



POLSKI UNIWERSYTET NA OBCZYŻNIE
THE POLISH UNIVERSITY ABROAD
www.puno.ac.uk

Twentieth Century Polish History Seminar

Convenors: Prof. Michael Fleming, Prof. Mikołaj Kunicki and Dr Wojciech Rappak

The seminar series on twentieth century Polish history was initiated at PUNO in 2013. It provides a forum for scholars and the wider public to engage with new historical scholarship. Scholars from a range of British and Polish universities have presented research in progress and discussed their recent publications. Details of previous seminars can be found at <https://puno.ac.uk/struktura-puno/zaklad-wspolczesnej-kultury-brytyjskiej-seminaria/>

The seminar is open to the public and is especially useful for students reading MA or PhD degrees in history or cognate disciplines. The seminar is conducted in English. This academic year the seminar will take place online, beginning at 6.30pm. Those wishing to participate should contact the convenor prior to each seminar: michael.fleming@puno.ac.uk

Programme for the 2025/2026 academic year

5 November 2025 Piotr Maciej Majewski (University of Warsaw)
The mechanisms of collaboration

This paper focuses on collaboration as a political and social phenomenon. It mainly concerns the Second World War, but it also attempts to answer the question why collaboration with the enemy (collaborationism and other forms) was only recognised and condemned at that time. Through the analysis of various cases of collaboration in Eastern and Western Europe and Asia, I attempt to show the mechanisms that occurred in the relations between the occupiers and the occupied communities. I demonstrate that this phenomenon was perceived and judged in very different ways, and that the assessment could vary depending on the time, place and circumstances.

Piotr Maciej Majewski is Professor of History at the University of Warsaw. His main academic interests are history of Czechoslovakia and Czech lands and the Czech-German relations in 19th and 20th centuries. He has published extensively on the Munich Crisis, prewar Czechoslovakia, and the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. From 2009 to 2017, Professor Majewski was deputy director of the Museum of the Second World War in Gdańsk, responsible for development of the permanent exhibition. His latest monograph, *Brzydkie słowo na k". Rzecz o kolaboracji* [The Ugly K-Word. An Essay on Collaboration] (Warsaw 2024), explores the phenomenon of collaboration.

10 December 2025 Jacob Flaws (Kean University, New Jersey, USA)

Spaces of Treblinka: Retracing a Death Camp.

Spaces of Treblinka utilizes testimonies, oral histories, and recollections from Jewish, German, and Polish witnesses to create a holistic representation of the Treblinka death camp during its operation. This narrative rejects the historical misconception that Treblinka was an isolated Nazi extermination camp with few witnesses and fewer survivors. Rather than the secret, sanitized site of industrial killing Treblinka was intended to be, Jacob Flaws argues, Treblinka's mass murder was well known to the nearby townspeople who experienced the sights, sounds, smells, people, bodies, and train cars the camp ejected into the surrounding world.

Through spatial reality, Flaws portrays the conceptions, fantasies, ideological assumptions, and memories of Treblinka from witnesses in the camp and surrounding towns. To do so he identifies six key spaces that once composed the historical site of Treblinka: the ideological space, the behavioral space, the space of life and death, the interactional space, the sensory space, and the extended space. By examining these spaces Flaws reveals that there were more witnesses to Treblinka than previously realized, as the transnational groups near and within the camp overlapped and interacted. *Spaces of Treblinka* provides a staggering and profound reassessment of the relationship between knowing and not knowing and asks us to confront the timely warning that we, in our modern, interconnected world, can all become witnesses. See

<https://www.combinedacademic.co.uk/9781496239730/spaces-of-treblinka/>

Dr. Jacob Flaws is an assistant professor of history at Kean University in Union, NJ where he teaches on topics in Modern European history, the Holocaust, and global genocide. He is the author of the 2024 book *Spaces of Treblinka: Retracing a Death Camp*, published by the University of Nebraska Press, as well as several other journal articles and book chapters. Flaws earned his Ph.D. in history from the University of Colorado-Boulder.

14 January 2026

Dr. Pawel Duber (PUNO, London)

Deprivation of Citizenship and Diplomatic Fallout: The 6 October 1938 Ordinance in Polish–Swiss Relations, 1938–1940

Following the Anschluss and the failure of the Evian Conference, on the 6 October 1938 Poland issued an ordinance requiring passport revalidation, effectively preventing many Jews from returning. Switzerland responded by tightening visa requirements and expressing concerns over reliability of Polish passports. The paper focuses on the impact of this law on the diplomatic relations between both countries and the role of Tytus Komarnicki, Polish envoy to Switzerland, whose initially liberal stance shifted toward strict enforcement of the aforementioned ordinance. Drawing on previously unused archival sources, the study reveals how both countries navigated through legal, diplomatic, and humanitarian challenges amid worsening geopolitical conditions and after the outbreak of World War II.

Dr hab. Pawel Duber is a historian and lecturer in the Unit of European History at the Polish University Abroad, as well as a history teacher in British schools. He graduated from the University of Silesia in Katowice and has worked at various cultural and academic institutions, including the University of Warsaw, the University of Fribourg (Switzerland), the Józef Piłsudski Museum in Sulejów, and Nottingham Trent University. He earned his PhD in 2009 at the Academy of Humanities in Pułtusk and completed his habilitation in 2015 at

the Institute of History of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw. His research focuses on the political history of Poland after 1918, 20th-century Central and Eastern Europe, Polish political and military emigration after 1939, the history of diplomacy and international relations, and the politics of memory. He is the author / co-author of several books and nearly one hundred scholarly and popular articles. His most recent book, a biography of the Polish diplomat and lawyer Tytus Komarnicki, is being published by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Warsaw.

25 February 2026 Prof. Paweł Machcewicz, (Institute of Political Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw)
Moczar's "Partisans": Nationalism, Anti-Semitism, Historical Myths

"The Partisans" were in the 1960s a very influential political group within the communist party and state apparatus in Poland. Led by Mieczysław Moczar, the minister of interior and leader of the veterans' associations (during the WW II he was a famous commander of the communist resistance), they founded a dynamic political movement which strongly influenced not only politics, but also mass-media and culture. Their ideology based on nationalism, anti-Semitism and exploitation of Polish history - especially its non-communist aspects which helped attract followers from outside the ruling party. "The Partisans" undertook the most far-reaching attempt to shape the Polish model of national communism and were often compared by contemporary observers and analysts with parallel developments in Romania.

Paweł Machcewicz is a historian, professor at the Institute of Political Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw. From 2008 to 2017, he was the founding director of the Museum of the Second World War in Gdańsk. He has taught at the Warsaw University and the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń and was director of research and education at the Institute of National Remembrance in 2000-2006.

His main areas of research are the Second World War, the Cold War and communist regimes in East-Central Europe. His many books include: *Rebellious Satellite. Poland 1956* (Woodrow Wilson Center-Stanford University Press, Washington DC-Stanford, 2009); *Poland's War on Radio Free Europe 1950-1989* (Woodrow Wilson Center-Stanford University Press, Washington DC-Stanford, 2014); *The War That Never Ends. The Museum of the Second World War in Gdańsk* (De Gruyter, Berlin-Boston 2019); *Wina, kara, polityka. Rozliczenia ze zbrodniami II wojny światowej* (with Andrzej Paczkowski; Znak, Kraków 2021); *Narodowy komunizm po polsku. „Partyzanci” Moczara* (Krytyka Polityczna, Warszawa 2025).