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Public Defense of the Doctoral Thesis in
History
by

Emily R. Gioielli

on

**‘White Misrule’: Terror and Political Violence
during Hungary’s Long World War I, 1919-
1924**

will be held on

Wednesday, March 18, 2015 at 15:00

in the

**Senate room
Central European University (CEU)
Budapest—1051
Nádor 9**

Defense Committee

Chair: Károly Bárd, Legal Studies Department, CEU

Supervisor: Susan Zimmermann, Department of History, CEU

Members: Francisca de Haan, Department of Gender Studies, CEU

Paul Hanebrink, Rutgers University

Reader: Melissa Feinberg, Rutgers University

Dissertation abstract

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 has been written about the high politics of this period, including biographies of many of the major players and detailed accounts of political decision-making and in-fighting. More recently, scholars have begun to examine postwar militia/paramilitary violence in Central Europe, and in Hungary more specifically. 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 deficiency by analyzing the lived experience of counter-revolution and White Terror in Hungary. It uses intersectionality, the study of how multiple forms of oppression and privilege overlap, to analyze how the violence and terror that accompanied political change was experienced and interpreted by its perpetrators, victims and observers, whose understandings were shaped by their overlapping positions in various socio-economic, ethnic, gender, legal, and political hierarchies.

But the counter-revolution and White Terror has never been simply a Hungarian story. 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 continued to affect 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 (attempting) to influence 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 interpretations, like those of the people 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.

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, as well as 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. 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. Thus, there was an intimacy to the counter-revolution and White Terror that tore at the social fabric of Hungary, and which engaged all sorts of people in the counter-revolutionary struggle whether they liked (or even realized) it or not.

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 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 these intersections, 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, this was the political activities 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 contained to the battlefield, but was experienced by groups such as civilians and prisoners-of-war. 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, subjecting “enemy aliens” (those persons who were citizens of enemy states), refugees, and political opponents of the state to material deprivation, imprisonment, and surveillance.

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. 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 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. 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 an important dimension of the Hungarian state’s positioning of itself in the international sphere.

The dissertation is divided into different arenas of counter-revolution and White terror, but all pay attention to the overlapping role of gender, class, ethnic, legal and global hierarchies in the interpretations and experiences of them. The first is a historical contextualization of Hungary’s war and revolutionary experiences. The second features a discussion of the white militias and their victims, paying attention to how social,

ethnic and gender hierarchies shaped not only the experience of victims but interpretations of the militia members' violent acts. The third chapter turns to the Budapest domestic sphere to explore the ways that counter-revolution and terror unfolded. It pays particular attention to how legal institutions were used in specific ways to reconquer domestic spaces for the middle classes. The fourth chapter homes in on the history of postwar political incarceration, positioning it within the broader history of wartime civilian internment as well as emphasizing the roles of gender, class, ethnicity, and legal status in shaping practices, experiences and interpretations of the carceral experience. The fifth and sixth chapters shift to the international arena, particularly the political and humanitarian engagement of the international labor movement and the Jewish philanthropic organization, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC). Regarding the reaction of the labor movement to White Terror, this chapter not only analyzes the report of the labor movement on the conditions in Hungary but explores how the concern about the Terror was wrapped together with a broader critique of Great Power diplomacy and democracy. The sixth and final chapter examines the limits of diasporic nationalism within the confines of humanitarian aid by delving into the JDC's approach to post-war developments in Hungary, paying special attention to the troubled relationship between American JDC representatives, the local committee they helped establish and Galician Jewish refugees in the Hungarian capital.

EMILY R. GIOIELLI

RESEARCH INTERESTS

- Women's and gender history of Eastern and Central Europe in the 20th century
- History of war, revolution and mass violence
- Global history
- History of the long Cold War
- Communism and state socialism
- History of international reform and humanitarian movements
- History of migration and refugees

Current research:

“‘White Misrule’: Terror and Political Violence during Hungary’s Long World War I”

EDUCATION

- 2008 – (2015) PhD Program in Comparative History, Central European University, Department of History
Comprehensive exams passed with distinction
- 2002-2004
MA European and South Asian History, University of Cincinnati
Thesis: “Souvenirs of a Revolution: The Cinematic and Literary Memory of 1956 in Hungary 1957-1983”
Supervisor: Thomas Sakmyster, Barbara Ramusack
- 1998-2002
BA History, Mount Vernon Nazarene College
Thesis: “Ideology and Interest: The Conflict in U.S. Policy-Making Concerning Ethno-religious Conflict in the Twentieth Century”
Summa cum laude; Valedictorian
- 2001
Non-degree Study Abroad, University of Debrecen
Hungarian Studies Program

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Adjunct Instructor, Xavier University, Department of History, August 2014-December 2014
European History I

Adjunct Instructor, University of Cincinnati, Department of History, September 2011-March 2012
Eastern Europe to 1918
Eastern Europe since 1918

Teaching Assistant, Central European University, Department of History, January-March 2011

“Three Europes: France, Poland, Russia and Ukraine in Comparative Perspective from the 16th to 19th centuries” (Graduate)

Adjunct Professor, Department of History, Xavier University, Cincinnati, Ohio, 2005-2008

Special Topics: Nationalism in World Cinema

Special Topics: A History of Partition in Indian Literature and Film

European History I: Prehistory to 1648

European History II: 1648-Present

Asian History I: Pre-History to 1526

Asian History II: 1526 to the Present

U.S. History to 1865

U.S. History since 1865

Adjunct Professor, Northern Kentucky University, Department of History and Geography, 2005-2006

European History to 1713

European History since 1713

World History since 1500

Adjunct Instructor, University of Cincinnati, Department of History, 2004

World History 1500-1900

World History 1900-Present

Graduate Teaching Assistant, University of Cincinnati Department of History, 2002-2004

U.S. History to 1848

Latin American History I & II

Asian Civilization: India

Asian Civilization: China

World War II and Film

WORKSHOPS AND TRAINING PROGRAMS

Midwest Historians of East Central Europe, University of Illinois Chicago, Chicago, Illinois, February 27-28, 2015.

East European Studies Junior Scholars' Training Seminar, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Ellicott City, Maryland, August 10-13, 2012.

World History Dissertation Workshop, World History Center, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, June 12-25, 2011.

“Transnational Approaches to European Women’s and Gender History: Institutions and Movements in the 19th and 20th Centuries, University Lumiere Lyon II, MATILDA Intensive Summer Programme, Lyon, France, July 2-13, 2009.

Summer Intensive Hungarian Language and Culture Program, University of Debrecen, Debrecen, Hungary, June-July, 2003.

FELLOWSHIPS, GRANTS AND AWARDS

1. Fellowships:

Write-up Fellowship, Central European University, Budapest, Hungary, July-November 2014.

Dissertation Fellowship, Eastern European Studies, American Council of Learned Societies, September 2012-June 2013.

Research Associateship, Five Colleges Women's Studies' Research Center, Mount Holyoke College, April 2011. (Non-Stipendiary, Declined)

Full Doctoral Fellowship, Central European University, September 2008-August 2011.

2. Grants and Awards

Travel Grant, Association for Jewish Studies, Baltimore, Maryland, December 13-17, 2014.

PhD Travel Grant, Central European University, Budapest, Hungary August 2014.

Travel Grant, Organizational Committee, *The Violence of War*, London, England, June 2014.

Travel Grant, English-Speaking Union of Cincinnati, Cincinnati, Ohio, April 2012.

Doctoral Research Support Grant, Central European University, Budapest, Hungary, January-March 2012.

Tuition Grant, "World History Dissertation Workshop," World History Center, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, PA, June 2011.

Travel and Accommodation Grant, Summer Research Lab on Russia, Eastern Europe and Eurasia, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, June 2011. (Declined)

Short Research Grant, Central European University Foundation, Munich, Germany, April 2011.

Travel Grant, Organizational Committee, *Violence and Societies in East Central Europe 17th to 20th Centuries*, Vilnius, Lithuania, October, 2010.

CEU Academic Achievement Award for First-Year Doctoral Students, Central European University, 2008-2009.

Academic Travel Grant, Central European University, March 2010.

Taft Graduate Enrichment Award, University of Cincinnati, 2003.

Von Rosenstiel Fund, University of Cincinnati Department of History, 2003 & 2004.

Co-Winner, Percy Buchanan Graduate Prize for South Asian History, *Midwest Conference on Asian Affairs*, 2003.

WORK EXPERIENCE

Assistant Book Review Editor and Editor of Online Review Database, *East-Central Europe*, 2009-Present.

Assistant Editor, "Debate on Wendy Lower's *Hitler's Furies*," *East Central Europe*, forthcoming.

Assistant Editor, "Debate on Stephen Kotkin's *Uncivil Society*," *East Central Europe*, May 2013.

Recruitment Assistant, Department of History, Central European University, September 2011-January 2013.

LANGUAGE SKILLS

- English: Native
- Hungarian: Advanced reading and speaking
- German: Advanced reading, intermediate speaking

PUBLICATIONS

1. Books (Edited, co-edited and introductions)

Co-Editor, *The Politics of Contested Narratives: Biographical Approaches to Modern European History*, Routledge, 2015. Originally published as a special issue of *European Review of History*.

2. Scholarly articles, book chapters

"Enemy at the Door: Revolutionary Struggle in the Hungarian Domestic Sphere, 1918-1926," *Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropa Forschung* 60, no. 4 (Dec 2011): 519-538.

3. Book Reviews

Legacies of Violence: Eastern Europe's First World War, ed. by Jochen Böhrer, Włodzimierz Borodziej and Joachim von Puttkamer (forthcoming).

Between States: The Transylvania Question and the European Idea during World War II, by Holly Case, *European Review of History* 18, no. 4 (August, 2011): 603-606.

The History of Murder: Personal Violence in Europe from the Middle Ages to the Present, by Pieter Spierenberg, *European Review of History* 18, no. 4 (August, 2011): 487-489.

Masculinity in the Modern West, *European Review of History*, by Christopher E. Forth, *European Review of History* 18, no. 3 (June, 2011): 410-413.

CONFERENCE PARTICIPATION:

“‘Horthy’s *Lager*’: Gender, Violence, and Internment in Hungary’s Long World War I,” Graduate Workshop on Gender, Sexuality, and Violence, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan, January 17, 2015.

“‘The most tragic of all the European Jewries’: The JDC and Hungary’s White Terror, 1919–1922,” Annual Conference, Association for Jewish Studies, Baltimore, Maryland, December 14-16, 2014.

“Conceptualizing Violence and Order in Revolutionary Post-War Hungary (1918-1921): A Victim’s Perspective,” Perspectives on the Great War/Rückblick auf den Ersten Weltkrieg, Queen Mary, University of London, August 1-4, 2014.

“‘Rousing the Conscience of the World’: Internationalism and the Hungarian White Terror, 1919-1923,” The Violence of War: Experiences and Images of Conflict, University College London, June 19-20, 2014.

“‘The Hungarian Siberia’: An Intersectional Analysis of Counter-Revolutionary Internment during Hungary’s Long World War I,” Association of Women in Slavic Studies Biennial Meeting, Atlanta, Georgia, April 9-10, 2014.

“‘Burning out this Nest of Serpents’: Counter-revolution in the Hungarian Domestic Sphere, 1919-22,” Midwest Slavic Conference, Columbus, Ohio, March 28-30, 2014.

“Great War and ‘Violent Peace’: (Re)Constructing International Norms of Violence in Post-World War Hungary,” Mid-West World History Association Annual Meeting, Springfield, Ohio, September, 2013.

“‘Primitive Cruelty’ and ‘Refined Vengeance’, English-Speaking Union of Cincinnati, Cincinnati, Ohio, June, 2012.

“The Terror at Home: Mistresses, Maids, and ‘Domestic’ Politics in Hungary, 1919-1921,” Violence and Societies in East Central Europe 17th to 20th Centuries, Vilnius, Lithuania, October, 2010.

“Violence toward the State, Violence of the State: The Dilemma of Theoretically Situating Hungary’s White Terror,” Violence: Probing the Boundaries, Salzburg, Austria, March, 2010.

“Reflections on Partition in Indian Cinema,” International Association for Media and History Conference (IAMHIST), Cincinnati, Ohio, July 2005.

“The Individual Experience of Partition in History, Film and Literature, 1947-2000,” Midwest Conference on Asian Affairs Annual Meeting, Normal, Illinois, October 2003.