

ABLOVATSKI, Eliza. Revolution and Political Violence in Central Europe. The Deluge of 1919. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021. 300 p.

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Veronika Szeghy-Gayer  |  szegy@saske.sk

Institute of Social Sciences of the Centre of Social and Psychological Sciences, Slovak Academy of Sciences, Slovak Republic

In her new monograph, Eliza Ablovatski, associate professor of history at Kenyon College, tells the story of two failed revolutions in 1919, the Munich Soviet Republic and the Hungarian Soviet Republic in Budapest, by focusing on their long-lasting effects on interwar politics and culture. The book provides a unique insight into the intellectual history of post-WWI Central European revolutions, specifically the cases in Bavaria and Hungary, as she not only discusses the violent acts and radical transformation of the political order during a short period of time but, mainly, explores the worldview and the intellectual milieu that came to predominate in both interwar German and Hungarian society, as a reaction to these revolutions. Further, the author makes an attempt to understand the different aspects of the dichotomous interpretations of the 1919 revolutions and describes how contemporaries experienced these short revolutions outside of Russia. In the following review of her book *Revolution and Political Violence in Central Europe – The Deluge of 1919*, my aim is to highlight the main points of the research.

The monograph is structured into 6 chapters in which the author places local events in Munich and Budapest into a larger transnational and European revolutionary context and tradition. The first chapter can be considered a kind of general introduction to the history of ideas that led to the revolutions. Here the author presents also the development of pre-1918 German and Hungarian society, by linking pre-war debates to the Jewish question and the 1919 revolutions. The two cities under investigation, Munich and Budapest, serve as a good platform to compare the similarities and differences between the Bavarian and Hungarian cases. Bavaria had been a predominantly agrarian region, like Hungary, and both transformed during the second half of the 19th century into big urban centers. Also, political Catholicism was strong in both cities. However, a much larger proportion of Jews lived in Budapest than in Munich.

In the following chapters, Ablovatski presents the political events of the two revolutions by focusing on the violent acts and the way how violence was interpreted by its contemporaries. She deals with the end of WWII, the October Revolution in Budapest, and the military collapse. Furthermore, she discusses the Hungarian refugee question that radicalized Hungarian society to a great extent. In the fourth chapter, Ablovatski investigates specific archival sources, the documents of the post-revolutionary courts, and the way how the questions of revolutionary guilt shaped the politics and culture of interwar Central Europe more broadly. She argues that these trials were responsible for creating the official narrative of the revolutions in both countries.

The author examines how the police and the courts became the main audience for competing revolutionary narratives of guilt and victimization. In the comparison between Budapest and Munich, she points out that in Munich the revolution did not play a central role in the symbolic world of Weimar German politics, as it did in post-1919 Hungary. In Hungary, politics and society were radicalized to a much greater extent as a result of the counter-revolutions. Reports from Budapest were censored, while in Munich the press offered their readers a multiple and diverse interpretation of the post-1919 events. In Munich, there was only one person sentenced to death, the Communist leader, Eugen Leviné, while in Budapest 97 death sentences were carried out and there was a more prolonged period of violence in Hungary, as the revolution itself lasted longer than in Munich.

On the other, as the author points out, there were differences in counter-revolutionary rhetoric and policy too between the two cities. In Munich, the old elites were able to re-establish themselves in power and regain control from the military and right-wing activists. In Hungary, the length of the military conflict and the Entente-supported Romanian occupation allowed the counter-revolutionary forces to create a center of power and government outside of and independent from Budapest's traditional elites. In Hungary the narrative created blamed Jews and foreigners, and the courts blamed the city itself. In Munich, courts portrayed the city primarily as a victim of the machinations of revolutionaries.

The last two chapters examine the transnational culture of memory of the 1919 revolutions. One of the key elements of post-1919 politics was the branding of revolutionaries as foreign, but in general, postwar narratives used racial and gendered symbols and content. The specific term Judeo-Bolshevism came into use after the Russian Revolution introduced Bolshevism as a key term in the European revolutionary and counter-revolutionary vocabulary. It was the time when the myth of Judeo-Bolshevism was created. However, another important observation of Ablovatski is that post-war narratives on revolution were combined with strong anti-gendered rhetoric. Press coverage of trials of women who participated in the revolutions has transformed perceptions of race and gender, and these profoundly affected the way people remembered the revolutions. One of the most relevant segments of Ablovatski's analysis is the subchapter that highlights the close link between anti-semitism and anti-feminism by describing the way how the activity of women revolutionaries was portrayed in the trials. WWI female integration into the industrial economy was accelerated and the war seemed to promote and legitimate female political integration too. The participation of women in the revolution offered proof of the dangerous and mutually ruinous relationship between women's political participation and revolutionary policies.

Finally, in the last chapter of the book Ablovatski examines the processes of remembering the revolutions, including individual and collective rituals, and practices. On the one hand, she deals with the dominant counter-revolutionary Right, while on the other hand she discusses the minority memory of the political Left. In the counter-revolutionary narratives, many contemporaries linked revolutions with mental illness and feminine hysteria. German psychiatrists, such as Eugen Kahn and Emil Kraepelin attributed revolutions to mental illness by proving the enemy to be debilitated by WWI and post-war traumas. However, in their highly speculative medical diagnoses of the revolutionaries, they also argued that the revolution was derived from the character of foreign leaders wish to separate. These expert interpretations led many contemporaries to believe that the experience of revolution was more a manifestation of mental illness rather than a mass movement that grew out of a feeling of social injustice. These arguments were used in the courts too. On the Left, in the international workers' movement, Eugen Leviné, the executed leader of the Bavarian Soviet Republic, became a symbol of martyrdom, and manifestations were connected to the anniversary of his executions. However, in Hungary, there were more restrictions limiting the

possibilities for memorializing the events and leaders of the revolutions. All in all, the monograph of Eliza Ablovatski helps us to better understand the role of the 1919 Central Europe revolutions in shaping interwar politics and culture in Hungary and German and the way they were used to justify counter-revolutionary violence, raise militaries, suppress leftist parties, and deny access to education for Jews. The double vision that contemporaries had about the revolutionary events of 1919, and which is described so precisely in the analysis, still prevails.