the end of the 19th century but they still are a central part of the memory culture and politics of memory today. Over the following decades the war and the related peace treaties were interpreted in different and often opposing ways by the nations involved (Turks, Russians, Bulgarians, Macedonians, Greeks, Georgians and Armenians), which lead to contradicting and conflicting images of the ROW of 1877/1878.

The international research project “Politics of Memory and Memory Cultures of the Russian-Ottoman War 1877/1878: From Divergence to Dialogue”, funded by the European Commission’s “International Research Staff Exchange Scheme – Marie Curie Actions” (FP7) and lasting for four years (02/2012 - 01/2016), aims to prepare ground for a revision of those conflicting images. In order to achieve that, researchers from all countries with relevant ROW memories are cooperating and constantly sharing their transdisciplinary results. The first work package “The Russo-Ottoman War – National Models of Memory” lasted for eight months and was capped by a workshop held at the University of Graz on September 8, 2012.

The workshop was both opened and moderated by the project’s coordinator **KARL KASER** (Graz), who especially emphasized that the project would constitute a pioneer attempt in bringing together, comparing, sharing, and relating the separated national memories of the War in a multi-perspective way of interpretation. Since so far, the ROW had been researched by political and military historians almost exclusively, while the main goal of the research in the project would be to encourage a transdisciplinary approach in the sense of emerging “memory studies”.

A general orientation on modern memory studies and manifestations of politics of memory was given by me, **DOMINIK GUTMEYR** (Graz), and my contribution “*History and Memory: A Tendency towards Transdisciplinarity and the Influence of Politics of Memory on the Formation of Historical Narratives*”, thereby underlining the importance of

an transdisciplinary and multi-perspective approach, not only in the studies of modern memory cultures in general but especially concerning the various questions related to the present project, as an unbiased approach to the ROW is still rather an exception than the rule.

PETAR VODENICHAROV (Blagoevgrad), on behalf of the Bulgarian researching team, also consisting of **MILENA ANGELOVA**, **NURIE MURATOVA**, **ANASTASIYA PASHOVA**, **MARIYANA PISKOVA**, and **KRISTINA POPOVA**, presented their common paper “*‘Battles in the Past’ or ‘Battles for the Past’: Bulgarian National Models of Memory and Memory Policy*”. By investigating the rich Bulgarian collective memory to the ROW of 1877/1878, their analysis identified the main instruments of memory politics in the hands of the state, namely public research institutions and historiography, national education institutions, monuments, museums and annual commemorations. Furthermore the paper critically stressed the role of the ROW in the formation of two myths: (1) The myth of the Treaty of Berlin preventing the Bulgarian state to be complete and (2) The Communist’s myth of Tsarist respectively Soviet Russia liberating Bulgaria twice. By illustrating the consequences of the two myths and their role in Bulgarian memory culture today, the authors pleaded for a re-thinking of the ROW and for new perspectives of commemoration and identity.

In her presentation “*Exploring the Russo-Ottoman War (Macedonian Memory and Presentation)*”, **BILJANA RISTOVSKA-JOSIFOVSKA** (Skopje) highlighted the Macedonian memory to the ROW and the role of the participating volunteers from Macedonia as well as both the results of the Treaty of Berlin and the migration processes of the ROW period. She argued that the reflection of the historical events and the related memory would show that because of the lack of academic institutions until the establishment of the Federal Republic of Macedonia in the framework of Yugoslavia, memories have been cultivated mainly in form of narratives, songs, poems and written memoirs of individuals. However, as pursuing the studies of national histories was considered suspiciously in socialist Yugoslavia, she emphasized that the questions of participating Macedonians in the ROW and the roles of the treaties of San Stefano and Berlin for Macedonia have been of interest before 1991 and were investigated mainly in the framework of the Eastern Crisis afterwards. Therefore these topics remain special points of interest until today.

IAKOVOS MICHAILIDIS (Thessaloniki) with his paper “*The Russo-Ottoman War (1877-1878) in Greek Historiography*” stressed the perception of the ROW in Greek historiography as a traumatic event. Especially the Treaty of San Stefano entered Greek historiography as a

disaster, as it had foreseen a Greater Bulgaria which was supposed to include Macedonia. Michailidis underlined the tendency of late 19th century historiography to blame the Greek government for its hesitation to join the Russian army or blamed Russia for preferring a pan-Slavic concept over a pan-Orthodox one. He further elaborated that recent historiography would argue that the Greek Kingdom had been in a weakened position due to its lack of diplomatic influence and its inability to pursue its aims on the battlefield, whereas the reason for the inertia of the political elite was to be found exactly in that weakness.

BÜLENT BILMEZ (Istanbul) with his talk on “*Memory Politics in Turkey with a focus on the perception of the Ottoman past / The Place of the ROW in Turkish historiography*” made it very clear, that academic studies on memory culture and politics of memory have only begun recently in Turkey and he explained these late developments with three reasons: (1) Memory research had always been linked to tabooed topics such as the state’s politics against non-Muslim minorities in the Turkish Republic. (2) Oral history as a method of research is still very weakly institutionalized. (3) Creating collective memory had always been and still is monopolized by the state. Bilmez drew the conclusion that despite the important role of the ROW for the history of the region, there is still little to be found in Turkish historiography about the war itself and about the related memory and it has not taken any place in recent discussions about politics of memory in Turkey.

ALLA KONDRASHEVA (Stavropol’) together with her colleague **OLGA CHERNYSHOVA** (Stavropol’) contributed an “*Analysis of the Russo-Ottoman War 1877-1878 on the basis of Russian historiography*”. They outlined the constant change of ideological influences on the perception of the ROW in Soviet historiography and stressed especially the massive turnaround in post-Soviet historiography, in which the Marxist paradigm is no longer dominating the perception of the War but a plurality of theoretical models and of research interests have arrived. The presentation set a special focus on newly discussed sources such as ego-documents (memoirs, letters and diaries) and previously neglected factors such as the heritage of the Cossacks or the participation of various Caucasian nations in the battlefields of the ROW.

NINO AROSHIDZE (Batumi), on behalf of her Georgian colleagues **MARINE AROSHIDZE**, **TAMAZ PHUTKARADZE**, **MARINA SHALIKAVA**, and **KAKHABER SURGULADZE** presented their common paper “*Georgian Memory Culture of the Russo-Ottoman War (1877-1878)*”. Their analysis shows that the pre-Soviet era lacks a substantial historiographical investigation of the ROW in Georgia which did

not change throughout the Soviet era until Stalin's death. Only with Chruščëv's thaw setting in, Georgian historiography and especially the works of Shamshe Megrelidze, focussed on the ROW. However, the presentation showed that a variety of alternative forms of memory to the ROW existed and still exists in Georgia. It elaborated in detail on memories in form of fiction, ethnographical collections, in folklore, music, public celebrations and in the ecclesiastical memory, thereby emphasizing the memories of the Muslim refugees who left the territories, which were newly acquired by the Russian troops during the ROW of 1877/1878. Aroshidze concluded that the "wound of Muhajirism" would still remain in certain families, and "the image of the enemy" as reflected in Georgian folklore and language would still be powerful.

The results of the first work package of the project and the related workshop will be published in a special issue of the journal *Balkanistic Forum* and as well on the project's website (<http://memoryrow.weebly.com>). The project itself will continue with its second work package "Places of Memory and Celebrations of Heroes of the ROW", which will again last for eight months and will be capped by a workshop as well.

Dominik Gutmeyr