

## Men & Masculinities under Socialism: A Social and Cultural History

*International Workshop, University of Bern, Switzerland, 14–15 May 2020.*

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For several decades now, scholars have taken an interest in analyzing the socialist attempt to transform traditional gender arrangements and revolutionize the family. In contrasting the ideal of women's emancipation with everyday experience under socialism, studies have demonstrated the limits of the socialist "solution" to "the woman question." However, recent debates about the very notion, meaning, and existence of feminism(s) under socialist rule show the ongoing relevance of the topic.<sup>1</sup> Central and Eastern European gender history is a dynamic field and recent efforts include overcoming the continuing Cold War stereotypes and paradigms<sup>2</sup> and writing a nonlinear history of socialist feminism.<sup>3</sup>

Another current challenge is to consider critical men's studies and the history of masculinities, and to make these approaches fruitful for Eastern European gender studies and the gender history of socialism. The understanding of masculinities—like femininities—as a social and cultural construct that necessarily underlies historical change, and the performative and multifaceted view on male domination (over women and over other men), provide important avenues to write a truly relational, interactive, and dynamic gender history. Applying critical men's studies and the history of masculinities to the history of state-socialist Eastern Europe opens new possibilities for further research. What impact did the making of "new" women—better educated, economically independent, and enjoying more legal rights—have on the constructions of masculinity and fatherhood in state-socialist societies? How did men react to socialist gender agendas? What did socialism mean for men, and what did masculinity mean for socialists?

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<sup>1</sup> Forum "Ten Years After: Communism and Feminism Revisited," ed. Francisca de Haan, *Aspasia* 10 (2016): 102–68; Forum "Is 'Communist Feminism' a Contradictio in Terminis," *Aspasia* 1 (2007): 197–246; Nanette Funk, "A very tangled knot: Official state socialist women's organizations, women's agency and feminism in Eastern European state socialism," *European Journal of Women's Studies* 21, no. 4 (2014): 344–60; Kristen Ghodsee, "Untangling the knot: A response to Nanette Funk," *European Journal of Women's Studies* 22, no. 2 (2015): 248–52.

<sup>2</sup> Francisca de Haan, "Continuing Cold War Paradigms in the Western Historiography of Transnational Women's Organisations: The Case of the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF)," *Women's History Review* 19, no. 4 (2010): 547–73.

<sup>3</sup> Anna Krylova, "Bolshevik Feminism and Gender Agendas of Communism," in *The Cambridge History of Communism, Volume 1: World Revolution and Socialism in One Country 1917–1941*, ed. Silvio Pons and Stephen A. Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 424–48.

Currently most studies of masculinity in this region focus on artistic representations of masculinities<sup>4</sup> or post-socialist transformations,<sup>5</sup> while some scholars have analyzed socialist homosexualities.<sup>6</sup> Geographically, the majority of research is done in Soviet and Russian history.<sup>7</sup>

This workshop aims, therefore, to stimulate new paths for writing the histories of masculinities under socialism, focusing especially on examining the meanings of masculinities in everyday life.<sup>8</sup> In particular, it seeks to address work and the workplace, family and fatherhood, (domestic) violence, the army, religion, health and medicine, sport and voluntary associations, and sexualities and homosexualities. It pays particular attention to the methodological challenges of writing a history of masculinities and intends to contribute to the theoretical and methodological debates in the field by proposing original ways to explore issues of gender and masculinity in the past. Therefore, it encourages research based on unexplored or newly accessible sources, such as company, military, and church archives; court records; the archives of different associations; personal narratives; and so on. The overall objective of the workshop is to engage in the ongoing debates about the gender history of socialism, to strengthen the history of masculinities in state-socialist Central and Eastern Europe, and to thus enter into an interdisciplinary discussion with historians, sociologists, anthropologists, demographers, and scholars from neighboring fields of research.

Papers emerging from the workshop will be considered for publication in a themed issue of the journal *Aspasia: The International Yearbook of Central, Eastern, and Southeastern European Women's and Gender History*. Thus, the workshop will be organized around the discussion of pre-circulated article drafts. Scholars submitting a proposal for the workshop should commit to sending their article drafts by 15 March 2020, should their proposal be accepted. Workshop participants will be expected to read all other papers in advance. Participation in the workshop does not automatically guarantee that the articles will be published. Final versions must be approved during *Aspasia's* internal peer-review process.

We invite those interested in participating in the workshop to submit abstracts of no more than 800 words, along with a brief academic CV (no more than one page) to Peter Hallama: [peter.hallama@hist.unibe.ch](mailto:peter.hallama@hist.unibe.ch) by 30 September 2019. Abstracts must include bibliographic

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<sup>4</sup> Ewa Hanna Mazierska, *Masculinities in Polish, Czech and Slovak Cinema: Black Peters and Men of Marble* (New York/Oxford: Berghahn, 2008); Eliot Borenstein, *Men without Women: Masculinity and Revolution in Russian Fiction, 1917–1929* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001); György Kalmár, *Formations of Masculinity in Post-Communist Hungarian Cinema: Labyrinthian Men* (Cham: Springer International Publishing/Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

<sup>5</sup> Rebecca Kay, *Men in Contemporary Russia: The Fallen Heroes of Post-Soviet Change?* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006); Sylka Scholz and Willms Weertje, eds., *Postsozialistische Männlichkeiten in einer globalisierten Welt*, (Berlin: Lit, 2008).

<sup>6</sup> Dan Healey, *Homosexual Desire in Revolutionary Russia: The Regulation of Sexual and Gender Dissent* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

<sup>7</sup> Barbara Evans Clements et al., *Russian Masculinities in History and Culture*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002).

<sup>8</sup> Cf. John Tosh, "The History of Masculinity: An Outdated Concept?" in *What is Masculinity?: Historical Dynamics from Antiquity to the Contemporary World*, ed. John H. Arnold and Sean Brady (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 17–34.

information (primary sources) and the author's methodological approach. The proposals will be reviewed by an international academic committee. The workshop will be conducted in English. We especially encourage advanced doctoral students and junior scholars from a wide range of disciplines using a historical perspective to apply (history, gender studies, sociology, anthropology, demography, etc.). Conference participants will receive accommodation and a stipend to cover travel expenses.

*Confirmed Keynote Speakers:*

Jürgen Martschukat (Professor of North American History, University of Erfurt, Germany)  
Erica L. Fraser (Assistant Professor, Department of History, Carleton University, Canada)

*Academic Committee:*

Krassimira Daskalova (Aspasia / St. Kliment Ohridski University of Sofia), Erica L. Fraser (Carleton University), Fabio Giomi (CNRS, Paris), Pavel Kolář (University of Konstanz), Maike Lehmann (University of Cologne), Thomas Lindenberger (TU Dresden), Marianna Muravyeva (Aspasia / University of Helsinki), Julia Richers (University of Bern), Régis Schlagdenhauffen (EHESS, Paris), Brigitte Studer (University of Bern)

*Schedule*

30 September 2019: deadline for proposals

Late October 2019: notification of acceptance and invitation to work on the articles

15 March 2020: deadline for draft articles

14–15 May 2020: workshop at the University of Bern, Switzerland

July 2020: deadline for revised articles to be submitted to *Aspasia*

Depending on the quantity and quality of texts, they will be published as one or two themed section(s) in *Aspasia's* vol. 15 (2021) and vol. 16 (2022).