

The theme of my work is Valka, a camp for refugees and strangers without home, one camp out of many. By combining and confronting various kinds of resources: both written and oral, official and non-official, I strive to draw a more solid picture of the camp's reality. Although the camp existed - bearing the name Valka - between 1946 and 1960, my focus lies in the period between 1949 and 1954 when Valka served as a government-run, Bavarian camp, opened for refugees from Communist Czechoslovakia. In the course of its history, the camp would internationalize, opening its gates for the post-bellum "homeless", ie. displaced persons. Due to the motives which forged Valka's existence, I launch my work by discussing Czechoslovak refugee situation as well as the shift in the state borders: I place the refugee problems into a broader context, focusing, however, on the Western, especially American Occupation Zone. At the same time, still in the First Chapter, I pinpoint the important differences in approaches of the International, and the Local - i.e. German -, authorities. The Second Chapter deals with the history and development of the very space where Valka existed, I focus on the organizational and structural changes between 1949 and 1954. The Third Chapter is based on both archival and secondary resources, as well as written - and importantly - oral testimonies of the eyewitnesses, I talk to the narrators, their comparison, analysis and interpretation. My interest lies not merely in the camp organization, but also how the inmates dealt with the abnormal, "U-boat atmosphere" of the camp, what was their everyday life like, their mutual relationship, their relationship towards the camp authorities and local inhabitants, where and why - and even if - they wanted to emigrate, how they reached their goals, and how they dealt with the excess of free time.