

Reform and Revolution in Europe, 1917-19: Entangled and Transnational Histories

University of Tampere, Finland, 16–18 March 2017

This international conference in historical sciences analyses the political, cultural, intellectual and societal influences of the First World War in Europe, focusing especially on the emergence of new nation states. The Finnish process of declaring independence in 1917 is related to the international developments of the time, paying particular attention to transnational interaction. In Finland, the Russian Revolution of February/March 1917 started a period of constitutional ferment which led to widespread political mobilisation, constitutional controversies, a declaration of independence in the aftermath of the October/November Revolution in December 1917, a civil war in spring 1918, and finally to adoption of a republican constitution as a compromise in July 1919. In all of these phases the Finnish process of becoming an independent state was linked to and dependent on inter- and transnational developments.

We invite proposals by **15 April 2016** for papers and sessions focusing on this general theme.

International, comparative and transnational approaches

Instead of a mere review of national historiographies, this conference aims at international, comparative and transnational approaches that consider the interconnectedness of processes, events and discourses of reform and revolution in different countries, particularly in Northern Europe. The First World War and the Russian February/March Revolution accelerated already existing national calls for reform of political life. Debates were accelerated as a consequence of the unprecedented challenges that the war caused to all involved societies, leading to questions about the legitimacy of the established political order and the limited possibilities of the people at large to participate in politics. The processes of reform and revolution received different forms in different national contexts but were often more dependent on international relations, transnationally interconnected and entangled than has traditionally been recognized in nation-state-centred historiographies. We are also interested in approaches considering the impact of the First World War and revolutionary ferment in various areas of cultural and societal life at individual, local, national and international levels. Related questions are being currently studied in the Academy of Finland Centre of Excellence in the History of Society, which takes care of the practical organisation of the conference.

The timing of the conference marks the centenary of the fall of the Romanov dynasty but the conference extends the discussion to concern a longer period of inter- and transnational reform and revolution in Europe during the second half and immediate aftermath of the First World War. In Finland, this revolution opened a lengthy period of constitutional struggle and confusion which gradually ceased after a republican compromise in summer 1919. These struggles and the formation of the new constitution were, to a great extent, a result of inter- and transnational interaction. The same is true of many other European countries: in Russia, the Revolution was related to international political debates that became nationalised and radicalised in specific ways in the national context. In Britain, plans for a suffrage reform had been launched as a consequence of collective war experiences before the start of the Revolution in allied Russia, but this impulse, together with the involvement of the United States in the war, also influenced the course of related debates there. Germany was forced to defend and reconsider its political system when the fall of Prussianism increasingly became the goal

of the war for the Allied powers and the German order was challenged by the fall of the Romanov dynasty. From autumn 1918 onwards, Germany experienced a revolution and democratisation that, from the point of view of the opponents, had been imported by domestic traitors. Neutral countries such as the Netherlands and Sweden reformed suffrage during the war or soon after it, reconsidering their relationship to alternative political models provided by the Great Powers. Not only the Russian but also the Habsburg Empire was dissolved as a consequence of the First World War, and the international system experienced a major transformation as a result of the rise of new actors, the principle of national self-determination, the formation of the League of Nations, etc.

The goal of the conference

The purpose of this conference is to better understand the formation of new independent states and the reforms and revolutions of established polities in international, comparative and transnational contexts. Comparative and transnational perspectives help us to rethink and relativize national histories, reinforcing some national exceptional features and demonstrating the entangled nature of many national experiences.

Conference subthemes

The themes to be discussed in the conference can include:

- the methodologies of comparative, international, transnational, related, transfer, connected and entangled history
- the impact of the First World War on the international system; developments in international law; humanitarianism during and after the war
- the dissolution of empires and the formation of new states; the increased emphasis on the principle of national self-determination; the growing number of international actors; debates on the nature of international politics
- the impact of the First World War on the processes of democratization and parliamentarization at local and national levels; changing concepts and practices of citizenship
- experiences of war and revolutions in everyday lives
- gender histories of war and revolutions
- the short and long-term impact of the Russian February/March and October/November Revolutions on geopolitics, political events and discourses in other European countries and globally; obstacles to transfers between Russian and Western European political cultures
- history politics and propaganda of the last phase and immediate aftermath of the First World War; the Wilsonian turn in war propaganda and domestic political debates in Europe
- entangled histories of war and revolutions in media debates
- the role of transnationally linked politicians and commoners in the transfer of reform and revolution between political cultures
- visions of the future of Europe and the world in 1917-19
- the new constitutions formed by the war, revolution and national and transnational debates
- post-war and post-revolutionary situations in various societies; the economic consequences of war and revolution

Keynote speakers

The invited keynote speakers and their preliminary titles include:

Prof. Richard Bessel (York), 'A transnational revolution: The challenges of the First World War and the crises of the legitimacy of the established political order'

Prof. Krassimira Daskalova (Sofia), ‘Reform, revolution and transformations of gender orders: A European comparison’

Dr. Bill Kissane (LSE), ‘Civil wars in a comparative perspective’

Prof. Jörn Leonhard (Freiburg), ‘Comparative studies of polities and societies transformed by war’

Prof. Henrik Meinander (Helsinki), ‘Forces of democracy in Scandinavian societies’

Paper and session proposals

Researchers interested in contributing to the conference are invited to submit **an English-language abstract of no more than 250 words to 1917conference@uta.fi no later than 15 April 2016**. You can propose either a full panel of three papers (90 minutes) or an individual paper. Kindly include full contact details of the proposer and all the speakers. The organisers will inform you about the inclusion of your paper in the programme during June 2016.

The Finnish Historical Society will award a limited number of travel grants covering part of the participation costs for non-Finnish scholars who do not have a permanent academic position or other kinds of travel funding. If you would like to apply for a travel grant, kindly send your application of no more than 250 words to the above-mentioned address.

Organisers

The conference is organised by the Finnish Historical Society, University of Tampere and the Finnish Centre of Excellence in the History of Society. The conference is part of the Centennial Anniversary of the Republic of Finland. The organising committee:

- Dr Juhana Aunesluoma (Helsinki)
- Prof. Pertti Haapala (Tampere)
- Prof. Pasi Ihalainen (Jyväskylä)
- Prof. Petri Karonen (Jyväskylä)
- Prof. Tiina Kinnunen (Oulu), chair
- Prof. Taina Syrjämaa (Turku)
- Prof. Kari Teräs (Tampere)

For further information on the conference programme, visit the conference website at www.uta.fi/conference/1917 or contact 1917conference-organisers@uta.fi

