

Call for Papers

International Conference

Ideas and their Consequences: Mass Violence and International Justice after 1919

Venue: European Academy Berlin, April 17-19, 2020

The Treaty of Versailles was signed on June 28, 1919. That summer marked the beginning of two contrasting historical developments. One movement that gathered momentum advocated for international justice and for the rescue of the victims, especially those of the Armenian Genocide, as the allies established tribunals to try the perpetrators of atrocities and created the first High Commission for Refugees. On the other hand, a contrasting moment set the ideological foundations of the worst atrocities the century was yet to experience.

Recent years have seen an outpouring of innovative research on the ‘humanitarian moment’ (Bruno Cabanes) of the interwar period, focussing on individuals and organizations and fields of action. Recent research has also focussed on the history of the protection of refugees, minority rights and crimes against humanity that eventually led to the institutionalisation of protective policies. This movement also led to the codification of ‘genocide’, to its criminalization through the Genocide Convention and, eventually, to the creation of the International Criminal Court. At the same time, a rapidly growing number of scholars, have also highlighted how mass violence in the ‘European rimlands’ (Mark Levene) during and after WWI and those geographies of violence played a central role in fostering new forms of ‘population politics’. In the aftermath of WWI policies seemed to be more disposed to violent solutions regarding ‘minority’ and ‘ethnic’ issues.

In this regard, the conference sits at the intersection of two burgeoning fields of historical inquiry: the history of humanitarianism and international justice, on the one hand, and the history of political violence and radical political ideology in the interwar period, on the other. It aims to explore how these contrasting movements were affected by the atrocities of World War I and by the Treaties that ended the war (Versailles, Trianon and Sèvres), and what part they eventually played in political thinking in Europe.

The conference aims to bring together scholars working on a wide variety of topics and employing different methodological approaches to showcase and debate current research trends. It will discuss absences and contradictions in existing scholarship and identify areas of interest for future research. Finally, the conference seeks to encourage a dialogue between the all too often isolated historiographies on humanitarianism, international justice and the history of political violence in the interwar period.

Topics for presentations might include but are not limited to:

- the role of individuals (e.g. René Cassin, Herbert Hoover, Eglantyne Jebb, Raphael Lemkin, Johannes Lepsius, André Mandelstam, Fridtjof Nansen, Albert Thomas) and organizations in humanitarian work in the era of the interwar period
- case studies of war crime tribunals in the interwar period and discourses on refugees and minority rights, including the Istanbul Trials 1919/20 and the cases of Soghomon Tehlirjan and Salomon Schwarzbart
- the emergence of humanitarian norms, organizational forms, and practices at the time, and (where applicable) their long-term impact
- the actions and agency of relief beneficiaries
- the relationship between this history of humanitarianism, remembrance and transnational justice on the 20th & 21th century
- the relationship between the history of humanitarianism and international justice, on the one hand, and the interwar European movement, on the other
- the impact and rise of 'population politics' due to war atrocities and genocide against the Armenians and other Christians in the declining Ottoman Empire
- the origins/ideas and political realities of minority rule in the post-war order in the Middle and Near East and Middle/Eastern Europe including Jews as well as Sinti and Roma
- the history of violence in the Baltic states, especially the course of the action of German paramilitary groups in the East after November 1918

Scholars interested in presenting a paper at the conference are invited to send a brief abstract of 300 words and a one-page CV by 01 December 2019 to Mr Roy Knocke: knocke@lepsiushaus-potsdam.de

The organisers will be able to offer hotel accommodation and travel costs to presenters.

Organisers: Lepsiushaus Potsdam, Armenian General Benevolent Union Europe, European Union of Jewish Students, Phiren Amenca.

This conference is part of a European project. It will be followed by a number of events in several countries aimed at disseminating its findings and will include the production of video interviews and of a travelling exhibition. The project is funded by the European Union's Europe for Citizens Programme.

For information on the project, please go to:

<http://agbueurope.org/programs/european-remembrance-2> or contact Maria Simonyan, project manager: maria.simonyan@agbueurope.eu



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