

**“‘WHITE MISRULE’: TERROR AND POLITICAL VIOLENCE DURING
HUNGARY’S LONG WORLD WAR I, 1919-1924”**

By Emily R. Gioielli

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Professor Susan Zimmermann

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Abstract

The early post-armistice period in Hungary was marked by defeat, military occupation, successive democratic and communist revolutions, and finally a counter-revolution that ended with the consolidation of the authoritarian conservative regency of Admiral Miklós Horthy. An important dimension of this political upheaval was the so-called White Terror, which included violence and legal persecution to punish, marginalize and even remove those persons officials regarded as dangerous to the Hungarian state. Many of the victims, especially those groups and individuals regarded as particularly “dangerous,” namely leftists and Jews, did not regard the White Terror as solely a discreet set of acts perpetrated by militias. Rather, they understood it as also including systematic forms of state directed persecution such as mass imprisonment and summary justice, which engaged the broader population in the counter-revolutionary struggle.

This dissertation is a social and international history of counter-revolutionary repression and White Terror in early postwar Hungary. It uses an intersectional approach that interrogates the relationship between different forms of oppression and privilege, in order to understand how class, gender, ethnicity, religion, and citizenship status shaped how different individuals and groups in Hungary perpetrated, experienced and interpreted White Terror. Further, this work places violence in a broader context, to show how different dimensions of violence continued and departed from longer term patterns of repression that developed over the course of World War I in Hungary, and in belligerent states more broadly.

The issue of violence in Hungary was not just a matter of domestic politics. It was also an important dimension of the international community's engagement in Hungary, especially between 1919-1921. Narratives produced by Entente officials, the international labor movement and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee fiercely debated the nature and scope of violence and interrogated the relationship of the counter-revolutionary state with White Terror. This dissertation shows how class, gender, ethnicity, religion and citizenship status, as well as unequal power relations between states, played an important role in shaping how these groups articulated the violence and instrumentalized it, to promote their political and philanthropic agendas in newly independent Hungary, and postwar Europe more broadly.

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Introduction

Between 1918 and 1922 Hungary experienced an extended period of political upheaval and violence including the end of a world war, two left-leaning revolutions, a Red and White Terror and a conservative counter-revolution. Much of the scholarship on this period has been written about high politics, including biographies of many of the major players and detailed accounts of political decision-making, in-fighting, and treaty negotiations.¹ More recently, scholars have begun to examine postwar paramilitary violence in Central Europe, and in Hungary more specifically.²

But relatively little has been written on the social history of this period, on the experiences and actions of those ordinary, and sometimes not-so-ordinary, persons attempting to navigate and exploit the dramatic shifts in the ideological and social bases of power, and perhaps hoping to carve out a new role or defend an old privilege in the newly independent Hungarian state. This dissertation seeks to correct, in part, this

¹ Thomas Sakmyster, *Hungary's Admiral on Horseback: Mikós Horthy, 1918-1944* (Boulder, CO: Eastern European Monographs, 1994); Thomas Lorman, *Counter-revolution in Hungary, 1920-1925, István Bethlen and the Politics of Consolidation* (Boulder, CO: Eastern European Monographs, 2006); Mária Ormos, *Magyarország a két világháború korában (1914-1945)*, trans. Brian McLean (Boulder, CO: Eastern European Monographs, 2007); István Pataki, *Az ellenforradalom hadserege, 1919-1921 : A hadsereg szerepe az ellenforradalmi rendszer kialakításában és megszilárdításában Magyarországon, 1919. augusztus-1921. július* (Budapest: Zrínyi Katonai Kiadó, 1973); Dezső Nemes, *Az ellenforradalom története Magyarországon 1919-1921* (Budapest: Akadémia Kiadó, 1962).

² Historian Robert Gerwarth has published several articles on Central European paramilitarism. See Gerwarth, "The Central European Counter-Revolution: Paramilitary Violence in Germany, Austria and Hungary after the Great War," *Past and Present* 200 (August 2008): 175-209; "Fighting the Red Beast: Counter-Revolutionary Violence in the Defeated States of Central Europe," in *War in Peace: Paramilitary Violence in Europe after the Great War*, eds. Robert Gerwarth and John Horne (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012). Historian Béla Bodó has also published a number of articles on paramilitarism in general and on several of the militia leaders specifically. See Bodó, "The White Terror in Hungary, 1919-1921: The Social Worlds of Paramilitary Groups," *Austrian History Yearbook* 42 (2011): 133-163; "Iván Hejjas: The Life of a Counter-revolutionary," *East Central Europe* 37, no. 2-3 (2010): 247-279; "Paramilitary Violence in Hungary after the First World War," *East European Quarterly* 38, no. 2 (Summer 2004): 127-172; *Pál Prónay: Paramilitary Violence and Anti-Semitism in Hungary, 1919-1921* (Pittsburgh, PA: Center for Russian and Eastern European Studies, 2011).

deficiency by exploring the lived experience of counter-revolution and White Terror in Hungary. It uses intersectionality, the study of how multiple forms of oppression and privilege intersect and produce distinct experiences for individuals and groups, to analyze how the violence and terror that accompanied political change was experienced and interpreted by its perpetrators, victims and observers³ whose understandings were shaped by their overlapping positions in various socio-economic, ethnic, gender, legal, and political hierarchies.⁴

³ Deploying such terms as “perpetrator,” “victim,” and “bystander” in a context such as post-WWI Hungary requires some explanation. Each term connotes a particular relationship to power, agency, and violence as well as a certain conceptual purity and moral assumption (i.e. an “innocent” victim). The problem with these concepts in revolutionary moments in particular is their instability. That is to say, the boundaries of these categories are extremely blurry because of the extreme circumstances in which persecution is committed, and because political legitimacy, which may later consecrate violence and persecution as justified, is contested. As Lynne Viola writes, “Defeat creates perpetrators just as victory absolves them.” Furthermore, the political back-and-forth evident in revolutionary moments often has meant that one regime’s “perpetrator” is another regime’s “victim,” but this “victim” is hardly innocent, because of their prior activities or status. In crisis politics, “victim” and “perpetrator” are not fixed nor are they mutually exclusive categories of political identity, especially in violent societies. The politically and historically fraught nature and content of these categories and their deployment in post-WWI Hungary will be explored in the course of dissertation, but as words, they are used here in their most narrow sense to denote those who have committed an act (perpetrator) and those injured by it (victim). See Lynne Viola, “The Question of the Perpetrator in Soviet History,” *Slavic Review* 72, no. 1(Spring 2013): 22; Wendy Z. Goldman, “Comment: Twin Pyramids—Perpetrators and Victims,” *Slavic Review* 72, 1(Spring, 2013): 24-27. See also Goldman, *Inventing the Enemy: Denunciation and Terror in Stalin’s Russia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); Christopher R. Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1992); Primo Levi, “The Gray Zone,” in *The Drowned and the Saved*, trans. Raymond Rosenthal (New York: Vintage Books, 1989); Jan T. Gross, *Neighbors* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); Stathis Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil Wars* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Sheila Fitzpatrick and Robert Gellately, “Introduction to the Practices of Denunciation in Modern European History,” in *Accusatory practices: Denunciation in Modern European History, 1789-1989*, eds. Sheila Fitzpatrick and Robert Gellately (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1997).

⁴ The term intersectionality was coined in the late 1980s, but the approach emerged out of a broader critique of feminist scholarship formulated by women of color who objected to the scholarship’s homogenization of women as a unitary group. Noted scholars of intersectionality pointed out that class, race, as well as gender (and ethnicity, religion, legal and citizenship status) simultaneously shape women’s experiences of oppression because of their subordinate positions within multiple systems of oppression and domination. Scholars such as Patricia Hill Collins and Kimberlee Crenshaw have also argued that these hierarchies and subordinate positions are reinforced by violence—physical and structural. See Kimberlé Crenshaw, “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color,” *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (July 1991): 1241-1299; Patricia Hill Collins, “The Tie that Binds: Race, Gender, and US Violence,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 21, no. 5 (September 1998): 917-938; Leslie McCall, “The Complexity of Intersectionality,” *Signs* 30, no. 3 (Spring 2005): 1771-1800; Angela Davis, *Women, Race, and Class* (New York: Vintage Books, 1983). While intersectionality provides a conceptual

But the counter-revolution and White Terror has never been simply a Hungarian story.⁵ World War I and the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy overlapped with and profoundly affected Hungary's internal politics, and Hungary's descent into political crisis and violence provoked a strong response from states concerned about the spread of Bolshevism and from international political and humanitarian organizations that attempted to address the material and moral consequences of counter-revolution. The experience of war had helped certain patterns of international engagement develop that helped shape how the international community—both state and non-state actors—interpreted and responded to the political upheaval in Hungary. State functionaries, like consuls and military personnel, and those of non-state actors like the International Red Cross, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, and the British Labour Party (which straddles the boundary between state and non-state actor) were prominent both in actively influencing the internal politics of Hungary, and interpreting and publicizing them for a wider audience back home through official reports, newspaper articles, and fundraising activities. These “outsider” interpretations, like those of the Hungarians

apparatus for which to understand multiple forms of oppression, Wendy Brown's argument that, “these powers of subject formation are not separable in the subject itself,” is an important point to keep in mind when analyzing individuals' experience and interpretation of events, though there are, in fact, different regulatory regimes that keep different social hierarchies in check. Wendy Brown, “The Impossibility of Women's Studies,” *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 9, no. 3 (Fall 1997): 79-101. This dissertation uses intersectionality to interrogate the violence of the White Terror and counter-revolution in order to understand both the interpretation and experience and perpetration of violence by different groups and individuals. This in no way is intended to create a “hierarchy of suffering” between men and women, Jew and Gentile, peasant or aristocrat. Rather it deploys an intersectional approach to understand how categories and hierarchies intersected in order to create a more complex portrait of the foundations of the (re)constructed Hungarian state and society after World War I.

⁵ Revolutions and counter-revolutions are not purely domestic affairs. Revolutionary and counter-revolutionary regimes often construct radical foreign policies and provoke a response from external actors fearful of the possibility of revolution's expansion into bordering territories. See Nick Bisley, “Counter-revolution, International Order and Politics,” *Review of International Studies* 30, no. 1 (June 2004): 49-50, for discussion of international dimensions of counter-revolution. See also Fred Halliday, *Revolution and World Politics: the Rise and Fall of the Sixth Great Power* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999); J.D. Armstrong, *Revolution and World Order: the Revolutionary State in International Society* (Oxford: Clarendon Press; New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Peter Calvert, *Revolution and International Politics* (London: Frances Pinter, 1984) for discussion on the international dynamics of revolution.

living through the White Terror and counter-revolution, were also shaped by the writers' ideas about the victims' and perpetrators' positions within existing hierarchies, as well as by their understanding of Hungary's place within the "family of nations," which was, in itself, another hierarchy in which all states were not equal.⁶

With the broader domestic and international context of counter-revolution and White Terror in mind, this dissertation makes several arguments. First, the counter-revolution and White Terror were not just top-down phenomena involving "white" militias comprised of officers from the traditional social-economic elite or the middle classes. Local authorities in towns and villages like the police and the gendarmerie and local militias in the countryside were put to the task of investigating and rounding up individuals and sometimes groups, holding them in prison, and participating in tortuous interrogations.⁷ Many of these functionaries were known to the victims by name and were not anonymous representatives from a far-off state. Further, officials often relied on the denunciations and testimonies of employers, neighbors and colleagues in order to make their cases against hundreds for their alleged participation in the revolutionary state.

⁶ Prior to World War I, there were the "Great Powers" which enjoyed full sovereignty over their populations (including colonies and protectorates) though there was a hierarchy between subjects/citizens of the metropole and colonial subjects. In between these two positions was a third largely occupied by independent Latin American states and the Ottoman successor states in southeastern Europe, like Serbia, Bulgaria, Romania, which were recognized as independent, but which faced varying amounts of Great Power intrusion into their domestic affairs. See Carole Fink, *Defending the Rights of Others: The Great Powers, the Jews, and International Minority Protection, 1878-1938* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). See also Antony Anghie, *Imperialism, Sovereignty, and the Making of International Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005). As a constituent part of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, Hungary had enjoyed the benefits of Great Power status, though they continued to lag behind many European states economically and socially. With the loss of the war, and the collapse of the Dual Monarchy, Hungary lost the protections afforded by Great Power status—which was one of the outcomes feared by both the governing and opposition parties in Hungary after the outbreak of war in 1914. See Gabor Vermes, *István Tisza: The Liberal Vision and Conservative Statecraft of a Magyar Nationalist* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985); József Galantai, *Magyarország az első világháborúban 1914-1918* [Hungary in the First World War 1914-1918], trans. Éva Grusz and Judit Pokoly (Budapest: Akadémia Kiadó, 1989).

⁷ Bodó, "The Social Worlds of Paramilitary Groups," 146.

Thus, there was an intimacy to the counter-revolution and White Terror that tore at the social fabric of Hungary, and which engaged the broader population in the counter-revolutionary struggle whether they liked (or even realized) it or not. Furthermore, the counter-revolution reached into people's homes, altering their daily lives in significant ways.

Second, individuals' experiences of the violence of the White Terror and counter-revolution were affected by multiple categories of their self and ascribed identities, including class, gender, legal, and ethnic hierarchies. These categories intersected with each other at multiple points, often simultaneously, which in turn affected people's interpretations of the counter-revolution and White Terror in particular ways. These intersections also shaped how the violence and terror was interpreted by its victims and its perpetrators, as well as by those investigating or observing developments within Hungary. In spite of the complex effects violence had, each interest group attempted to homogenize the victims by emphasizing what they considered to be the most relevant issue that motivated the Terror and counter-revolution. For the British Labour Party, these were the political activities and identities of the victims, while for the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, it was their ethnicity and religion.

Third, the counter-revolution and White Terror developed not merely as reactions to the leftist revolutions of 1918 and 1919 and the Red Terror. They are also part of the broader history of World War I, which for Hungary did not end neatly in November, 1918 with the signing of an armistice, but rather continued to be fought well into 1919 and overlapped with internal political collapse and revolution. World War I in many ways marked a departure from previous conflicts in Europe, in large part because the violence

of the war was no longer primarily contained to the battlefield, but was experienced by groups such as civilians and prisoners-of-war on larger scales than ever before.⁸ The war also differed from prior conflicts because of the massive expansion of state power through the passage of wartime emergency legislation that, to a greater or lesser extent, abrogated the civil rights of people all across Europe (and North America) and subjected “enemy aliens” (those persons who were citizens of enemy states), refugees, and political opponents of the state to material deprivation, imprisonment, and surveillance.⁹

This dissertation will therefore analyze the violence of the White Terror and counter-revolution as they were understood by their victims as part of the “normal” dynamics of revolutionary periods, whereby violence fulfills a number of impulses in the effort to rebuild state legitimacy, including revenge, retribution, and as an important and often overlooked dimension of transitional justice.¹⁰ But it will also examine the events in Hungary within the broader context of the war and imperial collapse, in order to analyze how the content of broader European norms about violence and expectations regarding

⁸ Heather Jones, *Violence against Prisoners of War in the First World War : Britain, France, and Germany, 1914-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Vejas Gabriel Liulevicius, *War Land on the Eastern Front: Culture, National Identity and German Occupation in World War I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Matthew Stibbe, “The Internment of Political Suspects in Austria-Hungary during the First World War,” in *Gender and Modernity in Central Europe: The Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and its Legacy*, ed. Agatha Schwartz (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2010); Alon Rachamimov, *POWs and the Great War: Captivity on the Eastern Front* (Oxford: Berg, 2002); Matthew Stibbe, *British Civilian Internees in Germany: The Ruhleben Camp, 1914-1918* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008).

⁹ See Galántai, 72-80, for a discussion on the use of emergency powers in Hungary. For emergency powers in other states during World War I, see Michael S. Nieburg, *Dance of the Furies: Europe and the Outbreak of World War I* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011), 154; 164-166; Christopher Joseph Nicodemus Capozzola, *Uncle Sam Wants You : World War I and the Making of the Modern American Citizen* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); Andrew Grierson Bone, *Beyond the Rule of Law: Aspects of the Defence of the Realm Acts and Regulations, 1914-1918* (PhD Dissertation, McMaster University, 1995).

¹⁰ What constituted “Terror” to the two primary victim groups, namely Jews and leftists was more than the arbitrary violence of militias. Socialists, communists and democrats conceptualized internment as well as the extraordinary legal measures used to purge Hungarian life of communism as essential dimensions of White Terror. For Jews it included internment and expulsion measures also largely directed and carried out by state authorities. See Chapters Two, Five and Six.

the “proper” relationship of the state to its citizens weathered and were transformed by the experience of the Great War in one small state in Europe. It will also look at how both individuals and groups interpreted violence and how they instrumentalized it, especially through publicity efforts, to attack or defend the legitimacy of the newly established government and to promote particular political and humanitarian agendas and policies. Thus gaining control over the narrative about counter-revolutionary violence in Hungary was not simply a matter of establishing political legitimacy in the eyes of the Hungarian public at home, but was also part of the Hungarian state’s effort to position itself in the international sphere by showing that Hungary’s postwar culture of violence was not unique, nor was it reason to marginalize Hungary as a politically backward state unfit for membership in the European family of nations.

Literature Review

The historiography of White Terror and early counter-revolutionary has mostly been focused on questions related to the high politics of the period, such as the regime’s popularity, its authoritarianism and the biographies of key persons who helped formulate policy during the postwar and interwar period. Additionally, in regard to the White Terror, another long term trend has been simply comparing the number of person’s killed by the White militias with deaths attributed to the Red militias, such as the Lenin Boys (*Lenin fiúk*), during the Red Terror.¹¹ Up until the 1980s, the literature was often heavily inflected by the ideological priorities of the state socialist regime. In the 1980s and 1990s, the political changes in Hungary helped spur changes within the historiography. More

¹¹ Péter Konok’s “Az erőszak kérdesei 1919-1920-ban. Vörösteror—fehérterror.” *Múltunk* 3 (2010): 72-91, is one of the more recent contributions in this debate about the two terrors.

nuanced and critical interpretations of the postwar power struggles appeared, such as Thomas Sakmyster's biography of Miklós Horthy, Thomas Lorman's work on István Bethlen, as well as Ignác Romsic's *Ellenforradalom és konszolidáció. A Horthy-rendszer első tíz éve, 1919–1929*.¹² All of these contributions are important, but none have provided significant insight into the social history of the political struggle.

Over the past decade, there has been increased attention on this period of crisis and change not only in Hungary but in the broader East Central European region. Foremost among this new scholarship has been Béla Bodó's work on the White militias.¹³ These contributions move beyond the ideologically driven interpretations of the White militias and systematically reconstruct the social composition and milieu of the militias, the political biographies of the most important—and infamous—militia leaders like Pál Prónay and Iván Hejjas. Bodó has also explored the relationship of the counter-revolutionary paramilitaries to the aristocracy, which has been invaluable in understanding the complex relationship that the militia movement had to the loci of political and social power. Bodó's well-researched articles have contributed to the historiography of postwar paramilitarism in Central Europe, showing points of commonality and difference between Hungarian paramilitarism and its German counterpart, particularly with regard to tracing the life trajectories of several of the major

¹² Thomas Sakmyster, *Hungary's Admiral on Horseback: Mikós Horthy, 1918-1944* (Boulder, CO: Eastern European Monographs, 1994); Thomas Lorman, *Counter-revolution in Hungary, 1920-1925, István Bethlen and the Politics of Consolidation* (Boulder, CO: Eastern European Monographs, 2006); Ignác Romsics, *Ellenforradalom és konszolidáció. A Horthy-rendszer első tíz éve, 1919–1929* (Budapest: Gondolat, 1982).

¹³ Béla Bodó, "Hungarian Aristocracy and the White Terror." *Journal of Contemporary History* 45 (2010): 703-724; Bodó, "The White Terror in Hungary, 1919-1921: The Social Worlds of Paramilitary Groups," *Austrian History Yearbook* 42 (2011): 133-163; Bodó, "Iván Hejjas: The Life of a Counter-revolutionary," *East Central Europe* 37, no. 2-3 (2010): 247-279; Bodó, "Paramilitary Violence in Hungary after the First World War," *East European Quarterly* 38, no. 2 (Summer 2004): 127-172; Bodó, *Pál Prónay: Paramilitary Violence and Anti-Semitism in Hungary, 1919-1921* (Pittsburgh, PA: Center for Russian and Eastern European Studies, 2011).

players. He also touches on issues of class, and to a lesser extent gender, in connection to the motivations of militia members, connecting participation to both the revolutionary political context and to the war. Although focused on the Hungarian case, his scholarship makes important contributions to the historiographical paradigm of the “Long World War I,” which has emerged in the study of the Eastern front of the Great War. This framework has sought to explore the crises facing East Central Europe following the Russian Revolution and the armistice between the Entente and the Central Powers through the lens of long-term developments and practices which emerged as a consequence of the war. However, while Bodó’s scholarship is a much needed intervention, his emphasis on the militia members themselves provides an in-depth consideration of the perpetrator perspective, but largely leaves the victims’ experience untouched.

Other new work on the Hungarian militias has come from Robert Gerwarth, who has published a number of articles and essays on the paramilitaries in Hungary and Central Europe more broadly. He has also edited several collections including *War in Peace: Paramilitary Violence in Europe after the Great War*, *Political Violence in Twentieth Century Europe*, and most recently *Empires at War, 1911-1923*.¹⁴ Gerwarth’s work has made two important contributions. First, it has examined paramilitarism as a transnational phenomenon, making important links between the experiences of Germany, Austria, and Hungary in the post-armistice period and the commonalities and differences between the regional “paramilitary subcultures” that emerged in the interwar period.

¹⁴ Robert Gerwarth, *Empires at War, 1911-1922* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2014); Gerwarth, *War in Peace: Paramilitary Violence in Europe after the Great War* (Oxford; New York: 2012); Gerwarth, *Political Violence in Twentieth Century Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Gerwarth, “Sexual and Non-Sexual Violence against “Politicised Women” after the Great War,” in *Sexual Violence in Conflict Zones from the Ancient World to the Late Twentieth Century*, ed. Elizabeth Heinemann (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011).

Similar to Bodó, he has also explored some of the gendered dimensions of the culture of violence—including sexualized violence—and masculinity in the Central European militia subculture. Second, Gerwarth has been one of the primary developers of the “Long World War I” paradigm, which has been instrumental in promoting English-language scholarship on the Eastern front of the war.¹⁵ His work on the Hungarian case is largely based on published German-language, sources such as memoirs and officials reports, which have some limitations in their explanatory capacity. But overall, his numerous articles and edited collections are theoretically and conceptually important for thinking about the experience of World War I outside of Western Europe.

While not working specifically in the “Long World War I” framework, Eliza Ablovatski’s scholarship provides a comparative study of the 1919 communist revolutions in Budapest and Germany with an eye on interpreting the events in Central Europe through the lens of the paradigm of revolution.¹⁶ Her work contributes to this regional historiography and points to continuity between the experience of war and the revolutions that came after. Her dissertation, which contains the material she also published as two articles, articulates the links between different dimensions of the counter-revolution and White Terror, namely the significance of the laws and courts in

¹⁵ In addition to the titles in the previous note, he has also edited a number of special issues on this theme, including most recently the January 2015 issue of *Contemporary History* entitled “The Limits of Demobilization” and an issue of the *Journal of Modern European History* on the theme of “The Crisis of Empire after 1918.” He has also contributed to the recent edited collection by Jochen Böhrer, Włodzimierz Borodziej, and Joachim von Puttkamer, eds., *Legacies of Violence: Eastern Europe’s First World War* (Munich: de Gruyter, Oldenbourg, 2014).

¹⁶ Eliza Ablovatski, “Between Red Army and White Guard: Women in Budapest, 1919,” in *Gender and War in Twentieth-Century Europe*, eds. Nancy M. Wingfield and Maria Bucur, 70-94 (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006); Ablovatski, “‘Cleansing the Red Nest’: Revolution and White Terror in Munich and Budapest, 1919,” PhD Dissertation, Columbia University, 2005; Eliza Johnson, “‘Revolutionary Girl with the Titus Head’: Women’s Participation in the 1919 Revolutions in Budapest and Munich in the Eyes of their Contemporaries,” *Nationalities Papers* 28, no. 3 (2000): 541-550.

bringing order back to Budapest and Munich. She also approached the revolutions with an interest in telling a social history of the period, or “history from below.” While she is successful in allowing the voices of some caught up in the upheaval to be heard, including “revolutionary” women, the source base she uses for the Budapest case is small, and seems to be limited to those charged under one specific law.

Furthermore, her analysis of the dichotomous collective memory of the upheavals between the right and the left and how these deployed gender and Judaism as “cultural codes” is also an important statement. Ablovatski refutes some of the core assumptions of the seminal piece of scholarship on gender and White Terror in Germany, Klaus Thewelweit’s *Male Fantasies*. In this massive work, Thewelweit used literary sources produced by members of the *Freikorps* to argue that the “soldier males” were afraid of women as a consequence of the repressive atmosphere of their authoritarian bourgeois backgrounds.¹⁷ By looking at sources produced by a notable conservative woman in the case of Hungary, Ablovatski shows that the articulations of gender codes as they clashed with political identities were not unique to Thewelweit’s “soldier males,” but was a broader vocabulary used by both men and women within politically conservative and/or reactionary circles.

Notwithstanding the contributions her research makes to understanding the events in Munich and Budapest as revolutions, Ablovatski engages with few unpublished Hungarian-language archival sources. Moreover, her research emphasizes discursive practices largely to the exclusion of the lived experience of the revolutions. Thus her research, along with that of Bodó and Gerwarth, has made important recent interventions

¹⁷ Klaus Thewelweit, *Male Fantasies*, Vols.1-2 *Male Bodies: Psychoanalyzing the White Terror*, trans. Stephen Conway (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1987).

in the history of the White Terror and counter-revolution. But it leaves ample ground for further exploration of this tumultuous period in Hungarian history and its reverberations in the international context, especially in terms of the social history of conflict, victims' interpretations of the experience(s) of violence, and the relationship of violence to foreign relations and international humanitarianism.

Explanation of Terms

The challenge of studying this period is that it, in many ways, defies conceptualization in relation to a number of issues. First, though this study uses the term “postwar,” to describe the early years of counter-revolutionary period, it uses this terminology only in a very limited sense to describe the period after the signing of an armistice between Austria-Hungary and the Entente on 3 November, 1918. In reality, the war for Hungary stopped and then reignited, as a re-organized army was raised in order to fight against the partitioning of historical Hungarian territory.¹⁸ The result of this military action was the successor states' and Romania's armies' (with the help of the French Eastern Army) invasion and occupation of nearly the whole of historic Hungary, and the re-occupation of lands set to be apportioned to the successor states. While the Romanian Army attempted to conceptualize this bilateral conflict as a separate conflict which would require its own separate peace, Entente military representatives in Budapest held firmly to the position that this conflict was not divorced from the general European conflict and

¹⁸ Rudolf Tökés, *Béla Kun and the Hungarian Soviet Republic: The Origins and the Role of the Hungarian Communist Party in the Revolutions of 1918-1919* (New York: Hoover Institution of War, Revolution, and Peace, 1967), 142-144.

tried to pressure the Romanians to respect the terms of peace negotiated in Paris.¹⁹

Further, the outbreak of successive leftist revolutions beginning in 1918, which included violence and in turn prompted a violent counter-revolutionary response from internal opponents of the regime and from the Great Powers, who were fearful of the spread of Bolshevism, meant that in no genuine sense of the term was there “peace” in the country.²⁰ Rather, this period was very much defined by transitions: from war to peace, from revolution to counter-revolution, from empire to nation-state, from Great Power to small. It was a period when the ideological foundations of the Hungarian state, and thus political power, were up for grabs, when its future was uncertain, when its (new) role in world affairs was not yet defined, and when multiple groups turned to violence in order to re-mold Hungary in their own image.²¹

With this context in mind, it is necessary to define certain terms which are central to this study such as political legitimacy, violence, revolution and counter-revolution, terror, and transitional justice. The following pages provide both a theoretical and historical grounding for these concepts.

¹⁹ Harry Hill Bandholtz, *An Undiplomatic Diary by the American Member of the Inter-Allied Military Mission to Hungary, 1919-1920*, ed. Fritz-Konrad Krüger (New York: Columbia University Press, 1933), 71. See also the records of the British Foreign Office regarding the Romanian occupation of Hungary, especially the following collections: FO/608/11, FO/608/12, FO/608/13, FO/608/14 at the British National Archives, Kew, England (Hereafter referred to as BNA).

²⁰ For an eloquent discussion of the concept of wartime emergency, see Mary Dudziak, *War Time: An Idea, Its History, Its Consequences* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 3-33.

²¹ Perhaps the most similar historical instance of such period of conflict in the post-Civil War (1860-1865) United States, where militias continued to terrorize particularly the African American, but also pro-Unionists in the South well into the 1870s. J. Michael Rhyne, *Rehearsal for Redemption: The Politics of Post-Emancipation Violence in Kentucky's Bluegrass Region* (PhD Dissertation, University of Cincinnati, 2007); Sally E. Hadden, *Slave Patrols: Law and Violence in Virginia and the Carolinas* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 203-220. Béla Bodó has also looked to the post-Civil War South as a point of comparison, specifically in his article “The Aristocracy and the White Terror,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 45, no. 3 (2010), 714.

Legitimacy

(Political) legitimacy is a very important concept in this study. This is because there is an intimate and complex relationship between violence and legitimacy.

Legitimacy shapes how people determine who gets to use violence, whether the use of violence is justified, and what forms of violence are acceptable. It also plays a role in how violent acts, once committed, are interpreted. Control over violence helps reinforce violence, but violence also may be a source of delegitimization, particularly when a state or other organ violates established norms about how violence may be properly used. The debates over these questions stand at the heart of how people interpreted the White Terror in both the domestic and international political sphere.

As a term in itself, legitimacy means “The condition of being in accordance with law or principle.”²² But as an academic concept, Max Weber’s definition of remains salient for those studying legitimacy.²³ In Weberian terms, political legitimacy emanates from “...the belief in the existence of a ‘legitimate’ order.”²⁴ In other words, it is necessary for the “dominated” in a state to believe in the validity of the regime which rules (or dominates) them.²⁵ Sociologist Morris Zelditch writes that “legitimacy is always a matter of accepting something is ‘right’...” It is “right” because it conforms to the “...norms, values, beliefs, practices and procedures accepted by a group.”²⁶

²² "legitimacy, n.". OED Online. September 2014. Oxford University Press. <http://www.oed.com> (accessed November 29, 2014).

²³ Bruce Gilley, *Right to Rule: How States Win and Lose Legitimacy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 3.

²⁴ Max Weber, *Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, trans. A. M. Henderson, ed. Talcott Parsons (New York: Oxford University Press, 1947), 124

²⁵ Max Weber, “Politics as Vocation,” in *Essays in Sociology*, trans. and ed. H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd., 1947), 78-79.

²⁶ Morris Zelditch, “Theories of Legitimacy,” in *The Psychology of Legitimacy: Emerging Perspectives on Ideology, Justice, and Intergroup Relations*, eds. John Jost and Brenda Major (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 33, 40, quoted in Gilley, *The Right to Rule*, 3.

Weber's essay "Politics as Vocation" sets to the task of explaining *why* someone or a group would accept something as "right," and outlines three basis of justification: historical tradition, legality, and charismatic leadership.²⁷ Reference to these sources of legitimacy are helpful as starting points, but they are not particularly helpful in understanding many twentieth century regimes which relied on new ideological bases, like communist or socialist governments, that do not comfortably fit into Weber's categorizations of state justification. Yet, while his typology might be deficient, Weber keenly understood the link between the beliefs used by regimes to justify their power, and the organization and practices of political power within a state. While Weber's typology is a good starting point for understanding the sources of political authority, it is not exhaustive.

Another problem with Weber's conceptualization is its emphasis on the generation of legitimacy within the only the national context. International recognition and acceptance has been an important dimension of state legitimacy since the early modern period.²⁸ But the subordinate status of smaller states vis-à-vis the Great Powers in relation to economic and military power heightened the significance of this external dimension of legitimacy and state-building. Their sovereignty was not the same as what Great Powers enjoyed and the legitimacy of non-Great Power regimes in the international sphere was dependent to a greater or lesser degree on their conformity to the norms and values, beliefs and procedures espoused by their Great Power "benefactors" and codified in an existing body of international law.²⁹ While the enforcement of international norms

²⁷ Max Weber, "Politics as Vocation," 79.

²⁸ See Ian Clark, *Legitimacy in International Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

²⁹ That is not to say that prior to World War I international norms regarding violence, among other things, did not exist. Rather the establishment of the League of Nations helped to unite, in part, disparate

and standards of political practice has generally been inconsistent for a number of reasons that will be elaborated on later, since the late 19th century, it has been increasingly necessary for regimes to conform, however superficially, to international norms and practices in order to be recognized as legitimate in the international sphere.³⁰

A corrective to some of the weaknesses of Weber is the conceptualization of legitimacy as articulated by political theorist David Beetham, who argues that political authority is legitimate when:

- 1 it is acquired and exercised according to established rules (legality);
- 2 the rules are justifiable to socially accepted beliefs about (i) the rightful source of authority, and (ii) the proper ends and standards of government (normative justifiability);
- 3 positions of authority are confirmed by express consent or affirmation of appropriate subordinates, and by recognition from other legitimate authorities (legitimation).³¹

In this definition, Beetham is able to bring together law, ideology as reflected in the “ends” of governments, and the means of governments. He also clearly hints at the complexity of consent in different regime forms, and thus this definition can be used to acknowledge legitimacy as an important factor of both domestic and international politics.

Beetham’s conceptualization of legitimacy is perhaps better suited to discussing legitimacy in twentieth century regimes than Weber’s, but Weber remains useful for his recognition that even when it is unnecessary for a regime to “cultivate the belief in its legitimacy”—for example where the regime successfully controls the entire coercive

international reform movements under an international umbrella organization. On the history of the League of Nations, see Martyn Houdsen, *The League of Nations and the Organization of Peace* (Harlow, England; New York: Pearson Longman, 2012).

³⁰ John W. Meyer, “The Nation as Babbitt: How Countries Conform,” *Contexts* 3, no. 3 (2004): 42-47.

³¹ David Beetham, “Political Legitimacy,” in *The Blackwell Companion to Political Sociology*, eds. Kate Nash and Alan Scott (Maden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), 110.

capacity of the state—it remains the norm for a regime to do so.³² Weber is also important for linking the justifications of political authority to the means regimes use to establish their domination of society, which will be elaborated on later.

Understanding legitimacy is important in this study of violence because the early post-World War I history of Hungary was defined by prolonged political and ideological contestation between a variety of parties and groups. In other words, the postwar period in Hungary was a time when regimes struggled over which groups’ “values, norms, beliefs, practices and procedures” would define the now-independent state.³³ The violence which defined this struggle was an essential dimension of this contest.

Violence

On a basic level, violence may be defined as “the deliberate infliction of harm on people.”³⁴ This definition highlights the physicality of violence as a lived experience for both perpetrator and victim. However, missing from this definition is an elaboration of the ends of such force beyond the immediate goal of the physical destruction or marginalization of the victim. For the purposes of this dissertation, it is politicized violence that is of primary interest. Therefore I would combine the definition above with Donald Bloxham’s and Robert Gerwarth’s and conceptualize political violence as all

³² Beetham, “Political Legitimacy,” 109.

³³ Morris Zelditch, “Theories of Legitimacy.”

³⁴ Stathis Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil Wars* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 19.

physical force that hurts, damages or kills, which is “enacted pursuant to aims of decisive socio-political control or change.”³⁵

This definition does several things. First it defines violence as a physical experience both for the victim and the perpetrator. Second, it highlights the intended ends of that violence as serving broader functions of control, domination, and possibly transformation. Third, it does not differentiate between perpetrators, especially between the state (i.e. “official” and recognized) and non-state actors who commit violent acts for political ends. This lack of distinction makes the definition usable in more liminal political periods where state power and control over legal definitions is up for grabs, and when social norms are in flux. Additionally, it allows for the interrogation of the legitimization strategies used for deploying violence discussed in the sources. These factors are obviously important for understanding the political and diplomatic crises in Hungary between 1918-1922.

Yet, the inherent problem of such a definition of political violence is that, especially during periods of revolution and counter-revolution, it can be narrow and “misleading.” Indeed, Gerwarth points out that: “The reification of a separate public sphere in which political conflicts are conducted separate from domestic or private spheres risks presenting a highly one-sided account of the origins of revolutionary violence.”³⁶ This observation is relevant to this study as it seeks to examine the counter-revolution and White Terror as it unfolded in precisely those spaces which have been left out of the existing narratives, but which were important sites of struggle over the

³⁵ Donald Bloxham and Robert Gerwarth, “Introduction,” in *Political Violence in Twentieth Century Europe*, eds. Donald Bloxham and Robert Gerwarth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 2.

³⁶ Gerwarth, “Revolution and Counter-revolution,” in *Political Violence in Twentieth Century Europe*, eds. Donald Bloxham and Robert Gerwarth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 141.

meaning and implementation of the revolution and counter-revolution in Hungary. The other problem with the concept of political violence in periods of political upheaval and revolution is that it has the capacity to over-interpret all actions as politically motivated. In reality, professional or material gain, opportunism, and pre-existing social tensions such as ethnic hatred, frequently have motivated people to commit violent acts that had nothing to do with the political goals of revolutionaries, but which take advantage of the political, social, and often legal upheaval in order to address their particular grievances.³⁷ Acknowledging that there are different motivations for violence that occurs in revolutionary periods does not, in the end, repudiate the concept of political violence. Rather, it shows that revolutionary political transformations are complex phenomena and therefore “have to be located in the alliance that emerged between the national and the local forces, and between the public and the private.”³⁸ It also is important to acknowledge that revolutions often provide an impetus for people to act on their more “base urges” by upsetting state authority, the enforcement of law, and by suspending or challenging normal patterns of behavior and providing both implicit and explicit justifications for, and opposition to, violence. In other words, revolutions provide people with “license” to act in ways they otherwise would not if times were “normal.”³⁹

³⁷ Stathis Kalyvas, *The Logic of violence in Civil Wars*, 21-22. Even these more subjective reasons often wind up functioning to either reinforce or restructure socio-political hierarchies, despite their more personal motivations.

³⁸ Gerwarth, “Revolution and Counter-revolution,” 142.

³⁹ “Licence,” according to historian Aristotle Kallis’ conceptualization is “the conditional suspension of those hindrances that keep violence (however desirable) at bay. ‘Licence’ is an *ad hoc* justified exception, an authorised suspension of conventional morality that is finite and targets a very specific scenario. By removing, cancelling out or weakening constraints, it enables individuals and groups to accept the desirability of a violent scenario even if the latter contradicts generic cultural understandings of defensible or ‘just’ behaviour.” See Kallis, “‘Licence’ and Genocide in the East: Reflections on Localised Eliminationist Violence,” *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism*, 2007 ASEN Conference Special, 7, no. 3 (2007): 8.

In addition to these conceptual challenges, it is also necessary to raise a few additional points about violence and particularly its relationship to state power. Weber wrote in 1922 that for a state to exist it must successfully monopolize the “legitimate use of physical force [such as police, army, gendarmerie] within a given territory.”⁴⁰ However, what determines the legitimacy of the force exercised by a group or person vying for authority is often their ultimate success. That is to say, the violence used to establish authority is generally subsumed into the founding myth of the state and is judged to be necessary in order to establish and exercise authority. Thus, when the state is believed to be legitimate, the violence it used to establish itself will eventually (if not immediately) come to be considered legitimate and in accordance to the beliefs, norms and practices of the state as it now exists. This legitimation process may be very difficult, depending on how effectively a leader(s) is able to incorporate the violence committed by his or her followers into a coherent narrative of necessary and beneficent political struggle. People’s (and states’) immediate interpretations of events are informed largely by the norms and practices that prevailed prior to revolution or crisis, and take a long time to adapt to the new conditions, methods, and logic of the state. Thus, Weber should be taken seriously in his warning that violence, when used as one of the means of revolutionary political struggle, has the potential to degrade the ends of that struggle, however noble they may be.

⁴⁰ Max Weber, “Politics as Vocation,” 78.

Counter-revolution

A discussion of counter-revolution is vital to the effective contextualization of the violence associated with revolutionary political transitions. Although this study hones in on the dynamics of counter-revolutionary violence and White Terror, it is necessary to understand counter-revolution in its relationship to its preceding event: revolution.

Revolution is a highly contested concept among scholars. Taking a more synthetic approach, this study considers revolution as a rapid transformation of the social and political structures of a polity. However, it is also informed by the definition of revolution as “those far-reaching transformations of the symbolic and institutional structures” of societies, which often include “upheaval, rapid change, discontinuity, and violence.”⁴¹ In other terms, revolution includes (attempts) to radically reshape how individuals relate to each other and the state and alter “the justifications for political authority in society.”⁴² Many revolutions seek the destruction of hierarchies and privileges that characterized the *ancien regime*, and aim to reconstruct the state by bringing in socially, economically, politically, and even ethnically marginalized groups and individuals. Most revolutionary states, however, do not dispense with the concept of hierarchy, but rather reproduce hierarchies in ways that reflect the functional needs and the ideology of the regime.⁴³

Counter-revolution stands in opposition to revolutionary efforts, with the two existing in a symbiotic relationship as counter-revolution does not exist without

⁴¹ S.E. Eisenstadt, *Revolution and the Transformation of Societies: a Comparative Study of Civilizations* (New York: Free Press, 1978), 216-217. See also Charles Tilly, *European Revolutions, 1492-1992* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), 4-9.

⁴² Bjørn Thomassen, “Notes towards an Anthropology of Political Revolutions,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 54, no. 3 (2012), 683.

⁴³ Eugen Weber, “Revolution? Counter-revolution? What Revolution?” *Journal of Contemporary History*, 9, no. 3 (April 1974): 8; See also Sheila Fitzpatrick, “Ascribing Class: The Construction of Social Identity in Soviet Russia,” in *Stalinism: New Directions*, ed. Sheila Fitzpatrick, 20-46 (New York: Routledge, 2000); Weber, “Revolution? Counter-revolution? What Revolution?,” 8; Collins, “The Tie that Binds,” 917-918.

revolution. Counter-revolution has come to mean the efforts of certain groups to undo the changes wrought by revolution and to re-establish the “traditional order,” however it is defined.⁴⁴ But this oppositional and reactionary conceptualization of counter-revolution does not leave space for those people who actually do not wish to restore the old order but rather want to establish an alternate order. The former would be *anti*-revolutionary and the latter *counter*-revolutionary in its precise sense—a “revolution against the previous revolution(s).”⁴⁵ In the Hungarian case, this distinction is perhaps moot because the Magyar word that is translated into English as “counter-revolution”—*ellenforradalom* or “against revolution”—actually can encapsulate both meanings and has been deployed as a catch-all term that refers to the ideologically diverse groups opposed to the Károlyi led Chrysanthemum Revolution and the Hungarian Soviet Republic.⁴⁶

The distinction between “counter-revolution” and “anti-revolution” may be further complicated by distinctions Arno Mayer articulated, between “reaction,” “conservatism” and “counter-revolution,” which are often conflated with counter-revolution, but which he argues are not the same. He defines reaction as a general pessimism about “present and future” society, which seeks to return to some romanticized past, whereas conservatism is an attempt to maintain the status quo or to implement change in a very slow and gradual manner through pragmatic compromise with political opponents.⁴⁷ However, Mayer argues that periods of political crisis drive the three factions together, when the need to create alliances supersedes the needs to keep

⁴⁴ Arno Mayer, *Dynamics of Counter-revolution, 1870-1956: an Analytic Framework* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 48-50; Weber, “Revolution? Counter-revolution? What Revolution?,” 32-33.

⁴⁵ Weber, “Revolution, Counter-revolution? What Revolution?,” 13.

⁴⁶ While in Hungarian *Tanácsköztársaság* literally translates as “Republic of Councils”, the common translation of the term in English is “Hungarian Soviet Republic”.

⁴⁷ Mayer, *Dynamics of Counter-revolution*, 48, 50.

the goals of each group separate. This conceptual differentiation of opposition to revolution does create a far more complex portrait of revolutionary moments, but using Mayer's conceptualization of anti-revolutionary alliances between different factions helps encapsulate the complexity of Hungary's "counter-revolutionary" factions which included Habsburg legitimists, monarchists (those who wanted to retain Hungary's royal heritage but establish a new ruling family) and radical nationalists. His conceptualization is also helpful in proposing how and why certain groups tolerate certain activities in crisis moments they would otherwise eschew in "ordinary" times, as well as in positing the reasons why coalitions forged in crisis eventually fall apart.

Terror and Transitional Justice

Integral to the study of revolution and counter-revolution is that of terror. As a historical concept, "Terror" has come to define periods of intensive bloodshed and repression of those perceived to be enemies of the regime.⁴⁸ Terror is largely an instrument of politics, and is often, though not exclusively, used in periods when ultimate success is unsure, and thus emanates from a perceived position of weakness and fear

⁴⁸ Arno Mayer, *The Furies: Violence and Terror in the French and Russian Revolutions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), chapter 4. Sheila Fitzpatrick conceptualizes terror as "extralegal state violence," with extralegal violence referring to that which is not explicitly regulated in the law. The challenge in periods of extreme flux is in determining which laws to follow, and the additional problem that what may have been extralegal at the time is often retroactively legitimized in emergency law and/or involves actors with close ties to the state apparatus (like gendarmes or police). Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times, Soviet Russia in the 1930s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 7. See also Eric A. Johnson, *Nazi Terror: the Gestapo, Jews, and Ordinary Germans* (New York: Basic Books, 1999) and James Harris, *Anatomy of Terror: Political Violence under Stalin* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

rather than strength. In terms of its goals, typically, the role of terror in revolutionary moments has been to eliminate “enemies” and strike fear into the hearts of observers.⁴⁹

Transitional justice, like that of terror, is an important concept within the broader study of revolutionary moments. As such, it often implicitly suggests a relatively brief timeline of a few months to a couple of years when the new regime is making its most intensive efforts to establish itself as legitimate. It is generally described as “the way societies or groups elect to deal with the past as they establish a new system.” Each instance of revolution requires the new government to “[balance] clemency with selective punishment,” which ideally allows a new government to consolidate its position and assert its “foundational principles” and its interpretation of social and political norms publicly in the hopes of laying the groundwork for future stability in the state.⁵⁰

Transitional justice usually requires its enforcers to balance four main impulses: punishment, amnesty, revenge, and restitution, all within institutionalized apparatuses of justice, to prevent or hinder popular expressions of these impulses. Of course the problem embedded within the concept is that of “justice” itself, given that revolutions and counter-revolutions hinge on dueling conceptualizations of what precisely constitutes a “just society.” Thus, what political theorists and historians alike tend to describe as “transitional justice” is the (re)construction of the legal order, which includes dealing with the “crimes” of the past regime.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Johnson, *Nazi Terror*, 11; See also Wendy Z. Goldman, *Inventing the Enemy: Denunciation and Terror in Stalin's Russia* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

⁵⁰ Howard G. Brown, “Robespierre’s Tail: The Possibilities for Justice after the Terror,” *Canadian Journal of History* (Winter 2010): 504.

⁵¹ Here the word crime is only used as a historically relative term, not as a moral valuation of the policies pursued by the previous regime, whatever its ideological bent.

Transitional justice is a conceptual paradigm with relatively recent origins dating from the early nineties. It was developed largely by social scientists examining political transformations in places like Latin America, South Africa, Eastern Europe, and Southeast Asia. As a result of this moment of genesis, transitional justice has been conceptualized almost exclusively in liberal democratic terms as a defining part of the progressive march of politically illiberal societies toward democratization.⁵² It encompasses a variety of methods and institutions which new governments have used to deal with the crimes and wrong-doings of past regimes. As such, transitional justice encompasses the desire for vengeance and punishment, as well as the potential for amnesty and restitution, and it provides a means for a new regime to present its ideological position, especially in terms of indicating how society is supposed to be ordered, its values, and defining who will be the primary beneficiaries of the state.

As a concept, transitional justice to this point has been largely ignored by historians, even those who study revolutionary moments.⁵³ Some scholars have argued that given the terminology and its near-exclusive use to describe only political transitions from authoritarianism to democracy (and somewhat less so postwar judicial procedures), to use the term in relation to historical moments is anachronistic because: (1) the meaning is implicitly packed with a set of assumptions and priorities which are specific to its origins in the early 1990s, (2) historical actors did not use the precise term and (3) actors and regimes in the past did not necessarily consciously build special judicial organs to

⁵² Brown, "Robespierre's Tail," 504. The concept has also been somewhat half-heartedly been applied to transitional moments from war to peace, and especially to the development of war crimes tribunals since World War II, most prominently the Nuremberg trials and the war crimes tribunals following the wars in Yugoslavia.

⁵³ Brown's article is a notable exception, though it also deals with the transition to a more liberal regime.

specifically deal with the actions of their predecessor(s).⁵⁴ However, though the objections deal with the content of the terminology, the conflicts which “transitional justice” has sought to mediate: “...truth vs. justice, vengeance vs. forgiveness and remembering vs. forgetting,” are issues with which all regimes in periods of significant social and political transition have had to grapple.⁵⁵ Unlike the dominant neo-liberal narrative however, the dilemmas which define regime change in revolutionary moments have not always been resolved in a manner which has promoted the cause of democracy or progress, however these concepts are defined. Moreover, the very idea of “justice” itself varies across different historical and ideological contexts. Understanding what seeking justice means at a particular historical moment makes it possible to identify how ideological goals are translated into practice.

This dissertation seeks to understand the relationship between terror and transitional justice in post-World War I and post-revolutionary Hungary. The instruments of transitional justice are ideally shaped in ways that specifically buoy a new regime’s claims of legitimacy—domestically and internationally—and allow it to survive and stabilize itself. Howard Brown, a scholar of the French Revolution, argued that a goal of transitional justice is to “overcome a legacy of violence and fear,” but a regime’s approach to transitional justice may, in fact, allow it to more effectively manage violence, transforming it from inconvenient “extra-legal” excesses or popular expressions of anger into an important facet of state policy. This dimension of transitional justice is often untreated in the scholarly literature on transitional justice specifically because the

⁵⁴ Paige Arthur, “How ‘Transitions’ Reshaped Human Rights: A Conceptual History of Transitional Justice.” *Human Rights Quarterly* 31 (2009), 329-332.

⁵⁵ I would like to thank my colleague Jan Bröker, for sharing his unpublished paper with me. Bröker, “Transitional (In)Justice: Hungary 1919-1922,” (paper presented at the annual Graduate Conferences in European History, May 3-5, 2012).

underlying assumption in much of it is that a state's transition is (always) toward democracy.⁵⁶ In the case of Hungary, the practices of counter-revolutionary transitional justice, including internment, complemented and prolonged the violence and fear instilled by the White Terror, which helped institutionalize the radically altered social, economic, and political conditions of the newly truncated postwar, post-revolution, and post-occupation state.

Chapter Outline

The first chapter of this dissertation provides a summary of Hungary's Great War as well as the revolutionary transformations following the dissolution of the Dual Monarchy. The subsequent two chapters address the counter-revolution and White Terror in the arena of internal politics. Chapter Two analyzes the violence of White militias, paying attention to how both perpetrators' and victims' (perceived) position in social, ethnic, gender, and religious hierarchies shaped the interpretation of and justifications for violence. Chapter Three explores the domestic sphere as a way of understanding the broader population's participation in the counter-revolution and White Terror, paying special attention to the reassertion of property relations, access to housing and the threat

⁵⁶ Jane L. Curry, "When an Authoritarian State Victimized the Nation: Transitional Justice, Collective Memory, and Political Divides," *International Journal of Sociology* 37, 1(Spring 2007): 58–73; Ruti Teitel, "Transitional Jurisprudence: The Role of Law in Political Transformation," *The Yale Law Journal* 106, 7 (May 1997): 2009–2080; Neil J. Kritz, editor, "Transitional Justice: How Emerging Democracies Reckon with Former Regimes" (Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1995); Ruti G. Teitel, *Transitional Justice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000). Much of the scholarship has developed along two lines, one of which discusses the issue of transitional justice in societies undergoing or attempting democratic transformations (e.g. post-socialist transition in Eastern Europe after 1989) or transitional justice after periods of extreme moments of ethnic conflict, including but not limited to genocide (e.g. Germany, Rwanda). Still another thread of scholarship grapples with the idea of transitional justice as it relates to efforts at "reconciliation" (such as post-Apartheid South Africa). Thus, transitional justice as a concept has developed primarily in the post-World War II period, as a policy-oriented idea rather than as a historical concept.

of violence as it invaded the most intimate spaces of people's lives. The fourth chapter serves as bridge between the domestic and international political sphere. It homes in on the history of counter-revolutionary incarceration and internment as an important site of violence and deprivation. It also explores how multiple factors, especially class, citizenship status and gender shaped the carceral experience of thousands of people.

The last two chapters explore the role of the international community in the White Terror. Chapter five features the struggle between the governments of the Great Powers, specifically Great Britain and the United States, and the international labor movement over the existence, the nature and scope of the Terror and the debate over whether and/or how the Entente should intervene in Hungary. The final chapter analyzes the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee's, a Jewish relief and reconstruction organization, response to the White Terror. These chapters both pay special attention to how ethnic, class and gender hierarchies as well as citizenship status not only shaped the international community's understanding of the complex nature of the crises in Hungary, but how it played a role in the formulation of diplomacy, relief, and reconstructive policies. Taken together, these chapters examine the counter-revolution and White Terror from a variety of domestic and international angles, showing the complex ways that violence defined this tumultuous period in Central European history.

Chapter One

Hungary's Political Crises

The White Terror and counter-revolution in Hungary came on the heels of very swift political transformations that saw Hungary go from an integral part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire to a much smaller independent state in just five years. The story of this period is therefore not only a story of political crisis and revolution, but also a story of state rebuilding in the wake of tremendous upheaval. This process of constructing an independent state was hindered by a number of important economic and social problems, as well as military defeat and ensuing territorial truncation. These were challenges that five governments, all of which differed in their ideological orientation, attempted—and largely failed—to solve.¹

The immediate postwar period was marked by a power struggle between the political right and left. The Hungarian economy was decimated by the war. The country's encirclement by Entente troops by the autumn of 1918 combined with the war government's efforts to extract as much labor and resources out of its population had become increasingly violent over the four years of war, with some labor leaders being thrown into prison to prevent disturbances, while some peasants traded sexual favors for increased rations and received arbitrary beatings by local leaders.² On the military front, the troops Hungary had supplied to the Habsburg war effort had largely been dispatched to the Russian, Serbian, and Italian fronts where fighting had been fierce, and where

¹ The governments were headed by István Tisza (1913-1918), Mihály Károlyi (October, 1918-March, 1919), Béla Kun who was formally only the Commissar of Foreign Affairs but actually functioned as the head of state (March 21, 1919-August 1, 1919), István Friedrich (August 7, 1919-November 23, 1919), Károlyi Huszár (November 24, 1919-March 1, 1920), Admiral Miklós Horthy (March 1, 1919-October 15, 1944).

² Péter Hanák, "Vox Populi: Intercepted Letters in the First World War," in *The Garden and the Workshop: Essays on the Cultural History of Budapest and Vienna* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 184, 186. The reasons for beatings are not elaborated on by the correspondent, Maria Sedláckova.

hundreds of thousands were taken as prisoners-of-war and sent to remote camps in Siberia. The Entente blockade combined with the Hungarian government's mismanagement of resources created near famine conditions in Hungary by 1918, and the anger and frustration many felt at the monarchist government came to rest in the figure of former Prime Minister István Tisza, who was assassinated on October 31, 1918 in his house on Hermina utca in Budapest. His assassination in many ways served as a symbol of the symbolic destruction of the pre-war assumption that political power rested solely in the hands of traditional elites, and initialized a prolonged crisis of political legitimacy as the ideological orientation of the government moved rapidly from conservative liberalism to social democracy to communism to conservative authoritarianism over the course of only one and a half years.

The assassination of Tisza offers a point of introduction for the primary questions guiding this study: what was the role of physical violence in the struggle for political legitimacy in post-World War I Hungary?; how did class, gender, and ethnicity affect how violence was instrumentalized, experienced, and interpreted during this postwar period, and which types of violence were of particular concern in the internal sphere of struggle, as well as in international diplomacy and advocacy efforts in the early postwar/interwar period?³ Each government positioned itself in radically divergent ways in regard to these questions as they went about the business of (re)building new political institutions and judiciaries, and in the long term, each regime came to be associated to these questions in particular ways which reflect not only the events and interpretations of

³ Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color," *Stanford Law Review*, 43, 6(July 1991): 1241-1299; Patricia Hill Collins, "The Tie that Binds: Race, Gender, and US Violence," *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 21, 5 (September 1998): 917-938; Leslie McCall, "The Complexity of Intersectionality," *Signs*, 30, 3(Spring 2005): 1771-1800. See also footnote on pg. 2-3.

contemporaries, but also later historical developments in Hungary, which only 27 years later was once again on the losing side of war. This study focuses on these questions as they relate to the final phase of political upheaval: the counter-revolution and the White Terror.

The revolutions and counter-revolution proposed and sought to institute political visions that conceptualized civil rights, property rights and Hungary's military and diplomatic orientation in radically different ways. But the Hungarian revolutions and counter-revolution also came on the heels of an extraordinarily violent war and at a moment of extreme economic, political, and military weakness, exploding when many Western European governments feared the seepage of violent communist revolution from Russia and were willing to intervene militarily to stem the tide of Bolshevik expansion in Europe. It took place during a period of intense soul-searching on the part of many Europeans who had been questioning the compatibility of violence with European ideological values and economic interests since the second half of the nineteenth century and continued to do so even more vigorously in the wake of the Great War when internationally minded reformers gained enough support from states to build new institutions that were intended to prevent future wars on European soil. In other words, the revolutions and counter-revolution in Hungary exploded during a time when international norms about violence were being re-defined as a result of the wartime experience, and the weakness of Hungary coupled with the presence of military and civilian advisors and missions meant that it was not solely up to Hungarians to define the limits of acceptable violence and to interpret when the state—and its representatives like

the army, police, and gendarmerie--had gone too far in their efforts to cleanse the nation of revolutionary remnants.

The purpose of this chapter is to give the historical background of the political crisis in postwar Hungary. Moving from the wartime government of István Tisza to the democratic regime of Mihály Károlyi, to the “dictatorship of the proletariat” established by Béla Kun to establishment of the regency of Miklós Horthy, this chapter will provide insight into the shifting sands of Hungarian politics in during the war and its aftermath. This chapter will pay special attention to the state’s use of coercion and violence against its own population and subject populations, after the declaration of war in the summer of 1914. It will also discuss interplay of the international and domestic sphere of Hungarian politics.

Hungary’s Great War

On the eve of World War I, the government was led by István Tisza. Tisza had been the Prime Minister from 1903-1905, during which he had called for the ruthless breaking of a railroad workers strike in 1903 and had also called on the police to break up a gathering of socialists in 1904, which ended with 33 people killed and many more wounded.⁴ Between his Ministerial posts, he had been the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and had championed controversial legislation designed specifically to marginalize the opposition, which encompassed a range of leftist parties and intellectual circles that had gradually positioned themselves around the person of Count Mihály Károlyi, a member of one of the wealthiest aristocratic families of Hungary and an

⁴ Gábor Vermes, *István Tisza: The Liberal Vision and Conservative Statecraft of a Magyar Nationalist* (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 1985), 99-100.

advocate of democracy and pacifism, by the end of the war. Tisza was opposed to substantive franchise reform or expansion before and during the war, and continuously defended traditional social hierarchy through a narrow franchise in the kingdom, in part to mitigate the influence of the national minorities on Hungarian politics. In the aftermath of the war, one influential critic of Hungary, British historian Robert Seton-Watson argued that the newly-independent state was responsible for the war because of Magyarization policies which had alienated national minorities and led to nationalist violence aimed at destroying the monarchy. Tisza, cited as the chief architect of these policies by Seton-Watson, and Hungary more broadly, therefore bore much blame for the collapse of the empire.⁵

Notwithstanding policies that alienated the national minorities, working class, and peasantry of Hungary, generally historians agree that Tisza and many of the political elite in Hungary did not want to declare war against Serbia, and Tisza personally went to Vienna to encourage the Emperor to use diplomatic channels to solve the political crisis initiated by the assassination of heir apparent Archduke Francis Ferdinand.⁶ However once the declaration of war had been made by the Emperor, a political ceasefire akin to the *Burgfrieden* in Germany and *L'union sacrée* in France was instituted between the governing party and the opposition parties in Parliament. By 1916, these political truces in nearly all of the belligerent states had collapsed under the weight of huge casualties, military defeats, and domestic economic crisis.⁷ Political consensus also deteriorated as the government seized more and more power via emergency legislation that was used to

⁵ See Robert Seton-Watson, *Racial Problems in Hungary* (New York: N. Fertig, 1972).

⁶ József Galántai, *Magyarország az elsőháborúban 1914-1918* [Hungary in the First World War 1914-1918], trans. Éva Grusz and Judit Pokoly (Budapest: Akademia Kiado, 1989), 25-44.

⁷ Michael Neiberg, *Dance of the Furies: Europe and the Outbreak of World War I* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2011), 152-153; Haupt, *Socialism and the Great War*, 234-235.

marginalize political opposition, outlaw worker agitation, seize with little or no recompense crops of the countryside which was becoming ever more depleted of its population because of mass conscription.⁸ Using emergency powers marshal the human and economic resources of the state during this first total war was not unique to the Monarchy.⁹ However, as the war dragged on, the state passed ever-more coercive legislation to control the population without balancing coercion with government action adequately addressed rising food and commodity shortages and dramatic inflation that drove thousands to near starvation and poverty. Urban industrial workers saw wage freezes and the restriction of their ability to agitate, peasants had their crops seized and their sons conscripted, newspapers came under ever more scrutiny, and jury trials were suspended.¹⁰ Anti-sedition laws provided the state with broad powers to imprison those deemed to be an enemy of the state, and new controls were placed on aliens from enemy states, many of whom were at best subject to home arrest and at worst internment.¹¹ These laws gave the Hungarian state broad power to punish and silence political opposition, and they echoed similar developments in all belligerent states during the war.¹²

⁸ Galántai, *Magyarország az elsőháborúban*, 95.

⁹ Jürgen Kocka, *Facing Total War: Germany Society, 1914-1918*, trans. Barbara Weinberger (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984) makes the argument that World War I was the first total war.

¹⁰ Ignács Romsics, *Hungary in the Twentieth Century*, trans. Tim Wilkinson (Budapest: Corvina; Osiris, 1999), 85; Galántai, *Magyarország az elsőháborúban*, 72-85. See also Ferenc Pölöskei, *Hungary after Two Revolutions*, trans. by E. Csicséri-Rónay (Budapest: Akadémia Kiadó, 1980) for discussion of wartime emergency measures which were ultimately expanded and/or elaborated on by the counter-revolutionary regime.

¹¹ Rudolf Nijinsky the famous Russian ballet dancer who had married a Hungarian woman was probably one of the most famous of the “enemy aliens” in Hungary and was placed under house arrest in Budapest during the war.

¹² Andrew G. Bone, *Beyond the Rule of Law: Aspects of the Defense of Realm Acts and Regulations, 1914-1918* (PhD Dissertation, McMaster University, 1994), 2. These were expanded upon throughout the course of the war.

¹² Arnold Krammer, *Undue Process: The Untold Story of America's German Alien Internees* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1997), 14; Christopher Cappazola, *Uncle Sam Wants You: World War I and*

Unlike Germany and Austria where it was military rather than civil authorities that exercised extraordinary wartime powers, in Hungary the arrangement was the reverse. The civil government benefitted from the implementation of emergency legislation and came to exercise more unchecked power over the country including the abrogation of civil rights and the forcible requisitioning of materials and foodstuffs from peasants. Though Prime Minister István Tisza's biographer Gábor Vermes argues that during the war, Tisza was generally not eager to use violence to achieve political goals or stymy protest, his personal reticence did not necessarily translate to the level of local authorities.¹³

The political truce in Hungary remained for a surprisingly long time given the domestic political and economic crises and growing military exhaustion of the country. Tisza's Party of National Work claimed a majority in the Hungarian Parliament in 1914, but nearly all opposition groups agreed to support the declaration of war and mobilization, as well as the government's use of emergency powers in 1914. Reasons for such collective support of the government were varied, but many in the opposition hoped that support for the government party in this time of international crisis could be leveraged into long-advocated reforms like the extension of the franchise and land reform for the peasantry.¹⁴ Yet, as the war continued, Tisza did not back away from his goals of preserving, intact, the pre-war social and political hierarchy in Hungary, and indeed, continued to pass coercive emergency legislation to control the increasingly discontent

the Making of the Modern American Citizen (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 173-205; Beverly Gage, *The Day Wall Street Exploded: A Story of America in Its First Age of Terror* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

¹³ Vermes, *István Tisza*, 334, 466.

¹⁴ Galántai, *Magyarország az elsőháborúban*, 119; 240-264.

populace rather than pass constructive legislation that might have taken some of the pressure off the state.

The domestic political tensions were only exacerbated by events on the battlefield. The Dual Monarchy had not been adequately prepared for the type of total war WWI devolved into by the end of 1914 and beginning of 1915. Part of the problem had been the debate between Hungarian and Austrian authorities over the share of military expenses Hungary would fund. But another problem was that the opening of two fronts in Russia and Serbia at the beginning of war stretched the Monarchy's military very thin in the early days. The Russian offensive in Galicia was initially successful and drove perhaps 400,000 refugees from Galicia, many of them Jewish, deeper into the Habsburg Empire.¹⁵ Eventually the Russian Army was pushed back by late 1914, but by that time, thousands of soldiers had been taken captive by the Russian forces and sent behind the front lines. By the end of the war, nearly 1.5 million Austro-Hungarian soldiers would be held captive in Russia and it was in the prison camps of Russia that the Hungarian communist party was organized.¹⁶

Death and captivity required the Austro-Hungarian authorities to become increasingly broader in their conscription efforts, eventually calling for able-bodied men between the ages of 18-50 to be called into the military.¹⁷ Military conscription efforts hit the rural population of Hungary very hard, as many of the men working in urban areas

¹⁵ Rebekah Klein-Pejšová, "Among the Nationalities: Jewish Refugees, Jewish Nationalities, and Czechoslovak Statebuilding" (PhD. diss., Columbia University, 2007), 28; David Rechter, *The Jews of Austria and the First World War* (London; Portland, OR: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2001), 71.

¹⁶ Iván Völgyes, "Hungarian Prisoners of War in Russia, 1916-1919," *Cahiers du Monde russe et soviétique* 14, 1-2 (January-June, 1973), 54. See also Alon Rachamimov, *POWs and the Great War: Captivity on the Eastern Front* (Oxford: Berg, 2002).

¹⁷ Galántai, *Magyarország az elsőháborúban*, 119.

were essentially conscripted as laborers in war industries.¹⁸ This uneven distribution of military service coupled with the increasingly coercive measures used by the authorities to requisition crops from the rural population helped generate increasing disaffection for the government in rural areas in Hungary.

The outbreak of war had occurred at the end of summer and at the beginning of harvesting season. Without the necessary rural labor forces, much of the harvest languished in fields in 1914. The food shortages experienced because of the loss of rural labor sources was exacerbated by bad harvests and by the Entente blockade of the Central Powers which in turn led to more coercive rationing legislation at home so as not to divert resources away from the military.¹⁹ As supplies dwindled, the government and traditional elite were increasingly the targets of anger and economic and social discontent, as well as the failure of to achieve peace with or without victory. They came to be regarded by many in the population as equally exploitive as newly enriched wartime profiteers, a characterization which was particularly strong among those sympathetic to socialism or social democracy, but also among many peasants who had not traditionally part of the traditional support base of such leftist parties.²⁰ As one woman wrote in a letter to her husband in 1917: “The masters were ‘clever enough to stumble into war’ to the ruination of the entire nation, and with the result that those at home starve; but they are not clever enough to make peace; that will have to be left to the socialists.”²¹

¹⁸ Romsics, *Hungary in the Twentieth Century*, 85.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Péter Hanák, “Vox Populi,” 209.

²¹ Ibid., 183.

Defeat and Revolution

The history of Hungary's military defeat and descent into revolution in October, 1918 is multifaceted. The events of the war affected internal political developments in Hungary. However, given the collapse of the Habsburg Empire, military defeat, and the territorial disintegration of Hungary, what had been issues of domestic policy prior to the war, particularly in regard to policies regarding the national minorities, were internationalized. It is extraordinarily difficult to extricate the domestic from the international, as each arena played off one another. The pages that follow will attempt to provide an overview of historical developments between October 1918 and August 1919.

The tides of war on the Eastern Front changed when Russia plunged into revolution in 1917 and formally extricated itself from the war by signing the Brest-Litovsk Treaty in early 1918, effectively closing the Russian Front. The Austro-Hungarian armies continued occupying Serbia with the help of their Bulgarian ally, and in May, 1918 signed a treaty with Romania which added territory to Hungary. The main Austro-Hungarian front which remained undecided as summer approached in 1918 was the Italian front. However, the United States' entrance into the war in spring, 1917, allowed the Entente to augment the Italian military with troops and supplies. On the Balkan front now able to free up some troops, the French *Armée de Orient* along with Romanian and Serbian forces launched an offensive which led to the liberation of Serbia and the defeat of Bulgaria, developments which positioned Entente troops at the southern and eastern borders of Hungary by October, 1918. The Austro-Hungarian defeat at the Battle of Vittorio Veneto against the Italians was the final blow to the Austro-Hungarian military, which had already begun to disintegrate in mid-October. On November 3, 1918,

the Austro-Hungarian leadership sued for peace with the Italians, and the formal armistice was signed between Austria-Hungary and the Entente.

By the time the armistice was signed, the “Indivisible and Inseparable” Monarchy effectively ceased to exist. At the end of September 1918, the Central Powers’ defeat was imminent and in early October, both member states of the Dual Monarchy indicated their desire for peace according to the principles of American President Woodrow Wilson’s Fourteen Points.²² In the following two weeks, Emperor Charles, Franz Josef’s more liberal successor, tried to hold together the empire by calling for its transformation into a federation of autonomous nations, thereby showing the Entente that he was serious about his acceptance of the Fourteen Points. Such a federation was officially declared on October 16, 1918. But by that point, the national minorities had already started to break away from the Monarchy. A Declaration of Independence had been issued by the Czechoslovaks in mid-October, was recognized by the Entente, the new Czechoslovakian state was formally considered a belligerent against Austria-Hungary. The creation of this new state definitively demonstrated that Charles’ offer of national autonomy could no longer be regarded as an appropriate foundation for peace by Great Britain and France. Austria-Hungary would have to negotiate a peace treaty with Czechoslovakia, which was now in control of its own national destiny.²³ Moreover, while restructuring the Dual Monarchy on a federalist principle was intended to hold the empire together, the declaration of October 16, 1918 prompted the Hungarian Parliament to proclaim, on that same day, that such a restructuring of the Dual Monarchy effectively voided the 1867 Compromise which had created the Dualist structure. The Hungarian Parliament

²² Galántai, *Magyarország az elsőháborúban*, 312.

²³ *Ibid.*, 315.

continued to recognize Charles as the king of Hungary in accordance with the Pragmatic Sanction of 1713, until the newly organized pro-independence and democratic government headed by Prime Minister Mihály Károlyi formally ended the personal union between the states on 31 October 1918, and the Habsburg Empire formally dissolved.²⁴

Like its Austrian counterpart, in mid-October 1918, the wartime government had declared itself ready to make peace on the basis of Wilson's Fourteen Points, especially in regard to democratization and a nationalities' policy.²⁵ Despite this acceptance of the Wilsonian program, however, leaders in Parliament fundamentally misunderstood the implications of the Fourteen Points for Hungary.²⁶ Many Hungarian politicians on both the right and left interpreted the concept of "national self-determination" as support for the independence of the Hungarian state outside of the Habsburg Empire. After all, by 1918, the historical Kingdom of Hungary had existed for over a millennium. Even leftist leaders of the opposition such as Oszkar Jászi envisioned a federalist solution for Hungary as opposed to dissolution, which would give Hungary's national minorities autonomy within the historical territory of the Hungarian state.²⁷ However, given the loss of the war by the Central Powers, the dissolution of the Dual Monarchy, the establishment of new states such as Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, and the military encirclement of Hungary by Entente troops, there was no incentive for the national minorities to choose to remain within Hungary when they could rather seek union with their brethren in their own multinational states.

²⁴ Ibid., 314-316.

²⁵ Galántai, *Magyarország az elsőháborúban*, 319.

²⁶ Rudolf L. Tökés, *Béla Kun and the Hungarian Soviet Republic; The Origins and the Role of the Hungarian Communist Party in the Revolutions of 1918-1919* (New York: Hoover Institution of War, Revolution, and Peace, 1967), 72.

²⁷ Galántai, *Magyarország az elsőháborúban*, 214; See also Galántai, *Oszkár Jászi's conceptions on Federalism during the First World War* (Budapest: Akadémia Kiadó, 1974).

The rejection of a federal state solution by the national minorities by June, 1918 helped cement plans among Entente leadership for the territorial partition of Hungary. After declaring Hungary's independence, Prime Minister Károlyi signed a punitive separate military armistice with French General Franchet d'Esperey, which called for the Hungarian military evacuation of Transylvania, the Banat, and other territories to the south. Following this new armistice, Romanian, Serbian, and French troops moved in to occupy these territories, despite the lack of a formal peace treaty. To the north, the Károlyi government's Minister of Nationalities Oszkar Jászi and Minister of Defense Albert Bartha began negotiating with the Slovaks regarding the borders between the two states. The boundaries initially set out corresponded, more or less, to linguistic boundaries, but this plan was scrapped by December 1918 after Czech leaders advocated setting the provisional borders further south, thereby giving the newly established Czechoslovak state more territory as well as a population of approximately one million ethnic Magyars.²⁸ After the signing of the armistice and throughout the last months of 1918 and into 1919, thousands of Magyar refugees from the occupied territories flooded into Hungary. Over the next three years, hundreds of thousands more Magyar refugees, an estimated 426,000, emigrated to Hungary.²⁹ Many of them were impoverished, having lost most of their property and wealth upon their departure from the "lost territories". This migration put tremendous pressure on the already strained resources of the defeated state.

The national and territorial crises triggered by the loss of the war were not the only problems facing Hungary. The political truce between parliamentary parties broke

²⁸ István Mocsy, *The Effects of World War I: the Uprooted: Hungarian Refugees and their Impact on Hungary's Domestic Politics, 1918-1921* (New York: Social Science Monographs, 1983), 12.

²⁹ Mocsy, *The Uprooted*, 12-14.

down in winter, 1915-1916, when some opposition politicians in Parliament renewed their efforts to institute democratic and economic reforms in Hungary.³⁰ However, wartime Prime Minister Tisza and his conservative successors refused to expand the franchise or make concessions to the workers, even though such reforms were supported by Emperor Charles, and even when defeat became imminent and it became clear that significant socio-political restructuring would have to take place.³¹ The unwillingness of the wartime Hungarian Parliament to budge on their refusal to implement genuine, far-reaching political and social reforms led to the establishment of the Hungarian National Council on October 23, 1918. The Council, led by Mihály Károlyi, was a coalition between three main groups: the so-called Károlyist Party, an anti-war, pro-democracy, pro-independence party, the Radical Party, and a number of socialist-oriented parties.³² All of these parties had been marginalized from official political power under Tisza, but they steadily gained in popularity throughout 1918 as both Hungarian warfront and home front fell apart. The establishment of the National Council was revolutionary because “...the Council regarded itself as the representative of the Hungarian nation, placing itself in opposition to the ‘noblemen’s Parliament’ that represented only a narrow stratum of society.”³³ However, although the move fundamentally challenged the legitimacy of the Hungarian Parliament as it existed, its leadership did not desire that a revolution *a lá* the French or the Russian, should break out in Hungary. They still held to the idea that

³⁰ Romsics, *Hungary in the Twentieth Century*, 87.

³¹ Galántai, *Magyarország az elsőháborúban*, 319, Romsics, *Hungary in the Twentieth Century*, 88-89; Tökés, *Béla Kun*, 84.

³² Romsics, *Hungary in the Twentieth Century*, 89; Mária Ormos, *Hungary in the Age of the Two World Wars 1914-1945*, trans. Brian McLean (Boulder, CO: Social Science Monographs, 2007), 23; Tökés, *Béla Kun*, 86-87.

³³ Galántai, *Magyarország az elsőháborúban*, 320.

genuine democratization and social reform could take place peacefully (i.e. without violence) and through established political channels rather than in the streets.³⁴

Even though the National Council was formed as a rival to Parliament, it did not take long for its members to ascend to actual positions of power. Only seven days after the Council's establishment, Károlyi was appointed Prime Minister of Hungary by the Emperor on October 31, 1918 and was charged with forming a new government. Károlyi's appointment marked a definitive shift in the political orientation of the Hungarian state which had been politically dominated by the conservative liberal vision of politicians like Tisza since *Ausgleich*. While there had been demonstrations and agitation in Budapest in the days immediately prior to Károlyi's appointment, the actual transfer of power to the democratic opposition took place without a massive explosion of violence, with the exception of the assassination of former Prime Minister István Tisza, the symbol of the war and intractable conservatism, in his home on November 1, 1918.³⁵ Furthermore, the combination of incomplete disarmament of demobilized soldiers coupled with political disaffection and economic deprivation led to looting and agitation throughout the country. Thus, while transition occurred relatively peacefully, the *fear* of violence gripped many people across class and regional lines, even if it did not necessarily materialize in the early days of the revolution.³⁶

The Károlyi government's political program called for the full independence of the Hungarian state, and on November 13, 1918 Charles IV formally relinquished (although he did not technically abdicate) the Hungarian throne. Hungary was declared a republic (*Magyar Népköztársaság*) three days later. The government's program also

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Tökés, *Béla Kun*, 84; Romsics, *Hungary in the Twentieth Century*, 90; Gábor Vermes, *István Tisza*, 453.

³⁶ Romsics, *Hungary in the Twentieth Century*, 90.

called for universal suffrage, full rights to the national minorities, the restoration and expansion of civil liberties and comprehensive agrarian land reform.³⁷ But gaining control of the state was easy compared to actually governing a state wrought by so many crises. Moreover, the political coalition between leftist parties which comprised the new revolutionary government had very different visions for Hungary, with some of the biggest differences emerging on the issues of land reform and industrial labor policy. Károlyi and Jászi initially supporting a more moderate “bourgeois-democratic” program which would entail some nationalization of industry coupled with the break-up the aristocratic “latifundia” into private plots for the impoverished peasantry. However, socialists supported a more radical program of large-scale nationalization in both the industrial and agrarian sectors.³⁸

This ideological and policy breach between groups was deep-rooted and it ran through the entire administrative structure of the new revolutionary government. Károlyi as Prime Minister was head of the government of Hungary. But in the early days of the Chrysanthemum Revolution [*őszirózsás forradalom*], as it was called, the government was one of four administrative bodies which exercised power in Budapest, the center of revolution. The other three were the Soldiers’ Council, the National Council, and the Workers’ Council, which was “...the most powerful of the four” and was “...in effect, an enlarged Hungarian Social Democratic Party congress—fully controlled by the party executive and the Trade Union Council.”³⁹ The existence of these different organs meant that political power was divided: the government was the recognized representative of

³⁷ Oskar Jászi, *Revolution and Counter-revolution* (London: P.S. King & Son, LTD., 1924), 36.

³⁸ Tökés, *Béla Kun*, 88; Oscar Jászi, *The Dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1929), 222.

³⁹ Tökés, *Béla Kun*, 86.

Hungary both at home and abroad, but the Soldiers' Council and the Workers' Council retained control the coercive power of the state. Furthermore, the government could not really function without the approval of the Workers' Council which represented a more extreme leftist perspective, which created a "dual-power" structure in the country in fact though not in law.⁴⁰ In reality, this "dual-power" structure, especially on questions of domestic policy, led to political paralysis between the "rightist" bourgeois-democratic elements represented by Károlyi who retained a fundamentally reformist agenda and the more extreme leftist elements—the socialists and communists who called for a more radical restructuring of Hungarian society.⁴¹

The political gridlock between the government and Workers' Council only piled onto the mounting economic and social problems Hungary was facing. There was an acute food shortage in the country, owing in part to the Entente naval blockade, which did not end until well into 1920. In cities, riots over the allocation of food broke out, while in the countryside there was a lack of labor to bring in the crops and they rotted in the fields. Most industrial activity had ground to a halt and there was a severe coal shortage as winter approached, due largely to the loss of coal-rich territories which were now occupied by the armies of the neighboring states.⁴² The material shortages facing Hungary that winter of 1918 were dire. But the political conflict between the bourgeois democrats and their leftist opposition prevented the new leadership from addressing these issues adequately.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ György Litván, "The Homefront During the Károlyi Regime," in *Revolutions and Interventions in Hungary and Its Neighbor States, 1918-1919*, ed. Peter Pastor (Boulder, CO: Social Science Monographs, 1988), 123; 126-127.

⁴² Jászi, *Revolution and Counter-revolution*, 42; Romsics, *Hungary in the Twentieth Century*, 95.

The internal political strife and economic problems were significant and the failure of the Károlyi government to institute far reaching economic and democratic reform was important, especially in alienating the public from the government. However, the failure of Károlyi's democratic government was ultimately due to the crises facing Hungary in the international sphere.⁴³ The Czech, Serbian, French and Romanian troops' occupation of territories demarcated in the November 13th armistice was shocking to the revolutionary leadership and public, and revolutionary politicians debated how the state should respond. Some called for military engagement to push back against invading armies, while others advocated viewing the occupation as a temporary development that could be remedied in the formal peace negotiations by showing the Entente Hungary's commitment to democratic values and franchise and nationalities reform. This debate proved moot when the Entente sent an ultimatum through French Lieutenant-Colonel Fernand Vyx to Károlyi on March 20, 1919 calling for the withdrawal of Hungarian troops from the frontier zones laid out by the armistice and the creation of an extended neutral zone which would envelop thoroughly Magyar-populated regions of the state, thus making much of historical Hungarian territory a political and military staging area for the Entente in East Central Europe.⁴⁴ The ultimatum—the so-called Vyx Note—was a blow not just to the territorial integrity of the kingdom. The Vyx Note also signaled to Károlyi and other Hungarian politicians that their attempt to stave off territorial disintegration through a pro-Entente foreign policy had utterly failed. Károlyi rejected the Entente ultimatum and on March 21, 1919 his government resigned in favor of the Social Democrats, who were charged with forming a new government. However, the more

⁴³ See Peter Pastor, *Hungary between Wilson and Lenin: the Hungarian Revolution of 1918-1919 and the Big Three* (Boulder, CO: East European Quarterly, 1976).

⁴⁴ Romsics, *Hungary in the Twentieth Century*, 98.

leftist contingent of the Social Democrats and socialists had already been in talks with the Hungarian Communist Party leadership, which had been imprisoned in February 1919. With the resignation of the Károlyi government and the threat of invasion looming, the socialist and communist parties merged and declared a Soviet Republic [*Magyar Tanácsköztársaság*—literally the Hungarian Republic of Councils] on March 21, 1919 in Hungary. The “baccili” of Bolshevism had spread to Hungary.

The Hungarian Soviet Republic of 1919

The establishment of Hungary as a Soviet Republic in late March 1919 marked a leftward shift in the domestic policies of the Hungarian government, as well as a shift in the orientation of Hungary’s foreign policy from west to east, in order to align the state with Bolshevik Russia. The Hungarian Communist Party’s rise to power was swift, as the party had not even existed six months earlier. The party itself was established formally on November 4, 1918 in Russia out of a core group of Hungarian prisoners-of-war who became communists during their captivity in Russia and who had already been very politically active in the Russian Revolution.⁴⁵ But even before its formal establishment, by October, 1918, Hungarian communists had been preparing to return to Hungary in order to spread world revolution in Europe.⁴⁶

Béla Kun, a former journalist from Transylvania, was the leader of this group of communists, though his official title during the 133-day regime was Commissar of Foreign Affairs. He, as well as several of the other commissars were ethnically Jewish, though they eschewed religious practice. Their Jewish ethnicity, combined with the

⁴⁵ Tökés, *Béla Kun*, 79-80.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 142-144.

location of their baptism into Bolshevism fueled many people Hungarian's belief that communism had been a "foreign import" to Hungary and that Jews were a foreign menace responsible for the destructive revolutions and territorial dismemberment of Hungary. (This will be discussed in chapter two).

Kun and his cadre of supporters in the Hungarian Communist Party helped bring together the more radical leftist coalition by dividing the socialists. Kun articulated a radical socialist revolutionary political program that moved far beyond the "bourgeois" reforms promoted by Károlyi. When the moderate revolution begun under Károlyi in November 1918 stalled, in part because of the international pressures, Kun and his followers forcefully attacked the fledgling government. In one such attack published in the Communist Party daily *Vörös Ujság* on February 3, 1919, the following declaration was published: "To hell with the bourgeois democracy! To hell with a parliamentary republic which makes it impossible for the masses of the proletariat to act... Long live the republic of the councils of the workers, soldiers, and village poor which will assure the rule of the exploited... To arms, proletariat!"⁴⁷ As the month wore on, the communists continued their attacks on the Károlyi government and renewed their call to the proletarian classes to take up arms against the government. This agitation finally bore fruit on February 20, 1919, when after a violent demonstration at the editorial offices of the Social Democratic Party's newspaper *Népszava* [The people's voice], four policemen were killed by anarchist soldiers among the demonstrators.⁴⁸ The following day, Kun and other well-known communists were arrested and jailed, with Kun being severely beaten while in police custody as retaliation for inciting the murders of the police officers. The

⁴⁷ *Vörös Ujság*, February 3, 1919, as quoted in Tökés, *Béla Kun*, 121.

⁴⁸ Tökés, *Béla Kun*, 122.

arrests only strengthened and increased support for the communists, especially among the working classes of Budapest.

The communists continued their political work, even though many of their comrades were in prison, and conditions in the country further deteriorated in the last weeks of February and March 1919.⁴⁹ News came that a group of old notables were conspiring against the Károlyi government. Peasants, starving and angry about the lack of agrarian reforms, began looting estates and food stocks. Workers in factories in Budapest and the other urban areas agitated, threatened to strike and even took over factories. Internal crisis was mirrored in the international sphere with continued threats against the territorial integrity of Hungary. The severity of the Entente's ultimatum to the Károlyi government proved the failure of the Károlyi's pro-Entente diplomatic strategy. With the internal and external crises coming to a head, socialist leaders began negotiating with the incarcerated communists in order to "...restore the unity of the working class..." by embracing a more leftist revolutionary political platform.⁵⁰ Empowering the communists also offered a (possible) end to the international political crises by allowing Hungary the opportunity to realign its foreign policy by building an alliance with Soviet Russia rather than with the Western European Great Powers. This reorientation, it was argued would allow Hungary defend itself against the Entente as a speech made by socialist Sándor Garbai made clear: "We must take a new direction to obtain from the East what has been denied to us by the West..."⁵¹ On March 21, 1919, following an agreement between some more radical social democrats and the communists, Kun and the other jailed communists

⁴⁹ Ibid., 123-136.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 133.

⁵¹ Ibid.

were released from jail and charged with forming a new revolutionary government in alliance with the socialists.

The new regime abandoned the reformist agenda of the Károlyi regime and instead sought to establish a “dictatorship of the proletariat” and implement a utopian social revolutionary political program. This program entailed large scale expropriation and nationalization of property, the nationalization of banks, the state monopolization of foreign trade and industry, and the divestment of the Hungarian churches’ authority and property.⁵² New revolutionary courts were established, staffed by workers as judges, and charged mainly with stifling political dissent.⁵³ Councils of workers and trade unions took over many of the administrative functions of the government and political participation became dependent on trade union membership, which actually served to dilute the revolutionary nature of such organs as all manner of occupational groups, including priests, formed unions.⁵⁴

Throughout the life of the regime, hundreds of laws were issued, touching nearly every aspect of life. Alcohol consumption was prohibited in an effort to improve the lives of proletarian families.⁵⁵ Regulations concerning workers’ access to bathing facilities were issued, and theaters were nationalized in an effort to provide an avenue for the cultural improvement of the proletarian population as the announcement indicated: “from now the arts will not be for the special enjoyment of the idle rich. Culture is the just due

⁵² Ibid., 130.

⁵³ Romsics, *Hungary in the Twentieth Century*, 101

⁵⁴ Tökés, *Béla Kun*, 168-169. Despite a more contemporary characterizations of unions which often presents them as more leftist, progressive forces, trade unions were often quite conservative, preferring to emphasize the state of the trade rather than make more radical political critiques of the regime. This was the case in Hungary as well as Great Britain.

⁵⁵ Frank Eckelt, “Internal Policies of the Hungarian Soviet Republic,” in *Hungary in Revolution: Nine Essays*, Iván Völgyes, ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1971), 61.

of the working people.”⁵⁶ The new regime made laws to eliminate the stigma of illegitimacy for children and children were also given access to improved medical care. The Kun regime made a full-scale effort to reform education and improve access to it. These reforms included the restructuring the historical curriculum, introducing sexual education, and eliminating religious influence in the classroom, an important effort given that nearly seventy percent of the schools in Hungary were run by the churches. Nuns who taught in schools could remain as teachers if they abandoned their religious orders; lay persons who taught in church schools were allowed to stay, but at least in the early days of the “revolution,” special committees of students were established in order to police schools for “reactionary elements” among the teaching staff.⁵⁷ Some of these reforms were abolished even before the collapse of the regime because they were so unpopular.

Freedom of the press was essentially abolished as the new government shut down hundreds of newspapers and magazines for political reasons. The only papers which were allowed to continue were *Vörös Ujság* [red paper], *Népszava* [people’s voice], *Volksstimme* [people’s voice—German], *Világsszabadság* [world liberation], and *Pester Lloyd*, all papers which could be relied on to support the government. Divorce laws were liberalized, and gender equality was declared. These measures, many conservatives feared, would lead to the “communization of women,” and they were some of the most frequently reviled dimensions of the Soviet Republic by the counter-revolutionaries.⁵⁸ Health care was nationalized, as were pharmaceutical firms. The new government made significant efforts to alleviate the severe housing shortage which had been made all the

⁵⁶ Ibid., 63.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 64-70.

⁵⁸ Cecile Tormay, *An Outlaw’s Diary: The Commune* (New York: McBride, 1924), 73; 177-179.

more acute as a result of the war and the armistice which brought thousands of refugees into the country, many of whom were living in empty boxcars in Budapest's train yards. This entailed nationalizing residential property.⁵⁹ (The housing crisis will be discussed in more detail in chapter three).

The social revolution, however, could not be really far reaching unless it successfully dealt with the issue of agrarian reform. Unlike the Károlyi regime which had advocated but failed to deliver far-reaching land reform, the revolutionary authorities believed that land reform which would break-up large estates and reapportion the property to peasants as smallholdings was a nod to capitalism and would decrease efficiency in the agricultural sector. Both of these outcomes were deemed unacceptable and ideologically insupportable. To this end, the Soviet government decided to nationalize large estates rather than parcel out small plots to the landless peasantry. These collective farms were to formally belong to the state and be worked by the peasantry. The Soviet regime adopted this policy because it appeared to be more efficient, offering the possibility of higher crop yields, which could be passed onto the working classes in the cities. However, this policy was a spectacular failure not only because neglected to address the land hunger of peasantry, and forced many peasants to work for their former masters were experienced in managing the large estates. It also failed to increase production. Thus, the regime's agrarian policy did not satisfy the hopes of the agrarian population. Rather it aggravated the urban/rural divide in Hungary by reinforcing the fact that the (small) urban proletariat would be the principal beneficiaries of the state to the detriment of the beleaguered peasantry.

⁵⁹ Eckelt, "Internal Policies of the Hungarian Soviet Republic," 73.

While some reforms, such as better access to medical care and education for working class children, helped generate support for the Soviet regime, most of the reforms were deeply unpopular and heavy-handed, though Kun's ability to implement these revolutionary laws owed much to the war years when the power of the state had been vastly expanded.⁶⁰ In several cases reforms such as alcohol prohibition and the introduction of sexual education in schools had to be rolled back even before the regime had collapsed, due to their extreme unpopularity. In general, the Soviet's had a very difficult time generating legitimacy from their domestic policies among segments of the population other than the working classes because they were specifically designed to address the needs of the urban working classes. The alienation of such groups as the aristocrats or urban bourgeoisie from the Soviet government was predictable, and indeed perhaps even desirable given the ideological foundations of the regime. However, the failure to build support among the agrarian classes, particularly the smallholders and the landless peasants who were far larger a segment of the population than the industrial working class was a fatal mistake. In fact, not only did the Soviet regime not cultivate their support, the regime was openly hostile to the agrarian classes.

Another dimension of the Soviet regime's domestic policy was their use of force to suppress internal political opposition. The regime had taken over and transformed the police and gendarmerie into units of the "Red Guard." But, in addition to the re-organization of the state's coercive organs, a political police, a Hungarian Cheka, under the leadership of Otto Korvin was formed, and armed militias that functioned almost like private armies were also formed and coordinated by Tibor Szamuely, the Deputy Commissar of War in the Soviet Government. The goal of these organs, which were

⁶⁰ Tökés, *Béla Kun*, 142.

controlled by the extreme left in the government, was to impose ideological conformity through violence and they were active particularly in the countryside around Budapest. The most notorious of these was the “Lenin Boys” [*Lenin-fiúk*], a group comprised mainly of former sailors led by a József Cserny, who wore leather coats, and traveled around the countryside in a special train which came to be called the “death train.” Red militias would enter villages, forcibly requisition foodstuffs and even execute people accused of counter-revolutionary activities.⁶¹ In all, between March and July 1919, these red militias were responsible for the deaths of an estimated five hundred to six hundred persons and had expropriated a great deal of food and material resources from the nobility and the bourgeoisie as well as the agrarian population.⁶² This violence contributed to the erosion of popular support for the regime as people linked the violent excesses of the militias directly to the Soviet government, which is why Kun attempted to disband these groups.

While the Soviet regime became increasingly unpopular among the population as a result of its domestic policies, these challenges paled in comparison to the international crises facing the regime throughout its entire rule. As discussed earlier, the government led by Mihály Károlyi resigned after receiving an ultimatum from the Entente regarding the future borders of independent Hungary and the government of Kun inherited this territorial crisis. A shift of power to the communists was intended to mitigate the impending partition of Hungary by re-orienting its diplomacy toward Bolshevik Russia,

⁶¹ Romsics, *Hungary in the Twentieth Century*, 101; Eckelt, “Internal Policies of the Hungarian Soviet Republic,” 85-86; Tökés, *Béla Kun*, 197-199; 259; Ormos, *Hungary in the Age of the Two World Wars*, 54.

⁶² There is still debate over the amount of victims claimed by both the Red and White Terrors in post-WWI, post-revolutions Hungary. I take this estimate from Tibor Hajdu, *The Hungarian Soviet Republic* (Budapest: Akademia Kiadó, 1979). See also Péter Konok, “A erőszak kérdesei 1919-1920-ban: Vörösteror-Fehérterror,” *Multunk* 3 (2010): 72-91.

which could act as a Great Power ally. It was believed by the communist leadership that a Hungarian Red army could be organized and move eastward, while the Russian army could move westward, meeting and pushing out Entente (particularly Romanian and Czech) soldiers which had encroached further onto historic Hungarian territory beyond the demarcation lines outlined in the November 13, 1918 armistice.

In order to push back the Entente, the Soviet government had to raise a new fighting force which would have to capitalize on nationalist fervor in the country without destroying the credibility of the revolutionary internationalism which the regime espoused. Kun did this by awkwardly marrying the goals of Hungarian nationalism with the internationalist goals of communism, arguing that military action by a Hungarian Red Army was necessary to push off imperialist aggression by the Entente and to expand world revolution to other parts of Europe. He underscored the importance of national territorial integrity by suggesting that Hungary become a union of nationalities akin to the new Soviet Union.⁶³ However, the pacifist orientation of the Károlyi government had led to the neglect of the military, which meant that essentially a new army would have to be raised which was a difficult enterprise for the new government.

In mid-April, 1919, the Entente dispatched a mission led by Jan Smuts to Hungary to negotiate with Kun, but Kun's refusal to accept the terms of the Vyx note set off a military crisis, which eventually led to the Romanian military's occupation of nearly all the territory in Hungary east of the Tisza river while Czechoslovak troops occupied the northern territories of Hungary by April 1919. These hostile actions by the Entente actually helped the Soviet government in their military recruitment efforts and the

⁶³ Tökés, *Béla Kun*, 144. Minorities would be given equal rights and autonomy—with the exception of the Romanian minority.

government ultimately successfully raised an army of approximately 200,000 men. Throughout May and June, the Hungarian Red Army made significant gains in territory, pushing back the Czechoslovak troops, and establishing a Slovak Soviet Republic around Kassa (present-day Košice in Slovakia). However, these initial successes provoked a response from the members of the Paris Peace Conference, which called for Kun to evacuate from these northern territories in exchange for a Romanian evacuation of territories in the Trans-Tisza region.⁶⁴

Kun complied with the Entente and began evacuating Czechoslovak territories in late June 1919. Kun justified this action by arguing that the Red Army could not continue military action because of the internal crises facing Hungary. The country was facing very serious economic problems which were exacerbated by the regime's disastrous monetary policy and high inflation and its alienation from international trade.⁶⁵ Following the withdrawal from Czechoslovak territory, the Hungarian Red Army began breaking up. There was a mutiny in the military, and several Red Army officers defected to the counter-revolutionary Hungarian National Army which was being organized in the south-eastern city of Szeged by former Habsburg Admiral Miklós Horthy. Seeing the disorder within the military, Kun tried to hold the force together by calling for another offensive action against the Romanian military which had made no move to evacuate the territories east of the Tisza. Kun launched an attack in late July 1919, but this attempt was unsuccessful, and the Romanian military moved swiftly occupying nearly all of "rump" Hungary, including Budapest. The Kun government resigned on August 1, 1919, ceding power to a "moderate socialist" government led by Gyula Peidl. Peidl's government

⁶⁴ Romsics, *Hungary in the Twentieth Century*, 106.

⁶⁵ Eckelt, "Internal Policies of the Hungarian Soviet Republic," 84-86; Romsics, *Hungary in the Twentieth Century*, 106-108.

quickly began rolling back the Soviet regime's policies, but Peidl was quickly replaced by Archduke Joseph, who was also quickly replaced because of the Entente's unwillingness to accept a Habsburg as the head of state in Hungary. The Archduke's conservative counter-revolutionary successors continued the dismantling of the Soviet legacy and went even further, rolling back democratic reforms instituted by the Károlyi government in 1918.⁶⁶ The Romanian invasion, the collapse of Kun's radical communist government, and the establishment of a new government under reactionary István Friedrich signaled the end of Hungary's second flirtation with revolution and the emergence of counter-revolution.

Conclusion

The history of Hungary's Great War and postwar revolutions is important for understanding the challenges inherited by the counter-revolutionary regime. It also provides a reference point for understanding the policies formulated by the new government, especially in regard to emergency legislation and carceral policies. By examining the policies of the wartime and revolutionary governments, this chapter lays the groundwork for understanding the complex nature of the counter-revolutionary government's and the broader population's reaction following the collapse of the Hungarian Soviet Republic. Finally examining the international dynamics contributing to the collapse of the Kun regime sets the stage for understanding the nature of the international community's engagement in the internal politics of Hungary.

⁶⁶ Pölöskei, *Hungary after Two Revolutions*, 11; Thomas Lorman, *Counter-revolutionary Hungary, 1920-1925: István Bethlen and the Politics of Consolidation* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 2006), 5.

Chapter Two

“White Misrule”¹: Militia Violence

“‘Not the Premier or Government, nor the majority party either,’ he declared, ‘represent the real power in the country. I dare to maintain that one per cent of the authorities, as a tiny minority, rule the whole land by their terror. I maintain that this whole system of government is only a formality. The Red Bolshevism was replaced by a White Bolshevism, which used the same means, but for far more dreadful deeds.’”¹

Robert Seton-Watson

The emergence of the White Terror and counter-revolution overlaps with the rise of militia violence in Hungary and in Central Europe more generally following the 1918 armistice. The democratic and communist revolutions provoked many men across Hungary from all walks of life to organize armed militias as a reaction to the dramatic social and economic changes proposed by the Kun government through the use of force. These militias targeted a wide variety of persons identified as being responsible for the troubles facing Hungary. The history of militias is a good starting point for an analysis of the role of violence in the early postwar period. Exploring their formation and activities as well as the ideologies they embraced provides an opportunity to raise some of the central issues which lay at the heart of this dissertation, including what the state’s relationship was to the militias and to political violence more broadly in the early counter-revolutionary period and how people interpreted this relationship. A discussion of militias also provides an entry point for unravelling the complexity of counter-revolutionary ideology which combined and adapted older prejudices with new political conditions and understanding how class, gender, religion, ethnicity and politics shaped people’s interpretations of violent acts, as well as their perpetrators and victims.

¹ Robert Seton Watson, “Introduction,” in Oskár Jászi, *Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Hungary* (London: P.S. King & Son, Ltd., 1924), xxi-xxii.

To this end, this chapter uses an intersectional perspective to explore the history of militia violence between 1919 and 1922 paying special attention to how contemporaries interpreted both militias' activities and their role in Hungarian political life. Part one focuses on the militias themselves, by analyzing their relationship to the counter-revolutionary state, the ideas which motivated them and their social composition. Part two shifts to the activities of militias. It begins with a discussion of the groups who were targeted by militias and then shifts to an analysis of how victims' experiences and interpretations of militia violence. The final section examines the strategies people used to defend themselves against attacks by militias.

Part One

*Paramilitarism and the Counter-revolutionary State*²

Paramilitarism in Hungary was a large and diverse movement. It included a wide variety of groups and ideologies. Militia activity reached its peak in mid-1920 with an estimated 10,000 to 12,000 men under arms.³ Some paramilitary detachments were organized in the hot-beds of counter-revolutionary activity such as Graz, Vienna, Arad, and Szeged and became loosely organized under the umbrella of the Hungarian National Army, which included both regular and irregular units until about 1922. The most famous

² The bulk of the information in this narrative comes from the scholarship of Béla Bodó who has written multiple systematic studies examining the origins of the paramilitary organizations and their relationship to the postwar government and elites in a number of articles. See Bodó, "Hungarian Aristocracy and the White Terror," *Journal of Contemporary History* 45 (2010): 703-724; Bodó, "Iván Hejjas: the Life of a Counter-revolutionary," *East Central Europe/L'Europe du Centre-Est* 37 (2010): 247-279; Bodó, "Militia Violence and State Power in Hungary, 1919-1922," *Hungarian Studies Review* 33, nos. 1-2 (2006): 121-156; Bodó, *Pál Prónay: Paramilitary Violence and Anti-Semitism in Hungary, 1919-1921* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press/Carl Beck Papers, 2011); Bodó, "Paramilitary Violence in Hungary after the First World War," *East European Quarterly* 38, no. 2 (June 2004); "The White Terror in Hungary 1919-1921: the Social Worlds of Paramilitary Groups, 1919-1921," *Austrian History Yearbook* 42 (2011).

³ Bodó, "The White Terror in Hungary," 141.

and infamous militias were the officer detachments, which were similar to the *Freikorps* in Germany. These detachments were led by commanders such as Baron Pál Prónay and Count Gyula Ostenburg, Baron Anton Lehár, Miklós Kozma, and Iván Hejjas, and they crisscrossed the Hungarian countryside and set up shop in the luxury of hotels in Budapest in the autumn of 1919. Operationally, officer detachments were more national in scope, especially prior to November, 1919 when Horthy arrived in Budapest.⁴ The officer detachments and their leadership had ties to and sometimes served as the military arms of irredentist and radical nationalist organizations such as the Association of Awakening Magyars (*Ébredő Magyarok Egyesülete*, ÉME) and the Hungarian National Defense Association (*Magyar Országos Véderő Egylet*, MOVE), although these organizations sometimes organized their own militias wings.⁵

In addition to the nationally oriented militias which moved around, local militias were also formed. These groups pulled their membership from towns or villages and they performed more local functions such as assisting the police in making arrests. At times, they also participated in atrocities. On some estates landowners and aristocrats raised their own militias or “rented out” the officer detachments to come onto their estates and bring “order” by punishing peasants for their involvement in revolutionary or reformist politics.⁶ In Budapest, locally oriented militias were also organized from university and military academy students which often worked in gangs in the 7th and 8th districts to harass and intimidate Jews.⁷

⁴ Bodó, “Paramilitary Violence in Hungary,” 135

⁵ Bodó, “Social Worlds,” 140.

⁶ Bodó, “Hungarian Aristocracy,” 714 and “Social Worlds,” 140.

⁷ Statement by Gyula Mayer to Legal Aid Bureau of Pesti Izraelita Hitközség (PIH) May 30, 1920, pg. 84, Folder I-E 1919 B/013 1919-es fehérterror jegyzőkönyvek, Budapest Zsidó Levéltár, Budapest, Hungary (Document collection hereafter referred to as BZsL); Statement by Hermann Meijetovits (sp.) to PIH, May 19, 1920, pg. 85, BZsL.

The relationship between the militias and the Hungarian government helmed by Miklós Horthy was ambiguous and often contradictory.⁸ Recently historians have revised socialist era historiography which held that the counter-revolutionary regime owed its existence to the militias and that Horthy was responsible for the White Terror.⁹ They have argued that although Horthy may have had personal ties to and was sympathetic to the agenda of the militias, Horthy and the regime had very little control over individual militia commanders and militias. Militia leaders generally acted independently, rejected the professionalization and discipline of regular army units, commanded a high degree of personal loyalty from their men and issued their own orders.¹⁰ These arguments primarily address the issue of Horthy's culpability for the White Terror as it has generally been conceptualized, but they do not necessarily clarify the complex relationship between the regime and the militias between 1919 and 1922.

The officer detachments, especially those of Ostenburg, Prónay, and Hejjas had a great deal of independence and power in their own right. In his 1924 book about the revolution and counter-revolution, Oszkár Jászi, a former minister in the Károlyi government and opponent of the Horthy regime, characterized the militias as functioning as "states within the state."¹¹ Although this may be exaggerated language, Béla Bodó has argued convincingly that the officer detachments differed significantly from regular armies units; that they did not form the core of the inter-war Hungarian military nor did

⁸ Thomas Sakmyster, *Hungary's Admiral on Horseback, Miklós Horthy, 1919-1944* (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 1994), 18-120.

⁹ Erzsébet Andics, *Ellenforradalom és a Bethleni konsolidáció* (Budapest: Szikra, 1946) and Dezső Nemes, *Az ellenforradalom története Magyarországon, 1919-1921* (Budapest: Akadémia Kiadó, 1962) are examples of this perspective.

¹⁰ Bodó, "Paramilitary Violence," 138-139.

¹¹ Oszkár Jászi, *Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Hungary*, "Introduction" by Robert Seton-Watson (London: P.S. King & Son, Ltd., 1924), 160.

they play a vital role in the consolidation of the counter-revolutionary regime.¹² In fact, paramilitary activities often exposed the Hungarian state to severe critiques from abroad by observers such as the British Labour delegation who concluded in their May 1920 report that “We do not think that either the Governor or the Government by themselves are strong enough to put matters right.”¹³

Notwithstanding the relative autonomy of militias, it is also clear that many militias, especially but not exclusively those which were locally organized, helped perform or assist in state functions like guarding internment camps, participating in police investigations and arrests and providing a guard for the Regent until the consolidation of the postwar counter-revolutionary regime in 1922.¹⁴ Militias helped “maintain order” during elections, and the Ostenburg detachment even attended the Parliamentary proceedings during which Horthy was elected Regent.¹⁵ Militia detachments stationed in Budapest occupied state military barracks like the Kelenföld, Nándor and Maria Theresia barracks where they imprisoned and tortured many suspected leftists. As recognized military barracks, these buildings were linked to the state and their use implicated the state in the violence regardless of whether and how state authorities actually colluded in it. Between 1919 and 1921, state authorities were generally loath to prosecute militia members for the atrocities they committed, and censorship of

¹² Bodó, “The White Terror in Hungary,” 138-140.

¹³ British Joint Labour Delegation to Hungary, *The White Terror in Hungary* (London: Trade Union Congress and the Labour Party, 1920), 24. Others also made similar conclusions, including the British Parliamentary report which acknowledged that the army had a “very turbulent element which has committed serious excesses” and that, “The Government is doing all it can to check these crimes, but its position is extremely difficult.” Letter from Thomas Hohler to Earl George Curzon, March 28, 1920, in *Report on the Alleged Existence of “White Terror” in Hungary* (London: His Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1920), 12; Letter from Thomas Hohler to Earl George Curzon, February 21, 1920, in *Report on the Alleged Existence of “White Terror,”* 2.

¹⁴ Bodó, “Social Worlds”, 140, 156; Bodó, “Militia Violence and State Power,” 122.

¹⁵ Sakmyster, *Admiral on Horseback*, 56-57; Pál Prónay, *A határban a halál kaszál: fejezetek a Prónay Pál feljegyzéseiből*, eds. Ágnes Szabó and Ervin Pamlényi (Budapest: Kossuth Könyvkiadó, 1963), 175-178.

newspapers provided the state with the means to suppress information about atrocities and those responsible for committing them.¹⁶ Several of the militias wore self-styled uniforms which added to their imposing presence and suggested they were acting in an official capacity.¹⁷ At least some of the militia commanders, notably Prónay, enjoyed a close personal relationship with Horthy, although he was eventually completely marginalized as were the leaders of the other officer detachments. Many, though not all, militia members were integrated into the army or the police and gendarmerie following the Treaty of Trianon in 1920. In sum, militias often assisted in or carried out coercive and carceral functions on behalf of the state during the first eighteen months of the counter-revolution.

Individuals frequently identified the seemingly complimentary and cooperative relationship between militias and state authorities in their statements to the Social Democratic Party Legal Aid Bureau and the Budapest Jewish Community's Legal Assistance Bureau.¹⁸ Rezső Kovács from Ujpest reported that when his brother was taken away, it was a police officer and a soldier who came to arrest him, although before they even left the house, they already had beaten him.¹⁹ In another incident, Gizella Szloboda related an incident when she was singing the *Internationale* on the street at the behest of

¹⁶ The counter-revolutionary regime continued the wartime censorship laws put in place and frequently news stories about atrocities or of bodies found would indicate that the perpetrators were unknown. It was also not uncommon to find large spaces in newspapers where articles which had been censored would have gone. Certainly not all of these censored stories were about militias but the regime was very proactive in exercising their right to censor, especially in liberal and leftist papers like *Népszava* and *A Világ*.

¹⁷ Nathan Joseph, *Uniforms and Non-Uniforms: Communication through Clothing* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), 35; Li Li, "Uniformed Rebellion, Fabricated Identity: A Study of Social History of Red Guards in Military Uniforms during the Chinese Cultural Revolution and Beyond," *Fashion Theory* 14, no. 4 (December 2010): 440-441.

¹⁸ Statement by Margit Tóth to Social Democratic Party Legal Aid Bureau (SDP), February 7, 1920, pg. 254, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, Politikátörténeti Intézet Levéltár (Document collection hereafter referred to as PIL); Statement by Mrs. Károly Róden, February 13, 1920, pg. 261, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by Ilona Springer to SDP, February 18, 1920, pg. 265, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL.

¹⁹ Statement by Rezső Kovács to SPD, January 21, 1920, pg. 232, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL.

her daughter, and was stopped and threatened by an officer who then called over a police officer to escort her and her daughter home, to take her name down and then threatened her by telling her that “he should shoot [her] for incitement.”²⁰ This event made it appear as though militias enjoyed an elevated status *vis-à-vis* the police. In another incident, an unnamed woman describing the events leading to a massacre of prisoners in Orgovány forest outside of Kecskemét by the Hejjas detachment. She reported that Hejjas and others went into the prison and took out the prisoners, eventually killing them and throwing their corpses in the Danube. She recalled that they had no problems because, “[the soldiers] can do anything because they stand beside Horthy and they were following the orders of the Minister of the Military.” She declared that “now they commit murder but later in history they will be standing as heroes.”²¹

Leftist politicians like Vilmos Böhm who were exiled in Vienna also promoted an image of the relationship between the counter-revolutionary government and the militias as one of close cooperation in their correspondence to “brother parties” in Western Europe. In a letter to the British Labour Party detailing the nature of White Terror in Hungary he wrote about the massacre in Orgovány: “...referring to an order of Horthy com. in chief, legitimating themselves with a police certificate...”²² He later stated following a list of murders committed by “White guardists” that, “...none of the committents of these murders are taken for responsibility, moreover they enjoy directly a distinguished honour; are especially distinguished by Horthy and enjoy his special

²⁰ Statement by Gizella Szloboda to SDP, January 22, 1920, pg. 234, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL.

²¹ No author to SDP, February 22, 1920, pg. 273, PIL.

²² Vilmos Böhm to Labour Party Information Bureau, received March 5, 1920, LP/HUN/1/13.vii, Labour History Archive and Study Centre, People’s History Museum and Archives, Manchester, England (Document collection hereafter referred to as LHA).

confidence” (*sic.*).²³ The British Labour Delegation, in organizing the program for their impending journey to Hungary outlined their desire to collect materials relating to the incidents such as the Orgovány massacre, the brutal rape and torture of a woman named Mrs. Sándor Hamburger, and the activities of Ivan Hejjas’ militia, ending their list with the question, “Why are these gentlemen [Hejjas and his accomplices] not arrested?”²⁴

Notwithstanding the impression of close cooperation between the police and militias, many people often witnessed the lack of coordination between local authorities and militias as well as the inability of local police and officials to curb the activities of the militias. People were arrested by local civil authorities, set free, then re-arrested and tortured by militias.²⁵ Vilmos Böhm indicated that there was conflict between local authorities and the militias when outlining the details of the Orgovány massacre of more than thirty leftists in his letter to the Labour Party. He recalled that the Hejjas detachment had seized the prisoners despite the “protest of the attorney.”²⁶ In a report about the shooting of his son by a student militia, Lipót Müller reported that the police officer who was in charge of investigating what had happened to his son on the street, was told by the militia that they “shot into the air” when questioned about how the two young men were shot. Upon further questioning, the militia members told the police that they did not regard it as “an offense” that a Jew should be dead.²⁷ Müller was successful in opening a case against the militia members, but the attitude of the militia members concerning their

²³ Böhm to Labour Party Information Bureau, received March 5, 1920, LP/HUN/1/13.xv, LHA.

²⁴ No Author, “Programme” LP/HUN/5/46/4.iv, LHA.

²⁵ Statement by István Eckstein to SDP, November 7, 1919, pg. 7, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by Andor Reiszmann to SDP, November 28, 1919, pg. 39, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by Géza Kállai to SDP, November 25, 1919, pg. 37, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by Dr. Fritz Imre to SPD, December 10, 1919, pg. 79; Statement by Miksa Blitz and Juliska Blitz to SDP, January 1, 1920, pg. 133, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL.

²⁶ Böhm to Labour Party Information Bureau, received March 5, 1920, LP/HUN/1/13.vii, LHA.

²⁷ Statement by Lipót Müller to PIH, April 6, 1920, document 86, BZsL.

killing of two Jewish young men is revealing of the mentality of the militias regarding the intensity of their anti-Semitism and their understanding their own position and function in counter-revolutionary Hungary.

The impression that many people came away with when observing these types of incidents was that even if the government was not in cahoots with the militias, it was utterly unable to prevent their violence. In a report sent to the British Labour Party in 1920 detailing the White Terror, the author wrote that there was growing dissent among some members of Parliament regarding the activities of the white detachments, but that they were powerless to stop them.²⁸ The British Joint Labour Delegation to Hungary came to the same conclusion in their report which stated: “We do not think that either the Governor or the Government by themselves are strong enough to put matters right....”²⁹

The relationship between the militias and the state is therefore a complex one. At times the militias worked in concert with the state authorities. But at other times, they contradicted and undermined the authority of the new regime not least by highlighting the authorities’ seeming powerlessness to stop violence and the lack of coordination between police and militias. This was perhaps most evident in the Ostenburg, Prónay and Lehár detachments’ participation in the second Royalist Coup and revolt in Burgenland in the autumn of 1921. What is clear, however, is that at the time, many Hungarians and international observers believed that the counter-revolutionary government was in collusion with the white militias, that it provided militias with money and other forms of

²⁸ Böhm to Labour Party Information Bureau, received March 5, 1920, LP/HUN/1/13.xvi, LHA; Joseph Marcus made similar findings in his June, 1921 report for the American Joint Distribution Committee. See Joseph Marcus, Report “Is There White Terror in Hungary,” June 5, 1921, doc. 220561, Folder 151. 4, Records of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee of the years 1919-1921, New York Collection, American Joint Distribution Committee Archives, New York (Document collection hereafter cited as JDC).

²⁹ Joint Labour Delegation, *The White Terror in Hungary*, 24.

sustenance, shielded militias from prosecution, and was therefore politically and morally responsible for the violent acts they committed.³⁰ This impression, however inaccurate, meant that generally speaking, people who sought redress for the atrocities they or their relatives and friends suffered at the hands of the militias did not look to the state as an ally. This is an important reason why many people went to legal aid offices rather than directly to the police and courts for legal redress.

The “Szeged Idea”

To quote Thomas Sakmyster, “the counter-revolution in Hungary was a river fed by many tributaries.”³¹ Paramilitaries, especially the officer detachments, like their German counterparts, were highly ideological organizations. But just as there was great diversity in the types of militias which emerged, there was no single coherent ideology or set of goals which united them. There was also a strong strain of legitimism among some militia members, notably in the Lehár and Ostenburg detachments, which participated in the second attempt to replace King Charles IV on the Hungarian throne in 1921. But a commitment to the Habsburg family was not shared by all the militias. There was also a strong strain of monarchism, which sought to maintain Hungary as a monarchy but with a new, native dynasty, but this was also not a unifying goal, as some more radical militia members looked to a political alternative which neither restored the monarchy nor created a republic.

³⁰ Marcus, “Is There White Terror in Hungary,” 26, JDC; Joint Labour Delegation, *The White Terror in Hungary*, 24-25.

³¹ Sakmyster, *Admiral on Horseback*, 59.

Treaty revisionism was a fundamental, if not the most important dimension of counter-revolutionary ideology not just among militia members but in the general population of Hungary throughout the entire interwar period.³² Anti-communism was also an extraordinarily important motivating force, as many militia members sought revenge against revolutionaries who they blamed for causing the political and economic crises facing Hungary more broadly, and often times for the impoverishment and persecution of their own families. Prónay for example had personal savings confiscated by the Soviet government as did others.³³ Embracing anti-communism for some militia members was part of their attempt to return to the conservative liberalism of the pre-war period and therefore, it was often coupled with a very strong anti-democratic strain among many who sought to retain the privilege of pre-war elites by maintaining a small franchise. The anti-Bolshevism espoused by many militias helps explain why many Jews from wealthier backgrounds supported counter-revolutionism; some even joined militias early on in Szeged, since the middle classes of which Jews comprised a significant proportion, especially in Budapest, were heavy hit by communist requisition policies and decrees on nationalization.³⁴ However, the anti-communism espoused by many of the militias was bound together with anti-Semitism as the components of the “Judeo-Bolshevik” myth which discouraged many Jewish men from joining up with militias, especially after August 1919.

³² Ignács Romsics, *Hungary in the Twentieth Century*, trans. Tim Wilkinson (Budapest: Corvina, Osiris, 1999) 191-204.

³³ Béla Bodó, *Pál Prónay*, 12.

³⁴ Bodó, “Social Worlds,” 146; István Mocsy, *The Effects of World War I, The Uprooted: Hungarian Refugees and their Impact on Hungary's Domestic Politics, 1918-1921* (New York: Brooklyn College Press, Social Science Monographs, 1983), 113. There was often no love lost for communists among Jews, as a quote by a Jewish man named Sándor Darvas who was arrested and tortured by a militia demonstrates. In recalling how many others were being held prisoner with him, Darvas said the number included “five rotten blackguard swindler bolshevik Jews.” Statement by Sándor Darvas, April 25, 1920, LP/HUN/5/45.ii, LHA.

In addition to revisionism and anti-communism, a more exclusivist Hungarian nationalism which emphasized Hungary's identity as a "Christian" nation also played an important role in motivating militias. Ethnic and religious minorities, specifically Jews, were regarded by militias and conservative politicians as a source of political and economic instability, defeat, and moral degeneration of the nation.³⁵ Combatting the minorities' influence and presence in the country, through violence when necessary, provided the core of the so-called "Szeged Idea" of a "Christian National" Hungary or the so-called "Christian Course" (*a Keresztény kurzus*) which sought to re-establish "pure Christian morals and national feeling...".³⁶ However, as will be discussed in more depth below, militias' persecution of Jews often referenced a number of anti-Semitic stereotypes, many of which developed long before defeat and revolution broke out. Moreover, the grisly nature of atrocities committed by the militias provoked critics of the counter-revolutionary government to attack both the regime and militias explicitly on the basis of their claims of representing Christian morality.

The "Christian Nationalism", anti-communism, and anti-Semitism of counter-revolutionary ideology provided a discourse for militia members to frame their violence in more lofty ideological and moralistic terms, and the significance of these three components to militias is born out in many of the acts of violence militias perpetrated against their victims. But militia membership offered a variety of perks to its members beyond ideological satisfaction, and as Béla Bodó argues, "Joining the militias and

³⁵ Paul Hanebrink, "'Christian Europe' and National Identity in Inter-War Hungary," in *Reconstructing Nationalities in East Central Europe*, eds. Marsha Rozenblit and Pieter Judson (New York: Berghahn Books, 2005), 192-93. Hanebrink's monograph expands on this issue. Hanebrink, *In Defense of Christian Hungary: Religion, Nationalism and Antisemitism, 1890-1944* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006).

³⁶ Joint Labour Delegation, *The White Terror in Hungary*, 23.

participating in the atrocities was a personal decision.”³⁷ This included the opportunity to remain mobilized and armed in a close-knit group of men. Loyalty and dependency was bred, in part, by the commission of atrocities and by the need to shield militias from outside scrutiny.³⁸ Paramilitarism also provided many with opportunities for material enrichment or at the very least a steady income in a time of economic crisis and unemployment. The state provided some, notably the student militias, with small stipends for their service. Other militias “lived off the land” and used extortion, blackmail, bribery, and kidnapping to fill the coffers of the militia.³⁹

The prospect of political and social advancement also motivated people to join militias, especially those, like ethnic Hungarians from the “lost territories,” whose advancement was stalled by the war and territorial disintegration of the Hungarian kingdom. Many who were attracted to militias had seen their economic and social networks crumble in the wake of war and territorial collapse and militias provided an opportunity to rebuild ties and reassert power. However, it is very important to note, that striving for wealth and status were not unique impulses which defined or separated the militias from the rest of Hungarian society. They were motivations which were common among the middle classes in Europe. The multiple crises produced and/or exacerbated by on-going war and revolution radicalized these impulses as tens of thousands of people underwent a very sudden loss of wealth and status, losing property, businesses, and in the case of Hungarian refugees, their social connections and status. Likewise, the desire for

³⁷ Bodó, “Social Worlds,” 155.

³⁸ Bodó, “Paramilitary Violence,” 138-139, 145.

³⁹ Bodó, “Social Worlds,” 155. Many of the statements given by Jews to the Pesti Izraelita Community Legal Aid Office feature an economic component. People frequently reported that their money was stolen during attacks or house searches. Others complain that, in addition to the seizure of property that comments about Jewish wealth coming at the expense of Christians. See for example, Statement by Izsó Silber to PIH, November 24, 1919, pg. 116, BZsL.

violent revenge against the “Reds” was a predictable (although not desirable) reaction to many of those observing developments in Hungary (and Russia).⁴⁰ But what divided militia members from their civilian counter-parts was their willingness to perpetrate extreme forms of violence against certain groups in their acts of revenge, their assertion of privilege and their quest to gain material rewards.⁴¹ Violence is routinely used to reinforce the social, ethnic and gender hierarchies which order society, but in modern states, there is generally a limit of how much violence a regime can tolerate without undermining its legitimacy in the eyes of the populace.⁴² The counter-revolutionary state’s toleration, if not facilitation, of violence and atrocities provided militias with license to commit atrocities with very little fear of legal recompense, at least until mid-1921.⁴³ The regime’s stance toward the militias reinforced their members’ belief that they were privileged and operated above the law.

*“Scoundrels Masquerading as Gentlemen”*⁴⁴

A variety of people were attracted to paramilitarism in post-armistice Hungary. Contemporary commentators, especially those on the left tended to characterize the militias as bastions of conservative and reactionary elites who worked “hand in glove” with Horthy to bring terror especially to the Jewish bourgeoisie and the proletariat.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ Letter from Thomas Hohler to Earl George Curzon, February 21, 1920, in *Report on the Alleged Existence of “White Terror,”* 2.

⁴¹ Bodó, “Social Worlds,” 158.

⁴² Patricia Hill Collins, “The Tie that Binds: Race, Gender and US Violence,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 21, no. 5 (September, 1998), 917-918.

⁴³ Aristotle Kallis, “‘Licence’ and Genocide in the East: Local Eliminationist Violence during the First Stages of ‘Operation Barbarossa,’” *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism, 2007 ASEN Conference Special* 7, no. 3(2007): 8-9.

⁴⁴ Jászi, *Revolution and Counter-Revolution*, 160.

⁴⁵ Letter from Camille Huysmans to Arthur Henderson, January 8, 1920, LP/HUN/1/1.i, LHA.

There was some aristocratic support for the militias. However, as Bodó has shown, the aristocracy and nobility did not comprise more than probably fifteen percent of the total number of members of the officers' detachments and even less in the more local militias, although these classes were overrepresented in the Prónay detachment. That being said, some elements in the aristocracy, especially in Transdanubia, did offer political and financial support to the militias in 1919. Some invited militias to their estates to as a way of disciplining rebellious peasants, while others colluded with or encouraged militias to commit violence against political enemies. Some militia leaders like Prónay enjoyed close social relations with members of the traditional aristocratic elite, and they often shared a commitment to the restoration of traditional social relations and hierarchy as well as the punishment of more radical or reformist political elements, through violence. But the Hungarian aristocracy was a large and diverse group. There was never total support for militias because there were many aristocrats who were offended by the upheaval and disorder caused by militias and were disgusted by the nature of acts linked to such groups. By the end of 1921, after two royalist coups and the failed rebellion in Burgenland (present-day Austria), for the most part, most traces of aristocratic support dissipated and paramilitarism came to be regarded as a hindrance to the government's consolidation and legitimization in both the domestic and international political sphere.⁴⁶

The majority of militia members were younger men in their twenties or early thirties from the upper and lower middle classes. Scholarship touching on the counter-revolution and on militias has tended to highlight the nationalist and anti-Semitic dimensions of counter-revolutionary ideology, but the anti-revolutionary and anti-communist dimensions of it should be taken seriously as well because militias attracted

⁴⁶ Bodó, "Hungarian Aristocracy and the White Terror," 709; 716.

people across ethnic and religious boundaries that were hostile to communism. Many of these people and/or their families had suffered during the Hungarian Soviet regime, had their property and businesses seized, their educations disrupted and fortunes lost. Many were also refugees from Transylvania and Slovakia, whose families had lost their property, homes, and social networks when they fled into Hungary following the announcement of the border lines. Refugees were especially prominent in the university student militias in Budapest. Ethnic Germans and bourgeois Jews also (attempted to) joined militias especially in the early months when focused anti-communist sentiments ran the highest. To be sure, even from the beginning, many militia commanders did not welcome Jews into their ranks, but serving in militias and donating to the counter-revolutionary cause was not exclusively a Gentile ambition despite the fact that anti-Semitism has become the most emphasized dimension of militia ideology, in part because of the institutionalization of anti-Semitism in the *Numerus Clauses*.⁴⁷ Wealthier peasants and some independent farmers did serve in civil militias in the provinces. While these were not “middle class” in the urbanized, bourgeois sense of the term, they were not landless peasants, who were generally hostile to militias, in part because they were the targets of terror and violence as militias passed through Transdanubia.

Despite the reality of militias’ domination by those with bourgeois origins, the idea that militias were composed of social elites, including both the traditional aristocracy, nobles, and gentry or the newly minted counter-revolutionary political elite, played a role in contemporary commentators’ and observers’ (especially, but not exclusively those involved in labor and socialist politics) interpretations of the atrocities

⁴⁷ Bodo, “Social Worlds of Paramilitary Groups” 143-146; Mocsy, *The Uprooted*, 10-15.

committed by the militias.⁴⁸ In a complaint to the Pest Jewish Community Legal Aid Bureau, Dr. Miklós Horváth, a lawyer describing an attack on some Jews in January 1920, recalled that the group of young men responsible included some who were in were very well dressed.⁴⁹ Others referred to their attackers as “gentlemen officers”.⁵⁰ In a January 1920 letter, the secretary of the International Socialist Bureau Secretary Camille Huysmans argued that the Entente governments were partially to blame for the White Terror and that their representatives in Budapest “secretly chuckle over if they dare not openly commend the vindictive bestiality of a victorious gentry toward the beaten proletariat (sic.).”⁵¹ Similar sentiments were reflected in a 1921 report by a Jewish relief organization representative who after describing the mutilation and torture of several Jewish men included a portrait of Prónay from the “Hungarian aristocracy magazine called “A Társaság” (sic.) meaning society.”⁵² This was very likely intended to lay bare the disconnect between the status of the men and the brutality of the acts they committed, given that by this point, it was the working classes rather than the bourgeoisie or elites who were closely associated with violence.⁵³

In an article detailing the relationship between the counter-revolutionary government and the English published in the American socialist magazine called *The Liberator*, journalist Fredrick Kuh reported that British representatives used Horthy’s elite social origins as part of their defense of the counter-revolutionary regime and White

⁴⁸ It also played a central role in the historiography of the White Terror up until the 1990s, as many Hungarian historians who wrote about the White Terror in the socialist era uncritically reproduced the conclusions of the original sources, which aligned with the ideological orientation of the state.

⁴⁹ Statement by Miksa Horváth to PIH, January 15, 1920, pg. 60, BZsL.

⁵⁰ Statement by Gyula Steiner to PIH, June 24, 1920, pg. 120, BZsL; Statement by Emil Tauber to PIH, January 28, 1920, pg. 125, BZsL.

⁵¹ Huysmans to Henderson, January 8, 1920, LP/HUN/1/1.ii, LHA.

⁵² Marcus, “Is There White Terror in Hungary,” 29, JDC.

⁵³ Georges Sorel, *Reflections on Violence*, trans. T.E. Hulme (London: Allen & Unwin, 1915).

Guards. Kuh reported that George Clerk, leader of a British mission to Hungary in 1919 called Horthy a “gentleman” as a way of defending himself against accusations from the left that Clerk and the British government were responsible for the White Terror.⁵⁴ Clerk used “gentleman” as shorthand to indicate that there was no White Terror because Horthy (and the White militias) belonged to a class of persons, elite men, who by definition did not engage in such behavior. By saying Horthy was a “gentlemen,” Clerk intended to communicate the respectability of the new regime which he and the British government were supporting as gentlemen did not commit acts of terror. In the first page of the article, Kuh sarcastically played with the idea of “gentleman”, attempting to fill it up with alternate meanings by querying, “I wonder how many socialists one has to slaughter or imprison before one can pass muster as a gentleman?” When referring to Thomas Hohler, the British plenipotentiary in Budapest’s inaction in regard to White Terror, Kuh wrote, “Thousands of people have appealed to Hohler to help them; they came with stories of ‘vanished’ husbands, murdered fathers and violated daughters. Holher says there is no White Terror in Hungary. I guess Hohler is a gentleman too.”

Kuh attempted to critique social hierarchy by laying bare the oppression of elites both in Hungary and in Britain and their use of socio-economic (and gender) privilege not only to commit unspeakable acts but to conceal them from public view. From his point of view, conservative elites were responsible for the oppression of the working class, the destruction of the revolution, and they were responsible for pushing back against democratization and economic reforms even before the outbreak of revolution in Eastern

⁵⁴ In his memoirs, General Harry Hill Bandholtz also relied on these class designations to defend the Entente’s support of the regime by emphasizing the socio-economic origins of Horthy and other counter-revolutionary politicians. Bandholtz, *An Undiplomatic Diary*, ed. by Fritz-Konrad Krüger (New York: Columbia University Press, 1933).

Europe. He therefore tried to fill the category of “gentleman” up with a new set of meanings that reflected this ideological position.

Yet, later on in the piece, Kuh mobilized the values embedded in the concept of gentleman that Clerk referenced, such as the protection of women, the defense of the weak, courage, fair play and the general “restraint of physical aggression” in order to criticize the the Horthy regime and the White militias.⁵⁵ He wrote, “Horthy has made ‘Communism’ synonymous with Death; he has hounded the most tepid mensheviks into exile, thrown pale little liberals into cells, and erected a feudal edition of Czarist Siberia right in the heart of Europe. He has condoned the raping of socialist women by his White Guards; he has winked slyly at atrocities that none but a pen able to deal with obscenities could describe. But Sir George [Clerk] tells us he is a gentleman.”⁵⁶ According to Kuh, these men preyed on and exploited the weaknesses of their demonstrably weaker opponents and they did so in part because their success was assured by their British patrons, who sought to turn Hungary into “a suburb of London.”⁵⁷ The problem then was that Horthy and the “White guards” were not acting like gentlemen because of their acts (and approval) of unrestrained violence against those persons and groups who should have been exempt from violence (i.e. women, children, the elderly) and because men of their social position were supposed to refrain against such types of aggression. Regulating who, when and how violence took place was one way the boundaries of elite

⁵⁵ Norbert, Finzsch. “Historical Masculinities as Intersectional Problem,” *Gender Forum* 32(2011), accessed July 18, 2014, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/887257307?accountid=2909>; John Tosh, “Masculinities in Industrializing Societies: Britain 1800-1914,” *Journal of British Studies* 44, 2(April 2005), 331; The issue of restraining physical aggression is somewhat complicated in the case of the Habsburg Empire as the practice of dueling continued into the first decade of the 20th century, but dueling was reserved exclusively for the elite in practice. See Raphael Patai, *The Jews of Hungary: History, Culture, Psychology* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1996), 379-380.

⁵⁶ Frederick Kuh, “England and the White Terror,” *The Liberator*, July, 1920, 43.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 44.

masculinity were policed. Kuh's arguments were contradictory because on the one hand he attempted to reject the positive and honorable connotations of eliteness while on the other, he mobilized the values embedded in the concept of gentleman to discredit both the British and Hungarian regimes. Yet his arguments demonstrate how closely tied social status and gender shaped interpretations of violence in the postwar period.

Sociologist and former Minister of Nationalities under Károlyi, Oszkár Jászi, echoed similar sentiments in his 1923 study *Revolution and Counter-revolution in Hungary* that the White Terror was fundamentally worse than the Red Terror because of expectations associated with elite men whom he regarded as the primary membership of white militias. He wrote:

But the tremendous difference between the Red and White Terror is beyond all question. During the counter-revolution the decreased spread of the Terror was compensated by increased brutality and by an entirely different psychological and moral quality. The Terrorist actions of the Reds usually revealed the primitive cruelty of coarse ignorant men; the Whites worked out a cold and refined system of vengeance and reprisal, which they applied with the cruelty of scoundrels masquerading as gentlemen. The worst atrocities of the Red Terror were usually the wild acts of depraved and semi-bestial proletarians: those of the Whites were the deliberate actions of elegant officers.⁵⁸

For Jászi the violence of the militias was more offensive not simply because it was disruptive, illegal and "bestial". Nor was it problematic simply because militias attacked the innocent persons and those groups which were generally supposed to be immune to violence. These issues were all important, but so too was the fact that atrocities were being committed by persons, elite men, who because of their status should have precluded them from conducting themselves in such a manner. Elite and bourgeois men were held to a different standard of conduct just as elite women were and their

⁵⁸ Jászi, *Revolution and Counter-revolution*, 160-161.

conformity to these norms undergirded class and gender hierarchies.⁵⁹ They were supposed to know better and act differently than the working classes *because* of their elevated status in these hierarchies. Therefore, for Jászi, because he believed that members of White militias were comprised of elites, they had no excuse for their behavior. There was no mitigating factor that made the violence they perpetrated something other than “bestly revenge”. The militias’ intentionally violated social and gender expectations which made their violence worse and more immoral than the Red Terror.

The violence of militias was not just interpreted through the lens of gender and social hierarchies. Religion also played an important role in conceptualizations of the violence of the White Terror, as people used the militias’ and the regime’s claim of representing Christian interests to decry the violence and persecution they faced. In doing so, they sought to mobilize a meaning of Christianity which was not just an expression of a political, cultural or ethnic identity, but which was imbued with spiritual and moral meanings which precluded horrific violence. One man, Sándor Darvas, recalled that after being arrested and taken to a sugar mill along with some other Jewish men that soldiers stood with clubs and beat the men as they entered the room because they did not greet the soldiers with “Jesus Christ be praised,” an observation which highlighted the conflict between the Christian rhetoric and the violence of the white detachments.⁶⁰ Jászi wrote, “The ‘Christian Course’ made the cross, that shining symbol of the love of man, into a gallows, and used it with a wind fury which in the end disgusted the Entente missions, who tried to moderate this hanging mania.”⁶¹ Similarly, the British Labour Delegation argued against the British military mission’s report on Hungarian conditions by arguing,

⁵⁹ Finzsch, “Masculinities as an Intersectional Problem.”

⁶⁰ Statement by Sándor Darvas , April 25, 1920, LP/HUN/5/45.i, LHA.

⁶¹ Jászi, *Revolution and Counter-revolution*, 159.

“Admiral Troubridge writing of the Hungarian Government says:--‘It is a Christian Government in a Christian country.’” This conveys a false impression unless it is fully understood that in Hungary the word Christian has a definite political significance.”⁶² These criticisms simultaneously moved in two different directions as one the one hand, they defined Christianity as a set of immutable moral principles sullied by militias who claimed to represent it, while on the other they emphasized the political instrumentalization of Christianity.⁶³ In sum, people condemned the violence committed by militias not just because they regarded it as illegal or excessive but also because it was committed by people whose status in social, gender and religious hierarchies foreclosed violence.

Part Two

*“The Tormented Masses”*⁶⁴

Understanding the diversity, the principles and the goals of paramilitaries, as well as who was attracted to them, is important as it understanding why certain groups were targeted by militias. The range of persons militias targeted was socially, politically and ethnically diverse. The first group targeted was those who had been involved in revolutionary politics in some capacity, either under Károlyi or Kun. The Károlyist Revolution was considered by many conservatives to be the “original sin” of revolution

⁶² British Joint Labour Delegation to Hungary, *The White Terror in Hungary*, 24.

⁶³ In a review of the English version of Cecile Tormay’s book *An Outlaw’s Diary* written by Rosika Schwimmer for *B’Nai B’rith News*, Schwimmer criticized Tormay’s attack on Károlyi’s pacifist stance by pointing out what she believed was a conflict between claims of Christianity and the promotion of political violence and war. Rosika Schwimmer, “The Perverse Psychology of the Reactionary” November, 1923, *B’Nai B’rith News*, 75.

⁶⁴ Jászi, *Revolution and Counter-revolution*, 156.

which cleared the way for Bolshevism. In practical terms, this association between the two revolutions made participants or supporters of democratization and socialism vulnerable to attack and arrest by both state authorities and militias. This included higher and lower ranking individuals such as people's commissars, bureaucrats, in addition to party or trade union members. Given the expansion of the government's role under Kun, the potential number of persons included in this group was very large. An estimated 100,000 people fled Hungary and went into political exile, but despite this large number, there were still plenty of people left to persecute.⁶⁵ Members of local councils and soviets were rounded up, as were those who had served as prosecutors, police men and judges in the Soviet regime, investigating and carrying out sentences on behalf of the Hungarian Soviet regime. In the complaints made to the Social Democratic Party, those who were involved in organizing and assisting with elections in early 1920 were also targeted and those that maintained voter and candidate lists were vulnerable to attacks.⁶⁶

Among those targeted as political opponents of the regime were women who were conservatives and militia members regarded as being actively involved in the feminist movement or in democratic and socialist politics or those who had close relationships to men involved in leftist politics. In the case of the Károlyi government, it espoused reforms such as universal suffrage, while the Kun regime embraced far more radical reforms including liberalized marriage and divorce laws and sexual education. Militia members as well as the police and other authorities as well as conservative commentators

⁶⁵ Béla Bodó, "The Social Worlds of Paramilitary Groups," 133; Bodó, "Hungarian Aristocracy and the White Terror," 704.

⁶⁶ Károlyi government see for example Statement by Mrs. Sándor Iványi to SDP, November 30, 1919, pg. 48, PIL; For examples of persecution in regard to the February, 1920 elections, see Statement by János Berze Nagy to SDP, January 21, 1920, pg. 231, PIL; Statement by Lajos Szöke to SDP, January 20, 1920, pg. 224, PIL; Statement by György Kraft and Sándor Huber to SDP, January 19, 1920, pg. 221, PIL.

held rudimentary views of feminism and vulgarized conceptualizations of communist gender ideology, focusing on such mantras as “free love,” the “nationalization of women” or “communization of women”⁶⁷ which they interpreted as meaning that the communist ideal was encouraging woman to be willing and available for sex outside the bounds of marriage. In practical terms, this conceptualization translated into practices of sexualized violence toward “political” women because they were believed to be willing and available for sex and thus unviolable. The emphasis on issues of gender and sexuality were also infused with religious connotations as well as communists were “atheists” and the loosened sexual mores of the communists were attributed, in part, to this lack of spiritual commitment to the sacrament of marriage.⁶⁸

But while the communist revolution provided the immediate context and discourse, the supposed link between “proletarian” women and sexuality was already established long before the outbreak of revolution or counter-revolution. Historically speaking, many working class and impoverished women did not enjoy autonomy over their bodies, and were often subject to regulations which attempted to police and punish “abnormal” or “deviant” sexual behaviors. Moreover, working class women in Budapest were already regarded by many as having different, looser sexual behaviors than their bourgeois and elite female counterparts and were frequently targeted as prostitutes.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Frank Eckelt, “Internal Policies of the Hungarian Soviet Republic,” in *Hungary in Revolution: Nine Essays*, Iván Völgyes, ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1971), 72.

⁶⁸ Cecile Tormay, *An Outlaw's Diary: The Revolution*, 198, 281; Tormay, *An Outlaw's Diary: The Commune* (New York: McBride, 1924), 41-42; 53-54. The book was originally published in Hungary between 1920 and 1922. It appeared in English not long after in 1923 and 1924. Between the two versions of the book, the English version was more heavily editing than the Hungarian version. While the book straddles the genres of memoir and novel, having been published immediately in the wake of White Terror provides insight into the prejudices against Jews, feminism, pacifism etc. that informed many conservatives.

⁶⁹ Susan Zimmermann, “‘Making a Living from Disgrace’: the Politics of Prostitution, Female Poverty and Urban Gender Codes in Budapest and Vienna, 1860-1920,” in *The City in Central Europe: Culture and*

These ideas of dangerous working class female sexuality were mobilized and combined with anti-communist rhetoric by white militias and other conservative commentators during the early counter-revolution to argue that the women who were being attacked had acted in ways which did not provide them with the same protections other “respectable” (bourgeois) women enjoyed.⁷⁰ But nevertheless, such rhetoric sought to tap into existing attitudes in the broader population which were shaped by class, gender, and religious hierarchies and which existed long before the establishment of the Soviet government.

Related to this was conservatives’ sexualized portrayal of communist and leftist women as masculinized, i.e. not “real” women. This strategy was deployed to demonstrate that, even in their appearance, communist women did not conform to standards of bourgeois femininity and consequently could not claim an exemption from violence.⁷¹ Further, the image of the “feminist” was heavily informed by the person of Rosa Bedy Schwimmer, a prominent feminist and pacifist active in Hungary and internationally.⁷² Schwimmer, a bourgeois, educated and assimilated, and secular Jewish woman who was active in international reform movements and who served as the Károlyi

Society from 1800 to the Present, ed. by Malcom Gee, Tim Kirk and Jill Steward (Aldershot, England and Brookfield, CT: Ashgate, 1999), 187.

⁷⁰ Eliza Ablovatski, “Between Red Army and White Guard: Women in Budapest, 1919,” in *Gender and War in Twentieth Century Eastern Europe*, ed. by Maria Bucur and Nancy Wingfield (Bloomington: Indian University Press, 2006), 82-86; See also Robert Gerwarth’s article, “Sexual and Non-Sexual Violence against ‘Politicised Women’ after the Great War,” *Sexual Violence in Conflict Zones from the Ancient World to the Late Twentieth Century*, ed. by Elisabeth Heinemann (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011); Tormay, *The Revolution*, 142, 192.

⁷¹ The attempt to show that communism attracted “masculinized” women is present in Tormay’s volume. See for example the picture and portrayals of communist women included in an *An Outlaw’s Diary*. Tormay, *The Commune*, photo opp. 140. See also Eliza Johnson, “‘Revolutionary Girl with the Titus Head’: Women’s Participation in the 1919 Revolutions in Budapest and Munich in the Eyes of their Contemporaries,” *Nationalities Papers* 28, no. 3(2000), 548.

⁷² Tormay, *The Revolution*, 137. To be clear, it was not just Hungarian conservatives who harbored this negative opinion of Schwimmer. Peter Pastor noted in his study that Western European and American diplomats were unhappy at her appointment as ambassador which they regarded as “perfidious” and “ultra-democratic”. Pastor, *Hungary between Wilson and Lenin: the Hungarian Revolution of 1918-1919 and the Big Three* (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 1976), 70.

government's ambassador to Switzerland, was the embodiment not only of feminism, but of internationalism, pacifism, the failed revolutionary regime (she had been appointed the ambassador to Switzerland by Károlyi), and Jewishness. For many conservatives, "feminism" carried this entire set of connotations, therefore making it impossible to regard "feminists" as a straightforward political or even gender category, but rather as one imbued with class, gender, ethnic, political and even religious expectations that were present prior to the counter-revolution and White Terror. Concerns about women's roles in society were also likely exacerbated by the war, during which many women took on expanded economic and social roles while their husbands were fighting and who also took drastic measures to ensure their and their families' survival as the economic troubles worsened.⁷³

Targeting the politically defined groups above was driven largely by revenge for both the revolutions and for the loss of the war, which many conservative Hungarians and militia members regarded as interrelated in a Hungarian version of the "stab in the back" mythology. But for many, political connections were not sufficient to explain their persecution. Many of the militias' victims were peasants, particularly in Transdanubia where the infamous militias led by Prónay and Hejjas were active, and where local militias were very active. As discussed earlier, the militias were heavily dependent on "requisition" and plunder for their livelihood on the countryside and aristocrats and/or estate owners were often willing to pay militias to come onto their estates and rough up "their" peasants as punishment for political involvement in the revolutionary governments, to bring order after the Commune incited people against them, and to

⁷³ Péter Hanak, "Vox Populi: Intercepted Letters in the First World War," in *The Garden and the Workshop: Essays on the Cultural History of Budapest and Vienna* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 184.

prevent them from joining agrarian reform movements.⁷⁴ The social dynamics at play in regard to the persecution of peasants puts into relief the important disciplinary function of violence in the early counter-revolution which allowed the aristocracy and estate owners to reassert their authority and affirm the “traditional” social and political hierarchies of Hungary.⁷⁵ However, the aristocracy’s and nobility’s instigation or participation in atrocities and militia violence had the capacity to undermine their traditional claims of authority because such actions violated many people’s expectations about how people of certain classes were supposed to act, and who was a legitimate target of violence, a point which will be explored more fully below.

While violence against peasants characterized the White Terror in the provinces, in Budapest militias set their sights on leftists and especially Jews, both Hungarian and “foreign-born.”⁷⁶ Many contemporary observers attributed this persecution to the visibility of ethnic Jews in the leadership of the communist parties of Central and Eastern Europe (Béla Kun, Rosa Luxemburg, Lenin) as well as in the Károlyi government which preceded it in Hungary (Oszkar Jászi).⁷⁷ Colonel Horowitz, a member of the Inter-Allied Mission to Hungary sent to Hungary to report on conditions there for the American delegation in Paris, allegedly relayed information regarding the treatment of Jews to

⁷⁴ See Prónay, *A határban a halál kaszál*, 124-125, 127, for example.

⁷⁵ Bodó, “Social Worlds,” 150.

⁷⁶ “Foreign-born” is presented in quotation marks, because many Jews placed in this category by counter-revolutionary authorities in Hungary had been citizens of Austria-Hungary (Austria Galicia) before the imperial collapse in November, 1918 and had migrated to Hungary in the last decades of the nineteenth century and therefore had been residing there for decades. When the Empire collapsed, many of these Jews became citizens of the new successor states where they had come from, not where they were residing at the moment of collapse. During the war, the Hungarian state had tried to move as many Jewish refugees out of Hungary and into Austria, arguing that under the auspices of the Dual-Monarchy, Hungary was a separate state and that the refugees were citizens/subjects of Austria *not* Hungary. Rebekah Klein-Pejšová, “Among the Nationalities: Jewish Refugees, Jewish Nationalities, and Czechoslovak Statebuilding” (PhD. diss, Columbia University, 2007), 18, 53.

⁷⁷ This “ethnic” designation is used because many of communists who were Jews did not primarily identify as Jews nor did they practice or observe the rituals of the Jewish faith. Thomas Sakmyster, *Admiral on Horseback* 17.

American General Henry Hill Bandholtz who wrote in his diary entry on September 29, 1919: “[Horowitz] stated that a great many rascally Jews under he[sic] cloak of their religion had committed crimes, that here really was a great deal of anti-Semitic feeling on account of so many Jews having been Bolsheviks.”⁷⁸ Cécile Tormay wrote angrily about the formation of the National Council by the Károlyi circle in her memoir-novel in her entry for October 31, 1919: “...Who proclaims himself the saviour of Hungary in the hour of her greatest peril?...Eleven Jews and eight bad Hungarians.”⁷⁹ She had a great deal more to say about the linkage between Jews and communism after the establishment of the Soviet government: “Just as in Károlyi’s Government the [Soviet government] is headed by a deceptive Christian clown....The others are all foreigners. All the People’s Commissaries are Jews, there is now and then a Christian among the assistant commissaries, then again Jews and more Jews.”⁸⁰ Here Tormay not only made the association between Jews and communism, but also specifically conceptualized Jews as foreigners, which was false but it reinforced the idea that Jews, no matter their citizenship status or their level of assimilation, would always remain outsiders. The association between the Judaism and communism remained an important explanatory dimension of the White Terror well into 1921, when American Joint Distribution Committee

⁷⁸ Bandholtz, *An Undiplomatic Diary*, 101. Bandholtz also wrote that he had had a confrontation with the Minister of Defense Károlyi Soós following a report he received about the beating up of two young Jewish boys. Bandholtz wrote that he told Soós that “I was so damned sick and tired of any such conduct; that although I could understand how the Hungarians would naturally feel sore over the fact that most of the Bolshevik leaders had been Jews, nevertheless neither America nor England could understand any such barbaric conduct; that one of England’s greatest Prime Ministers had been a Jew and the present chairman of the military committee in the American House of Representatives is a Jew; that if reports got out that Hungarians were lapsing into the same form of barbarism as the Russians, it would seriously affect their whole future...” Bandholtz, *An Undiplomatic Diary*, 263.

Similar characterizations of Horowitz’s report were recorded by the British Mission. See the letter from General Reginald Gorton to High Commissioner Thomas Hohler, 18 February, 1920, *Alleged Existence of White Terror in Hungary*, 3.

⁷⁹ Tormay, *The Revolution*, 7.

⁸⁰ Tormay, *The Commune*, 11.

representative Joseph Marcus noted in his May, 1921 report that “any Jew in Hungary to-day is synonymous with ‘Communist...’”⁸¹

The link between Jewishness and Bolshevism and the belief that the interests of Jews and interests of communists “were one in the same”—the Judeo-Bolshevik myth—flowered in the immediate postwar period, although its origins can be traced earlier.⁸² The undergirding logic of Judeo-Bolshevism in 1919 Hungary, and Europe more generally, was that Jews were the physical embodiment of internationalist revolutionary ideology. Even in the correspondence from the British representative to the Inter-Allied Military Mission in Budapest to the British High Commissioner in Budapest Thomas Hohler betrayed, at the very least, a sympathy toward the logic of Judeo-Bolshevism when he wrote about the White Terror and its effects on “Jews and other communists...”⁸³ Likewise the British Labour Party’s report, while discussing the persecution of Jews, explicitly defined the atrocities as being politically rather than ethnically or religiously motivated.⁸⁴ Thus, the category of “Jew” denoted a specific political identity and relationship to the Hungarian state.

Although not discounting the immediate political significance of the revolutions on the conceptualization of Jews, even before the military defeat and outbreak of

⁸¹ Joseph Marcus, “Political Background and what it Means to Hungarian Jews,” June 5, 1921, p. 6, 220562, Folder 151.4, JDC.

⁸² Eliza Ablovatski, “The 1919 Central European Revolutions,” 474-476; Paul Hanebrink, “Transnational Cultural War: Christianity, Nation, and the Judeo-Bolshevik Myth in Hungary, 1890-1920,” *The Journal of Modern History* 80, 1(March 2008): 55-80.

⁸³ Letter from General Reginald Gorton to High Commissioner Thomas Hohler, February 18, 1920, *Alleged Existence of White Terror in Hungary*, 3. More examples of the strength of the association between communism with Jewishness circulating in government documents, Report by Townley Fullam, FO/608/12, pg. 14, March 31, 1919, Records of the British Foreign Office, British National Archives, Kew, England (Hereafter referred to as BNA). This association did not go unnoticed among American Jews involved in transatlantic relief and philanthropic efforts. See Letter from Louis Marshall to US Secretary of State Bainbridge Colby, May 27, 1920, reprinted in Nathaniel Katzburg, “Louis Marshall and the White Terror in Hungary,” *American Jewish Archives* 45, no. 1 (1993), 1-12.

⁸⁴ Joint Labour Delegation, *The White Terror in Hungary*, 23-24.

revolution, the category of “Jew” was not a free-standing religious-ethnic category void of sociopolitical meanings. In the pre-war period, Paul Hanebrink and Eliza Ablovatski have shown that political anti-Semitism was a shorthand for “...expressing an anti-revolutionary and anti-modern worldview, and it encompassed not only a political statement about one’s attitude to Jews, but also to democracy, social reform, suffrage reform, as well as technical and artistic innovation.”⁸⁵ It was also a way to express anxieties about industrialization, the instability and exploitive nature of capitalism, and the management of a multi-ethnic state in the late nineteenth century “golden age” of East Central European nation-building. In the pre-war period across Europe and North America, Jews had been labeled as “internationalist,” and “cosmopolitan” because of their religious difference and their diasporic history. Jews’ prominence in industry and banking fed into a belief that Jews were part of a “gold international” which was economically exploitive and which directed the flow of global wealth.⁸⁶

The economic dimensions of anti-Jewish politics and rhetoric were strengthened by the wartime experience in Central and Eastern Europe. This developed in spite of the catastrophic consequences of the war for many Jewish communities, especially those in Russia and Galicia, which had been two of the primary theaters in the Eastern Front’s war of movement. As the economic conditions in Hungary (and in the Dual Monarchy broadly) declined, Jewish refugees from Galicia were often accused of profiteering, price-gouging, and black marketeering when they were not being resented for stretching scant resources thinner. Even Hungarian Jews, especially those in Budapest, blamed the recently arrived refugees for these problems, wanting to distance themselves from their

⁸⁵ Ablovatski, “The 1919 Central European Revolutions,” 480.

⁸⁶ Robert S. Wistrich, *A Lethal Obsession: Anti-Semitism from Antiquity to the Global Jihad* (New York: Random House, 2010), 119.

more impoverished and religiously demonstrative Eastern brethren.⁸⁷ Moreover the Hungarian version of the post-World War I “stab in the back” myth emerged among conservatives emphasized the national minorities’ (including but not exclusively Jews), feminists’, democrats’ and communists’ exploitation and abandonment of the national cause by pressing their political claims in a moment when the nation was vulnerable. The economic collapse of Hungary in the wake of defeat and revolution only intensified economic resentments against Jews who were prominent drivers of the industrial and commercial life of the country. The numerous negative associations of Jews with “anti-national” economic behaviors such as smuggling, speculation and hoarding forged before, during, and immediately after the war is useful for understanding the complaint made by Kecskemét lawyer Imre Fritz to the Social Democratic Party’s Legal Aid Bureau on December 10, 1919, which stated that wealthy and distinguished Kecskemét Jews, several of whom were merchants had been targeted for persecution and eventually execution by a “group of uniformed individuals.”⁸⁸ The complaint was careful to say that none of the victims had taken part in politics during the Commune and that at least two of the victims had fled the city to avoid service in the Red Army, therefore indicating that the only thing linking the individuals together was their Jewish identities, but the characterization of the persecution of “propertied and respectable” Jews indicates that economic resentments played an important role in the victims’ persecution.⁸⁹ Economic

⁸⁷ Rebekah Klein-Pejšová, “Among the Nationalities,” especially pages 27-28, 32; See also David Rechter, “Galicia in Vienna, and The Jews of Austria,” *Austrian History Yearbook*, 122-123, 127 which indicates that the reaction to refugee Jews from the broader population was similar to that of the Jews of Budapest in terms of placing economic resentments and pressures on the backs of new arrivals.

⁸⁸ Statement of Dr. Imré Fritz to SDP, December 10, 1919, pgs. 79-80, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL. These individuals were executed in a forest outside of Kecskemét.

⁸⁹ See also Statement to Military Prosecutor by Lipót Schwartz, March 5, 1920, pg. 114, BZsL; Statement of Lipót Blau, May 18, 1920, pg. 364, PIL; Gyula Andrásy, Address to Parliament, May 8, 1921, 220563, NY AR191921/4/23/2/151.4, Folder Hungary, Marcus Report on “WhiteTerror,” 1921, JDC.

resentments in many cases provide a better explanation than communism for the violence against bourgeois Jews in Budapest and other provincial cities.

In addition to feeding economic resentments, the wartime experience also fed the association of Jews to “shirking” (i.e. non-participation in the military effort) disloyalty and defeatism. Many Jews also noted that when they were stopped and attacked on the streets of Budapest, that militia members frequently told them that Jews were to blame for the Trianon Treaty and for prolonging the Romanian invasion.⁹⁰ These beliefs did not lead, as it had in Germany, to a military census to assess Jewish participation during the war. Yet it did help place Jews outside the national community by essentially promoting the idea that Jews had no sense of loyalty to the Hungarian nation.⁹¹

The arrival of Jewish refugees from the Galician provinces fed the narrative of disloyalty surrounding Jews given their status as non-citizens. The Hungarian government attempted to transfer all the Galician Jewish refugees to their Austrian neighbor’s territory during the war or compel repatriation. However, a substantial number remained in Hungary even after the 1918 armistice, and many, including the more assimilated and wealthy Budapest Jewish community regarded them as a drain on local resources, the cause of inflation, a source of disease, in addition to their status as “foreigners.”⁹² The large presence of non-citizen Jews fuelled nationalist and anti-Semitic

⁹⁰ Statement by Imre Kuefler to PIH, May 29, 1920, pg. 68, BZsL; Statement by Mrs. Mór Hahn, May 31, 1920, pg. 53, BZsL; Statement by Mátyás Lax to PIH, May 20, 1920, pg. 80, BZsL; Statement by Simon Neumann to PIH, May 30, 1920, pg. 91, BZsL; Statement by Zsigmond Rabinek to PIH, May 22, 1920, pg. 96, BZsL; Statement by Béla Pfeffer to PIH, May 27, 1920, pg. 94, BZsL; Statement by Simon Neumann to PIH, May 30, 1920, pg. 91, BZsL; Statement by Samu Stein to PIH, May 27, 1920, pg. 118, BZsL; Statement of Lipót Schwartz to Military Prosecutor, March 5, 1920, pg. 114, BZsL. Sakmyster’s biography of Horthy indicates that the future regent at least in 1919-1920 held Jews responsible for prolonging the Romanian occupation. Sakmyster, *Admiral on Horseback*, 32.

⁹¹ Klein-Pejšová, “Among the Nationalities,” 28; István Deák, *Beyond Nationalism: a Social and Political History of the Habsburg Officer Corps, 1848-1918* (New York: Oxford University, 1990), 195-196.

⁹² Klein-Pejšová, “Among the Nationalities,” 18, 36.

conceptualizations of Jews—regardless of state citizenship or length of time spent in Hungary—as inherently foreign.⁹³ This was reflected at times in the comments of militias during attacks according to several statements by victims of attacks who recalled militia members telling them that the violence was intended to force all Jews to emigrate, or referred to all Jews as Galicians.⁹⁴ No matter if they “had always professed themselves to be Hungarian,” for many including militia members, Hungarian Jews were not and could never be integrated fully into the Hungarian nation.⁹⁵

It is important to understand the multiple political and economic associations surrounding the conceptualization of “Jew” in wartime and counter-revolutionary Hungary. But it is also important to take seriously the position of Jews as religious outsiders in Christian Hungary. To be sure, many Jews had abandoned their religion through assimilation and inter-marriage over the course of the late nineteenth century. Further, religion was imbued with political meaning well before the outbreak of war or revolution in most of Europe. In other words, religious difference in Hungary was not just about different doctrines or rituals. Hanebrink has shown that religious difference featured heavily in pre-war Christian nationalist discourse, which among other things argued that Jews promoted an entirely different *moral* point-of-view in Hungarian society.⁹⁶ But especially with the arrival of unassimilated Orthodox Jews from the eastern provinces of the Monarchy, the importance of Jews’ religious differences was not insignificant. Moreover pre-war stereotypes about Jewish rituals including the blood-libel were

⁹³ Ibid., 73.

⁹⁴ Statement by Jakob Lowy to PIH, September 30, 1919, pg. 81, BZsL; Statement by Oszkar Lemburger to PIH, Statement by Lipót Friedmann to PIH, February 5, 1920, pg. 35, BZsL; Unsigned Statement to PIH, February, 1920, pg. 64, BZsL.

⁹⁵ Statement by József Schwartz to PIH, May 19, 1920, pg. 112, BZsL.

⁹⁶ Hanebrink, *In Defense of Christian Hungary*, 27-28.

referenced by militia members during attacks and sometimes shaped acts of violence. For example, during a militia attack, two men recalled that during his attack, a soldier declared, “Here are Jews who want to drink Christian blood.”⁹⁷ The concern that (especially unassimilated) Jews had higher rates of fertility also likely fed the growth anti-Semitism, especially in the wake of major territorial changes and consequently ethnic Hungarian population losses.

By 1919, the category of “Jew” for many conservatives and Christian nationalists in Hungary was a complex category imbued with myriad (negative) political, ethnic, and religious meanings which did not exist independently from each other. “Jew” served as a type of political shorthand which identified someone as an outsider and enemy of the Hungarian nation. This shorthand is evident in the dozens of accounts of militias stopping persons in the street and asking them simply, “what is your religion (*vállas*)?”⁹⁸ The multifaceted nature of this identity was manifested often in Jews’ encounters with militias as well as in the interpretations of such violence provided by Jewish victims, their families and other observers who deployed a number of strategies to defend themselves and their families against attack and persecution.

*“White Bolshevism”*⁹⁹

The above discussion provides description of the primary victim groups of militia violence, but militia violence was not experienced uniformly between or within these

⁹⁷Statement by Dezső Krausz and unreadable name, August 20, 1919, pg. 88, BZsL.

⁹⁸ Many examples of this may be found in the White Terror collections of the Budapesti Zsidó Levéltár and the Politikatörténelmi Intézet Levéltár.

⁹⁹ Robert Seton Watson, “Introduction,” in Jászi, *Revolution and Counter-revolution*, xxi-xxii. This terminology links the violent tactics of revolutionary bolshevism with “White” politics.

groups. Militias often targeted people on the basis of their ethnicity, religion, class, gender and the nature of their violent acts frequently reflected an explicit desire to humiliate people in ways which were specific to their position in these hierarchies. Likewise, victims' and their relatives' and neighbors' experiences and interpretations of violence were shaped by their position in multiple hierarchies which also formed the basis of established norms about violence which had survived the war. The horrific nature of the atrocities committed by militias may give an impression that such norms no longer retained their salience, but as Jonathan Gumz argues, "norms are far more robust than laws, and violations of norms do not render norms irrelevant."¹⁰⁰

Because of the complex relationship between militias and the state, militia violence included both the "wild" massacres and pogroms committed in public view but also more systematic forms of torture, beatings and assaults committed following arrests and during incarceration initiated by militias or the authorities. Many of the reports of attacks in Budapest indicate that questioning a person's religion preceded street violence. Particularly in the seventh and eighth districts of Budapest (the Jewish Quarter of the city), militias and groups of young men patrolled the streets asking passersby, "What is your religion?" or "where are you going, Jew?" or even, "Jew, how much money do you have?"¹⁰¹

Attacks on Jews frequently featured acts which demonstrated their particular anti-Semitic nature. Militias were responsible for burning down synagogues and cutting off

¹⁰⁰ Jonathan Gumz, "Losing Control: the Norm of Occupation in Eastern Europe during the First World War," in Jochen Böhrer, Włodzimierz Borodziej and Joachim von Puttkamer eds., *Legacies of Violence: Eastern Europe's First World War* (Munich: de Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2014), 70.

¹⁰¹ Report about László Okolicsányi to PIH, July 25, 1920, pg. 92, BZsL; Statement by György Csillag to SDP, January 1, 1920, pg. 134, PIL; Statement by Mór Zsolnai to SDP, pg. 17, PIL.

beards.¹⁰² Some young men who were unable to provide acceptable identification papers were told to pull down their pants so that the patrols could see if they were circumcised.¹⁰³ Militias forcibly removed the hats (*kalap*) of Jews.¹⁰⁴ Dr. Miksa Horváth recounted militias taking their hat and then playing around with Jews, asking them if they wanted their hat back, giving it to them, and then taking it again.¹⁰⁵ The prevalence of the loss of caps in the documents of the Budapest Jewish Community legal office and the absence of such claims in the Social Democratic Party's legal aid office strongly suggest that the hats in question were of religious significance to the victims. Following arrest, militias did things which were explicitly intended to humiliate the victim on the basis of their religion. In one report, a man named Hugó Kóhn recalled that after arriving to Keleti station and sitting in the waiting area, he was taken by a detachment into an office at the station where the commanding officer asked him, "do you know how to pray?" and after answering affirmatively, the officer pulled out *talith* and *tefillin* from a cupboard and ordered him to pray in front of them. When he protested, he was beaten by more than a dozen people, though he noted that three detectives and one of the officers did not participate but just stood behind and watched, or supervised what was going on.¹⁰⁶ Some victims recalled anti-Semitic songs being sung, such as "I don't have money, but soon I will, when Miklós Horthy is Emperor and Schwartz and Fekete are dead."¹⁰⁷ This song intended to instil fear in Jews, but it also clearly articulated the view that full assimilation was impossible, a sentiment echoed in the statement by Lipót Weisz who recalled being

¹⁰² Bodó, "Paramilitary Violence," 146, Prónay, *A határban a halál kaszál*, 146; Joseph Marcus, "Galician Jews in Hungary Prior to the War," pg. 6-7, March 28, 1921, doc. 220051, 148.1, JDC.

¹⁰³ Statement by Rudolf Csernyegi to PIH, July, 12, 1920, pg. 19, BZsL.

¹⁰⁴ There is no separate word for the head coverings of Jews and just "hats" in Hungarian. Both use the term *kaláp*.

¹⁰⁵ Statement by Dr. Miksa Horváth to PIH, January 15, 1920, pg. 60, BZsL.

¹⁰⁶ Statement by Hugó Kóhn to PIH, March 26, 1920, pg. 69, BZsL.

¹⁰⁷ Unsigned statement to SDP, June 12, 1920, pg. 370, PIL.

told by soldiers executing a house search that “stinking Jews remain stinking Jews, they can’t Magyarize themselves.”¹⁰⁸ Some militias articulated this very thought, telling victims that the only thing they could do to protect themselves was to emigrate before they were forcibly expelled or murdered.¹⁰⁹

In many complaints, it is also possible to identify the intersection of class and ethnicity and religion. Many Jews who were attacked by militias in Budapest and further afield were prosperous, and they and their relatives and friends experienced and interpreted the violence not just as Jews, but as people with status who were unaccustomed to what they regarded as degrading and insulting behavior. Such was the case of Ferencz Fried and his wife who were attacked on the street in Budapest.¹¹⁰ Not only was the attack itself a violation, but the couple’s elevated social status and the inclusion of Mrs. Fried in the attack signaled that the beating was particularly notable because of how it challenged social and gender hierarchies. According to the testimony of Sándor Darvas, while he was imprisoned by a militia detachment he was with another man who had formerly been a journalist and publisher whose was forced to open his mouth into which soldiers spit, an act designed for maximum humiliation.¹¹¹ In another complaint by Lipót Blau, he recounted the activity of Iván Hejjas and his detachment in Soroksar (now the 23rd district of Budapest), whose militia broke the windows of the Jews in the town, looted Jewish businesses and tried to force Jews to transfer the ownership of their business to Christians. For many Jews, militias did not just hurt their bodies but also hurt their pride by beating them in front of their wives. They destroyed or

¹⁰⁸ Statement by Lipót Weisz to PIH, December 11, 1919, pg. 137, BZsL. Similar sentiments were echoed in the letter from Jénő and Nándor Polatsek to the Prime Minister, n.d., pg. 86, BZsL.

¹⁰⁹ Statement by Oszkar Lemberger to PIH, n.d., document 80, BZsL; add two more re expulsion

¹¹⁰ Statement about Ferencz Fried attack for PIH, March 25, 1920, pg. 33, BZsL.

¹¹¹ Statement by Alex Darvas, May 16, 1920, LP/HUN/5/45.i, LHA.

stole valuable personal possessions, extorted money in exchange for freedom, and often broke their promises, failing to release their prisoners after bounty was paid by their families.¹¹² Financial resources often proved to be a curse and a blessing as wealthy motivated militias to target certain people in order to gain material rewards, but it could also provide a means to avoid prolonged imprisonment or torture at the hands of militias, an option which was unavailable to many workers and peasants who also found themselves in the clutches of armed detachments.

Militias' broad-based violence against groups such as children, the elderly and especially women was particularly noteworthy and troubling to victims, families and neighbors who witnessed attacks or were charged with communicating acts of violence to those who could help take legal action against the militias. Such was the case of Mrs. Mihály Hegedűs, a mother of six and Mrs. Ircsike whose husbands were interned. Mrs. Hegedűs went into to discuss her husband's case with the militia and when she was there, she was subjected to sexualized violence and was also brutally beaten "without mercy" along with another woman whose husband was also interned. Mrs. Hegedűs stated that the soldiers "went under her skirt" and forcibly held down her head and legs while she was on a couch and beat her. She screamed and consequently was nearly suffocated with a pillow by the soldier attacking her. She was badly hurt and could not get up from bed for days as her entire body was bruised and swollen. She also complained that the injuries were exacerbated because she (and her children) were malnourished because of the economic losses incurred by losing her husband as "breadwinner" (*kenyérkereső*). For Mrs. Hegedűs, the experience of violence was not just a brief physical event, but was

¹¹² Statement by Jenő Berger to PIH, March 11, 1920, pg. 12, BZsL; Statement by Lipót Blau to SDP, May 18, 1920, pg. 364, PIL.

heavily tied to the economic deprivations she was experiencing as a result of her husband's political internment. However in a corroborating report of the event, an observer named István Végh highlighted the sexualized nature of the attack, stating that the women were forced to strip completely naked. Yet he also emphasized the women's roles as mothers, which highlighted the women's commitment to their husbands and families and well as invoked such norms as a woman's exemption from violence.¹¹³ In addition to subjecting whole families to persecution, there is other evidence that militias as well as state authorities used women and children as pawns to smoke out their "real" targets. In the case of Dr. Szerenyi a teacher at a high school in Miskolc in northern Hungary, after unsuccessfully trying to locate him in order to intern him, the militia threatened his wife and young daughters with internment should he not materialize.¹¹⁴

The most infamous incident of militia violence, was the "interrogation" and rape of Mrs. Sándor Hamburger by the Hejjas detachment. The case is important for a variety of reasons, not least of which is its exemplification of the blurred line between the official and unofficial status and activities of militias. Mrs. Hamburger was the sister-in-law of a former functionary during the Kun government who had fled to Vienna and was a mother of two. She, along with her neighbor Béla Neumann, were tricked by the militia and taken into the Kelenföld military barracks in Buda, where the detachment had imprisoned a sizable number of persons. According to a number of reports including one by Neumann's brother, the militia members had been drinking heavily and brought Mrs. Hamburger up from her basement cell and forced her to strip in front of them. They tried unsuccessfully to force her brother-in-law and then Neumann to have sexual intercourse

¹¹³ Statement by István Végh to SDP, May 4, 1920, pg. 345, PIL; Statement by Mrs. Mihály Hegedűs to SDP, May 11, 1920, pg. 357, PIL.

¹¹⁴ Statement by Jénő Csillag to SDP, May 7, 1920, pg. 355, PIL.

with her in front of them. Later during her imprisonment she was forcibly penetrated with the handle of a whip by the soldiers as they laid her on a table and spread her legs apart. This act caused her to hemorrhage and caused her to develop a severe vaginal infection which was compounded by her lack of access to clean clothing and visitors. In addition to her sexual violation, the same men ultimately castrated Neumann when he refused to rape her. Another male prisoner was also brought up in order to have sex with Mrs. Hamburger, but his genital organs had already been crushed and he was not physically able to have sexual relations.¹¹⁵ Mrs. Hamburger was also ordered to sit naked on a stove burner, but she was given reprieve after she told them that she was menstruating. She was also forced to dance naked for several of the soldiers.¹¹⁶ All the while, Mrs. Hamburger claimed that the men abused her by calling her a “Jewish whore”, “Bolshevik whore”, and “Whore of the Romanians.”¹¹⁷ Mrs. Hamburger eventually was released and escaped to Vienna after approximately six weeks of incarceration, where reportedly she was interviewed by the British Labour Joint Delegation. Neumann died of injuries sustained during his incarceration and was thrown into the Danube according to information received by the Social Democratic Party from his brother and another observer.¹¹⁸

The story of Mrs. Hamburger’s torture will reappear in further chapters because it was used by various groups charged with investigating and publicizing the White Terror. However, the report of the incident by Hamburger herself as well as Béla Neumann’s brother is important as reveals important differences in how sexualized violence was interpreted. The castration of Béla Neumann was, according to his brother, inherently a

¹¹⁵ Marcus, “Is There White Terror in Hungary,” pg. 32, JDC.

¹¹⁶ Marcus, “Is There White Terror in Hungary,” pp. 33-34, JDC; Joint Labour Delegation, *The White Terror in Hungary*, 8-10.

¹¹⁷ Statement by Mrs. Sándor Hamburger and Dr. Elizabeth Kunfi, n.d. LP/HUN/5/46/18.i.

¹¹⁸ Unsigned statements collected by SDP, n.d., pg. 349, PIL.

“barbaric” and unnatural act by the militias by its very nature of physical demasculinization, whereas his brief discussion of Mrs. Hamburger’s experience highlighted Mrs. Hamburger’s status as a mother as a key component in contextualizing and interpreting her treatment by the militias, an emphasis which mirrored Hamburger’s own concerns. Imre Neumann set her attack in gendered terms which sought to affirm women’s exemption from violence through an emphasis on her maternal role.¹¹⁹ In another case, a man named József Dündek reported that he was arrested and held by a militia for two days, during which time he was strapped down and the soles of his feet were mutilated and “sexual immorality” was committed with him.¹²⁰ Dündek was not ultimately sent on for internment after his arrest and torture, but his story shows that sexual violence was used not only against women, but also men in order to emasculate and utterly humiliate them. However, like Béla Neumann, Dündek interpreted his attack using universal moral language. It did not matter who he was, only that the act itself was morally wrong, whereas according to Imre Neumann, the act against Mrs. Hamburger was despicable because of her role as a mother (interpretations by international observers emphasized different dimensions of Mrs. Hamburger’s character or status to show why the violence against her was unacceptable.)

¹¹⁹ Statement by Imre Neumann to SDP, May 6, 1920, pg. 348, PIL.

¹²⁰ Statement by József Dündek to SDP, December 19, 1919, pg. 115, PIL.

Illustration in Print Copy held in CEU Library

Fig. 2.1 “Rape” Mihály Biró, 1920

Illustration in Print Copy held in CEU Library

Fig. 2.2 “The Beasts!” Mihály Biró, 1920

The story of Mrs. Hamburger and Béla Neumann as well as Dündek also reveal some of the common dynamics of militia violence. First, the soldiers committing the attacks against Neumann and Hamburger were notably drunk, and the story indicates that the violence went on for some time and escalated to the penetration of Mrs. Hamburger with the whip handle. Many of the most gruesome stories of torture involved heavy drinking by the militias and an escalatory trajectory of attacks similar to that in the

Hamburger story.¹²¹ At other times, it is clear that violence was designed to be an amusement for the militias. In the case of Dündek, in addition to his rape, he was forced to dance for his captors, and although he does not make it explicit, given that his arrest took place at a restaurant/pub (*vendéglő*), it is likely that the soldiers who arrested him were inebriated. In another complaint by Dezső Neumann (no relation to the above), he recalled that after being seized by some soldiers, he and four other young Jewish men were taken to a room and ordered to beat each other. When they refused, the soldiers went ahead and beat them themselves and then forced the Jews to stand in a circle while the soldiers stood around them in a bigger circle and forced them to hit each other. Because Neumann had lung disease (probably Tuberculosis) he began to vomit because of the blows.¹²² These orgiastic dynamics of violence played out frequently as extreme forms of hazing rituals and games which often serve to cement group bonds especially those in certain types of institutions such as the military or prisons while simultaneously “othering” those subjected to such violence.¹²³ The fact that very often these types of displays were perpetrated outside of public view helps underscore this formulation as well as illustrates the conditions which provided militias with the capacity to perpetrate their more gruesome acts of torture.

¹²¹ Bodó, “The Perpetrators of the White Terror: Paramilitary Violence in Hungary, 1919-1921,” (paper presented at The Violence of War conference, June 19-20, 2014). See Pál Prónay, *A határban a halál kaszál*, esp. his chapters on Transdanubia and Budapest.

¹²² Statement by Dezső Neumann to PIH, May 26, 1920, pg. 90. A similar story was recounted in statement by Béla Pfeffer to PIH, May 27, 1920, pg. 94, BZsL. These incidents occurred on different days, but likely the same militia group was active in both incidents and repeated this form of abuse among their victims.

¹²³ Bodó, “The Perpetrators of the White Terror.” See also Klaus Thewelweit, *Male Fantasies*, Vol. 2 *Male Bodies: Psychoanalyzing the White Terror*, trans. Stephen Conway (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1987); Phillip Zimbardo, *The Lucifer Effect: Understanding How Good People Turn Evil* (New York: Random House, 2008) and Melanie Richter-Montpetit, “Empire, Desire and Violence: A Queer Transnational Feminist Reading of Prisoner ‘Abuse’ in Abu Ghraib and the Question of ‘Gender Equality,’” *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 9, 1(March 2007): 38–59.

Defensive Strategies

The relatively unchecked power of militias, their multifaceted and flexible ideology combined with the state's expanded emergency powers meant that there was no surefire strategy to defend oneself from persecution and violence by the militias. Evidence of actual "revolutionary" political activity was not necessary to justify the persecution of individuals as communists. Moreover, the inseparable political, social, religious and economic meanings imbued in the category of "Jew" by counter-revolutionaries, meant that determining an individual's Jewishness was all that was necessary to justify attacks against Jews. But despite the difficulties victims and their families and relatives faced in mounting defenses of themselves or loved ones, there were some common strategies deployed.

The first of these strategies was the denial of certain types of political activity. For some it was a general denial of having taken part in politics and more specifically having not taken part in "the Commune" or in the "proletarian dictatorship." Sometimes people outlined what they had done instead of getting involved in politics, and many sighted illness (often the Spanish flu epidemic), wartime imprisonment, or political imprisonment during the Commune as evidence that they had no involvement in the communist government.¹²⁴ This denial of wrong-doing ran through the documents collected by the Pest Jewish Community and the Social Democratic Party. Sometimes people pointed out that they or their relative had not taken part in a substantive way, i.e. in an "exposed" occupation during the Commune but in a low level job which happened to have been

¹²⁴ Statement of Janka Steininger to PIH, May 18, 1920, pg. 121, BZsL; Mrs. Gábor Kovács to SDP, March 15, 1920, pg. 300, PIL; Statement by Mrs. Jozsef Igert to SDP, March 16, 1920, pg. 304, PIL.

nationalized under Kun.¹²⁵ People often decried the “evidence” of Bolshevism used by militias and state authorities, such as the possession of a social democratic newspaper or union membership cards found in home searches, arguing that these activities were legal, that is they were not “crimes” and therefore were not punishable offenses.¹²⁶ However, the documents collected by the Social Democratic Party differ from those of the Jewish community’s in that frequently people deny having taken part in the Kun government (at least willingly, although some confessed that they were conscripted into the Hungarian Red Army), but they did outline political activities such as union membership, election work, and Social Democratic Party membership which were all technically legal but nevertheless tied them to the ideals of Károlyist government.

Abolovatski argues that the efforts by the Pest Jewish Community leaders and Jewish victims of militia violence to disconnect Jews from communist politics after the collapse of the Commune in August, 1919 were a “tacit acknowledgment that revolutionaries would be the victims of revenge, but that anti-Jewish violence was misdirected.”¹²⁷ But this tacit acknowledgement was not limited to the Jewish community although it had specific effects for the diverse and divided group. Complaints made to the Social Democratic Party also indicate that there was at least a grudging recognition that specific *anti-communist* violence could be expected, even if it was supposed to be prohibited according to the terms negotiated between the Peidl government and the

¹²⁵ Statement by Mrs. Jénő Boromissza to SDP, March 22, 1920, pg. 311, PIL; Statement by János Bercze Nagy to SDP, March 14, 1920, pg. 296, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL.

¹²⁶ The issue of the counter-revolutionary regime’s conceptualization of “crime” will be discussed in more detail in chapters three and four.

¹²⁷ Ablovatski, “The 1919 Central European Revolutions,” 484.

Entente.¹²⁸ However the recognition that violence against leftists and revolutionaries was a predictable reaction, although to be clear, they did not advocate for or encourage violence which was a significant destabilizing factor, exacerbated rather than relieved the persecution, especially of Jews.¹²⁹ This was because rather than challenging the legitimacy of violence as a legitimate political instrument, Jewish leaders instead took a much narrower approach by challenging specifically the counter-revolutionaries' conceptualization of *Hungarian* Jews as communists in order to contest violence against them.

This approach ultimately divided the victims of counter-revolutionary violence into two categories: those who deserved persecution, a group which included any number of groups including leftists, communists and non-citizen Jewish refugees who played a role in the communist revolution, and those who did not, namely apolitical Hungarian-born Jews and those engaged in any legal political activity. However, implicitly leaving the door open to violent political persecution for some required every person to clearly differentiate themselves from other persecuted groups which stymied the construction of broader solidarity between victims of militia violence. It also entailed delegitimizing anti-Semitism by attempting to disconnect Jewishness from the other markers which were significant for militia members. The first of these propositions was impossible as there were many Jews who supported more democratic and socialist goals, a fact that defied such a simplistic categorization. This fact made the second improbable since each case of intersection between leftist and Jew was used to confirm and invigorate the broader

¹²⁸ Jászi also acknowledged that anti-Bolshevik violence was “inevitable” but it was especially problematic that the violent impulses quickly moved beyond a reasonable response fuelled by simple revenge. Jászi, *Revolution and Counter-revolution*, 156-159.

¹²⁹ Letter from General Reginald Gorton to High Commissioner Thomas Hohler, February 18, 1920, *Alleged Existence of White Terror in Hungary*, pgs. 3-4.

mythology of Judeo-Bolshevism, which made it more difficult for the Hungarian Jewish community to promote Jewishness as separate, politically insignificant category that did not carry all the other meanings attached to it.

Attempts by Jewish leaders to pull apart the Judeo-Bolshevik myth proved unsuccessful, as did their attempts to deflect the incitement of revolution onto refugee and sojourning foreign-born Jews, primarily from (formerly) Austrian Galicia.¹³⁰ This tactic demonstrated the inter-community divisions between Jews as many prominent members of the Jewish community sought to differentiate between Hungarian Jews, which they defined as patriots, and foreign Jews, who could be blamed for Hungary's descent into revolution and consequently the state's poor treatment at treaty negotiations. This strategy of differentiation and blame heightened foreign-born Jews' political vulnerability by highlighting their status not only as Jews but as non-citizens. In 1921, many of these "foreign" Jews felt that they had been abandoned by Hungarian Jews, who failed to provide them with aid or include them in their advocacy efforts. In a letter written in May 1920 by interned "Poles, Russians, Roumanians, Galicians" to Joseph Marcus, the American Joint Distribution Committee's representative in Hungary, the author(s) wrote:

As we Poles, Russians, Roumanians, Galicians [Jews] cannot come to you and tell you openly about our sorrow, since doing so we run the risk from the flatterers and intrigants who surround you, from Hungarian Jews who are our mortal enemies, who through egotism and selfishness made of us victims in order [that] we should be persecuted as they openly admit that it was the Polish Jew who brought the misfortune to this country; that the Hungarian Jews have nothing in common with us, as we are impostors, thieves, swindlers, rogues (these

¹³⁰ Ablovatski, "The 1919 Central European Revolutions," 485.

expressions come from the staff of the [Hungarian Joint Distribution Committee]) and they will eventually let us be persecuted and interned.(sic.)¹³¹

The strategy of differentiating between Jews also likely intensified persecution of all Jews in general because as Ablovatski observes, “the strength of an association such as Jew = Bolshevik lies in its simplicity, and the admission of ‘exceptions’ to the rule would undermine its functionality.”¹³² An admission that some Jews but not other Jews were responsible for the revolution underscored the idea that ultimately it was in fact Jews who were responsible for the revolution and therefore that marginalizing or eliminating all Jews would eradicate the revolutionary threat once and for all.

The second strategy commonly used was using military service records to emphasize loyalty to the Hungarian nation. This strategy was common in the documents of both organizations’ legal offices and it was likely a continuation of a similar strategy used during the war, especially by Hungarian Jews to counter accusations of shirking military service.¹³³ Many men outlined their wartime service records including the medals or honors they earned while completing their service at the battlefield. Many also pointed out their wartime injuries and tried to use their disabilities to prevent attacks or persecution.¹³⁴ This strategy was intended to demonstrate patriotism and loyalty to the Hungarian nation as a counter to the narrative of the disloyalty of leftists and Jews. For Jews, emphasizing wartime service could also chip away at the wartime stereotypes of Jews as shirkers or traitors and reinforce Jewish masculinity, loyalty, and by extension

¹³¹ “Letter from Budapest Jew to Mr. Joseph Marcus,” May 16, 1920, doc. 220567, folder 151.4, JDC.

Though the letter states that the writers of the letters are Poles, Russians, Roumanians, and Galicians, the implication of the letter as a whole is that the authors are all ethnically Jewish from those different states.

¹³² Ablovatski, “The 1919 Central European Revolutions,” 485.

¹³³ Klein-Pejšová, “Among the Nationalities,” 67-69. This was also used by Jews in the Austrian half of the Monarchy and Germany, where the state undertook a military census (*Juden-zählung*) to confirm Jewish under-representation in the military.

¹³⁴ Statement of Lipót Klein to PIH, January 15, 1920, pg. 65, BZsL; Statement of József Schwartz to PIH, May 19, 1920, pg. 112, BZsL.

national belonging. In one such request, the plaintiff recounted the story of his arrests as such: "...two officers of the department of investigations stopped me and insulted me with these words, "where are you going Jew?". To this I confirmed that I served as soldier for four and a half years, that I was not a Red soldier, and in the Commune I had no role. I also proved that during the whole period of the commune, I was ill....¹³⁵ In another Lipót Klein stated that he had been given the bronze and silver medal for gallantry during his 21 months in front line service during the war.¹³⁶ In another, Endre Katz recalled that he was stopped by some officers in the street around midnight and was beaten with various instruments because he was Jewish. He tried to stop them by arguing that he was sixty percent (60%) disabled.¹³⁷

This strategy was only accessible to men, but in any case it was, largely ineffective in regard to avoiding or halting street violence. For example, in the case of Endre Katz, his pleas to stop on the basis of his disability led one of the soldiers to retort, "every Jew is disabled."¹³⁸ Here, the strategy backfired because rather than interpreting his disability as an indication of loyalty and service, Katz claimed that the militias instead interpreted it as a confirmation of the stereotype of Jews as shirkers and cowards. Similarly in other cases, military service and/or military disability did nothing to quell attacks.¹³⁹ An exception was the case of István Végh which implied that there was

¹³⁵ Statement by Mór Zsolnai to SDP, November 6, 1919, pg. 17, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL.

¹³⁶ Statement of Lipót Klein to PIH, January 15, 1920, pg. 65, BZsL.

¹³⁷ Veterans' with disabilities were assigned percentages to determine how much their pension would be. Research throughout Europe has shown that generally disability was under-assessed. See Bruno Cabanes, *The Great War and the Origins of Humanitarianism, 1918-1924* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Natali Stegmann, *Kriegsdeutungen - Staatsgründungen - Sozialpolitik. Der Helden- und Opferdiskurs in der Tschechoslowakei, 1918-1948* (München Oldenbourg-Verlag, 2010).

¹³⁸ Statement of Endre Katz to PIH, March 10, 1920, pg. 63, BZsL.

¹³⁹ Statement by Mór Zsolnai to SDP, November 6, 1919, pg. 17, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by Mrs. Sándor Szücs to SDP, February 24, 1920, pg. 281, PIL; Statement by Adolf Halper to PIH, November 17, 1919, pg. 54, BZsL; Statement by Lázár Hecht to PIH, April 7, 1920, pg. 56, BZsL;

potential that this strategy would work. In his statement he recounted that after recounting his military service, he was paroled in order to take care of his sick wife and daughter.¹⁴⁰ Exceptions notwithstanding, there was simply no way to predict if and when this strategy would prove to be effective. Yet the strategies people deployed reinforced the idea that there was a close relationship between the counter-revolutionary state and the militias as people's attempts to defend themselves centered on proving themselves perpetually loyal to the Hungarian nation-state and in conformity with its laws, thus implying that people regarded militias were agents of the state.

Conclusion

Militias were composed of men who embraced a set of ideas about the ideal future of Hungary which reflected both longer term prejudices as well as the shorter term context of Hungary's wartime and postwar experience. Searching to blame and punish someone or something for the problems which beset Hungary in the wake of defeat, territorial dismemberment, revolution, military occupation and impoverishment, militias used terror, violence, torture, extortion and bribery to punish and marginalize certain groups while simultaneously affirming the supremacy of economically prosperous Christian Hungarian men. In their justifications of violence, militia members invoked a large cache of stereotypes, prejudices which identified their victims as deserving of attacks and torture ostensibly because their activities, or sometimes their very existence

Statement by Otto Hoffman to PIH, no date, pg. 59, BZsL; Statement by Jakob Kohn to PIH, January 4, 1920, pg. 70, BZsL; Statement of Simon Neumann to PIH, May 30, 1920, pg. 91, BZsL; Statement of Frigyes Saphir to PIH, February 5, 1920, pg. 105, BZsL; Statement of Oszkar Schlesinger to PIH, February 22, 1920, pg. 107, BZsL; Statement of József Schwartz to PIH, May 19, 1920, pg. 112, BZsL.

¹⁴⁰ Statement by István Végh to SDP, May 4, 1920 pg. 345, PIL.

threatened Hungary's domestic and international security. But just as the members of militias targeted a wide variety of persons for a wide variety of reasons, victims' and their relatives' experiences and interpretations of violence were diverse and were shaped by their positions in multiple hierarchies.

Militias were abetted in their violence by the state, and the relationship between the two was deeply ambiguous. For some, the militias were essentially agents of the state as they performed vital state functions and received state protection from prosecution for their excesses. For others, the militias were wild, uncontrollable elements which could not be reined in by the state which was neither stable nor strong enough to eliminate militias. In either case, militias undermined rather than reinforced state authority.

The formation and activities of militias and their relationship to state power as interpreted by contemporaries is one dimension of the broader history of political violence and persecution during the early counter-revolutionary period. Yet because of the diversity of their activities and functions in political life, they play a very important role in other dimensions of White Terror and counter-revolutionary violence. Furthermore, militias are a good entry point for understanding the set of issues which stood at the heart of counter-revolutionary politics: revenge and justice. As the next chapter will show, the desire for both moved far beyond the ranks of the militias extending into the most intimate spaces of life and bringing the broader population into the project of counter-revolution.

Chapter Three

“Burning Out this Nest of Serpents”: Counter-revolution in the Domestic Sphere

“A revolution is not a dinner party, or writing an essay, or painting a picture, or doing embroidery; it cannot be so refined, so leisurely and gentle, so temperate, kind, courteous, restrained and magnanimous. A revolution is an insurrection, an act of violence by which one class overthrows another.”

Mao Tse-tung¹

In August, 1919, the Budapest prosecutor’s office received a denunciation from a widow named Mrs. János Ernyey. She accused her cleaning woman, Mrs. József Csizmás, as well as Mrs. Csizmás’ sister and brother-in-law, of taking up residence in her apartment; of constantly insulting her with threats; and of at least once sending Red soldiers to her address to take her to the local eighth district Workers’ and Soldiers’ Council, “between bayonets” and in public view during the months of the Commune. According to her, the council dismissed her after failing to produce “sufficient evidence,” but she now was asking the court for “retaliation and satisfaction” because of the humiliation and harassment she suffered “in spite of being a gentlewoman.” Furthermore, she said that one of the members of the Soldiers’ Council told her that if even the slightest proof emerged against her, or if there were any witnesses who saw conduct against the communists, that they would make her stand in front of a revolutionary court as a counter-revolutionary. Mrs. Ernyey also complained that just a little while after the outbreak of communism, Mrs. Csizmás denied her services and declared that from this time forward, she wanted to be considered simple a tenant of the apartment. She went forward and fully occupied the kitchen and servant’s room and made use of the

¹ Mao Tse-tung, “Report on an Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan,” March 1927.

kitchenware and bedding, for which she paid an amount of twenty crowns, a rent based on the decision of the main house trustee (*házbizalmi*). Mrs. Csizmás' sister and brother-in-law, who had previously not been living in the apartment, took up residence. Finally, she stated that in May of 1919, Mrs. Csizmás moved out to an apartment in the first district, which she had requisitioned for herself. Together Mrs. Csizmás and her relatives proclaimed extreme class struggle against the bourgeoisie and used the choicest threats which the other tenants in the house could verify.²

In another letter later that year, Mrs. Ernyey once again recounted her experience and told the state police that according to information she had acquired, the Csizmás family was planning on moving to Transylvania permanently, and she asked that the proceedings against them be sped up in order to ensure that the court could prosecute the family. In February 1920, the two women were arrested and taken to the Szerb utca prison in Budapest. The court eventually sentenced Mrs. Csizmás to ten months in prison and a five-year loss of rights for incitement and an additional month and ten days for the charge of the violation of personal liberty. The records of the court provide witness statements confirming that Mrs. Csizmás made threatening statements against the bourgeoisie, even while in prison, and they include a small receipt provided by Mrs. Csizmás as evidence that confirmed she paid for her lodgings.³

The nature of Mrs. Ernyey's complaint offers a glimpse at the personalized nature of political upheaval in Hungary. The complaint demonstrates the extent to which common people on both sides of the political divide interpreted the ideological goals and policy priorities of different regimes into their daily lives, and demonstrates the extent to

² Criminal Case against Mrs. József Csizmás, 1919, HU BFL-VII.18.d-1919-13/0084, Records of the Royal Prosecutor, Budapest Fővárosi Levéltár (hereafter abbreviated BFL).

³ Ibid.

which Soviet regime disrupted property relations and established social hierarchies which had ordered Hungarian social and political life for centuries.⁴ It also shows that domestic spaces, although often overlooked, were important sites of counter-revolutionary struggle and terror, especially between 1919 and 1921, the most intense period of political retribution under the counter-revolutionary system. Finally the complaint sheds light not only on the role the judicial system played in the counter-revolution but also illuminates how different groups including women and the working classes participated in and negotiated the political transformations of Hungary.

Studies of the White Terror and counter-revolution have focused on high politics and military affairs.⁵ This has made the crises following World War I appear separate from the everyday experiences of those people who were not actively involved in the political struggle as soldiers or politicians, or who were not members of those groups specifically targeted by the militias, such as Jews and leftists. Yet, as the above example demonstrates, the White Terror cannot be detached from the daily lives of ordinary Hungarians, especially because all of the regimes vying for supremacy in the early post-World War I period were fundamentally seeking to re-shape or reconstruct, not just the

⁴ Ignács Romsics, *Hungary in the Twentieth Century*, trans. Tim Wilkinson (Budapest: Corvina; Osiris, 1999), 39-53; Gábor Gyáni, *The Parlor and the Kitchen: Housing and Domestic Culture in Budapest, 1870-1940* (Budapest: Central European Press, 2002), 54.

⁵ On the historiography of the counter-revolution and White Terror see for example, Erzsébet Andics, *Ellenforradalom és a Bethleni konsolidáció* (Budapest: Szikra, 1946); Dezső Nemes, *Az ellenforradalom története Magyarországon, 1919-1921* (Budapest: Akadémia Kiadó, 1962); Thomas Sakmyster, *Hungary's Admiral on Horseback, Miklós Horthy, 1919-1944* (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 1994); Mária Ormos, *Hungary in the Age of the Two World Wars 1914-1945*, trans. Brian McLean (Boulder, CO: Social Science Monographs, 2007); Thomas Lorman, *Counter-Revolutionary Hungary, 1920-1925: István Bethlen and the Politics of Consolidation*. (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 2006); Péter Konok, "Az erőszak kérdesei 1919-1920-ban. Vörösteror—fehérterror," *Múltunk* 3 (2010): 72-91; István I. Mócsy, *The Effects of World War I The Uprooted: Hungarian Refugees and Their Impact on Hungary's Domestic Politics, 1918-1921* (New York: Social Science Monographs, Brooklyn College Press, 1983); and the multiple articles on paramilitary violence by Béla Bodó enumerated in the previous chapter.

political order, but also the social and economic spheres, which included the domestic sphere.

This chapter therefore pivots away from the activities of the White militias and instead refocuses on the socio-political struggle which unfolded in the domestic sphere during the early years of the counter-revolutionary period. For the purposes of this chapter, the domestic sphere is conceptualized not only as the apartment or family home, but also the apartment *ház*, courtyards, and even the smaller neighborhoods and communities where people lived, worked, and carried on their daily lives.⁶ It explores how the state and middle class elites reconquered these intimate and familiar spaces in the early years of the counter-revolution. To this end, this chapter homes in on three dimensions of the counter-revolution in domestic sphere: the use of mechanisms of retroactive and transitional justice as a way of restoring pre-Soviet social and property relations through purges of domestic laborers for “political” activities; the instrumentalization of violence and counter-revolutionary politics to solve conflicts regarding access to housing; and the threat and use of violence by the state authorities and militias in the broader domestic space. The case against Mrs. Csizmás helps illuminate these three dimensions. Csizmás’s actions were driven by the need for housing, and she claimed to have been authorized to occupy the space by Soviet authorities, although Mrs. Ernyey regarded them as aggressive self-quarantining. The case against her depended on Mrs. Ernyey’s conceptualization of Mrs. Csizmás’s actions retroactively as crimes, and her ability to use the courts to seek revenge for her losses.

⁶ This broader definition is supportable according to historian Gábor Gyáni’s history of urban life in Budapest, as he shows that especially among Budapest’s working classes, building and maintaining communities stretched beyond the walls of the apartment for cultural and environmental reasons. Gyáni, *The Parlor and the Kitchen*, 137-139. See also Christine Stansell, *City of Women: Gender and Class in New York, 1789-1860* (New York: Knopf, 1986).

The case also shows that the threat of (or experience of) violence permeated people's everyday lives as domestic spaces became arenas of ideological and class struggle.

Although the use of violence was an important dimension of the counter-revolution in the domestic sphere, the case against Mrs. Csizmás demonstrates that through the court system, the counter-revolutionary regime provided another effective means for individuals to seek retribution and revenge for the loss of status and property they suffered during the communist government. This involved the conceptualization of acts committed under the laws of the Kun government as criminal rather than political offenses or as the results of decrees passed by a now-defunct government. Adjudicating these acts in this way was a central element of transitional justice between 1919 and 1922. Transitional justice, which is common to revolutionary political transitions, is the way in which one regime elects to deal with the legacy of its predecessor.⁷ The counter-revolutionary authorities's criminalization of politicized acts delegitimized the Soviet Republic and its ideological foundations, as well as its decrees regarding private property, the concentration of wealth, and the transformation of class relations. The domestic sphere was an important part of this assault on the legacy of Kun's policies because the home was microcosm of Hungarian society. For many people, it was the primary place where they confronted the social and material implications of state ideology and policy.⁸

⁷ Howard G. Brown, "Robespierre's Tail: The Possibilities for Justice after the Terror," *Canadian Journal of History* (Winter 2010): 504. See also pages 18-21 of this dissertation for more discussion of transitional justice.

⁸ Gábor Gyáni, *Women as Domestic Servants: the Case of Budapest 1890-1940*, trans. András Vitányi (New York: Institute on East Central Europe, Columbia University, 1989), 39-41; Despite the bourgeoisie's intention to construct their domestic sphere as a "secure island of private domestic life that provided intimacy and protection, and fully accorded with the illusions built up of security in public life," the socio-political conflicts of the day crept into the domestic sphere and exploded. See Susan Zimmermann, *Divide Provide and Rule: An Integrative History of Poverty Policy, Social Policy, and Social Reform in Hungary under the Habsburg Monarchy* (Budapest: CEU University Press, 2011).

Analyzing political and ideological struggles as they unfolded in the domestic sphere reveals popular participation in the counter-revolution, as well as the activities of, and relationships between, those groups who have historically not been easily visible in high politics, particularly women of all social strata. However, the domestic sphere was never the exclusive domain of women, although men's relationship to the domestic sphere was different than women's, as they were less involved in the daily management of the household. Nor was it ever disconnected from broader social and political developments. For tens of thousands of people, there was no separation between the home and the workplace, and thus no distinction, however artificial, between the private and public spheres. This was because they were employed as domestic laborers: domestic servants, cooks, nannies, housekeepers (*házvezetőnő*), porters (*portas*), and caretakers or managers (*házfelügyelő, házmester, házbizalmi*).⁹ That domestic life was somehow divided from politics was a fiction that ignored how essential these domestic labor relations were for defining bourgeois class identity, social hierarchies, as well as for affirming gender hierarchy.¹⁰ The domestic sphere was a space where many confronted and reinforced social divisions on a daily basis long before the outbreak of revolution in the autumn of 1918 upset the "traditions" undergirding Hungarian social and political life.¹¹ Moreover, though all regimes shape the domestic sphere in particular ways, the Hungarian Soviet Republic, and the counter-revolutionary regime that came after it,

⁹ According to Gyáni, the number of domestic servants in 1920 was about 51,000 and composed 2/5 of the female workforce in the capital, which by 1910 had a population of approximately 900,000 but this just includes female domestic servants who worked as housemaids. Gyáni, *Female Domestic Servants*, 5; Péter Hanák, *The Garden and the Workshop: Essays on the Cultural History of Budapest and Vienna* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 12. See also Zsombor Bódy, "A Delay in the Emancipation of Labour: Bourgeois Paternalism, Workers' Insurance and Labour Law in Hungary from the End of the Nineteenth Century to the Second World War." *Social History* 34, no. 2 (May 2009): 204-230.

¹⁰ Gyáni, *Women as Domestic Servants*, 39-41.

¹¹ Gyáni, *The Parlor and the Kitchen*, 54-56; 115-117.

explicitly attempted to transform all spheres of life in Hungary for both ideological reasons and because of pressing practical problems. Therefore, the domestic sphere was an arena of counter-revolutionary struggle in part because it had been a very important sphere of political and economic activity long before the collapse of the Dual Monarchy in 1918, and especially during the short-lived Kun government.

In order to explore the complexities of domestic counter-revolution, this chapter primarily uses cases adjudicated through the criminal courts and the Royal Prosecutor's office as well as statements and complaints made to the legal aid bureaus of the Social Democratic Party and the Pest Jewish Community. Each group of sources has its weaknesses. The case records for many of the court proceedings are incomplete. Further, they offer very little insight on the defendant, owing in part to counter-revolutionary legal procedures instituted to deal with the massive influx of thousands of cases between August 1919 and the end of 1921.¹² They do, however, shed light on the plaintiff's interpretation of the of the revolutionary regimes, their ideas about social hierarchy, and their political worldview. The statements in the records of the legal aid offices provide the opposite perspective, revealing the stories of those whom the counter-revolutionary state and the White militias (which often acted as agents of the state) targeted. These documents primarily reflect the perspective of social democrats, leftists and Jews. This difference of perspective means that while neither set of sources contains the whole picture, they complement each other by showing multiple perspectives on the meaning of justice, competing interpretations of the recent Hungarian past, and the nature of popular participation in and experiences of the counter-revolution.

¹² This was in spite of the regime's extension of military jurisdiction in order to keep pace with the number of cases flooding the justice system against civilian populations.

Class Confrontation

In the years leading up to the war, the domestic sphere in Budapest was an important space of interaction, though not necessarily conflict, between social classes for a number of reasons. First, it was an important site of labor for a large number of people who served as domestic servants, cooks, nannies, housekeepers, porters and caretakers and house managers.¹³ As such it engaged a large number of women as domestic help, especially in middle-class households where the feminization of domestic labor helped affirm gender and social hierarchies within the bourgeois home.¹⁴ Second, in addition to the co-mingling of different social strata in *individual* residences, residential buildings were also spaces of class contact owing to some specificities of Budapest's urbanization. Unlike many larger cities in Europe where people from different classes were *de facto* segregated from each other in different neighborhoods or districts of the city, in Budapest apartment buildings were divided in such a way as to have apartments of different sizes which catered to different people of different income levels and social strata, making the apartment house itself reflective of the social hierarchies structuring Hungarian society.¹⁵ This did not mean that people from different strata had personal relationships with each other. But there was, nevertheless, regular contact between social strata.¹⁶

The single most important political issue involving the domestic sphere spanning the pre-war, wartime, and revolutionary periods was the severe lack of housing coupled with rapidly rising rents.¹⁷ This housing shortage was caused by the rapid migration of people to the capital from the provinces and by the lagging construction of residential

¹³ Gyáni, *The Parlor and the Kitchen*, 6-7.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 37.

¹⁵ Hanák, *The Garden and the Workshop*, 17; Gyáni, *The Parlor and the Kitchen*, 145.

¹⁶ Gyáni, *The Parlor of the Kitchen*, 54-56.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 162; See also Susan Zimmermann, *Divide Provide and Rule*.

housing to accommodate the rising population.¹⁸ During the war, the housing shortage did not abate, but intensified as refugees from the Monarchy's occupied provinces, particularly Jews from Galicia poured into the country and temporarily settled in Budapest and the provinces while housing construction ground to a complete halt. To address the need for housing and to tamp down social discontent in the capital, the government, regulations were put in place to prevent evictions of soldiers' families, to portion out housing and to establish rent moratoriums to ease the effects of rising inflation on the beleaguered population.¹⁹ The end of the war further intensified both the refugee crisis and the housing crisis. Defeat included the territorial partitioning of the Hungarian Kingdom. Responding to impending involuntary exile and almost certain discrimination, approximately 425,000 ethnic Magyars fled those regions set to be ceded to the newly created states surrounding Hungary, fearful of the treatment they would receive as a minority population. Many of these refugees were unable to find housing and thousands set up makeshift dwellings in warehouses, movie houses and boxcars in the train yards of Budapest.²⁰ The short-lived Károlyi government had little time or resources to deal with the intensifying housing crisis, which was just one of many problems facing the defeated, partitioned, and economically devastated state. The Károlyi government stepped down in favor of a more radically leftist government led by the Hungarian communists on March 21, 1919. One of the new government's first orders of business was to address these material crises as part of its broader plan to restructure every dimension of Hungarian society.

¹⁸ Hanák, *The Garden and the Workshop*, 12.

¹⁹ Jenő Pongrácz, ed., *Az 1919 November 1-től érvényben lévő lakásrendeletet* (Budapest: Népszavá-Könyvkereskedés Kiadása, 1919).

²⁰ Mocsy, *The Uprooted*, 10; Marcus, "Galician Jews in Hungary Prior to the War," pg. 6-7.

Sovietization in the Domestic Sphere

In an effort to alleviate the housing crisis, in one of the first decrees of the newly established Hungarian Soviet Republic, residential housing in Budapest was socialized with Soviet government becoming the owner.²¹ As was the practice, the new government published the order proclaiming the communization of private property on the front pages of the *Vörös Ujság* [Red newspaper] on March 26, 1919. It was the tenth order to be issued by a regime which would go on to issue hundreds of orders during its brief tenure. It was also one of the most controversial decrees issued by the government, as the late historian Frank Eckelt wrote, “No policy of the government caused as many problems, led to as much dissatisfaction and corruption, as the socialization of apartments and houses.”²²

The Soviet government’s social programs were swiftly and imperfectly implemented because of problems stemming from incompetence and corruption. Further, the Soviet regime also had very little time to effect the far-reaching and constructive (from a working-class perspective) changes promised by officials eager to transform Hungary from a feudal monarchy to a dictatorship of the proletariat.²³ Yet, beyond bureaucratic ineptitude, the communist leadership attempted to implement a dramatic social and cultural program which fundamentally upset the established norms of Hungarian society, including the respect for private property to which even many of those without personal wealth, like peasants, ascribed.²⁴ The communist leadership also established a set of policies which sought to resolve pressing socio-economic problems

²¹ Pongrácz, ed., *Az 1919 November 1-től érvényben lévő lakásrendeletet*.

²² Frank Eckelt, “Internal Policies of the Hungarian Soviet Republic,” in *Hungary in Revolution: Nine Essays*, Iván Völgyes, ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1971), 73.

²³ *Ibid.*, 61.

²⁴ Romsics, *Hungary in the Twentieth Century*, 103.

swiftly and the urgency of their rhetoric was taken up by many people in fairly desperate conditions who believed that the state implicitly sanctioned their actions, even if they acted outside of official regulatory channels.

The housing policies of the new regime stirred quite a reaction which resonated among many, especially conservatives. Cecile Tormay wrote of sovietization of homes in her 1920-21 memoir-novel published in English as *An Outlaw's Diary*: "Under the guise of philanthropy Galician Jews and proletarian rabble are planted among the hated bourgeoisie. The kitchen is common property and the middle-class occupier is obliged to put his furniture at the disposal of intruders. Home is home no longer. Even in the restricted area assigned to them the bourgeoisie is to have no peace." Evoking stereotypes of working class deviance, she wrote of sovietization: "[The communist government] want the bourgeoisie to perish, perhaps they revel in the idea that they may thus introduce vermin and infection into clean homes."²⁵ She also said, "Palaces are treated worse than other places. The finer the mansion, the dirtier the people who are installed in it...Cooking ranges are put into the drawing rooms, their chimneys rest against the brocade-covered walls. Libraries are transformed into sculleries."²⁶

The new regime faced serious bureaucratic and procedural problems in terms of its housing policy. In order to apportion housing, the communist Housing Commission (*lakásügyiroda*) was responsible for processing housing applications and requisitioning flats and homes in order to redistribute or subdivide them in order to accommodate more persons in a single apartment or house.²⁷ The agency from the very beginning was

²⁵ Cécile Tormay, *An Outlaw's Diary: The Commune* (New York: Robert M. McBride & Company, 1924), 44.

²⁶ Tormay, *The Commune*, 61.

²⁷ Eckelt, "Internal Policies," 74.

defined by avarice and bribery was rampant, although the regime made attempts to “clean house” by assigning Tibor Szamuely, a man notorious for his leadership of Red Terror groups, to reform the affairs of the organ.²⁸ In addition to the official housing office, as the complaint by Mrs. Ernyey at the beginning of the chapter shows, armed with new political and social power, many working class people in Budapest and its near environs like Mrs. Csizmás felt empowered to bypass the Housing Commission altogether and self quarter in residences. Many “requisitioned” homes of their own, relying on the working class sympathies of local units of the Red Guard to uphold their claims against the bourgeoisie with the threat of imprisonment or worse.²⁹ Despite feelings of empowerment, however, the records of the revolutionary courts established by the Soviet government indicate that the new regime was concerned about these unsanctioned acts of class antagonism, and they prosecuted many individuals for circumventing official channels, even if they belonged to the empowered working classes.³⁰

While the housing commission was responsible for communizing the housing space, house trustees, caretakers, and housing inspectors were responsible for collecting rents on behalf of the new regime which was the formal owner of all residential property. Trustees had long been employed by building owners and were generally charged with maintaining the physical appearance of the buildings, collecting rents, and enforcing housing regulations. In order to ensure the collection of rents, landlords or main tenants often recruited caretakers from some of the roughest segments of the population which

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Eckelt, “Internal Policies,” 74; Criminal Case against Mrs. József Csizmás, 1919, HU BFL-VII.18.d-1919-13/0084, BFL.

³⁰ Eckelt, “Internal Policies,” 74. See also records of the Revolutionary Courts in the Budapest Fővárosi Levéltár (BFL) which are just the remnants of the court’s records. See Fond group XVI, fond 2 in the BFL for the records of the revolutionary courts.

helped create a layer of coercion and intimidation between house owners or renters and the lodgers. Even before the war and revolutions, caretakers functioned as the “all-seeing, all-hearing concierges” who often “enjoyed being highhanded with the tenants,” and this particular intermediary position would prove to be extraordinarily useful to the Soviet regime.³¹

Under Kun, the house trustee’s role included parceling out ration tickets for food and other necessities.³² They also frequently served as political educators in many houses, promoting the ideals of the regime and compliance with the decrees of the government and posting the latest information about regulations issued by the state. In a less than charitable characterization of the trustee, Tormay wrote:

Class hatred has established spies and watchers in all the houses of Budapest: the secret agents of the new power are able to be found in every house; they watch, blackmail, and report. On their good-will depends the distribution of food tickets within the house, and those whom they suspect are deprived of bread. Their sanction is required to obtain permits if one requires wood, soap, or boot-laces, and Proletarians alone receive the permits... It is the business of the ‘confidential man’ in every house to see that the Proletarian should not notice the wolf at the door. But it is the intellectual workers who are short on rations: the middle classes are to be deprived of food tickets. Everything is for the Proletarian. Such privileges have never before been known, but it is not for love of the Proletarian that inspires these privileges; it is the hatred for the Hungarian Christian citizens, the delight of their sufferings, that are the principles upon which the new rulers govern.³³

This prominent position in the house made the trustee an important component of the Soviet regime, but it also spelled their downfall along with other emboldened domestic laborers who took seriously the Soviet regime’s ideological goals.

³¹ Gyáni, *The Parlour and the Kitchen*, 158.

³² Joseph Marcus, Report “Is There White Terror in Hungary,” June 5, 1921, pg. 97, doc. 220562, folder 151.4, Records of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee of the years 1919-1921, New York Collection, American Joint Distribution Committee Archives, New York (Document collection hereafter cited as JDC).

³³ Tormay, *The Commune*, 43-44.

The radical political and military reversals which took place between March and August 1919 had practical consequences for the broader population who experienced them on the subjective level, as class and gender hierarchies as well as property relations were turned upside-down, and then restored in a matter of a hundred days. These rapid transformations created a minefield difficult for many persons to navigate, especially if they had taken advantage of new Soviet laws which the new regime set about delegitimizing and criminalizing immediately after collapse.³⁴ Oszkar Szöllosy's, a deputy in the Ministry of Justice, comments are demonstrative of this position. In an essay entitled "The Criminals of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat" he wrote: "Revolution, as a movement of the masses aiming at the violent overthrow of the existing system of law, from the standpoint of criminal law is a single cumulative criminal act; committed against the community as a whole...."³⁵ The counter-revolutionary government generally adopted this approach to the revolutionary regime, reinterpreting official acts which were legal under the Soviet regime as crimes. This included official acts by former bureaucrats and civil servants, even those who had been continuously employed in civil service prior to the Commune in the same position.³⁶ Those who had been employed by or imbued with authority from the Soviet authorities in "exposed occupations", (teachers, judges) were particularly vulnerable legally speaking because of this delegitimization effort. In the two and a half years following the Commune's collapse, they, along with thousands of others became the defendants in hastily organized

³⁴ Although fictional, this role reversal and political dynamic is perhaps best captured in the first chapters of the 1925 novel *Édes Anna* by Dezső Kosztolányi. Dezső Kosztolányi, *Anna Édes*, trans. George Szirtes (New York: New Directions, 1991).

³⁵ Oscar Szöllosy, "The Criminals of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat," in Tormay, *The Commune*, 217-18. Quote on page 218.

³⁶ Ferenc Pölöskei, *Hungary after Two Revolutionsm (1919-1922)*, trans. E. Csiceri-Rónay (Budapest: Akadémia Kiadó, 1980), 47.

trials in Budapest's criminal courts and counter-revolutionary tribunals as a result of denunciations.³⁷ Many others who did not necessarily face criminal proceedings faced harassment, violence and eviction not just by state representatives such as militias, police, gendarmes, but by their landlords, neighbors and domestic laborers.

Denunciation and the Courts

For some observers of the political upheaval, it was quite natural that the White Terror and counter-revolution would reach into the domestic sphere, given the nature of the Soviet regime's housing and property policies. American General Harry Hill Bandholtz, the U.S. representative to the Inter-Allied Military Mission in Budapest, remarked in his diary, "although I sympathized with men of education, refinement and means, whose comfortable homes had been taken charge of by a lot of anarchists, and whose families had been confined to one or two rooms and forced to live in contact with a lot of filthy, ignorant and fanatical Bolshevists, this was no reason why they should not

³⁷ It is difficult to distinguish those persons actually tried for in proceedings as opposed to those incarcerated under the internment order. According to Levente Pücske, more than 70,000 cases were opened against people accused of ties to primarily the Soviet, but also the Károlyi regime. Other numbers range from 10,000 to 40-50,000, but in any case, thousands of people were affected by the regime's hunt for communists and many wound up in internment camps or prisons awaiting trial. See Levente Püski, *A Horthy-rendszer* [The Horthy-System] (Budapest: Pannonica Kiadó, 2006), 200. In the data collected in a brief visit by the Joint Distribution Committee in April 1920, they estimated that the number was 10,000 proceedings. Joseph Marcus, "Galician Jews in Hungary Prior to the War," March 28, 1921, pg. 2-4, doc. 220051, folder 148.1, JDC. The British Labour Delegation's report reported allegations that 13,000-25,000 persons were in prison awaiting trial. British Joint Labour Delegation to Hungary, *The White Terror in Hungary* (London: Trade Union Congress and the Labour Party, 1920), 21. Vilmos Böhm estimated that 10,000 proceedings had been introduced by March 16, 1920. Letter from Vilmos Böhm to Labour Party, March 16, 1920, LP/HUN/1/13.iii. This would not have included the thousands interned without charges being filed against them. Estimates are not much clearer in the historiographical record. Part of the problem was that the charges were dismissed against many of those arrested. However, even if we use the most conservative estimates, a very large number of cases filled the dockets of courts, judicial and military tribunals.

handle the situation with decency and decorum.”³⁸ For Bandholtz and the other leaders of the Entente, “decency and decorum” could be achieved by using the court system to seek redress for wrongs committed by the Kun government.³⁹ And indeed, using counter-revolutionary criminal courts to perpetrate “legal terror” as many in the labor movement regarded it, was an important dimension of both the state’s and individuals’ efforts to reconquer, reestablish and (re)affirm Hungary’s inherited legal order and social hierarchies by purging all spheres of Hungarian social life of its communist remnants.⁴⁰

The drive to reestablish pre-Soviet property and social relations in Hungary was an important dimension of the counter-revolution, and it was not just a state-directed effort. It was embraced by many in the population, especially the middle class and elites, who had been touched by what they perceived as humiliation and loss during the Soviet regime. No space had been exempt from sovietization, and thus there had been no way for elites to escape from the attacks of the state on their economic and social power, not even the domestic space, which was perceived as a refuge or haven from the problems outside.⁴¹ Taking revenge on those responsible for “stealing” their homes and property and “inciting” resentment against them became an important dimension of the reassertion of traditional social relations.

Domestic workers, and especially house trustees, comprised one of the highly visible occupational categories of defendants in the trial records. The evidence strongly suggests that they were targets of purges because of their elevated status and perceived

³⁸ General Harry Hill Bandholtz, *An Undiplomatic Diary*, ed. Fritz-Konrad Krueger (New York: Columbia University Press, 1933), 86.

³⁹ Bandholtz, *An Undiplomatic Diary*, 86.

⁴⁰ The Labour Party Advisory Committee on International Questions, “Memorandum on the White Terror in Hungary,” LP/HUN/2/6.ii, LHA. While the precise term “legal terror” is used in this memo, other correspondence use similar terminology and conceptualization.

⁴¹ Tormay described home as “...everything that was good, everything that protected me....” Tormay, *The Commune*, 8.

revolutionary actions in the domestic space during the Commune. In other words, the alteration of domestic employees' status and access to power during the Commune was likely the most immediate reminder of the elites' reversal of fortunes, and consequently, they had to be removed once the Commune collapsed. This is not to say that those who denounced their servants and other domestic laborers had no other motivations for their actions. But the way complaints and denunciations were framed suggests that reasserting authority in the home was an important dimension of retroactive justice which affected domestic employees.

It is possible to identify the influence of class resentments in the case against *házbizalmi* Gyúla Jókai, who was denounced for criminal trespassing and the violation of personal freedom by the widow Mrs. Haffner, the owner of a house on Ferenc Körut, Budapest. She claimed that he, along with his daughter, moved into her home without her permission; that he did so using "terrorism and violence"; and that Red guards, in addition to two civilian-dressed persons, barred her from entering the flat she owned.⁴² Jókai defended himself, claiming that his wife and daughter were quite ill and that he asked for permission to move them from a dank basement apartment to the rooms of her flat, which stood empty.⁴³ He was convicted of these crimes through a judicial process which that had been accelerated as a result of the number of political cases. "Mitigating circumstances" [*enyhitő körülmények*], including his lack of prior criminal record and service in the military when he had been imprisoned as a POW for the nearly the entire length of the conflict, affected his sentencing.⁴⁴ This case highlights the complex relationship between the political and criminal as it played out the legal system of

⁴² Case against Gyúla Jókai, 1919, VII.18.d 13/4334 – 1919, Budapest Royal Prosecutor's Office, BFL.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

counter-revolutionary Hungary as Mrs. Haffner simultaneously contextualized the act as a crime induced by the political principles of the prior regime and which relied on the exploitation of the mechanisms of power in the Soviet government, including violence and terror.

In another case, the former *házmester* of 92 Dohány utca in Budapest, József Igerth was denounced by Eszter Roser, who accused him and his wife of glorifying the communist government, and bragging that he had received 10.000 korona blue money for agitation activities. Similar claims made by Adél Burgermeister, Mrs. Vilmos Prets and several others who supported Roser's accusations, one of whom claimed that the fox fur that Igerth's wife wore had in fact been hers. Igerth, however, claimed that the charges made by the women were baseless and vicious. He asked to be set free for a number of reasons, including his claim, which he said could be confirmed, that during the communist period Roser and Prets had in fact denounced him as a "counter-revolutionary" out of spite. Igerth's wife in a separate statement to the Social Democratic Party, stated that the case was initiated because "personal enemies" (*személyes ellenségei*) had denounced her family, and that they were constantly harassed, their house was constantly being searched and she did not know how they would get by because of the constant harassment.⁴⁵ Igerth was brought up on charges of incitement (*izgatás*) in November, 1919. Burgermeister eventually retracted her claim and Igerth used this as leverage to try and get the charges against him dismissed, claiming that Roser and Prets were old enemies of his and had bullied Burgermeister. The case dragged on for several

⁴⁵ Statement by Mrs. József Igerth to SDP, March 16, 1920, pg. 304, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL;

months, but eventually it appears the charges were dismissed altogether.⁴⁶ In addition to showing how conflict in the domestic space unfolded, the case also demonstrates how mutable political identity was in the immediate postwar period.

Another case of incitement was raised against Mrs. Mária Józsa, a resident of a house on Fő utca, Budapest. She was denounced to the authorities for holding political lectures among the domestic servants and stirring up class violence. According to the state's interrogation, Józsa claimed that while she did hold lectures in support of the unionization of domestic employees, the employees were never violently compelled to attend the lectures or to join the union. The court, however found otherwise, and regarded her as a "persuaded" communist who had used violence and compulsion in her organizational activities. According to one report, during the Commune, she had lived in a house on Attila körút as a servant in the home of Dr. Armin Ligeti. During her month of employment there, she made speeches there three times to the domestic employees calling for better working conditions for the "girls" (*leányok*) including a shorter work day (until 8 pm), and more free time on the weekends. One servant claimed that Józsa said that if they did not join the organization, that they should be thrown out of the house or regarded as "counter-revolutionaries." Another employer at another house claimed that Józsa had threatened the domestic employees in the house with a knife. She was ultimately charged with incitement to maintain the Soviet government and sentenced to two years in Marianosztra prison.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Case against József Igérth, 1919, HU BFL - VII.5.c - 1919 – 9681, Hungarian Royal Prosecutor's Office, BFL.

⁴⁷ Case against Mrs. Mihály Józsa, 1919, HU BFL - VII.5.c - 1919 – 11770, Budapest Royal Prosecutor's Office, BFL.

Incitement and the “violation of personal freedom” were generally the most common charges brought against domestic employees, although illegal requisitioning of clothing, food and apartments were also common.⁴⁸ The cases brought against household employees illuminate the blurred line between criminalization, politicization, and personalization in individuals’ interpretation, and the court’s adjudication, of acts committed and statements made during the Soviet Republic. The witnesses and denouncers positioned their complaints within the context of the political and ideological transformations, often citing particular bits of speeches allegedly made by defendants such as, “The messiah has now come in the form of Béla Kun”⁴⁹ or “the bourgeoisie will hang.”⁵⁰ Plaintiffs frequently emphasized the defendants’ use of the coercive power of the Soviet state or threats of violence to threaten their property, freedom, and terrorize the residents of houses.⁵¹ Denunciations also often indicated the sense that defendants violated established social and class hierarchies, as in the case against Mrs. Czizmás or Mrs. Józsa.

In addition to the radical political context, the cases often reflect the immediate context of Hungary’s war experience. Defendants eager to prove their loyalty to Hungary cited military service, and sometimes, as in the case of Jokái, prior service did influence the courts’ sentencing behavior. Prior military service was, as chapter two demonstrated, was not a guaranteed method when it came to avoiding violence or mitigating legal

⁴⁸ Case against Kálmán Csintó, 1919, HU BFL - VII.5.c -1920 –543, Budapest Royal Prosecutor’s Office, BFL; Case against György Kucsera, 1919, HU BFL - VII.5.c -1919 –613, Budapest Royal Prosecutor’s Office, BFL; Case against Mór Bokor, 1919, HU BFL - VII.5.c -1919 –9438, Budapest Royal Prosecutor’s Office, BFL; Case against József Nyári, 1919, HU BFL - VII.5.c -1919 –11523, Budapest Royal Prosecutor’s Office, BFL.

⁴⁹ Case against Mrs. and Mrs. Adorján Kuzner, 1920, BFL HU BFL - VII.5.c -1920 – 616, Budapest Royal Prosecutor’s Office, BFL.

⁵⁰ Case against HU BFL - VII.5.c -1920 – 4523, Budapest Royal Prosecutor’s Office, BFL.

⁵¹ Case against József Jakert and wife, 1919, BFL HU BFL - VII.5.c -1920 – 616, Budapest Royal Prosecutor’s Office, BFL.

troubles, but it had the potential to, as various laws were passed in the early postwar period to acknowledge and compensate veterans for their service.⁵² Some, like Jókai, had some success in invoking their veteran status, but many, particularly Jewish men, were frequently unsuccessful. However using military service to gain privileged treatment in the courts was still theoretically possible even to the most marginalized men in Hungarian society, whereas women had very little to use as “proof” of their loyalty when they were brought up on criminal charges for their activities during the Soviet regime.⁵³ Denunciations could provide a way for women not only to retrieve their lost property, to reassert social hierarchies, but also to show their loyalty to the Hungarian nation-state.

The state’s willingness to take legal action in response to individuals’ denunciations put many people who otherwise may not have regarded themselves as politically active in contact with the coercive organs of the state and the carceral system, (discussed in the following chapter). But there were many other people who were not brought up on formal charges but nevertheless were threatened with denunciation and harassed by their employers, landlords, and neighbors, whose motivations were not always clear to the victims of such denunciations.

In one complaint by Robert Szuhi, the woman who owned the house where he lived in Soroksar (incorporated into the city of Budapest in 1950), denounced him “for no reason” and was even present when he was beaten by soldiers.⁵⁴ József Zaklukál likewise complained that the woman, Mrs. Károlyu Eivök, who owned the house in which he lived, denounced him. According to his statement, Eivök accused him time and again of

⁵² See Jenő Pongrácz, ed., *Az 1919 November 1-től érvényben lévő lakásrendeletet*.

⁵³ See chapter 2 “Defensive strategies” for more discussion on this issue.

⁵⁴ Statement by Robert Szuhi to SDP, January 5, 1920, pg. 150, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, Politikatörténeti Intézet (Document Collection hereafter referred to as PIL).

infractions, and at one point told the local militia that he had been involved in political agitation at the bread factory where he worked. Later she accused him of spitting and insulting the civil guards passing under his window. Her accusations were repeatedly found to be baseless, but Zaklukál asked the Social Democratic Party for help in fighting the “constant persecution” and “revenge motives” of his landlady.⁵⁵

In early December 1919 Mrs. István Borcsi described the conditions of her eviction from a one room apartment in Budapest. She claimed a widow who lived above her in a three-room apartment wanted her apartment in order to house her domestic employees with whom she did not want to “share the same roof.” The woman was told she would have to move into an unheated “barrack apartment” which she did not want to do because she was in her last month of pregnancy. In any case, the new apartment was not yet ready and she had paid the housing fees until the 15th of the month, so she remained in the apartment. However, she was worried about her husband who had not come home for days. The woman who wanted the apartment threatened Mrs. Borcsi that she would denounce him to the authorities for killing a priest during the Soviet republic.⁵⁶

The way transitional justice played out in the domestic sphere helps illuminate Hungarian women’s participation in politics, specifically as witnesses and denouncers in counter-revolutionary legal proceedings. Women often dominated the witness lists in many of the trials of domestic employees or domestic incidents, providing vital testimony that helped send people to prison. But as the cases and statements above demonstrate, women also played an active part as denouncers. Historians Sheila Fitzpatrick and Robert Gellately have argued that denunciation, defined as “spontaneous communications from

⁵⁵ Statement by József Zaklukál to SDP, November 24, 1919, pg. 34, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL.

⁵⁶ Statement by Mrs. István Borcsi to SDP, December 2, 1919, pg. 61, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL.

individuals to the state...containing accusations of wrongdoing by other citizens or officials and implicitly or explicitly calling for punishment,” was a way that ordinary people were involved in “everyday terror.” They have argued, as have others, that denunciations have been an important link between citizens/subjects, the “formal terror system” and the official legal system.⁵⁷ As such denunciation has occupied an important position in between the state officials “above” and ordinary citizen/subjects “below.” Denunciation provided a way for individuals to prove their loyalty to a regime, especially in periods such as (total) wars and revolutions, when Manichean world-views flourish, and socio-political conformity is prized and disloyalty punished.⁵⁸ In the modern period, the encouragement of denunciation has provided certain groups of individuals, particularly those whose interests are most compatible with those of the regime, with access to the coercive organs of the state and thus with increased power vis-à-vis their fellow citizens. Denunciation has also served a vital method of social discipline and self-policing by providing citizens with a means to address legal violations, enforce political and social norms, as well as deal with personal affronts among neighbors and even family members, including husbands and wives, as the work of Vandana Joshi and Wendy Z. Goldman have shown.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Sheila Fitzpatrick and Robert Gellately, “Introduction to the Practices of Denunciation in Modern European History,” *The Journal of Modern History* 68, no. 4 (December 1996), def. 747; 751; see also pages 748-750. See also Eric A. Johnson, *Nazi Terror: the Gestapo, Jews and Ordinary Germans* (New York: Basic Books, 1999).

⁵⁸ Fitzpatrick and Gellately, 749; See also Fitzpatrick and Gellately, *Accusatory Practices: Denunciation in Modern European History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

⁵⁹ Vandana Joshi, “The ‘Private’ Became ‘Public’: Wives as Denouncers in the Third Reich,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 37, 3 (July 2002), 420. Wendy Z. Goldman, *Inventing the Enemy: Denunciation and Terror in Stalin’s Russia* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), esp. 140-251. See also See Johnson, *Nazi Terror*; Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil Wars* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 21-22.

The counter-revolutionary justice system was inundated with denunciations following the collapse of the Soviet government. The new regime's conceptualization of criminal law to include many acts which had been legal under the previous regime meant that there was a blurry line between the "criminal" and the "political." Furthermore, people's accusations often recalled not simply the "facts" of the crime committed, but placed such acts within the context of topsy-turvy social relations established by the Soviet regime, which entailed a sudden loss of status as well as property and wealth among many who had belonged to the middle class or the elite. Placing the commission of an act in the revolutionary political context served as a form of short-hand which immediately "proved" that an act was more than simply a crime against person or property but was a flagrant violation of established ideals and norms set out by the new counter-revolutionary regime. Such acts had to be punished, even though the immediate threat had passed, to serve as a public reminder that the Soviet regime had been an aberration; that it had not been a genuine government but a violent disruption that had definitively failed. Denunciations, and the legal processes which emerged from them, also provided many people with a means to regain and/or claim their elevated status in social and ethno-religious hierarchies by seeking redress in a legal system in which the odds were stacked in their favor, and which was eager to mete out punishment.

Denunciation provided many people, including Hungarian women with a way to articulate their concerns about the norms under-girding Hungarian society, and to participate in the enforcement of these norms under the new regime. It also opened a path for women to prove their loyalty to the new regime. Of course women were not solely responsible for denunciations, nor were their charges made exclusively against those they

encountered in the domestic sphere. However, the archives demonstrate that women played a vital role when it came to reconstructing the pre-revolutionary domestic sphere and helping the new regime enforce its norms, values and regulations in the home.

“You have to kick his sort out....”⁶⁰

The desire for revenge as part of the counter-revolutionary political atmosphere was entangled with informal efforts to “alleviate” the housing shortages in Budapest, or secure better apartments by evicting individuals and families from their homes. According to correspondence addressed to the British Labour Party written on December 22, 1919, the unnamed author of the letter claimed that, particularly in the neighborhoods around Király, Dob and Rumbach utca in the Jewish Quarter of Budapest, soldiers were entering apartment buildings, demanding non-existent official paperwork (“legitimation cards”), and when such documents could not be produced, clearing out apartments by sending whole families to internment camps. “The flat in this way ‘evacuated’ were handed over arbitrarily to the protégés [sic.] of the Government. In this way the dearth of lodgings was supposed to be eased.”⁶¹ This letter, along with information gathered by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, a philanthropic organization engaged in relief work on behalf of Jews in war-torn Europe, suggests that there were systematic efforts by the state to use internment law to evict Jewish families from Budapest, intern them in camps like Hajmaskér and Orkény, and expand ethnic Hungarians’—specifically those refugees from the “lost territories”—access to living space.⁶²

⁶⁰ Kosztolányi, *Anna Édes*, 8

⁶¹ N.a. letter to Labour Party, n.d., LP/HUN/1/2, LHA.

⁶² Marcus, “Galician Jews Prior to the War,” 6-7.

The veracity of above claims concerning the counter-revolutionary state's systematic eviction of Jews in Budapest as fundamentally different than the government's wartime efforts to prevent the long-term settlement of Galician Jews in Hungary, is difficult to ascertain in the sources.⁶³ However, there is evidence that people deployed their political connections, or used threats of violence or denunciations rooted in the revolutionary political context, to evict people from their homes. Internment also often freed up additional living spaces as people were often deported with their whole families and their apartments were handed over to the housing bureau for reallocation per internment regulations.⁶⁴ For example, a widow Mrs. Ignácz Kovács claimed in her statement to the Social Democratic Party that her son had been interned as a consequence of the denunciation of a landlord—a university professor—who wanted him out of his apartment for undisclosed reasons.⁶⁵ In another complaint to the Social Democratic Legal Aid Bureau, Mrs. Mór Gruber explained that her family, including her two children, had been kicked out of their apartment in Buda by the wife of a gendarme lieutenant, who locked her and her children out of the apartment, leaving them “without shelter.” She stated that an apartment was definitely necessary for her, although admittedly, “I do not remain at home all day because I am looking for bread by sewing.”⁶⁶ Dr. Pál Oriás reported a similar incident in Budakeszi, a small town close to Budapest, where his three room apartment was handed over to a militia detachment by the National Army. When he

⁶³ It is also a politically motivated issue although the JDC was convinced that newly arrived ethnic Hungarians from the provinces had pressured the government to expel Jews as a way of freeing up housing. Marcus, “Galician Jews Prior to the War,” 6-7.

⁶⁴ Dezső Nemes, *Iratok az ellenforradalom történetéhez* [Documents on the history of the counter-revolution] (Hereafter abbreviated *IET*), 2nd edition (Budapest: Szikra, 1956), 239; Case against Dezső Andorka, pgs. 431-434, 1925, VII.5.c - 1925 – 8038, Bírósági-ügyészségi, BFL.

⁶⁵ Statement by Mrs. Ignácz Kovács to SDP, January 5, 1920, pg. 155, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL.

⁶⁶ Statement by Mrs. Mór Gruber to SDP, November 20, 1919, pg. 24, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL.

complained, he was told that because the municipal government had not renewed his residence permit for Budakeszi, he no longer had a need for the apartment.⁶⁷

Housing woes were peppered throughout the complaints collected by the Social Democratic Party. Ferencz Csillag described his experience, recalling that in October 1919 he was evicted from his apartment and made to move temporarily into a movie theater. He was then allocated an apartment on Király utca until a “stranger” (*idegen ember*) came to the flat and told him that he and his family, including four children, would have to move out as he would be moving in the next day. He worried because he was out of work and as he had already paid for three months’ rent, he had no money to secure another apartment and therefore would be homeless.⁶⁸

Similar worried were echoed in the January 1, 1920 complaint by Mrs. Lajos Papp and Mrs. Imre Kecskés sought help from the Social Democratic Party because their husbands were in prison and the women were no longer able to collect their salary. As they had children, they were unable to find their own employment and therefore were “exposed to the greatest misery.” Compounding their problems was the fact that the two families, who had been housed in apartments at the public prosecutor’s headquarters because of their husbands’ former employment as prison guards, were now on the verge of being evicted from their new homes.⁶⁹

The Budapest Jewish Community’s Legal Aid Bureau contained similar claims, like the one by Mrs. Sándor Hirschl. She stated that her family was being thrown out of their house as a consequence of her husband’s involvement in a messy financial triangle

⁶⁷ Statement by Dr. Pál Óriás, January 8, 1920, pg. 169, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL.

⁶⁸ Statement by Ferencz Csillag to SDP, November 19, 1919, pg. 23, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL.

⁶⁹ Statement by Mrs. Lajos Papp and Mrs. Imre Kecskés to SDP, January 1, 1920, pg. 132, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL.

between himself, the owner of two large wagons of sugar (a much sought-after commodity given the food shortages⁷⁰), and the Ostenburg detachment. She was told they could exchange their flat for an “unhealthy” apartment on Rózsa utca (probably a basement apartment) currently inhabited by the acquaintance of one of the Ostenburg detachment’s officer’s wives who wanted to move into the Hirschl’s apartment.⁷¹ Aside from being embroiled in a dispute which had the capacity to escalate from a legal standpoint, the statement suggests that the Hirschl family felt that added pressure of worrying about angering the notorious militia leader.

All of these complaints illuminate the complex social and political context of the early counter-revolutionary period. The war and multiple revolutions had exacerbated a housing crisis which had originated long before the counter-revolution. Yet the above complaints demonstrate that individuals, especially those among the middle and upper classes who were reestablished as the primary beneficiaries of the counter-revolutionary state, used the political mood to pressure people to give up their homes. Those individuals and families who were already embroiled in legal problems linked to their alleged political activities appear to have been especially vulnerable to the threat of denunciation, as were those of the lower classes or the unemployed who had few resources to try and challenge eviction proceedings. Landlords, neighbors, and potential tenants exploited their social status, their political connections, as well as the political atmosphere in order to access better living arrangements for themselves, forcing many families to choose between legal difficulties or homelessness.

⁷⁰ Poor harvests, bad provisioning policies and the blockade had led to a food crisis in Hungary by 1918.

⁷¹ Statement by Adorján János to SDP, December 3, 1919, pg. 58, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL.

The complaints also highlight the ways women negotiated the minefield of early postwar Hungarian politics. Particularly for elite or bourgeois women, the reactionary atmosphere of early counter-revolutionary politics empowered them by providing them with more direct access to coercive institutions such as the police, gendarmerie or militias which had broad political roles closely tied with the maintenance of “order.” In some cases, as the complaints of Mrs. Gruber and Mrs. Hirschl demonstrate, women’s personal relationships to the male power elite provided them with access to better accommodations, as it allowed them to use the implicit threat of violence or persecution to pressure families to abandon their homes. In other cases, women exploited the tool of denunciation in order to affirm their privileged position and to gain. Such women likely felt secure enough in their social status and untarnished political pedigrees in order to threaten those who were not similarly secure.

The depositions illuminate gender and social hierarchy intersected in regard to counter-revolutionary politics. Wealthier women, even those like widows who lacked a male head-of-household, were empowered by and exploited the retributory political atmosphere in order to secure material benefits including better apartments in the housing-starved city. The social and political capital they wielded as social elites overrode the disadvantages they faced as women in a society still dominated by more paternalistic social and political relations.⁷² Conversely, working class families encountered increasing economic pressures due to high inflation, returning soldiers searching for employment, and the influx of hundreds of thousands of refugees. Further, the state’s suspension of *habeas corpus* and broad-based internment regime combined with broad interpretations of “revolutionary” political activities and the delegitimization

⁷² Gyáni, *Women as Domestic Servants*, 38-44.

of the Soviet Republic's laws, meant that the working class was particularly exposed as they had neither the financial resources nor social status to mobilize as a means of defense. Working class men were the primary targets of prosecution by the regime and militia violence, but working class women also faced persecution and abuse both on the basis of their own activities or political stances and because of their relationships with men. At times this meant they were punished or incarcerated along with their husbands. At other times, as statements made to the Social Democratic Party and Pest Jewish Community legal aid bureaus help show, women played a central role in navigating political and legal channels in order to take care of and provide for their families in a variety of ways including protecting their families from homelessness and/or eviction. For women like Mrs. Papp and Mrs. Kecskes, the imprisonment of their husbands had forced them to take on expanded roles as advocates and breadwinners for their families.

“Home is home no longer”⁷³: Violence and Terror in the Domestic Sphere

Politicized evictions and trials against domestic workers, neighbors and others offer one perspective on how the retributive dynamics of the Terror penetrated the domestic sphere and engaged the broader populace in the counter-revolution. Families were left homeless and people went into hiding, fearful of the fate awaiting them should they be picked up by the police or militias. These seemingly bureaucratic issues had very real physical consequences for hundreds if not thousands of Hungarians who landed in the prisons and camps of the regime. But the Terror and counter-revolution in the domestic sphere did not just mire people in red tape or put them at the mercy of the

⁷³ Tormay, *The Commune*, 44.

courts. The physical violence of militias described in the previous chapter invaded the domestic sphere quite literally.

In many cases, as the statements made to the Social Democratic Party's and Pest Jewish Community's legal aid offices show, the violence people experienced during the White Terror in the form of beatings began in the home when soldiers, police officers or other groups arrived on their doorstep to take them away for questioning or searches.⁷⁴ Rezső Kovács recalled on January 21, 1920 that when guards came to arrest his brother Miklós, they beat him in the house before taking him away to the command headquarters of the militia.⁷⁵ A group of Jewish residents made a group complaint which recalled their experience of being pulled from their beds on January 30, 1920 at two in the morning and tortured, simply because they were Jewish.⁷⁶ One man, Zoltan Majoros reported that his abuse at the hands of the authorities began in the guard's room of his apartment building and that the neighbor who witnessed him being beaten on a staircase in the building could verify his story.⁷⁷ Gyula Freiser recalled in a complaint from February 1920 how militia soldiers had beat him up at the gate of his house and his family had witnessed the whole thing from the window.⁷⁸ Hendrik Hermann noted in his statement that when gendarmes came to his home on August 8, 1919, he had barely stepped out of his home when the lieutenant started beating him and in February 1920 Oszkar Schlesinger reported that

⁷⁴ Statement by Lipót Weisz to Legal Aid Bureau of Pesti Izraelita Hitközség (PIH), December 11, 1919, pg. 137, Folder I-E 1919 B/013 1919-es fehérterror jegyzőkönyvek, Budapest Zsidó Levéltár, Budapest, Hungary (Document collection hereafter referred to as BZsL). Statement from Mrs. Aladár Csontos to SDP, March 23, 1920, pg. 315, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL.

⁷⁵ Statement by Rezső Kovács to SDP, January 21, 1920, pg. 232, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL.

⁷⁶ Letter for the Consideration of the Prime Minister, February 4, 1920, pg. 77, BZsL.

⁷⁷ Statement by Majoros Zoltán to SDP, November 22, 1919, pg. 31, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL.

⁷⁸ Statement by Gyula Preizer to PIH pg. 32, BZsL.

upon trying to enter his house on Báross utca, he was beaten after soldiers saw his Jewish religion on his identity card.⁷⁹

On January 31, 1920 two police officers came to a house the apartment of the Jewish landlord on Vérseny utca near Keleti station in Budapest and carted off five of the Jewish tenants in the house. According to the complaint lodged by the wives and son of two of the men taken, the officers wanted to take one additional tenant but he was sick with the Spanish flu and could not get out of bed.⁸⁰ In another statement, two police officers entered a home and pulled a man from his bed to take him in for questioning at a police station across the street.⁸¹ Other statements submitted that soldiers entered apartment buildings and took away those whose names were on a list, telling them only that they were needed for questioning.⁸² Even nearly a year a half after the collapse of the Commune, in May 1921, Joseph Marcus, the JDC representative visiting Hungary, reported that people continued to fear visits and home searches by Hungarian officers. In one of the cases mentioned in the report written by Joseph Marcus, he reported that one woman did not even realize her husband had been arrested and was being held by the Hungarian authorities as he had gone into hiding following the receipt of an order to appear and was, according to his wife, “afraid to sleep at home.”⁸³ The fear of sleeping at home echoed the 1919 complaint of Mrs. István Borcsi earlier in the chapter, whose husband was so fearful of denunciation that he had left his eight-month pregnant wife home alone to go into hiding.

⁷⁹ Statement by Henrik Hermann to PIH, September 24, 1919, pg. 57, BZsL; Statement by Oszkár Schlesinger to PIH, February 21, 1920, pg. 107, BZsL.

⁸⁰ Statement by Paula Kreutz, Irén Láng and Józsa Láng to SDP, January 31, 1920, pg. 245, PIL.

⁸¹ Statement by Sámuel Porjesz to SDP, October 14, 1919, pg. 1, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL.

⁸² Statement by Mihály Lázár to SDP, January 2, 1920, pg. 137, Fond 658, Statement by István Radics to SDP, January 12, 1920, pg. 185, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; pg. 185, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; See also Statement by Lipót Friedmann to PIH, February 5, 1920, pg. 35, BZsL.

⁸³ Marcus, “Is There White Terror in Hungary?,” 22A, JDC.

As the above cases show, for many in Budapest and further afield, the home was not a safe space immune from the authorities' attempts to bring order to Budapest. The White Terror arrived quite literally on the doorstep of many who were beaten, at times, in front of their families, and then carted away to prisons, barracks, and the headquarters of various militias or to the local police precincts where they were often abused further.⁸⁴

Heightened surveillance efforts by the state also shaped the domestic sphere. In one case, Mrs. Imré Simon complained that since August, 1919, detectives came to her house weekly to inquire as to the whereabouts of Andor Fleischmann and Venczelt Mateika, whom they believed were sleeping at her house because they believed her to be the two men's lover. She also claimed they did the same to the house trustee, who they also believed was the lover of the two men.⁸⁵ This complaint not only demonstrates the more systematic dimensions of Terror in regard to coordinated surveillance efforts, but also shows how women who did not conform to bourgeois norms of sexual decorum were treated by the authorities.

Apartments were searched, ransacked, personal items and money was seized by police, soldiers and gendarmes.⁸⁶ In one complaint from February 1920, Gyula Freiser recounted how after being beaten up by soldiers, the men ransacked his family's home searching for his younger brother. They even drove their bayonets into the bed.⁸⁷ Such actions continued well into 1920, and according to Marcus, harassment and major

⁸⁴ Statement by József Pál to SDP, May 14, 1920, pg. 360, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL.

⁸⁵ Statement by Mrs. Imre Simon to SDP, January 21, 1920, pg. 230, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL.

⁸⁶ Statement by Mrs. József Ludwig to SDP, March 7, 1920, pg. 289, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by János Pelikan to SDP, March 19, 1920, pg. 307, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by Mrs. József Igert to SDP, March 16, 1920, pg. 304, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by Mrs. Aladar Csontos to SDP, March 23, 1920, pg. 312, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by Mrs. István Badsó to SDP, March 23, 1920, pg. 313, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by Lipót Weisz to PIH, December 11, 1919, pg. 137, BZsL, Letter to Chief Prosecutor from Salamon Schlomosuk, n.d., pg. 108, BZsL.

⁸⁷ Statement by Gyula Preizer to PIH, February 26, 1920, pg. 32, BZsL.

physical damage to homes continued well into 1921 for Jewish families. For example, he recounted on his visit to the city of Czegled in May, 1921 that many of the Jewish homes he saw had no windows because of destructive raids on Jewish homes by a local branch of the nationalist organization Awakening Magyars. Marcus reported that in addition to hitting out windows with sticks, some had thrown grenades into houses.⁸⁸

In some cases, domestic employees were complicit with the authorities, providing them with information on tenants, witnessing home searches, identifying Jewish households and denouncing tenants.⁸⁹ In one complaint, Gyula Wettel recalled that soldiers from the national army came to his apartment house in order to requisition clothing from him and the other tenants. Wettel also said that the soldiers went to the apartment of the house master Frigyes Bangroth and asked him about the religion of the tenants so that they could harass and beat the Jewish tenants. Wettel claimed that all this happened at the “initiative” (*kezdeményezésére*) of Bangroth.⁹⁰ A similar incident in January 1920 was recounted by Lipót Friedmann who recalled soldiers being led by the house master coming to his house to take him to the police precinct.⁹¹

Terror not only reached into the actual home. It also overtook neighborhoods, specifically the streets of the Jewish quarter and the eighth district, where many people, but particularly the Jewish residents of the district experienced the constant presence of militias, police and other bands of young men roaming the streets of their neighborhoods.⁹² Just walking home entailed a certain amount of risk, as “patrols” stood

⁸⁸ Marcus, “Is There White Terror in Hungary?,” 54, JDC.

⁸⁹ Statement by János Pelikán to SDP, March 19, 1920, pg. 307, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by Robert Szuhi to SDP, January 5, 1920, pg. 150, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL.

⁹⁰ Statement by Gyula Wettel to SDP, November 25, 1919, pg. 35 Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL.

⁹¹ Statement by Lipót Friedmann to PIH, February 5, 1920, pg. 35, BZsL.

⁹² Statement by Imre Tóth to SDP, February 20, 1920, pg. 267, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by Ferenc Fried to PIH, March 25, 1920, pg. 33, BZsL; Statement by Pál Friedmann to PIH,

on street corners, stopped people and asked them their religion or for identification papers.⁹³ Those who replied they were Jewish were often hassled further, being asked to remove their caps. In one case, the daughter and daughter-in-law of one man recalled that all the Jewish patrons, including their father, at their neighborhood cafe were sent into the street by soldiers who beat them all with dog whips and the butts of rifles “without mercy.”⁹⁴ A similar complaint was lodged with the Social Democratic Party on the same day February 20, 1920 regarding an incident at a café on Népszínház utca where soldiers called out the Jewish guests and beat them with rifle butts and Blackjacks.⁹⁵ The simultaneity of these café raids suggests that the actions were organized and coordinated attacks rather than spontaneous, disorganized actions by mobs. The documents in the Jewish archive also indicate that raids such as those above were relatively common, particularly between the winter and spring of 1920.⁹⁶ According to a case, on May 18, 1920, there was another rash of attacks made on a number of cafes largely in the Jewish quarter.⁹⁷ It is difficult to estimate how many people were treated in this way, but the complaints made to the Budapest Jewish Community legal aid bureau suggest that

January 4, 1920, pg. 36, BZsL; Statement by Ferenc Geld to PIH, December 9, 1919, pg. 42, BZsL; Statement by Lipót Goldschmid to PIH, January 3, 1920, pg. 44, BZsL; Statement by Dr. Samu Görög to PIH, January 8, 1920, pg. 46, BZsL; Statement by Salaman Habermesch to PIH, June 7, 1920, pg. 52, BZsL; Statement by Adolf Halpern to PIH, November 27, 1919, pg. 54, BZsL; Statement by Henrik Hermann to PIH, September 24, 1919, pg. 57, BZsL; Statement by Dr. Miksa Horváth to PIH, January 15, 1920, pg. 60, BZsL; Letter from Endre Katz to PIH, n.d., pg. 63, BsL; Statement by Vilmos Schaar to PIH, December 30, 1919, pg. 106, BZsL; Statement by Dr. Ödön Schwartz to PIH, March 14, 1920, pg. 115, BZsL.

⁹³ Statement by Miksa and Juliska Blitz to SDP, January 1, 1920, pg. 133, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by György Csillag to SDP, pg. 134, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by Oszkár Schlesinger to SDP, February 23, 1920, pg. 278, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL.

⁹⁴ Statement by Mrds. Sándor Deutsch to SDP, February 21, 1920, pg. 269, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL.

⁹⁵ Statement by Sándor Róth and Hermann Jakabovics to SDP, February 21, 1920, pg. 271, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL.

⁹⁶ Statement by József Schwartz to PIH, May 19, 1920, pg. 112, BZsL.

⁹⁷ Judgment by Royal Prosecutor against unknown perpetrators, n.d. pg. 113, BZsL.

between the autumn of 1919 well into 1920, street harassment was a common experience for many Jewish men and women.

The violence faced on the streets of their neighborhoods was experienced by many Jews as *Jews*. Most of the complaints indicate how the attacks began: by being questioned about their religion, but some also note the loss of hats (*kalap*). Given the repeated mention in documents to the Jewish Community records versus its absence in the reports collected by the Social Democratic Party it is likely that the loss of their head covering was ritually important and more humiliating for Jews than simply the loss of a (expensive) article of clothing.⁹⁸ Further, Otto Hoffman who called the clubs used by his attackers as “pogrom sticks” (*pogrombot*), placed his attack within a broader narrative of historical persecution against Eastern European Jews, rather than simply putting it in the more immediate context of Hungarian counter-revolutionary politics.⁹⁹ Likewise, some of the methods of humiliation and persecution enacted by soldiers were intended to shame Jews as Jews. The forced undressing of Rudolf Csernyegi by soldiers to validate his Jewishness by examining whether he was circumcised was also an attack on the rituals of the faith as was the attempt made by some soldiers to force Hugó Kóhn to pray with *tefillin* and *talith* while in their custody. When he was unwilling, he was beaten.¹⁰⁰ Jews and Jewish community institutions were also attacked, as the complaint of Sándor Schönfeld shows. He reported that he had heard that there was to be a gathering at the

⁹⁸ Statement by Otto Hoffman to PIH, no date, pg. 59, BZsL; Statement by Samu V. Görög to PIH, January 8, 1920, pg. 46, BZsL; Statement by Pál Friedmann to PIH, January 4, 1920, pg. 36, BZsL; Statement by Emil Kramer to PIH, January 20, 1920, pg. 73, BZsL; Statement by Dr. Miksa Horváth to PIH, January 15, 1920, pg. 60, Statement by Oszkár Schlesinger to PIH, February 21, 1920, pg. 107, BZsL. Schlesinger also filed a report with the Social Democratic Party’s legal aid office as well. Statement by Jakub Kohn to PIH, January 4, 1920, pg. 70, BZsL.

⁹⁹ Statement by Otto Hoffman to PIH, no date, pg. 59, BZsL.

¹⁰⁰ Statement by Rudolf Csernyegi to PIH, July, 12, 1920, pg. 19, BZsL; Statement by Hugó Kohn to PIH, March 26, 1920, pg. 69, BZsL.

Budapest Jewish Community's building on Sip utca in Budapest and went with his brother. Upon arriving, the porter (doorman; receptionist) of the building told them where the meeting was being held, but when they went up to the room, they were met by police who took them and other Jews who had responded to the call to the offices of the Awakening Magyars. Schönfeld was convinced that the porter intentionally tried to ambush him and other Jews who came for the meeting and denounced them as trying to organize a Jewish army.¹⁰¹

Yet while Jewishness played an important role in shaping people's experiences and interpretations of violence, it is also clear that people experienced their attacks and other forms of persecution as individuals in multiple hierarchies. Several of those who mention the loss or theft of their hats indicate how expensive they were, strongly suggesting that they felt humiliated not only simply because militias' violated them as Jews, but also because militias meted out violence despite their elevated socio-economic status.¹⁰² Others also list the valuables seized from them which demonstrates that although they may have been targeted for attack as Jews by militias or nationalist mobs, their humiliation and anger was also tied to their ideas of their social respectability and financial prosperity.¹⁰³ Further, broader ideas about those groups who should be exempt from violence, such as women and the elderly were extraordinarily salient in individuals' interpretations of violence.¹⁰⁴ Hierarchies of age were upset as young militia members

¹⁰¹ Statement by Sándor Schönfeld to PIH, September 5, 1919, pg. 110, BZsL.

¹⁰² Statement by Dr. Ödön Schwartz to PIH, March 14, 1920, pg. 115, BZsL.

¹⁰³ Statement of Gyula Preizer to PIH, February 26, 1920, pg. 32, BZsL. In the previous chapter the targeting of middle class Jews in particular has been discussed.

¹⁰⁴ Statement of Gyula Preizer to PIH, February 26, 1920, pg. 32, BZsL; Statement by Hermann Meijesovitz to PIH, May 10, 1920, pg. 85; Statement by Mrs. Samuel Furmann to PIH, December 9, 1919, pg. 39, BZsL.

accosted and beat pensioners as well as children and adolescents and gender hierarchies were challenged, as men were beaten in front of their wives and children.

Conclusion

The discussion above demonstrates the extent to which the White Terror and counter-revolutionary political strife bled into the domestic sphere, eroding trust and intimacy between neighbors and fellow citizens. Between August 1919 and 1921, the domestic sphere was an important arena of violent political, social and ideological struggle. Reconquering the domestic sphere by removing the remnants of bolshevism was an important element of the transition from revolution to counter-revolution because the bourgeoisie so closely tied their identity to their domestic power.¹⁰⁵ The struggle also entailed the invasion of physical violence and terror into the domestic sphere, as the police and militias performed destructive searches, placed individuals under constant surveillance, pulled people from their homes and beds, subjected them to physical violence and abuse in the most intimate spaces of their lives. Terror and counter-revolution in the domestic sphere was highly personal in nature, and often required the collaboration of neighbors and domestic employees who denounced their neighbors and aided the authorities in identifying potential enemies of the state. Budapest's Jewish community was touched in specific ways by the terror in these spaces, as the constant patrols of their neighborhoods and streets by militias and other bands of nationalist activists placed many in constant danger of harassment and abuse.

¹⁰⁵ Gyáni, *The Parlor and the Kitchen*, 115-117.

However, people's experience of the violence, both as perpetrators and victims, was defined not simply by their religion but also by class, gender and age hierarchies. The counter-revolutionary regime's broad-based efforts to root out communism and their willingness to entertain denunciations provided many people, including middle class and elite women, with opportunities to contribute to the counter-revolution by helping the state reassert pre-war social hierarchies and property relations. Moreover, the counter-revolutionary political environment allowed people to settle personal scores and secure access to better housing by providing them with the means to use the coercive power of the state. The White Terror and counter-revolution may have targeted specific groups, but its reach into the home meant that many people felt its effects. They were exposed to the state's capacity for violence and saw that no space, however sacred, was immune to violence.

Reconquering the domestic sphere also took place in the counter-revolutionary court system. It entailed exploiting the state's broad interpretation of criminal law in ways that ensured that those who had been empowered by the laws and policies established by the Kun regime or those employed by the Soviet state—specifically but not exclusively (former) domestic employees—were penalized for their actions and political and ideological sympathies during the Soviet regime. Formal prosecutions also relied heavily on the denunciations of landlords, employers, and neighbors eager to prove their loyalty and (re)assert their dominant position in the social and political hierarchies of Hungary. Through (the threat of) denunciations, individuals wielded a great deal of power over their fellow citizens in order to get revenge for the past wrongs of the Soviet regime. Prosecution

in the courts may not have been violent in and of itself. But for many defendants, trials ended with sentences in camps and prisons defined by abuse and deprivation.

Finally, the struggle in the domestic sphere illuminates the myriad ways the broader population contributed to the political struggle. Through their denunciations, their collaboration with the policies, militias, or gendarmerie, many people served as intermediaries between the coercive organs of the state and their fellow citizens/subjects. Often just the *threat* of denunciation by people who wielded power because of their elevated socio-economic status was enough to exact material advantages and instill fear in persons who were vulnerable to accusations. Such actions highlight the erosion of social relations and economic conditions that had taken place in Hungary over the course of war and two revolutions.

However, this is not the full story of the White Terror and counter-revolution in the domestic sphere. In many instances, house trustees, porters, landlords and neighbors helped protect and aid their neighbors in a variety of ways. Many people assisted their neighbors by petitioning legal aid bureaus on their behalf, reporting what they had seen. Neighbors also witnessed on behalf of each other in court proceedings.¹⁰⁶ In one case, a house trustee accompanied a man who had been beaten on the street to get his umbrella and hat which were left behind after his attack.¹⁰⁷ People often sought the help of house trustees or house masters in identifying them to the authorities and vouching for their character.¹⁰⁸ In one case, during a search of his father's apartment, Salaman Schlomosuk said that 500 persons who knew his father as an honorable and trustworthy man gathered in the courtyard of the

¹⁰⁶ Case against József Reklóvitz, 1919, HU BFL-VII.5.c-1919-7588, BFL; Case against Izidor Lajta Löwy, 1920, HU BFL-VII.5.c-1920-4734, BFL; Case against Kálmán Mészáros, 1919, HU BFL-VII.5.c-1919-9434, BFL; Case against Gyula Jókai, 1919, HU BFL-VII.5.c-1919-9529, BFL.

¹⁰⁷ Statement by Otto Hoffman to PIH, no date, pg. 59, BZsL.

¹⁰⁸ Statement by Lipót Weisz to PIH, December 11, 1919, pg. 137, BZsL.

house.¹⁰⁹ Even more than a year and a half of raids, searches, and attacks had not completely battered trust among neighbors. Focusing on the terror in the domestic sphere helps demonstrate that, in the words of one character in Dezső Kosztolányi's *Édes Anna*, "It's quite terrifying for a person to realize one really doesn't know the people one's living with...."¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ Letter to Chief Prosecutor from Salaman Schlomosuk, n.d. pg. 108, BZsL.

¹¹⁰ Kosztolányi, *Anna Édes*, 190.

Chapter Four

Hungarian Siberia: Counter-revolutionary Internment and Incarceration, 1919-1925

“No one—not even the Friedrich government itself—is aware of the number of men and women who have thus been imprisoned under the White misrule. That these prisons are as gruesome as the Black Hole of Calcutta, that 50 to 100 citizens are packed into one cell without trial, that the tortures inflicted have made each cell a Chamber of Horrors; these are truths to be verified on a day’s visit to Budapest.”

Frederick Kuh, 1920¹

In 1925, the Hungarian Royal Curia initiated a case against Dezső Andorka, formerly an accountant in an ironworks. Andorka had written a book entitled *The History of Hungarian Siberia* about internment under the Horthy regime, which he allegedly had been trying to get published in Vienna.² The book itself was more of a huge scrap-book of news clippings, cartoons, copies of parliamentary debates, and elegantly etched postcards of the internment camp at Zalaegerszeg, a town in the southwest corner of Hungary near the present-day borders of Austria and Slovenia. It also included the author’s commentary about the brutality of counter-revolutionary internment and incarceration in the early postwar period, which he himself had experienced during his fourteen month-long political internment in Zalaegerszeg.³ Andorka was charged with making “damaging statements about the Hungarian state and nation,” which was a charge

¹ Frederick Kuh, “Hope Revives in Hungary,” *The Liberator*, January 22, 1920, p. 37.

² Case against Dezső Andorka, 1925, VII.5.c - 1925 – 8038, Bírósági-ügyészégi, Budapesti Fővárosi Levéltár (hereafter referred to as BFL).

³ According to Roger Daniels, a distinction must be made between incarceration and internment. The difference is that “internment” generally refers to the confinement of non-citizens while “incarceration” refers to the confinement of citizens. Internees generally have recourse to international legal conventions because of their legal status, while those who are incarcerated are at the mercy of domestic legal authorities and generally have no broader recourse because of their citizenship. In the case of Hungary, citizenship played an important role in the Hungarian counter-revolution. Roger Daniels, “Words Do Matter: A Note on Inappropriate Terminology and the Incarceration of the Japanese Americans,” in Louis Fiset and Gail Nomura, eds. *Nikkei in the Pacific Northwest: Japanese Americans and Japanese Canadians in the Twentieth Century* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005), 183-207.

based on recent piece of legislation enacted to prevent the spread of information that would harm Hungary's international reputation, and thus its chances for treaty revisionism.⁴

Linking Russia's and Hungary's systems of internment was provocative as it summoned up associations between the political conditions of counter-revolutionary Hungary and the tsarist use of Siberia as a place of exile.⁵ As such, it served as a stark critique of the newly established conservative-nationalist regime by linking it to an enemy which had long been considered an enemy of the Hungarian nation. Comparisons between tsarist repression and the counter-revolutionary regime were not unique to Andorka's work. For example, in a December 1919 letter to British labor leaders, the author wrote that "Crimes are being perpetrated in comparison to which the regime of the Czar are like child's-play."⁶ But the title also summoned up images of Siberia which may have been more readily available in the Hungarian mind. Siberia, after all, was the place where hundreds of thousands of Magyar soldiers had been held (and were being held) in captivity during World War I, in notoriously mismanaged camps, where they suffered from a lack of adequate housing, clothing, and food, and according to some prisoners, were brutalized by their Russian and Cossack captors.⁷ In any case, Andorka's title linked the conservative nationalist political regime in Hungary to Russia, which in addition to its historic role as Hungary's enemy, was also considered to be a barbaric, "oriental," and

⁴ Case against Dezső Andorka, 1925, VII.5.c - 1925 - 8038, Bírósági-ügyészségi, BFL.

⁵ Jonathan Daly, "Political Crime in Late Imperial Russia," *The Journal of Modern History* 74, 1 (March 2002), esp. 63.

⁶ No Author to British Labour Party, Dec 22, 1919, LP/HUN/1/2, Labour History Archive and Study Centre, People's History Museum and Archives, Manchester, England (Document collection hereafter referred to as LHA).

⁷ Case against Dezső Andorka, pg. 425, 1925, VII.5.c - 1925 - 8038, Bírósági-ügyészségi, BFL; Alon Rachamimov, *POWs and the Great War: Captivity on the Eastern Front* (Oxford: Berg, 2002), esp. 87-132; Iván Völgyes, "Hungarian Prisoners of War in Russia, 1916-1919," *Cahiers du Monde russe et soviétique* 14, nos. 1-2 (January-June, 1973), 54.

uncivilized, with the outbreak of revolution in 1917 underscoring this perspective in the minds of many.⁸

In his effort to publish the book, Andorka intended to bring to light something that he had feared had been (or was becoming) largely forgotten both domestically, and internationally, namely the history of counter-revolutionary political incarceration and internment in counter-revolutionary Hungary.⁹ Andorka believed that the experience of counter-revolutionary internment and imprisonment was an important part of the broader story of counter-revolution and White Terror, that it said something important about the postwar, conservative authoritarian regime in Hungary. The regime likely thought as much, since they prosecuted him. Especially between 1919-1921, political imprisonment and internment was understood by many both inside and outside of Hungary as an important dimension of the White Terror that was systematically perpetrated and carried out by the state.¹⁰ It had been the subject of debate and propaganda and numerous legal interventions early on, but there was not sustained interest in keeping the memory or history of it alive, which is what Andorka intended to address with his book.

The history of civilian internment and incarceration during the long World War I period has generally been understudied by scholars. It has only been in the last decade or

⁸ Imperial and Royal Austro-Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Collection of Evidence Concerning the Violations of International Law by Countries at War with Austria-Hungary* (n.p.: n.p. 1915), 49-75. There was also enmity against Russia in Hungary because it had played a key role in putting down the 1848 Hungarian Revolution. Ignács Romsics, *Hungary in the Twentieth Century*, trans. Tim Wilkinson (Budapest: Corvina; Osiris, 1999), 85

⁹ Case against Dezső Andorka, pgs. 76-77, 1925, HU BFL - VII.5.c - 1925 – 8038, Bírósági-ügyészégi, BFL.

¹⁰ British Joint Labour Delegation to Hungary, *The White Terror in Hungary* (London: Trade Union Congress and the Labour Party, 1920); Joseph Marcus, "Is There White Terror in Hungary," June 5, 1921, doc. 220562, folder 151.4, Records of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee of the years 1919-1921, New York Collection, American Joint Distribution Committee Archives (hereafter cited as JDC); International Committee of the Red Cross (hereafter abbreviated ICRC), "Report on the Hajmasker Political Internment Camp," in *Report on the Alleged Existence of 'White Terror' in Hungary* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1920), pp. 5-8.

so that work on the incarceration and internment of civilians during World War I and in its aftermath has begun to appear. This dearth is not unique to East Central Europe or to Hungary, but is a general problem within this broader European, and United States, historiography on World War I and its violent aftermath.¹¹ This chapter contributes to the historiography on civilian confinement by analyzing internment and incarceration during the early counter-revolutionary period as an important dimension of state-directed and organized violence and retribution. It also examines internment and imprisonment as an important dimension of the new government's efforts to adapt and transform wartime practices and laws in order to manage internal crises, marginalize certain political and ethnic groups, and mete out retribution against alleged enemies of the regime. The counter-revolutionary internment apparatus mirrored the practices of civilian internment established between 1914-18, though extra-legal internment and imprisonment continued in Hungary even after crisis abated.

Legislation giving the state broad powers to identify and root out potential threats to internal security was not out of step with the emergency legislation passed in other countries during the course of World War I, which included provisions for the internment of "enemy aliens" (citizens from enemy states) and citizens who might harm the war effort. In general, the war had provided for a dramatic expansion of states' powers across

¹¹ One of the historians most active in regard to the history of "civilian" internment has been Matthew Stibbe. Stibbe, "The Internment of Political Suspects in Austria-Hungary during the First World War: A Violent Legacy?" in *Gender and Modernity in Central Europe: The Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and Its Legacy*, Agatha Schwartz, ed. (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2010), 203-218; Stibbe, *British Civilian Internees in Germany: the Ruhleben Camp, 1914-18* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008); Stibbe, "The Internment of Civilians by Belligerent States during the First World War and the Response of the International Committee of the Red Cross," *Journal of Contemporary History* 41, no. 1 (January 2006): 5-19; Stibbe, "Civilians Internment and Civilian Internees in Europe, 1914-1918," *Immigrants and Minorities* 26, nos. 1-2 (2008): 49-81. See also Todd Huebner, "The Internment Camp at Terezin, 1919," *Austrian History Yearbook* 27 (January 1996): 199-211; Andrej Mitrović, *Serbia's Great War, 1914-1918* (London: Hurst&Co., 2007). For an important discussion about the changing nature of "civilian status, see Tammy M. Proctor, *Civilians in a World at War, 1914-1918* (New York: New York University Press, 2010).

Europe and North America. In 1912, two years before the war even began, the Hungarian government passed special legislation outlining the state's emergency powers. Should war break out, civil authorities were to be given ever greater powers to put down internal opposition.¹² The declaration of war on July 28, 1914 activated the legislation, which over the course of the war was continuously expanded to abrogate civil rights, most importantly, freedom of the press, freedom of association, and the suspension of normal judicial procedures and *habeas corpus*.¹³ During the war, Hungarian authorities used the legislation to defuse social tensions arising from the economic crises and neutralize political upheaval caused by the war, mainly by forcibly curbing labor strikes and leftist activism and marginalizing those regarded as threats to internal state security. The authorities also used emergency law to intern and surveil citizens from enemy states.¹⁴

Similar to Hungary and the Dual Monarchy more generally, other belligerent states also instituted their own wartime emergency legislation which afforded them, among other things, the right to detain and intern enemy aliens after the war began. The British Parliament passed the first of the Defence of the Realm Acts (DORA) in August 7, 1914.¹⁵ The governments of France, Germany, Canada, the United States and Russia all instituted regulations that empowered them to surveil, intern, and deport enemy aliens

¹² In Austria it was military authorities who would benefit from expanded powers, which provided for the "deportation and internment of suspect persons....". See József Galántai, *Magyarország az elsőháborúban 1914-1918* [Hungary in the First World War 1914-1918], trans. Éva Grusz and Judit Pokoly (Budapest: Akadémia Kiadó, 1989), 72-78; Stibbe, "The Internment of Political Suspects," 206.

¹³ Rachamimov, *POWs and the Great War*, 137, Galántai, *Hungary in the First World War*, 72-75; Ferenc Pölöskei, *Hungary after Two Revolutions*, trans. by E. Csicséri-Rónay (Budapest: Akadémia Kiadó, 1980), 46-47.

¹⁴ Stibbe, "The Internment of Political Suspects," 206.

¹⁵ Andrew G. Bone, *Beyond the Rule of Law: Aspects of the Defense of Realm Acts and Regulations, 1914-1918* (PhD Dissertation, McMaster University, 1994), 2. These laws were expanded upon throughout the course of the war.

and those suspected of undermining the war effort.¹⁶ The substantial body of emergency laws enacted during WWI helped pave the way for more aggressive measures against those regarded as (potentially) dangerous to the state later. As the crisis in Europe shifted in late 1918 and 1919 from world war to civil war and revolution, governments in many of the successor states, not only Hungary, continued and sometimes expanded emergency legislation to root out internal threats in an effort to fortify the stability and legitimacy of their new governments.¹⁷ All of these laws, including the internment order issued by the counter-revolutionary government in Hungary, established certain procedures designed to allow governments to respond more nimbly to internal threats so as not to hinder the state's war efforts.

The 1919 Hungarian internment order was not simply a continuation of its wartime emergency laws. It may have used similar rhetoric and perpetuated practices born from the wartime emergency, but its goals were not exactly the same. Wartime emergency powers were supposed to be designed to allow the government to maintain order and prevent internal crisis so that it could center its attention and resources winning the war. The counter-revolutionary internment order, on the other hand, was an important dimension of the government's response to actual internal political crises. While it was presented as a preventative measure to quell revolutionary elements, it was used to systematically punish those parties regarded as responsible for the destruction caused by the Commune, to purge Hungarian politics and society of "Bolshevist" and anti-national

¹⁶ Arnold Krammer, *Undue Process: The Untold Story of America's German Alien Internees* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1997), 14; Christopher Cappazola, *Uncle Sam Wants You: World War I and the Making of the Modern American Citizen* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 173-205; See also Beverly Gage, *The Day Wall Street Exploded: A Story of America in Its First Age of Terror* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); Stibbe, "The Internment of Civilians"; Stibbe, "The Internment of Political Suspects."

¹⁷ See for example Todd Huebner, "The Internment Camp at Terezin, 1919," *Austrian History Yearbook* 27 (January 1996): 199-211.

elements, and to create a legal basis to expel non-citizens, particularly those who were Jewish. In other words, the internment order was a key dimension of transitional justice and nation-(re)building in counter-revolutionary Hungary, and not just an effort to streamline the function of the state in a period of crisis. Moreover, the order helped facilitate the institutionalization of violence against the “harmful elements” by establishing spaces where all these “elements” would be concentrated, and where violence against them could occur outside of public view, without undermining the legitimacy of the fledgling regime. The internment order as well as the use of criminal law to punish those who had committed acts associated with the revolutionary regime or ideology (see chapter three) expanded the White Terror from extra-legal militia violence to systematic state policy.

The norms and practices of civilian internment which developed over the course of 1914-18 were relatively well entrenched by the time the counter-revolutionary regime in Hungary was established in late 1919. But people’s experiences and interpretations of internment were not homogenous. This chapter will explore how the indignities and violence of internment were shaped by or reflected individuals’ positions in multiple hierarchies of privilege and oppression including ethnic, gender, class, and political hierarchies.¹⁸ These categories intersected, and produced divergent understandings of incarceration and internment. Some hierarchies were reproduced in the spaces of confinement, while in others, differences among prisoners were flattened. Moreover,

¹⁸ Intersectionality is the study of the relationships between different dimensions of oppression or disenfranchisement which produce differential experience. Patricia Hill Collins argues that violence plays a very important role in reinforcing hierarchies. For a fuller explanation of intersectionality, see Kimberlé Crenshaw, “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color,” *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (July 1991): pp.1241–1299. For a discussion of the relationship between hierarchy, and violence see Patricia Hill Collins, “The Tie that Binds: Race, Gender, and US Violence,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 21, no. 5 (September 1998): 917-938.

certain practices and/or regulations were designed specifically to accentuate differences between prisoners. This chapter will therefore analyze the multiplicity of confinement experiences for thousands of “unluckies” [*szerencsétlenek*] who were rounded up and held without due process as “politically suspect persons” in camps, gaols, medieval fortresses, and all other sorts of makeshift prisons between 1919 and 1924.

The Romanian Precursor

Counter-revolutionary incarceration and internment began before the definitive collapse of the communist regime in the beginning of August 1919 and it did not simply involve Hungarian state authorities. As they invaded and began occupying “rump” Hungary in April 1919, the Romanian Army arrested and imprisoned suspected leftists and communists who were regarded as “dangerous.”¹⁹ This was in addition to the Romanian army’s capture of soldiers and officers from the Hungarian Red Army who had not already deserted their ranks.²⁰ Over the course of its military occupation of Hungary, and especially between August and November, 1919, the Romanian occupation forces, in addition to Hungarian legal and military authorities and the white militias,

¹⁹ Nemes, *IET*, 228; Mocsy, *The Uprooted*, 157.

²⁰ Mária Ormos, *Magyarország a két világháború korában (1914-1945)*, trans. Brian McLean (Boulder, CO: Social Science Monographs, 2007), 32. It is unclear how many POWs the Romanian army seized, though it is likely in the tens of thousands. Those sources which discuss the violence of Romanian’s occupation of Hungary often expressed a dual concern for how the violent Romanian treatment of Hungarian prisoners and minority in general reflected on the values of the Entente and their work in restabilizing the region as well as the inherent unacceptability of violence as a tactic against a civilian population. See General Harry Hill Bandholtz, *An Undiplomatic Diary*, ed. Fritz Krueger (New York: Columbia University Press, 1933) as well as Miklós Lojkó, *Meddling in Middle Europe: Britain and the ‘Lands Between’ 1919-1925* (Budapest: CEU Press, 2006), 15.

added to the thousands of suspected leftist and communist civilians captured during the fighting.²¹

The invasion and occupation of Hungary by troops acting on behalf of the Entente had two aims. The first was to militarily defeat the Hungarian Red Army while the second was to oust the Hungarian communist regime from power.²² This dual purpose, military defeat and internationalized counter-revolution, technically should have led to the creation of two classes of prisoners, differentiated by international law: military POWs and civilian political prisoners. However, because of the reigning anti-Bolshevist ideology among the Entente and the nature of the politico-military crisis in Hungary, the line between military and civilian was very blurred, creating problems for those international and domestic groups charged with monitoring the enforcement of international norms concerning wartime military imprisonment.

Red Army soldiers and officers captured by the invading army were considered by the Inter-Allied Mission to be official POWs. As such, they were protected by regulations outlined in international conventions regarding the definition of recognized enemy combatants, the rules of war, and the standards of care for wounded POWs. The first of these was the 1864 Geneva Convention, which dealt specifically with the treatment of the wounded. This was eventually supplemented by the 1899 Hague Convention, which was a codification of rules for warfare that explicitly stated that POWs “must be humanely treated” and outlined a set a guidelines regulating captivity.²³

²¹ The Romanian Army began to evacuate its armies from Hungary in early November 1919, but remained in Eastern Hungary until the spring of 1920.

²² Romsics, *Hungary in the Twentieth Century*, 105-116.

²³ Text of “Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded on the Field of Battle, August 22, 1864,” The Avalon Project at Yale Law School, accessed May 7, 2012, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/geneva04.asp; Text of “Convention with Respect to the Laws and Customs of War on Land (Hague II), 29 July 1899,” The Avalon Project at Yale Law School, accessed 7

Both conventions also defined who was a legitimate enemy combatant, and thus who would benefit, and who would be excluded, from the protections enshrined in them. Only those recognized as enemy combatants could legitimately claim protection under international conventions, which is why this dimension of the conventions had been one of the most contested points when they were originally drafted.²⁴

In practice, during World War I the POW experience differed greatly depending on which state was responsible for capture, and the location of incarceration. Physical abuse and widespread violation of the norms outlined in the Hague and Geneva Conventions and other practices developed during the conflict was common throughout the Great War especially, but not exclusively, on the Eastern front.²⁵ Despite this, POWs still had protected status and could make appeals to an international community on the basis of these conventions. Those soldiers from the Hungarian Red Army who were captured by the Romanian army in the summer and early fall of 1919 were the captives of a foreign occupation force and could claim the protections afforded recognized enemy combatants as long as the authority holding them was the Romanian army.

May 2012, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/hague02.asp#art4, especially Chapters 1-3 of the Annex. According to the rules established in the Hague Convention, there was also to be no organized attempt by the state to compel enemy soldiers to join their military effort through their labor or their military service. There was not supposed to be any political propagandizing nor was their supposed to be de-nationalization efforts or forced assimilation.

²⁴ Sibylle Scheipers, "Prisoners and Detainees in War," *EGO: European History Online (EGO)*. Mainz: The Institute of European History (IEG), 2011. Accessed 18 September, 2012. <http://www.ieg-ego.eu/en/threads/alliances-and-wars/war-as-an-agent-of-transfer/sibylle-scheipers-prisoners-and-detainees-in-war>. See also Alan Kramer, "Prisoners in the First World War," in *Prisoners in War*, Sibylle Scheipers ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 75–90; Scheipers, "The Status and Protections of Prisoners of War and Detainees," in *The Changing Character of War*, eds. Sibylle Scheipers et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

²⁵ Heather Jones, *Violence against Prisoners of War in the First World War: Britain, France, and Germany, 1914-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), esp. Part Two, 360.

The treatment of civilian prisoners, on the other hand, was the major blind spot of international conventions regarding war.²⁶ This omission was recognized prior to 1914, particularly because of conflicts in European colonies, but its absence was all the more glaring during the Great War because of the massive increase in violence against civilians, which has been regarded by many historians as one of the key dimensions which differentiates the Great War from prior conflicts.²⁷ During the war, all belligerent states interned some civilians, mostly those who were non-citizens from enemy states.²⁸ However, the governments of the Austria-Hungary and Russia went further and used expanded wartime emergency powers to imprison or exile their own citizens deemed politically suspect or dangerous to the war effort. In practice this often targeted more radical leftists who did not accept a political truce established when the war broke out between the government and opposition parties. Though the internment of enemy aliens was not covered under the Hague and Geneva Conventions, an internee's non-citizen status by definition elevated their captivity to the international sphere. This meant that their treatment could be ameliorated through bilateral or multilateral diplomatic negotiations between states, and by international humanitarian monitoring and aid.

²⁶ There was very broad language inserted into the 1907 Hague Convention, especially in reference to the treatment of populations in occupied territories who were not members of the military. Other than this, however, there was only the "Marten's Clause" in the preamble of 1899 Convention (it appeared in the 1907 convention in modified form) which stated: "In cases not included in the Regulations adopted by them, the inhabitants and belligerents remain under the protection and the rule of the principles of the law of nations, as they result from the usages established among civilized peoples, from the laws of humanity, and the dictates of the public conscience." It appealed to "civilized" norms but did not concretely lay out a code for the treatment of civilian populations. See Stibbe, "Internment of Civilians," 7, and Scheipers, "Prisoners of War and Detainees."

²⁷ Stibbe, "The Internment of Civilians," 5-6; Proctor, *Civilians in a World at War*, 5; 203-238.

²⁸ See references in note 6; future revolutionary leader Mihály Károlyi was briefly interned in France in 1914. Mihály Károlyi, *Fighting the World: The Struggle for Peace*, trans. E.W. Dicks (New York: Albert & Charles Boni, 1925), pg. 92-111. In Great Britain, approximately 32,000 enemy aliens were interned. See Stibbe, "Internment of Civilians," 7; Panikos Panayi, *The Enemy in Our Midst. Germans in Britain during the First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 81 and 95; Proctor, *Civilians in a World at War*; Jones, *Violence against Prisoners of War*.

Nevertheless, civilian internees were often used as pawns in wartime propaganda and were targets for retaliation.²⁹ Native-born political prisoners, however, were extraordinarily vulnerable because their own states were denying them rights as citizens, and they were of no special consequence to international humanitarian organizations, who feared getting involved in the internal politics of states. Thus, for all intents and purposes, those political prisoners interned during the war found themselves outside the “sanctified realm of human obligation.”³⁰

The 1919 Romanian invasion and occupation of Hungary reproduced on a smaller scale the problems and deprivations which characterized foreign military and civilian captivity during World War I. According to the diary of its American representative mission, General Henry Hill Bandholtz, the treatment of the Hungarian POWs by the Romanian military created something of a scandal among the Inter-Allied mission in Hungary. A committee composed of American Colonel Raymond Sheldon, Dr. Hector Munro of the International Hospital Relief Association, Captain Georges Brunier of the Swiss Army and the International Committee of the Red Cross and First Lieutenant Francesco Braccio was sent to investigate conditions in Romanian camps in Arad, Transylvania. Sheldon sent back a telegram to Bandholtz, who wrote that the telegram was “voluminous and contained so many disgusting details.”³¹ Sheldon’s telegram stated that the Romanian army was inappropriately imprisoning officers sent to Arad for demobilization and disarmament. It also said that the conditions in the camp were

²⁹ Stibbe, “The Internment of Civilians,” 5; Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau and Annette Becker, *14-18: Understanding the Great War*, trans. Catherine Temerson (New York: Hill and Wang, 2002).

³⁰ Helen Fein, *Accounting for Genocide: National Responses and Jewish Victimization during the Holocaust* (New York: Free Press, 1979), 123, as quoted in Stibbe, “The Internment of Political Suspects,” 206.

³¹ Bandholtz, *An Undiplomatic Diary*, 185.

terrible: there were no beds, heat, or even windows, food was only supplied by the Hungarian Red Cross, there were hardly any clothing supplies and that in general the prisoners were “blue with cold, half starved [sic.] and worried about their private affairs.”³² Sheldon stated that the Romanians also took civilian prisoners who were held together with the military prisoners without respect for rank, class, or sex, despite the fact that many prisoners (presumably male) had no underwear and pants. Sheldon noted that among the female prisoners, there was one who was “evidently an educated woman who has written poetry.”³³ He also reported that it was not just prisoners who faced terrible conditions, but also their family members, specifically their female relatives who were “mistreated” when they came to deliver provisions to their incarcerated loved ones.³⁴ Sheldon concluded that the conditions he saw in Arad were, “a disgrace to civilization.”³⁵ The conditions provoked the Inter-Allied mission to send notice to the Romanian leadership about the unacceptability of the state of Arad. The Romanians were directed to release their civilian prisoners, especially children and the elderly, as well as those wounded or disabled during military service. Romanian authorities were also told to construct adequate bathing and latrine facilities and provide access to their camps to the ICRC, in conformity to wartime norms.³⁶ They were also denounced by their allies for deporting Hungarian war orphans from Transylvania to orphanages in Budapest. Bandholtz declared, “It was decided to inform [the Romanians] that it was difficult to

³² Ibid., 187.

³³ Ibid., 188.

³⁴ Ibid., 187.

³⁵ Ibid., 192.

³⁶ Ibid., 191.

believe how any nation that laid claims to being in a civilized class could handle children along the lines indicated....”³⁷

The warfare between Hungary and Romania, and the Entente more broadly, created layers of chaos when it came to the issue of imprisonment. The Entente’s twin goals in Hungary, military defeat and counter-revolution, meant that the line dividing military and civilian prisoners was very blurry. Moreover, the Romanian military orchestrated the transfer of prisoners in their custody to the Hungarian National Army and thus to the purview of the Hungarian counter-revolutionary regime. This transition is documented in complaints made to the Social Democratic Party’s legal bureau, such as one from December 9, 1919 made by a Budapest woman Ida Szőke. The complaint stated that the Romanian troops had taken a large group of Red Army soldiers and officers prisoner and placed them in a prison camp in Arad, a city in Transylvania that had been the first center of the counter-revolutionary movement prior to it moving to Szeged. According to Szőke, when the Romanians continued their westward advance against the communist government, they brought along their prisoners and handed them over to the National Army in Szolnok, who continued to incarcerate them.³⁸ Another woman, Mrs. István Fekete, said that her son had been arrested by the occupying Romanian Army, who later handed him over to the “whites” in Szolnok.³⁹ Other complaints state that internment had initially begun under the occupying Romanians who were most interested in interning communists or suspected communists, especially those with links to the

³⁷ Ibid., 195.

³⁸ Statement by Ida Szőke to the Social Democratic Party Legal Aid Bureau (hereafter abbreviated SDP), December 9, 1919, pg. 76, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, Politikatörténeti Intézet Levéltár (collection hereafter abbreviated PIL).

³⁹ Statement by Mrs. István Fekete to SDP, December 3, 1919, pg. 59, PIL.

Budapest (e.g. Kun) government.⁴⁰ Each transfer of prisoners from Romania to Hungary transformed their incarceration from the international to the domestic sphere, which meant that direct and substantive intervention by the Entente was less likely, as its members were selective in regard to when and to what extent they would intervene into the domestic affairs of another state. In the case of Hungary intervention was primarily limited to preventing the (re)establishment of a communist regime.⁴¹ Beyond the Great Powers, the transfer of prisoners to the custody of Hungarian authorities also meant that any international interventions, inspections, or investigations made on behalf of prisoners would only take place at the pleasure of the counter-revolutionary government.

Regulating Internment

Overlapping with the occupation forces' internment of soldiers and civilians, counter-revolutionary political internment and incarceration formally began in on August 20, 1919 with decree 194/1919 issued by the Ministry of Interior which stated that "The goal of internments is a preventative measure in the vital interests of state security."⁴² The order was born out of Hungary's maintenance of Law LXIII of 1912, which provided the state with emergency powers in the event of war, which had been activated in 1914.⁴³ In December 1919, Hungarian Minister of Interior Ödön Beniczky issued an amended order

⁴⁰ Statement by Dr. Imre Fritz to SDP, December 10, 1919, pg. 79-80, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by Olga Spitzer to SDP, December 15, 1919, pg. 97, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by Schwitzer Sándor to SDP, December 6, 1919, pg. 67, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL.

⁴¹ Great Powers were primarily concerned with the establishment of a non-communist, (ideally but not necessarily democratic and representative) government in Hungary as indicated by their negotiations with the Peyer government in the summer of 1919. "The Responsibility of the Entente Powers Respecting the Political Persecutions in Hungary," LP/HUN/1/10/1.i-iv, LHA.

⁴² Belügyminisztérium Levéltár, Magyar Országos Levéltár (hereafter referred to as MOL), Alispán Iratok, 2140/1920; reprinted in Ferenc Pölöskei, *Hungary after Two Revolutions*, trans. by E. Csicséri-Rónay (Budapest: Akadémia Kiadó, 1980), 49.

⁴³ Pölöskei, *Hungary after Two Revolutions*, 47.

91383/1919.VI.a.B.M. which elaborated and expanded the carceral regime in Hungary.

The revised order called for the internment of foreign persons and native Hungarians who were deemed (1) “dangerous to public order and safety”; (2) suspected (*gyanus*) of being dangerous to public safety and order; and/or (3) “harmful” to the economic life of Hungary.⁴⁴ Those persons who were swept up into one of these categories were to be deported, in many cases with their dependents, to camps or other villages in order to concentrate the population of those who would be subject to strict surveillance or confinement by police authorities. If they were non-citizens, they were to be deported from Hungary altogether. So long as it was not gained through illegal means (smuggling, theft, requisitioning, or, profiteering), and thus subject to uncompensated state seizure, their property was to be transferred to the custody of the authorities. It would be used to pay for their and their families’ upkeep during their incarceration, or otherwise stored or sold off “at market value” (mainly in the case of food stores). The homes of internees were to be turned over to the relevant housing authority and would be immediately available for occupancy, unless all or some of the space was still necessary for the family of the internee. The order also provided an alternate arrangement of “police guard” for those, similar to a rigorous form of parole, whereby the individual and their family would be required to report to the police according to a set schedule and would be limited in their movements, socialization, communications, and labor.⁴⁵ The categories of persons outlined in the order were extraordinarily vague since arrest and internment could be made simply on the basis of “suspicion,” which practically suspended *habeas corpus* and

⁴⁴ Dezső Nemes, *Iratok az ellenforradalom történetéhez* [Documents on the history of the counter-revolution] (Hereafter abbreviated *IET*), 2nd edition (Budapest: Szikra, 1956), 239; Case against Dezső Andorka, pgs, 431-434, 1925, VII.5.c - 1925 – 8038, Bírósági-ügyészégi, BFL.

⁴⁵ Nemes, *IET*, 239.

due process of law in Hungary. It allowed the authorities to arrest and incarcerate persons without having to or being able to file formal criminal charges against them and provided internees with virtually no opportunities for recourse, as incarceration could be initiated on the basis of mere suspicion of harmful political or economic activity and required no evidence.

The law primarily targeted two groups, the first being “suspect” foreigners and their families. This language was technically inclusive of all non-citizens in Hungary who were deemed by the authorities to be a threat to Hungary’s security. However, Galician Jewish refugees who had fled to Hungary during the fighting on the eastern front during World War I, and who had stayed in Hungary following the armistice, were especially vulnerable to internment, because of the confluence of their ethnic and legal status in the anti-Semitic political climate.⁴⁶ Likewise, the Russian wives of Hungarian veterans and former POWs were also interned because of concerns that they would import communism to Hungary.⁴⁷ The second group targeted was leftists, including all those who had ties of any sort to the governments of Kun and Károlyi. This included not only actual members of political parties or those directly responsible for the formulation of state policy in both revolutionary regimes, but any of those individuals who had been involved in trade unions, election activities, or employed by the government in any capacity. This was potentially a very large group given the nationalization policies enacted by the Soviet government, which had turned many people previously employed in private industry into public employees. Individuals targeted for internment were called

⁴⁶ Tamás, Kovács, “Az internálás mint rendészeti válasz állambiztonsági és államrendészeti kihívásokra 1919-1945 között,” *A Pécsi Határőr Tudományos Közlemények hivatalos honlapja*, vol. XIII (2012), 431, accessed July 11, 2014, <http://www.pecshor.hu/periodika/XIII/kovacst.pdf>.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 433.

upon to outline their personal, professional, and economic activities going back all the way to August 1, 1914, which would both allow authorities to identify their political leanings and to determine whether someone was or had been a drain on the economic resources of the Hungary.⁴⁸

The internment order created a legal architecture for what was actually the dispossession and imprisonment of persons regarded as dangerous to the stability of the newly independent Hungarian state, a charge which was extremely vague and highly flexible. Moreover, this architecture was designed in many cases to legitimize the imprisonment those who had been incarcerated weeks and months without charge. According to Andorka, Vilmos Böhm, an exiled Social Democratic politician in Vienna, and others, the internment order was specifically intended to provide the state with legal basis to incarcerate those against whom no formal criminal charge could be brought.⁴⁹ This law supplemented the new regime's use of existing criminal laws (discussed in the previous chapter) to prosecute people for enacting the various policies of the revolutionary regimes, which had operated according to a wholly different set of ideological principles and which envisioned a completely different social and economic organization for the country (see chapter three).⁵⁰

Employing an ambiguous language of state security, which had been used to varying degrees by all states following the outbreak of war in 1914 to enact emergency

⁴⁸ Case against Dezső Andorka, pg. 432-434, 1925, VII.5.c - 1925 – 8038, Bírósági-ügyészségi, BFL; Rebekah Klein-Pejšová, "Among the Nationalities: Jewish Refugees, Jewish Nationalities, and Czechoslovak Statebuilding" (PhD. diss., Columbia University, 2007), 28; Article 4 of Order 4352/1919 of Ministry of Interior, March 27, 1920, LP/HUN/1/41, pg. 4, LHA.

⁴⁹ "The Responsibility of the Entente Powers Respecting the Political Persecutions in Hungary," n.d., LP/HUN/1/10.iii, LHA.

⁵⁰ The criminalization of political acts is born out in the thousands of case files in the Budapest Municipal Archives' Criminal Court Records. This dimension of transitional justice was also discussed at the time. Report by Vilmos Böhm to Labour Party Information Bureau, 5 March, 1920, LP/HUN/1/13.iv. LHA.

measures, the counter-revolutionary internment order emerged out of, but also prolonged, a state of emergency in postwar Hungary where the reinstitution of law and order was concerned. The order helped legitimize (*ex post facto*) arrests and incarcerations which had been carried out by judges, prosecutors, police officers, gendarmes and militias since the summer of 1919. The internment order was one of the most important pieces of transitional justice legislation to emerge from the early counter-revolutionary regime, as the goal of the law was to marginalize radical leftists in Hungarian political culture, and to punish those identified as enemies of “Christian national” Hungary.

Over the course of five years, the laws regulating political incarceration and internment, were amended and amnesties were issued. In March 1920 Prime Minister Sándor Simonyi-Semadam issued a new regulation which only slightly altered the language of the December 1919 order. As a result of negotiations between Károly Peyer and István Bethlen, in 1920 more substantive changes were introduced in regulation 13920/1920. These revisions called for all internments to be reviewed within three months, and for the results of such reviews to be presented to the Minister of the Interior in order to decide whether the proceedings against internees should proceed or be dropped.⁵¹ This change, it appears, helped lead to the paroling of a significant amount of prisoners, at least from the Zalaegerszeg internment camp. These were the last major changes to the regulations until 1922, when the Internment Section was transferred from the Ministry of the Interior to the control of the Department of Public Safety, although the ministry did maintain an interest in some of the affairs of the section.

⁵¹ Case against Dezső Andorka, pg. 440, 1925, VII.5.c - 1925 – 8038, Bírósági-ügyészégi, BFL; Kovács, “Az Internálás,” 431-432.

The “Internment Question” provoked significant debate in Parliament. There was concern among some Parliamentary representatives that the issue was harming both the state’s reputation abroad and the process of political consolidation for the new government at home. Publicizing the excesses of internment, as well as the on-going suspension of habeas corpus and due process, was a central point in the exiled labor leaders’ publicity against the counter-revolutionary government well into 1920. People such as Vilmos Böhm and Oszkar Jászi conceptualized internment as another dimension of White Terror that equaled and perhaps surpassed militia violence in terms of its significance and impact, describing internment as “legal terror.”⁵² In June 1921 Joseph Marcus, a representative of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), came to Hungary to undertake an investigation of internment camps and reported on the unsatisfactory conditions in camps to the New York JDC leadership (see chapter six). Further, charges of corruption in 1920 were lodged against the second head of the internment section, Laszló Barkóczy, who quickly became the target of complaints about the poor conditions in camps and prisons as well as of corruption and extortion. He was accused of serious corruption, including taking bribes in exchange for freedom, an offer some wealthier internees undoubtedly took.⁵³ He was ultimately replaced by János Baksa.

Despite corruption within the internment section of the Interior Ministry, many politicians continued to believe that even though the imminent threat of communist resurgence had passed, simply re-integrating former political internees back into society

⁵² Labour Party Advisory Committee on International Questions, Memorandum on the White Terror in Hungary,” n.d., LP/HUN//2/6.ii, LHA.

⁵³ Case against Dezső Andorka, pg, 445, 1925, VII.5.c - 1925 – 8038, Bírósági-ügyészégi, BFL; Kovács. “Az internálás,” 432-433.

was neither practical nor desirable.⁵⁴ Moreover, for many, the primary problem regarding internment was the corruption of officials, not the treatment of and the abuses and privations faced by prisoners. Therefore, in order to contend with such accusations and provide oversight in the internment section, rather than abolish internment, in 1921 the government enlarged the committee charged with overseeing internment. It also provided various political parties including the Social Democratic Party with the opportunity to send missions to one camp, Zalaegerszeg, in order to investigate the conditions there. The Social Democratic Party refused on the grounds that sending a mission was tantamount to legitimizing internment as an acceptable political tool, which stood in opposition to the party's position on all internment. But despite their refusal, other parties and groups such as the Christian Socialists and the Hungarian Workers Party, as well as the American Joint Distribution Committee, took the government up on their invitation. It is not clear whether such missions in the short term actually helped ameliorate the conditions of prisoners, but according to Tamás Kovács, the increased transparency and openness of internment facilities contributed to the subsequent and steady decline in the numbers of internees after the summer of 1921.⁵⁵

As time went on, and as the perceived threat of a renewal of Bolshevik activity receded to the background, a divide emerged between those who supported the continuation of internment others who called for its termination. In 1922, the Budapest Bar Association [Budapesti Ügyvédi Kamara] called for the Ministry of Justice to terminate internment on the basis that it was no longer necessary. The BÜK argued that internment had been necessary in the immediate wake of the Soviet Republic's collapse,

⁵⁴ Case against Dezső Andorka, pg, 445, 1925, VII.5.c - 1925 – 8038, Bírósági-ügyészégi, BFL.

⁵⁵ Kovács. "Az internálás," 435.

but reckoned that it was time to return to the established legal norms of a constitutional state such as due process and “double jeopardy.”⁵⁶ Though formally internment did not conclude until more than two years later, this petition helped initialize negotiations to end the practice.

Notwithstanding the political conflict over internment, in the first year and half following the collapse of the Soviet government, the combined results of the order and the use of criminal laws in regard to imprisonment were significant. Figures are imprecise for a variety of reasons, including the polarized political environment in which statistics were produced. Another reason for discrepancies is that thousands of persons were arrested and incarcerated by the regime for political reasons, although they did not necessarily ever spend time in internment camps, but were held in various prisons and barracks for undefined periods of time, especially in the first year after the collapse of the Soviet Republic in August 1919. Because the suspension of *habeas corpus* provided the state with a great amount of leeway to arrest and hold persons, the time spent in custody varied considerably and people often had no idea when they might be released as they had not been formally charged with a crime let alone sentenced for a specific period of time.

In any case, according to estimates by historians, 60,000 to 70,000 persons were subject to political incarceration at some point between 1919 and 1925.⁵⁷ In a May, 1920 letter, British internationalist, pacifist and feminist K.D. Courtney related the estimates

⁵⁶ Ibid., 437.

⁵⁷ István Mocsy, *The Effects of World War I: the Uprooted: Hungarian Refugees and their Impact on Hungary's Domestic Politics, 1918-1921* (New York: Social Science Monographs, 1983), 157; Robert Gerwarth, “Fighting the Red Beast: Counter-Revolutionary Violence in the Defeated States of Central Europe,” in *War in Peace: Paramilitary Violence in Europe after the Great War*, eds. Robert Gerwarth and John Horne (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 63.

on political internment to William Gillies, the International Secretary of the British Labour Party. According to Courtney's letter, approximately 46,000 were incarcerated either in internment camps or in prisons, while former Minister of War for both the Károlyi and Kun governments Vilmos Böhm estimated that 50,000 were interned and another 15,000 were imprisoned. Courtney, however, warned about the reliability of these estimates given that the government denied that there was internment in Hungary beyond the 2,000 persons held in a camp in Hajmáskér, a town not far from Székesfehérvár in Transdanubia.⁵⁸ There was no more clarity regarding numbers a year later when the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee reported that thousands were being interned even "after they had been pronounced innocent by courts or had served their respective sentences."⁵⁹ Though the scope of official counter-revolutionary internment continues to be debated, sources generated from the period nevertheless indicate that starting in late July and early August, 1919, every conceivable space of incarceration teemed with men, women, and children who were believed to have played a role in the establishment or bolstering of the communist regime.⁶⁰

The Practices, Experiences, and Interpretations of Internment

Counter-revolutionary internment came on the heels of a war in which the internment of soldiers and civilians had been a defining feature. Between belligerents there had been many shared principles, such as the differential treatment of officers versus enlisted men, which shaped wartime captivity, some of which were actually

⁵⁸ Letter from K.D. Courtney to Bruce Gillies, May 8, 1920, LP/HUN/1/34.iii, LHA.

⁵⁹ Marcus, "Is There White Terror in Hungary," 15, JDC.

⁶⁰ Mocsy, *The Uprooted*, 156.

enshrined in international law.⁶¹ Given the sheer number of Hungarians, an estimated 600,000, who had been POWs in Russia, it is likely that a fairly large number of Hungarians had become familiar with the aid practices developed or administered by relief organizations, such as sending parcels of food and clothing, which were intended to alleviate the suffering of those held captive.⁶² However, even if much of what characterized the Hungarian system of internment fits within the broader history of WWI-era captivity, individuals' experiences and interpretations of their confinement were varied and reflected individuals' ideas about social, ethnic and gender relations. Further, sources suggest that some policies were explicitly designed to affect specific groups of prisoners in particular ways, while other policies were uniformly applied but had divergent effects on different groups. The following pages will help illuminate the diversity of experiences and interpretations of counter-revolutionary internment by focusing on four main dimensions of incarceration as discussed by relatives or internees themselves: (1) accommodation and facilities; (2) organization; (3) food and clothing deprivation; and (4) physical punishment and violence. It is important to note that a good deal, though not all of what is known about counter-revolutionary internment comes from the reports of foreign investigatory commissions who went to Hungarian internment camps to gather information. As these reports contain and/or reflect the interpretations of the observers writing them and were commissioned by organizations with particular agendas, I have tried to use these sources in this chapter primarily for their descriptions, but not their interpretations, of the physical conditions of the camps, facilities and food

⁶¹ Text of "Convention with Respect to the Laws and Customs of War on Land (Hague II), 29 July 1899," The Avalon Project at Yale Law School, (Accessed 7 May 2012) http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/hague02.asp#art4.

⁶² Ivan Völgyes, "Hungarian Prisoners of War in Russia, 1916-1919," *Cahiers du Monde russe et soviétique*, 14, no. 1/2 (Jan-Jun., 1973), 54.

supplies. Discussion of these missions' interpretations will be presented in chapters five and six.

Accommodation and Facilities

The legacy of World War I was not just evident in the origins of the counter-revolutionary internment order. Continuity between the Great War and the subsequent development of the regime of political incarceration was also evident in the physical landscapes of confinement facilities. The camps used to house political internees, such as Osztiaaszonyfa, Hajmáskér and Zalaegerszeg, had been established or used as POW camps during World War I. The December 1919 report made by the International Red Cross regarding the conditions of internment in Hajmáskér specifically noted that the camp was constructed to house Russian and Italian POWs during and after the war, and also indicates that some of wear and damage to the camp during the war had yet to be repaired.⁶³ A year and half later, the physical evidence of the camps origins was still visible, according to the June 1921 report by Joseph Marcus. He wrote about his visit to the internment camp at Zalaegerszeg: "To the extreme left of the sign [reading Hungarian Royal Internment Camp], on a small hill, rises a forest of black crosses. Beneath them rest the remains of hundreds, if not thousands of Russian prisoners of war."⁶⁴ During WWI, the camp at Zalaegerszeg had housed prisoners-of-war, and like many of the POW camps on the Eastern Front, it been hastily constructed and did not make it through the war and the first two revolutions unscathed. By the time the counter-revolutionary regime

⁶³ ICRC, "Report on the Hajmasker Political Internment Camp," 7.

⁶⁴ Marcus, "Is There White Terror in Hungary," 65, JDC.

began using it as an internment camp, the barracks were in poor condition from almost continuous use, and from being looted by locals for firewood.⁶⁵

Although the camps may have been the most notorious carceral spaces, all manner of spaces were put to the use for confinement, particularly in the first six months after the collapse of the Commune. This included village gaols, holding cells, nursery schools and medieval fortresses.⁶⁶ Additionally, many persons were arrested and placed in the town halls of villages like Rákoskeresztur (now in the seventeenth district of Budapest) and Csepel, just outside of Budapest.⁶⁷ According to István Mocsy, “Every prison in the country was teeming with political prisoners...” and the shortage of confinement spaces became acute very quickly.⁶⁸ In a letter dated August 18, 1919, a representative from the Ministry of Justice requested permission from the Ministry of War to relocate those arrested on political charges to the second and third floors of the Margit Körut prison, a military prison, which was standing empty.⁶⁹ Written only eighteen days after the formal collapse of the Hungarian Soviet Republic, this letter indicates how quickly efforts to root out communism in Hungary intensified.

The system of political incarceration and internment was largely managed by a chaotic and overlapping web of civil and military personnel with different priorities and practices when it came to taking care of prisoners. In some cases, the local police or

⁶⁵ Ibid., 66.

⁶⁶ Statement by Jénő Klein to SDP, December 11, 1919, pg. 90, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by Ignác Schreiber to SDP, December 11, 1919, pg. 94, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by József Karácsony to SDP, December 18, 1919, pg. 113, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL. Eger Castle was cited as a place of internment, which was not unusual as many European countries used medieval fortresses during the war to house POWs and civilian internees.

⁶⁷ Statement of Mrs. Ignác Klein to SDP, November 18, 1919, pg. 20, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by Nándor Singer to SDP, November 19, 1919, pg. 22, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by Dezső Kaszt to SDP, November 27, 1919, pg. 38, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by Mrs. Ferencz Luthenberger, December 2, 1919, pg. 57, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL;

⁶⁸ Mocsy, *The Uprooted*, 156.

⁶⁹ Nemes, *IET*, 142-143.

gendarmes made the initial arrests while in others, arrests were initiated by officer detachments or local militias.⁷⁰ Many of the prisoners were at least initially held by civil authorities in the holding cells of village prosecutors until they were either released or transferred to another camp, prison, or military barracks, which were often staffed by military or former military personnel or white militias. Local judicial and legal authorities only had a very limited authority when it came administering justice and by extension, managing imprisonment. Statements to the Social Democratic Party frequently indicated that even when local authorities judged that proceedings should be halted, many people remained imprisoned or were re-incarcerated on the basis of orders from higher authorities in Budapest or threats from nearby National Army or militia detachments, who were often charged with transferring people to the larger camps or prisons.⁷¹ Thus,

⁷⁰ Given the role that local authorities played in arrests and interrogation, prisoners and the relatives who advocated on their behalf often were acquainted with those who initially arrested or denounced them and even provided their names to the Legal Aid Bureau. Some even went so far as to claim that their arrest came because of personal conflicts with members of local law enforcement. One complaint made by a widow Mrs. Dezső Goldstein said that the wave of thirty arrests in the town of Dunapataj came not because the arrested “had committed any serious crimes, but only because they [the arrested persons] are personal enemies and the arrests took place as part of the prefecture’s beastly revenge.” Of course, personal relationships could also potentially prevent or at least delay persecution, as in the case of Zoltán Majoros in November, 1919, who said that he was paroled because he knew the detective personally. Intimacy often characterized at least the initial phase of political imprisonment. Statement by Gyula Gichler to SDP, November 6, 1919, pg. 6, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by Antal Almási to SDP, January 2, 1920, pg. 135, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by József Halm to SDP, November 11, 1919, pg. 10, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by Zoltán Majoros to SDP, November 22, 1919, pg. 31, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by Miklós Kis to SDP, December 11, 1919, pg. 89, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by Mrs. Ferenc Kucsera to SDP, December 2, 1919, pg. 55, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by Mrs. Mór Róth to SDP, December 2, 1919, pg. 57, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by József Zaklukál to SDP, November 24, 1919, pg. 34, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by Nándor Singer to SDP, November 19, 1919, pg. 22, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by Mrs. Dezső Goldstein Dezsóné to SDP, December 6, 1919, pg. 69, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by Mrs. Ferenc Kucsera to SDP, December 2, 1919, pg. 55, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by Mrs. József Herót to SDP, February 6, 1920, pg. 251, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by Zoltán Majoros to SDP, November 22, 1919, pg. 31, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL.

⁷¹ Statement by Andor Reismann to SDP, November 28, 1919, pg. 39, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by Miksa Blitz and Juliska Blitz to SDP January 1, 1920, pg. 133, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by Géza Kállai Géza to SDP, November 25, 1919, pg. 37, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by Dr. Imre Fritz to SDP, December 10, 1919, pg. 79, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Marcus, “Is There White Terror in Hungary?,” 19-A, 20-A, 21-A, JDC.

the internment system as it developed was driven by the interplay of local and national, semi-official and official, civil and military authorities who conflicted over the state's legal transition.

The bureaucratic and administrative confusion encountered by many prisoners was mirrored in the number and types of confinement spaces many prisoners encountered during their incarceration. That is to say, while imprisonment and internment of political suspects was often initialized by local authorities, it rarely concluded in local jails. The majority of complaints about internment show that especially in Budapest and the surrounding towns, those who had been arrested were often transferred at least once from the place of their arrest and initial incarceration. It was often the case that after arrest and interrogation at the local police station, prisoners would be sent to either the military prison on Margit Körút in Buda or the Toloncház (a detention house originally used as a holding place for vagrants before their deportation to the countryside), and from there sent on to camps in the countryside. For those individuals initially arrested by officer detachments, imprisonment typically began in either the hotels that the leaders of militias resided in, or in the military barracks where their men were garrisoned.⁷² The multiple transfers between institutions made it very difficult for relatives and friends to find their loved ones, and many of the complaints made to legal aid offices were pleas for assistance in helping people actually find out where their incarcerated relatives had been taken.⁷³

⁷² Statement by Margit Tóth to SDP, February 7, 1920, pg. 254, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL.

⁷³ Statement by István Eckstein, November 7, 1919, pg. 7, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by Mrs. Ferencz Kecskés to SDP, January 28, 1920, pg. 240, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by Mrs. Andor Czako and Mrs. János Pataki to SDP, November 20, 1919, pg. 27, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by Gyula Schramm to SDP, January 19, 1920, pg. 219, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; pg. 235, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by Mrs. András Sávol to SDP, January 4, 1920, pg. 236, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by Lajos Eisler to SDP, December

Illustration in Print Copy held in CEU Library
 Fig. 4.1 “On the Way to Hajmáskér,” Mihály Biró, 1920.⁷⁴

Illustration in Print Copy held in CEU Library
 Fig. 4.2 Hand drawn etching “The prisoners’ barrack got from the Russian Siberia to Hungarian Siberia; separate guard, separate barbed-wire fence”⁷⁵

31, 1919, pg. 130, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by József Bartanek to SDP, December 5, 1919, pg. 62, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL.

⁷⁴ This image was part of a set of postcards produced by exiled artist Mihály Biró in Vienna in 1920. Mihály Biró, “On the Way to Hajmáskér,” *Graphic Witness*, accessed September 18, 2014, <http://www.graphicwitness.org/contemp/biro04.htm>.

⁷⁵ Case against Dezső Andorka, pg. 463, 1925, VII.5.c - 1925 – 8038, Bírósági-ügyészségi, BFL.

Illustration in Print Copy held in CEU Library

Fig. 4.3 “Detail of the camp. Barrack 19 and 20.”⁷⁶

Illustration in Print Copy held in CEU Library

Fig. 4.4 “Detail from the Zalaegerszeg internment camp.” December 25, 1921 by Sándor Fehér.⁷⁷

Much of the political and military disorder which characterized the period between the November 1918 armistice and collapse of the Commune abated by the spring of 1920. However, widespread political imprisonment did not, and in fact, it had been

⁷⁶ Case against Dezső Andorka, pg, 766, 1925, VII.5.c - 1925 – 8038, Bírósági-ügyészségi, BFL.

⁷⁷ Case against Dezső Andorka, pg, 765, 1925, VII.5.c - 1925 – 8038, Bírósági-ügyészségi, BFL.

institutionalized by the early months of 1920 as a consequence of the internment order. By January 1920, the requests to the Social Democratic Party generally shifted away from requests for help finding relatives and instead focused on reporting abuses and poor living conditions, and requesting help to improve their relatives' lives in captivity.

Among the most common complaints and concerns about confinement between 1919 and 1921 were those regarding the physical conditions of cells and barracks in prisons and camps as well as overcrowding.⁷⁸ British Plenipotentiary Thomas Hohler expressed his concerns about overcrowding following his visit to the Hajmáskér camp in May 1920, and was quickly assured by Prime Minister Simonyi-Semadam that better barracks were under construction and would be finished well before prisoners would be harmed by exposure.⁷⁹

Many people submitted complaints to the Social Democratic Party's Legal Aid Bureau such as widow Mrs. Rezső Horváth, who told the bureau that her son had complained to her that in prison "it is the filthiest there, that there are scabies and rain is constantly coming in."⁸⁰ Another made a similar claim that the conditions prisoners were kept in were filthy, and a report given by three women whose husbands were interned in a camp in Cegled outside of Budapest commented on the cleanliness of the cells and declared that the prisoners "are exposed to the greatest deprivation".⁸¹ A reporter said that

⁷⁸ Marcus, "Is There White Terror in Hungary," 97, JDC; Statement by Mór Zsolnai, November 16, 1919, pg. 17, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by Jénő Vajda to SDP, November 18, 1919, pg. 19, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL.

⁷⁹ Letter from Thomas Hohler to Prime Minister Simonyi-Semadam, May 5, 1920, LP/HUN/1/39.i-ii, LHA; Letter from Prime Minister Simonyi-Semadam to Thomas Hohler, May 16, 1920, LP/HUN/1/40.i-ii, LHA.

⁸⁰ Statement by Mrs. Rezső Horváth to SDP, November 17, 1919, pg. 15, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, pg. 15, PIL.

⁸¹ Statement by József Halm to SDP, November 11, 1919, pg. 10, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, pg. 10, PIL; Statement by Mrs. Károlyi Seres to SDP, December 1, 1919, pg. 51, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL.

during his visit to a prison in Budapest, he found many prisoners confined to dirty cells, sitting in complete darkness.⁸² One complaint stated that the prisoners were forced to lay in “dirty rotten straw that was full of lice.”⁸³ A description of the conditions endured by a woman held in the Kelenföld barracks was fairly representative of those noted by other prisoners or internees: “She remained in Kalenfold (sic) five weeks—tow (sic) weeks on straw on the floor with twelve or fourteen others. This cellar was about 15 ft. square with a low ceiling; no washing, no change of clothes, no medical attendance.”⁸⁴ In Joseph Marcus’ June 1921 report for the American Joint Distribution Committee, he explained that the barracks were in horrible condition in part because peasants in the surrounding areas had stripped wood from them during the revolutions to supplement their firewood and coal supplies.⁸⁵ This contributed to the structure’s poor condition and to the prisoners’ exposure to the cold. Exposure, in turn, made prisoners more vulnerable to infectious diseases or to the health complications associated with injuries sustained in the course of physical violence.

The December, 1919 report issued by the International Committee of the Red Cross on Hajmáskér camp confirmed, in part, the conditions described above.⁸⁶ The report indicated that prisoners were given a straw bed and blanket, but also stated that the latrines were numerous and clean. It also stated that there were no vermin with the exception of a few recently arrived prisoners, but also reported that the disinfecting

⁸² Sándor Lestyan, “Mi történik a budapesti fogházban?” *A Világ*, October 17, 1919.

⁸³ Statement by Mrs. Nándor Kriszmanich to SDP, December 11, 1919, pg. 91, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL.

⁸⁴ Marcus, “Is There White Terror in Hungary,” 33, JDC. The story was originally reported in British Joint Labour Delegation to Hungary, *The White Terror in Hungary* (London: Trade Union Congress and the Labour Party, 1920), 10.

⁸⁵ Marcus, “Is There White Terror in Hungary,” 67, JDC. The country had been suffering from a lack of coal because of the blockade and the requisitions of the Romanian army.

⁸⁶ International Committee of the Red Cross, “Report on the Hajmasker Political Internment Camp,” in

machine was broken. The ICRC also reported that Hajmáskér had adequate kitchen and laundry facilities, which it stated were primarily used by the female inmates. This suggests that the gendered division of labor which defined such “domestic” tasks like laundry and cooking as women’s work was at least in part, reproduced in internment camps. Despite the relatively positive portrait of the camp, the ICRC also reported that due to the freezing of pipes, there were no showers or baths, nor was there soap, owing to the country’s economic and transportation problems. A year and a half later, on an April 1921 visit to Zalaegerszeg camp, Joseph Marcus reported that there were no showers in the camp.⁸⁷

Because of the lack of these amenities combined with overcapacity, it is easy to see how quickly conditions could devolve in overcrowded camps and prisons, even if they were as pristine as the first ICRC report claimed, which is doubtful. In an exposé about the conditions of political prisoners published in the newspaper *A Világ* in October 1919, the author claims that upon his personal visit to a prison and detainment center in Budapest, he found serious overcrowding.⁸⁸ In the first prison he visited, the prison officially only had space to hold 939 prisoners, but was actually holding 2191 men and 162 women, and at its largest headcount to date had held 2504 prisoners. This number was double the amount of prisoners held by the communists in the same facility earlier in 1919. The second facility he visited also held double the maximum capacity of 300 prisoners.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Marcus, “Is There White Terror in Hungary,” 68, JDC.

⁸⁸ *A Világ* was the official press organ of the Freemasons and was leftist oriented. Lestyán, “Mi történik a budapesti fogházakban?” *A Világ*, October 17, 1919.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

*Illustration in Print Copy held in CEU Library*Fig. 4.5 “Horthy: ‘No Complaint reached us against [sic] the treatment.’”⁹⁰

Owing to the overcrowded conditions of prisons and camps, the spread of infectious diseases was a problem from early on. Although the ICRC report on Hajmáskér in December, 1919 indicated that there was no outbreak of contagious diseases at the camp, other sources suggest that prisons and internment camps were rife with diseases particularly tuberculosis and syphilis, and were also plagued by lice and scabies, which spread quickly in prisons and camps, even among those who had arrived healthy.⁹¹ Compounding the spread of disease were the physical injuries faced by prisoners who had been subject to beatings and other physical punishments while in prison, malnutrition in prison. Moreover, disease made more routine health events such as childbirth even riskier, given the poor conditions of prisons and lack of adequate medical care. Yet despite this, at least a few women were recorded as giving birth during their political incarceration.⁹²

⁹⁰ Mihály Biró, “On the Way to Hajmáskér,” *Graphic Witness*, accessed September 18, 2014, <http://www.graphicwitness.org/contemp/biro08.htm>.

⁹¹ Lestyán, “Mi történik a budapesti fogházban?” *A Világ*, October 17, 1919

⁹² According to the report written by journalist Sándor Lestyán, at least one woman gave birth while incarcerated in the vagrancy detention center in Budapest. It is reasonable to assume that other women gave birth in camps and prisons, especially since in many cases, families were interned together and because technically special conditions allowed women in advanced pregnancy to give birth in hospitals or to remain

The December 1919 ICRC reported that the Hajmáskér camp was staffed with three civilian doctors to care for over one thousand prisoners in addition to daily visits from a military doctor, though it did note that there were not adequate medical supplies. The exposé published by Sándor Lestyán in *A Világ*, however, reported that for more than two thousand prisoners confined in the Budapest detention center, doctors only visited the prison twice weekly and that there were only two permanent doctors, two externs and eight nurses who staffed the infirmary. Lestyán also reported that prison guards turned the sick away and that it took weeks for even the most urgent cases to see a doctor. Many who desperately required medical attention in the camps and prisons were simply forced to go without while others were provided with inadequate care. The medical resources available to prisoners does not appear to have improved significantly even by 1921, as according to Marcus' report, in the Zalaegerszeg internment camp medical care for approximately twelve hundred prisoners was provided largely by two physicians who were internees as well as by a doctor who visited the camp which at the time held 1188 prisoners, twice weekly.⁹³ Given these circumstances, it was common for people to begin their incarceration as a healthy individual and leave an invalid.⁹⁴

Organization

In his 1921 report, Joseph Marcus stated that at the Zalaegerszeg camp there were five prisoner categories. Three of them, communists, spies and foreigners were “political”

at home. Marcus, “Is There White Terror in Hungary,” 90, JDC; Article 23 of Order 4352/1919 of Ministry of Interior, March 27, 1920, LP/HUN/1/41, pg. 14-15, LHA.

⁹³ Marcus, “Is There White Terror in Hungary,” 67, JDC.

⁹⁴ There are many statements in the records of the Social Democratic Party's Legal Aid Bureau which claim that after arrest and incarceration people sought medical attention for the injuries they sustained in prison.

and two, thieves, profiteers, were “criminal”. He claimed that all classes of prisoners lived together, without differentiating between prisoners belonging to each category.⁹⁵ Earlier, in late 1919 and 1920, at the level of local prisons, there was also concern about the lack of separation between those arrested for political reasons and common criminals.⁹⁶ This lack of differentiation went against the expectation that political prisoners should be treated as a special category of prisoner with special rights. However, the use of categories such as “spies” and “profiteers” and “foreigners,” and the use of criminal courts to prosecute those who had performed tasks according to the laws enacted by the Hungarian Soviet government, indicate that the line between political prisoner and criminal was extremely blurry. Moreover, the categories of prisoners at the Zalaegerszeg overlapped with anti-Semitic stereotypes of the time, which often cast Jews as price gougers and hoarders of valuable and scarce resources and food. This suggests that categorizations were heavily informed by negative characterizations of Jews and were intended to have a racialized impact on Jews, many of whom did not have Hungarian citizenship and were engaged in trade and merchant activity. This made them very vulnerable to accusations of economic harm to the state.

The lack of differentiation between criminals and political prisoners was also discussed in an October 1919 article regarding the conditions of a Budapest prison which held thousands of people arrested for political crimes after the collapse of the communist government. When discussing the women’s section of the prison, the writer noted that all the women prisoners were all held together, including those prisoners who had

⁹⁵ Marcus, “Is There White Terror in Hungary,” 69, JDC.

⁹⁶ Marcus, “Is there White Terror in Hungary?” 88, JDC.

“infectious syphilis” [*fertőző vérbajos*].⁹⁷ Noting the presence of syphilis among the female prisoners suggests that women held for political offences were being held together with the general population of “criminals”: specifically women arrested for (unregulated) prostitution. This was a charge which disproportionately affected impoverished women in urban areas in Hungary, and thus Lestyán’s observation very likely betrayed a concern not just about the cohabitation of sick and healthy prisoners, but also of an undesirable intermingling of women from different social classes.⁹⁸ However, it is also likely that women engaged in non-regulated prostitution were among those targeted by the counter-revolutionary regime for “political” imprisonment because they did not conform to bourgeois codes of sexuality. Many conservative-minded Hungarians had been outraged about the communist regime’s redefinition of gender relations (see chapter two).⁹⁹ Women involved in leftist politics during the early counter-revolutionary period were frequently associated with the dimensions of communism which had to do with liberal ideas about marriage and childbearing pejoratively called “free love,” which was defined as sexual relationships outside of marriage, and more liberalized divorce laws.¹⁰⁰ This stereotype created and/or perpetuated a link between working class women’s sexual “deviancy” (as opposed to men’s silently accepted “promiscuity”) and radical leftist politics.

⁹⁷ Lestyán, “Mi történik a budapesti fogházban?” *A Világ*, October 17, 1919.

⁹⁸ Susan Zimmermann, “Making a Living from Disgrace: the Politics of Prostitution, Female Poverty and Urban Gender Codes in Budapest and Vienna, 1860-1920,” in *The City in Central Europe: Culture and Society from 1800 to the Present*, Malcolm Gee, Tim Kirk, and Jill Steward, eds. (London: Ashgate Publishers, 1999), 183; see also Marcus, “Is there White Terror in Hungary?” 93, 95, JDC.

⁹⁹ Frank Eckelt, “Internal Policies of the Hungarian Soviet Republic,” in *Hungary in Revolution: Nine Essays*, Iván Völgyes, ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1971), 74; Cecile Tormay, *An Outlaw’s Diary*, vol. 2, *The Commune*, 73, 177-179 (New York: McBride, 1924).

¹⁰⁰ Tormay, *The Revolution*, 197-198.

Concern about miscegenation between the different categories of prisoners stemmed in part from concerns about the treatment of prisoners with different class origins. Class differentiation between recognized POWs was enshrined in international law, and practiced during World War I. Differential treatment of officers, who typically came from the upper echelons of society, and rank and file soldiers was an important dimension of the international conventions regarding the treatment of POWs and was, generally speaking, respected during the war.¹⁰¹ Class differentiation was also a well-developed, though not universal practice among belligerent states during WWI who imprisoned *civilians*, as the memoir of Mihály Károlyi suggests, when he recounted special treatment he was offered by French authorities in the autumn of 1914.¹⁰² Likewise, in post-World War I Czechoslovakia, President Masaryk specifically ordered the Slovak authorities overseeing the political internment of suspected “bolsheviks” to differentiate between classes in internment facilities.¹⁰³

Article 23 of the revised counter-revolutionary internment regulations issued in 1920 in Hungary provided for differentiation of prisoners on the basis of class origins, recognizing that persons with superior financial resources would be able to enjoy better internment conditions than poorer prisoners, owing to the fact that prisoners’ own financial resources would be used for their upkeep.¹⁰⁴ However, in spite of the letter of the law, there is no evidence of systematic differentiation between social classes in terms of facilities or treatment in prisons or camps. In fact, the state’s lack of differentiation between the official categories of prisoners to be incarcerated in a single facility, and

¹⁰¹ Jones, *Violence against Prisoners of War*, 143.

¹⁰² Károlyi, *Fighting the World*, 41.

¹⁰³ Huebner, “The Internment Camp at Terezin, 1919,” *Austrian History Yearbook* 27 (January 1996): 204.

¹⁰⁴ Article 23 of Order 4352/1919 of Ministry of Interior, March 27, 1920, LP/HUN/1/41, pg. 3, LHA.

between prisoners of different social classes in counter-revolutionary Hungary, was commented on and derided by outside observers and investigatory commissions who described the deplorable conditions endured by people of “refinement” who were incarcerated.¹⁰⁵ However, the sources composed by internees or the relatives pleading on their behalf were not concerned with the issue, instead emphasizing their more pressing material and physical needs and deprivations. Placing those persons accused of political crimes with common criminals was very likely the result of a perfect storm of an acute lack of carceral facilities (the consequence of mass punishment), coupled with the state’s desire to humiliate those regarded as the political enemies.

Most of the sources which discuss the conditions of imprisonment show that, at least in prisons, the main source of differentiation between prisoners was on the basis of sex.¹⁰⁶ From the perspective of authorities, such sex-based differentiation was important so as to ensure the maintenance of “morality” in prisons and camps and to prevent the spread of infectious (venereal) disease between prisoners. Even though Hungarian sources and reports of foreign observers repeatedly indicate facility overcrowding, they also indicate that such sex-based differentiation was consistently applied.¹⁰⁷ However, in cases where whole families, primarily those of Galician-Jewish refugees, were deported to camps together, it appears that depending on the facility, families might be confined together where in others, the female and male family members were separated from each other in single sex barracks.¹⁰⁸ According to Marcus’ during his first visit to Hungary

¹⁰⁵ See Marcus, “Is There White Terror in Hungary,” JDC.

¹⁰⁶ According to information collected by the British Joint Labour Delegation from an article about life in the women’s prison in Budapest, there was an exception to the segregation of men and women as there was a Jesuit priest locked up with the women, but even the author noted its irregularity. N.a., “In the Women’s Prison, Budapest,” LP/HUN/5/46/13.i, LHA.

¹⁰⁷ Joint Labour Delegation, *The White Terror in Hungary*, pg. 11.

¹⁰⁸ Statement by László Liska to SDP, January 26, 1920, pg. 238, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL.

(but not personally to internment camps) in the spring of 1921, interned and incarcerated women enjoyed more freedom than men who were kept under heavier surveillance.¹⁰⁹

For many people who gave statements to the Social Democratic Party as well as others, the incarceration of women by the authorities seems to have been a troubling dimension of counter-revolutionary political repression. From the figures provided by commissions and witnesses, as well as from my research on the political trials carried out by the criminal courts in Budapest, the overwhelming number of prisoners and internees were male. The International Committee of the Red Cross Committee, for example, noted in their report on conditions at Hajmáskér camp that of the 1004 prisoners, only 38 were women.¹¹⁰ Many plaintiffs made a special mention of female prisoners, accounting for them separately from men by saying things such as, “there were 736 prisoners, including 15 women.”¹¹¹ In camps like Piliscsaba, where most internees were “foreign” Jewish families awaiting deportation, women and children would have composed a larger percentage of the camp population, as would have the camp at Csót, where the Russian wives of former Hungarian prisoners of war interned in Russian were held.¹¹² Despite the small percentage of women imprisoned, it was a notable feature for many who witnessed the conditions of camps and prisons, especially at the height of their population, between 1919-1921.

Often people attributed the incarceration and internment of women by the counter-revolutionary authorities not to the activities of the women themselves, but rather

¹⁰⁹ Josph Marcus, “What Does Our Committee do to Help the Present Situation?” March 28, 1921, pg. 46, doc. 220048, folder 148.1, JDC.

¹¹⁰ ICRC, “Report on the Hajmasker Political Internment Camp,” 6.

¹¹¹ Statement by János Adorján to SDP, December 3, 1919, pg. 58, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by Mária Zsömbölyi to SDP, November 25, 1919, pg. 36, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL.

¹¹² Marcus, “Is There White Terror in Hungary,” 87, JDC; Kovács, “Az internálás,” 433;

to the relationships that women had with men as wives, lovers, daughters or sisters. These types of statements reflected the continued relevance of established norms which exempted certain groups such as women, children and the elderly from political violence.¹¹³ But they also reinforced the idea that women did not have political agency. However, but women prisoners themselves did not necessarily accept these characterizations. In Lestyán's article, for example, he specifically noted that of the 162 women held, 97 identified *themselves* as political prisoners. Similarly, in an article published on the woman's prison in Budapest, the author, while acknowledging that women's associations with political men played a role in some women's incarceration, also outlined the political activities and loyalties of women themselves.¹¹⁴ This suggests that even when observers regarded women as passive victims of men's political activities, many women regarded themselves as political agents.¹¹⁵

Historians have shown that even though in practice World War I was a watershed moment in the breaching of norms excluding "civilians" from violence, the ideas encapsulated by these norms retained their salience amongst the broader European population throughout the war and its violent aftermath in East Central Europe in general, and in Hungary specifically.¹¹⁶ This is evidenced in the reports and pamphlets published during the war, which outlined the atrocities committed by enemy armies. These reports tended to place violence against women, particularly sexualized violence like rape or genital mutilation, at the fore of their publications.¹¹⁷ The concern about the incarceration

¹¹³ Proctor, *Civilians in a World at War*, pgs. 4, 9.

¹¹⁴ N.a., "In the Woman's Prison in Budapest," LP/HUN/5/46/13, LHA.

¹¹⁵ Lestyán, "Mi történt a budapesti fogházban?" *A Világ*, October 17, 1919.

¹¹⁶ Proctor, *Civilians in a World at War*, 3.

¹¹⁷ John Horne and Alan Kramer, *German Atrocities: A History of Denial* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 14, 64; For examples of atrocity reports see Toynbee, Arnold J. Toynbee, *The German Terror in Belgium; An Historical Record* (New York, G. H. Doran Co., 1917); Arnold J. Toynbee, *The German*

of women in Hungary affirms, at least in part, the continued relevance of norms proscribing violence against certain groups. However, such concerns also implicitly denied these “exempted” groups agency as legitimate political actors, while simultaneously sanctioning violence against other groups, particularly military-age men.

Food and Clothing

Those who were imprisoned experienced acute food and clothing deprivation in the camps. According to internment regulations, internees were responsible for supporting themselves as their financial resources would be taken over and managed by the state.¹¹⁸ The text of the law recognized that this stipulation would generate inequality between prisoners because of differential financial resources. The idea of prisoners self-financing their own captivity emerged and was popularized among belligerents during World War I. Although international conventions explicitly stipulated that captor states were responsible for feeding their prisoners, states holding prisoners increasingly relied on humanitarian and philanthropic organizations as well as the relatives of the captives and the captives’ home states to supply prisoners with necessary food and clothing, regardless if the captor state actually needed the assistance.¹¹⁹

Terror in France (London; New York: Hodder & Stoughton, 1917); R. A. Reiss, *How Austria-Hungary Waged War in Serbia; Personal Investigations of a Neutral*, trans. J. S. Paris: A. Colin, 1915; Reiss, R. A. *Infringements of the Rules and Laws of War Committed by the Austro-Bulgaro-Germans; Letters of a Criminologist on the Serbian Macedonian Front* (London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1919); n.a., *Frightfulness in Retreat* (London; New York: Hodder & Stoughton, 1917); No Author, *Their Crimes*, trans. J.E. Adams (London; New York: Cassell, 1917); L. Mokveld, *The German Fury in Belgium; Experiences of a Netherland Journalist during Four months with the German Army in Belgium*, trans. C. Thieme (New York, G. H. Doran, 1917).

¹¹⁸ Articles 7-9 of Order 4352/1919 of Ministry of Interior, March 27, 1920, LP/HUN/1/41, pg. 4, LHA.

¹¹⁹ Heather Jones, “A Missing Paradigm? Military Captivity and the Prisoner of War, 1914-18,” *Immigrants and Minorities* 26, no. 1-2 (2008), 36; Matthew Stibbe, “Civilian Internment and Civilian Internees, 1914-20,” *Immigrants and Minorities*, 26, 1-2(2008): 65. See also Stibbe, “The Internment of

The development of this particular norm, which became standard practice over the course of World War I, was the result of two parallel processes: the increasing use of reprisals against military and civilian prisoners to “punish” states for their poor treatment of another states’ citizens/prisoners, and the development and growth of international humanitarian and philanthropic organizations which carried out camp inspections, raised money, and organized the transport and delivery of food parcels and remittances sent by families to their loved ones imprisoned abroad. These developments helped establish the precedent that states could increasingly foist responsibility for caring for their prisoners onto private charitable organizations and individuals.¹²⁰ Hungarian counter-revolutionary regulations were largely in line with this precedent of looking to non-state actors to provide or supplement provisions to prisoners and thus required prisoners’ relatives or the state to augment the system of incarceration.¹²¹ Furthermore, the principle of reciprocity, which during the war had been the main deterrent preventing captor states from treating prisoners-of-war harshly, was absent in counter-revolutionary Hungary. This was because many of those interned were either Hungarian citizens or non-citizen members of an ethnic minority (almost exclusively Jews), which none of the successor states was eager to claim after the war.¹²² Moreover, internees who appealed to international sectarian charitable and advocacy organizations such as the American Jewish Joint Distribution

Civilians the First World War and the Response of the International Committee of the Red Cross” and Richard Speed, *Prisoners, Diplomats and the Great War: A Study in the Diplomacy of Captivity* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1997).

¹²⁰ Jones, *Immigrants and Minorities*, 41-42; For more on the development of war-oriented philanthropic organizations see also Bruno Cabanes, *The Great War and the Origins of Humanitarianism, 1918-1924* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Merle, Curti, *American Philanthropy Abroad* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1988) and Oliver Zunz, *Philanthropy in America, A History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011).

¹²¹ Jones, “A Missing Paradigm?” 42.

¹²² See Carole Fink, *Defending the rights of Others: The Great Powers, the Jews, and International Minority Protection, 1878-1938* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); and Rebekah Klein-Pejsova, “Among the Nationalities.”

Committee, risked underscoring anti-Semites' and conservatives' claims that Jews and leftists were dangerous and anti-national elements, that they were part of an international (Jewish) conspiracy, and that they had unequal access to resources that Christian prisoners did not share.¹²³ Despite these very real concerns, the JDC did help fund food assistance programs which provided Kosher meals to Jewish prisoners in Piliscsaba camp, but this service did not extend to all the internment facilities where Jewish prisoners were being held.¹²⁴

Most sources indicate that the food rations provided by the state were inadequate.¹²⁵ In a November 5, 1919 complaint to the Social Democratic Party, two women named Mrs. Zsigmond Tóth and Mrs. János Molnár, whose husbands were interned at the Ujszaszi camp because of their service in the Red Army, complained that their husbands were only receiving turnips and pumpkin with no fat or salt and just a small roll a day (later on they were given half a kilo of bread). Additionally they said that one of the camp punishments was to deprive prisoners of almost all food for days at a

¹²³ Rather than use the binary "Jew and Gentile", The Joint Distribution Committee and documents submitted to the Pesti Izraelit Hitközség used the binary "Jew and Christian." The JDC was very careful to disseminate aid in ways intended to prevent or reduce animosity toward Jews. See Letter from Felix M. Warburg to Maud Nathan, Nov 30, 1920, MS 457, Box 191, Folder 5. Warburg Papers, American Jewish Archives (Hereafter referred to as AJA).

¹²⁴ Marcus, "What Does Our Committee do to Help the Present Situation?" 45-48.

¹²⁵ Statement by Mrs. Zsigmond Tóth to Mrs. János Molnár to SDP, November 5, 1919, pg. 5, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by Ármin Bárc to SDP, November 17, 1919, pg. 16, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by Mrs. Nándor Kriszmanich to SDP, December 11, 1919, pg. 91, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by József Halm to SDP, November 11, 1920, pg. 10, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by Mrs. József Ihász to SDP, December 5, 1919, pg. 63, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by Emma Frankó to SDP, December 3, 1919, pg. 60, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by Mrs. Ármin Helfgott to SDP, December 12, 1919, pg. 96, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by Regina Weinberger to SDP, November 17, 1919, pg. 18, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement to Alajos Kerbolt to SDP, December 16, 1919, pg. 106, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by Vencell Ruzsicska to SDP, December 17, 1919, pg. 108, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by Mrs. József Herót to SDP, February 6, 1920, pg. 251, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by Mária Zsömbölyi to SDP, November 25, 1920 pg. 36, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL.

time.¹²⁶ Another complaint made by Ármin Bárc on behalf of his younger brother, said that internees in the Szerb Utca prison in Budapest were subjected to starvation conditions, even though he had been allowed to bring his interned brother lunch.¹²⁷ One woman said that her son was only given a few rotten potatoes and pieces of dried corn while being held in an unspecified camp.¹²⁸ According to the expose in *A Világ*, the political prisoners being temporarily held in the Budapest Toloncház received food only once a day which consisted of soup and corn kasha. Those prisoners who were sick received slightly better food as their soup contained semolina. The author reported that he tasted the soup and found that it was just “clear water.”¹²⁹

Nearly one and a half years later, it does not appear that food rations for prisoners improved substantially. Marcus described the rations supplied in the Zalaegerszeg internment camp as follows:

Breakfast: Black water, called coffee, without sugar or milk.

Lunch: Soup devoid of fats, and some vegetable, such as beans, peas, potatoes or cabbage.

Supper: The same as breakfast.

In addition to this, “[prisoners] receive twenty five [dk] of bread per person. On Sundays a small piece of meat is served. A few sick and weak persons plus the eighty children receive small pieces of meat, about 14 deker [sic], daily.” Marcus wrote, “I have it from the officials themselves that the food is insufficient to keep the people alive.” According to a conversation Marcus had with an interned physician at Zalaegerszeg camp: “... the

¹²⁶ Statement by Mrs. Zsigmond Tóth and Mrs. János Molnár to SDP, November 5, 1919, pg. 5, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL.

¹²⁷ Statement by Ármin Bárc to SDP, November 17, 1919, pg. 16, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL.

¹²⁸ Statement by Mrs. Rezső Horváth to SDP, November 17, 1919, pg. 15, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL.

¹²⁹ Lestyan, “Mi történik a budapesti fogházban?” *A Világ*, October 17, 1919.

food the inmates are receiving is not sufficient to keep them in physical condition. [The doctor] therefore believes that the people are suffering a slow starvation...”¹³⁰

Illustration in Print Copy held in CEU Library

Fig. 4.6 “Political internees in the Hajmáskér gunner’s courtyard, searching in the trash for food.”

Adequate clothing in the camps was also lacking, and the physical conditions of camp facilities made this clothing shortage all the more acute as people had no real protection from the natural elements. Like food, prisoners’ own resources were supposed to be used to provide them with adequate clothing. The lack of clean underclothing and warm clothing in the fall and winter months of 1919 was worsened when visitors were arbitrarily prevented from seeing their relatives, or had difficulties traveling to the prisons or camps where their relatives were being held. Lack of adequate clothing continued to be a problem 1921 according to Marcus, who recorded the following in his report

¹³⁰ Marcus, “Is There White Terror in Hungary,” 15, 68, JDC.

I found a large number of people totally naked. In the hospital I found one man named Stein Huvo sitting near a burning stove. He was as naked as on the day he was born. Sweitzer, Silber, Klein and others were in a similar condition. Some were fortunate enough to have a pair of underwear to cover themselves, or an old coat....Little children...were lacking the most essential pieces of clothing. Underwear is a luxury.”¹³¹

Historical developments in Hungary probably played at least a small part in the amount and poor quality of rations provided to prisoners. During World War I Hungary, as part of the Central Powers, had been subject to the Entente economic blockade, which along with mismanagement of resources during the war had contributed to near famine conditions in the country. Conditions had become worse by 1919 because of the continued blockade, which was not called off until the summer of 1919. Territorial partitioning of the state from some of its most economically productive regions, as well as the activities of the Romanian army, which “requisitioned” Hungarian food stores, along with many other resources, for themselves during their occupation, put further pressure on the state’s food resources.¹³² But notwithstanding these challenges, it is likely that the state did not provide better rations because they did not have to. That is to say, the wartime experience had normalized the practice whereby prisoners would largely be responsible for their own upkeep and when they and their families could not help, private charities would step in. Sources indicate that the authorities did not feel compelled to provide better rations for prisoners, which contributed to the problems described above. Further, some people claimed that the state was manipulating and misdirecting its food

¹³¹ Marcus, “Is There White Terror in Hungary,” 67, JDC.

¹³² Kenneth Steuer, *Pursuit of an “Unparalleled Opportunity”: the American YMCA and Prisoner-of-war Diplomacy among the Central Power Nations during World War I, 1914-1923* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 123; Galántai, *Hungary in the First World War*, 292-294; Romsics, *Hungary in the Twentieth Century*, trans. Tim Wilkinson (Budapest: Corvina; Osiris, 1999), 85-86. The British Foreign Office during this period was very concerned about the lack of food, especially of its potential to reignite revolution. See records of the British Foreign Office FO/608/11 and FO/608/12, British National Archives, Kew, England (Hereafter referred to as BNA). It was not until spring of 1920 that the acute food crisis somewhat abated.

stores. In a statement to the Social Democratic Party, Mrs. Imre Horvath claimed that following a visit to her husband, who was imprisoned at the Hajmáskér camp, she saw huge warehouses filled with food parcels. She claimed that the authorities were showing international missions these food stores to prove their appropriate treatment of the prisoners, but that in fact, the food was being given to the guards.¹³³ Her statement not only charged the state with intentionally holding back necessary rations from its prisoners, but it also pointed out the problems associated with charging international missions with enforcing norms by noting that the true conditions in camps and prisons could be easily concealed, as missions had to rely on interpreters and prisoners who were under the threat of violence for information about camp conditions.

Prisoners' relatives and private charitable organizations did send or brought parcels of food and clothing to them to ameliorate the starving conditions in camps. These supplements and visitors were permitted after an individual had been interned for four weeks according to the ICRC report.¹³⁴ Prior to the December 1919 order, prisoners also were also heavily reliant on the visits of relatives to bring them food and clothing, and thus their access to resources was largely dependent on the conditions their relatives faced on the outside. Lestyán's article provided a description of families' participation in the carceral system. He wrote "In the pouring rain is a mass of a hundred storming the gate [of the prison], who are bringing food to the prisoners. Four or five weeks before thousands stood here in the queue with necessities, [but] already today there are fewer. Though the number of prisoners does not decrease, the poverty increases and the money

¹³³ Report by Mrs. Imre Horváth to SDP, May 6, 1920, pg. 351, PIL.

¹³⁴ ICRC, "Report on the Hajmasker Political Internment Camp," 7.

runs out for the relatives of the prisoners.”¹³⁵ The continued economic crisis in the country put pressure on the whole family and left little available to pass onto loved ones in prisons.

Between 1919 and 1921, the records of the Social Democratic Party and the Joint Distribution Committee show that supplementing relatives in prison and internment camps was a common practice. According to Marcus, while he was visiting the Zalaegerszeg internment camp, he heard the camp director tell four newly arrived prisoners, “*Write to your folks to send you food. It is very necessary.*”¹³⁶ Likewise, Marcus reported that “From all parts of the country, mothers, wives, sisters, etc. are traveling with food parcels for their beloved ones.”¹³⁷ The survival of many of these prisoners likely depended on the receipt of these parcels. This is why some people sought help from the Social Democratic Party, not to free their relative from state custody, but to ensure their relative’s access to these important supplements to their rations by helping arrange prisoner transfers to make such essential visits easier.¹³⁸

The sources suggest that all prisoners were subject to the same levels of deprivation in terms of their state-supplied rations. However, because the state allowed prisoners to receive packages from outside, some prisoners suffered more than others,

¹³⁵ Lestyán, “Mi történik a budapesti fogházban?,” *A Világ*, October 17, 1919.

¹³⁶ Marcus, “Is There White Terror in Hungary,” 68, JDC; Emphasis in the original.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 69.

¹³⁸ Statement by Mrs. Ármin Helfgott to SDP, December 12, 1919, pg. 96, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by Mária Zsömbölyi to SDP, November 25, 1919, pg. 36, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by Mrs. Zsigmond Tóth and Mrs. János Molnár to SDP, November 5, 1919, pg. 5, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by Emma Frankó to SDP, December 3, 1919, pg. 60, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by Mrs. József Ihász to SDP, December 5, 1919, pg. 63, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by Mrs. Nándor Kriszmanich to SDP, December 11, 1919, pg. 91, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by Ármin Barc to SDP, November 17, 1919, pg. 16, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by Mrs. Ignác Klein to SDP, November 18, 1919, pg. 20, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by Mrs. Alajos Kerbolt to SDP, December 16, 1919, pg. 106, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Marcus, “Is There White Terror in Hungary,” 101, 107, JDC. See Jones, *Violence against Prisoners of War*, 361.

particularly those whose relatives did not have extra money or supplies, or those whose families were not able to travel. Marcus noted this problem in his report, stating that he had it on the authority of the camp's doctors at Zalaegerszeg that the prisoners most susceptible to starvation were "those who do not have money with which to purchase something or those who do not receive anything from outside."¹³⁹ Thus prisoners from poorer working-class or peasant backgrounds appear to have been particularly affected by the food distribution policies and visitation policies of the internment authorities. Marcus also suggests that "foreign Jews" (i.e. those Jews who fled their homes during the war and remained in Hungary as refugees, but were now technically citizens of foreign states such as Poland and Romania) were also particularly vulnerable to malnutrition. He stated:

But there are innumerable people who do not have any relatives to look after them, particularly the foreign Jews. The Budapest Joint Distribution Committee has made several efforts to secure permission to supply the foreign Jews with food (the writer had no hand in those efforts). The government refused this privilege on the ground that it would arouse animosity amongst the other uncared for inmates of the camp, in view of the fact that all classes of inmates are kept together.¹⁴⁰

Thus, while provisioning policies may have been applied universally, they had very different effects on prisoners depending on their social background, citizenship, and their families' proximity to prisons and internment camps.

The lack of access to extra food rations and adequate clothing was one element of the internment experience that created a differential experience of internment between certain groups of prisoners. Another was the arbitrary denial of these privileges by the

¹³⁹ Marcus, "Is There White Terror in Hungary," 68, JDC.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 69.

camp and prison guards.¹⁴¹ In a complaint made by Mrs. József Herót, a man and his two daughters were denied clothing and food even though the other prisoners were permitted to receive them.¹⁴² Others told the bureau that they had been mistreated when they visited the camps or were denied access to see their relatives, even after they had previously been allowed to bring parcels. Still others told the bureau that the internees were persecuted when they came to greet their visitors.¹⁴³ In another case recorded in the Marcus report, soldiers administering the camp helped themselves to one prisoner's food.¹⁴⁴ While these incidents were egregious, they do not appear to have been systematically applied to certain defined groups of prisoners, which illustrates the arbitrary nature of political incarceration.

Lastly, particularly between 1919 and 1920, many people travelling reported that White militias often stopped and boarded trains and other vehicles searching specifically for Jews, who were then seized and beaten.¹⁴⁵ The dangers of travel encountered during the early counter-revolutionary period added another dimension to the vulnerability of prisoners, because they were so heavily dependent on supplements to their rations provided by relatives, many of whom travelled significant distances to camps and prisons

¹⁴¹ Statement by Mrs. Vencell Ruzsicska to SDP, November 17, 1919, pg. 108, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by Mrs. Nándor Kriszmanich to SDP, December 11, 1919, pg. 91, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by Mrs. Ármin Helfgott to SDP, December 12, 1919, pg. 96, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL.

¹⁴² Statement by Mrs. József Herót to SDP, February 6, 1920, pg. 251, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL.

¹⁴³ Statement by Ármín Bárc to SDP November 17, 1919, pg. 16, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by Mrs. Károlyi Kiss to SDP, November 13, 1919, pg. 11, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by Mrs. Nándor Kriszmanich to SDP, December 11, 1919, pg. 91, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by Regina Weinberger to SDP, November 17, 1919, pg. 18, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by Mrs. Zsigmond Tóth and Mrs. János Molnár to SDP, November 5, 1919, pg. 5, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by István Gregus to SDP, November 21, 1919, pg. 30, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL.

¹⁴⁴ Marcus, "Is There White Terror in Hungary," 33, JDC.

¹⁴⁵ Statement to SDP, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement to SDP, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; n.a., Excerpt from letter, December 22, 1919, LP/HUN/1/2, LHA; Marcus, "Is There White Terror in Hungary?," 40-41, JDC.

to visit. Moreover, the threat of danger while travelling disproportionately affected Jews, who were singled out for violence by militias, and therefore took significant personal risks by helping their loved ones.

Punishment and Physical Violence

One of the most common protests made by internees or their relatives was the extreme forms of violence they experienced upon arrest and during their imprisonment. This most often consisted of beatings by a variety of instruments including wooden cudgels, leather dog whips, and even metal or lead pipes.¹⁴⁶ The prevalence of physical violence seems to have varied significantly depending on the persons responsible for arresting and guarding prisoners. Those under the guard of the military of militia detachments appear to have been exposed to higher levels of violence, as opposed to those held by civil authorities. But harsh beatings were a systematic feature of imprisonment and internment during the counter-revolution, beginning at the moment of arrest and often continuing during longer-term captivity.

¹⁴⁶ Statement by Zoltán Pfeiffer to SDP, December 2, 1919, pg. 54, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by Mrs. Henrik Verő to SDP, December 12, 1919, pg. 95, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by Mrs. Mór Róth to SDP, December 2, 1919, pg. 57, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by István Gregus to SDP, November 21, 1919, pg. 30, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by Mária Zsömbölyi to SDP, November 25, 1919, pg. 36, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by Sándor Czako and Mrs. János Pataki to SDP, November 30, 1919, pg. 46, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by Jénő Váradi to SDP, December 12, 1919, pg. 98, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by Mrs. Alajos Kerbolt to SDP, December 16, 1919, pg. 106, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by Katalin Tomane to SDP, December 13, 1919, pg. 103, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by Mrs. Vencell Ruzsicska to SDP, December 17, 1919, pg. 108, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by Ferencz Csendes to SDP, January 19, 1920, pg. 217, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by Ignác Kaufer to SDP, February 7, 1920, pg. 253, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by Mrs. János Zachar to SDP, January 28, 1920, pg. 239, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by István Jobbágy to SDP, January 20, 1920, pg. 242, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by Mrs. Andor Fleischmann to SDP, February 3, 1920, pg. 247, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL.

The military provided a significant amount of the staff of internment camps, which Marcus claimed was an effort by the Hungarian state to circumvent the treaty terms laid down by the Entente that demanded that Hungary's government reduce the size of the country's military. Militias also arrested and imprisoned people in the military barracks for weeks or months. Consequently, prisoners held by these groups were subjected to forms of corporal punishment that was common in the military (although it had been formally outlawed). For example, guards at the camps used a particular punishment called "tying out" which entailed the following: "The victims [sic] hands are tied backwards. Then they tie his feet. A rope is swung over a branch of a tree or specially prepared post and the condemned is thus swung up in the air and left hanging on his tied hands and feet for a specified period"¹⁴⁷ (See Figs. 3.6 and 3.7). This practice was a military punishment which was a holdover from the pre-war period and while military reforms over the previous thirty years had moved to purge corporeal punishment from the military, the practice was reinvigorated during the White Terror, as the images suggest.

¹⁴⁷ Marcus, "Is There White Terror in Hungary," 70, JDC.

Illustration in Print Copy held in CEU Library

Fig. 4.7 “Hungarian Siberia.”¹⁴⁸

Illustration in Print Copy held in CEU Library

Fig. 4.8 “The Governor has a good time,” by Mihály Biró, 1920

Beatings were also frequently used by police and soldiers during interrogations, but were also appear to have been administered systematically in prisons and camps, often as a form of discipline to keep order in camps and as punishments for alleged crimes and for other infractions. The report by the ICRC indicates that their representatives received only a single complaint of a beating, but the depositions

¹⁴⁸ Case against Dezső Andorka, pg. 768, 1925, VII.5.c - 1925 – 8038, Bírósági-ügyészszégi, BFL.

collected by the Social Democratic Party report that regardless of age, ethnicity, or sex, prisoners held in multiple facilities frequently experienced beatings during arrest and confinement, some of which were so severe that they caused lasting physical damage or death. In one report stated that such a beating left the victim's "flesh in shreds."¹⁴⁹ The exposé written by Lestyán gives a similar description of violence against prisoners.¹⁵⁰ The documents collected by the Labour delegation contained multiple claims that pregnant women who were imprisoned were beaten and kicked in their abdoments so hard that they miscarried.¹⁵¹ In general, evidence indicates that severe violence was a common feature of incarceration and internment.

Collectively, the sources of the Social Democratic Party and the Joint Distribution Committee as well as the British Labour Delegation suggest that leftists and Jews were subject to similar violent treatment, including whippings, manual beatings and similar acts. However, in some depositions made to the Social Democratic Party as well as Marcus' 1921 report, people claimed that Jews were singled out for the most severe beatings.¹⁵² Since the Marcus report dealt with the conditions specifically of Jews under internment, it is not possible to confirm from these sources whether claims of such differentiation between leftists and Jews were accurate. It is also extremely difficult to determine how people judged what was more or less severe violence as interpretations

¹⁴⁹ Statement by Sándor Schwitzer to SDP, December 5, 1919, pg. 67, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by Mrs. Andor Czako and Mrs. János Pataki to SDP November 20, 1919, pg. 27, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by Mrs. Alajos Kerbolt to SDP, December 16, 1919, pg. 106, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by Jénő Váradi to SDP, December 12, 1919, pg. 98, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by Mária Zsömbölyi to SDP, November 25, 1919, pg. 36, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by György Kraft to SDP, January 19, 1920, pg. 221, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL. This is in addition to those who do not indicate whether beatings were constant and repeated or not.

¹⁵⁰ Lestyán, "Mi történik a budapesti fogházakban?" *A Világ*, October 17, 1919.

¹⁵¹ List of incidents to be investigated by Joint Delegation, LP/HUN/5/46/2.1, /10.iv, LHA.

¹⁵² Statement by József Kohn to SDP, November 29, 1919, pg. 41, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by Mrs. Márkus Grünberg to SDP, pg. 44, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Marcus, "Is There White Terror in Hungary," 68, JDC; Joint Labour Delegation, *The White Terror in Hungary*, 8.

and experiences of violence are mediated by gender, class, ethnicity and ideological perspective.¹⁵³ Furthermore, the intersecting identities of many of those making depositions to the Social Democratic Party as leftist, who were also of Jewish heritage, make it impossible to untangle their ethnic from the political identity, and prioritize one over the other.¹⁵⁴ Nevertheless, given the explicit targeting of Jews by militias described in chapter two, it is probable that Jews were vulnerable to higher levels of physical violence than non-Jewish internees, regardless of their political stripes.

The majority of those beaten survived, but there were those that became severely ill or even died as a result of them. The violence made prisoners even more vulnerable because of poor medical facilities in camps and prisons.¹⁵⁵ In one report made by Mrs. Katalin Toma, she stated that beatings administered on her brother-in-law during his imprisonment had led to his death. She claimed that her sister-in-law had received notification that her husband had died during a year of captivity as a result of heart failure. However, when a second autopsy of the body was made, the physician determined that her brother-in-law “died violently in prison from a blow to the head.”¹⁵⁶

Some individuals claimed that the repeated beatings were a form of psychological torture, as in the case of Mrs. Jenő Klein’s father-in-law who claimed that the constancy of the beatings had left him in a state of “hopelessness” and he was “close to going

¹⁵³ Lawrence L. Langer, “Gendered Suffering? Women in Holocaust Testimonies,” in *Women in the Holocaust*, Dalia Ofer and Lenore J. Weitzman, eds. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998); Collins, “The Tie that Binds,” 918-919.

¹⁵⁴ Collins, “The Tie that Binds,” 919.

¹⁵⁵ Statement by Mrs. János Zachar to SDP, January 28, 1920, pg. 239, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by Katalin Tomane to SDP, December 13, 1919, pg. 103, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by Mrs. Vencell Ruzsicska to SDP, December 17, 1919, pg. 108, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by Mrs. Mór Róth to SDP, December 2, 1919, pg. 57, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by Jénő Ehrental to SDP, December 10, 1919, pg. 86, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by Mrs. Dezső Goldstein to SDP, December 6, 1919, pg. 69, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL.

¹⁵⁶ Statement by Katalin Tomane to SDP, December 13, 1919, pg. 103, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL.

crazy”.¹⁵⁷ According to another report from Mrs. Dezső Goldstein, prisoners themselves were compelled to beat each other in order to gain confessions of terrorism, leading some to attempt suicide.¹⁵⁸ For others, beatings were merely precursors to more extreme forms of physical torture, as in the case of the husband of Mrs. Henrik Verő, who wrote to his wife claiming that on top of regular beatings, his and other prisoners’ feet had been mutilated, or in the case of Mrs. Alajos Kerbolt whose interned husband’s “situation was desperate because they are constantly beating him, and he sent a message to help him because they’ll kill him”.¹⁵⁹ In another report, György Kraft claimed that the authorities had pulled out his tooth.¹⁶⁰

Sexualized violence was another aspect of incarceration. The most infamous case of Mrs. Hamburger discussed in chapter two (and which will be revisited in chapters five and six), occurred while she was imprisoned by the Héjjas militia for five weeks.¹⁶¹ In another report published in the British Joint Delegation’s report, the “Jewish of Putnok” was raped while in jail because of a denunciation that she had been a communist. She was held only for one week in the jail, and was guarded by a militia detachment. During this period, the guard attempted to exchange higher quality rations and good lodging for sex, which according to the report, she refused. Finally, after repeatedly refusing to become the mistress of the guard, he raped her several times and then allowed her to

¹⁵⁷ Statement by Mrs. Jénő Klein to SDP, December 11, 1919, pg. 90, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL. Another report makes a similar claim of “nervous injuries,” Statement by Jénő Vajda to SDP, November 18, 1919, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, pg. 19, PIL.

¹⁵⁸ Statement by Mrs. Dezső Goldstein to SDP, December 6, 1919, pg. 69, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, pg. 69, PIL.

¹⁵⁹ Statement by Mrs. Henrik Verő to SDP, December 12, 1919, pg. 95, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL; Statement by Mrs. Alajos Kerbolt to SDP, December 16, 1919, pg. 106, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL.

¹⁶⁰ Statement by György Kraft to SDP, January 19, 1920, pg. 221, Fond 658, Allag 10, Dossier 3, PIL. A similar incident was included in the Joint Labour Delegation, *The White Terror in Hungary*, 11.

¹⁶¹ Joint Labour Delegation, *The White Terror in Hungary*, 8-11.

escape.¹⁶² She discovered she had become pregnant as a result of the assault. According to the 1921 report by Joseph Marcus, sexual assault was common at the Zalaegerszeg camp. He recounted the story of “Miss A.F.” who was the daughter of a synagogue president who was arrested and imprisoned. Because she was educated, she was placed in a work assignment in the prison office and was raped by her boss, Milos Smoling, who Marcus claimed had assaulted many Jewish women who came to him on behalf of their male relatives. When A.F. accused him of rape, he had her interned.¹⁶³ Marcus also reported the case of a Polish Jewess named Miss E.Y. who was forced to clean a “very neglected toilet” while interned and became ill from the hard work because she is “a refined girl.” The next day, she refused to do similar work and was verbally abused by a camp guard who called her a prostitute and forced her to go to the infirmary for a gynecological exam.¹⁶⁴ The case of E.Y. suggests that women faced distinctive forms of violence in state custody that involved forcible sex as well as other sexualized threats such as compulsory gynecological exams and unwanted fondling. However, it also suggests that class played an important role in interpreting sexualized violence. Compulsory gynecological exams were performed by the state for public health purposes years before the outbreak of war. They were typically performed on women, largely from the impoverished and working classes, who were arrested for unregulated prostitution. Marcus’ report on the use of such exams in Piliscsaba camp, which was used primarily to house Jews set for deportation, suggests that the regime used these invasive exams as a

¹⁶² Ibid., 16-17.

¹⁶³ Marcus, “Is There White Terror in Hungary,” 39, JDC.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 89-90.

specific form of punishment for female internees used in part to violate their “respectability”.¹⁶⁵

Sexual violence also appears to have been common not just for just actual prisoners but was experienced by their relatives who visited or attempted to get them freed. Moreover, internment of family members opened up whole families to increased surveillance and persecution by state officials. Related to this, some of the reports indicate that wives and daughter of internees were vulnerable to violence, including sexualized violence. In one incident two women whose husbands were interned were sexually assaulted after they were called to the municipal building by soldiers.¹⁶⁶ This incident, along with others, show that the violence of incarceration and internment was not relegated to the prisoner alone but often affected their entire families, whether or not they too were incarcerated.

It is difficult to determine exactly how prevalent sexualized violence was during internment. Historically sexual violence against both women and men has been a notoriously underreported crime largely because victims are often made to feel responsible for their own violation, or because social norms usually attach a great amount of shame to unsanctioned sexual contact.¹⁶⁷ Nevertheless, stories of sexual violence played an outsized role in cultural representations of internment and in leftist publicity against the counter-revolutionary regime. This emphasis on sexual violation reflected the conventions of atrocity literature which exploded during World War I and sought to publicize and sensationalize stories of sexual violence against women. These stories

¹⁶⁵ Zimmermann, “Making a Living from Disgrace,” 183-185, 187.

¹⁶⁶ Marcus, “Is There White Terror in Hungary,” 39, JDC.

¹⁶⁷ Joanna Bourke, *Rape: A History from 1860 to the Present Day* (London: Virago, 2007), 15-18.

dominated propaganda publications on both sides of the conflict.¹⁶⁸ The Hungarian counter-revolution was, in this sense, a point of continuity from wartime, as sexualized violence during internment had a central place in anti-counter-revolutionary stories presented in the leftist press, and in art and literature, particularly produced by artists who left Hungary after the collapse of the Soviet Republic.

One example of this literature is exiled writer Gábor Andor's book of three plays depicting life in the counter-revolutionary internment camps, published in 1922 in German as *Horthys Lager* and in Hungarian as *Egerszeg*. Both versions were published in Vienna, where he was living at the time. In the first play, entitled "Szűz Mária" [Virgin Mary], he focuses on the conflict between a mother and the internment staff regarding the mandatory gynecological testing of her virgin daughter Mária. The mother argued with the doctor that her daughter did not require an invasive vaginal exam for venereal disease because she was a virgin. The camp doctor, however, justified the exam on the basis of her employment as a teacher during the Commune, stating that her job indicated that she supported "free love" and therefore was presumably sexually active. He offered to bypass the exam if the mother would offer Mária to him. "Szűz Mária" illustrates the central place that sexual violence had in publicity efforts denouncing the horrors of internment and the White Terror more broadly. The play simultaneously highlighted the constant danger of sexual violation lurking in internment camps and underscored the immorality of the counter-revolutionary authorities who reportedly perpetrated such violations.¹⁶⁹

From the perspective of publicity, emphasizing sexual violence in the internment system was an effective way to discredit it. Efforts by the JDC in particular tended to

¹⁶⁸ See note 116.

¹⁶⁹ Gábor Andor, "Szűz Mária," in *Egerszeg: három kép a magyar életből és a magyar halálról* (Vienna: AMA Verlag, 1922), 21-

highlight the elevated social status of the victim like Marcus did, when he noted that Miss A.F. was the daughter of a prominent community member and a well-educated and refined young woman. They also emphasized the victims' adamant refusal to engage in illicit or promiscuous behaviors, like the story of the Jewess of Putok or Miss A.F. Miss E.Y. was required to undergo an exam because she defended herself against accusations of prostitution. As such they emphasized the victims' respectability and their conformity to bourgeois norms regarding sexuality in order to clearly show that such women were undeserving of such attacks.

Although the stories recounted above emphasized women as victims, the details regarding their assaults also suggest that women could deploy their sexuality in order to gain better conditions for themselves or their relatives while in prison. The Jewess of Putok was offered her freedom in exchange for becoming the mistress of the guard. In the incident involving Miss A.F., Marcus stated that she had observed many (Jewish) women being "violated" by Smoling when they came into the office to advocate on behalf of their incarcerated relatives.¹⁷⁰ These incidents hint that in addition to money, some bureaucrats and guards in the internment section may have been willing to accept, or demanded, bribes in the form of sexual favors in exchange for freedom or better conditions, although Marcus clarified that the above women did not yield to the temptation. It is not clear if this form of sexual coercion and violence was widespread or how many women may have engaged in it in order to help themselves or their relatives. However, the sources suggest that at least for some, sex may have been a currency that women could strategically deploy to ameliorate the conditions of imprisonment.

¹⁷⁰ Marcus, "Is There White Terror in Hungary," p. 39, JDC.

Conclusion

Political incarceration continued well into the 1920s because many convicted by counter-revolutionary criminal courts for their political activities were serving their sentences in prisons. However, internment camps had largely been disbanded by December 1924. Over the nearly ten years of operations between the war and its aftermath, camps like Hajmáskér, Zalaegerszeg and Csót had seen the composition of prisoners changed substantially from prisoners of war to political prisoners and deportees and finally to common criminals. Counter-revolutionary internment had originally been designed to marginalize leftists and “foreigners”, particularly Jews, from Hungarian society, but increasingly authorities used specifically the Zalaegerszeg internment camp as a place to send the capitol’s undesirables, including pickpockets and prostitutes.¹⁷¹ National minorities were also heavily represented among those still imprisoned. But generally speaking, the original goal of internment as a means to marginalize leftist political opposition and remove non-Hungarian immigrants from the troubled state, had receded to the background, although one might conclude that the camp ostensibly functioned as space for social and national, if not political, cleansing. After the closing of the Zalaegerszeg camp, the area was transformed into a sanatorium for those suffering from tuberculosis, something of an irony given that internment camps and other counter-revolutionary prison facilities had notoriously been hotbeds for the spread of infectious diseases, including tuberculosis, in the early years of the counter-revolutionary state.

Counter-revolutionary camps and prisons were important sites of counter-revolutionary violence and deprivation in Hungary. Institutions used for politically motivated incarceration were places where violence and deprivation was used

¹⁷¹ Kovács, “Az internálás,” 7.

systematically by state authorities to manage and control those persons deemed enemies of the state. Unlike the militias which had an ambiguous relationship to the state, the counter-revolutionary carceral state was formulated and regulated by the government and was regarded as critical, in both its successes and failures, to its legitimacy and its ability to concentrate, control and ultimately remove political threats from the rest of society.

As much as political incarceration was shaped by the revolutionary political struggle within Hungary, its design and implementation owed much to the broader European experience of the Great War, which helped set a legal pattern the new Hungarian regime could follow and even a physical infrastructure with which to start its work. Counter-revolutionary imprisonment and internment, then, was not only an important dimension of transitional justice, whereby the state sought to remove and punish the political remnants of the previous revolutionary regimes; it also was an important dimension of Hungary's transition from wartime to peacetime.

Persons involved with leftist politics in some capacity and Jews, particularly those who were foreign-born, were the primary targets for internment by a regime which was eager to settle scores against those persons and groups which they held responsible for defeat and revolution. But in addition to prisoners' ethno-political identities, which at times were one and the same, individuals' experiences of internment were also shaped by existing class expectations and gender norms. These same elements: class, gender, ethnicity and politics, also helped shape the interpretations of internment and the White Terror more generally by foreign missions which came to Hungary to investigate the conditions of internment and the White Terror more generally.

Chapter Five

Rousing the Conscience of the World

With the best of intentions, Great Britain has gone completely astray in her efforts to solve the Hungarian problem. It will be a humiliating and well-nigh inexplicable fact for the future historian that the diplomacy of Great Britain—of this most advanced Commonwealth of the world—played the principle part in rendering possible in Hungary the blood-stained and reactionary rule of Admiral Horthy.

*Robert Seton-Watson*¹

The activities of the Entente missions in Hungary, and probably also in other countries similarly situated, have, in fact, become a prying scandal and a burning shame upon the Entente democracies. With pathetic faith these unfortunate people cling to the hope that aid and comfort will come to them from the Western democracies. Whereas all they get is cynical militarists or hard-crusted lawyers completely out of touch with the democratic sentiment who are hand in glove with all the reactionary elements, who feast in the castles of Royalist aristocrats freshly re-instated in their feudal glory, and who secretly chuckle over if they dare not openly commend the vindictive bestiality of a victorious gentry over a beaten proletariat [sic].²

The words above, written in a letter from Camille Huysmans, the secretary of the International Socialist Bureau (ISB), to Arthur Henderson, a prominent Labour politician and former member of the War Cabinet in Great Britain,³ provide insight into reaction of the international socialist and worker's movement to the White Terror. Although the letter does not fail to mention the persecution of Hungarian leftists and workers, who Huysmans regards as "glowing idealists and Martyrs of Socialism whose memory must be enshrined in the heart of International Labour," the main thrust of his letter was his

¹ Robert Seton-Watson, forward to *Revolution and Counter-revolution in Hungary*, by Oskar Jászi (London: P.S. King & Son, LTD., 1924), vii.

² Letter from Camille Huysmans to Arthur Henderson, January 8, 1920, LP/HUN/1/1.i-ii, Labour History Archive, People's History Museum and Archive, Manchester, England (Document collection hereafter referred to as LHA).

³ Arthur Henderson had been a member of the War Cabinet until 1917, when he resigned. He had been on the wing of the party which supported—to a point—British involvement in the Great War. After resigning his post, he was heavily involved in the re-organization of the Labour Party, drafting a new constitution in 1918. He was also very interested in "international questions" and in the previous decade had been instrumental in building ties between the British labor movement and the continental movement.

expression of deep dissatisfaction with the lack of traction arguments and pleas against worker-targeted violence gained among the Entente governments. He implored Henderson, and according to his letter, other prominent Western labor politicians to use their power to exert influence over their governments in order to obtain the representation of labor on diplomatic and military missions to Hungary and to encourage Entente governments to remove their recognition of the “White Terror [regime] and replace it with a regime compatible with the notions of civilization before they have any dealings with the Hungarian government.”⁴

Huysman’s letter exemplifies response of the international labor movement to the persecution of workers and leftists by the newly established counter-revolutionary regime in Hungary. Huysman’s letter also highlights the significance of White Terror as an important international issue in postwar Europe. Violence played an important role in debates between Entente officials and labor politicians regarding Hungary in part because labor politicians regarded the Entente’s engagement in Hungarian political affairs as the key to stopping political persecution and violence against leftists. As the following pages will show, the debate was not simply about against whom violence was directed but over the very existence and scope of counter-revolutionary violence. At stake was a possible shift in the Entente’s entire policy in Hungary which, politicians feared, would have likely prolonged political crisis in the beleaguered state and instability in postwar Europe. This chapter will examine this contest between labor and Western governments by analyzing the competing narratives about the White Terror produced by British and American government representatives and the British Joint Labour Delegation respectively. It will pay special attention to how gender, class, and ethnicity of both

⁴ Letter from Camille Huysmans to Arthur Henderson, January 8, 1920, LP/HUN/1/1.iii, LHA.

victims and international observers shaped both narratives as well as the conclusions each group came to regarding the violence question in Hungary.

In order to tell this story, this chapter will begin by contextualizing the ideological and political transitions going on in the British and international labor movements in the last years of the Great War and the formulation of their “war aims” and policy priorities. Next, it will analyze the Entente’s, and particularly the American and British governments’ involvement in Hungary with regard to military occupation and political reconstruction following the collapse of the Hungarian Soviet Republic. This will provide a context for understanding the contents of the Parliamentary report of early 1920 and the Entente’s response to allegations of White Terror. Finally, it will analyze the labor movements’ reaction to the official governmental report, and to conflicting information it received from Hungarian labor politicians and other fellow travelers across Europe. It will examine the context of its prescriptions for action regarding Hungary, including the organization of an investigatory mission to be sent to Budapest. It will consider the production and content of the report from an intersectional perspective in order to understand how violence was interpreted to further specific political agendas and in order to understand how this international advocacy work reflected the political and ideological tensions within the international and British Labour movements.

International Labor, British Labour and the Great War

The Great War and its aftermath was a period of tremendous change and upheaval not just for revolutionary Hungary, but for the international labor movement which was

had been organized under the auspices of the Second International.⁵ By 1916, the Second International was all but completely defunct, though its “executive” coordinating body, the International Socialist Bureau (ISB), established in 1900, continued to operate. There was little in the way of ideological consensus between and *within* many of the parties affiliated with the Second International, even prior to the outbreak of war. The most significant divide was between the reformist wing of the International and the more radical wing which regarded reformism as a misguided attempt to reconcile the bourgeoisie-dominated political and social order with socialism. This ideological divide repeatedly manifested itself in a number of debates within the International, including the issue of socialism’s response to war and militarism.

The International took up the issue of war and militarism relatively early in its history, but it was only at the 1907 Stuttgart Congress that the body passed an explicit resolution on the issue. The resolution reiterated that unbridled capitalist regimes were responsible for war and also reaffirmed its commitment to the democratization of militaries and foreign policy as a measure to prevent offensive war, and promoted disarmament arbitration. But the statement did not offer any concrete strategies to oppose war.⁶ The general timidity of the statement reflected the inability of disparate factions to come to an agreement on a concrete policy to respond to war. For the leftist minority in the International, this was most deeply felt not in the inability to come to consensus about

⁵ Merle Fainsod, *International Socialism and the World War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1935); Georges Haupt, *Socialism and the Great War* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972); R. Craig Nation, *War against War: Lenin, the Zimmerwald Left, and the Origins of Communist Internationalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1989).

⁶ International Socialist Congress, *Proposals and drafts of resolutions with explanatory reports submitted to the International Socialist Congress of Stuttgart, 18-24 August 1907* (Geneva: Minkoff Reprint, 1977).

preventing war, but in the lack of commitment to *resisting* war when it broke out, which it would, since war was regarded as an “inevitable” dimension of capitalism.⁷

When World War I broke out in the summer of 1914, it split the international labor movement, with many parties abandoning an internationalist stance in favor for cooperation with the national war governments of their respective states.⁸ Although the political “truces” across Europe eventually broke down, the difficulties associated with moving beyond national boundaries contributed to the hardening of positions. This led to an institutional split at the end of the war, with the revolutionaries led by the Bolsheviks organized under the COMINTERN and the reformists were left to pick up the pieces of the Second International, which they reconstituted as the Labour and Socialist International in 1923.

However, while the Second International collapsed, the ideas it represented: internationalism, the solidarity of the working class across national boundaries, and socio-economic change, were revitalized by the end of 1916. The destruction of the war coupled with a belief that it had fundamentally discredited the “capitalist, bourgeois” governments which were responsible for the war encouraged a recommitment to the internationalism among many labor parties and organizations in belligerent states. Moreover, the outbreak of revolution in Russia reinvigorated the belief in class struggle and solidarity, socialism, internationalism, and democratization, and the militarized reaction of the Entente to it merely solidified the belief of many in the movement that labor was becoming ascendant on both the national and international political stage and

⁷ Nation, *War on War*, 23. See also Haupt, *Socialism and the Great War*, especially chapter 1.

⁸ In Germany “defensism” led to the *Burgfrieden*; in France, the *Union sacrée*. Haupt, *Socialism and the Great War*, 234-235; Michael Neiburg, *Dance of the Furies: Europe and the Outbreak of World War I* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2011), 152-154.

that the International (or an international labor organization) had an important role to play in reforming the international system.

In the last year of the war, the Second International worked to rebuild cooperation between national labor parties.⁹ In the months and years immediately following the armistice, the International took a strong stance on the war and the peace process. The International argued that the war had laid bare the ideological and political bankruptcy of the current system. It supported many of Wilson's war aims, promoted democratization over dictatorship and the right of self-determination. It organized against power politics and it was disgusted with both the slowness of the peace process and the final treaties which emerged from it, arguing that the treaties established new "international injustices" rather than eliminated sources of national and economic tensions between states.¹⁰ Unlike the prewar period, the reconstructed international labor movement was not focused on developing policies for a future, unknown crisis. Rather the concrete crises which plague post-armistice Central and Eastern Europe provided the International with an opportunity to test the renewed bonds of socialist brotherhood.

The debates and challenges which defined and tested the international labor movement were generally mirrored in British labor politics. Prior to 1918, the Labour Party (LP) was more of a coalition of multiple parties and trade unions than a single, all-

⁹ This was no small feat considering that arranging meetings where representatives from all belligerent and neutral states could be present was an especially difficult challenge as several governments would not allow representatives of enemy states on their territory prior to a treaty. This prevented, for instance, an international socialist conference to be organized in Paris, in order to formulate a labor program for peace, but Clemenceau would not allow representatives from enemy states in Paris, so the held the meeting in neutral Switzerland instead. Lewis L. Lorwin, *The International Labor Movement: History, Policies, Outlook* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press Publishers, 1953), 50-51.

¹⁰ The Labour Party, "The International at Lucerne: The Resolutions. The Provisional Constitution" (London: Labour Party, 1919), 3-4.

purpose party with a unified agenda.¹¹ This loose structure of many different groups, many of which had fairly narrow goals, coupled with the lack of power the Labour Party exercised in the governments before 1924, meant that its foreign policy formulations and debates prior to that often displayed an idealism that characterized theoretical discussions rather than practical knowledge of policy-making.

The outbreak of war had serious consequences for the unity of the British labor movement. Like the Second International, the British labor movement was split between the two main camps (reformists versus revolutionaries) and also included many committed pacifists.¹² The turning point for British labor was the outbreak of revolution in Russia, which reinvigorated the movement's commitment to socialist internationalism.¹³ Henderson visited Kerensky's Provisional Government and even tried to organize a delegation to send to the international Stockholm conference in 1917, a move which ultimately led to his resignation from the government. Following the collapse of the Provisional Government, the unity of the two wings of the British Labour

¹¹ The Labour Party emerged from the earlier Labour Representation Committee (LRC), a group formed in 1900 to represent the interests of the working class in Parliament. The LRC and subsequently the Labour Party often worked to identify sympathetic candidates among the Liberal Party in elections, until 1918, when there was a major party reorganization and the drawing up of a new constitution. The Labour Party was comprised of four main groups: the trade unions (which comprised the majority of pre-war membership); the Marxian socialists including the Social Democratic Federation (SDF); the Fabian Society; and the Independent Labour Party (ILP), a non-Marxist "ethical" socialist party informed by Christian socialism. In the late war and postwar period, the ILP had a great deal of influence on the formulation of Labour Party foreign policy. The ILP was founded in 1893, around the same time as the continental socialist parties, and its positions were often communicated in both moral and political terms. James Jupp, *The Radical Left in Britain, 1931–1941* (London: Frank Cass, 1982), 18; Rhiannon Vickers, *The Evolution of Labour's Foreign Policy 1900–51*, volume 1 of *The Labour Party and the World*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 19–23; Douglas J. Newton, *British Labour, European Socialism and the Struggle for Peace 1889–1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 15–16.

¹² Vickers, *The Evolution of Labour's Foreign Policy*, 34–35.

¹³ The revolutionary and constitutional factions of the British Labour Movement came together at the 1917 Leeds Convention which was an unprecedented gathering of the two primary ideological strands of the British labor movement. Vickers, *The Evolution of Labour's Foreign Policy*, 64–65. See also Stephen Richards Graubard, *British Labour and the Russian Revolution, 1917–1924* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956), esp. 39–40; and Ralph Miliband, *Parliamentary Socialism: A Study in the Politics of Labour* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1961), esp. 55–57.

broke down, in part over the radicalization of the Bolshevik revolution. Henderson committed himself to reconstructing the labor movement into a genuine party, drafting a new party constitution which, among other things, set the realization of Parliamentary socialism as the ultimate goal of the Labour Party and moved toward excluding the revolutionary left from the party, which it did in 1925. Although the February Revolution contributed to Labour's opposition to, and exclusion, of revolutionary socialism within its own ranks, it also helped solidify Labour's oppositional position vis-à-vis the Liberal and Conservative Parties by affirming the Labour Party's commitment to internationalism and working class solidarity in the case of Bolshevik Russia.¹⁴

In addition to the new constitution, the Labour Party established the "Advisory Committee on International Questions," a committee which the Independent Labour Party (ILP), a non-Marxist "ethical" socialist party informed by Christian socialism, and the members of the Union of Democratic Control, an association of those who believed that citizens should have a voice in foreign policy, were dominant. Consequently the Labour Party's stance on international issues in the early postwar period was heavily informed by the priorities and approach of the ILP and UDC. These included a commitment in political and *moral* terms to internationalism, socialism, anti-militarism and the solidarity of the working classes. The Labour Party also championed a "durable peace" after the war which they rejected the traditional "fetish" of "balance of power" concerns which were "...nothing more than that, at a given moment, in a given country, there is an effort to hold up to the public gaze the Government and people of another country as being intent upon the destruction of its neighbours...".¹⁵ In the postwar period,

¹⁴ Vickers, *The Evolution of Labour's Foreign Policy*, 66.

¹⁵ Union of Democratic Control, *The Morrow of War* (London: Union of Democratic Control, 1915?), 7-8.

the Labour Party, denounced the Versailles Treaty and the Paris Peace Conference more broadly for ramming through an “imperialist peace” and setting the stage for further conflict.¹⁶

The foreign policy goals of the Labour Party in the aftermath of the Great War were heavily influenced by its ideological commitment to liberal and socialist internationalism. They were forged in the crucible of war and reflected their troubled moment of conception. The postwar conditions of Central and Eastern Europe, and specifically Hungary, provided an opportunity for the Labour Party to respond to actual crises abroad at a moment when the party wanted to prove itself capable not just of participating in Parliament, but as a party capable of governing the empire. Crises in Central and Eastern Europe also provided an opportunity for the Labour Party and the international labor movement more generally to test the reactivated bonds of the international labor movement and the strength and consistency of their own ideological convictions. Like their formulation of policy aims, their response to actual crisis was not shaped by ideological principles but was fully embedded in the immediate historical and political context of postwar Europe and in the position of Britain in the international system. Further, it demonstrated that the persistence of tensions between imperialism, nationalism and socialism in the pre-war Second International and the British labor movement remained unresolved in the postwar crisis.

¹⁶ Labour Party, *Labour Party Annual Conference Report*, 1923, pp. 11–12.

“Potentates, diplomaticists and militarists”¹⁷

While it invigorated the labor movement, the spread of “Bolshevism” outside of Russia alarmed the Entente governments.¹⁸ In the case of Russia, they worked to establish a “*cordon sanitaire*” around Russia in order to prevent the revolution from spilling over its borders into the rest of Europe. They also intervened militarily into the Russia revolution and civil war, which raged for nearly five years. The Entente response to the Hungarian Soviet Republic followed similar lines, as they used the forces of their associated powers active in Central Europe to launch a military intervention into the country to oust the communist regime from power. From the perspective of the international labor movement, in the postwar period, the Great Powers emerged as force of international counter-revolution that was stymieing chances for reform based on socialist principles.¹⁹

Because of their military defeat and the collapse of Dual Monarchy, Hungary was surrounded on all sides by new and hostile states, namely Czechoslovakia and Romania, which were allied with the Entente, which called for major territorial concessions from Hungary which would be transferred to their new allies. Upon taking power, the Kun regime organized a Red Army to retake the “lost territories” which foreign armies had already occupied prior to the finalization of the treaty terms. Their neighbors responded in kind, mobilizing forces supported by the Entente governments against Hungary.

¹⁷ UDC, *The Morrow of War*, 14.

¹⁸ The deployment of epidemiological and/or medical terms to describe the expansion of communist ideology was extraordinarily common and can be found in both more propagandistic literature and official reports and correspondence from diplomats and military personnel in Central and Eastern Europe during this revolutionary period.

¹⁹ Miklós Lojkó, *Meddling in Middle Europe: Britain and the ‘Lands Between’ 1919-1925* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2006), 21-22.

The Romanian invasion of Hungary beginning in late spring, 1919 was not a unilateral military occupation but an Entente action. Believing that "...the Romanian-Hungarian question was the most serious in Europe...", the Great Powers established the Inter-Allied Military Mission, which remained active in Budapest from August 1919 to February 1920, after which it was replaced with regular diplomatic missions.²⁰

Commissioned by the Entente to work on behalf of the Supreme Council in Paris, the mission was composed of a general and his escort from Great Britain, the United States, France, and Italy, and was charged with demobilizing and reconstructing the Hungarian military according to the stipulations agreed on by the allied powers. The mission was also responsible for overseeing the lifting of the blockade and managing the occupation forces of the Entente, and specifically the Romanian military, which comprised the bulk of the Entente forces occupying Hungary. In addition to supervising the occupation, the mission was also charged with preventing nationalist upheaval between Hungarians and their occupiers, which the Supreme Council was concerned would "retard the conclusion of peace." The council required the mission to report on the internal political situation because, as the council stated, "the maintenance of these new conditions will depend on the conduct of the Hungarian Government toward the Allied and Associated Powers."

Further, although the "Powers have not the least desire to interfere in the interior affairs

²⁰ General Harry Hill Bandholtz, *An Undiplomatic Diary*, ed. Fritz-Konrad Krueger (New York: Columbia University Press, 1933), 17. Already in January, 1919, there was concern in the British Foreign Office that Hungary was "becoming the vortex of the whole problem of South-Eastern Europe—of the disintegrations now rapidly proceeding and of the baffled and baffling and contradictory efforts towards reshapingment." British Memorandum, 54. "Again on Hungary," January 10, 1919, FO/608/11, p. 415, Records of the Foreign Office, British National Archives, Kew, England (Hereafter referred to as BNA). The Bandholtz diary, while imperfect as a source, does provide insight into the prioritization of certain policies over other in regard to the Entente as well as the dynamics between the Great Powers and the governments of the successor states in Eastern Europe. As the chief U.S. official in Hungary for more than six months, his personal feelings about his enemies and allies as well as his reading of the crises in Hungary held a lot of sway with the U.S. government and the Entente more generally. The same is true of the opinions of other diplomats stationed in Hungary. See records of the British Foreign Office FO/608/11; FO/608/12; FO/608/13, British National Archives, Kew, England (Hereafter referred to as BNA).

of the Hungarian nation concerning the choice of their government,” the Entente was interested in the type of government Hungary established, as it wanted a regime it could “trust to carry out fairly its international obligations.”²¹ Thus, the Inter-Allied mission was supposed to get Hungary in compliance with the terms of peace set out by the Supreme Council in Paris and to see that the country was returned to stability.

Harmonizing broader strategic aims and ideological preferences with the rights of national integrity and sovereignty was a central tension in the diplomatic landscape of the postwar period, where the number of independent, but much less powerful states proliferated in the European “family of nations.” Further, there was also a tension between punishing and ostracizing Hungary as a defeated state and stabilizing the region and building cooperation between the Habsburg successor states. Nevertheless, the governments of the Great Powers had goals for the region and therefore had to balance a number of ideological, diplomatic, economic, and humanitarian concerns, and satisfying some of these entailed exacerbating other problems. This meant that they had to prioritize one over another. Stabilizing the region generally, and Hungary particularly, both politically and economically, while simultaneously containing communism in Russia, were the most urgent issues for the Great Powers. Addressing the political character and internal policies of the counter-revolutionary regime took a backseat to these goals, as the Entente’s commitment to democratization and self-determination.²²

The Inter-Allied Military Mission was active during a liminal period in Hungary’s political development, between the collapse of the Soviet regime and the establishment of the Horthy regency. During its tenure, the mission became the important clearinghouse

²¹ “Supreme Council’s Instructions to the Inter-Allied Military Mission to Hungary,” in Bandholtz, *An Undiplomatic Diary*, 368-369.

²² Lojkó, *Meddling in Middle Europe*, 32.

for official information about the political conditions in Hungary, which it passed along to the Supreme Council in Paris and to the respective governments of the Entente. Claims of persecution of the labor movement, Jews and democrats by journalists, Hungarian political exiles, and philanthropic organizations active in the region led the Entente to charge the mission with investigating and reporting on rumors of political persecution and anti-Semitic violence committed by the provisional regime in Budapest. The mission used its own personnel to investigate atrocity reports and rumors and supplemented this information with reports compiled by other institutions like the International Red Cross Committee (ICRC) which inspected Hungarian civilian and military internment facilities.²³ Because of their official nature, the reports and memorandums issued by the mission, specifically its British and American representatives, were some of the most important pieces of information about the conditions in Hungary on which their governments relied to shape policies for the region.²⁴ These reports not only reveal the policy priorities of the Great Powers, but also illuminate how class, gender and ethnicity and/or nationality shaped how the White Terror was interpreted by mission members for foreign policy-makers and politicians in Paris and in their home countries.

In the immediate wake of Hungary's collapse and occupation, the violence that the Entente was perhaps most concerned about controlling and mitigating was *not* necessarily the violence against suspected "Bolshevists," but rather that of the Romanian

²³ The outbreak of revolution in Russia had ground POW repatriation efforts to a halt, in part because of fears that returning POWs from Russia would reinvigorate the communist movement in Hungary. Tamás, Kovács, "Az internálás mint rendészeti válasz állambiztonsági és államrendészeti kihívásokra 1919-1945 között," *A Pécsi Határőr Tudományos Közlemények hivatalos honlapja*, vol. XIII (2012), 433, accessed July 11, 2014, <http://www.pecshor.hu/periodika/XIII/kovacst.pdf>.

²⁴ Nathaniel Katzburg, "Louis Marshall and the White Terror in Hungary," *American Jewish Archives* 45, no. 1(1993), 1-12. The letters between Marshall and the U.S. Secretary of State shows that the British Parliamentary Report was trusted by the U.S. government and was disseminated as an accurate assessment of conditions reigning in Hungary.

occupation forces.²⁵ American General Harry Hill Bandholtz wrote in his diary that “Turning portions of Hungary with its civilized and refined population will be like turning Texas over to the Mexicans.”²⁶ These concerns were based in fears that harsh military occupation will lead to a resurgence of communism, especially in the first three months following the occupation of Budapest by the Entente. But the mission was also worried about how the treatment of Hungarians by the Romanians harmed the Entente’s reputation as the ultimate representatives (and gatekeepers) of “civilization”.²⁷ The mission did not approve of the Hungarian government’s and White militias’ violence against communists and Jews, emphasizing to the new regime that such acts were regarded by the Entente as a source of instability and shame for the new government. But it accepted the violence as a predictable outcome of the political situation and tolerated it as long as it fell within “reasonable limits.”²⁸ Bandholtz even remarked to a group of Hungarians who came to visit the mission that “... [he] sympathized with men of education, refinement and means, whose comfortable homes had been taken charge of by a lot of anarchists, and whose families had been confined to one or two rooms and forced to live in close contact with a lot of filthy, ignorant and fanatical Bolsheviks,” under the communist regime. But he also reminded them that, “this was no reason why they should not handle the situation with decency and decorum” now that the regime had collapsed.²⁹ Bandholtz also understood the impulses driving anti-Semitism and violence against Jews.

²⁵ Bandholtz, *An Undiplomatic Diary*, 149-154. See also the document collection FO/608/12, BNA.

²⁶ Bandholtz, *An Undiplomatic Diary*, 361. It is clear in Bandholtz’s diary that he generally favored the Hungarians over the Romanians. In his frequent colorful language he wrote: “In fact everything Roumanian makes a sad comparison with Hungarian equivalents. The city of Bucharest compared to Budapest would be like a tadpole by the side of a rainbow trout.” Bandholtz, *An Undiplomatic Diary*, 82. See also FO/608/12, p. 20, BNA.

²⁷ Bandholtz, *An Undiplomatic Diary*, 188, 195.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 86.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

When a Jewish officer, Colonel Nathan Horowitz arrived from the U.S. to investigate reports of White Terror, Bandholtz wrote that “I explained to him that although not all Bolsheviks were Jews, nor were all Jews Bolsheviks, nevertheless Béla Kun, the Hungarian Bolshevik leader, practically all his lieutenants, and most of his followers were Jews and as a result the people of Hungary were simply furious and determined to rid themselves of the Semitic influence.”³⁰ Even as late as mid-November 1919, Bandholtz denied that Admiral Horthy, having just marched into Budapest, and the Friedrich cabinet were making unnecessary and excessive arrests of their political opponents; in fact, he regarded them as “...perfectly justifiable.”³¹

To say that the Mission tolerated some violence against leftists and Jews is not to say that they approved of it. Moreover, their toleration for violence waned as time went on, and as the credible threat of revolution subsided and as reports of militia excesses and the conditions of Hungarian prisons arrived at the Mission. Bandholtz recalled in his diary that on December 6, 1919, he met with Minister of Defense Károly Soós and lambasted him about the beatings of two young Jewish boys:

I told him I was so sick and tired of any such conduct; that although I could understand how the Hungarians would naturally feel sore over the fact that most of the Bolshevik leaders had been Jews, nevertheless neither America nor England could understand any such barbaric conduct...[and] that if any such reports got out that the Hungarians were lapsing into the same form of barbarism as the Russians, it would seriously affect their whole future....³²

The mission directly confronted Horthy and Soós at least twice about the atrocities of the Hungarian National Army, and vigorously reminded them that although “...undoubtedly there would be some young hot-heads of the Hungarian army who would be crazy to

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid., 232.

³² Ibid., 263.

shoot a Roumanian or hang a Jews and that one or two [of these incidents] could bring discredit upon the whole country”.³³ Further, the Italian representative to the mission, Colonel Romanelli, toured Hungarian prisons in Budapest and reported back that they were in very bad condition.³⁴

As reports of violence mounted, the mission sent out Horowitz in the autumn of 1919 to investigate political conditions in the countryside and the rumors of atrocities against Jews. However, according to Bandholtz, Horowitz reported that the military under Horthy’s leadership was working steadily to prevent atrocities and that “no more atrocities had been committed than would ordinarily happen under the stress of such circumstances.”³⁵ Further, Horowitz reportedly said to Bandholtz that “a great many rascally Jews under the cloak of their religion had committed crimes, that there really was a great deal of anti-Semitic feeling on account of so many Jews having been Bolshevists, but as to there being a real White Terror, there was nothing of the kind, and this danger was a figment of the imagination of politicians.”³⁶ Horowitz’s findings were sent to the Hungarian press in order to sooth political tensions in October, 1919.³⁷

Later, in the winter of 1920, the British government issued an official report on the political conditions of Hungary entitled “Report on Alleged Existence of ‘White Terror’ in Hungary.” A slim collection of correspondence between the British members of the mission and the government as well as the ICRC report on internment, the report was an important source of information the governments of England and the United

³³ Ibid., 184, 263.

³⁴ Ibid., 105.

³⁵ Colonel Nathaniel Horowitz, “Communication for the Press,” October 7, 1919, in *Report on Alleged Existence of ‘White Terror’ in Hungary* (London: His Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1920), 4-5.

³⁶ Bandholtz, *An Undiplomatic Diary*, 120; Horowitz, “Communication for the Press,” 4-5.

³⁷ Horowitz, “Communication for the Press,” 4-5.

States had about postwar, post-revolutionary Hungary. As a parliamentary report, it was endowed with a significant amount of credibility and its findings, namely that there was no White Terror, also played an important role in the formulation of policy toward postwar Hungary. As the name suggests, the report's general outlook was defined by skepticism on the part of the British towards calling anything going on in Hungary "terror." In fact, in a letter to the Foreign Secretary Earl Curzon, Thomas Hohler, the pro-Hungarian, British High Commissioner to Hungary in 1920, actually praised counter-revolutionary minded Hungarians—"a hot-blooded nation"—for showing such "restraint" toward the communist regime. Hohler admitted that there were undoubtedly abuses and atrocities, but argued that "patriotic Hungarians should desire to punish those who were in any way, however slight, implicated in the events entailing such disastrous consequences cannot be regarded as surprising, and I venture to think that the conduct of Admiral Horthy and of the troops under him in maintaining such restraint and in directing the anger of the mass of the people into legal channels is worthy of high commendation."³⁸ Similarly in a letter from General Gorton to Hohler in February 1920, the general says that Horthy also commended the restraint of Hungarians, who declined to massacre the nation's "torturers."³⁹ The overall belief was that in regard to violence, "Well-conducted Jews and Christians have, therefore, nothing to fear."⁴⁰ The underlying assumption then was that communists—many of whom were Jews—had brought the violence upon themselves and deserved whatever they got, although violence was not a supportable policy.

³⁸ Letter from Thomas Hohler to George Curzon, February 21, 1920, reprinted in *Report on Alleged Existence of 'White Terror' in Hungary*, 1.

³⁹ Letter from General Reginald Gorton to Thomas Hohler, February 18, 1920, reprinted in *Report on Alleged Existence of 'White Terror' in Hungary* (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1920), 4.

⁴⁰ Horowitz, "Communication for the Press," 5.

According to Admiral Ernest Troubridge, the head of the Danube Commission, a multinational organ charged with managing military and economic activity on the Danube between 1918-1919, any oppression which was taking place in the country against the labor movement and repression of civil rights and freedom of the press were simply temporary and justifiable measures “induced by fear.” He also took pains to clarify that although both might be called “labor movements,” that the Hungarian labor movement significantly differed from its English counterpart because, “Primitive passions are much nearer to the surface here, and fear, the mother of cruelty and oppression, has always governed the relations between the communities east of the Vienna.”⁴¹ The Admiral’s orientalizing of the Hungarians and eastern European populations in general, was also apparent in Hohler’s correspondence with Lord Curzon, and these echoed sentiments similar to those held by Bandholtz who, having served as the Chief of the Constabulary in the U.S. colony in the Philippines. Bandholtz concluded in regard to rumors of anti-socialist atrocities, that “The people in this section of the world...do not and cannot look at things the same as we do.”⁴²

In any case, according to the British representatives in Hungary, political violence was largely directed against a relatively small number of “Jews and other communists.”⁴³

Troubridge emphasized that the leadership of the Hungarian Soviet Republic was

⁴¹ Letter from Admiral Ernest Troubridge to Thomas Hohler, February 20, 1920, reprinted in *Report on Alleged Existence of ‘White Terror’ in Hungary*, 9; Colonel Nathaniel Horowitz, “Communication for the Press,” October 7, 1919, reprinted in *Report on Alleged Existence of ‘White Terror’ in Hungary*, 5.

⁴² Bandholtz, *An Undiplomatic Diary*, 308, 320.

⁴³ Letter from General Reginald Gorton to Thomas Hohler, February 18, 1920, reprinted in *Report on Alleged Existence of ‘White Terror’ in Hungary*, 4; The link between Jews and Bolshevism in the case of Hungary was not relegated to more the more radical nationalist segments of the counter-revolutionary movement in Hungary. Prominent members of the British staff in Hungary and in Paris also propagated the link between communism and Jews and advocated for the “elimination of all Jews” and the establishment of a Hungarian government which was comprised of “real” Hungarians. Lt.-Col. W.L.D. Twiss, “Political Situation,” FO/608/12, p. 387, BNA.
of some prominent members in the British representation to the Paris Peace Conference

comprised of middle class Jews, and he relayed Horthy's confirmation that any persecution taking place was unofficial, and only targeted "those who had been with Béla Kun, i.e., workmen and Jews."⁴⁴ In general, the conclusion of Hohler, Gorton, and Troubridge as well as Bandholtz was that any violence taking place was (1) insignificant; (2) unsanctioned by the government, and (3) impossible for the government to control because of its weakness and because, taking the view of the Hungarian Minister of Justice István Bárczy that, "normal circumstances in Hungary are not yet restored."⁴⁵

Reports of atrocities were regarded by the British representation in Budapest as major exaggerations by people "whose interest it was to exaggerate,"⁴⁶ or even more insidious, as propaganda spread by Hungarian communist and socialist exiles in Vienna.⁴⁷ The British and American commitment to this view was based less on tangible evidence and more on the status and perceived character of the people making the reports. The Horowitz report disputing reports of anti-Jewish violence, for example, was considered trustworthy by Bandholtz, Secretary of State Bainbridge Colby and the British delegation because Horowitz himself was Jewish (and Western).⁴⁸ Moreover, Horowitz's sources, officers in the National Army, were themselves reliable because they were "...inspired with sentiments of real patriotism, duty and justice," that is, they were regarded as conforming to ideals of masculine military virtues with which the Allied

⁴⁴ Letter from Admiral Ernest Troubridge to Thomas Hohler, February 20, 1920, reprinted in *Report on Alleged Existence of 'White Terror' in Hungary*, 9.

⁴⁵ Letter from István Bárczy to Thomas Hohler, March 6, 1920, reprinted in *Report on Alleged Existence of 'White Terror' in Hungary*, 11.

⁴⁶ Letter from Admiral Ernest Troubridge to Thomas Hohler, February 20, 1920, reprinted in *Report on Alleged Existence of 'White Terror' in Hungary*, 9.

⁴⁷ Letter from István Bárczy to Thomas Hohler, March 6, 1920, in *Report on Alleged Existence of 'White Terror' in Hungary* (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1920), 11; Even Ernő Garami, the exiled Social Democratic politician, argued that the correspondence of Troubridge's included in the Report on the Alleged 'White Terror' ... was not substantive but rather was an "[attack] on my personal integrity."

⁴⁸ Bandholtz, *An Undiplomatic Diary*, 86, 118; Letter from General Reginald Gorton to Thomas Hohler, 18 February, 1920, reprinted in *Report on Alleged Existence of 'White Terror' in Hungary*, 3.

mission members could identify.⁴⁹ The report by Minister of Justice Barczy regarding the adjudication of political crimes was also reliable because Barczy was “a gentleman of the most liberal tendencies,” as was Horthy, “a man of liberal tendencies and strong character” according to Troubridge.⁵⁰ Similarly, reports of atrocities could be disregarded because Troubridge’s “Socialist Jew friend” laughed at their preposterousness.⁵¹

Associating personal virtue and identity with credibility was and is certainly not an atypical practice especially when dealing with violent acts.⁵² However, linking veracity to personal identity has meant that those who deviate from the ascendant social and political norms and occupy those lower rungs of social and political hierarchies are at a disadvantage in terms of having their voices heard.⁵³ Moreover, the British government officials in Hungary generally failed to consider more structural reasons as to the lack of clear information on atrocities. First, the vehement antipathy of the mission to “bolshevism” meant that the mission was predisposed not to believe reports about violence committed against communists and other persons associated with revolutions, dismissing reports as “propaganda,” or as understandable outbursts of anger.⁵⁴ Second, the mission did not consider that fear of reprisal led both victims and investigators to under-report violence on the Hungarian countryside just as such fears had shaped reports

⁴⁹ Horowitz, “Communication for the Press,” 5.

⁵⁰ Letter from Admiral Ernest Troubridge to Thomas Hohler, reprinted in *Report on Alleged Existence of ‘White Terror’ in Hungary*, 10.

⁵¹ Letter from Admiral Ernest Troubridge to Thomas Hohler, reprinted in *Report on Alleged Existence of ‘White Terror’ in Hungary* (London: His Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1920), 10.

⁵² Kimberlé Crenshaw, “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color,” *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (July 1991): 1241-1299; Patricia Hill Collins, “The Tie that Binds: Race, Gender, and US Violence,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 21, no. 5 (September 1998): 917-938, especially 920-926; Leslie McCall, “The Complexity of Intersectionality,” *Signs*, 30, 3 (Spring 2005): 1771-1800; Joanna Bourke, *Rape: A History from 1860 to the Present Day* (London: Virago, 2007), 28-44.

⁵³ *Ibid.*; See also Susan Zimmermann, “Making a Living from Disgrace: the Politics of Prostitution, Female Poverty and Urban Gender Codes in Budapest and Vienna, 1860-1920,” in *The City in Central Europe: Culture and Society from 1800 to the Present*, Malcolm Gee, Tim Kirk, and Jill Steward, eds. (London: Ashgate Publishers, 1999), 181-183.

⁵⁴ Bandholtz, *An Undiplomatic Diary*, 120.

about treatment of POWs during and after the war.⁵⁵ It is reasonable to assume that many individuals were either silent about or minimized the violence and abuses of power by the Hungarian National Army and the new regime when they were interviewed by foreign missions.⁵⁶ Third, the mission did not take into account that reports of abuses by the Hungarian regime to the mission may have dropped off specifically because as time went on the mission was regarded by many Hungarians as being incapable and/or unwilling to prevent or even acknowledge them.⁵⁷

The British and American representatives in Hungary were very concerned about the mission's ability to appropriately manage the Romanian occupation force, which was their ally. There was significant outcry about the conditions prevailing in Romanian POW camps for Hungarian soldiers and upon leaving Hungary Bandholtz, referring to the behavior of the Romanian troops, even wrote that, "The great Powers of the Allies should hang their heads in shame for what they allowed to take place in this country after an armistice."⁵⁸ But similar persistence and vigor in following up on reports of the Hungarian regime's abuses was not as forthcoming, especially while there was still a fear of a communist resurgence. According to the Entente representatives in the spring of 1920, the atrocities or abuses which were taking place were the result of an extended political crisis and a popular expression of anger at the communists. They indicated that

⁵⁵ Richard Speed, *Prisoners, Diplomats and the Great War: A Study in the Diplomacy of Captivity* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1997), 17-18; Heather Jones, *Violence against Prisoners of War in the First World War: Britain, France, and Germany, 1914-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 361.

⁵⁶ Letter from Frederick Kuh to Ewer, April 30, 1920, LP/HUN/1/24.iv, LHA.

⁵⁷ Letter from Thomas Hohler to Earl George Curzon, March 31, 1920, *Report on Alleged Existence of 'White Terror' in Hungary* (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1920), 12. Hohler said that the number of complaints of atrocities the mission received had gone down precipitously from the beginning of the counter-revolution and used that as a way to extrapolate that the violence was largely the result of immediate revenge for the crimes of the Soviet regime.

⁵⁸ Bandholtz, *An Undiplomatic Diary*, 361.

the new government was not yet strong enough to completely pacify the political sphere and bring the military completely under its thumb. In any case, whatever the reason, and whoever the victims, according to the Inter-Allied Mission and other Entente representatives in Hungary, it was surely *not* “terror.”⁵⁹

“[Rousing] the Conscience of the World”⁶⁰

The democratic-reformist wing the international labor movement, in the midst of trying to reorganize the Second International in the wake of war, disputed the Anglo-American governments’ official determination that there was no White Terror in Hungary. Prominent socialists and labor politicians attacked the Hungarian counter-revolutionary regime’s persecution of the Hungarian socialist movement and it condemned the Entente governments’ missions’ activities in and policies toward Hungary. Upon the invitation of the Hungarian government, the British Labour Party and Trade Unions Congress, with the input of the ISB, organized a delegation to investigate the reports and rumors of White Terror in Hungary in the late spring of 1920. The results of the investigation, along with supporting press reports and correspondence and interviews with exiled Hungarian socialists, yielded a narrative of conditions in Hungary that utterly contradicted the findings of the British Parliamentary report.⁶¹

⁵⁹ *Report on Alleged Existence of ‘White Terror’ in Hungary* (London: His Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1920), 2-5.

⁶⁰ Letter from Camille Huysmans to Arthur Henderson, January 8, 1920, LP/HUN/1/1.i, LHA.

⁶¹ Eliza Ablovatski conceptualizes this British delegation’s report as an artifact conducive to constructing the “memory” of the White Terror, but while the report has indeed shaped that memory, it was intended to affect actual policy in the region by exposing the Entente’s role in the violence in the hopes of putting pressure on their government. It was part of an official protest to the actions of the Entente. H.N. Brailsford, “Memorandum on the White Terror in Hungary,” March, 1920, LP/HUN/2/6.i.

Mirroring their reaction to the Russian revolution, the Second International heralded the establishment of another socialist regime in Europe and was bitterly disappointed by the defeat and collapse of the Hungarian Soviet Republic in the summer of 1919. At the Lucerne Conference in early August 1919, the representatives passed a number of resolutions which condemned the Entente as an international counter-revolutionary force, arguing that the Entente as *the* representative of global capitalist power had no other reason to intervene in Hungary than to defeat the socialist revolution and to, "...bring to nought all revolutionary conquests...."⁶² The movement's initial reaction to the political collapse of the Kun regime was shaped primarily by their commitment to solidarity with "brother parties" and to helping socialism flourish in those places where such governments had been established, even if they were concerned about the violent methods used by such governments.⁶³ However reports and rumors of White Terror seeping across the borders of Hungary which the labor movement to respond were linked to the specific political conditions prevailing in counter-revolutionary Hungary as well as the state's position in the newly revised international system. Moreover, the White Terror was not just a Hungarian problem; rather the international labor movement conceptualized it as an international problem that required an international solution.⁶⁴

⁶² The Labour Party, "The International at Lucerne: The Resolutions. The Provisional Constitution" (London: Labour Party, 1919), 11.

⁶³ Letter from Vilmos Böhm to the Independent Labour Party, February 14, 1920, LP/HUN/1/11.iii, LHA.

⁶⁴ See for example, Letter from Ernő Garami to Camille Huysmans, October 16, 1919, LP/HUN/3/3i-ii, LHA, Letter from Ernő Garami to Camille Huysmans, October 10, 1919, LP/HUN/3/4.i-ii; Camille Huysmans to ?, October 4, 1919, LP/HUN/3/1.i-ii. It was not just the labor movement which emphasized the significance of the crisis in Hungary as a world-historical problem. Bandholtz, for example wrote that the Romanian-Hungarian question was the most serious question in Europe." Bandholtz, *An Undiplomatic Diary*, 17. Likewise, a telegram from the Supreme Council presented the events in Hungary as a challenge to the general peace in Europe. See the telegram from Supreme Council too Inter-Allied Military Mission in Budapest, reprinted in Bandholtz, *An Undiplomatic Diary*, 30-31; Communications within the British Foreign Office also emphasized that the problems in Hungary endangered the stability of the whole of Europe.

The labor movement had made strong critical statements against the Entente's contribution to the collapse of the Kun government and had also issued statements about the existence of White Terror and the persecution of the Hungarian labor movement prior to the winter of 1920.⁶⁵ But it was not until January 1920, when ISB Secretary Camille Huysmans declared in a letter to British Labour politician Arthur Henderson that, "The White Terror has reached such a stage of frensy (sic) that it seems at last to have roused the conscience of the world," that the international labor movement became more heavily engaged in the events in Hungary.⁶⁶ Huysmans' spoke against the "ghastly atrocities" of the counter-revolutionary regime, which he argued was composed of feudal aristocrats who resisted any social or political progress in the country. It was a "Government of wholesale massacre which seems bent on exterminating any trace of a labour movement...."⁶⁷ In another letter from Budapest enclosed with Huysmans', the (unknown) author wrote: "The present regime retains...its brutal, lying violent character. Crimes are being perpetrated in comparison to which the regime of the Czar are like child's play."⁶⁸ Arthur Henderson passed the information from Huysmans along to Prime Minister David Lloyd George, making sure to indicate that the atrocities of the White regime in Hungary far outstripped those of the Bolshevik regime in Russia. Vilmos Böhm, a prominent Hungarian Social Democrat and former Minister of War under

⁶⁵ Permanent Commission of Labour and Socialist International, Resolution I, Aug 1-9, 1919, in The Labour Party, "Report of the 19th Annual Conference of the Labour Party" (London: Labour Party, 1920); Letter from Ernő Garami to Camille Huysmans, October 16, 1919, LP/HUN/3/3i-ii, LHA, Letter from Ernő Garami to Camille Huysmans, October 10, 1919, LP/HUN/3/4.i-ii; Camille Huysmans to ?, October 4, 1919, LP/HUN/3/1.i-ii.

⁶⁶ Letter from Camille Huysmans to Arthur Henderson, January 8, 1920, LP/HUN/1/1/i., LHA.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ No Author, December 22, 1919, LP/HUN/1/2, LHA.

Károlyi and Commissar of War for the Kun government, communicated similar sentiments in his correspondence with the British Labour Party.⁶⁹

Prior to the dispatch of the British Joint delegation in May, 1920, communications between prominent European labor politicians relayed stories about the impossibility of getting justice in Hungarian courts. Böhm wrote in a lengthy letter to the British Labour Party on March 5, 1920 “...it is the most horrible injustice, that the courts of the counter-revolution punish thousands of people for having done nothing else, but having served the government of the Labour dictatorship and carried through its orders.”⁷⁰ Letters included detailed information and statistics regarding the internment of men, women and children, claiming that “The internated (sic) people are kept on hunger-rates and are occupied with the most abominable sorts of compulsory labor. Thus for instance, professors, physicians and lawyers are occupied with carrying dung.”⁷¹ Bohm also reported on the violence of militarized bands of officer detachments, all of which, they concluded, surpassed any atrocities the Hungarian Bolshevik regime ever committed.⁷² As Henderson wrote to Prime Minister David Lloyd George on January 17, 1920, “According to my informants, there is scarcely a village in Trans-Danubia where men and women have not been murdered wholesale, and more persons have been killed in the very small villages alone by the officers of the present Government than in Budapest under the Red Terror.”⁷³

⁶⁹ Letter from Arthur Henderson to David Lloyd George, January 17, 1920, LP/HUN/1/3.i, LHA.

⁷⁰ Letter from Vilmos Böhm to Labour Party, March 5, 1920, LP/HUN/1/13.iv, LHA.

⁷¹ Letter from Vilmos Böhm to Labour Party, March 5, 1920, LP/HUN/1/13.vi-vii, LHA.

⁷² Letter from Vilmos Böhm to Labour Party, March 5, 1920, LP/HUN/1/13.ix, LHA.

⁷³ Letter from Arthur Henderson to David Lloyd George, January 17, 1920, LP/HUN/1/3.i. Note the specific link Henderson makes between the White militias and the government.

The atrocities of the Hungarian “feudal” regime notwithstanding, labor politicians across Europe argued that it was another international bloc, so-called “International Democracy,” i.e. the Entente led by Great Britain, the United States, and France, which was at fault for the White Terror.⁷⁴ Indeed Huysmans wrote: “The important point to seize and lay stress upon is the heavy responsibility of the Entente Governments for the terrible events in Hungary. Their reaction has been consistently and persistently reaction and mischievous from the establishment of the Károlyi Government to the present day.”⁷⁵ Huysmans argued that the Entente missions in Hungary were “hand in glove with the reactionary elements” and he surmised that the activities of the Entente in Hungary was no doubt a source of humiliation for socialist- and democratic-minded persons in those countries and should be for all of those who were citizens of these Western democracies.⁷⁶ He proposed that it was up to the labor movement to save “the honour of our Western democracies.”⁷⁷ Henderson went further, arguing to the Prime Minister that any protests lodged by the Entente missions to the Hungarian government regarding its political persecution were “formal and perfunctory.”⁷⁸ A month later Huysmans’ sentiments were echoed in a letter from exiled Hungarian socialist Vilmos Böhm to the British Labour Party. He wrote: “Never had ashamed [sic] a more inhuman persecution the culture and civilisation of mankind but the detestable white terror, which now has the controll [sic] over Hungary. According to my opinion...the Powers are, without any

⁷⁴ Robert Seton-Watson, forward to *Revolution and Counter-revolution in Hungary*, by Oskar Jászi (London: P.S. King & Son, LTD., 1924), vii.

⁷⁵ Letter from Camille Huysmans to Arthur Henderson, January 8, 1920, LP/HUN/1/1/i, LHA.

⁷⁶ Letter from Camille Huysmans to Arthur Henderson, January 8, 1920, LP/HUN/1/1/i, iii, LHA.

⁷⁷ Letter from Camille Huysmans to Arthur Henderson, January 8, 1920, LP/HUN/1/1/iii, LHA.

⁷⁸ Letter from Arthur Henderson to Prime Minister David Lloyd George, January 17, 1920, LP/HUN/1/3.ii, LHA.

doubt, though not lawfully, morally responsible for all the cruelties which are now in Hungary.”⁷⁹

The labor movement’s condemnation of the Entente’s Hungarian policy stemmed from an understanding and acknowledgement of military and diplomatic inequality between the Entente and the Hungarian state. Labour politicians and activists believed that only the Entente had the power to stop the political violence against the Hungarian labor movement. In a memorandum by the Advisory Committee on International Questions on Hungary H.N. Brailsford, an important British leftist journalist and political activist wrote, “The policy of the Allies has in fact dominated Hungarian politics ever since the armistice.”⁸⁰ A letter from Ernő Garami, a prominent Social Democrat, was more explicit about the power of that the Entente, and specifically England, had over the Hungarian government. He wrote regarding the failure of the British government to prevent the execution of several prominent labor politicians, “The Hungarian government, which exists because of the open and secret support which it derives from England, would never have dared to ignore such a protest [against the executions] if it had been made more seriously.”⁸¹ In his estimation, the Entente was obligated to use its influence to prevent political persecutions of labor politicians but instead indulging the government which was composed of the “...Magyar oligarchy who have been as great a curse to Europe as the Prussian Junkers.”⁸² The true weapon of the Entente, for labor politicians, was the refusal to grant recognition and therefore diplomatic capacity to the

⁷⁹ Letter from Vilmos Böhm to Labour Party, February 8, 1920, LP/HUN/1/9.i, LHA.

⁸⁰ H.N. Brailsford, Advisory Committee on International Questions, “Memorandum on the White Terror in Hungary,” LP/HUN/2/6/1.i, LHA.

⁸¹ Letter from Ernő Garami to Frederick Kuh, n.d., LP/HUN/2/7.iii, LHA.

⁸² Letter from William Gillies to J.J. Davies, January 27, 1920, LP/HUN/1/6, LHA; Letter from Camille Huysmans to Arthur Henderson, January 8, 1920, LP/HUN/1/1/iii, LHA.

government, which as long as the peace treaty remained unsigned, remained a significant lever. The actions of the Entente in Hungary were despicable because they refused to exercise their power, and instead permitted the establishment of “this Government of wholesale massacre,” and they gave the counter-revolutionary regime international recognition and allowed it represent itself at the Paris Peace Conference.

The condemnations of the Entente activities in Hungary described above were rooted in international socialism’s goals. But Huysmans’ and other labor politicians’ reaction to the conditions in Hungary also demonstrated an attempt to frame the White Terror not only as a political crisis but as a moral one as well.⁸³ For many prominent labor politicians and supporters, much more was at stake than simply claiming political victory or promoting a set of policy goals in a small country in Europe’s east. Rather, the lack of definitive response, labor politicians argued, undermined the Great Powers’ claims of moral authority and advanced civilization. Vilmos Böhm for example stated resolutely that he intended to “publicate (sic) the names of all the murdered persons in the next future and then the civilised world will be embarrassed to state that in Central-Europe, in the presence of the Entente-missions, it is possible to maintain such a system, which supports with the most detestable crimes, the reign of the terrorists.”⁸⁴ Similar sentiments were echoed in a report of the British Labour Party entitled “The Responsibility of the Entente Powers Respecting the Political Persecutions in Hungary,” argued among other things that, “The Allied Powers so have the moral responsibility towards the Hungarian working-class to realise the stoppage of political persecutions if

⁸³ Letter from Ernő Garami to Camille Huysmans, October 16, 1919, LP/HUN/3/3i-ii, LHA, Letter from Ernő Garami to Camille Huysmans, October 10, 1919, LP/HUN/3/4.i-ii; Camille Huysmans to ?, October 4, 1919, LP/HUN/3/1.i-ii. Vickers, *The Evolution of Labour’s Foreign Policy*, 7.

⁸⁴ Letter from Vilmos Böhm to Labour Party, March 5, 1920, LP/HUN/1/13.xv.

necessary by economical or other measures.”⁸⁵ In another report in March 1920, Böhm reiterated his assessment that “...the Entente Powers have accepted moral obligation to a certain limit, -for the prevention of the political persecutions.”⁸⁶ The allowance of the White Terror by the Entente also discredited the democratic political institutions which the Entente claimed it was trying to establish in the newly-created states in East Central Europe and which were essential to the (eventual) triumph of the labor perspective.⁸⁷

The conceptualization of the White Terror as a moral challenge was provocative and not insincere.⁸⁸ Yet, however, as much as the labor movement wanted to elevate the issue of White Terror beyond the realm of partisan politics, their assessment of the situation in Hungary and prescriptions for dealing with the regime were rooted in the historical and political context of postwar Europe which multiplied the number of smaller states which were technically independent but which did not have the economic or military power to enjoy the level of national sovereignty in the way the Great Powers did.⁸⁹ Indeed, Huysmans’ and Böhm’s advocacy efforts specifically called upon labor-

⁸⁵ “The Responsibility of the Entente Powers Respecting the Political Persecutions in Hungary,” n.d., LP/HUN/1/10.iii, LHA.

⁸⁶ Letter from Vilmos Böhm to Independent Labour Party, February 14, 1920, LP/HUN/1/11.i, LHA. Even Robert Seton-Watson, a British historian noted for his commitment to liberalism and antipathy toward Hungary, admitted in his 1924 “Forward” to Oszkar Jászi’s book admitted, “It will be a humiliating and well-nigh inexplicable fact for the future historian that the diplomacy of Great Britain—of this most advanced Commonwealth of the world—played the principle part in rendering possible in Hungary the blood-stained and reactionary rule of Admiral Horthy.” Seton-Watson, forward to *Revolution and Counter-revolution*, vii.

⁸⁷ Letter from Ernő Garami to Camille Huysmans, December 30, 1919, LP/HUN/3/4.ii.

⁸⁸ The policy debates within the international and British labor movements in particular had reflected not just a political but a moral commitment to the goals of socialism long before the outbreak of White Terror. Vickers, *The Evolution of Labour’s Foreign Policy*, 8

⁸⁹ Letter from Camille Huysmans to ?, November 24, 1919, LP/HUN/3/2, LHA; Letter from Ernő Garami to Camille Huysmans, December 30, 1919, LP/HUN/3/4.i-ii, LHA. The call to deploy this power was not without debate. Huysmans was concerned about the promotion of militarist intervention to solve the crisis facing the Hungarian labor movement. Garami argued to Huysmans that avoiding intervention was ridiculous because “the Entente has, in fact, already ‘intervened’. In this ‘intervention’ is to be found the root of the Friedrich regime, and this root must and will expand until it threatens democracy and the Hungarian proletariat with catastrophe, unless a juster intervention can be enforced.” Letter from Ernő Garami to Camille Huysmans, October 16, 1919, LP/HUN/3//3.i-ii, LHA. Huysmans for his part came

minded citizens of the Great Powers to pressure their governments to deploy their (so far untapped) power to compel the counter-revolutionary regime in Hungary to end its persecution of the Hungarian labor movement and to intervene in order to modify the political character of the Hungarian regime. The assumption was that the superior economic, political, and military resources of the Entente should be leveraged to ensure Hungary's compliance with the norms and goals set out by the Entente. Labor politicians argued that the Entente had the perfect opportunity in the liminal period when the Hungarian government had not yet signed or ratified the peace treaty, to mold the Hungarian regime into the Entente's own image by threatening to withdraw international recognition from the fledgling government, and in preventing Hungarian politicians from representing the country at treaty negotiations.⁹⁰ The Entente's refusal to use this pressure and to demand that the regime end the atrocities against the working class and Jews and democratize (i.e. to conform to the standards of political practice prevalent in the "civilized" societies of Western Europe) was therefore a "moral perversion and corruption" of the civilized and democratic values purportedly represented by the Entente.⁹¹

According to labor politicians, the Entente's unwillingness to pressure the White regime into compliance was not the only error with the Great Powers' response to White Terror. The other issue, which was related to the first, was that the Entente was deliberately misleading the public about the nature of the violence raging against leftists

around to the position that no substantive change would take place in Hungarian politics without some form of intervention, be it diplomatic or otherwise, of the Entente governments. See Letter from Camille Huysmans to British Labour Party, February 26, 1920, LP/HUN/3/7.

⁹⁰ See Letter from Vilmos Böhm to the International Socialist Bureau, February 14, 1920, LP/HUN/3/9.i-ii; Report, "Responsibility on the Entente Powers Respecting the Political Persecutions in Hungary," n.d. LP/HUN/1/10.iv.

⁹¹ Vilmos Böhm to British Labour Party, March 5, 1920, LP/HUN/1/13.xvi, LHA.

(and Jews) in Hungary. In a letter to the British Labour Party dated March 16, 1920, Vilmos Böhm reported his concern that the British government had received “incomplete reports” about the atrocities in Hungary during the Parliamentary investigation. Böhm stated that he suspected that the early incorrect assessment that there was no White Terror in Hungary by British Labour politicians in Parliament was likely indicative of inaccurate information they had received from the British mission in Budapest.⁹² Böhm’s depiction of the problems with the British government’s evaluation of the counter-revolutionary regime was fairly diplomatic in its assessments, and it was accompanied by his report which systematically described the conditions in Hungary. He did state that the incorrect information was likely because the British mission—and all the foreign missions in Budapest—received their information from conservative Hungarian elites.⁹³ Ernő Garami was even blunter in his portrayal of the relationship between the Entente missions and the counter-revolutionary elements. In a letter to Huysmans, he claimed that the Entente missions had “duped” the working classes of their respective countries as to the nature of the counter-revolutionary regime by using the presence of a token Social Democrat in the Friedrich government to obscure their role in establishing “the reign of the blackest reaction and the most revolting White Terror.”⁹⁴

⁹² Vilmos Böhm to Colonel Thomas Cunninghame, February 7, 1920, LP/HUN/1/13.i, LHA.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Letter from Ernő Garami to Camille Huysmans, December 30, 1919, LP/HUN/3/4.ii, LHA.

Illustration in Print Copy held in CEU Library
 5.1 “Preparing the report of the mission: “there is no white terror!”⁹⁵

The candor of Garami’s characterization was echoed in an April 30, 1920 letter sent to the British Labour Party by American journalist Frederick Kuh, a correspondent for the *Daily Herald* (a left leaning newspaper) to his colleague William Ewer in London. Coming on the heels of the British government’s publication of, “Report on the Alleged ‘White Terror’”, Kuh’s lengthy epistle systematically challenged nearly every element of the report and the mission’s conduct in Hungary. It is worth analyzing at length because it attempted to give evidentiary teeth to the claims of labor politicians, whose assertions could easily have been dismissed as propaganda.

Describing his reaction to correspondence between leading members of the British mission in Central Europe, Kuh said he was, “...amazed less because it reveals the network of falsehood in which the British Foreign Office has been enmeshed by its misrepresentatives, than because this web of fiction was woven with so little ingenuity.”⁹⁶ He said that British officials were deliberately presenting a “...brazen perversion of truths...” about the White Terror.⁹⁷ Directly tackling the contents of the British Parliamentary report, Kuh relayed an interchange he had with Barczy, the Minister of Justice under the Friedrich government and an “outspoken Tory” whom Hohler in the

⁹⁵ *Bécsi Magyar Újság*, “Preparing the report of the mission: there is no white terror!” May 29, 1920.

⁹⁶ Letter from Frederick Kuh to William Ewer, April 30, 1920, LP/HUN/1/24.i, LHA. See also Letter from Kuh to Ewer, May 23, 1920, LP/HUN/2/7.i-iii.; Letter from Ernő Garami to Frederick Kuh, n.d., LP/HUN/2/7.iii-iv.

⁹⁷ Letter from Frederick Kuh to William Ewer, April 30, 1920, LP/HUN/1/24.i, LHA.

Parliamentary Report claimed had denied allegations of White Terror. According to Kuh, Barczy told him:

‘Hohler came to see me,’ said Barczy, ‘in order to gather general data available in my department. In the course of his conversation, Mr. Hohler asked me whether I believe that there is actually a White Terror in Hungary today. At the mere absurdity of such a question from Mr. Hohler, who has been in Budapest for some months and who has seen the Terror and its results, I laughed outright. A few days later, a friend of mine told me that Hohler had spoken to him and mentioned his visit to me. “Yes,” said Hohler, “I called on Dr. Barczy and asked him whether there is such a thing as White Terror in Hungary. Barczy laughed at the very thought that there could be such reports.”’⁹⁸

Kuh used this exchange as evidence of the British mission’s “deliberate distortion” of the facts of the White Terror and that Hohler, “...deliberately ignores material which is antagonistic to his preconceived sympathies....”⁹⁹

One of the most important threads of Kuh’s account was describing the relationship between the foreign missions, specifically the British mission, and the Hungarian aristocracy, which confirmed Huysmans’ claim that the lack of accurate information about the White Terror was due to the British mission’s lack of interchange with people outside more conservative and reactionary aristocratic circles.¹⁰⁰ Kuh related information communicated by Cecil Harmsworth, the Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs in Lloyd George’s cabinet to support his assertion of the British mission’s ties to counter-revolutionary elites and the White Terror. He wrote, “Mr. Hohler does not venture to deny this constant and almost exclusive association of British Mission members with the Magyar aristocracy.”¹⁰¹ Further, Kuh established that the foreign missions, rather than staying in hotels were instead billeted in the palatial villas of the

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Letter from Frederick Kuh to William Ewer, April 30, 1920, LP/HUN/1/24.ii, LHA.

¹⁰⁰ Letter from Camille Huysmans to Arthur Henderson, 8 January, 1920, LP/HUN/1/1.i-ii, LHA.

¹⁰¹ Letter from Frederick Kuh to William Ewer, April 30, 1920, LP/HUN/1/24.iv, LHA.

aristocracy, which he attributed to the desire of the White regime “...obviously to keep [the Inter-Allied mission] away from Jews, liberals, and other ‘disreputables’ who might speak infelicitous truths. English journalists, upon arriving in the Budapest, are invited to stay at the palaces of the aristocracy, too, for the same reasons.” Kuh’s characterization of the relationship between the official missions and the aristocracy might have been dismissed as propaganda at the time; Kuh himself suspected it would be. But as Bandholtz’s and Cuninghame’s diaries indicate, there was a great deal of sympathy for the Hungarian aristocracy and gentry among the missions active in Central Europe between the fall of 1919 and 1920. Moreover, the British and American members of the Inter-Allied mission relished the trappings of their privileged status and access to luxurious accommodations during their stay in the Hungarian capital.¹⁰²

Kuh sarcastically commented on Harmsworth’s and Hohler’s assessment in the British Parliamentary report that there were no Social Democrats in Budapest to interview to get balance to the story. Kuh argued that clarifying exactly *where* the Social Democrats were might give Hohler a clearer picture as to the true political conditions reigning in Hungary. Kuh also cynically commented on Hohler’s claim that he mixed with a variety of different groups including Rabbis, Christian Socialists and Smallholders, arguing that despite the impression of the diversity of this group that, “...if Hohler had set out to compile a list of all Hungarian reactionaries, he couldn’t have done much better except by including the ex-Kaiser Karl...”¹⁰³ At best Kuh argued, the British mission was naïve and too trusting of the Hungarian government’s claims about the White Terror. For example, he recalled a situation whereby English officers intervened to

¹⁰² Bandholtz was very open about the luxuries he had access to in Budapest throughout his diary.

¹⁰³ Letter from Frederick Kuh to William Ewer, April 30, 1920, LP/HUN/1/24.v, LHA.

help 400 Social Democrats who had been interned in Eger. He claimed that the Hungarian guards at the internment facility told the men that they would be freed if they signed statements that no harm had been done to them during their incarceration. The men complied so as to gain their liberty and these false statements were shown to the English officers as evidence that the stories of violence and bodily harm in counter-revolutionary prisons were untrue.¹⁰⁴ At worst, British officials in Hungary simply dismissed reports which conflicted with their personal impressions by classifying them as “propaganda”. Kuh held that if the reports he had received were false that the informant providing the information should be disciplined, but he also said that if the British Foreign Office was found to be deliberately suppressing information that they should be punished.

Kuh’s critique of the British mission was scathing in its takedown of the government’s official evaluation of the political conditions in Hungary. He provided precise information and also provided multiple interpretations as to why the government’s information was so wildly inaccurate: because of naiveté and a lack of depth to investigations, because of the mission’s lack of diversity when it came to their informants, and because of deliberate suppression of information on account of political sympathies. However, despite significant evidence which undoubtedly promoted his reputation among foreigners in the region as a reliable source of knowledge about the Terror, Kuh’s evaluation of events in Hungary also included attacks on the character of the members of the British mission.¹⁰⁵ He related information regarding the “sexual excesses” and drunkenness of British officers who liked to hang around the fanciest

¹⁰⁴ Letter from Frederick Kuh to William Ewer, April 30, 1920, LP/HUN/1/24.iv, LHA.

¹⁰⁵ Letter from K.D. Courtney to William Gillies, May 8, 1920, LP/HUN/1/34.ii, LHA.

hotels in Budapest picking up prostitutes.¹⁰⁶ Kuh also claimed that the palace where General Gorton of the Inter-Allied Mission was billeted was the residence of a vulgar and unrefined, but fabulously wealthy Count. This particular information was irrelevant to establishing the “facts” of the White Terror, but it served to impugn the character of the mission, presenting it as a group of men less interested in ensuring security and stability was restored to all Hungarians and more interested in making the most of their elite status in Budapest by dining with Hungarian aristocrats, using the royal box at the opera and residing in the finest hotels and homes of Budapest.¹⁰⁷ His comments were also salacious gossip that also would likely arouse moral indignation, because as violence raged in the countryside, the men of the mission spent their time and money drinking cocktails and bedding prostitutes.

The letter from Kuh was supported by correspondence from Károly Peyer who refuted the representation of his activities as reported by Troubridge in the “very white paper” on the White Terror calling them unambiguously “a lie”.¹⁰⁸ These letters combined with all the other reports and articles of atrocities and repression pouring into the Labour Party’s offices from Böhm, Huysmans, and from the Independent Order of B’nai B’rith, a Jewish Fraternal organization, indicated to the leadership of the Labour Party that there was a wide disconnect between the government’s official version of events and the information they were receiving. Unlike the Anglo-American representatives in Hungary, Labour politicians in England and supporters elsewhere rejected the Inter-Allied mission’s toleration for and/or justifications violence against leftists and Jews based on the actions of the Soviet Regime. It was therefore important to

¹⁰⁶ Letter from Frederick Kuh to William Ewer, April 30, 1920, LP/HUN/1/24.i, LHA.

¹⁰⁷ See Bandholtz, *An Undiplomatic Diary*, 4, 13.

¹⁰⁸ Letter from Károly Peyer to Frederick Kuh, n.d. LP/HUN/2/7.ii-iii, LHA.

the British Labour Party, and the international labor movement more generally, that an investigation that took into account the perspective of labor was necessary and established the “truth” of what was happening in Hungary.¹⁰⁹

The British Labour Party was not the first national labor party to express concern or respond to the White Terror. Earlier in 1920, Italian Socialist Party deputies were turned away by the counter-revolutionary regime, which accused them of distorting the truth and slandering the Hungarian government abroad.¹¹⁰ Mounting atrocity reports and the detailed information provided by Böhm in mid-March motivated Henderson to send a telegram to the Hungarian Prime Minister on behalf of the British Labour Party on March 18, 1920. He communicated that the Labour Party was, “deeply disturbed and horrified by the reports regarding the sustained persecution of the Hungarian working-classes.”¹¹¹ He called on the government to immediately halt its persecution of the Hungarian labor movement and the formation of a Hungarian state which recognized civil liberties and democratic values on the model of Western democracies. Henderson also warned the Hungarian Prime Minister that the government’s failure to end the Terror would irrevocably damage the relations between England and Hungary and would lead to the institution of economic and diplomatic sanctions against the state. In response to this message, Prime Minister Sándor Simonyi-Semadam invited the British labor movement

¹⁰⁹ Correspondence from K.D. Courtney, an internationalist and pacifist in Vienna stressed to William Gillies, the International Secretary of the Labour Party, reminded him that, “...everyone exaggerated in an appalling manner—the Reds exaggerating the White Terror, the Whites the Red....” Letter from K.D. Courtney to William Gillies, May 8, 1920, LP/HUN/1/34.ii, LHA.

¹¹⁰ Letter from Sándor Simonyi-Semadam to Thomas Hohler, May 16, 1920, LP/HUN/1/40.i, LHA.

¹¹¹ Copy of Telegram from Sándor Simonyi-Semadam to Arthur Henderson, no date, LP/HUN/2/1/2.i, LHA.

to send a mission of its own to Hungary in order to dispel the “baseless” rumors spread “malevolently” by political opponents of the government.¹¹²

In May 1920 the British Labour Party in cooperation with the Trade Unions Congress sent a joint delegation to Budapest to investigate the White Terror. The delegation also spent time in Vienna interviewing political exiles who had gathered in the city and sympathetic foreigners like Kuh, who was regarded as a trusted source of information. The Labour delegation’s report arrived at a wildly different conclusion about the White Terror and the nature of the counter-revolutionary regime in Hungary.

Unlike the Parliamentary report on the White Terror, the Labour delegation’s was specific and graphic in its discussion of violence. It addressed several issues including the suppression of the Hungarian labor movement, massacres, executions, and imprisonments, the suspension of *habeas corpus*, an issue Hohler had addressed with the Hungarian Prime Minister earlier that year, as well as the problem of anti-Semitism.¹¹³ In exposing the atrocities against, and suppression of the Hungarian labor movement, the delegation sought to publicize the true nature of the counter-revolutionary regime, as well as to present a defense of their working class brethren and to reflect on the White Terror’s broader significance in both the domestic and international context.

The report recorded many incidents of imprisonment without charge, torture, and execution. It also emphasized the attack on civil rights and liberties such as the freedom of the press and assembly, which affected not just the labor movement but the broader population as well. On a visit to the prison in Szolnok, the delegation met with the

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Letter from Thomas Hohler to Prime Minister Simonyi-Semadam, May 5, 1920, LP/HUN/1/39.i-ii, LHA; Letter from Prime Minister Simonyi-Semadam to Thomas Hohler, May 16, 1920, LP/HUN/1/40.i-ii, LHA.

warden of the prison who told them that nineteen prisoners had been taken out of their cells and were eventually killed on the pretext that they had clandestinely been planning to stage a riot for May Day. The report clarified that of the nineteen killed only three were Jews. The report also indicated that the delegation did not trust the “official story” because of the timing of the massacre and the burial of the men which took place in the same night. The mission concluded that the military was responsible for the death of these men.

The statement that only a small fraction of Jews were present among those men helped underscore that the atrocities being committed in Hungary were motivated primarily by anti-communist and anti-socialist rather than anti-Semitic animus. This is not to say that the Labour delegation was not interested in incidents of anti-Jewish violence. The report is replete with descriptions of atrocities including the severe beating of a Jewish doctor in Abonyi,¹¹⁴ the purportedly more intense violence against Jews in counter-revolutionary prisons and camps,¹¹⁵ and the torture of two elderly Jewish men who were tied to a horse cart. However, particularly in the case of the doctor and the two elderly men, their Jewish identities intersected with other dimensions: educated respectability for the former, and advanced age in the latter, which underscored the unacceptability of the violence against them. The delegation regarded violence against Jews as rooted not in anti-Semitism, but anti-communism and in accusations of profiteering which were due, they claimed, to the prominence of Jews in the communist government and in commercial enterprises.¹¹⁶ For example, one episode recounted in the report described the imprisonment and torture of a Polish Jewish man who arrived in

¹¹⁴ Joint Labour Delegation, *The White Terror in Hungary*, 4.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 24.

Hungary to take care of his four daughters, who was tortured and held in a military barracks for several days where he was held down and officers tattooed his forehead with the words “*Schleichhändler*” [blackmarketeer/profiteer].¹¹⁷ While intending to emphasize the political character of the White Terror, this statement nevertheless suggests that the Labour delegation, like the British governmental mission acknowledged the validity of Judeo-bolshevism to a certain extent, by interpreting attacks against Jews as attacks against socialism.

As the cases above suggest, the report often highlighted atrocities against those classes of persons who, according to established norms, were generally excepted from violence, particularly women children and the elderly. In this sense, the report fits within the corpus of atrocity literature which had become well-developed over the course of the war and which tended to emphasize violence against these groups. There was, for example, an incident where a police detective named Lukacs severely beat two six-year-old children for being unable to disclose the location of their brother.¹¹⁸ In another incident, an elderly man, the father of an escaped prisoner, was beaten by the police for being unable to tell them where his son was, and suffered from cracked ribs and a broken leg.¹¹⁹ In still another, the report claimed that two elderly Jewish men were chained to a horse cart and dragged until they collapsed,¹²⁰ and another relayed an incident where a sixty-five year old man was forced to eat his own excrement after a severe beating which left his genital organs mutilated.¹²¹

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 13.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 12.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 14.

¹²¹ Ibid., 15.

The most sensational cases covered in the report were those involving the severe abuse against women in the state's custody, who were subjected to sexualized violence by their captors. There were only two included in the twenty-five page report, but they were covered in detail, and one of the stories could be found in both the Labour delegation's and the Joint Distribution Committee's reports and was referenced in the Social Democratic Party's legal aid bureau. The first was the story of Mrs. Hamburger which has already been discussed in previous chapters. The other was an incident which involved the "Jewess of Putok," a young Jewish socialist agitator who was denounced by an officer and arrested and held in custody by an officers' detachment. While she was there, one of the officers took a liking to her, gave her a private cell and better food than the other prisoners. He tried to leverage her special treatment for sex, "making improper advances."¹²² She refused and was starved for two days. He tried again to have sex with her and she refused despite her hunger. He finally came to her cell and raped her once and then raped her again two days later. He offered her the opportunity to become his mistress in exchange for her freedom, but she refused. Eventually she was set free, but found that she was pregnant as a result of her rape.¹²³

The stories of Mrs. Hamburger and the Jewess of Putok highlight the prominence of sexualized violence in atrocity literature, and in specifically the Hungarian left's depiction of the White Terror which did not shy away from using imagery of female violation or suffering to drive home the image of a barbarous counter-revolutionary government.¹²⁴ (see also the images in chapter two which were drawn by artist Mihály

¹²² Ibid., 16.

¹²³ Ibid., 16-17.

¹²⁴ John Horne and Alan Kramer, *German Atrocities: A History of Denial* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 36. For examples of atrocity reports see Arnold J. Toynbee, *The German Terror in Belgium*;

Biro who also was exiled in Vienna and produced images for the revolutionary governments in 1918-1919).

Illustration in Print Copy held in CEU Library

5.2“Because it will be the grand and lovely thought for Hungarian women”¹²⁵

An Historical Record (New York, G. H. Doran Co., 1917); Arnold J. Toynbee, *The German Terror in France* (London; New York: Hodder & Stoughton, 1917); R. A. Reiss, *How Austria-Hungary Waged War in Serbia; Personal Investigations of a Neutral*, trans. J. S. Paris: A. Colin, 1915; Reiss, R. A. *Infringements of the Rules and Laws of War Committed by the Austro-Bulgaro-Germans; Letters of a Criminologist on the Serbian Macedonian Front* (London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1919); n.a., *Frightfulness in Retreat* (London; New York: Hodder & Stoughton, 1917); No Author, *Their Crimes*, trans. J.E. Adams (London; New York: Cassell, 1917); L. Mokveld, *The German Fury in Belgium; Experiences of a Netherland Journalist during Four months with the German Army in Belgium*, trans. C. Thieme (New York, G. H. Doran, 1917).

¹²⁵ *Bécsi Magyar Újság*, “Because it will be the grand and lovely thought for Hungarian women,” June 26, 1920.

Illustration in Print Copy held in CEU Library
 5.3 “Spring”¹²⁶

Illustration in Print Copy held in CEU Library
 5.4 “The pain of Transdanubia”¹²⁷

However, the story also shows how gendered violence was tied to ideas about female respectability and chasteness. The delegation, for instance, emphasized that Mrs. Hamburger who was raped with the handle of a dog whip and subjected to other forms of sexualized torture, was “a quiet unassuming, and a highly respected woman, and we were

¹²⁶ *Bécsi Magyar Újság*, “Spring,” May 20, 1920.

¹²⁷ *Bécsi Magyar Újság*, “The Pain of Transdanubia,” May 22, 1920;

informed by all who knew her that she possessed a moral character beyond reproach.”¹²⁸

This qualification suggests that the story of Mrs. Hamburger’s torture by an officer detachment was unconscionable and undeserved not simply because she was unlawfully imprisoned—the labor report indicates that she was never charged with anything—or because rape was illegal, but because of who she was, what she did, and how she acted. She conformed to the expectations of a true victim of sexual violence as a “respectable woman of good education” and a woman with high moral character, who was a faithful wife and mother.¹²⁹ That her “character” was an important dimension of her victimization and the interpretation of violence is clear given that the delegation twice commented that her character was unimpeachable, and made it clear that she resisted violation by begging and pleading to be spared.¹³⁰ According to the Labour delegation, the official Hungarian government version of events refuted the story not by denying that Mrs. Hamburger had been beaten, but that the violence was punishment because Mrs. Hamburger, having been placed in a holding cell with a man, was found to be engaged in sexual relations with him. They further claimed that she was moved to another cell with another man, and with this man too, she was found, “misconducting herself...”¹³¹ The British delegation contested this version of events by calling attention first to Mrs. Hamburger’s status and character and by arguing that holding people of two different sexes in a cell together was not standard practice, even with major prison overcrowding (see chapter four). It was because of the intersection of Mrs. Hamburger’s gender and social status combined with

¹²⁸ Joint Labour Delegation, *The White Terror in Hungary*, 10.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 11.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 9-11.

¹³¹ Ibid., 10.

her conformity to moral that made her a victim, not just the fact that she was illegitimately arrested, imprisoned and tortured.

The fixation on the character and behavior of Mrs. Hamburger and the Jewess of Putnok was not common to all victims of sexualized violence, just to women. This distinction is born out in the delegation's presentation or suppression of sexualized violence against men. For example in the story of Mrs. Hamburger, the genital mutilation of the two male prisoners brought up to rape Mrs. Hamburger was not accompanied by a discussion of the character of the men. The castration of men would have been understood as an inherent violation of the men's bodies which would prevent them from conforming to gender norms which prized male sexual vigor. In another incident, the report presented the story of two Jewish men who were severely beaten and whose genitals were mutilated by an officers' detachment. Again, the lack of elaboration on the character of men in the incidents involving the sexual violence against men indicates interpretations of sexual violence and victimization of men was understood as an inherent deviation and violation of masculine gender norms.¹³²

The Labour Delegation had also received information about the rape of József Dündek by a White militia (discussed in chapter two). The information the delegation received, however, did not provide detailed information about the attack against József, but rather emphasized the rape of his wife, which was carried out in front of him. Neither his nor his wife's assault was published in the final report, but its lack of usability helps underscore that the sexual victimization of men was a destabilizing force on conceptualizations of masculinity which generally held that men were supposed to be

¹³² Statement by József Dündek to SDP, December 19, 1919, pg. 115, PIL; n.a., "Texas in Hungary," LP/HUN/5/46/36.i, LHA.

protectors of women and not victims. In the case of Dündek, he was personally violated as well as humiliated because of his inability to prevent the rape of his wife, which he was compelled to observe. More generally, sexualized violence by men against men also had the capacity to disrupt heterosexual norms, but here too, such acts were largely viewed as inherent moral violations of the “natural order” rather than as linked to the social origins of the victim. In short, the incidents of sexual violence against women were only “usable” because the women had either demonstrated their resistance to the violation by undergoing severe physical tests to protect their “honor” and/or because their social origins and “moral character” indicated that they could not have possibly been responsible for encouraging their violation.

The stories of violence and atrocities highlighted in the delegation’s report provided a powerful, if sometimes gruesome counter-narrative to the British government’s definitive declaration that there was no “White Terror,” and that “life was as secure here as it is in England”.¹³³ The Labour report unequivocally stated that, “There is a ‘Terror’ in Hungary....”¹³⁴ This determination was based on the existence of violence and atrocities in Hungary, but it was also based on a more expansive conceptualization of terror which did not only take into account the “wild” violence of uncontrollable militias but the systematic violence and repression of the counter-revolutionary government which was using laws and courts to wreak vengeance on its opponents and those who did not (or could not, i.e. Jews) conform to the “Christian National” ideal touted by the counter-revolutionary regime. The labour delegation challenged the Hungarian regime’s persecution out of a sense of outrage that such actions offended democratic and socialist

¹³³ Letter from Admiral Ernest Troubridge to Thomas Hohler, in *Report on Alleged Existence of ‘White Terror’ in Hungary*, 9; Joint Labour Delegation, *The White Terror in Hungary*, 24.

¹³⁴ Joint Labour Delegation, *The White Terror in Hungary*, 22.

principles, as well as the ideals represented by the claim of “Christianity” clarifying that defining something as “Christian” in Hungary was not a statement of morality or spiritual commitment but had “definite political significance.”¹³⁵ The British delegation report demonstrates that the representatives fundamentally rejected violence against leftists as a political tool. They used the stories of atrocities to delegitimize the Hungarian counter-revolutionary regime, by emphasizing certain types of violence and by defining terror in such a way as to demonstrate that the government itself was an important perpetrator and a facilitator of terror. Thus, identifying and publicizing violence aimed to threaten the legitimacy of the Hungarian regime, not just because violence was treated as a politically and morally unacceptable method of political control, but because it showed how weak and unstable the new regime was, as it could not control the militias nor govern without violence.¹³⁶

The report also indicated that the delegation rejected the logic undergirding both the militias’ and the government’s White Terror, namely that the Károlyi and Kun regimes were fundamentally illegitimate. The delegation argued that the Károlyi government, the “Commune” and the socialist government which took over for it briefly in July, 1919, were genuine, legally constituted governments which passed laws, suppressed uprisings and participated in negotiations with the Entente.¹³⁷ According to the report, “...there is no justification for calling for the death sentence on those who simply took part in the Communist Government, especially when it is remembered that

¹³⁵ Ibid., 24.

¹³⁶ Thomas Lorman, *Counter-revolutionary Hungary, 1920-1925: István Bethlen and the Politics of Consolidation* (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs), 226.

¹³⁷ Joint Labour Delegation, *The White Terror in Hungary*, 5, 25. Labor politicians frequently stressed the legality of the regime in their correspondence between each other and in their correspondence to the leadership of their governments.

several armed counter-revolutions were attempted and suppressed by the *de facto* Government.”¹³⁸ The delegation did not refute claims that there was some violence perpetrated by the Soviet regime, but compared “Red” violence with the breadth and type of atrocities already committed by the White regime, while also contextualizing it as a predictable outcome of the upheaval caused by the war and imperial collapse. In other words, the British Labour delegation fundamentally rejected the methods of transitional justice used by the counter-revolutionary regime to grapple with the legacy of the revolutions.

In addition to linking the White Terror to the question of political legitimacy of the counter-revolutionary government, the British Labour delegation’s report also repeated the labor movement’s concerns that the White Terror in Hungary threatened the legitimacy and moral authority of Britain and the Entente. They reiterated the British government’s failure to honestly portray to the political repression and violence in Hungary and argued that the Supreme Council, and the British specifically were the Hungarian government’s accomplices in “a policy of oppression of political, industrial, and religious freedom,” because of their refusal to intervene, despite ample cause.¹³⁹ The British government and the Supreme Council in Paris had orchestrated the ascendance of Horthy, and had helped organize the government under Károly Huszár. Moreover, the Entente had consistently refused to use its power to intervene against the White Terror even though it had grounds to do so under the agreement it had brokered in July 1919, which among other things called for the cessation of all political persecutions (white and

¹³⁸ Ibid., 5.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 24.

red).¹⁴⁰ The Entente governments therefore were not just observers, but collaborators in the White Terror because by accepting the terms of this negotiation, they were “morally responsible for all the cruelties committed now in Hungary....”¹⁴¹

Conclusion

The international labor movement’s attempts to put an end to the White Terror in Hungary did not stop with the publication of the report. On June 20, 1920, the International Trade Union Federation in Amsterdam called for a transportation boycott of the country, a relatively unsuccessful action which was eventually called off on August 8, 1920. Despite international outcry by labor politicians, the White Terror, especially its legal dimensions, continued for another few years, provoking continued attention from philanthropic organizations from abroad, but not commanding nearly the international attention it once did.

The White Terror became an issue of international contestation. The competing narratives produced about it by the Entente and labor movement demonstrate that class, gender, ethnicity and political loyalty played an important role in defining, publicizing and instrumentalizing violence in order to achieve specific international policy goals. The debates about White Terror also help reveal significant contradictions in both the Entente’s and the labor movement’s policies. For the Entente, the issue of White Terror exposed the fundamental contradictions of their anti-communist policy in Hungary, because it required prioritizing one dimension of “civilization”: anti-communism over another: democracy, even if it meant tolerating a more authoritarian regime. The labor

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 24-25.

¹⁴¹ Letter from Vilmos Böhm to British Labour Party, February 8, 1920, LP/HUN/1/9.ii, LHA.

movement's response to White Terror shows the willingness of politicians dedicated to social and political justice to exploit unequal power relations between states in order to stop violence against their ideological brothers and sisters.

Ultimately, the stakes of the debate over the existence and nature of White Terror in were higher than just ending violence against leftists in a small state in Eastern Europe. It was an important front in the ideological battle between democratic socialism and capitalist "imperialism" in the interwar period. The problem was that winning the war of ideas and provoking humanitarian outrage could not solve the actual deprivation and pain caused by the violence in Hungary. Philanthropic organizations from across Europe and North America attempted to fill this gap by raising money, publicizing conditions and sending missions and aid to the beleaguered victims of the war, terror and counter-revolution in Hungary. The following chapter will shed light on the efforts of one such organization, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee.

Chapter Six

“The Most Tragic of All the European Jewries”¹: The Joint Distribution Committee and the White Terror

It is impossible to fight anti-Semitism successfully in one battle, but it is very important that our actions be so guarded as to put us in a position where we cannot be attacked, with foundation, as being equally narrow as some of the anti-Semites.

Felix M. Warburg, 1921²

In April, 1920, an appeal by Hungarian Jews to American Jews was published in the Yiddish language daily, *Forward* [not my translation]:

Brothers, save us. We are outlawed and whoever wills it, attacks us. We are afraid to leave our homes, because we are never safe outside. Not one day passes that some two hundred Jews are not seized and taken to places from which they never return. Hungarian army officers have sworn to take revenge on the Jews and to make pogroms, and they are observing this oath in a most terrible manner. The very air is fraught with death and gorrer (sic) for the Jews of Hungary. Many Jews are buried alive, while the bodies of others are unspeakably mutilated. Jewish women are defiled in the presence of their parents and husbands. Jewish widows and orphans abound everywhere. The jails and the concentration camps are crowded with Jews, whose only guilt is that they are Jews... Daily the situation grows worse, there is no hope in sight, and no escape. Brothers, free citizens of America. Try to prevail upon the American government to intervene and put a stop to the terrible slaughter of the Hungarian Jews. If you will not do it we shall all perish.³

The plea painted a pitiful portrait of Jewish suffering in Hungary and framed the crisis facing Jews in Hungary as hopeless without the intervention of outsiders. This chapter

¹ Lieutenant James Becker, “Minutes of Joint Distribution Committee Executive Committee Meeting,” Dec 12, 1920, pg. 114, MS 457, Box 190, Folder 2, Felix M. Warburg Papers (hereafter referred to as Warburg Papers), Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio (hereafter referred to as AJA).

² Letter from Felix M. Warburg to Maud Nathan, Nov 30, 1920, MS 457, Box 191, Folder 5. Warburg Papers, AJA.

³ “Jews of Hungary Appeal to American Jews,” *Forward*, May 17, 1920, in “Digest of News in Yiddish Press of Interest to J.D.C. May 14-17, 1920,” MS 457, Box 192, Folder 1, Warburg Papers, AJA. The JDC leadership received weekly collections of news articles from the Yiddish language press about the conditions of Jews in war torn Europe and the Near East. These articles were already translated from the Yiddish into English.

focuses on how one philanthropic organization, the American Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), responded to the political crises facing their foreign brethren in counter-revolutionary Hungary.⁴

The Great War was a watershed moment in many respects, including the transformation of international philanthropy aimed at “war relief” and reconstruction in Europe. However, as is evident above, the humanitarian and political crises did not abate after the November, 1918 armistice as thousands of persons across Eastern Europe remained alienated from their homes, pogroms against Jews erupted in Ukraine and Poland, and anti-Jewish persecution raged following Hungary’s failed Soviet Republic. The JDC was one of the many benevolent organizations founded in the wake of the declaration of war in 1914. It was committed to distributing funds and material assistance to specifically Jewish victims of war and contributed to the reconstructive work after the armistice.

This chapter examines the JDC’s intervention in Hungary, focusing specifically on the group’s interpretations of the violence against and persecution of Jews committed by the Hungarian counter-revolutionary regime and militias. It explores the multiple dimensions of the JDC’s—both its New York and Budapest branches—anti-violence work in Hungary. These included their attempts to publicize the White Terror, to assist in the humane repatriation of non-Hungarian Jews to their (new) homelands, to address the “economic destruction” of the Hungarian Jewry, and to help Jews defend themselves against legal persecution and/or discrimination of Jews.

⁴ n.a., “The report starts out with a flaming denunciation of the Hungarian anti-Semitic leaders, who though most of them are civil or military officials...” January 1, 1920, Doc. 220552, folder 151.3, JDC.

To this end, this chapter will analyze the JDC leadership's portrayal of the crises facing the Jews in Hungary in relation to Hungary's recent wartime and revolutionary past, which played an important part in the development of their conceptualization of the White Terror as an international humanitarian crisis. It will also show how the committee's narrative of the White Terror was shaped by the priorities of American Jews, who were especially moved by the Hungarian upper class and bourgeois Jews' sudden loss of status and power, whose wealth and respectability did not shield them from the Terror. By paying such great attention to the experience of elites, the JDC's narrative of the White Terror laid bare the fragility of Jewish life even in places like Hungary, where Jews, they argued, had enjoyed significant prosperity, emancipation and high levels of assimilation.

This chapter will also analyze how citizenship status shaped the JDC's narrative and its activities in Hungary, by exploring the complex web of relationships which entangled the JDC as it waded into the counter-revolutionary political terrain. These included the JDC's role as mediator between the Hungarian and Galician Jewry, as well as the unequal and often contentious relationships the American JDC developed with the local Budapest committee and the Hungarian government. As such, it reveals the complex interaction between Hungarian Jews with those coming from "outside" to assist in relief efforts and between humanitarian organizations and the state in a period of political upheaval and institutional transition.

By examining the international Jewish response to the Terror, this chapter explores the important role that international humanitarian organizations played during the war and its aftermath. WWI was a transformative moment for many philanthropic

organizations. The scale of warfare not only required a massive mobilization to provide relief, but also provoked philanthropies to turn to modern scientific methods to provide effective long-term assistance in alleviating suffering and assisting postwar relief and reconstruction. Thus it is important, in addition to analyzing the JDC's role in Hungary, the JDC provides a case study of how international humanitarian organizations developed during the war, how they engaged with new (small) states in its aftermath, and how they shaped people's understanding of important historical processes and events.

“...the Jewish people of Europe need a savior...”⁵

Understanding the genesis, structure, concerns and activities of the JDC in its wartime context is significant for understanding the organization's response to the White Terror. The composition of the JDC leadership and their interpretation of the crisis in Hungary played an important role in the strategies they used to combat the situation facing Jews there. It also helps illuminate the complex web of relationships and conflicts the JDC navigated and arbitrated during the period of its intensive work in Hungary.

The Joint Distribution Committee of Funds for Jewish War Sufferers (JDC) was established in November 1914 to address the consequences of the Great War as they affected the European Jewry.⁶ It was an umbrella organization which distributed funds collected by the American Jewish Relief Committee for Sufferers from the War (AJRC)

⁵ Letter from Irving Levy to Felix Warburg, December 10, 1918, MS 457, Box 178, Folder 16, Warburg Papers, AJA.

⁶ The outbreak war had provoked the organization and expansion of charitable activities across Europe and the United States. In this period, most benevolent organizations in the United States were organized on the basis of ethnicity or confession, and in this regard the JDC followed established charitable norms of the period. Merle Curti, *American Philanthropy Abroad* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1988), 224-258 and 361-390. See also Oliver Zunz, *Philanthropy in America, A History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 66-67.

which was established by the American Jewish Committee (AJC), and the Central Relief Organization for the Relief of Jews Suffering through the War (CRO), established by the Union for Orthodox Congregations (UOC). These AJC and UOC represented two different constituencies of Jews in the United States: AJC was largely composed of well-established, wealthy Reform Jews of German origin, and the UOC represented the interests of the more recently arrived orthodox Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe.⁷ In 1915, the People's Relief Committee (PRC), an organization of Jews involved in socialist and labor politics joined the organization. Felix M. Warburg, a prominent banker and philanthropist in New York City was appointed chair of the new organization, and the leadership was dominated by other prominent American Jewish men with a great deal of power and influence in business and politics.⁸

The overarching goal of the JDC was to ensure that funds were distributed to Jews according to need (as opposed to religious adherence, political loyalties, language or place of origin) among the besieged Jewish populations of the belligerent empires of Europe and the Near East.⁹ Despite the cooperation with the People's Committee, the JDC was apolitical, which tamped down (though it did not erase) intra-organizational conflicts and also allowed the JDC to operate in more regions and with better access to their constituents. In terms of fundraising, the JDC was extraordinarily successful during

⁷ Joseph C. Hyman, *Twenty-five Years of American Aid to Jews Overseas: a Record of the Joint Distribution Committee* (New York: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1939), 10. See also Yehuda Bauer, *My Brother's Keeper: a History of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, 1929-1939* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1974) and Oscar Handlin, *A Continuing Task: The American Joint Distribution Committee, 1914-1964* (New York: Random House, 1965).

⁸ The board included Louis Marshall, a prominent lawyer and Jewish leader (he was nearly appointed Supreme Court Justice by President W.H. Taft), Felix Warburg a wealthy and prominent banker, prominent Reform Rabbi Judah Magnes, Arthur Lehman, a partner in Lehman Brothers bank. "Joint Distribution Committee Executive Committee Members, Doc. 173, Folder 4.1, JDC. See also Jaclyn Granick, "Waging Relief: the Politics and Logistics of American Jewish War Relief in Europe and the Near East (1914-1918)," *First World War Studies* 5, no. 1 (April 2014): 55-68.

⁹ Hyman, *Twenty-five Years*, 10-11.

the war years, acquiring donations of more than one and a half million U.S. dollars in the first year of the conflict. By September 1918, the JDC collected an estimated twenty million dollars for Jewish relief, according to a report by Albert Lucas, the Secretary of “the Joint,” as it was known.¹⁰

During most of the war, much of the JDC’s activities comprised of distributing monies collected to a variety of local or international organizations that were active on the ground, in war zones. This meant that the “Joint” was heavily reliant on local relief organizations like the Jewish Committee for the Relief of War Victims (Evreiskii Komitet Pomoshchi Zhertvam Voyny, EKOPO) in Russian territory, *Das Jüdisches Hilfskomitee für Polen und Litauen* in Germany and the *Alliirter Hilfsverein* in Austria, all of which received and disbursed financial and material assistance.¹¹ This pattern of using local organizations for the disbursement of funds continued after the war, but the JDC also launched their own operation in Europe, developing its own bureaucracy and established local committees. By the time of European Director Lt. James H. Becker’s 1920 report, the JDC had approximately four thousand local committees in Europe, two thousand in Poland alone.¹²

The political crisis facing Jews posed a challenge to the JDC, which was only recently moving toward reconstruction work, and was not even particularly well informed about the “true” conditions in Hungary. To this end, in response to mounting reports of

¹⁰ Albert Lucas, “American Jewish Relief in the World War,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 79, *War Relief Work* (September 1918): 221-228. According to the U.S. Department Bureau of Labor Statistics, adjusted for inflation, was equivalent to nearly 475 million dollars, accessed September 24, 2014, http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm.

¹¹ Michael Beizer, “American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee,” *YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*, 2010, accessed May 22, 2014, http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/American_Jewish_Joint_Distribution_Committee.

¹² Meeting of the Joint Distribution Committee Held at the Hotel Pennsylvania, December 12, 1920, pg. 5, doc. 200102, file 6, JDC.

anti-Jewish violence and large-scale deportation efforts of Jewish Refugees, the New York JDC established a local Budapest Joint Distribution Committee in April 1920. The new committee was to be chaired by Eugen de Polnay, a Neolog (a Reformed faction of Jews in Hungary) and former cabinet minister under István Tisza.¹³ Other members of the Budapest JDC's leadership were taken from all the major Jewish organizations in Budapest in an effort to bridge the divisions within the Jewish community in Hungary. Thus, the new committee would unite the Orthodox, Neolog (Reformed) and Zionist factions of the community and dispense relief and organize reconstruction work.¹⁴ The American JDC also established a repatriation office to assist those Jews who had been interned and marked for deportation.¹⁵ According to Becker who briefly visited Hungary on behalf of the JDC in November 1920, the Budapest committee was the best local committee the JDC had established in Europe.¹⁶

Despite the organization of the local committee, little information about the White Terror reached its parent organization in New York. Therefore, in 1921, the New York JDC sent Joseph Marcus, a JDC representative active in Eastern Europe, on two, month-long missions to Hungary, the first from February to early March, and the second from mid-April to early June 1921. The trips were primarily organized for "securing the most reliable information in regard to the present political conditions of the Jews; to collect indisputable data on the frequently reported acts of injustice, inhumanity and persecution

¹³ Neolog Judaism is a particular strain of Reform Judaism which emerged in the Kingdom of Hungary. Klein-Pejšová, "Among the Nationalities," 7.

¹⁴ Letter from Dr. Julius Goldman to Felix M. Warburg, April 13, 1920, doc. 220522, folder 151.3, JDC.

¹⁵ Joseph Marcus, "Galician Jews in Hungary Prior to the War," pg. 6-7, March 28, 1921, doc. 220051, folder 148.1, JDC.

¹⁶ "Dr. Goldman Confirms Reports of Hungarian Persecutions," *Forward*, April 11, 1920, in "Digest of News in Yiddish Press of Interest to J.D.C.," April 8-11, 1920, MS 457, Box 192, Folder 1, Warburg Papers, AJA; "Minutes of Joint Distribution Committee Executive Committee Meeting," Dec 12, 1920, pgs. 115, Warburg Papers, AJA.

to which the Jews were said to be subjected; and to ascertain the underlying causes of such conditions.”¹⁷ Thus, establishing a narrative about the nature of White Terror in Hungary based on evidence was one of the most important dimensions of the JDC’s activities in Hungary as it would allow the JDC to more effectively deploy its resources to meet the needs of the population ravaged by violence and deprivation. It would also provide the JDC with data it could use to publicize the White Terror in order to provoke the U.S (and Entente) governments to intervene in Hungarian political affairs in order to stop anti-Semitic persecutions.¹⁸ The narrative revealed the complex nature of the crises facing Jews in Hungary and the tensions and conflicts it engendered among the large and diverse group of Jews living in Hungary. It also revealed the priorities of American Jews, particularly the elite and well-connected Jews who served as leaders in the JDC.

“Brothers, save us”¹⁹

Hungary was not a primary focal point of the JDC’s attention during or after the war. Polish, Ukrainian, and Russian territories as well as the Palestinian Mandate demanded the majority of attention and resources. This focus did not change considerably following the armistice, lasting until the collapse of the Commune, when violence against Jews in Hungary erupted and a spate of legislation directed against the diverse Jewish population was proposed by members of the new regime. According to a statement

¹⁷ Joseph Marcus, Report “Is There White Terror in Hungary?,” pg. 4, June 5, 1921, doc. 220561, folder 151.4, JDC.

¹⁸ Granick, “Waging Relief,” elaborates on the relationship that the JDC had developed with the US government over the course of the war. JDC leaders active in Hungary between 1920-1921 continued to regard a close relationship with the American state to be a vital component to the improvement of the conditions facing Jews in Hungary.

¹⁹ “Jews of Hungary Appeal to American Jews,” *Forward*, May 17, 1920, “Digest of News in Yiddish Press of Interest to J.D.C. May 14-17, 1920” MS 457, Box 192 Folder 1, Warburg Papers, AJA.

released by a group of Hungarian Jewish immigrants in the United States, the change in the political fortunes of the country had led to a deterioration of Jewish life, which necessitated American Jewish intervention.²⁰ Mounting stories of Jewish focused atrocities demonstrated to the JDC that a more intentional strategy was necessary to provide succor to Jewish victims of the White Terror and Jewish war sufferers in Hungary.

The rise of the counter-revolutionary regime, which embraced anti-Semitism as an important dimension of state ideology (the Szeged Idea) in the early interwar period, had been accompanied by mass atrocities against leftists and Jews. The charges of profiteering and shirking which Jews faced during the war were, in this post-Soviet period, expanded on and supplemented with new charges including “signing the peace treaty,” cooperating with the Romanian occupation, and most importantly, for being communists.²¹ As discussed in Chapter Two, the association of Jews with communism was a central tenant of counter-revolutionary ideology, which highlighted the prominence of Jews in the leadership of the communist regime, and cast Jews as a fifth column seeking to undermining the soul of the Hungarian nation through the introduction of their “foreign” ideas (communism) and perverse morality.

The political crisis facing Hungarian Jews was distinct, but it was closely related to another crisis in Hungary, namely, the influx of tens of thousands of Galician Jewish refugees. The refugee crisis was caused largely by the war and continued into the post-

²⁰ The first Hungarian Congregation Ohab Zedek, Letter from congregation Ohab Zedek for release, April 25, 1921, pg. 1-3, doc. 220068, folder 148.1, JDC.

²¹ Statement by Imre Kuefler to PIH, May 29, 1920, pg. 68, BZsL; Statement by Mrs. Mór Hahn, May 31, 1920, pg. 53, BZsL; Statement by Mátyás Lax to PIH, May 20, 1920, pg. 80, BZsL; Statement by Simon Neumann to PIH, May 30, 1920, pg. 91, BZsL; Statement by Zsigmond Rabinek to PIH, May 22, 1920, pg. 96, BZsL; Statement by Béla Pfeffer to PIH, May 27, 1920, pg. 94, BZsL; Statement by Simon Neumann to PIH, May 30, 1920, pg. 91, BZsL, Statement by Samu Stein to PIH, May 27, 1920, pg. 118, BZsL; Statement of Lipót Schwartz to Military Prosecutor, March 5, 1920, pg. 114, BZsL.

armistice period, a consequence of both the upheaval of war and the political disintegration of the European empires which followed defeat. The refugee crisis in Hungary had significantly disturbed intra-Jewish relations between segments of the Jewish population in Hungary in a number of ways. First, Galician Jews were looked down upon by the more educated and prosperous Budapest Jewish community, many of whom had assimilated into Hungarian society. Many Hungarian Jews also traced their origins in Galicia, albeit after decades of settlement in Hungary. They saw the influx of Galician Jews, who were typically more orthodox, poorer and less assimilated, as a reminder of their humble origins.²² Galicians were regarded by many more assimilated Jews as undesirable and visible outsiders, threatening Jewish legal and political advances in Hungarian society. Second, the influx of Galician Jews put real or imagined pressure on increasingly scarce foodstuffs, and refugees were frequently blamed for rising prices and profiteering, even by the Budapest Neolog (reformed) Jews. Marcus reported in March 1921 that he had been told by a national leader of the Neolog Jews that “the Galician Jews were not always clean in their business dealings. They appeared in the street...with their peculiar dress and with their long beard and peies. And this attracted the attention of non-Jews who commenced talking about ‘the Jews’. From [the Neolog leader’s] talk I could see that [the Hungarian Jews] feared this very much.”²³ The visibility of Galician Jewish refugees fed into many nationalist and conservative Hungarians’ mindsets that the Jews were the cause of all of Hungary’s economic,

²² Rebekah Klein-Pejšová, “Among the Nationalities: Jewish Refugees, Jewish Nationalities, and Czechoslovak Statebuilding” (PhD. diss., Columbia University, 2007), 18. This embarrassment concerning Galician Jewry was not unique to the Hungarian Jewry. See Steven Ascheim, *Brothers and Strangers: the East European Jew in the German and German Jewish Consciousness* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982) for the German case and David Rechter, *The Jews of Vienna and the First World War* (Portland, OR: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2008) for the Austrian.

²³ Joseph Marcus, “Galician Jews in Hungary Prior to the War,” pg. 2-3. See also chapter two for a discussion of anti-Semitic stereotypes of Jews. See also Klein-Pejšová, “Among the Nationalities,” 27-28.

political, spiritual and social problems.²⁴ It also strengthened arguments made by the more reactionary elements that Jews were an inherently foreign presence in Hungary that needed to be removed through expulsion.²⁵

In order to combat the violence and legal persecution which accompanied these crises, the New York JDC had to understand the conditions in Hungary in order to develop effective policies and deploy their waning funds efficiently. This was a difficult task because the status of Hungary as an enemy territory during the war and revolution meant that the JDC had very little direct contact with the Jews in Hungary after 1914. The committee had channeled assistance to Jewish refugees in Budapest through its cooperation with the *Allianz* in Vienna, but for the most part, the local Hungarian Jewish communities, especially those in the countryside, had taken responsibility for the care and feeding of the thousands of refugees, primarily women, children and the aged, who arrived in Hungary in the early days of the conflict.²⁶ After the armistice the revolutions cut Hungary off for nearly another year. News reports and letters from abroad provided the bulk of information about the eruption of the White Terror up until the early months of 1920. According to one article published in *Day*, a Yiddish-language daily in early April 1920:

...Such is the prevailing sentiment against the Jews in general and the Galician Jews in particular, that both the leaders of the masses and of the aristocracy are in favor of expelling the refugees. Recently ex-premier Friedrich declared in the Hungarian parliament that he was heartily in favor of expelling all the Galician refugees. He insisted that only the respectable, native Hungarian Jews be permitted to remain in the country, and that all others, even if natives, be driven out. Daily occurrences prove, however, that the respectable native Jews are not

²⁴ Paul A. Hanebrink, *In Defense of Christian Hungary: Religion, Nationalism and Antisemitism, 1890-1944* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), 27-28.

²⁵ See for example, Statement by Oszkar Lemberger to PIH, n.d., document 80, BZsL.

²⁶ Klein-Pejsova, "Among the Nationalities," 22-25; Letter from Congregation Ohab Zedek for release, pg. 2; Marcus, "Galician Jews in Hungary Prior to the War," pg. 2.

spared. Jews are assaulted, beaten and whipped to death regardless of whether they are refugees or natives, respectable or otherwise.²⁷

In addition to news reports, the other major sources of information about the White Terror were the British Parliamentary report (March 1920) and the British Labour Party report (May 1920) which shed more light on the situation in Hungary. However, the narratives of the violence and the characterization of the Hungarian government's role in it drew substantial criticism from the JDC and other American Jewish organizations like the American Jewish Committee. These organizations objected to the reports' characterization of the anti-Jewish violence and persecution as tied to anti-communism.²⁸ For many in the JDC leadership, these reports did not take the explicitly *anti-Jewish* character of the White Terror seriously enough. Like the labor movement, the JDC was concerned that the Great Powers' political and diplomatic priorities, especially a fervent desire to ensure that communism had been stamped out entirely, led to a willful distortion of information by both the Hungarian government and Western diplomats. Furthermore, JDC leaders feared that official reports which emphasized the Jewish heritage of the communist leadership fueled the association of Jews with communism and internationalism. There was concern that these reports provided a justification for the persecution of Jews by identifying the violence and persecution against them as acts motivated by political revenge and retribution rather than anti-Semitism.²⁹ Therefore the narrative produced by the JDC throughout 1920 and 1921 was different than those which

²⁷ Leon Shalit, n.t. *Morning Journal*, April 5, 1920, in "Digest of News in Yiddish Press of Interest to JDC," MS 457 Box 192, Folder 1, Warburg Papers, AJA.

²⁸ British Joint Labour Delegation to Hungary, *The White Terror in Hungary* (London: Trade Union Congress and the Labour Party, 1920); *Report on the Alleged Existence of "White Terror" in Hungary* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1920); Nathaniel Katzburg, "Louis Marshall and the White Terror in Hungary," *American Jewish Archives* 45, no. 1 (1993), 7-8.

²⁹ Joseph Marcus, "What Does Our Committee do to Help the Present Situation?," pg. 37, March 28, 1921, doc. 220048, folder 148.1, JDC; Translated Letter from Barti to Dearest Rose, May 25, 1920, doc. 220524, folder 151.3, JDC.

preceded it for a number of reasons, but most importantly because it paid attention almost entirely to the victimization of Jews *as Jews*, rather than as co-conspirators in a defeated revolution and despised political ideology.³⁰

Undermining the supposed link between Jews and communism became one of the primary facets of the JDC's narrative about the White Terror and its members' advocacy work with both the Hungarian and the U.S. governments.³¹ This required combatting the misinformation and rumors they believed the governments of the successor states deliberately spread about the link between Jews and communism. Marcus attributed these fabrications to the new governments' of the successor state skillful exploitation of the strident anti-communism of Entente, and especially the United States' government.³² It also meant emphasizing the patriotism and loyalty of the Jewry in both the longer and the more recent past as a way of striking at the claim that Jews were a foreign, revolutionary and therefore destructive influence on the Hungarian nation.

According to a memorandum produced by Polnay and cited by Marcus, the Hungarian Jews regarded themselves as true patriots who were so loyal to Hungary that

³⁰ This single-minded focus is not unique to the JDC. Benevolent and philanthropic work during this period was undergoing a transition away from confessionally-focused charitable giving to more "scientific" work that was intended to address the underlying structural factors contributing to impoverishment, disease, etc. However, there was continuing concern that Jews were being excluded from charity work in Europe in general and in Hungary in particular. See Letter from Alex Landesco to Julius Goldman, March 5, 1920, doc. 219965, folder 148.2, JDC; Letter from Alex Landesco to Julius Goldman, March 5, 1920, doc. 219963, folder 148.2, JDC.

³¹ Julius Goldman, the JDC's European Director wrote that according to the Jews in Vienna and Budapest, "...the Jews themselves are greatly to blame for the change which has taken place..." because of economic exploitation prior to and during the war, and because of the Jewish heritage of the communist leadership, which "are naturally held responsible for what took place", despite the fact that the majority of the followers of communism were not Jewish or had abandoned the faith. Goldman believed that it was pointless to try and refute these as contributing factors to the eruption of White Terror and that it would be more fruitful to exert pressure on the Hungarian government by using the political connections of American Jews to provoke the U.S. government to intervene on behalf of the Jews in Hungary. Letter from Dr. Julius Goldman to Felix M. Warburg, April 13, 1920, doc. 220522, Folder 151.3, JDC.

³² Joseph Marcus, "The Political Background and What it Means to Hungarian Jews," pgs. 5-6, June 5, 1921, doc. 220562, folder 151.4, JDC.

in the prewar period they had avoided building ties to their religious brothers and sisters abroad.³³ Marcus himself was somewhat critical of Hungarian Jews on this point, suggesting that the lack of information about the White Terror was possibly due to the fact that Hungarian Jews, “are too patriotic to put their fatherland to shame before the civilized world.”³⁴ However, their prominence in Hungarian economic and political life and their high level of Magyarization definitively demonstrated that many Jews regarded themselves as Hungarians first and foremost, a development Marcus sympathized with by comparing patterns of immigration and settlement in Hungary with those in the United States.³⁵ In another report Marcus also highlighted Jewish (male) loyalty to the Hungarian state by stressing the military service records of terror victims.³⁶ His March 28, 1921 report used this approach, which was very likely as much a reflection of how the people he interviewed cast themselves as it was his own priority, since emphasizing military service was a common tactic, particularly among Jewish victims of the White Terror, to show that the violence and persecution was undeserved (see Chapter Two).

There was a significant hurdle to gathering information and producing an official, “reliable” (in the eyes of JDC leadership) account about the White Terror in Hungary, namely the enormity of the wartime crisis and its aftermath in other parts of Eastern Europe. The colossal task of rebuilding Jewish life in Russia, Ukraine and Poland was overshadowing the problems facing other Jewish populations across Central and Eastern Europe. In fact, the JDC had committed most of their material and human resources

³³ Marcus, “Galician Jews in Hungary Prior to the War,” pg. 2.

³⁴ Marcus, “What Does Our Committee do to Help the Present Situation?,” pg. 30.

³⁵ Marcus, “Galician Jews in Hungary Prior to the War,” 1-2.

³⁶ Joseph Marcus, “The Jews in Hungary are divided into two classes: (1) Magyar Jews and (2) Galician Jews...” Marcus, “Galician Jews in Hungary Prior to the War,” pg. 4, March 28, 1921, doc. 220047, folder 148.1, JDC.

there.³⁷ The first step, then, was demonstrating that the persecution of Jews in Hungary, which was smaller in scale, was worthy of attention and that the lack of evidence about it was, in fact, a direct *consequence* of the Terror, not evidence that such terror did not exist.³⁸

In order to stress the urgency of the situation in Hungary, reports and descriptions of the White Terror tended to center around the sudden degeneration of the status of Jews in Hungary, arguing that the conditions in Hungary were worse than elsewhere because the status and success of Jews in Hungary had been so good prior to the war.

Understanding the White Terror as it affected the bourgeois and elites made it more legible to the leaders of the JDC, who could empathize with the sudden loss of status and wealth which had turned flourishing industrialists and bankers into “poor millionaires.”³⁹

For example in an April 19, 1920 letter from JDC European Director Julius Goldman to Felix Warburg, he wrote,

There has probably not been in modern times a more remarkable and drastic development in Jewry than the one which has taken place in Hungary. While finance, industry, commerce and journalism have for many years been in the almost exclusive control of the Jews and while until quite recently the standing of the Jews was an exceptionally favorable one so that Pogroms were unknown and even anti-Semitism, at least as an active factor of life was negligible, all of this changed almost overnight...⁴⁰.

³⁷ “Minutes of Joint Distribution Committee Executive Committee Meeting,” Dec 12, 1920, pg. 92.

³⁸ Letter from Dr. Julius Goldman to Felix M. Warburg, April 13, 1920, pg. 2, doc. 220522, folder 151.3, JDC; “Our Understanding of the Hungarian Outrages” *Forward*, May 18, 1920 in in “Digest of News in Yiddish Press of Interest to J.D.C.,” May 21, 1920, Warburg Papers, AJA ;Letter from George G. Black to Gardner Richardson, January 5, 1920, doc. 220515, folder 151.3, JDC. Lieutenant James Becker, “Minutes of Joint Distribution Committee Executive Committee Meeting,” pg. 114; Joseph Marcus, Report “Is There White Terror in Hungary,” pgs. 10, 12, JDC.

³⁹ “Digest of Report No. 2 of the Hungarian Branch of the Joint Distribution Committee,” December 1, 1920, doc. 220025, folder 148.2, JDC; Letter from Dr. Julius Goldman to Felix M. Warburg, April 13, 1920, pg. 5, doc. 220523, folder 151.3, JDC; Letter from Dr. Julius Goldman to Felix M. Warburg, April 13, 1920, pg. 3, doc. 220522, folder 151.3, JDC.

⁴⁰ Letter from Dr. Julius Goldman to Felix M. Warburg, April 1920, doc. 220522, folder 151.3, JDC.

Later that year, Lieutenant James H. Becker, the Acting European Director, similarly characterized the situation. In his report to the executive committee about his recent trip to Budapest in December, 1920 he stated:

...Probably the situation in Hungary is without an equal. Conditions are growing worse and worse and worse. Business conditions are terrible. A man who yesterday was rich is today poor. The possibilities of supporting their local institutions are growing slimmer and slimmer; and on the whole, the conditions are very, very bad. I personally think that it is probably the greatest catastrophe of all, because we cannot forget that the Hungarian Jews were always in a very, very favorable position, and overnight the change came. After all, that is the worst thing of all. When one considers the differences, the overnight change in Hungary, one must realize that their situation is probably the most tragic of all the European Jewries today...⁴¹

Similarly, in the reports produced by Marcus during his two visits to Hungary in the spring of 1921, the JDC representative emphasized the great fall Hungarian Jews had experienced following the collapse of the Soviet Republic. He wrote:

“The whole commerce and industry of Hungary has been developed by Jews. According to the Statistical Department of the Hungarian government, the Jews always stood on top of the list in percentage of education. The Jews have occupied the foremost positions in art, science, music, etc. ‘Is he a Jew?’ people would ask when discussion would go about a person who had acquired exceptional distinction in the realm of science or art. And because of their distinctive abilities, the former liberal government placed them in positions where they were a real asset to the nation....”⁴²

Emphasis was placed on the sudden decline of Hungarian Jews after a period of emancipation, assimilation and financial and political prosperity, a dimension of suffering that resonated with the men in the executive committee who had experienced similar expansions in their opportunity in the United States over the previous half century.⁴³

⁴¹ Lieutenant James Becker, Minutes of Joint Distribution Committee Executive Committee Meeting, Dec 12, 1920, pgs. 115.

⁴² Marcus, “The Political Background and What it Means to Hungarian Jews,” pg. 5. See also Marcus, “Galician Jews in Hungary Prior to the War,” pg. 2.

⁴³ Marcus, “Galician Jews in Hungary Prior to the War,” pg. 1.

The concern for the loss of social and economic status of the Hungarian Jewry, characterized as assimilated and prosperous, was reflected in the JDC's interpretation of the multiple dimensions of White Terror and in their descriptions of violence and persecution against Jews in Hungary. This is not to say that other dimensions, such as gender and citizenship status, did not play a role in the JDC's understanding of the White Terror. Indeed, the intersection of these categories is woven throughout the description of violence and the victims of atrocities. However, it is clear that the social decline suffered by middle-class and elite Jews was very troubling to the JDC.

Marcus' June report frequently emphasized the specific singling out of Jews for persecution, such as the ban on printing materials in the Hebrew alphabet and the pulling out of beards.⁴⁴ But throughout he also paid particular attention to the experiences and victimization of Jews from the upper classes. For example, in relating the role of Jews in the military, he wrote that Jewish men were typically organized into special groups and charged with doing the most undesirable labor. According to him it was important to mention that "Even Jewish university students are placed in such units to perform the dirty work for the officers and the army as a whole."⁴⁵ He related a story of the son of "one of the most noted Jewish Professors in Hungary" who was denounced by his military unit following capture and imprisonment during the war. In his cataloguing of victims dredged from the Danube, his descriptions also emphasized markers of class, gender, and age, which fit people into categories of those persons often believed to be exempt from violence. For example, he frequently commented on the dress and physical appearance of the corpses as well as the age and gender of the victims. Recalling a body

⁴⁴ Marcus, "Is There White Terror in Hungary," pg. 16, JDC; Marcus, "Galician Jews in Hungary Prior to the War," 6-7, JDC.

⁴⁵ Marcus, "Is There White Terror in Hungary?," pg. 16, JDC.

pulled from the river on February 10, 1921, he said of the young female victim, “...judging from her wearing apparel she must have belonged to the better class... [She] wore dark-blue coat, embroidered shirt, fine silk stockings and high black boots.”⁴⁶ Of another victim pulled from the Danube on April 10, 1921, he wrote, “...He wore good clothes, [and] had fine hands, and from all other indications it would seem that he was of refinement,”⁴⁷ while of another victim whose body was found on May 15, 1921, he indicated that the woman was well-dressed and according to the coroner was likely violated.⁴⁸

Marcus’ descriptions about the violence, particularly sexualized violence, against Jewish women, were also heavily informed by the intersection of class and gender hierarchies in ways similarly reflected in the reports of other organs. His report, for example quoted the British Labour Report’s description of the torture of Mrs. Hamburger verbatim, adding only that Mrs. Hamburger was Jewish and that was taken from her home, leaving two small children behind. But he also included a story about Miss A.F., the daughter of a synagogue president, who was a “refined and kind girl” who was arrested and imprisoned. She found employment in the prison office because she was well educated, but after refusing the sexual advances of a man in the office who frequently coerced women who came to the prison on behalf of their male relatives, he raped her, and then had her thrown into the Zalaegerszeg internment camp, after she lodged a complaint to the prison officials.⁴⁹ Recounting the suicide of Mrs. Ivanovich in a prison in Budapest, Marcus recalled that the woman had been imprisoned because she

⁴⁶ Ibid., 19.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 20.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 23.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 39.

refused a military officer's sexual advances and after being held for several months in a variety of confinement spaces drank lime while crying out, "I am innocent."⁵⁰ And finally, a Polish Jewess named Miss E.Y. was forced to clean a "very neglected toilet" and became ill from the hard work because she is "a refined girl." The next day, she refused to do similar work and was verbally abused by a camp guard who called her a prostitute and forced her to go to the infirmary for a gynecological exam.⁵¹

Like the story of Mrs. Hamburger, Marcus' interpretation of the violence against these women was predicated on expectations which derived from the intersection of their gender and class identities. Interpreting their stories as those of blameless victims of the White Terror depended on their conformity to the expectations associated with upper class women, especially the defense of their sexual purity, even if it meant increased suffering or even death. The women's visibility as victims was dependent on the retention of this blamelessness by fighting off the advances of men willing to exchange sex for freedom or increased privileges, and in their status as social elites. However, reiterating observations from previous chapters, despite the use of sexualized violence as a way to discredit the counter-revolutionary regime, the framing of women's suffering in certain ways, particularly in the emphasis of women "victims" nobly denying the sexual advances of the authorities, reveals that at least some women may have been willing to exchange sexual favors for freedom or better treatment for themselves or their loved ones.

(Jewish) men who had been sexually violated, however, were inherently victims because of the nature of the violence, not because of their character, status, or reaction to

⁵⁰ Ibid., 57.

⁵¹ Ibid., 89-90.

the violence.⁵² This being said, it is also clear from the report that “refinement” as a descriptor for both men and women, and it was deployed in ways that served to demonstrate how wretched the situation facing Jews was, and how far the status of Jews had fallen. Such was the case in the report’s description of the abuse of Mr. Solomon Schiffman, a 50 year-old, well-to-do businessman on a train headed for Debrecen. A militia officer and another man in plain clothes entered his compartment, identified him as a Jew, and called Schiffman a “speculator and profiteer”. Schiffman was ordered to completely undress immediately, despite the presence of women, and was beaten with a cudgel, given back his clothes, bound and then thrown out of the train car.⁵³ Although the entire incident was grotesquely violent, the fact that Schiffman was quite literally stripped of his dignity compounded his victimization. Yet in this case, Marcus also included information which made it clear that Schiffman could not resist the coercion of the two men, pointing out that the other (non-Jewish) men in the compartment were too afraid to object to Schiffman’s persecution as well. Casting the situation in this light suggests that Marcus intended to emphasize that Schiffman was not acting cowardly but was definitively overpowered making it impossible for him to resist such treatment, therefore affirming masculine norms.

Marcus’ reports and those of other JDC representatives who visited Hungary between 1920-1921 often represented the suffering of elite Jews was represented as particularly traumatic by the Marcus report. However, the Marcus report also reveals that wealthier Jews had access to resources which could alleviate their distress. This was largely because of the corruption of those authorities overseeing internment, who took

⁵² Marcus, “Is There White Terror in Hungary?,” 28, 99, JDC.

⁵³ Ibid., 60-61.

bribes in exchange for freedom. As Chapter Four indicated, the corruption of internment authorities was a major source of debate within the halls of government, but for those who had the resources to take advantage of the ethical shortcomings of the authorities, the corrupt system offered an escape hatch out of prison.

The JDC's concern for the suffering of the Hungarian Jewish elite did not exist exclusively on paper, but was also reflected in several of the relief programs. Aid was given to provide "professional men" with new suits of clothing. A specific number of food packages were also set aside for distribution among middle class families. Quite a bit of attention was paid to the plight of university students who were also to be provided with clothing and financial support.⁵⁴ The concern for students was related to concerns about rioting in universities as well as broader legal concerns about the passage of the 1920 *Numerus Clausus*, which was intended to limit the access of national minorities, particularly Jews, to higher education.⁵⁵ The misery of wealthier Jews and the legal discrimination against them played an important role in the JDC's conceptualization of White Terror as it suggested that no matter how much freedom and prosperity Jews enjoyed, no matter how patriotic and assimilated they were, their inclusion in the nation was tenuous.

⁵⁴ Report #2 of the Hungarian Branch of the Joint Distribution Committee," MS 457, Box 190, folder 3, Warburg Papers, AJA. See also Eliza Ablovatski, "Between Red Army and White Guard," in *Gender and War in Twentieth Century Eastern Europe*, ed. Maria Bucur and Nancy M. Wingfield (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006), 83.

⁵⁵ Nathaniel Katzburg, *Hungary and the Jews: Policy and Legislation, 1920-1943* (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1981), 60-79. See also Mária M. Kovács, *Liberal Professions, Illiberal Politics, Hungary from the Habsburgs to the Holocaust* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

A “Haven of Refuge”?⁵⁶

In addition to the role of class and gender in the JDC’s interpretation of White Terror, the other important distinction which shaped the conceptualization of what the White Terror was and who it affected, was citizenship status. This aspect was particularly salient in regard to the refugee question and in the development of the JDC’s relationship with the Hungarian government, the local Hungarian Jewish community and Galician sojourners in Hungary. While the sudden deterioration of the status of the wealthy and assimilated segments of the Jewish community was presented as perhaps the singular defining feature of the crisis facing Hungarian Jews, the refugee question was an older problem the JDC had been confronting across Eastern Europe since the early months of the war. Moreover, since the arrival of the first wave of Galician refugees in September 1914, successive Hungarian governments, over the course of the war, had specifically set their sights on the expulsion of the Jewish refugees. These efforts were enthusiastically taken up by the counter-revolutionary regime starting under Friedrich as part of the “Christian course.” Increased popular anti-Semitism, combined with material deprivation caused by the war and revolutions, fed this drive. Internment laws specifically targeted foreign-born Jews, and other proposed pieces of legislation sought to establish a legal hierarchy which would distinguish between Jews on the basis of both citizenship status and economic circumstances.⁵⁷

Despite Hungary’s characterization as a “haven of refuge” during the war for Jewish refugees by some American Jews, the tensions among Jews caused by the influx

⁵⁶ Letter from Congregation Ohab Zedek for release, pg. 2.

⁵⁷ Marcus, “Galician Jews in Hungary Prior to the War,” 8-9. Reportedly the influence of ethnic Magyar refugees from the “lost territories” who were allying with nationalist and irredentist Hungarian organizations to pressure the regime into expelling refugees in order to free up living space.

of Galician refugees was so great that during the war the Budapest Jewish community allegedly requested that the Hungarian government expel the recently arrived to the Austrian half of the empire, since Galicia was not historic Hungarian territory and therefore, the crisis should be borne by their Austrian neighbor.⁵⁸ According to Marcus, “The Jews in Hungary are divided into two classes: (1) Magyar Jews and (2) Galician Jews. The Galician Jews must be divided into (a) those who had settled in Hungary many years ago, and (b) those who came after the outbreak of war in 1914.”⁵⁹

Navigating the troubled waters of these divisions was one of the most important dimensions of the JDC’s involvement in Hungary. But doing so was made difficult in part because the legal standing and needs of the different segments of the Jewish population in Hungary were different, which in made the suffering of each group distinct from the perspective of the JDC. For example, in regard to the planned deportations of Jews, Marcus wrote:

“...It is tragic enough to see Jews who had come to Hungary after 1914 expelled and forced to return to their former places of abode, many of which do not exist anymore, but it is still greater misfortune to witness the internment and expulsion of those who have been living in Hungary for decades... They have business establishments, they have property; their children were born there, and in many instances fought in the last war...”⁶⁰

The conflicts between Jews in Hungary plagued the functioning of the committee. First, although the committee was comprised of Jews representing the different segments of the Jewish population, it was dominated by those from the upper echelons of society and the more recently arrived Galician Jews did not trust that these men had a genuine

⁵⁸ Klein-Pejšová, “Among the Nationalities,” 24-25.

⁵⁹ Marcus, “The Jews in Hungary are divided into two classes: (1) Magyar Jews and (2) Galician Jews...” pg. 1, doc. 220047, folder 148.1, JDC.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 4.

understanding of the problems facing them.⁶¹ Second, bitter resentments festered among and between the Galician refugees, the Orthodox community and the Hungarian Neolog (Reformed) community, with the former two accusing the latter of remaining “passive” on the issue of the counter-revolutionary regime’s plans for the expulsion of Galician Jews. Some Galician Jews, according to Marcus, went so far as to accuse of the Neologs of recommending to the Budapest City Council that they [Galician Jews] be deported in 1919.⁶² Marcus even reported that a leader in the local committee, Rabbi Friedman, said, “No Hungarian Jew cares for a Galician Jew.”⁶³ This attitude, he said, was shared by the director of the JDC repatriation bureau Mr. Korein, who said in a meeting that he did not “tolerate the Galician Jew.”⁶⁴ Third and closely related to the second, Hungarian Orthodox Jews and the Galician refugees held deep suspicions about the Neolog Jews in regard to their relationship with the new regime. They believed that the Neologs were working closely with the government, even to the point of denouncing Galician Jews to the police, who would then arrest, incarcerate and eventually expel them.⁶⁵ Marcus investigated all of these accusations, and while he established that the accusations were unfounded, he concluded that the enmity between the Hungarian and Galician Jews was seriously hindering relief efforts as Galician Jews did not have confidence in many of the Budapest JDC’s lower level functionaries.⁶⁶ Furthermore, his reports also indicated that

⁶¹ Marcus, “Galician Jews in Hungary Prior to the War,” 15-16; Letter from Budapest Jews to Joseph Marcus, May 16, 1921, doc. 220568, folder 151.4, JDC; Letter from Budapest Jews to Joseph Marcus, 220567, folder 151.4, JDC.

⁶² Marcus, “Galician Jews in Hungary Prior to the War,” 3.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ Marcus, “Galician Jews in Hungary Prior to the War,” 9; Letter from E.M. Baynton to JDC New York, March 30, 1921, doc. 220042, folder 148.1, JDC.

⁶⁶ He did say that the lack of trust did not extend to Polnay, who was well respected. However, given the official duties of Polnay and his need to delegate much of the quotidian work to subordinates, he was

the deficit of trust led many Galician Jews in Hungary to bypass the local committee altogether and instead look directly to the Americans for assistance and succor.⁶⁷

According to Marcus, “[d]issatisfaction with the work of the Budapest JDC was felt greatly among the masses. They took me for a court of appeals from which they expected fair and unbiased treatment.”⁶⁸

The fears of the Galician Jews regarding the relationship between the Neolog Jews and the government sheds light on the complex and uneasy relationships between different factions of Jews in Hungary as well as on the complex relationship between the New York JDC, the Budapest JDC, and the Hungarian state. Since its inception, the JDC relied on cooperation with national governments in order to carry on its activities. This arrangement had not been very problematic between 1914-1917, when the old empires were still intact. However, the collapse of the great Central European empires had led to the creation of multiple small states where there was considerable antipathy between the respective Jewish populations and their new governments.⁶⁹ In Hungary, the ambiguous relationship between the white militias and the regime, coupled with the passage of discriminatory legislation designed to persecute Jews and leftists, produced a scenario in which both the American and local JDCs had to work with a government which was actively engaged in persecuting its constituents in order to carry out its goals. For the local Budapest JDC, this cooperation might entail negotiating and sometimes submitting to the demands of the regime, however distasteful, in order to ensure that operations

blamed for problems between Hungarian and Galician Jews, especially in regard to the repatriation work. Marcus, “Galician Jews in Hungary Prior to the War,” 14-15, JDC.

⁶⁷ Marcus, “Is There White Terror in Hungary?,” 102, JDC.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 7.

⁶⁹ See Carole Fink, *Defending the Rights of Others* for a detailed history of minority rights in East Central Europe. A concern for the rights of particularly Jewish populations in Eastern Europe contributed to the creation of the minority rights articles of the postwar treaties respecting Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland and Romania.

would continue. Such was the case with the JDC repatriation office. The office was accused of collecting names and providing lists of registrants to the police who then would carry out raids against the persons and families on such lists. Refugees also complained about the presence of a police officer in the office which created fear among the refugees and hindered the work of the agency by discouraging people from seeking aid.⁷⁰ For the New York JDC, cooperation entailed enlisting the government to help disseminate material and financial aid, submitting to regulations and assurances of access and safe travel.⁷¹ For example, in order to provide shoes to needy Jews, the New York JDC granted \$25,000 to the Hungarian government to purchase and distribute shoes to children without respect of their religion, provided that a certain number (25%) be given to Jewish children.⁷² This action was protested by at least one JDC supporter who accusingly asked Warburg why the JDC cooperated with a government which “...allowed the pogroms and have been torturing and robbing the Jews of the country.”⁷³

Both committees regarded cooperation with the government as essential to their ability to function and also saw it as a way to perhaps rebuild Jewish life in Hungary and reduce anti-Semitic feelings. But the need for a cooperative spirit between the JDCs and the Hungarian government was not universally recognized by supporters of the organization and its goals. To detractors, the committees’ cooperation with the government implied recognition and legitimization, which was unconscionable to those

⁷⁰ Marcus, “Galician Jews in Hungary Prior to the War,” pg. 9-11, JDC. The JDC was also criticized for their repatriation efforts because they did not, it was argued, fully understand how corrupt the new regime was and adjust their strategies accordingly.

⁷¹ Marcus, “Is There White Terror in Hungary?,” 3-7, JDC; Letter from George G. Black to Gardner Richardson, January 5, 1920, doc. 220515, folder 151.3, JDC.

⁷² Letter from Dr. Julius Goldman to Felix M. Warburg, April 13, 1920, pg. 7-8, doc. 220523, folder 151.3, JDC.

⁷³ Letter from Maud Nathan to Felix Warburg, Nov. 29, 1920, MS 457, Box 191, Folder 5, Warburg Papers, AJA.

who had heard about or observed the Hungarian regime's persecution of Jews. For the Budapest committee, the erosion of trust between local and refugee populations was so severe that alternative explanations for the Budapest JDC's cooperation with the government, such as Budapest JDC's fear that the whole repatriation office would be closed foreclosing the possibility of humane repatriation, were not even acknowledged, let alone accepted by the refugee population.⁷⁴ From the perspective of the American "Joint," they pointed out that some of their critics seemed oblivious to the fact that the JDC leadership may have had other motivations for cooperation with the state besides simply the distribution of aid. As Felix Warburg wrote to a woman who protested the transfer of money for shoes, it was the hope of JDC leaders that the transfer had the greater effect of "...[showing] that we are broader minded than they are, and that the charge of the anti-Semites that the Jews, by means of international assistance, have an easier life and receive more aid than the Christians, might be disproved."⁷⁵

The American and local committees may have faced the same dilemma in terms of having to defend their work with a government which was actively persecuting their constituency. But they did not share the same status in the local Jewish population or with the government. Nor did the committees wield the same amount of power, regardless of the fact that the leadership of both were comprised of wealthy and respectable men and women, who had enjoyed considerable political influence in their respective countries. The American JDC as represented primarily by Marcus, was unburdened by the conflicts dividing the local Jewish community and moreover, had the

⁷⁴ Marcus, "Galician Jews in Hungary Prior to the War," pg. 7, 9-10. See also M.E. Baynton, Letter from JDC Paris to JDC New York, March 30, 1920, doc. 220042, folder 148.1, JDC.

⁷⁵ Letter from Felix Warburg to Maud Nathan, Nov. 29, 1920, MS 457, Box 191, Folder 5, Warburg Papers, AJA.

advantage of coming from a more powerful country.⁷⁶ These two factors helped Marcus provoke the local population to tell him about the prevailing conditions in Hungary despite their unwillingness to speak with other, formerly trusted community leaders.⁷⁷ However, even his status as an outsider from a more powerful country could not convince everyone to speak up, for fear of retribution by the authorities. The man who worked as Marcus' guide during his second visit to Hungary declared: "'I am a married man, I have children. If it becomes known [to the Hungarian authorities] that I am going around with you to the homes of these people, I will disappear and that will be the end of me and my family. You are an American and they can do nothing to you. You will return to America, but I must remain here.'" ⁷⁸

The American JDC also wielded a great deal more clout with the Hungarian government than the Budapest committee, which was "...distrusted and disliked by the Hungarian authorities" who believed that the Budapest committee was engaging in propaganda against the state abroad.⁷⁹ The government's distrust of the local JDC, Marcus argued "hampered the work" of the Budapest JDC.⁸⁰ According to Marcus, the presence of Americans was vital for the JDC to accomplish any goal in Hungary. In his March 1921 report he argued that "just as the presence of Americans in uniform acting in

⁷⁶ Memorandum from Dr. Rose to Mr. Lehman., May 12, 1921, pg. 4, doc. 220064, folder 148.1, JDC. The JDC tended to emphasize the distinctly American nature of their philanthropy in multiple ways including cultural dimensions which emphasized the ingenuity of the American spirit which made American Jews perfect leaders in overseas relief efforts. See also Granick, "Waging Relief," esp. pages 61-63 for a discussion on some of the political implications of representing aid as "American" rather than Jewish/sectarian during the war.

⁷⁷ One of Marcus' friends was the chairman of a commission investigating atrocities against Jews. He told Marcus: "I asked him what he had on the subject. He stated very plainly that despite his popularity amongst our people, despite the complete confidence they have in him because of his long service for the Jewish cause, they would not even talk to him. He stated that on many occasions he tried to get people talk and tell him of their troubles, but without success. Marcus, "Is There White Terror in Hungary?," JDC, note between pp. 10-11.

⁷⁸ Marcus, "Is There White Terror in Hungary?," 11, JDC.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 5.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

behalf of the JDC elsewhere has had a good effect, so has the absence of such representatives in Hungary had the contrary effect. The Government saw that it was dealing with *local people* and not with an American relief organization, and it has treated the representatives of that organization without due consideration.”⁸¹ In his June report, Marcus reported a similar dynamic between the local JDC and the Hungarian government, and illustrated the privileged relationship the American committee held with the Hungarian government after being provided with an all-access pass to visit internment camps where Jews were being held while members of the Budapest “Joint” were denied any access.⁸²

The privileged position the American JDC (as compared with that of the Budapest JDC) enjoyed with the Hungarian government allowed the JDC to do a significant amount of work in Hungary. It also helped Marcus to collect substantial information and produce a “reliable” narrative about the White Terror which highlighted the particular suffering of Jews.⁸³ This information could then be used by the JDC to lobby governments to place political pressure on the Hungarian regime to end their persecution of Jews. For some in the New York JDC leadership, the only way to stop the White Terror against the Jews was for a foreign state to put pressure on the Hungarian government:

No Hungarian Government, however liberal it may be, will stake its safety by coming out in favor of the Jews, or by taking strenuous measures for the suppression of Anti-Semitism unless there is active pressure brought to bear from the outside. The Hungarian Government is no different than other governments. It wants to live, it wants to have the good-will of the people and it will cater to their desires and prejudices. There is great dissatisfaction in Hungary due to the

⁸¹ Marcus, “What Does Our Committee do to Help the Present Situation?,” 31, JDC. Italics in original.

⁸² Marcus, “Is There White Terror in Hungary?,” 5, JDC.

⁸³ Memorandum from Dr. Rose to Mr. Lehman., Subject: Report by Mr. Marcus on Hungary, 1, JDC.

economic conditions; to want and misery. The line of least resistance has been tried and in most cases proved successful. If the blame can be put on the Jews who as scape-goats, are punished and tortured, the feelings of revenge on the part of the mob will be satisfied and the government will not interfere. It is for this reason that strong pressure on the part of a foreign government is absolutely necessary.⁸⁴

In short, by exploiting its position as privileged outsider, the American JDC was actually doing what the counter-revolutionary regime suspected and accused the Budapest JDC of doing: publicizing the White Terror and the atrocities against Jews abroad and tarnishing the international reputation of the Hungarian government.

Conclusion

The American Joint Distribution Committee as an important international philanthropic organization played a significant role as the interpreter and disseminator of information about the White Terror in Hungary for a large international audience of Jews as well as politicians and philanthropists engaged in postwar humanitarian work. It did so as a distinctly American and Jewish body led by prominent and wealthy men.

Consequently, the narrative its representatives produced reflected these multiple facets of the organization's identity, especially in regard to its conceptualization of recent Hungarian history, its prioritization of class in its interpretation of anti-Jewish violence.

These dimensions also affected their relationships with the local JDC, the diverse Jewish population of postwar Hungary, and the counter-revolutionary regime. The American JDC held the position of privileged outsider which was unencumbered by the prejudices of the local committee toward many of its would-be constituents (i.e. recently-arrived Galician Jews). This status provided the American committee with access to a

⁸⁴ Ibid., 2-3.

larger portion of the suffering Jewish population than the local committee. But their outsider status meant that they came to serve as mediator in local intra-communal conflicts and in the broader political crises which they did not fully understand. This ultimately undermined the authority of the Budapest JDC because it helped reinforce divisions by allowed the different factions of the Jewish community the opportunity to circumvent the local committee and address the American JDC directly.

Despite the claim that it was staunchly apolitical, the JDC, like many other American philanthropic organizations which emerged and/or expanded during and after the Great War, played a very important political role as their activities largely depended on the largesse of states to grant them access to their constituents. They also wielded a great deal of influence because of their leaders' social and economic position in the United States and their American citizenship which gave them access not only to American leaders, but to foreign governments as well. While in general, American JDC efforts to influence the policies of their own government toward Hungary were largely unsuccessful, they enjoyed privileged status with the Hungarian government largely because it was an American organization. Here too, this status came at the expense of undermining the local JDC which was regarded by the Hungarian authorities as a working against the interests of the state and which was unable to defend itself without the backing of its parent organization.

Overall, the JDC's story in Hungary demonstrates how the intersection of multiple dimensions of identity including class, gender, ethnicity, as well as citizenship status produced a distinctive portrait of the White Terror within the broader history of the Jewish people in Hungary. The JDC's work in Hungary is also a window into

understanding how non-governmental organizations emerged as increasingly important international actors in the postwar era. They increasingly carried out important roles which often reproduced and sometimes exploited the inequalities of the international system in order to attain their organization's diplomatic and humanitarian goals. And although they performed important functions, their work often entailed privileging the goals of the organization over the complex needs of a diverse community.

Conclusion

Although every chapter of this dissertation is about the White Terror and counter-revolution, they examine the period from a variety of different perspectives, places and analytical frames. Nevertheless, there are a number of common themes that run through each chapter. The first is violence, which helps us understand how the counter-revolution and White Terror played out in a number of different dimensions. Especially for victims, the White Terror was not just the violence meted out by militias roaming the countryside and busting through city neighborhoods. It also included systematic forms of state-directed persecution such as internment, incarceration, retroactive justice and all of the deprivations and suffering these practices caused as integral parts of the Terror. Moreover, it engaged a much broader swath of the population, who used the tools provided to them by the counter-revolutionary state as well as (threats of) violence to reassert their power and improve their social and material standing.

Although the political conditions may have been new, the emergence of White Terror and retributive policies enacted by the counter-revolutionary government owed much to the longer wartime context. Many of the state's early policies built on and transformed norms and practices that had emerged from the wartime emergency in order to restore stability after the crises of war and revolutions. This included policies intended to marginalizing political opposition from the left and "threats" to the state as well as the delegitimization of laws, policies and the ideals of the Károlyi and Kun governments. Many of the state's practices, especially in regard to internment, also continued longer-term developments that had emerged across Europe during the war. This, of course, was

not of much comfort to thousands suffering in internment camps and prisons, but it is useful for understanding not only the context of violence but also the nature of the response it provoked both domestically and internationally.

Violence and retribution also played an important role in how foreign organizations and governments framed the events in Hungary as an international issue that affected the security and stability of Europe. Violence and the new regime's relationship to it, and its capacity to stop it, stood at the heart of many debates (particularly between the governments of the Great Powers and the international labor movement) about the future of Hungary as a member of the enlarged European "family of nations," and the Entente's intervention in the domestic affairs of Hungary. Violence and persecution was also central to the American Joint Distribution Committee's conceptualization of the White Terror as an international humanitarian crisis. The JDC's concerns about, and the response to, the crisis facing Jews were closely tied to the multiple challenges facing Hungary's diverse Jewish community, such as access to food and material necessities as well as citizenship status. These were all a consequence of wartime dislocation and shortages, as well as repression and persecution.

In addition to violence, the dissertation's other main themes make several important contributions. First, by examining the lived experiences of Terror and counter-revolution from an intersectional perspective, it shows that women were integral to the Hungarian counter-revolution and White Terror. While the counter-revolutionary regime promoted a more conservative gender politics which rejected the emancipation of women, which had been promoted through policies enacted by the Károlyi and Kun regimes, women played an integral role in helping the counter-revolutionary regime

reconstruct and police the pre-war social hierarchies in all aspects of society, including in the domestic sphere. Participating in the re-conquest of the spaces of the domestic sphere, frequently as witnesses and denouncers, provided middle class and elite women with the opportunity to assist the state in its efforts to “cleanse” the country of all remnants of communism. Women played a vital role in the mechanisms of transitional justice, helping the regime identify potential enemies and those they believed were deserving of punishment for the revolutions, occupation and the territorial truncation of Hungary. Participation in what some termed “legal terror” not only connected women to the coercive organs of the state, it also provided them with the opportunity to assert their loyalty and belonging to the national community and the state, which was very important in a period when many people were scrambling to prove their loyalty to the nation-state and their lack of involvement in revolutionary politics. Many women were also invested in the struggle to reassert the prewar social, political and gender hierarchies, and played an important role in affirming the power of traditional elites and the (Christian) middle class.

The violent and repressive actions of the counter-revolutionary state actors and quasi-state actors demonstrates the contradictory impact of violence and retribution on “traditional” gender relations. For example, state efforts to marginalize and punish its enemies through incarceration challenged male authority and power by requiring many women whose male relatives were incarcerated to take on important economic and social roles in their husbands’ brothers’ or fathers’ absence. Moreover, both state officials and male inmates relied on women to provide prisoners with the materials for their survival, which frequently placed women in danger as they traversed the countryside to bring

provisions to their relatives in camps and prisons. They also relied on female relatives to undertake legal advocacy on their behalf. Despite common representations of women whose husbands or sons were imprisoned in traditionally feminine roles as vulnerable mothers and wives, women were integral to the functioning of the counter-revolutionary carceral system. Many placed their personal safety in jeopardy in order to ensure the welfare of incarcerated relatives and took on ever greater responsibilities in order to provide for their families.

Women's experiences of imprisonment and internment shows how violence and retributory policies undermined the traditional gender order. However, at the same time they also show that violence committed against women, specifically sexualized violence, helped reinforce gender, class and political hierarchies by undermining (some) women's right to bodily integrity. Guards in camps and prisons used sexualized violence as a method and punishment and discipline. Further, sexualized violence against both men and women was frequently enacted in ways that simultaneously highlighted women's vulnerability without male protection while demonstrating the inability of her male guardians to protect her. This violence was often justified in ways which sought to affirm bourgeois norms of sexual behavior in opposition to communist "free love" and working class sexuality, but came under attack for failing to conform to the very norms it sought to restore: the inviolability of the morally upright, middle class mother.

Women also played a central role in the counter-revolution as it played out in the international sphere, specifically with regard to the instrumentalization of the female body in the debates about legitimate and illegitimate violence, as well as debates about the existence and nature of White Terror. The image of the sexually violated female body

was an important symbol in the labor movement's efforts to undermine the political legitimacy of the new regime and in their attacks on the (moral) authority of the Entente democracies. Yet this image was contested because a woman's ability to claim status as a victim of sexual violation was dependent on a consensus about what the markers of respectability were, and who should be exempt from violence. This consensus, however, had broken down under the pressures of war and revolution. Furthermore, the use of women's bodies by both the labor movement and the JDC reaffirmed gender and class hierarchies by emphasizing female vulnerability and the absence of political agency.

In showing the multiple roles that women played, both physically and symbolically, in the counter-revolution and White Terror, this dissertation demonstrates that women's participation was integral to the revolutionary struggles in Hungary. Their activities and roles show how women acted in ways that often simultaneously affirmed and challenged gender hierarchies. Their participation also shows the extent to which the broader population was invested in restoring class hierarchies and in meting out revenge in the wake of the Commune's collapse. Women played key roles in the reconstruction of norms and practices of violence as they contributed to the wider struggle between "civilization" in a post-war "West": democracy vs. anti-communism.

This dissertation also shows how class played a central role in the post-war period in defining the border between legitimate and illegitimate violence and retribution, as well as how the relationship between class and violence was so fraught. Elite masculine social and political privilege in Hungary was based, in part, on an understanding that violence committed by men at the top of the social hierarchy should conform to certain patterns. This was reinforced by the selective exercise of and abstinence from violence,

as well as the protection of specific vulnerable groups from violence. However, this dissertation shows that significant cracks in this formulation occurred during Hungary's revolutionary political struggles because of the tensions that existed between mediating the desire for political reform, the desire to reassert "traditional" social hierarchies, and the desire for revenge. Years of war, revolution, and counter-revolution altered practices of violence, including how violence should be deployed, and to what ends. The labor movement's critiques of the white militias, the Hungarian government and the governments of the Entente mobilized the assumptions embedded in elite masculinity to identify the violence of militias as illegitimate. Labor commentators stressed grotesque atrocities against women, the elderly, and children to underscore that violence was not a path to restore hierarchy, because it actually undermined an important base of elite privilege. Their anti-violence work shows the durability of norms about violence and their relationship to class hierarchy, even by persons committed to the eventual transformation of societies on the basis of socialist principles.

While the labor critique of White Terror mobilized older assumptions about elite privilege to challenge the violence of militias as illegitimate and unjustified, representatives of the Entente governments voiced their understanding of the vengeful impulses and actions of the bourgeoisie and elites. This is not to say they approved of the forms that revenge and retribution took. Indeed, some officials were very concerned about how the violence of militias reflected on the Entente. But on the whole, there was an understanding that the middle and upper classes' strong reaction to both official and unofficial attacks on their property and privilege was predictable, and was tolerable within certain limits, so long as it did not hinder the broader political stability of the state

and region. Moreover, they tended to explain the “excesses” of White Terror within the framework of an orientalist narrative about the nature of the peoples from Europe’s “east”. Therefore, the Entente articulated the position that under certain conditions, the limits to violence determined by class were lifted, permitting “respectable people” to engage in greater levels of violence.

Defining the legitimate boundaries of violence in terms of political and economic stability and in relation to class was also present in the JDC’s critiques of the White Terror and the relief and reconstruction work they did in post-war Hungary. The JDC mobilized class to show the important contributions Jews had made to Hungarian economic and political life in the previous century. In so doing, the JDC helped promote the assumption that certain groups of Jews, namely the prosperous and assimilated community of Hungarian Jews in Budapest, should be exempt from violence. That many affluent Jews were targets specifically because of their prosperity not only challenged norms, but also significantly undermined the JDC’s work in Hungary, which had prioritized elite Hungarian Jews at the expense of more impoverished refugee Jews. The JDC’s approach also exacerbated the tensions between the economically, denominationally and legally (with regard to citizenship status) diverse Jewish community, as some interpreted the JDC’s concern for elite Budapest Jews as sanctioning the violence against, and repression of the less assimilated and less prosperous Jewry.

Related to the centrality of class to articulations of norms regarding violence, this dissertation demonstrates that there was a general agreement among many different groups domestically and internationally that the use of violence and retribution against those persons genuinely connected to communist revolution was predictable and

acceptable. This consensus did not, understandably, include the labor movement, although some of those involved in the Károlyist government also sought to distance themselves from the Commune in an attempt to disentangle the impulse for democratic reform from communism. However, the labor movement was largely a voice crying out from the wilderness. The idea that a variety of methods including legal repression, deportation, violence, torture and incarceration, should be mobilized to ensure the total defeat of communism in Hungary had wide acceptance among the broader population of Hungary and brought many people, including women, into the political struggle. Communist revolution reached into the most intimate spheres of life, challenged hierarchies and property relations. Ensuring that the people responsible for such violation were punished and thoroughly marginalized undergirded the legal conflicts over housing and the carceral policies of the Hungarian government.

Likewise, representatives of the Entente and the international Jewish community also accepted that some violence against communists was legitimate. The Entente was itself engaged in an intervention against communism in Russia. Ensuring that Bolshevism did not spread further west was significant for the Entente from an ideological standpoint as well as for their more regionally focused geopolitical goals of peace, security, stability and economic development. The JDC's primary goal was protecting the Hungarian Jewish community from charges of communism and disloyalty to the Hungarian nation-state. The JDC's willingness to concede that some people deserved violent revenge, however, was dependent on the clear distinction between Jews and communists, which utterly failed to gain traction among many in counter-revolutionary Hungary.

But if there was consensus about some violence being acceptable, agreement ended in defining the boundaries of violence, including who was an acceptable target for revenge and retribution and to what types of treatment they should be subject. The experience of war had, in practice, already challenged the exemption of certain groups from violence, as total war blurred the distinction between war and home front. Further, socialist ideology challenged traditional social, gender, ethnic and religious relations calling for all people to engage in class struggle. An important part of the postwar struggle in Hungary, and across Central Europe more broadly, was about (re)defining the boundaries between legitimate violence and revenge in relation to state-building and stabilization. Within this struggle was a broader debate about whether older norms (which had exempted women, children and the elderly) were still relevant following a revolution which sought to reorder the hierarchies which undergirded these norms and a war which had moved women into new roles as men were mobilized for battle.

For many in Hungary, the salience of older norms had been destroyed in the wake of revolution. Members of militias, for example, frequently justified violence on the basis of their distorted understanding of the tenets of socialism and the agents of communism. For others, exemptions for women, children and the elderly held fast. Notably, the international labor movement formulated their critique of the violence of the militias and the retributory policies of the state on the basis of these older norms. However, the general consensus that violence against some was acceptable helped establish a new norm under which violence—even in its more extreme forms—against (confirmed) young, male communists was permissible.

This consensus that violence and retribution against “genuine” communists was legitimate helps us understand how the events in post-World War I Hungary served as an early example of the nearly century-long effort by western democratic states to balance the expansion of democracy and capitalism with a commitment to anti-communism. As such, counter-revolutionary Hungary may be seen as perhaps as the first stage of a longer-term pattern of western democratic states supporting illiberal regimes which then enacted repressive policies toward their populations in order to prevent the spread of communism. This sort of support for illiberal regimes became a hallmark of the Cold War foreign policy of the United States. Beginning with support for the Shah of Iran in the 1953 coup, the United States provided overt and covert support for a variety of dictators, juntas and oppressive governments in Latin America, Asia and Africa for the next forty years, all in the name of containing communism. When viewed from this lens, the counter-revolution and White Terror in Hungary should not only be considered part of the long World War One, but also one of the first sites of struggle in what might be called the long Cold War.

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