

Der Arbeitsbereich Osteuropäische Geschichte, die Zweigstelle Mainz der Südosteuropa-Gesellschaft und die Landeszentrale für politische Bildung Rheinland-Pfalz laden zu folgendem Vortrag ein:

Prof. Dr. Máté Rigó (München)

From the Mekong Delta to the Danube Delta: the return of the Romanian mercenaries of the French Foreign Legion to Stalinist Romania

Dienstag, 14. Mai 2024, 18.15 Uhr, Raum P 203 (Philosophicum, Jakob-Welder-Weg 18, 55128 Mainz)

The Wagner Group's brutality in Russia's war on Ukraine has recently pushed mercenaries to the center of media attention, even though mercenaries, most prominently the French Foreign Legion, have heavily impacted the history of the Cold War as well. Yet most accounts of the Cold War are still wedded to an 'Iron Curtain mentality,' separating the West from the Eastern Bloc and the histories of Asia and Europe more generally. In these accounts, colonialism remains the burden of Western European "Great Powers," and the manifold ties to East and Central Europeans to colonialism remain overlooked. The lecture follows the path of Romanians who signed up to the French Foreign Legion in overcrowded POW camps in occupied Germany after WW2 and dispatched to Indochina to fight the Viet Minh. The majority of these mercenaries eventually got captured by Vietnamese troops and sent back to Romania in closely guarded trains through China and the USSR. The presentation offers hypotheses why the Romania of Gheorghiu-Dej, unlike other socialist states, treated these mercenaries harshly, and kept them in labor camps in the Danube Delta, until the 1960s and 1970s.

Máté Rigó is professor of Southeast and East-Central European history at LMU in Munich. He has previously worked as assistant professor at Yale-NUS College in Singapore and Brandeis University. His first book, *Capitalism in Chaos, How the Business Elites of Europe Prospered in the Era of the Great War*, appeared at Cornell University Press in 2022. His current research projects look at the global Cold War, focusing on the involvement of East Europeans in both projects of recolonization (through the French Foreign Legion in Indochina) and decolonization (through aid and assistance from Vietnam to Cuba).