

Q & A with Dr. Tamás Stark



Dr. Tamás **Stark** is a Fulbright scholar and senior research fellow from Hungary. This semester, Dr. **Stark** is conducting research in conjunction with Dr. George Eisen of the Center for International Education, and is teaching an honors course on the Holocaust in East-Central Europe.

Q: Why are you here at Nazareth?

A: I'm a Fulbright scholar. I had a dream to teach in an American university and it was my honor to get acquainted with Dr. George Eisen in late 2010, when we decided to begin to work together on a practically unknown chapter of the history of the Hungarian holocaust. This is the history of the first Hungarian deportation. During that time, 20,000 Hungarian Jews were deported to Galicia and were slaughtered there, mainly by members of the police battalions. So I am here because we began to work together, George Eisen and I, and I had the opportunity to visit Rochester for the first time in November of 2011. At that time, I gave a presentation at the Shults Center on the current debate in Hungary on the legacy of the holocaust. I was honored and proud to get an opportunity to return here last Spring. At that time I gave another presentation on the history of Hungarian forced labor in the Soviet Union after the Second World War.

Q: Please describe your area of research and the course you are teaching at Nazareth.

A: This course deals with the history of the holocaust in East-Central Europe with special regard to the fate of the Jewish communities in Slovakia, Hungary, and Romania. I think the course is important because of its framework. I would like to tell a relatively lesser known part of the history of the holocaust because these countries were formerly independent and the fate of the Jewish communities depended mainly on the governments of these countries. These governments actively deported Jews (or parts of the Jewish community, because not all were deported from Romania) independent of direct German demand.

Q: How did you first become interested in Holocaust Studies? What was the main impetus?

A: I wrote my PhD thesis on the human losses of Hungary during World War II, and the conclusion was that the largest source of human loss in Hungary was the holocaust. The second largest was Soviet forced labor camps. This was a striking discovery for me that many more Hungarian citizens died in the German extermination camps and in the Soviet Union than in the various theaters of the war. Many more Hungarians died in these camps than in combat. For this reason, when I completed my PhD thesis I began to concentrate on the history of the holocaust because I wanted to get a clear picture of what happened to the various Jewish communities in Hungary, with special regard to the fate of the remnant of the Hungarian Jewish community, meaning the survivors of the holocaust. I summarized my research in a book titled *Hungarian Jews During the Holocaust and After the Second World War, 1939-1949; A Statistical Review*. It was published in 2000 here in the United States in the framework of Eastern European monographs, published by Boulder and distributed by Columbia University Press.

Q: You've mentioned that you have travelled to India to present lectures in New Delhi. What other countries or cities have you travelled to for research?

A: I like to travel and meet colleagues from various countries. I am interested in the scholarly life of Western European but also Asian research centers and universities, and since I am a scholar at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in the Research Center for the Humanities Institute of History, I have plenty of opportunities to visit various countries and to attend international conferences. What was my main important experience? Between 2000 and 2007, I was a co-team leader with Professor Gustavo Corni of Trento University and a team of scholars from Poland, Italy, Finland, Austria, and Germany. We met a few times a year in Trento and Amsterdam to conduct intensive research work on WWII-related migrations. That work was financed by the European Science Foundation. So that was my major participation in the international scholarly world. The whole of our research was published in a book titled *People on the*

Move: Forced Population Movements in Europe in the Second World War and its Aftermath. As to the most important scholarships, I had the opportunity to stay ten months at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC from [1995-1996](#). I was also in Israel and did research in Yad Vashem and in other Israeli research centers many times. I was in Israel probably six or seven times. In 2002 I had the opportunity to spend one month in China as a guest of the Chinese Academy of Sciences where I studied the genocide which was committed by Japanese occupational forces in Nanjing. The Japanese conducted medical experiments on civilians and prisoners. They were so called medical experiments, guinea pig experiments. I also visited India, it was a tourist trip, but since I really like to get in touch with scholars, I visited a university in Delhi and gave two presentations. In my presentations I tried to draw a parallel between the forced migrations which happened in Eastern Europe after WWII and the migrations which happened in India after the partition. That was my major issue in India. I was also in Russia as an exchange student for a month in Krasnodar-Krai. In 2011, I was the guest of the Russian Academy of Science for two weeks to do research on Hungarian forced labor in the Soviet Union.