



**University
of Victoria**

Graduate Studies

Notice of the Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of Master of Arts

of

MATTHEW MISKULIN

BA (University of Victoria, 2012)

**“Chaos and Confusion: British Oversight of Russian Repatriations in
Postwar Southern Austria”**

Department of History

Friday, August 11, 2017
9:00 A.M.
David Turpin Building
Room A144

Supervisory Committee:

Dr. Serhy Yekelchuk, Department of History, University of Victoria (Supervisor)
Dr. Tom Saunders, Department of History, UVic (Member)

External Examiner:

Dr. Charlotte Schallie, Department of Germanic & Slavic Studies, UVic

Chair of Oral Examination:

Dr. Deborah Begoray, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, UVic

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Abstract

In 1945, as the Second World War ended, British troops serving under 5 Corps in southern Austria encountered a number of critical problems which hindered their ability to occupy the region and enact the policy of repatriation as set out in the Yalta Agreement. Fragile lines of supply and communication, and the need to feed and house diverse groups of hundreds of thousands of prisoners of war and refugees impeded British attempts to administer the area. Further complicating the situation was the infiltration of Yugoslav Partisans, supposed allies, fighting under Josip Broz Tito who claimed northern Italy and southern Austria as part of a "Greater Yugoslavia." In preparation of an anticipated forceful ejection of these Partisans, the British military prioritized the fighting effectiveness of its troops over a consistent application of repatriation. The British military issued orders which interpreted Soviet citizenship, and therefore liability for repatriation, in very broad terms. This resulted in an inconsistent application of the policy, in which non-Soviets were either retained or handed over, with both courses of action seemingly in keeping with orders. While subsequent authors, most notably Nikolai Tolstoy and Christopher Booker, have written on this topic, none have yet recognized the connection between the chaotic circumstances in the region and the haphazard application of repatriation. By re-examining archival records of communications between military units involved, this thesis rectifies this lacuna and acknowledges for the first time the irregular and inconsistent nature of these repatriations.