



FACULTY  
OF SOCIAL SCIENCES  
Charles University



Institute for the Study  
of Totalitarian Regimes

## **Reshaping the Nation: Collective Identities and Post-War Violence in Europe 1944–48**

### **CALL FOR PAPERS**

Conference dates: 16th – 17th of May 2019

Venue: Charles University Prague, Karolinum, Czech Republic

Organizing institutions:

**Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University Prague**  
**Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes, Prague**

Keynote speaker: professor Norman Naimark (Department of history, Stanford University)

Deadline for applications: **31 January 2019**

World War II entailed an unprecedented amount of violence and suffering, only part of which was caused by the actual fighting. Against the background of a looming unconditional, total German defeat at the end of the war, German occupation in many cases degenerated into brutal physical violence against civilians. Immediately after the end of the war, societies in nearly all formerly occupied countries were drowning in a wave of more or less spontaneous violence. People in the liberated countries directed their wrath not only against former Nazis and against ethnic Germans in general, but also attacked domestic “collaborators” and national “traitors.” The complex phenomenon of Endphasegewalt involved transitional violence, violent rituals, extermination campaigns, national cleansing, rage, retribution, rape and other forms of opportunism. Endphasegewalt infused the everyday experience of millions of Europeans at the time.

In the course of the last few decades, historians and other researchers have published many studies concentrating on different cases of violence during the period. Mostly, they sought explanations for political decision making or proposed models and descriptions of the social practices connected with violent behavior. These macrosocial perspectives left out the very important performative aspect of violence: people were putting their conceptions of the ideal postwar society into practice through violence. Was violence a meaningful act meant to empower new collective identities, or was it only the coincidental product of accumulated frustration and rage? To answer these questions, the conference will adopt a micro- and local-historical perspective. It will compare events in selected regions of several occupied countries that were affected by German occupation policies.

The conference will focus on violent acts occurring at the end of World War II in the context of nationalism as reshaped by previous war experiences. For the first time in modern history, German occupation served as a tool not only for economic expropriation of the material wealth of defeated societies but also for racial reordering of occupied populations. Even though there were important differences between the occupation regimes that Germany established in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe and those in Central, Northern, and Western Europe, the Nazi administration utilized national and racial categorizations as the crucial framework for strengthening its rule in all occupied countries. The Nazis used both domestic perceptions of nationality in the occupied lands and “racial” classifications at the same time. As a result of the Nazis' racial dividing lines, nationality lost many of its former imaginative aspects. Occupation powers inscribed nationality and race onto the fate of individuals, which in many cases became a matter of life and death.

Historical research on nationalism has often focused on the nineteenth century, on World War I, and on the inter-war period. Researchers have not paid much attention to the concepts of nationhood, nationalism, and nation building in the period directly after World War II. It is an open research question how the extreme forms of racism promoted by the Nazis during World War II influenced the experience of individuals in the postwar period.

The conference will analyze the composition of nationalities (who belonged to the national community?), the legitimizing function of nationalism, and its relation to acts of violence at the end of war and to the reshaping of postwar societies. At the same time, we want to address the differences between countries. How did a specific occupation policy in a specific place, with its specific national and racist criteria, influence the “responses” of the occupied society? Is there any evidence of a biological understanding of nationhood? How did competing concepts shape a new understanding of the “nation”—particularly taking into consideration the different political and cultural developments in various nation-states after the war ended?

We welcome papers dealing with topics from all occupied countries (Poland, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Denmark, Norway, Bohemia, Italy /after 1943/, Yugoslavia, Greece, etc.). Because the conference will try to bridge the persistent dividing line between Western and Eastern European historiography, we are especially interested in comparative papers.

We are interested in papers that touch upon violent acts occurring at the end of World War II and stemming from nationalism as reshaped by previous war experiences. Potential participants in the conference can contribute to the following topics:

- The role of race-based discourses and biological concepts of nationhood
- Connections between local and regional violence and state-controlled activities
- Violent rituals and historical models of violence
- Concepts of nation, nationhood, and citizenship after 1944
- Processes and perceptions of inclusion and exclusion
- Connections between nationhood on the one hand and religion, language, history, and culture on the other
- Relations between violence and gender-based aspects of the creation of new collective identities

- Connections between political, national, and criminal violence and socially motivated violence

### **Conference organization**

#### **Submission of abstracts**

Please send your abstracts in English by 31 January 2019 to: [kamila.kozichova@ustrcr.cz](mailto:kamila.kozichova@ustrcr.cz). The length of conference abstracts is limited to 500 words. We will inform you about an acceptance of your paper no later than by 28 February 2019.

**Conference language is English.**

#### **Organizers**

Boris Barth (Charles University, Prague)

Ota Konrad (Charles University, Prague)

Blanka Mouralova (Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes, Prague)

Jaromır Mrnka (Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes, Prague)

#### **Accommodation and travel**

The organizers will cover accommodation, catering at the conference and travel costs from Europe for all speakers. Please, contact us in case of travel from other destinations ([kamila.kozichova@ustrcr.cz](mailto:kamila.kozichova@ustrcr.cz)).