

Call for Papers

Conference “Central and Eastern Europe after the First World War”

In the early years following the First World War (1918–1923), political, military, cultural, social and economic developments consolidated to a high degree in Central and Eastern Europe. This period was shaped, on the one hand, by the efforts to establish an international structure for peace and to set previously oppressed nations on the road to emancipation. On the other hand, this time was also defined by political revisionism and territorial claims, as well as a level of political violence that was effectively a continuation of the war in many places, albeit under modified conditions. Political decision makers sought to protect the emerging nation states from radical political utopias but, at the same time, also had to rise to the challenges of a social and economic crisis, manage the reconstruction of the many extensively devastated landscapes and provide for the social care and support of victims of war. When faced with these conflicting trends, differing memories developed regarding this period of just five years, making the concept of any transnational memorial culture appear barely possible even to the present day.

The conference will consider the period of five years starting with the Russian revolution, through the final stages of the First World War, to the year 1923. This short but critical period saw the overcoming of hyper-inflation and creation of the “New Europe”, i.e. the new political order in Central and Eastern Europe, ensuring a degree of consolidation. More significantly, however, attention was drawn sharply to the ongoing threat to the democratic order, marked by Adolf Hitler’s failed putsch attempt in Germany and the preceding rise to power of the fascist regime in Italy.

The aim is to achieve a balance of sub-studies and transnational investigations, in order primarily to promote mutual understanding for particular developments in individual European states, and also to do justice to overarching phenomena in the process.

Presentations are sought on the following core subject areas:

The End of Empires and the Emergence of a New State Order

To what extent did the First World War and the Paris Peace Conferences change the political landscape in Central Europe? What opportunities and room for manoeuvre were opened up, for example, through the implementation of international bodies such as the inter-allied commissions, the League of Nations, and the International Court of Justice in The Hague?

New Beginnings and Political Emancipation

On what kind of ideas were the new states, or those states that had once again come into existence, founded within Central Europe? What role was played by ideas such as Socialism on the one hand and Fascism on the other? What impacts emerged from the implementation of women’s right to vote in many states and the creation of the International Labour Organization (ILO)? What were the values and convictions that underpinned the international reputation of officials from states that had previously been considered “Underdogs”, including such individuals as Tomáš G. Masaryk, Edvard Beneš, Józef Piłsudski, Eleftherios Venizelos, Nicolae Titulescu and Mustafa Kemal Atatürk?

Social and Economic Crisis

How did the traditional (pre-war) elite within the realms of politics and the economy respond to the newly created social democracies? What were the social and mental consequences of experiences of violence, the economy of scarcity and the protracted instability? What social and political significance did the perceived and actual burden of the reparations imposed by the victorious powers have on the German Empire, Austria, Hungary and Bulgaria?

Revolutions, Counter-revolutions, Revisionism and Territorial Claims

What expectations and fears were nurtured by the October Revolution in Russia? What types of political, military and academic arguments were used by various states to legitimise their territorial claims against other states' lands?

Memories of the "Great War"

What forms of memories of the World War emerged and evolved in the years 1918-1923 in the individual national societies? What role was played by war graves, monuments and specific interest groups (soldiers associations, veterans and invalids groups), as well as the artistic and intellectual treatment of the war in the visual arts, literature and in historical scholarship? What was the significance of the consideration of minority rights and the "ethnic issue" of the new order for the memorial culture of individual states?

The conference will take place from January 31 to February 2, 2018. Conference papers (in German or in English) should be a maximum length of 20,000 characters, and must be submitted prior to the conference. A publication of articles is planned to accompany a thematical open-air exhibition. This exhibition is being organized by the European Network Remembrance and Solidarity.

Persons wishing to participate in the conference should submit a paper of 400 words and a short CV in German or English before July 22, 2017.

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Date: January 31 – February 2, 2018

Venue: Embassy of the Slovak Republic in Berlin

Conference languages: German and English

Conference Organizers:

European Network Remembrance and Solidarity, Warsaw; Federal Institute for Culture and History of the Germans in Eastern Europe, Oldenburg; in cooperation with: Leibniz Institute for the History and Culture of Eastern Europe (GWZO) (Germany), Leipzig; Jagiellonian University of Cracow, Department of Historical Anthropology; Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice, Department of History; Hungarian Academy of Science, Institute for Humanities, Research Center of History; University of Cluj-Napoca.