

The German Diaspora in Eastern and Central Europe and the former Soviet Union

Call for Papers

Workshop

Durham University
22-23 June 2012

The German diaspora can be found in most Eastern and Central European states as well as in some of the successor states of the former Soviet Union. Ethnic German minorities have lived - and albeit in much reduced numbers still live - in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Romania, Moldova, Ukraine, Serbia, Croatia, Hungary, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and, of course, Russia.

During the Cold War - when the iron curtain ensured that only a relatively small number of these ethnic Germans were allowed to leave - West Germany's relationship with these communities focused on facilitating the migration of as many as possible to their alleged 'homeland'. Until the changes to Germany's citizenship laws in the 1980s and 1990s, three million ethnic Germans migrated from Eastern and Central Europe and the (former) Soviet Union. This mass exodus casts severe doubt over the continued existence and long-term survival of these communities.

The main aim of this workshop is to bring together contributions which focus on the state of the German diaspora in Eastern and Central Europe and the former Soviet Union in the wake of the mass migration of the late 1980s and early 1990s. In particular, we invite contributions which

- by way of individual or comparative case studies -
- assess the state of the German diaspora as a transnational community in the aftermath of mass migration;
- identify and examine notions of Germanness in these communities as they have emerged in the post-Cold War context;
- examine state-diaspora relations that have emerged in the post-Cold War world between Germany and these ethnic communities in the postcommunist world;
- identify and assess the significance of any new developments such as the phenomenon of 'reverse return';
- identify any generational differences in perceptions and expressions of Germanness and examine to what extent the narrative of suffering is being replaced by other notions of belonging and/or cultural practices;
- explore the importance of history and memory to these communities;
- investigate the relationship between the émigré communities and the rump communities in the former homeland, as well as between Germany and these states in ECE and the FSU;
- examine the relationship between German communities abroad and their 'host' states
- analyse the nature of the relationship between German communities abroad and other ethnic groups

If you would like to contribute, please send a 250 word abstract and a short CV (including a list of relevant publications) to ruth.wittlinger@durham.ac.uk

Deadline for abstracts: **31 March 2012**

Accommodation and meals for invited speakers will be covered by a grant from Durham University.