

cooperation across the Cold War line, and rivalry and enmity within the socialist bloc. The next two chapters are devoted to the cultural exchanges with the capitalist world, including relations with the Bulgarian émigré diaspora, mostly in West Germany and the USA. This latter aspect—“forging a diaspora”—gets a thoroughly original treatment, particularly by changing the lens to close-ups on the local and personal levels. The last two chapters, focusing on the cultural offensive in the developing world, are the most evocative of the usefulness of the pericentric approach. There were 15,413 cultural events in Asia; 3,442 in the Arab counties; 2,973 in Latin America; and 1,170 in Africa, dwarfing the 7,420 in capitalist countries. While warm relations on an equal footing with the two large countries of ancient civilizations, India and Mexico, allowed Bulgaria to develop a self-perception as a grand world civilization, relations with Africa (exemplified by Nigeria) displayed a more ambivalent approach, where cultural initiatives were not as lavishly funded and were subordinate to economic considerations, and where talk of anti-imperialist solidarity was often mired by paternalism and superiority, if not outright racism. Culture was often the veneer of economic and political interests in the quest for hard currency and markets, but it provided a shrewd template for an alternative modernization to the postcolonial world.

Especially interesting for this reviewer is the emancipation (called “normalization” in the book) of the 1970s. For a 1968er like myself, clearly a generation older than Dragostinova, the 1970s were boring, conformist, disappointing, and at times laughable, and I share Tony Judt’s (coming from the same generation) verdict of a “dispiriting decade” not only for the West. But Dragostinova convincingly makes the case that the decade in Bulgaria saw silent efforts at resolving contradictions and a relatively stable economic and political situation. More importantly, this was also true globally where the western crisis was felt less acutely, and the Third World could articulate specific demands. Most importantly, the book pleads for “allowing room for the agency of people who lived through the 1970s and not simply condemn them to gloom and doom” (19).

This book, like any good book, also raises many questions and longs for further elaborations. What is the part of contingency in this narrative? What is the (contingent) role of individuals (in the cases of, among others, both Zhivkov and Liudmila Zhivkova)? What was the share of their specific entourages, their social provenance and views? Is there a place for religion, including the Universal White Brotherhood (Dunovism)? Did the mix of diverse intellectual and ideological influences end up in something like a sustained (and sustainable) platform beyond nationalism? Can we weigh (and how) the relative role of the cultural program and diplomacy at home and for export? Reception is consciously absent from this coverage and left for future research because of the source base, but how about tacit motivations? Is socialism going global the same as socialist globalization? What is the tangible difference between capitalist and socialist globalization? Again, these and many more questions are raised only and precisely because this is an excellent and rich book that invites us to further inquiry.

doi:10.1017/S0067237823000322

## Ablovatski, Eliza. *Revolution and Political Violence in Central Europe: The Deluge of 1919*

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021. Pp. 300.

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In the past two decades, the historiography of World War I in the Habsburg successor states and Eastern Europe has grown quickly, with studies in both English and the languages of the region greatly

expanding our understanding of the “wars after war.” Eliza Ablovatski’s *Revolution and Political Violence in Central Europe: The Deluge of 1919* significantly contributes to this rich scholarship with a nuanced analysis of this brief revolutionary moment in Munich and Budapest.

Beginning with a Dickens-inspired *Tale of Two Cities* framing, *Revolution and Political Violence* is a comparative exploration of the aborted 1919 communist revolutions in Munich and Budapest that focuses on the ways contemporaries made sense of these revolutionary moments and how these revolutions “fitted into the self-perception of these cities and into both historical narratives and collective memory” (14). Notably, Ablovatski’s analysis pays particular attention to the ways that gender and antisemitism shaped the global-historical interpretations of the 1919 revolutions produced by those on the right and left of the political spectrum in Hungary, Bavaria, and across Europe.

In the first two chapters, Ablovatski provides a focused history of the Hungarian and Bavarian capitals, drawing out the parallels and disjunctures between the two cities. Chapter 1 examines the urban culture and politics of the cities; both experienced rapid growth and cultural modernization in the final decades of the nineteenth century, each gaining a cosmopolitanism that older elites and nationalists greeted with varying levels of hostility. Both cities also confronted (or perhaps failed to confront) the plight of the expanding working classes, who faced squalid living and working conditions as well as the indifference of the urban bourgeoisie and older elites. While pointing out important distinctions between the two cities, the author makes a strong case for the comparison of the revolutions in them. In both places, franchise reform and the political organization of the urban working class signaled the simmering tensions that undergirded the sparkling bourgeois modernity of Munich and Budapest and ultimately exploded with military defeat and imperial collapse.

Building on the first chapter, chapter 2 traces the more “high” political contours of war for Germany and Hungary and the revolutions that followed. Ablovatski explains the important differences in the revolutions in the two cities, including their duration and the number killed. She also concludes by briefly addressing the longer legacies of the revolutions in their respective societies, a point she returns to in the final chapter on memory.

Chapters 3 through 5 zoom in on the narrativization of the revolutions in a wide array of sources including court cases, the press, reports, and memoirs, analyzing these sources through the lens of gender and antisemitism. Chapter 3 addresses the revolutionary scripts that emerged to explain what was happening and who was responsible for acts of violence. Here, Ablovatski emphasizes deficits of information in both cities that helped produce a culture of rumor, which in turn fed fears and helped legitimize retaliatory violence. Gender especially played an important role in this environment, as acts of violence perpetrated against women helped fuel support among a population that remained in the dark because of a deficit of reliable information.

Addressing post-revolutionary justice in chapter 4, Ablovatski looks at trial records as sources of narrative and memory in-the-making. There were stark differences in the way that post-revolutionary justice was meted out in the two countries owing to key structural and institutional factors as well as the political, economic, and military contexts, and, Ablovatski asserts, the way the city of Budapest itself was blamed for the “crimes” of the revolution (165). In Hungary, more people were put on trial, and sentences were more severe. Yet, gender and antisemitism played powerful roles in the courtrooms of both cities as defendants, prosecutors, and lawyers drew on the crystallizing link between Jews and communism to make their cases.

Chapter 5 carries forward threads from the previous two chapters, focusing on the ways that gender and race were mobilized in the service of the post-revolutionary states. Bringing together her analysis of different types of sources together, Ablovatski outlines the hypersexualization or masculinization of women associated with revolutionary politics on the Right as well as the victimhood of these women on the Left in the interwar period. Furthermore, Ablovatski demonstrates the ways that narratives produced on the Right and Left contributed to the “codification” of the Judeo-Bolshevik mythology, which became increasingly powerful in Central Europe in the interwar period, drawing on her own and Paul Hanebrink’s recent work.

The sixth and final chapter adds to the scholarship on memory and the Hungarian Soviet Republic, which has expanded in recent years with the work of Péter Apor (2016) and Péter Csunderlik (2019).

Ablovatski provides both a gendered and transnational perspective on the competing “communities of remembering” that emerged on the Right and Left in the interwar period. For the Right, these narratives centered on a defensive discourse, that is, defense of the nation, while the Left’s centered on the revolutionary learning curve represented by these two aborted soviet experiments. In the interwar period, the dominance of the Right’s narrative in central Europe had real consequences for persons associated with the brief revolutionary past, including exile or the loss of pensions. Given the marginalization of the Left and antipathy toward communism globally in the interwar period, the chapter provokes a number of questions, including how narratives intended for domestic consumption differed from memoirs and other types of writing published by those in exile or translated for international audiences.

Enlisting a wide array of sources—including the press, novels, trial records, and memoirs—in the service of an elegantly written analysis, *Revolution and Political Violence* positions the short-lived soviet republics in Hungary and Bavaria within the wider post-1918 narrative of world revolution, while also identifying the ways these narratives reflected the distinctive political cultures of Germany and Hungary in the interwar period. Through her sustained attention to gender and ethnicity, Ablovatski also highlights the urgency and contingency of the period and the common interpretive strategies used to legitimize the acts that made and broke the Hungarian and Bavarian revolutions. In so doing, the book demonstrates the value gendered approaches lend to our understanding of this tumultuous era and opens up new avenues of inquiry to scholars of the long World War I era in central and eastern Europe.

doi:10.1017/S0067237823000310

## Rieber, Alfred J. *Storms over the Balkans During the Second World War*

Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022. Pp. 281.

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Alfred J. Rieber offers a panoramic political history of the Balkans during World War II through the prism of the well-known leaders who impacted the region and the countries they represented. Rieber’s history is the stuff of high politics—diplomatic maneuverings, ideological posturing, and grand strategies—reflecting a lifelong, intimate scholarly fascination with the broad arcs of East European and Russian history. Rieber adopts a meteorological metaphor in organizing his book, splitting it into two parts: “The Storms Breaks” (part 1) and “Wind Rising from the East” (part 2). Part 1, which makes up the bulk of the book, is organized into five chapters, each devoted to one of the five leaders (in sequence): Mussolini, Hitler, Stalin, Churchill, and Tito. As the title suggests, part 2 is devoted to chronicling the wartime roots and subsequent postwar split in 1948 between Tito, the Balkan regional hegemon, and Stalin, the hegemon of the world’s communist movements.

Rieber’s “leader-centric” approach to the World War II Balkans makes sense in many ways, which he enumerates in a brief few pages in his introduction. All these leaders, including Churchill as the head of the one democracy, “amassed extraordinary powers during the Second World War” (27); all had a certain “charismatic aura”; all “took a direct, personal role in planning and conducting military operations”; and “in the long run” all of them “failed to realize their imperial aims in the