
Study Visit of the Chair of Contemporary History of the University of Fribourg in Italy

On October 22-24, 2009, a group of students and professors of the **Chair of Contemporary History** of the **University of Fribourg** (Switzerland) led by Prof. Francis Python chose Forlì and the *Istituto per l'Europa Centro-Orientale e Balcanica* (IECOB) as the destination of their yearly study visit abroad. In the framework of the Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Research and Studies on Eastern Europe (MIREES), our guests took part in a series of events mainly held at the Faculty of Political Science "Roberto Ruffilli".

On October 22, the delegation from Fribourg attended a lecture by **Prof. Stefano Bottoni** (University of Bologna) on ***Radical nationalism or soft ethnic policies? Romanian state-building in Transylvania during the XX century***. Presenting Transylvania as one of few regions in Central and Eastern Europe that preserved its multiethnic character, the speaker underlined some patterns and specificities within the Central and Eastern European historical space, gave a historical outline of the Romanian development in the 20th century, traced the evolution of ethnic conflict in Transylvania from 1918 up to the present day, and expanded on the 'soft ethnic policies' carried out by the Romanian state in Transylvania. The lecture aroused great interest in the guests from Fribourg, who actively participated in the discussion that followed.



Prof. Bottoni's lecture



Prof. Jakovina's lecture

On the following day, October 23, the guests continued their study visit by attending the lecture ***Southeastern Europe in the XX century. A region between old and new "imperial" system*** delivered by **Tvrtko Jakovina**, associate professor at the University of Zagreb and a Cold War historian. The lecturer focused on the tradition and legacy of non-alignment in foreign policies of ex-Yugoslav countries. Elaborating on the Yugoslav relations with the Soviet Union and the West, as well as Balkan regional affairs during the Cold War period, the speaker argued that 1956 was the crucial year in the foreign policy of Tito's Yugoslavia and the events successive to it actually defined the position of Yugoslavia and its policies in the international arena till the end of the Cold War. The lecture itself and the discussion which ensued were received with great interest by the delegation from Fribourg.



Welcome address by Mr Leech



Prof. Bianchini presenting *IECOB* activities

After the lecture, the Fribourg delegation was received by the **City Councillor, John Patrick Leech**, at Forlì's Town Hall. The guests were officially greeted by Mr Leech on behalf of the city. Then, **Prof. Stefano Bianchini** and **Prof. Francesco Privitera** (University of Bologna) made a presentation of the activities carried out by the *Istituto per l'Europa Centro-Orientale e Balcanica*. The guests had the opportunity to ask questions on the features and development of the '*Europe and the Balkans*' International Network, the international academic network of scholars and experts which guarantees a strong international dimension to all the activities of IECOB.

Continuing the series of events devoted to Balkan-related issues, the group of students and professors from the University of Fribourg attended the lecture ***Vers les démocraties 'normales', enfin dans les Balkans?*** ("Towards normal 'democracies', eventually in the Balkans?"), given in French by **Prof. Jean Blondel** (European University Institute, Florence). The speaker elaborated on the current state of affairs and the prospects of political development in South-Eastern Europe. His analysis covered the area from Moldova in the North to Turkey in the South. During the discussion, the most relevant contemporary issues were debated by the students and professors who attended the lecture.



Prof. Blondel's lecture

Concluding the study program, on Saturday 24, the delegation from Fribourg attended at the "Roberto Ruffilli" library the showing of the film ***"The Witnesses"*** directed by Vinko Brešan (Croatia, 2003). A war drama set in the war-torn Serbian Krajina, the movie dealt, using artistic means, with issues previously debated during the lectures such as ways of perceiving reality and human relations during the armed conflict. The study visit paid to both IECOB and MIREES by students and professors of the Chair of Contemporary History of the University of Fribourg was a key event that in itself showed, and further contributed to, the intensification of international academic cooperation within the framework of the '*Europe and the Balkans*' International Network.