

invite you to the

198th GELLNER SEMINAR

March 23, 2023, 4pm

Venue:

EÚ AV ČR, Na Florenci 3, Prague 1 (5th floor) and on-line (link below)

The Surface of History: Mass Atrocities in Russia and Serbia and their Monuments

Galina Oustinova-Stjepanovic
University of Glasgow

Monuments and memorials to victims of mass atrocities, such as the Stalinist Terror in Moscow and the Holocaust against Jews in Novi Sad and partisan revenge against its perpetrators, tend to reveal history. They have an apophantic force of bringing the past to the surface. Surface itself forms a plane of history and implies that there is something beneath. The Solovetsky Stone in central Moscow is one of the first monuments to victims of political oppressions in Russia. Until recently it was a nexus of remembrance of the dead for relatives and descendants, activists of Memorial and Last Address, historians, human rights advocates, and strangers. In 2022, the construction of the monument to the victims of violence in Novi Sad (Serbia) was disrupted by protesters who glued to its surface the names of the dead that include names of people killed by Yugoslav partisans and names of several Hungarian war criminals and collaborators. The surface of monuments enables a mediation of history and refraction of justice, as is the case with the Solovetsky Stone. Conversely, it can absorb the past and accrue the menacing power of a casket that buries the past within. Michael Taussig has argued that history and sorcery are substantially the same as they reveal and conceal violent processes. The surface of the above monuments is where knowing the past or hiding it are at play, and names of the dead, like the sorcerer's invisible darts, stake out possibilities of justice.

Galina Oustinova-Stjepanovic is a Social Anthropologist and a Lecturer in Social Anthropology and Sociology at the University of Glasgow. She specialises in anthropology of historicity, political anthropology, and anthropology of religion. Her monograph *Monumental Names. Archival Aesthetics and the Conjuraton of History in Moscow* (Anthropology of History, Routledge, 2023) is available in open access from the publisher's site.

MS Teams *link*