



Universität
Basel

Philosophisch-Historische
Fakultät

Profilbereich Osteuropa



Life under the Red Banner

Minorities in Socialist Europe

Thursday, 11.09. - Friday, 12.09.2025
University of Basel, Switzerland

[ba | sees]

study group
for minority history

**BASEL
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University of St. Gallen
Center for Governance
and Culture in Europe



Swiss National
Science Foundation



Life under the Red Banner: Minorities in Socialist Europe

Socialist regimes have built their ideology around the concept of equality. Committed to a communist classless society, those regimes devised and introduced policies based on the belief that the quest for economic equality would gradually eliminate social divisions based on nationality, religion, and/or gender. In practice, however, socialist states closely engaged with their minorities and implemented a wide arsenal of policies that were directed towards their minorities, ranging from promotion, protection and accommodation to forced assimilation, repression and exclusion.

This conference aims to critically examine the discrepancies between the ideology, theory, and practice of minority policies in socialist countries, and discuss the everyday experiences of minority life under socialism through a comparative and transnational lens. Drawing on examples from different Soviet republics, countries of the socialist bloc, as well as non-aligned socialist states, such as Yugoslavia and Albania, this conference aims to draw scholarly attention to how various socialist regimes came to shape the status, rights, and experiences of different, and often marginalized, ethnolinguistic, religious, sexual, and social groups.

Organization

Olena Palko (University of Basel), **Julia Elena Grieder** (University of Basel)

Location

University of Basel, Faculty of Theology, Nadelberg 10, 4051 Basel



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Program

Day 1 - Thursday, 11. September 2025

11:00-12:30	Registration and light lunch Common room Faculty of Theology, Nadelberg 10, 4051 Basel
12:30-12:45	Welcome and Introduction
12:45-14:45	Panel 1: Ethnic Agency (Chair: Julia Elena Grieder) Helene Henze (LMU München) «Making a Home in Soviet ideology: The Kolkhoz «30 Years of the KSSR» Between Accommodation and German Eigensinn» Szabolcs Czáboczký (Forum Minority Research Institute Šamorín Slovakia) «Alternative Spaces of Socialization: The Birth of the Hungarian Youth Club Movement in Czechoslovakia» Marina Gerber (Universität Hamburg) «Black Ice: Sovietization of the Indigenous Peoples of the North» Jonathan Kaplan (University of Verona) «Jewish Life in the GDR: Political Elite and Religious Minority»
14.45-15:15	Coffee Break
15:15-17:00	Panel 2: Accommodating Diversity (Chair: Olena Palko) Malcolm Lowe (University of East Anglia) «Disabled Yugoslavs and Youth Work Action: Between Discourse and Reality» Martin Pácha (Institute for Contemporary History of the Czech Academy of Sciences) «The Forbidden Faith: Illegal Religious Minorities in Communist Czechoslovakia» Fatos Hoxha (Universität Regensburg) «Personnel Policies and Minority Integration in Socialist Kosovo: The Case of Trepça»
18:00-19:00	Frauenstadtrundgang (City walking tour)
19:00	Dinner

Day 2 - Friday, 12. September 2025

09:00-11:00 **Panel 3: Queer and Gender Minorities** (Chair: Anna Dobrowolska)
Shaban Darakchi (Bulgarian Academy of Sciences)
«Challenging the Western Gaze on Intimate Lives: Decolonizing the Knowledge on Homosexuality in Communist Bulgaria 1944-1989»
Ioana Zamfir (University of Oxford)
«Queer Love in Belarus and Ukraine: Reconsidering Identity Formation in Late Soviet and Post-Soviet Society»
Izabella Agardi (Institute of Advanced Studies Kőszeg (iASK))
«Different Histories: Rural Women's Discourses of Race and Ethnicity in in East and Central Europe»
Tetyana Fedorchuk (Universität Bern)
«Women's Congress as a Place of Agency and State Control: Experience of Women in the Ukrainian Soviet Republic through a Case Study from 1965 Zhytomyr»

11:00-11:30 Coffee Break

11:30-13:15 **Panel 4: (Inter)state and minorities** (Chair: Rosa Öfinger)
Péter Vukman (University of Szeged)
«Power Politics, Ethnic Conflicts and Everyday Lives: Hungarians and South Slavs in the Baja Triangle (1945–1956)»
Mladen Zobec (Universität Graz)
«At the Intersection of Ethnic and Economic Marginality: The Case of an Albanian Ethnic Economy in Socialist Yugoslavia»
Nikola Tohma (Masaryk Institute and Archives of the Czech Academy of Sciences)
«From a Refugee Group to an Ethnic Minority: Greek Civil War Refugees in Socialist Czechoslovakia»

13:15-13:30 **Concluding Remarks**

13:30-14:30 Lunch



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