

**FORUM: THE MEMORY AND LEGACY
OF 1919 IN HUNGARY**

Introduction

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The centennial of the Hungarian Republic of Councils in March 2019 has passed without much fanfare in Hungary, its commemoration largely overshadowed by events centered on the approaching hundredth anniversary of the Trianon Treaty and highlighting the significance of the country's twentieth-century history as the main battlefield of current memory politics. In 2018, a representative volume examining the political and cultural legacy of the Hungarian Soviet Republic at its centennial was published not in Hungary but in Vienna, edited by Austrian and Swiss historians.¹ The volume contains contributions, in German, by Hungarian historians based in Hungary and abroad, as well as by many young Austrian, German, and Swiss scholars. Though until very recently this was the only substantial volume on the Hungarian Republic of Councils,² the collaborative effort offers evidence of the lively scholarly interest in the Hungarian revolutions, and demonstrates the benefits of a transnational approach to one of the most controversial but also iconic events of the postwar period.

A roundtable panel, held in Vancouver at the Hungarian Studies Association of Canada annual meeting in June 2019, considered the place and legacy of the Hungarian Republic of Councils (and the liberal-democratic revolution that preceded it) within twentieth-century Hungarian history and beyond. The editors of *Hungarian Studies Review* then extended an invitation to specialists of twentieth-century Hungarian history to address some general and specific aspects of this legacy. Participants were asked to respond to one or more of the following questions:

1. What is the political, intellectual, and cultural significance and legacy of the 1919 Republic of Councils in Hungary?
2. How can you characterize the participation of the Hungarian cultural elite in the Hungarian Soviet Republic?

3. What was the impact of the large-scale emigration of intellectuals and artists on Hungarian and European intellectual and artistic life?
4. What can you say about the role of respective political agendas of successive Hungarian regimes and governments in shaping the memory of the event?

Though arguably short-lived, the liberal-democratic Hungarian People's Republic and the 133-day Republic of Councils constitute a pivotal moment in Hungarian history. The six contributions that follow suggest possible new ways of thinking about this revolutionary moment in Hungarian history. They are presented here in the hope that they will help generate scholarly conversations on a topic whose study has continued to develop along ideological and political lines, entrenching, rather than narrowing, the divisions among the general public and historians alike.

NOTES

1. Christian Koller and Matthias Marschik, eds., *Die Ungarische Räterepublik 1919* [The Hungarian Republic of Councils 1919] (Vienna: Promedia, 2018).
2. Since the writing of these commentaries a handful of scholarly works have marked the centennial in Hungary. These include Lajos Varga, *Kényszerpályáról tévútra: Szociáldemokraták a Tanácsköztársaságban* [From forced path to lost way: Social Democrats in the Republic of Councils] (Budapest: Napvilág, 2019); Viktor Szabó, *A kommunizmus bűvöletében—A magyarországi Tanácsköztársaság propagandája* [Under the spell of communism: The propaganda of the Hungarian Soviet Republic] (Budapest: TIT Teleki László Ismeretterjesztő Egyesület, 1919); Péter Csunderlik, *A "vörös farsangtól" a "vörös tatárjárásig"—A Tanácsköztársaság a korai Horthy-korszak pamflet- és visszaemlékezés-irodalmában* [From 'Red carnival' to 'Red Tatar raid': The Republic of Councils in the pamphlet and memoir literature of the early Horthy era] (Budapest: Napvilág, 2019) and the commemorative issue of the journal *Múltunk*, 64, no. 1 (2019), <http://www.multunk.hu/2019-1-szam/>.