

Dynamization of Gender Roles in Wartime: An East European Perspective on World War II and its Aftermath

March 31 -April 2, 2011
At the German Historical Institute Warsaw

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CFP:

The East European theatre of war is known to have been, in many ways, quite distinct from the other theatres of war: Most East European countries experienced not one, but two occupying forces during the war, being either occupied by NS-Germany and Soviet Union, or being occupied by Germany and then “liberated” by the Soviet Union with the effect of becoming part of the socialist bloc in the Cold War. Furthermore, Eastern Europe was the staging ground for the mass extermination of the European Jews, and was the place where Non-Jewish civilians were exposed to mass atrocities and deportations.

While numerous studies have explored the effects of the occupying regimes on the respective societies, the impact of World War II on Gender relations has generally been treated as a rather marginal issue. In recent years, however, some important studies have been published shining light on various aspects of gender relations in times of war in Twentieth-Century Eastern Europe (Wingfield/Bucur 2003), and focusing on women as perpetrators, e.g. as “Agents of Germanization” (Harvey 2003), or as victims of sexual violence (e.g. Beck 2004, Gertjejanssen 2004).

The conference „**Dynamization of Gender Roles in Wartime: An East European Perspective on World War II and its Aftermath**“ intends not only to piece the existing puzzle together, but to explore the interplay of World War II and gender roles in East Europe in a broad context. For this purpose, our first aim is to bring scholars from the concerned countries together with scholars from Western Europe and the US. Secondly, we want to lead a discussion that does not simply follow the dichotomised categories of women as perpetrators and women as victims, though these categories will accompany most questions. Rather, we want to use the category of space in a fruitful way.

Possible contributions might focus on one of the following aspects:

- I Displacements and changes of location: Between opportunities for female empowerment and victimization abroad
*What impact do voluntary or forced displacements have on gender roles? What does it mean if women became abroad the bread-winner of the family? Does the separation of men and women in times of war, in camps and at the home front, change gender relations?
Do touristic experiences play a role for the women? And what about the possibility to choose lovers far away from the social control of the family and neighbourhood at home?*
- II War at home: Between confusions and reinforcements of traditional gender relations
What does the presence of foreign men mean for women in war? What do we know about sexual violence in the East European countries?

Can we observe cases of “amorous empowerment” through relationships with foreign soldiers? How did the reestablishment of male power in the countries function: Did honour punishments as head-shavings, etc., exist?

What impact did the intrusion of foreign soldiers have in the domestic sphere, especially with regard to work life?

III In the aftermath of War: Between restoring order and new concepts

What happened with the confused gender roles after war? How did the female work lives look - in ideology and in reality of the then-socialist countries?

To what extent have the different experience of men and women been included in post-war narratives about war? In what sense can we speak of gendered narratives of the nation in the East European countries after 1945?

The Organization Committee is particularly interested in receiving proposals from different national and academic perspectives. Further, young academics are encouraged to submit proposals. Participants will deliver papers of 20 minutes. The conference language is English.

Please submit an abstract of 250-500 words as a Microsoft Word (.doc or .docx) plus brief biographical information via email to leiserowitz@dhi.waw.pl and roeger@dhi.waw.pl by September 1st, 2010.

The organizers are able to cover your travel and accommodation expenses.