

CfP: Beyond Defeat and Victory. Physical Violence and the Reconstitution of East-Central Europe, 1914–1923

Dates and venue: 17–19 September 2015; Prague, Czech Republic

Organizers: Masaryk Institute and Archives of the Czech Academy of Sciences; Imre Kertész Kolleg at the Friedrich Schiller University, Jena; Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University in Prague

Conference Scholarly Board: Jochen Böhler (Imre Kertész Kolleg, Jena) Robert Gerwarth (University College, Dublin), Ota Konrád (Charles University, Prague), Rudolf Kučera (Masaryk Institute and Archives of the Czech Academy of Sciences, Prague)

Deadline for paper proposals: 31st December 2014

Violence during and in the immediate aftermath of the First World War is a frequent research topic pursued in various contexts and within the framework of different methodological approaches. Nevertheless, with the exception of the now classic *Male Fantasies* (1977–78) by Klaus Theweleit, culturally inspired analyses were very rare. At the same time, expansions of the horizon beyond the boundaries of a particular nation-state have been virtually non-existent. Only in the mid-1990s did the research of violence start to refocus on the cultural, social and psychological preconditions for the emergence of group dynamics facilitating the collective application of violence as a practice that considerably confirmed the group identity of its perpetrators. Besides the emergence of the “mass killing culture,” (Alan Kramer) attention was paid to George Mosse’s “brutalization” thesis. Among the first comparative works, Sven Reichardt’s book on the practices of Italian Fascist paramilitary commandos *squadre d’azione* and German *Sturmabteilung* was probably the most prominent contribution that showed how the concept of violence as a legitimate tool of political communication of both organizations was closely associated with the prevailing idea of masculinity. Recently, the

scope was further widened by studies of paramilitary violence treated as a transnational phenomenon that appeared in practically all the defeated states of East-Central Europe and emerged from the specific “culture of defeat” in the aftermath of First World War. Paramilitary violence is interpreted as a phenomenon brought about by the collective shock over the military defeat, weak statehood and threat of communist revolutions.

In general, almost all the scholarship focuses on those states in East-Central Europe that emerged from the wartime collapse as defeated. A key concept is the “culture of defeat,” i.e. the specific socio-economic and political conditions at the end of the war and shortly thereafter that particularly in Germany, Austria and Hungary determined the structure and operation of violence as the primary phenomenon brought about by the outcome of the war. The other side of the fall and reconstruction of East-Central Europe at the turn of 1910s and 1920s that did not originate from the “culture of defeat,” but rather from the opposite “culture of victory,” has been missed, though. In states like Czechoslovakia, Poland, Yugoslavia or the Baltics, the war victory leading to state independence filled the public space with much more widespread support for the new order. Hence, the results of previous research shaped by the “culture of defeat” cannot be simply transferred to the victorious states, but these cases need to be approached anew. The existing research has also tended to examine violence predominantly in its political form (e.g. military, paramilitary or police violence) but it has overlooked other forms such as domestic, sexual or juvenile violence.

On the level of international scholarship, one of the largest gaps in the research to date has been the lack of comparisons between different environments formed by the “culture of victory” and “culture of defeat,” and of subsequent unifying views transcending this divide. The conference seeks to explore the possibilities in comparing the role of physical violence in the two distinct cultures that emerged in Central Europe as a result of the First World War. We particularly welcome paper proposals that adopt comparative or transnational perspectives, but we are open to case studies if they are relevant to the conference topic as well. We also encourage the submission of paper proposals dealing with the theoretical aspects of the relationship between the cultures of defeat and victory and of the wave of violence that swept over East-Central Europe at the turn of 1910s and 1920s.

The paper proposals should revolve around one of the following topics or should lie at the intersection of two or more of them:

- Forms of demobilization in victorious and defeated states of East-Central Europe
- Comparative views on military, paramilitary and police violence

- Public violence and its state and non-state actors
- Private, sexual and domestic violence
- Self-inflicted violence (injuries, suicides, abortions)
- Juvenile violence
- Legislative, executive and judicial reactions to violence
- Expert discourses on violence
- Popular images of violence

Please send a paper abstract (up to 300 words) and a brief CV to violence@centrum.cz by 31st December 2014. You will be notified about the decision of the Conference Board in March 2015. Successful candidates will be asked to submit a draft paper for pre-circulation among the conference participants by 30th August 2015. Organizers will cover accommodation and meals during the conference. There will be a limited number of travel grants awarded by the Conference Board for those who cannot be supported by their home institutions. If you would like to apply for a travel grant, please include a preliminary financial calculation. A publication of selected reworked papers in a collective volume is planned. For any further inquiries, please contact violence@centrum.cz.