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**Belief-Geopolitics-Borderland:
Central European Borderlands of Russia:
Report on a Panel at the 2019 ASEES Convention,
San Francisco, California, United States**

Each year the Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies (ASEES) Convention takes place in a different U.S. city and has a different theme. The conventions, which gather over 2,600 U.S. and international attendees, serve as forums for exchanging new research findings about Central Asia, the Caucasus, Russia, and Eastern Europe. Most recently, conventions were held in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (2015), Washington, D.C. (2016), Chicago, Illinois (2017), and Boston, Massachusetts (2018). With the theme of “belief,” the 2019 annual convention took place at the San Francisco Marriott Marquis from 23 to 26 November.

Apart from the regular panel sessions, a series of meetings and workshops, as well as an awards reception, were held. The convention participants had an opportunity to attend a roundtable during which President Lech Wałęsa discussed the causes and impact of 1989, to listen to prominent historians reflect on the changes in the field of Russian/Soviet history in the last decades, to see

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three short films (*Kiev Frescoes*, *Hakob Hovnatanyan*, and *Arabesques on the Pirosmeni Theme* by Parajanov), or to join the ASEEEES Dance Party. At the awards reception, nine book prizes, a dissertation prize, and a graduate essay prize were given to outstanding scholars in the field.

The 2019 ASEEEES panel sessions were grouped into various broad categories, such as Russian and Eurasian Literature, Russian and Eurasian History (since 1924), Politics/Law, Anthropology/Cultural Studies, Gender/LGBTQ, and Linguistics/Language Pedagogy or Translation, with the first two categories being most represented (they had 84 and 83 panels, respectively).

Around 100 Polish scholars in the field of history, politics, Jewish studies, literature, and linguistics attended the ASEEEES convention, one third of whom represented the two largest Polish universities: the University of Warsaw and the Jagiellonian University in Kraków. Other Polish attendees were affiliated with the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Polish Academy of Sciences, POLIN Museum of Polish Jews, and the University of Gdańsk.

The University of Białystok was represented by three scholars from the Faculty of Philology: Professor Anna Janicka, Dr. Robert Szymula, and Dr. Daniel Karczewski. Their visit at the ASEEEES convention was possible due to a grant to the Faculty of Philology from the Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education under the Regional Initiative of Excellence program for the years 2019 to 2022.

The panel offered by the Białystok group examined phenomena occurring in the geopolitical space of Russia and Central and Eastern Europe. The common denominator of the discussion was political discourse captured through the prism of religion, hate speech, and linguistic manipulation. The analyzed texts concentrated on issues such as (1) the relation of religious beliefs and nationality in the journalistic discourse of the Polish-Belarusian borderland, (2) the tactics of influence used in Russian political discourse, and (3) the manifestations of antisemitism in the Polish conservative press.

Professor Janicka's paper analyzed the journalistic discourse directed against the cultural and ethnic emancipation of Polish Belarusians and the political opposition in Belarus, as well as the nation-state aspirations of the Ukrainians. Dr. Szymula discussed the manipulative tactics used in the election programs of the eleven biggest Russian political parties. As argued by Dr. Szymula, the programs aimed to sway the opinions of citizens, influence their thoughts and



Photograph Dr. Daniel Karczewski (left), Professor Anna Janicka, and Dr. Robert Szymula in the lobby of the San Francisco Marriott Marquis

beliefs, and control their behavior. Finally, Dr. Karczewski's paper presented an analysis of various manifestations of antisemitism in the conservative Polish magazine *Najwyższy Czas!* The analysis showed that the magazine's journalists construct their viewpoints by relying on a dichotomous model of US-vs.-THEM, alluding to different frames, and employing metonymy.

Daniel Karczewski, *Belief-Geopolitics-Borderland: Central European Borderlands of Russia...*

Overall, the conference was highly successful, with many opportunities for discussion and the presentation of new research. Some of the convention's strengths included the presentation of a diversity of viewpoints and perspectives and the opportunity for an exchange of ideas in a multinational and multidisciplinary research community. Scholars specializing in Slavic, Eastern European, and Eurasian Studies are bound to continue a multifaceted dialogue at the next convention, to be held in Washington, D.C., from 5 to 8 November, 2020. More details can be found on the ASEES conference website: <https://www.asees.org/convention>.