

'West Coast Seminars'

on

**Economic and Social Change in Russia and Eastern Europe
(Glasgow, West of Scotland [Paisley campus] and Strathclyde Universities)**

Eighteenth Series 2011-2012

The organisers of the West Coast Seminar Series are grateful for the financial support provided by the University of Glasgow MacFie Bequest

<http://www.universitystory.gla.ac.uk/biography/?id=WH0079&type=P>

Wednesday 01 February

17.30

Central and East European Studies Seminar Room, 8 Lilybank Gardens

Professor Joanna Beata Michlic

Associate Professor of History, Director of HBI Projects on Families, Children and the Holocaust at Brandeis University, USA

'The Path of Bringing the Dark to Light: Memory of the Holocaust in Post-communist Europe'

Tea and coffee from 17.00

ALL WELCOME

Joanna Beata Michlic is a social and cultural historian and Director of HBI (Hadassah-Brandeis Institute) Project on Families, Children, and the Holocaust at Brandeis University. Until December 2008 Michlic was an Associate Professor of History and Chair of the Holocaust and Ethical Values at Lehigh University, Bethlehem Pennsylvania. Her major publications include *Neighbors Respond: The Controversy about Jedwabne* (2004; co-edited with Antony Polonsky) and *Poland's Threatening Other: The Image of the Jew from 1880 to the Present* (hardback 2006, paperback 2008, Polish translation 2012, Hebrew translation 2013), and the forthcoming *Bringing the Dark to Light: The Reception of the Holocaust in Postcommunist Europe*, co-edited with John-Paul Himka (Lincoln, NUP, 2012). Her current main research topics are the memory of the Holocaust in post-communist Europe, Christian rescuers and the politicization of rescue of Jews, and East European Jewish childhood. She is a recipient of many academic awards and fellowships, most recently the Rothschild Foundation (Hanadiv) Europe Visiting Fellowship, Spring 2012.

(abstract attached)

Professor Joanna Beata Michlic

Associate Professor of History, Director of HBI Projects on Families, Children and the Holocaust at Brandeis University, USA

jmichlic@brandeis.edu jmichlic@comcast.net

'The Path of Bringing the Dark to Light: Memory of the Holocaust in Post-communist Europe'

Abstract

In 1945, only a few grasped the extent of the destruction of East European Jews and their civilization and the implication of this loss for the region. Today, the Holocaust has become the European paradigm of *lieu de mémoire* and the universal icon of evil. Most recently some have claimed the Holocaust an international paradigm of human rights. These developments have evolved in different directions, creating greater understanding of the impact of the Holocaust on the one hand, and on the other making poor analogies and producing competing narratives of martyrdom. In Europe, in spite of the establishment of the International Day of Holocaust Remembrance (27 January), the memory of the Holocaust does not cease to cause tensions between the West and the postcommunist countries. In the latter states, the memory of the Gulag and reluctance to come to terms with the dark wartime past in relation to local Jewish communities play a significant role in the manner in which the Holocaust is remembered today.

When communism collapsed in Eastern Europe in 1989 and in the Soviet Union in 1991, coming to terms with the Holocaust was one of the political, moral, and cultural challenges that encumbered postcommunist Europe's "return" to Europe. But the restoration of memory has not been and could not have been a smooth, unifying, and unified process. And at present it is still undergoing many dynamic transformations of competing and discordant remembering. The presentation discusses the two major stages of the process of restoration of memory of the Holocaust in postcommunist Europe and argues that in order to understand its ongoing dynamics three key dimensions recurring in the landscape of memory of Jews and the Holocaust should be considered: remembering to remember, remembering to benefit, and remembering to forget. By studying these dimensions carefully, we learn the nature of the reconceptualization of Jews and the Holocaust, and the limits of the recognition and integration of the "dark past" by broader multigenerational sections of postcommunist societies.