Unearthed Files Expose the Romanian Security State

Last month, the Center for European and Mediterranean Studies’ Eastern Europe Workshop hosted Katherine Verdery, distinguished professor of anthropology at the City University of New York (CUNY). Verdery gave a talk about her current research project, which concerns her own secret police file from the archives of communist Romania’s secret police. She hopes to publish a pseudo-memoir tentatively entitled My Life as a Spy.

Verdery discussed both the contents of her file, consisting of some 2,700 pages, as well as the information that her file divulges about the worldview of the Securitate officers who spied on her while she was researching the political economy of social inequality, ethnic relations, and nationalism in Romania in the 1970s and 1980s.

Verdery, an American, emphasized the great expenditure of time, effort, and resources spent by the officers who compiled her Romanian Securitate file. Multiple officers worked on her case, often without knowing one another’s identities, which created a significant amount of information overlap. She claimed that this practice, though inefficient and repetitive, might have been part of a larger effort to maintain secrecy, or what she calls conspirativity: the compartmentalization of tasks present in most intelligence agencies. The principle of conspirativity was evident, for example, in the lack of direct communication between agencies within the Securitate, as well as in the use of multiple code names given to Verdery over the years.

She also hypothesized that the repetition of information might have been inconsequential, since what mattered most was that officers were demonstrating proof that they had completed their tasks. For example, she described a photograph from the file that portrayed her and an officer in an exchange that she remembers well: the officer had warned her not to enter the building she was walking toward. This was a clear breach of conspirativity, she said, so the photo was likely taken as proof that the officer had completed his assigned task.

Acting as ethnographers, the Securitate officers attempted to develop a comprehensive file on this presumed CIA agent: Verdery’s file represents a constructed reality. The sole connection between the various individuals who compiled the expansive file is the file itself. Thus, Verdery views the files themselves as the framework that ultimately constituted the Securitate as a cohesive unit.

Considering the historical context, Verdery said that socialism could not have survived without the production of these files. Communist Romania relied on the creation of an enemy, a category that was then filled with people who fit the bill. Verdery noted that the planned economy valued performance targets over the quality and truth of the information the Securitate collected. Because these files have destroyed families and lives, Verdery believes research into these archives should be an essential element in the post-socialist discourse.
Identity, Immigration and *The Italian American Table*

NYU: November 20
By: Stephen Whittaker

In celebration of Assistant Professor Simone Cinotto’s new book, NYU’s Casa Italiana hosted him in conversation with Fabio Parasecoli of The New School, Annie Hauck-Lawson of Brooklyn College and Luigi DiPalo of Di Palo’s Fine Foods. Cinotto, a scholar of Italian-American history, focuses his research on Italian immigration to the United States. His book, *The Italian American Table*, argues that food is a symbolic response to immigrants’ need to establish identity within their new society.

“It is hard to miss the fact that food is so important to Italian life,” began Cinotto. Food is a significant touchstone of any film or book about Italian-American culture. Moreover, he said, the culinary features of Italian-American culture are “less a persistence of old traditions” than a “creative response to the needs and challenges of migration” within American consumer culture. As new participants of consumer culture, Italian immigrants generally purchased products from the local Italian business community. While some goods were occasionally imported, foodstuffs often came from local suppliers, necessitating an adaption to American items and practices.

These points are personified in the book’s cover art, Ralph Fasanella’s “Family Supper.” Cinotto discussed, with great excitement, the inclusion of this work, as it depicts the working-class and family-oriented nature of meals in many Italian-American households within the structural frame of a home. Italian food products line the shelves, the departed family members adorn the walls as martyrs and a street scene of a food market is painted as part of the home’s foundation.

Cinotto also discussed the social implications of Italian immigration. Family dynamics shifted, markets expanded because of increased demand, and immigrants became somewhat apolitical despite rhetoric in Italy regarding revolutionary socialism. He joked that this political ambivalence was probably because it is difficult to rationalize a socialist revolution when everyone is “happily enjoying steak and apple pie” each night. Neighborhood relations became crucially important, and communities learned to be self-contained, especially those in the “Little Italys” of East Harlem and the Lower East Side.

Cinotto observed that “racial” tensions between northern and southern Italians, as well as levels of assimilation, determined one’s place in the Italian immigrant community. If an Italian appeared to have an “American complexion” or dressed in American styles, they were often perceived as an outsider in the Italian-American community.

These sentiments sparked a wonderfully nostalgic conversation between DiPalo, Hauck-Lawson and Parasecoli. They spoke of their parents’ experiences—and of their own—as members of the Italian-American community in New York. Parasecoli also reminded the audience that Italy is no longer a country that sends its population elsewhere in great numbers. It now receives immigrants. “Italians today would do well to read this book,” he said, referring to the abhorrent treatment of immigrants in Italy today, “Italians have been very quick to forget their own struggles.”

Progress on EU Data Protection Regulation

By Michael Zelenko
CUNY: November 14

In the wake of this summer’s NSA spying scandal and its continuing fallout across Europe, the European Union Studies Center invited Bernhard Schima, a legal adviser in the European Commission’s Legal Service, to deliver a presentation entitled “Towards a European Data Protection Regulation—the Commission’s Proposal and Recent Developments.”

Though data privacy is commonly associated with the digital era, the European Court of Justice first ruled on the subject in 1969 in a case known as *Stauder v. City of Ulm*. In that case, a community program established to distribute butter at reduced prices required the disclosure of the name of the recipient of the butter. A certain Mr. Stauder refused to provide his identity and his successful case against this disclosure policy laid the groundwork for the fundamental rights of privacy.

Since then, data protection has been enshrined in the general principles of EU law, codified in Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights. Much of Schima’s detailed presentation outlined the European Commission’s General Data Protection Regulation, which will replace the current Data Protection Directive. The first significant update of Europe’s data protection laws in almost two decades, the General Data Protection Regulation is currently under negotiation and is expected to be adopted in spring 2014.
It aims to address the changing nature of personal data in the digital era. In crafting the legislation, 4,000 amendments were considered, with just over 100 finally being adopted. For instance, unlike the Data Protection Directive, the new General Data Protection Regulation will apply to all organizations dealing in EU data, whether or not the companies in question are located within the EU. In addition, individuals will have the right to access their own data, as well as the “right to be forgotten,” meaning people will be able to delete their personal data if there are no legitimate grounds for its retention. Rules on data protection will be streamlined—a single set of rules will be established across the EU—and security will be improved, with companies and organizations now required to notify national supervisory authorities of serious data breaches within the first 24 hours. Any breach of EU data protection regulations will now also lead to penalties of up to €1 million or 2 percent of that company’s global annual turnover.

If the regulation is enacted, Schima said we can expect “better defined rights for data subjects, simple procedures for controllers of personal data and, finally, an important contribution to the creation of a singular digital market.” Unfortunately, the legislation is already seeing resistance by member states Sweden and the United Kingdom, so successful passage will depend on striking a balance between all interested parties.

A Documentary on Greece's HIV Witch Hunt

NYU: November 8, 2013
By: Kavitha Surana

As part of NYU’s Radical Film and Lecture Series, the Global Center for Academic and Spiritual Life hosted a film screening and discussion of the Greek documentary Ruins: Chronicle of an HIV Witch-Hunt by Athens-based journalist Theodora Oikonomides. A Q&A with Oikonomides and Michelle O’Brien, a doctoral candidate in the department of sociology at NYU, followed the screening.

Ruins: Chronicle of an HIV Witch-Hunt explores government and media hysteria over a supposed “HIV-outbreak” in the run-up to the Greek 2012 elections and exposes some of Greek society’s problematic attitudes towards women, race and the poor. After a young prostitute was found to be HIV-positive in 2012, the government initiated a roundup of poor women in the center of Athens and tested them at police stations without their consent. Women who tested positive were indicted on criminal charges of intent to spread the disease, and their information and photographs were distributed to the public. Though almost none of those found to be infected were prostitutes and most were Greek, the media and government characterized it as an epidemic of immigrant prostitutes who were trying to infect their clients. Women accused of spreading HIV were brought to court and demonized in the media, their lives destroyed.

Furthermore, the Greek government overreacted—for example, guards used plastic gloves whenever they had to escort the women, as if the disease was transferred through skin contact. The film argues that the stigmatization of HIV and the demonization of the women was used as a tool to mobilize voters in a tough election season.

Though the women’s photos are publicly available and known throughout Greece, the film makes a conscious choice not to identify them. All photos are blurred and interviewees are shown from the back as they recount their experiences, restoring some of the privacy lost through this harrowing ordeal.

A lively Q&A, along with a Greek buffet, followed the screening. O’Brien drew some useful connections with American AIDS policies and a link between AIDS and austerity. She said that HIV criminalization is a real problem in the U.S. as well—32 states have laws on the books that make HIV transmission a crime. The criminalization and stigmatization of the disease means that people feel less safe getting tested and talking to healthcare providers. Additionally, socially marginalized groups who are infected are often treated as scapegoats by general society. “This is the use of stigma as a means of gathering support for right-wing agendas to attack the poor and working class more broadly,” she said. “The fight around AIDS has always been a fight for dignity and a challenge to the ideology of the right-wing agendas.”
Conservativism and Greek Austerity Politics

Columbia: November 21
By: Stephen Whittaker

As part of the Blinken European Institute Seminar, Dr. Konstantinos Karpozilos recently offered a lecture on the historical background and reasons for the recent conservative revolution in Greece. Karpozilos, the Niarchos Postdoctoral Fellow at the Blinken Institute, is an expert on radicalism and revolution in postwar Europe.

He began by observing that a simple Internet search will yield headlines heralding the “end of austerity” in Greece and much of Europe. However, he is not sure that historians or the general public can understand the effects of austerity measures. He posited that austerity is likely the consequence of a natural condition of the economy. As a result, talking heads can comment all they want, but austerity can never be truly understood or appreciated in its value to society. He likened it to quantum physics by saying that, while we can delve deeply into the study of the subject, understanding austerity, as with physics, is only at the “deepest reaches of the science,” and “we have not yet arrived there.”

In the Greek case, according to Karpozilos, one witnesses a significant transformation in austerity politics. It defies the “traditional pillars of the postwar social model” and is an example of how quickly many forget the past. He reminded the audience that “austerity defined Western society until the 1950s.” With the rise of the EU, especially its infrastructure programs and the Common Agricultural Policy, many Europeans are looking forward when they should be considering the past.

Framing Greek austerity measures as a result of the Eurozone crisis highlights the shift from limited to mass consumption, a trend that peaked in the 1990s. Karpozilos said that this peak was a turning point for austerity politics. While Greece is often painted as a model of failure, he argued the opposite. Up until its financial collapse, “Greek capitalism” was radically successful and based on state-funded infrastructure as well as private banking domestically and in the greater Balkans. It raised the standard of living for Greeks and turned the idea of austerity into an attack on the Greek way of life instead of a necessary evil.

This shifting understanding of austerity came to the forefront of Greek politics in 2010. In the eyes of Karpozilos, the failure of the Left to determine a viable alternative to austerity de-politicized the issue. After the 2012 elections, politicians saw technocracy as the only way to navigate the crisis.

This “ineffective and depoliticized left” prompted a conservative revolution that returned Greece to the political conditions of the 1970s and 1980s. Greece is trapped in a “Weimar” paradigm of extremes. The Left complains and offers no solutions while the Right jockeys for power.

In order for Greece to emerge from political and economic crisis, Karpozilos suggests that the Left must break free from its historical entrapment in history. They only know how to contest the Right, not defeat them. The Left has grown so used to the “old order of affairs” that they cannot effectively lead when the nation desperately needs them to. According to Karpozilos, in order to combat the conservative revolution, the Greek Left must “transition from protest to power politics” and produce a coherent vision for a “post-capitalist society.”

The Perils of Balkan Machismo

By: Michael Zelenko
November 15: NYU

For November’s meeting of the Gender and Transformation in Europe Workshop at CEMS, the group welcomed Tatjana Aleksic to give a presentation entitled “The Victims of Post-Socialist Economic Transition in the Western Balkans: A Socio-Cultural Panorama.” Assistant Professor of Slavic and Comparative Literatures at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Aleksic is the author of the recently published The Sacrificed Body. Her book analyzes the use of the sacrificial metaphor in cultural texts to sustain communal ideologies in the Balkans. Her presentation
at CEMS centered on violence in post-socialist Europe, cults of masculine aggressiveness in the Balkans and their pernicious impact on vulnerable communities. Aleksic stressed that she was not interested in the victimization of women, but instead in the complex gender dynamics of the region and how the perceived emasculation of men spurs aggression.

Aleksic kicked off her presentation by giving the audience a profile of contemporary violence in the region. Mob violence in post-Yugoslav Balkans is “unfocused and angry,” she said. It regularly erupts during public events such as soccer matches or rallies, and commonly targets groups that are seen as “weak,” such as the homosexual community. Much of this violence stems from a perceived need to protect the familial structure, and a notion that nation states in the region lack strong, paternal figureheads—that men are no longer the masters of their own domains.

This crisis of gender roles in the Balkans has its roots in Tito’s Yugoslavia. Though the communist Yugoslav regime never established gender equality, rhetoric used during the era promoted the concept. Aleksic pointed out that both state-sanctioned films as well as avant-garde “Black Wave” films harped on concepts of equality, the latter using misogyny to symbolize inequality between sexes. The history of Yugoslavia, Aleksic said, reads like a case of “Freudian castration anxiety.”

The last decade of Yugoslavia’s existence was marked by rampant unemployment, shortages of basic goods, strikes and extreme debt. As the country ripped itself apart, leaders passed up the opportunity to create more inclusive, open societies, and instead dug deeper trenches, creating seven patriarchal communities.

In this environment, rigid interpretations of masculinity forced softer interpretations into submission. The nations’ communist histories were gendered as feminine, and in an effort to distance themselves from their communist past these countries reinstated severe patriarchal norms. Aleksic suggested that post-Yugoslav women reacted in two ways: either they stood by passively while their rights were curtailed, or they supported the transition to the household because they felt the home represented a shelter from the oppressive nature of the socialist workplace—though she also added that this drastic shift in gender roles “is not easily understood.”

Meanwhile, media in the 1990s glorified gang members and street fighters, who were oftentimes little more than war criminals. Gang members were revered for having rebelled against their own victimhood, and their amoral and criminal activities were cast as a means of overcoming difficult conditions. In time, these individuals became masculine role models.

The obsession with masculinity and objectification of women had brutal ramifications. Organized rape during the conflicts of the 1990s was seen as a means of humiliating the male group to which the victim belonged. “Men communicated with other men over the bodies of women,” Aleksic said. Torture and the repetitive rape of women were seen as an affront to the opposing male group, and women’s perspectives were rarely figured into the equation. These wars marked a resurgence of masculinity in the Balkans and the return to chauvinism was seen as a return to traditional values.

Aleksic wrapped up her presentation by saying that today these Balkan communities continue to see themselves as defined by their male components. Fragile visions of masculinity are viewed as undesired imports from abroad. This attitude is reflected in headline news, such as the recent clash during a gay pride parade in Montenegro, which resulted in 60 arrests and 20 police officers injured.

Aleksic’s presentation was followed by a lively conversation. Russia expert Janet Johnson, an associate professor of Political Science at Brooklyn College, CUNY, noted that although there’s specificity in this narrative to the Balkans, there is evidence of the same obsession with criminal machismo across post-Soviet states. “Yes, the same trends emerged across eastern Europe and post-Soviet states,” responded Aleksic. “But the difference in the Balkans is that it resulted in wars.”
Prison Healthcare Advocacy in Georgia

Columbia: November 25
By: Kavitha Surana

The Harriman Institute recently invited Nina Gelashvili, a human rights activist from Georgia, to present her work on human rights advocacy in her country. In 2011, Gelashvili co-founded the NGO Youth for Justice - Georgia, a group that currently focuses on advocating for improved prison healthcare measures. Gelashvili is currently in New York to deepen her expertise at the Human Rights Advocates Program at the Institute for the Study of Human Right at Columbia.

Gelashvili began her presentation with some background. She said that public healthcare issues in prisons gained awareness in the 1980s when some western European countries started incorporating public healthcare structures into penitentiary systems in their national legislations. The prisoner’s right to health was established as being based upon the “principle of equivalence”—that prisoners should have access to the same standard of health care as the wider public. This right is recommended and promoted by the Human Rights Committee of the United Nations, the Council of Europe and the European Court of Human Rights, among other international bodies.

Georgia began reforming its prison healthcare system in 2005 by constructing new medical facilities and establishing new ministries of health care and correction in order to harmonize national legislation with international human rights standards. However, Gelashvili said there have been many gaps and deficiencies in implementation of the new program. For instance, the legislative authority left leeway for national courts and the commission to interpret when to suspend the enforcement of a sentence on healthcare grounds. As a result, it remains unclear what constitutes “severe disease” and an “impediment to the completion of a sentence.”

Gelashvili’s research with Youth for Justice found that many problems in the prison healthcare system are related to high imprisonment rates and overcrowding. There is a high mortality rate and high prevalence of infectious and communicable diseases. A Georgian Department of State report found that of those Georgian prisoners who died during incarceration, 50 percent passed away in the medical establishments for convicted prisoners instead of public healthcare facilities. According to Gelashvili, this could indicate that prisoners with communicable diseases were going untreated, and only being transferred to prison medical facilities during the last stages of their illnesses.

Youth for Justice brought 40 cases related to prison health care to the European Court of Human Rights. In 18, the court held that the problems of medical treatment for prisoners suffering from hepatitis C were of a structural and systematic nature. It was not only an aggravating factor with regard to the state’s responsibility but also a threat to the further effectiveness of the convention’s mechanisms. The court urged the national government to carry out prompt and effective legislative and administrative measures to remedy these structural problems.

Since then, Youth for Justice has been part of a working group in partnership with other NGOs. Together, the group has reformed the commission that makes decisions about which prisoners can have their sentences reviewed for suspension in order to receive medical treatment. The composition of the commission was changed to include four permanent members and two doctors who assess the health of each prisoner. Final decisions are issued within 14 days of application. Another working group also established an alternative to this process by providing more options for prisoners in need of medical attention.

Gelashvili said that her group has seen the process move forward positively, with more prisoners succeeding in getting necessary healthcare treatment. Youth for Justice continues to monitor the healthcare situation in Georgian prisons, conducting comparative analyses of needs and drawing up recommendations, among other activities.

After Gelashvili’s presentations, audience members were curious to know more about healthcare issues in the prisons related to drug addiction and psychiatric problems. Gelashvili said that drug use can be a problem in the prison system, and pointed out that these substances are often supplied by prison guards. She added that psychotropic drugs are sometimes used in Georgian prisons because it makes prisoners easy to control. Gelashvili estimated that 8 to 10 percent of deaths in Georgian prisons might be caused by psychiatric disorders, though there are no established data on this. She said her group was also working on suicide prevention policies.

Gelashvili ended the Q&A on a troubling note: establishing a principle of equivalence between public and prison health care may not be a significant enough improvement, as Georgia’s general healthcare system is also inefficient at serving its unincarcerated population.
Right-Wing Populism on the March in Europe

Columbia: December 2
By: Michael Zelenko

Against the backdrop of the recent resurgence of right-wing populist movements across Europe, Columbia’s School of International and Public Affairs recently hosted "Populism in Europe and Beyond," a roundtable discussion on the roots and nature of contemporary populist movements. The two-hour long roundtable was moderated by Assistant Professor of Political Science Turkı Isıksel from Columbia University. Speakers included Associate Professor Andreas Kalyvas, Professor Jan-Werner Mueller, doctoral candidate Maria Paula Saffon Sanin, Professor Nadia Urbinati and Professor Andrew Arato.

Mueller, professor of politics at Princeton University, characterized populist movements as anti-elitist, anti-pluralist and anti-liberal. As a rule, populist movements posit themselves as the privileged stakeholders of a morally pure and “authentic” populous, which they contrast against the so-called corrupt elite. Mueller echoed the sentiments of Andrew Arato, professor of political and social theory at the New School, who suggested earlier during the roundtable that populist movements in power are vulnerable to the same forms of counter-democracy that they struggled against. Despite being anti-parliamentarian—as parliamentarian government suggests plurality—populist movements are able to govern by relying on clientilism to maintain political support. As a result, “populists in power end up doing exactly the things that they had accused the previous party of—they usurp the state,” said Mueller.

Sanin, a doctoral candidate of Political Science at Columbia, offered a Latin American counterpart to the discussion, saying that populist regimes are often the most successful regimes in South America. For countries with significant inequalities in wealth distribution, populist movements offer a compelling promise of redistribution and political inclusion. Furthermore, Sanin suggested that most critics of populism refuse to seriously consider the claim that populist movements are a form of radical democracy with a stated goal of recovering components of societal equality. Sanin also stressed that populist movements regularly win elections. That said, Sanin also admitted that populism is problematic when confronted with issues such as representational democracy and constitutionalism. In order to reform populist governments, she suggested we must avoid labeling these governments authoritarian and risk being discredited by regime supporters, but instead hold populist governments accountable to the democratic ideals they espouse.

For Urbinati, a professor of Political Science at Columbia University, populism is a parasitical phenomenon dependent on democracy. Urbinati suggested that populism stretches the notion of democracy to its limit in three ways: it exaggerates the majority principle to the point of majoritarianism; it eschews complexity in favor of simplicity and transforms pluralism into polarization; and it is often characterized by the prominence and significance of a singular, central political leader. According to Urbinati, unlike movements that are popular without a populist agenda (i.e. the Occupy movement), populism is a political “style” with the ultimate goal of seeking state power.

Finally, Andreas Kalyvas, associate professor of Political Science at The New School, placed populism within a contemporary European context. In Europe, populism is predominantly a phenomenon associated with the extreme right—a movement that vilifies both the government entitled technocratic elite and disenfranchised migrant foreigners. Unlike contemporary populism in Latin America, European populism is marked by xenophobia. Meanwhile, anti-populist discourse attempts to isolate the populist phenomenon and in turn re-affirms the basic techniques of populism by promoting dualism—us vs. them—and claiming representational primacy. In order to combat populism, Kalyvas suggested a redefinition of “popular” to encompass the entire population, which includes the poor, the marginal, and the migrant factions of society. This strategy—largely untapped by the Left—would promote openness and plurality across borders. Kalyvas concluded, “The way to fight populism is to fight nationalism.”

During the spirited discussion period that followed, Arato challenged Sanin’s assertions about the efficacy and democratic potential of populist movements in South America and chose Venezuela as a case-in-point. “[Chavez] outlawed parties. When populists are a majority, they are majoritarian, but when they’re a minority, they’re minoritarian. Elections for them are only tools, and majoritarianism for them is only a slogan.” Sanin countered that, while these criticisms were valid, they were not sufficient to bring about reform. To do so, academics need to hold populist governments to the democratic ideals the governments claim to champion.

The roundtable speakers largely agreed on the root of the contemporary populist movements in Europe: the implosion of the Soviet Union, the rise of nationalistic and anti-communist politics in eastern Europe and increased migration. According to Kalyvas, the events of 1989 suggested that there was no political path but the centrist one. Arato suggests that the rise of populism is closely tied to the fall of global Leftism—“nothing has come to occupy that space.” For Urbinati, the 90s marked the end of ideology and the dawn of meritocracy, technocracy and the politics of truth. Part of the impetus for the rise of populism in Europe, said moderator Isıksel, is “a frustration with the failure of technocracy in Europe and it not producing the results expected.”
Transitions to Democracy in Southern European

NYU: November 19
By: Kavitha Surana

The A.S. Onassis Program in Hellenic Studies Department’s small conference room was packed past capacity with audience members overflowing into the hallway for last month’s mini-colloquium, “Revisiting the Transitions to Democracy in Greece, Spain & Portugal.” Dr. Kostis Kornetis, assistant professor and faculty fellow at CEMS, invited Dr. Kostis Karpozilos, Dr. Alberto Medina and doctoral candidate Daniel da Silva, three academics affiliated with Columbia University, to present on their respective countries of interest. Dr. Maria Elena Cavallaro, a visiting scholar at CEMS, and Dr. Germán Labrador Méndez, an assistant professor of Spanish and Portuguese Languages and Cultures at Princeton, were present as respondents to the discussion.

Kornetis, whose recently published book Children of the Dictatorship chronicles student dissent and activism under Greece’s 1967-1974 dictatorship, began by mentioning reasons for convening the mini-colloquia. Though the democratic transitions of Spain and Greece were considered model transitions to democracy, the recent simultaneous political and economic crises in both countries have created a need to reassess post-authoritarian phenomena. “In moments of deep social political and economic crisis the recent past often becomes a central issue of contention,” he said. He added that the recent Arab Spring uprisings have reawakened the central questions of what constitutes a smooth passage to democratic rule. “Which issues regarding democratic transition do we choose to remember and to forget?” he asked the audience. “How would we reconstruct the events if we applied a bottom up instead of top down historical approach?”

Karpozilos, a postdoctoral fellow at Columbia’s Blinken European Institute, offered a presentation entitled “Revisiting the Myths of the Greek Transition: In Search of the Revolutionary Moment.” He began with a provocative thought on imagining history: “I think that our historical imagination is defined by an idea of a linear transition between key moments,” he said. “In the Greek case, the final outcome is perceived as the inevitable outcome of certain events.”

Karpozilos argued that this is problematic when one considers certain “myths” that surround Greek resistance to the junta (1967-1974). Karpozilos questioned the dominant narrative’s validity by looking at accounts from the day after the critical uprisings at the Polytechnic, before the Junta collapsed. After it collapsed, he found that very different dominant narrative emerged in the Greek consciousness, promoting the idea that what happened during the military Junta was an anomalous trauma in Greek history and that the resistance constituted the majority of the masses. This encouraged the idea that the country needed to move on towards democracy by joining the European Union. According to his research, the assumptions underlying this narrative are based on myths.

Medina, director of undergraduate and graduate studies at Columbia’s Department of Latin American and Iberian Cultures, presented a paper titled, "Portrait of the Nation as a Young Corpse – Spanish Transition and the Spectacle of Passion.” In it, Medina framed Spain’s transition to democracy as a coming of age story that incorporated the cultural explosion of the post-authoritarian Movida, but silenced other versions of what was going on inside Spain. He identified La Luna de Madrid, a cultural magazine of the time, as one of the primary image creators.

“Citizens, for the first time, could afford to focus on personal interests,” said Medina. “There was no conflict between working effectively at day and doing what they wanted at night.” In fact, Medina argued, the crux of the Movida was the very fact that people could be who they wanted to be at night. “What characterized the Movida for people around La Luna was not the capacity to break the rules, but to go back to them every day,” said Medina. He also analyzed the media’s treatment of heroin and later, AIDS, which he said helped construct the image of a “disoriented youth” who had abandoned the traditional script in reaction to newfound liberalism.

With “Different Folk: Zeca Afonso and Music in the Portuguese Revolution,” da Silva contributed an analysis of a Portuguese folk song, Vila Grandola Morena, in the context of the transition to democracy. He explained that “Vila Grandola Morena,” a song that describes an idealized village, was a significant manifestation of resistance because, “under the Estado Novo, folklore became a function for state ideology.” The authoritarian state actively appropriated cultural heritage and folklore to promote “rustic Portugal as a constant live exhibition of popular art…people were, in this, way occupied and organized and exploited in Estado Novo mythmaking,” he said.

"Vila Grandola Morena,” which was sung in groups in a Cante Alentejano style and associated with workers brought together by their fieldwork, “subverted the state’s monopoly of folklore.” Da Silva also said that the song is essentially an expression of class struggle and noted that the song has been used recently in the context of austerity protests.

Each contributor to the colloquium dealt with the topic of democratic transition in a very different way, offering thought-provoking approaches to engage with the past and reconcile the post-authoritarian history of Southern European countries with the current Eurozone crisis.
UPCOMING EVENTS

—NEW YORK UNIVERSITY—

CENTER FOR EUROPEAN AND MEDITERRANEAN STUDIES
285 Mercer Street, 7th Floor. All events take place at the Center unless otherwise noted. 212.998.3838
http://www.cems.as.nyu.edu


TUESDAY, December 10 at 6:30 PM Discussion: "Swiss Talks: Beat Richner and Georges Cachot," with Beat Richner (Pediatrician and Comedian), Georges Cachot (Film director) and Thomas Schneider (Consulate General of Switzerland in New York).

LA MAISON FRANÇAISE
16 Washington Mews. All events take place at the Maison unless otherwise noted. 212.998.8750
http://www.nyu.edu/maisonfrancaise

MONDAY, December 2 at 7:00 PM Talk: “L’Ensignement de la Torture,” by Catherine Perret (University of Paris). This event is in French.

TUESDAY, December 10 at 7:00 PM Concert: “Soirée Musicale: A Celebration of French Art,” with works by Hector Berlioz, Gabriel Fauré, Henri Sauguet, and Francis Poulenc.


CASA ITALIANA
24 West 12th Street. All events take place at the Casa unless otherwise noted. 212.995.4012
casa.italiana@nyu.edu
http://www.nyu.edu/pages/casaitaliana

WEDNESDAY, December 11 at 6:00 PM Film: “Focaccia Blues,” by Mary Ann Carolan (Fairfield University) and Millicent Marcus (Yale). Q&A will follow the screening. The film is in Italian with English subtitles.

THURSDAY, December 12 at 7:00 PM Concert: "MUSICA VIVA: Young Artists from Italy," with Francesca Bogo and Valentina Benelli. Music by J.S. Bach, Piazzolla, Trojjan, Reindl, Solotarjow and Hermosa.

FRIDAY, December 13 at 6:00 PM Film: “41 PARALLELO Screening: New Cinema from Naples (Day 3),” in collaboration with Napoli Film Fest. All films are in Italian with English subtitles.

—COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY—

THE BLINKEN EUROPEAN INSTITUTE
420 West 118th Street, International Affairs Building (IAB), Room 1205. 212.854.4618
All events take place at the Institute unless otherwise noted.
www.bei.columbia.edu

MONDAY, December 2 at 6:10 PM Discussion: "Populism in Europe and Beyond," with Andrew Arato (New School), Turku Isiksel (Columbia), Andreas Kalyvas (New School), Jan-Werner Mueller (Princeton), Maria Paula Saffon Sanin (Columbia), Nadia Urbinati (Columbia). At Room 107, Jerome Greene Hall (Law School).

FRIDAY, December 6 at 12:30 PM

THE HARRIMAN INSTITUTE
420 West 118th Street, International Affairs Building (IAB), Room 1219. All events take place at the Institute unless otherwise noted.
212.854.4623
http://www.harrimaninstitute.org

TUESDAY, December 3 at 12:00 PM
Lecture: "From Promise to Terror: Ukrainian Socialists Between Imperial Austria, Poland and Soviet Ukraine,” by Iryna Vushko (Hunter College).

TUESDAY, December 3 at 4:00 PM
Panel: “The Internal Other in East Central Europe,” with Kristen Ghodsee (Bowdoin College), Marina Mikhailova (Temple University), Evgenia Ivanova (Oxford), Gergely Romsics (Balsass Institute), Snježana Milivojević (University of Belgrade). At Room 1512 International Affairs Building.

Wednesday, December 4 at 4:15 PM
Discussion: “Burning Issues of Human Rights in the Western Balkans: The Perspective of Practitioners,” with Darija Marić (Columbia), Nataša Govedarica (Columbia) and Snježana Milivojević (University of Belgrade).

THURSDAY, December 5 at 12:00 PM

TUESDAY, December 5 at 4:00 PM
Talk: "Working on Central Asia: A Ground-level View,” by Nate Schenkkan (Freedom House).

LA MAISON FRANÇAISE
Broadway at West 116th Street, Buell Hall, 2nd Floor. All events take place at Buell Hall unless otherwise noted.
212.854.4482
maisoncoordinator@columbia.edu

WEDNESDAY, December 4 at 6:00 PM
Lecture: "Languages of the People: A Romanian-Jewish Linguist on Yiddish and French,” by Natalie Zemon Davis (Princeton University, University of Toronto)

THURSDAY, December 5 at 6:00 PM
Discussion: “Making History: a Roundtable Discussion with Natalie Zemon Davis,” with Columbia University Scholars Elisheva Carlebach (History & Jewish Studies), Matthew Jones (History), Natasha Lightfoot (History) and Claudio Lomnitz (Anthropology & Center for the Study of Ethnicity & Race).

THURSDAY, December 5 at 10:00 AM
Research Workshop: "Researchathon on Aimé Césaire,” Led by digital humanities expert and Caribbean scholar Alex Gil, this day-long collaborative research event is intended to compile the largest online bibliography of primary and secondary sources related to Aimé Césaire. Open to students, scholars, librarians, and technologists, the researchathon will train and organize task-based teams (data entry, web and catalog research, programming, etc) and go live at the end of the day. At Studio@Butler, Butler Library 208.

FRIDAY, December 6 at 10:00 AM
Celebration: "The Work of Man Has Only Just Begun: Legacies of Aimé Césaire,” a centennial celebration of the Martinican poet and statesman with Anne Eller (Yale), Millery Polyné (NYU), Gary Wilder (CUNY), Yarimar Bonilla (Rutgers), Carrie Noland (University of California, Irvine), Christopher Winks (CUNY), Brent Edwards (Columbia), Erica Hunt (Poet)

Benner (Yale), Giovanni Giorgini (University of Bologna), Thomas Berns (Free University of Brussels), Harvey Mansfield (Harvard), Philip C. Bobbit (Columbia), John McCormick (University of Chicago), Jo Ann Cavallo (Columbia), Luca Baccelli (University of Camerino), Filippo Del Lucchese (Brunel University), Pasquale Pasquino (NYU), Benedetto Fontana (Baruch College, CUNY), Paul A. Rahe (Hillsdale College), Marie Gaille (Paris-CNRS), Quentin Skinner (University of London).

MONDAY, December 9 at 6:00 PM

MONDAY, December 10 at 6:00 PM
Lecture: “Socrates as a Satyr: a Conundrum in the History of Greek Portraiture,” with Luca Giuliani (Humboldt University) and Maria Luisa Catoni (IMT Lucca).

WEDNESDAY, December 11 at 7:00 PM

THE EUROPEAN STUDIES CENTER
365 Fifth Avenue. All events take place at the Center unless otherwise noted.
212.817.2051
eusc@gc.cuny.edu
http://euromatters.org/center

THURSDAY, December 5 at 11:00 AM

TUESDAY, December 11 at 6:00 PM

---City University of New York---

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FRIDAY, SATURDAY December 6, 7
Conference: "Liberty and Conflict: Machiavelli on Politics and Power,” with Jérémie Barthas (University of London), Marco Geuna (University of Milan), Erica
November 3: Experts revealed the discovery of more than 1,400 artworks in the possession of an elderly man in a Munich apartment. The collection, believed to have been originally confiscated or sold cheaply under the Nazis, includes work by Pablo Picasso, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, Oskar Kokoschka, Canaletto, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Franz Marc and Gustave Courbet.

November 5: As Greece entered its sixth straight year of recession, protestors in the country jeered and heckled IMF and EU austerity inspectors.

November 5: About 6,000 street and parks cleaners went on strike in Madrid when job cuts and salary reductions were announced by the three private sector companies that manage the city’s street cleaning.

November 7: To the surprise of many analysts, the European Central Bank reacted to deflationary fears by cutting interest rates from .5 percent to .25 percent.

November 11: Greece’s conservative-socialist coalition government survived a no-confidence vote after a coalition led by Syriza, the radical left-wing opposition party, tried to bring it down.

November 13: Two right-wing nationalistic political leaders, France’s Marine Le Pen and the Netherlands’ Geert Wilders, announced plans for a pan-European alliance to join forces in the 2014 European Parliamentary elections.

November 14: Ireland announced it will exit its EU-IMF bailout program without a precautionary line of credit.

November 15: Russian authorities revealed the whereabouts of imprisoned Pussy Riot punk rock band member Nadezhda Tolokonnikova, who was transferred to a prison facility in Krasnoyarsk, 3,400 kilometers from Moscow, after going on a hunger strike at a prison colony in Mordovia.

November 17: In Madrid, street cleaners voted to end a two-week strike that has left the capital’s streets clogged with trash. The companies avoided lay-offs, and in return, workers accepted a 9 percent wage reduction.

November 18: French police locked down sections of Paris after a man opened fire at the office of the French daily *Libération* and in front of Société Général tower.

November 22: After two tense months, Russia released most of the Greenpeace activists known as the Artic 30, though the charges against them of hooliganism still stand. Russian authorities accused the activists of trying to take over an oil platform and endangering the lives of the oil company’s employees, adding that the activists’ actions could have led to an environmental disaster.

November 22: In the deadliest accident since Latvia won independence from the USSR, 51 people perished when the roof of supermarket in the capital, Riga, collapsed. The tragedy resulted in the resignation of the country’s prime minister.

November 24: After Ukraine’s government declined to sign an Association Agreement with the European Union, angered Ukrainians took to the streets in mass demonstrations. Many saw the decision as a capitulation to Russia's strong arm tactics.

November 26: France sent approximately 1,000 troops to the Central African Republic to join 400 troops already stationed there. The country has been wracked by violence since a coup earlier this year.

November 27: Germany’s Chancellor Angela Merkel, leader of the Christian Democrats, officially formed a coalition with the Social Democrats. The deal, which took more than two months to negotiate, will introduce a new minimum wage program.

November 27: Italy’s senate voted to expel ex-Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi from parliament for his tax-fraud conviction.

November 27: A Belgian Senate committee signed off on a controversial bill that would extend the right to request euthanasia to children suffering terminal illnesses and adults with dementia.
EUROPE•NYC Newsletter of the New York Consortium for European Studies

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