

Co-Conveners: Duke University and University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, Departments of History

### Friday, 26 January 2024

2:00 – 4:00 pm **Zoom Seminar**

Konrad H. Jarausch Essay Prize Winner for  
Advanced Graduate Students in 2023:

## MIRA MARKHAM

Graduate Student, UNC Chapel Hill, Dept. of History



## *Operation Velehrad, 1950: Communism, Catholicism, and Popular Tradition in Czechoslovakia*

During the period of greatest repression of the Catholic Church in Stalinist Czechoslovakia, Communist leaders organized and promoted an official manifestation at Velehrad, which since the mid-nineteenth century had come to represent a Moravian Catholic vision of Czech nationhood that both emphasized popular piety and rural tradition, and connected a peripheral region to the broader Slavic and Christian world. By co-opting a symbol of local, national, and international significance, Communist activists attempted to shift the loyalties of lay believers and rank-and-file priests away from the Catholic hierarchy and toward the new regime and its allies in the Soviet bloc. Operation Velehrad—as local activists dubbed the state-sponsored pilgrimage—reveals the persistence of a little-researched regional tradition of Czech Catholic politics and highlights the rhetorical and ideological flexibility of the Czechoslovak Communist regime during its early years.

**MIRA MARKHAM** is a graduate student in history at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill. Her dissertation, “Power in the Village: Rural Political Life in Czechoslovakia, 1944-1954,” examines how ordinary people in the region of Moravian Wallachia engaged with state power as both modern citizens and members of traditional rural communities during the decade of political transition following the Second World War. Her article “Světлана: Partisans and Power in Post-War Czechoslovakia” was published in the journal *Contemporary European History* in 2021.

**Moderation:** **KAREN HAGEMANN** | James G. Kenan Distinguished Professor of History, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Department of History

**Laudation:** **JAMES CHAPPEL** | Gilhuly Family Associate Professor, Duke University, Department of History

**Comments:** **PIOTR H. KOSICKI** | Associate Professor, University of Maryland, Department of History  
**KYRILL KUNAKHOVICH** | Assistant Professor, University of Virginia, Corcoran Department of History

**More information on the NCGS website:** <https://ncgsws.web.unc.edu/>

**CONTACT:** Karen Hagemann | UNC Chapel Hill, Dept. of History, email: [hagemann@unc.edu](mailto:hagemann@unc.edu)

**CONVENERS:** **Duke University:** Dept. of German Studies | Dept. of History | **The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill:** Carolina Seminars  
Carolina Center for Jewish Studies | Center for European Studies | Dept. of Germanic and Slavic Languages & Literatures | Dept. of History