

The Enemy at the Door: Revolutionary Struggle in the Hungarian Domestic Sphere, 1919-1926

by
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I Introduction

In 1920, the Budapest criminal courts received a complaint from the middle aged widow of a lawyer named Mrs. János Ernyey. She claimed that in January 1919, her servant, who had been faithful up to that point, had become increasingly difficult after the announcement of the Hungarian Soviet Republic. This woman, a 20-something named Mrs. József Csizmás, announced to her mistress that she, her sister, Ilona Rózsa, and husband, Gerő Csizmás, a former soldier in the Red Army, would be taking over the apartment. When the widow protested, Mrs. Csizmás sent six Red soldiers to her house and she was dragged in front of the local Soviet and accused of being a counter-revolutionary and of slandering Béla Kun and the “Proletarian Dictatorship”. She eventually returned to her home and lived with the three others, presumably until the collapse of the regime in August 1919.¹

This particular denunciation, a rather extreme case, helps shed light on the social disruption during the Hungarian Soviet Republic. It perfectly illustrates the clash between the middle and working classes, and the fleeting assertion of power by the working classes, many of whom took very seriously the Social Democrats’ and Communists’ rhetoric about changing the plight of the working classes. The above example shows how social relations were upset during the prolonged period of political chaos that engulfed Hungary after the collapse of the Dualist system and the Austro-Hungarian war effort. Indeed, the Red and White Terrors in post-World War I Hungary represented a relatively brief period of political chaos, extremism, and violence. The rapidly changing political orientation of the country brought with it a great deal of insecurity to millions of ordinary Hungarians who could not foresee whether they would emerge as political victors or casualties.²

¹ János Ernyey: Denunciation of Mrs. József Csizmás and Ilona Rózsa to Budapest Criminal Prosecutor, filed September 24th, 1919, in: Records of the Budapest Royal Criminal Court at the Budapest Municipal Archives (*Budapest Fővárosi Levéltár*, later abbreviated as BFL), VII.5.c. 1920-1710, pp. 1-2. This case resulted in the prosecution of Mrs. Csizmás for the crimes of causing personal injury and insurrection (*izgatás*). She was sentenced to ten months in prison and a five year loss of civil rights. Also of importance were the defendant’s statements that communism was a beautiful principle and that only clever people could be Communists.

² For further reading on this tumultuous period in Hungary see the following books: MÁRIA ORMOS: *Hungary in the Age of the Two World Wars, 1914-1945*, Boulder

Despite this article's focus on representations of the Red Terror and its immediate aftermath in Hungary, it does not discuss the types of people and events typically linked to the Terrors, i.e. militia bands composed of young, enthusiastic men carrying out beatings, assassinations, summary courts and executions. Rather, it focuses on the domestic sphere as an important arena of political activity and class conflict, a place that was integrated into the wider struggle for political legitimacy. This article offers just a brief glimpse into this battle for the "home" front. However, this focus on the domestic sphere shows that Terrors did not only consist of militia violence. Fear permeated people's homes and their daily lives. And, as we will see in this paper, it meant grappling with the fear that enemies were not strangers, but one's own household staff who might pose the greatest threat to safety and property.

Analyzing the domestic sphere within the broader history of the Terrors in Hungary is significant for two reasons.³ First, for thousands of working class people, particularly young women, the domestic sphere was also their workplace. They laboured as cooks, nannies, maids of all work, servants, and porters. That domestic life at this time was somehow divided from politics was a fiction that ignored the fact that domestic labour relations were critical to the formation of bourgeois class identity, and by extension, an institution through which class divisions were confronted and solidified on a daily basis. Second, bringing the domestic sphere into focus offers an opportunity to make women visible as political actors, although the domestic sphere was not, of course, the exclusive domain of women. With these two issues in mind, this article is one small step in analyzing the wider struggle over political legitimacy as it played out in multiple arenas of Hungarian political, social, and cultural life. It is not exhaustive. Rather it is an attempt look at the social meanings and in-

2007; RAPHAEL PATAI: *The Jews of Hungary. History, Culture, Psychology*, Detroit 1996; IGNÁCS ROMSICS: *Hungary in the Twentieth Century*, Budapest 1999; THOMAS SAKMYSTER: *Hungary's Admiral on Horseback. Miklós Horthy, 1918-1944*, Boulder 1994.

³ To this point, there has been relatively little written about the Red Terror specifically in Hungary, although in general, there has been a veritable explosion of research on militia violence throughout East Central Europe in the post-World War I period. In the case of Hungary, PÉTER KONOK: *Az erőszak kérdesei 1919-1920-ban. Vörösteror – fehérterror* [The questions of violence in 1919-1920. Red Terror – White Terror], in: *Múltunk* 3 (2010), pp. 72-91, has written a fine comparative piece regarding the question of violence in the Red and White Terrors. ORMOS (as in footnote 2) also discusses the Red Terror, and PATAI (as in footnote 2) includes a brief assessment of the Red and White Terrors from the perspective of the Hungarian Jewry. Because of the relative paucity of scholarship on the Red Terror, more general literature on revolutionary violence in Russia, Ukraine, Finland is useful in showing where violence fit into the world-view of leaders of the Communist revolution in Hungary, given that several, including Béla Kun received their political education in Russia during World War I. Helpful sources are FRANCO VENTURI: *Roots of Revolution. A History of the Populist and Socialist Movements in 19th Century Russia*, London 2001, and ARNO J. MAYER: *The Furies. Violence and Revolution in the French and Russian Revolutions*, Princeton 2000.

terpretations of the Terrors in post-war Hungary through contemporary representations and interpretations of changes in the mistress-maid relationships during the Red Terror.

II Political Struggle in Post-World War I Hungary

The history of post-war Hungary is extraordinarily complicated as it was wracked by successive revolutions and a prolonged period of “counter-revolutionary” activity.⁴ Hungary was among the defeated of World War I. Approximately two-thirds of its territory was occupied and ceded to Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, Austria, and Romania. This truncation of territory confirmed by the Treaty of Trianon which was signed in June 1920 played a significant role in the politics of Hungary between the wars and during World War II.⁵ Trianon served as a rallying point for nationalist and monarchist politicians, and exacerbated the political, economic, social, and military conditions of Hungary in the immediate post-war period.

In October of 1918, a revolution led by a coalition of liberal and leftist parties with Mihály Károlyi at the helm declared Hungary a People’s Republic. Although the Károlyi Revolution transformed Hungary from a monarchy into a liberal republic, it inherited the established political and legal structures from the Dualist period. However, its post-war independence meant total control over its military and foreign affairs, both of which were very important throughout the inter war period. In his attempts to consolidate the new government, Károlyi dissolved the military, though he failed to fully disarm returning soldiers who had fought in the Habsburg military during the war, an error that played a role in his political fortunes. By December 1918, Károlyi’s leadership was crumbling, largely because the government failed to gain better terms at the Paris Peace Conference, and because of the foreign invasion and occupation of the border regions of Hungary by the armies of Romania and Czechoslovakia. These incursions onto Hungarian territory and the lack of a military to combat them demonstrated Hungary’s diplomatic and military isolation and gravely affected Károlyi’s position. By the end of 1918, the political coalition of Leftists and Liberals was deeply divided. In an effort to turn revolutionary Russia into a diplomatic ally, Károlyi negotiated a transfer of power to the Hungarian Communists, which ultimately ended with the

⁴ EELIZA JOHNSON ABLOVATSKI: ‘Cleansing the Red Nest’. Counter-revolution and White Terror in Munich and Budapest, 1919, PhD Dissertation, Columbia University 2004; BÉLA BODÓ: Militia Violence and State Power in Hungary, 1919-1922, in: *Hungarian Studies Review* 33 (2006), 1-2, pp. 121-156; IDEM: Paramilitary Violence in Hungary after the First World War, in: *East European Quarterly* 38 (2004), 2, pp. 129-172; ISTVÁN DEÁK: Budapest and the Hungarian Revolutions of 1918-1919, in: *Slavonic and East European Review* 46 (1968), pp. 129-140; ORMOS (as in footnote 2); SAKMYSTER (as in footnote 2).

⁵ Hungary signed an armistice on November 4, 1918. HOLLY CASE: *Between States. The Transylvanian Question and the European Idea during World War II*, Stanford 2009.

declaration of a pro-Bolshevik Hungarian Soviet Republic on March 21st, 1919.⁶

This new republic came to power largely on the promise to end the Romanian occupation and secure a better peace in Paris. However, under the leadership of Béla Kun, it also began to enact increasingly radical social legislation. This was intended to pander to the Russian Soviet leadership, but in practice alienated large portions of Hungarian society, both in Budapest and in the countryside. Unlike Károlyi, who had left many institutions in place, the Hungarian Soviet Republic abolished the judiciary, the police forces (both police and gendarmerie) and other public administrative structures and created institutions such as the Red Guard and People's Tribunals to perform these functions. Further, Hungary still had no army, a lack which the Soviet leadership remedied quickly with the formation of the Hungarian Red Army.

If the first half of the brief Soviet period was marked by dramatic changes in domestic policy and institutions, the second half, and its ultimate downfall, was the result of the Hungarian Soviet Republic's failure to push back the Romanian onslaught, which resulted in the occupation of the regions of Eastern Hungary up to the Tisza river by April, 1919. Both the radical domestic program of the Communists, and these military crises, culminating in the Romanian occupation of Budapest in summer of 1919, led to the establishment of rival "counter-revolutionary" centers in Graz and Szeged. The center in Graz largely consisted of a group of Habsburg Legitimists, whereas the Szeged government was broadly known to be a repository of anti-communism and nationalist territorial revisionism. However, beyond these basic points, there was no genuine ideological or political unity. The Hungarian National Army, organised in Szeged, reflected this disunity, and was a loose grouping of broadly counter-revolutionary-minded mid-level military officers and their subalterns. They embraced the so-called "Szeged Idea" of "Christian National Hungary", which was interpreted in a variety of ways, depending on the political stripe of the individual. The National Army had no official structure, no ranks, and no weapons, other than those individually held by its members or those the members had failed to return to the Hungarian government after the dissolution of the Habsburg army in 1918. It functioned largely as independent military detachments held together by the personal loyalties and culture of collective guilt cultivated by the individual officers themselves.⁷

⁶ The so-called *Tanácsköztársaság* or Republic of Councils, with the councils organised along the lines of the Russian soviets.

⁷ For general reading on the composition of the militia detachments in Hungary and in Central Europe more generally, see BODÓ, *Militia Violence and State Power* (as in footnote 4), pp. 123-124; IDEM, *Paramilitary Violence in Hungary* (as in footnote 4), pp. 137-141; ROBERT GERWATH: *The Central European Counter-Revolution. Political Violence in Germany, Austria, and Hungary after the First World War*, in *Past & Present* 200 (2008), 1, pp. 175-209, here pp. 185-198.

The Red and White Terrors have, for the most part, been conceptualised narrowly as including the activities and atrocities of groups like the *Lenin fiúk* (Lenin Boys) or the Bandl group, both of which were militia groups supporting the Communist government, and detachments of the National Army (white).⁸ However, discussions of the militias' activities including assassinations, street-fighting, lynching, torture, and beatings have so far ignored how this arena of politicised physical violence related to or perhaps even shaped the everyday experiences of individuals and families, many of whom either feared harassment or sought to take advantage of the tumultuous political upheaval, but may not necessarily have seen themselves as actively engaging in the political arena.⁹ This article does not seek to dilute the concept of violence by broadening it to include any infraction or feeling of fear (which is difficult to quantify since it belongs to the sphere of mental and emotional life).¹⁰ Rather, it shifts the focus away from those who intentionally engaged in political violence through membership in a militia to hone in on the threat revolutionary rhetoric and political violence posed to the domestic sphere, whether this space was the apartment or the apartment building. It focuses on the relationship between domestic employees, their employers and building residents to show the transformation of older forms of socio-economic relationships.

This conceptual expansion of the terror reveals groups of actors not easily visible in the history of high politics, such as women (both middle and working class) and working-class men. But it also reflects how participants addressed and interpreted conflict in the domestic sphere, as well as how the domestic sphere served as an intentional target of political rhetoric, activity,

⁸ BODÓ, Militia Violence and State Power (as in footnote 4), pp. 123-124; IDEM, Paramilitary Violence in Hungary (as in footnote 4); IDEM: Iván Héjjas. The Life of a Counterrevolutionary, in: *East Central Europe* 37 (2010), 2-3, pp. 247-279; KONOK (as in footnote 3) also deals specifically with the activities of Red and White militias. A special issue of a Hungarian popular historical periodical features several articles on the period, replete with a dozen pictures of different militia groups and leaders: *Vörös Terror – Fehér Terror* [Red Terror – White Terror], in: *Rubicon* (2011), 2. Some recent and notable exceptions to this trend are BÉLA BODÓ: The Hungarian Aristocracy and the White Terror, in: *The Journal of Contemporary History* 45 (2010), 4, pp. 703-724, and MARTIN CONWAY, ROBERT GERWARTH: Revolution and Counter-Revolution, in: *Political Violence in Twentieth Century Europe*, ed. by DONALD BLOXHAM and ROBERT GERWARTH, Cambridge 2011, pp. 140-175, here p. 141. Bodó considers the relationship between the Hungarian aristocratic elite and white militias while Conway and Gerwarth discuss the tension between "political" violence and other forms of conflicts. They limit their definition of violence to physical, but their conceptualization of the relationship between different forms of violence during periods of revolution and counter-revolution is very helpful in tackling the complex political and social environments in which violence outside of the norm, crops up.

⁹ CONWAY/GERWARTH (as in footnote 8), p. 141.

¹⁰ MICHAEL BURLEIGH: *Blood and Rage. A Cultural History of Terrorism*, London 2008; WALTER LAQUEUR: *A History of Terrorism*, New Brunswick 2001.

and organization. The middle and upper classes had a variety of mediums in the post-Soviet period, including the courts, memoirs and novels, to prosecute infractions and disseminate stories and interpretations of mistreatment at the hands of their domestic staff. Administratively, throughout the early 1920s, the criminal courts of Budapest continued to prosecute political cases having to do with “crimes” perpetrated during “Dictatorship of the Proletariat”.¹¹ These court cases, along with the memoir and novel discussed in this article help expose the conflicting ideas about justice and social order between the working classes and middle classes throughout the revolutionary period and its aftermath. Used together, these sources help reveal the seriousness with which people, both bourgeois and proletarian, regarded the political promises of the revolutionary regime to address gross inequalities between social groups. The sources also show how central the middle and upper classes were to creating and perpetuating certain representations of the Social Democratic and Communist revolutions that willfully ignored genuine social and economic problems.

III Domestic Life and Service in Budapest in the Late 19th and Early 20th Centuries

In order to examine the role of revolutionary politics in the domestic sphere during the period of the Hungarian Soviet Republic and its aftermath, a brief history of domestic service in Hungary (particularly Budapest) is useful to illuminate the expectations embedded in domestic labour relationships.¹² The combination of an exploitive labour relationship in the home and the increased politicization of the domestic sphere between 1919 and 1920 offers an opportunity to show how some women engaged in political struggle,

¹¹ The “Proletariat Dictatorship” refers to the period of the Hungarian Soviet Republic that was in power in Budapest between January and August, 1919. The term “Dictatorship of the Proletariat” is a politically motivated term used to reflect middle class and conservative conceptualizations of the period.

¹² There is not a great deal of scholarship on the case of Hungary specifically. However, the following titles provide an excellent glimpse into the lives of domestic servants in both Europe and the United States during the same period. Furthermore, social historian Gábor Gyáni has made excellent contributions on domestic servants in Budapest and domestic life in Hungary. FRANK DAWES: *Not in Front of the Servants. Domestic Service in England 1850-1939*, London 1973; FAYE E. DUDDEN: *Serving Women. Household Service in Nineteenth Century America*, Middletown 1983; DREW GILPEN FAUST: *Mothers of Invention. Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War*, Chapel Hill 1996; GÁBOR GYÁNI: *Women as Domestic Servants. The Case of Budapest, 1870-1940*, New York 1989; DAVID KATZMAN: *Seven Days a Week. Women and Domestic Service in Industrializing American*, New York 1978; THERESA MCBRIDE: *The Domestic Revolution. The Modernization of Household Service in England and France 1820-1920*, New York 1976.

and how they used political arguments to frame grievances against their mistresses and servants respectively.¹³

Domestic service engaged approximately two-fifths of the female workforce of the capital in 1910.¹⁴ This number stagnated in the interwar period, but despite increasing economic opportunities for women outside the home, there was still a significant amount of women engaged in domestic service, even on the eve of World War II. For many women, domestic service was their first foray into the wage economy, and many were migrants to Budapest from the countryside, although the composition of this group changed after World War I when there was an increase in the amount of Magyar refugees from excised territories of the old Hungarian kingdom. The majority of female domestic servants worked in bourgeois households, as opposed to the households of the nobility. The situation of Hungarian domestic service seems to have been slightly different from that of other European countries in that service was not necessarily the sole domain of the impoverished. It was not uncommon in Hungary for daughters of small, wealthier farmers to serve for a time, although historian Gábor Gyáni makes clear that often this dimension of service tended to occur in the countryside, and that in Budapest, broader European patterns prevailed.¹⁵ For the most part, girls went to Budapest in order to save money and send it back to their families, as did domestic servants elsewhere.

Because of older stigmas about women's wage labour, for some families sending daughters to the city, domestic service was preferable because seemed to offer greater paternalistic supervision and less freedom (and less opportunity for immoral behaviour) than factory work. Service also offered girls the opportunity to acquire the skills they would need when they became wives and mothers. Gyáni argues,

"domestic service prepared the girls for their subsequent, traditionally interpreted roles as wife, mother and homemaker. In this regard, it fulfilled an important and indispensable function: it implied the promise, which also partly materialized, of continuing the traditional life of the family, notwithstanding the economic conditions working against it."¹⁶

There were many stereotypes wrapped up in people's conceptualizations of domestic servants, including that of the servant as spendthrift, and the sexually immoral servant who used her free time in the city to meet men. These older stereotypes of servant sexuality were fed with anti-communist fears about "free love" that became an increasingly important trope after the out-

¹³ GÁBOR GYÁNI: *The Parlour and the Kitchen*, Budapest 2002, pp. 156-157.

¹⁴ GYÁNI, *Women as Domestic Servants* (as in footnote 12), pp. 6-7.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 15, 25.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 37.

break of revolution in Russia in 1917, and Bavaria and Budapest in 1919.¹⁷ However, for many domestic servants, their time away from the home in which they worked was heavily restricted, and many typically worked very long hours. Since, for the most part, contracts were verbal, employers could easily infringe upon servants' free time. Furthermore, the intimate nature of the relationship between servant and employer often meant that strict expectations of morality limited the activities of servants for fear of being fired. The interest employers took in the private lives of their servants was an important feature of domestic service as it existed in the period from 1870 to 1940. Female domestic servants were judged by the (male) company they kept, and their ties to certain men often played a role in conflicts that broke out between maids and mistresses in Budapest in 1919 and beyond.

Domestic service was simultaneously defined by intimacy and exclusion, heterogeneity, and atomization, all of which severely hindered efforts to improve the situation of domestic workers. There were no general standards of service since expectations and workload could differ substantially between families – especially those with children. Furthermore, the spatial intimacy of the servant was countered with the exclusion of the servant from the family. This juxtaposition between intimacy and distance was one of the most important features of domestic service. In fact there were often conscious strategies used by some mistresses to depersonalise or distance the domestic worker from the family.

In gendered terms, the middle class family was patriarchal and paternalistic. Even the material organization of the home reflected this gender hierarchy. All members of the family, including the domestic servant, were expected to follow the wishes of the “master”, but in reality, it was chiefly middle class women who supervised their domestic work force. The mistress's ability to run the household smoothly was regarded as a duty and a reflection of her abilities and skills as a homemaker. The embeddedness of all members of the household within a patriarchal hierarchy of inferior and superior social and gender relations, meant that the domestic servant occupied the lowest position in that hierarchy, but was still recognised as a member of the household and expected to show loyalty to her employers.¹⁸ However, the servant was an outsider cut off from the rest of the family in physical terms because her room, if there was one, was divided from the family's living space. The paternalist subjugation of the servant was supported by the labour legislation in

¹⁷ ABLOVASKI (as in footnote 4), pp. 218-220. For a developed discussion of where so-called “free love” or “free union” fit into Socialist and Communist ideology, see WENDY GOLDMAN: *Women, the State and Revolution. Soviet Family Life and Social Policy, 1917-1936*, Cambridge 1993, especially pp. 1-59.

¹⁸ GYÁNI, *Women as Domestic Servants* (as in footnote 12), p. 44.

Hungary in the late 19th century, which applied to many workers, but excluded domestic servants.¹⁹

IV Conflict in the Domestic Sphere

This dimension of the servant experience leads us to the two most relevant issues for understanding the eruption of conflict in the domestic sphere, particularly between servants and employers in 1919. First, servants, no matter what the political environment, were the target of suspicion. For the most part, these suspicions concerned the theft of household goods, and some mistresses might arrange “tests of honesty” for their servants, such as leaving money around the house to see if the servant stole, or placing dirt under a carpet to see if her servant was cleaning “properly”. Second, the atomization of domestic servants in terms of their working environment, and the diversity of their working conditions, made labour and political organization among servants difficult, though not necessarily impossible.²⁰ However, solitary as the domestic servant appears, and notwithstanding the scarcity of sources from the working class in general, many servants likely had contact with working class politics through relatives, boyfriends, or other domestic employees even if they did not enter political organizations themselves. Furthermore, throughout late 1918 and 1919 in Hungary, there was an explicit effort by the Social Democratic and Communist parties to politically mobilise and organise the domestic sphere.²¹

The lack of so-called working class consciousness among domestic servants forms an important backdrop to understanding the conflicts that emerged in 1919, and how the Hungarian middle classes interpreted them. The introduction to this article presents one of the most extreme examples. In the complaint, the widow specifically links her servant’s change in behaviour to the declaration of the Hungarian Soviet Republic in January 1919. Before then, she records, they had got along rather well.²² She also does not fail to record evidence for changes or possible motivating factors for her servant, whose husband served in the Red Army. The feature of linking changes in behaviour or acts of insubordination to a servant’s male relationships was an

¹⁹ ZSOBOR BÓDY: A Delay in the Emancipation of Labour. Bourgeois Paternalism, Workers’ Insurance and Labour Law in Hungary from the End of the Nineteenth Century to the Second World War, in: *Social History* 34 (2009), 2, pp. 204-230, here p. 207; GYÁNI, *Women as Domestic Servants* (as in footnote 12), p. 39.

²⁰ BÓDY (as in footnote 19), p. 226.

²¹ Throughout 1919-1921 (especially), there are dozens of trials against house representatives for political speeches and incitement located in the records of the Budapest Royal Criminal Court at the BFL, under the heading “A jogszolgáltatás területi szervei” [Organs of Territorial Jurisdiction] in fond group VII.5. Brief summaries of the political cases against Leftists and Communists held by the archive may be found in fond group VII.5.c, boxes 3934/a and 3934/b.

²² János Ernyey: Denunciation of Mrs. József Csizmás and Ilona Rózsa (as in footnote 1).

important feature of mistresses' reports of insubordination, which will be discussed later.²³

The (illegal) requisition of the widow Ernyey's house provides a window into another important social problem in Budapest: the severe housing shortage after the war. Because of heavy urban migration and a catastrophic flood in Pest, there was a severe shortage of living space, which hit the working class and migrants hardest. The reconstruction of Budapest had occurred at a much slower rate than needed, and the war all but stopped construction for a period. With the influx of large numbers of Hungarian and Galician Jewish refugees, the situation reached crisis level, leaving many to live in train cars and makeshift housing. Even among the middle class of Budapest during this period, there was a shortage of appropriate housing stock, leaving many in apartments that did not reflect their social station.²⁴ Additionally, although in other European (and American) contexts, the organization of housing kept the working class and middle/upper classes somewhat segregated from each other, in Budapest, many apartment buildings featured a mixture of flats that catered to people of various social and economic levels. Thus, in Budapest it is likely that there was a greater degree of day-to-day contact between the working class and the bourgeoisie.

To address this crisis, on March 26th, 1919 the Communist government announced new legislation which was supposed to address the housing shortage as well as to re-allocate housing to families in need.²⁵ This legislation also essentially served as a challenge to the principle of private property and involved transferring the ownership of companies to the state as a first step in communization. The accompanying problems with such policies were not just resistant (former) owners, but the over-zealousness of people desperate to obtain a decent living space for themselves and their families, as well as opportunists taking advantage of the new legislation in order to "requisition" valuables, including clothing, linens, and even homes, mostly for reallocation, but also for military use, a practice employed by both the Red and National Armies.²⁶ The problem of illegal requisitioning was apparently serious, or at

²³ It also seems that emphasizing the roots of one's ideological awakening to outside sources – and in the case of many women, to male relationships – may have been a legal strategy employed in the post-Soviet political-criminal trials. See Political History Institute Archives (*Politikai Történeti Intézet Levéltár*, later abbreviated as PTIL), fond 822, folder 3, 8.

²⁴ GYÁNI, *The Parlour and the Kitchen* (as in footnote 13); PÉTER HANÁK: *The Garden and the Workshop. Essays on the Cultural History of Vienna and Budapest*, Princeton 1998.

²⁵ *Vörös Ujság* from March 26th, 1919, in: PTIL, fond 866, folder 1, p. 9.

²⁶ This vocabulary of requisition was a holdover from the wartime policies of the military who took crops and other valuables to meet the needs of the military. The problem of wild requisitioning continued into the post-war period among both Communists and the White militias continuing to seize all sorts of items and cash for their "official" duties, but for the most part, it was simply theft with a politicised conceptualization.

least believed to be serious, prompting the government to issue warnings that illegal requisitioning was forbidden and would entail a sentence of ten years in prison and a 50 000 Korona fine.²⁷ However, despite these harsh warnings, there are numerous cases between August 1919 and the end of 1921 that deal with illegal requisitioning or illegal use of goods within the apartment.²⁸ There also seemed to be a blurry line between what was considered “theft” (*lopás*) and what was “requisitioning” (*rekvirálás*).

Against this backdrop of housing shortages and requisitioning, the case between Mrs. Ernyey and Mrs. Csizmás shows how politics encroached upon the domestic sphere. That Mrs. Csizmás brought her family to live with her in the apartment suggests that she used her position as a domestic worker to improve her family’s accommodations rather than wait for space to be allocated via the Bureau of Housing Allocation. This is made even more clear when the statements record that after Mrs. Csizmás heard that Mrs. Ernyey had complained, she requested a new place to live from the housing bureau and moved out hurriedly when it became clear that Mrs. Ernyey would denounce her to the (new) regime. Her position in the household of Mrs. Ernyey gave Mrs. Csizmás immediate access to a new living space, and the anti-bourgeois political and legal environment of early 1919 enabled Csizmás avoid immediate punishment for an act that was technically punishable by law, but seems to have been overlooked until January, 1920 when Mrs. Ernyey made her complaint. The political discourse of the period of the Hungarian Soviet Republic, which allowed Mrs. Csizmás to accuse her employer of counter-revolutionary activities and access the brute force of the state (via the local Soviet and Red Guard) shows the space that had been created, and facilitated by the highly gendered labour relations in which the working class was involved, to address inequality and transform power relations within the household.

However, the case also has powerful gender implications. First, like other examples in this article, the “victim” was a widow, without children, who lived alone. This lack of a male head of household may have made her employee more provocative when it came to challenging social and political boundaries. Second, there was an implicit link made in Mrs. Ernyey’s denunciation between Mrs. Csizmás’s actions and her husband’s career in the Red Army. The linking of infractions in the domestic sphere to a woman’s relationship with a politically active man was an important dimension of wo-

²⁷ Because of hyper-inflation in Hungary after the end of the war, it is difficult to say, but this amount of Korona would have been equal to approximately 3 100 US \$. In today’s values this would equal approximately 40 000 US \$; PTIL, fond 866, folder 9, pp. 64-65.

²⁸ This period between August 1919 and the end of 1921 is the primary period of judicial action against acts committed during the brief *Tanácsköztársaság*. There is also overlap in complaints about Communist requisitioning and requisitions carried out by the National Army detachments in Budapest, although it seems that these complaints were made primarily to military authorities and for the most part were not dealt with in the civil courts.

men's experiences of Red and White Terror. But it was not something that *produced* the suspicions of employers, rather, it seems to have played a part in re-focusing suspicions away from general stereotypes of working class dishonesty and immorality to the political sphere.²⁹

An excellent example of this association between a servant and her male relations is found throughout the political "memoir" of Cécile Tormay (1876-1937). Tormay was a prominent novelist and essayist heavily involved in nationalist politics in Hungary, even co-organizing the Hungarian Women's National Association after the war. She openly despised the Social Democratic government presided over by Mihály Károlyi and was also anti-Semitic, blaming the rise of the Hungarian Soviet Republic, which was presided over by the ethnically Jewish Béla Kun, on the foreign influence of Galician Jews who she argued had inculcated the country with internationalism and communism.³⁰ Between 1920 and 1922, she published a two-volume memoir-novel, *Bujdosó könyv* ("The Condemned Book", but published in English as "An Outlaw's Diary"), about her experiences during the Hungarian Soviet Republic.³¹ As a source, it is rather difficult to classify. It is written as a diary in the first person, by a novelist with obvious political prejudices, and it was published outside Hungary early on, with the added agenda of pleading the revisionist cause abroad. Despite these problems, it is nevertheless a rich source that shows the blurring of the boundaries between the political and the private and clearly reveals the prejudices of the middle classes. In some ways, it perfectly represents the blurring of lines between fact and fiction in people's representations and interpretations of historical events.

In the book, Tormay comments on all aspects of the revolution, and she has important comments on the role of servants in the revolution. Although Tormay's anti-Semitism has been the subject of inquiry,³² the book is equally, if not more, inundated with concern and hatred for the Communist government's transformation of class relations. Tormay displays an unapologetic lack of compassion for the impoverished and she seems hostile to the recognition of social inequality. One example of this attitude is an excerpt from the

²⁹ ABLOVATSKI (as in footnote 4) also makes the important link between communism and female sexuality in her 2004 dissertation.

³⁰ Tormay is very open about her hatred for social democracy, communism and Jews. She has different strategies to attack Károlyi, Kun and Jews in general, including unfavourable physical descriptions (she says Károlyi has a hump-back), sexual deviance, as well as foreignness and lack of military service.

³¹ CÉCILE TORMAY: *An Outlaw's Diary: Revolution*, New York 1923; IDEM: *An Outlaw's Diary: The Commune*, New York 1924. While the Hungarian and English versions of the diary are very similar, they are not identical, having been edited differently, and the Hungarian language edition contains passages not present in the English-language version. While all the translated passages have been taken from the English-language version of the text, they are all present in the Hungarian and the translations were checked for accuracy: IDEM: *Bujdosó Könyv [The Condemned Book]*, Budapest 2009.

³² ABLOVATSKI (as in footnote 4).

book that describes her reaction to an old print hanging in her family's house in Buda. The painting sparks a commentary on the transformation of property rights under the Communist government. The picture shows a caretaker with a gun standing over two cowering children stealing firewood. Tormay writes:

"How this picture has gone out of date! Justice has altered. Nowadays the new law of 'mine, thine, his' is proclaimed in a new shape. Thine – is mine, his – is ours! This is the teaching of the new leaders of the people and the foundation of their power. For many thousands of years the crowd has learned nothing with such ease and nothing has ever made it the slaves of its masters with greater speed."³³

In her view, the transformation of property relations was essential to understanding "the crowd's" loyalty to and interest in the Communist government. It is pure self interest that breeds the loyalty of the working classes to Károlyi and Kun. Tormay never fails to point out the hypocrisy of the Social Democratic tenets promoted by Károlyi, whom she repeatedly describes as a noble elitist "who would not have offered a seat to his bailiff".³⁴ Tormay continues a longer tradition of the depersonalization of the working class as a mass fueled by personal gain rather than ideology.³⁵ Her portrait is that of an old world of security and *noblesse oblige* passing away, and leaving in its stead a world of danger, insecurity and a radical social reversal marked by working class "cruelty".³⁶

The first volume is mostly concerned with a sense of loss, over the country, over status, over property. These concerns reflect the challenge of politics to bourgeois domestic life, since in Tormay's eyes political danger was connected to personal property loss. Tormay vocalise these fears.

"I loved all these things so much, or rather I became conscious of my love for them because fear was now added to my affection. Shall we keep them? Will they remain our own?"³⁷

For Tormay, the radical political changes in understandings of material or social inequality translated into the domestic environment, and affected a person's control over household employees, the physical safety of family members, and the protection of basic property rights. She is right to reflect on changing conceptualizations of justice embedded in communism and social democracy. However, her ascription of cruelty and criminality to the working class shows her refusal to acknowledge the serious discrepancies in the allocation of resources and opportunities between classes that made these ideologies attractive to people in the working classes. Therefore, according to

³³ TORMAY, *An Outlaw's Diary: Revolution* (as in footnote 31), p. 28.

³⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 43, 125, 107.

³⁵ GUSTAV LE BON: *The Crowd. A Study of the Popular Mind*, London 1903.

³⁶ TORMAY, *An Outlaw's Diary: Revolution* (as in footnote 31), pp. 67, 179, 277.

³⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 80.

Tormay, greed and criminality rather than anger over social injustice are essential markers of Communist activism.³⁸

The tripartite link that Tormay made between the working class, communism, and criminality was powerful and could be exploited by individuals to conceal seemingly apolitical actions. For example, Mrs. Sándor Vad, a witness in the criminal proceedings against a member of the Communist militia known as the *Lenin Fiuk*, deployed this stereotype when attempting to cover up a theft.³⁹ She and her husband worked on an estate in Kalocsa, which had been requisitioned by Communist authorities, and several politicians had moved into the house with their wives. When Mrs. Vad was brought in to give her statement about the activities of the “terror groups” and Communists operating the area, in addition to testifying about “terrorists”, she accused the wives of the Communists of stealing jewelry and clothing. However, when asked to clarify this accusation, she eventually broke down and admitted that it was she who had stolen the items.⁴⁰ The association of the working class with criminality and communism, and the extraordinariness of the times provided Mrs. Vad not only with access to goods, but also with access to an explanation that exploited middle class stereotypes of the working class.

In Tormay’s work, concerns about the criminal dimensions of communism are coupled with the first volume’s attention to the intrusion of politics into the domestic sphere. Tormay’s quiet family villa in Buda is no longer isolated from outside political developments.⁴¹ Within the family garden, bullets whizz past her head and she fears that bands of robbers and deserters would pillage their home. Fears about theft reflect a concern about not only the loss of order and exposure to newly freed criminal elements and foreigners (she claims the communists have released many prisoners), but perhaps more importantly, illustrate the angst felt by a woman who knows that the law is no longer on her side. Indeed, when she sees a group of soldiers breaking into a villa next door, she writes that, “My first thought was ‘I must telephone to the police!’ Then I realised that even that impulse belonged to the past. What good would it be? There is nobody who can maintain order.”⁴² However, fears about bands of robbers and foreigners invading the home are less alarming than the fear that the security of one’s intimate circle – which included domestic servants – is disintegrating.

³⁸ Throughout her memoir, Tormay relies on anti-Semitic, but also criminal characterizations to denounce the leaders of the Hungarian Soviet Republic and the earlier Social Democratic government.

³⁹ Trial documents of Árpád Kohn, BFL, 1919-6691, folder 1, pp. 14-15.

⁴⁰ No charges were filed against Mrs. Vad in the Budapest criminal courts.

⁴¹ Here, “outside” may reflect the collapse of clear boundaries between battlefield and home, but also between Buda and Pest, since Tormay tends to locate political extremism in Pest rather than in Buda.

⁴² TORMAY, *An Outlaw’s Diary: The Commune* (as in footnote 31), p. 68.

That working class consciousness has reached domestic servants and other household employees is obvious to Tormay, who remarks on the contingent of “ne’er-do-fell” (*kószáló*) domestic servants at the unemployment benefits office that demand higher benefits.⁴³ By the end of the first volume, Tormay is being pursued by the authorities because of her anti-communist writings, and this investigation, coupled with earlier fears of property loss, lead her and her mother to hide their valuables at night, when the servants were asleep. They did this in order to prevent being reported to the authorities by their domestic staff.⁴⁴ In earlier times, many bourgeois families might have been afraid of the prying eyes and ears of their servants who might spread rumours about their private affairs to other domestics. But in Budapest, 1919, Tormay was concerned that the government had created a new network of spies from members of the working class that included those who had been engaged to serve the middle and upper classes, including porters, chauffeurs and perhaps, even domestic servants.

Tormay also relates her concerns about their housekeeper who she believes is connected to the Communists through her fiancée. She wrote about one particular encounter with her maid:

“In the evening I overheard from my room a curious conversation on the telephone. Our housekeeper was telephoning to her *fiancé*, who she tells me is a chauffeur. She is a good-looking woman, and in January [it is now February 1919] she left our service over a question of wages, but a short time later asked to be taken back, although we could only raise her salary slightly. At the time, I didn’t see anything very remarkable in that; but since I have heard this conversation [about overtaking a counter-revolutionary arsenal] over the telephone, I have begun to wonder what her reason for coming back could be [...] I was rather alarmed. So they [the Red Army] had captured one of the arsenals which the counter-revolution had established in the country. I feared for the safety of the others. Only later did I think of ourselves. Who was this woman’s *fiancé*? Whose chauffeur was he? My suspicions were aroused. But the time when one can dismiss a servant is past, unless it be the servant’s good pleasure to go. I remembered letters I had asked her to post, which never reached their destination. I also remembered that when I receive visitors she crosses the ante-room as if accidentally. Is it accidental? I must watch her.”⁴⁵

Later on, Tormay believes her suspicions confirmed when her housekeeper inquires about her day and tired appearance. Tormay lies to the servant and then directly asks “out of self-defence” if the housekeeper’s fiancée was the chauffeur of one of the new Cabinet ministers. When the housekeeper answers affirmatively, Tormay writes triumphantly: “That was just what I

⁴³ TORMAY, *An Outlaw’s Diary: Revolution* (as in footnote 31), p. 192. This is the term used in the English version of the book.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 220-221.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 253-254.

wanted to know.”⁴⁶ Tormay, who goes on the run after learning that there was a warrant for her arrest, leaves home in the middle of the night to prevent the housekeeper from finding out about her escape until the morning, when she would have been able to get out of the city ahead of the authorities preparing to arrest her.⁴⁷

The suspicions Tormay harbours toward her housekeeper remain just that, suspicions. In the course of the books, they are never confirmed or denied. Although in her mind they are completely reasonable given the phone conversation she overhears, Tormay’s concerns quickly shift from a counter-revolutionary arsenal (an explicitly political subject) to the behaviour of her housekeeper, which could have easily been the result of high unemployment or nosiness rather than political mischief. That political authorities would need any additional information from a housekeeper to pursue Tormay is unlikely given that her political positions were in print and there were ample opportunities to arrest her while she remained in Budapest. Although the servant’s actions and motivations are uncertain, what is clear from Tormay’s statements is that her evaluation of her servant’s actions, to which Tormay herself says she never gave another thought prior to the revolution, gained political significance during the period and led her to take certain precautions.

The transferring of ordinary actions and conflicts to the political arena exposed fissures in the understanding of class that undergirded the servant-mistress relationship. Tormay’s conclusions show that, during the Soviet Republic, at least some members of the middle class perceived themselves as being held hostage by their servants, whom they could not send away for fear of reprisals by the local Soviet. But Tormay’s comments also expose ideas about gender embedded in stereotypes of domestic servants and conceptualizations of women’s political activity. Just as in the conflict between Mrs. Csizmás and Mrs. Ernyey, the relationship between a working class woman and a politicised male is an important frame to understand or interpret the woman’s (political) activities, and is not only a way to criticise tworking class women’s morality.⁴⁸ Mrs. Csizmás is related to a former member of the Red Army, and likewise, Cécile Tormay’s housekeeper is the fiancée of a man employed by the new government. Tormay makes similar associations between the politicization of women and their male relations when she recounts a meeting with a young woman who was the daughter of a wealthy landowner-turned-communist agitator. Her political awakening to communism was (according to Tormay) the result of her coming under the influence of Jewish syndicalists.⁴⁹ Although Tormay herself helps build an organization for politi-

⁴⁶ Ibidem, pp. 279-280.

⁴⁷ TORMAY, *An Outlaw’s Diary: The Commune* (as in footnote 31), p. 7.

⁴⁸ ABLOVATSKI (as in footnote 4). Ablovatski’s scholarship contains a discussion about the link between sexual morality and communism in the aftermath of the revolutions in Munich and Budapest.

⁴⁹ TORMAY, *An Outlaw’s Diary: Revolution* (as in footnote 31), p. 236.

cally conservative, upper class wealthy and middle class women, according to her characterizations of working class women or women involved in leftist politics, their political views and actions are the result of their relations with men.

The fear and anger over the inversion of class relations, combined with ordinary fears about domestic workers, is perhaps best represented in a 1926 novel by Hungarian writer Dezső Kosztolányi entitled “Anna Édes” (*Édes Anna*).⁵⁰ Like Tormay’s *Outlaw’s Diary*, this novel provides rich insight into the complex social and political milieu of the Hungarian middle classes in the period immediately following World War I. The novel tells the story of a young woman from the countryside who enters the service of an upwardly-mobile couple (the Vizys) in Buda after being pressured to do so by her uncle, the Vizy’s porter, who was trying win back the favour of his masters after briefly working for the Communists. In the course of the novel she is seduced by the nephew of the couple, has an illegal abortion, and ultimately murders the couple while in a semi-conscious mental state. Although Kosztolányi prided himself on remaining politically non-aligned – no small feat given the dynamic political environment in which he lived – the book highlights the difficult lives of the working class. It is a rich novel that reveals the complexity of the post-war political environment and uses different characters to highlight the different socio-political perspectives of the period succeeding the revolutions and Terrors.

Kosztolányi’s portrayal of bourgeois life is highlighted through his wonderful portrait of Mrs. Vizy, who is obsessed with finding a good servant and whose social status is tightly bound to the behaviour of Anna over the course of the novel. With this portrait of the middle class in mind, the book describes something of a “worse-case scenario” for the middle class: a servant who works faithfully and gives every sign of contentment and loyalty, who inexplicably turns on her employers and killed them. The harshness of the conditions Anna endured seems to justify her extreme actions. For example, she takes up employment in the Vizy household after her uncle promised her to Mrs. Vizy, who literally stalked the girl until she left her old position. Later on, a sexual liaison with the nephew leaves her pregnant, and she nearly dies after taking medicine to induce an abortion.⁵¹ And finally, Mrs. Vizy pressures her to refuse a proposal of marriage, ironically arguing that the prospective husband only wants someone to cook and clean. To some present-day

⁵⁰ DEZSŐ KOSZTOLÁNYI: *Anna Édes*, New York 1991. All translations have been taken from the English-language edition of the book. However, they have been checked against the original Hungarian: IDEM: *Édes Anna*, Budapest 2008.

⁵¹ The consensual nature of this sexual encounter is somewhat ambiguous. Because of the unequal power relations involved in this sexual liaison, it is possible to call this rape, although Kosztolányi suggests that Anna is happy this unexpected tryst. Despite this ambiguity, Kosztolányi is clear that Anna did nothing to provoke or encourage the nephew’s advances.

readers, these conditions are unreasonable, but any sort of critique of Anna's conditions based on ideas about social justice and employee rights must be mitigated by the understanding that these conditions were not significantly worse than those of many of the approximately 58 000 domestic servants in Budapest (and hundreds of thousands more throughout Europe and the United States) during the same period.⁵²

Kosztolányi is necessarily vague about the reasons for Anna's outburst of violence against the Vizys at the end of the novel. His tendency to delve into the psychological lives of his characters suggests an unconscious motivation for Anna's mental breakdown. Nevertheless, some of his supporting characters, specifically the Vizi's neighbours and the police investigators, draw their own conclusions that demonstrate how politics and gender work hand-in-hand in people's interpretations of working class criminality and violence.⁵³ The very first line of questioning is about Anna's political connections as evidenced in the following exchange: "'What did you do during the time of the commune?' The commissioner harried her. 'Where did you work then? For who? What was their occupation? You didn't have a communist lover? Some terrorists who might have left some documents with you? Some revolutionary documents?'"⁵⁴ Although officials move away from their politicised investigation, their immediate equation of lower class violence with communism clearly indicates the pervasiveness of the idea that it was primarily politics that could inspire such an act of violence. As in the other cases, there is also the linkage of politics to criminality and a concern about Anna's (romantic/sexual) relationships with Communists and interestingly, the suggestion by one investigator that the outburst of violence was caused by menstrual hysteria.

Even after the police dismiss the idea that Anna is not some sort of Red conspirator, some of the other witnesses do not. While Kosztolányi uses the Vizi's neighbours to represent the complexity of political positions in the early post-WWI period, one of the murdered couple's neighbours, a lawyer, insists to the police and later to the courts that the murders must have been politically motivated by implicitly equating working class status with bolshevism. He declares confidently that:

"[The Bolsheviks] have poisoned the soul of the whole Hungarian nation. The swines and scoundrels. It would have been unimaginable before. Such a monstrous deed. But this is the result of all that Communist propaganda, those schools of agitation. It's the last fling of Bolshevism [...] and the war [...] We

⁵² GYÁNI, *Women as Domestic Servants* (as in footnote 12) p. 5.

⁵³ It is important to note that Kosztolányi uses the various residents of the house to represent different political perspectives circulating at the time. His portrait of the political life is highly complex. I focus on the testimony of the lawyer and the line of questioning by the police to highlight the effect of communism on the legal and judicial institutions in Hungary.

⁵⁴ KOSZTOLÁNYI (as in footnote 50), p. 188.

have to cut her out like a poisonous growth [...] I insist, we must burn out this nest of serpents, we must wipe them out, all of them. If someone disturbs the social order they must pay for it.”⁵⁵

This image of Anna as a monster motivated by communism is countered by the description of the couple’s former servant Kata, earlier characterised in the novel as a lazy, unruly, and disrespectful young woman who keeps company with Romanian soldiers. When she arrives to mourn the couple, she appears the portrait of the faithful servant. Her mourning is also interpreted by the neighbours as a sign that the slain couple must have been good people, and the mistress “a veritable angel” to inspire such loyalty from a servant.⁵⁶

When the case against Anna eventually goes to court, all the neighbours give testimony and once again the lawyer attributes the murders to politics as he speaks to the judge:

“I would like permission to throw some light on the political background of the accused, and in passing to refer [...] to the role of the caretakers [the aunt and uncle of Anna who recommend Anna to the couple]. These people, your honor, behaved in such an extreme Bolshevik manner at the time of the Commune that the whole house lived in terror of them.”⁵⁷

While the prosecution, like the police, dismissed these comments, their repetition indicates the persistent tendency of many in the middle class to interpret acts of defiance in the domestic sphere politically. In sum, the novel helps expose the links and fissures between the pre-Soviet, Soviet, and post-Soviet period conceptualizations of domestic relations, as well as exemplifying the longer term class anxieties existent within the mistress/servant relationship. It also shows how these longer-term tensions moved into the political sphere.

V Conclusion

The above is just a brief analysis of the role of revolutionary politics in the domestic sphere after World War I. It has shown that there was both continuity and change in middle class conceptualizations and interpretations of the working class and their behaviour. Suspicions of the working class and acts of rebellion and theft were no longer regarded as isolated incidents, but as signifiers of an attack on the structures undergirding bourgeois identity and power, including property, social hierarchy, and stability. It provides deeper insight into the wider clash over political legitimacy that rocked the halls of government, the battlefield, the streets, as well the home. The political struggle was not confined to traditional arenas of political struggle.

Historians of the Red and White Terrors have typically limited their analysis to the activities of the so-called Terror groups (*terror csoport*) on the ex-

⁵⁵ Ibidem, p. 191.

⁵⁶ Ibidem, p. 192.

⁵⁷ Ibidem, p. 228.

treme Right and Left. What this article attempted to do is provide a glimpse of the wider social and cultural effects of revolution and the Terrors in Budapest. For many, terror was experienced not through an actual trip to the gallows or an extended stay in prison. It was the prolonged fear that any of these things might happen and that one did not know from where danger could arise. These fears led many to the terrifying conclusion that “one really doesn’t know the people one’s living with”.⁵⁸

Zusammenfassung

Mit dem Feind Tür an Tür:

Der revolutionäre Kampf im häuslichen Umfeld in Ungarn, 1919-1926

Dieser Beitrag untersucht, wie das häusliche Umfeld zu einem wichtigen Schauplatz politischer Kämpfe wurde und so die revolutionäre Phase Ungarns nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg abbildete. Er beschreibt Erscheinungsformen der Politisierung von Konflikten zwischen Hausangestellten und deren Arbeitgeberinnen, die sich in Gerichtsprozessen, Cécile Tormays politischen Memoiren *Bujdosó könyv* und Dezső Kosztolányis klassischer Erzählung *Édes Anna* niederschlugen. Es wird gezeigt, wie die neu entstandene politische Besorgnis über die revolutionäre Arbeiterklasse und althergebrachte Stereotypen über das Benehmen und die Moral weiblicher Hausangestellter ineinander verstrickt waren. Der Artikel leistet einen Beitrag zur Erforschung dieses Zeitraums, indem er untersucht, wie einzelne Personen, insbesondere Frauen, die Revolution sowie den Roten und Weißen Terror interpretiert haben. Während sich die Forschung bisher auf Politiker und, in jüngerer Zeit, auf bewaffnete Verbände der politischen Linken und Rechten konzentriert hat, nimmt der vorliegende Beitrag das häusliche Umfeld als einen natürlichen Schauplatz politischer Aktivität, der Revolution und Terror widerspiegelt, in den Blick. Die Fokussierung auf das häusliche Umfeld gewährt Einblicke, wie sehr nach Ansicht einzelner Personen die revolutionäre Rhetorik der Sozialdemokraten und Kommunisten die ungarische Gesellschaft durchdrungen und die Klassenverhältnisse verändert hat.

⁵⁸ Ibidem, p. 190.