

## **Reader's report on M. A. Thesis**

Thesis Master's Degree Programme 'Central European Comparative Studies'

Emilia Sbroscia, Integration and Everyday Life of Italian Refugees Exiled to Northern Bohemia in the First World War – A Microhistorical Look at the Daily Experience of Sannicoló in Jablonné v Podještědí

The M.A. Theses by Emilia Sbroscia deals with Italian refugees from the Trentino region in the Bohemian Lands during the WWI. It is composed of two main parts. Firstly, the author describes migration in the WWI from the general point of view. Then she looks on the situation of Italian refugees, especially from the Trentino region. The main part of the M.A. thesis pays attention to interpretation of a diary written by an Italian refugee called Sannicoló. He was evacuated from Roveretto in 1915 and spent next years in the north bohemian village Deutsch Gabel (today Jablonné v Podještědí).

In the introduction she discusses the most important literature and archival sources, used in the M.A. Thesis. In the conclusion Emilia Sbroscia deals with the main research question: the reasons for relatively successful integration of Italian refugees in the Bohemian Lands – especially in the comparison with the Jewish refugees.

I consider the M.A. Thesis to be a valuable contribution to the history of the everyday life of refugees in the WWI. I appreciate the diligence and self-reliance of the author. She succeeded in finding relevant research literature and especially the main archival source. I find most of her conclusions to be appropriate. Above all the interpretation of the diary is really successful.

On the other side, there are some questionable places and problematic conclusions. From the formal point of view in the introduction the author should reference all of the mentioned sources in the footnotes and not only in the bibliography (see for example pp. 13-14). There is some ambiguity in the way, how the author deals with the term „Italians“. She treats them as a distinct ethnic and political unity on some places (for example p. 34), although she knows about problematic and mixed identities of the Italian speaking citizens of the monarchy. From that point of view she didn't need to discuss the situation of other groups of Italian migrants, i. e. P.O.Ws, so broadly and to compare them with the Italian speaking citizens of the monarchy. It is evident, that the Italian P.O.Ws were handled by the Austrian authorities differently to the Italian speaking citizens of the monarchy were. On the other side, the

situation of the Italians from the territory, which was occupied by the Habsburg army after the successful battle of Caporetto is mentioned only marginally. I think, exactly in that case, she would have to discuss similarities and differences in fate of Italian speaking Austrian citizens of the Trentino region and Italian citizens of the occupied regions more broadly.

As she admits, she can't read in German or in Czech. These shortcomings don't impact negatively on the M.A. Thesis in any important way, as the author deals with Italian sources and the general overview about the topic could be written on the basis of English literature. But in one case I find the lack of language knowledge to be important. Emilia Sbroscia asks about how Sannicolo viewed the „ethno linguistic tensions“ in the Bohemian Lands. She concludes, that he didn't notice any tensions whether national or religious. But, regarding to the ethnic composition of the region, where Sannicolo used to live, he maybe didn't have to notice the national or religious tensions at all, because of the vast majority of citizens of the region was German (or German speaking inhabitants of Bohemia) and Catholics. The multinational character of the Bohemian lands, which is mentioned by Emilia Sbroscia repeatedly (although from the general point of view relevant pronouncement), didn't play any important role in the specific case of Deutsch Gabel. I think that more specific knowledge, based on the German or Czech literature about the history of region of Deutsch Gabel could prevent her from that kind of conclusions. This is important to stress for the case, she would like to continue in the research about migration and refugees in central Europe – which I recommend warmly.

Apart from the above mentioned problems I suggest to discuss the following question during the defense of the Thesis: which were the most important reasons for the successful integration of the Italian refugees in the Bohemian Lands, especially in comparison with the fate of Jewish refugees from Galicia?

With respect to the oral exam I suggest the M.A. Thesis should be evaluated: excellent (1) up to very good (2).

I suggest that, after the afore mentioned revisions the M.A. Thesis or part of it could be published.

Ota Konrád 

Prague, January 26<sup>th</sup>, 2016