



## Call for papers

Dipartimento di Filosofia, Storia e Beni culturali - Università di Trento  
Centre for War Studies - University College Dublin

### **International Graduate Conference "Veterans or Socialists? Socialism and Militarism in the Nationalist and Protofascist Movements and Regimes (1918 – 1945)"**

**Conveners:** Gustavo Corni & Sara Lorenzini (Trento), Robert Gerwarth (Dublin)

#### **Trento, 25-26 May 2012**

The First World War significantly changed the European social framework and contributed to the development of modern mass society. In some countries the experience on the front had far-reaching results. In Italy, for example, conscription brought together young soldiers from every part of the country, and their experience at war strengthened the process of national unification. Furthermore, life in the trenches had a socially leveling value, as the soldiers experienced themselves to be equal, sharing the same destiny and facing the same dangers.

Political mass movements grasped the importance of this new sense of belonging. In some countries the idea emerged that the reminiscence of the war could be used to mobilize mass support for a socialist revolution. The dream of many socialists was a Bolshevik-like revolution which could spread throughout Europe aided by the new sense of brotherhood developed during the war.

However, in the post-war years the spirit of the trenches was mainly clad in a nationalist mantle. The people in arms fighting for the "Fatherland" was an image often used by nationalist movements. Many veterans' associations were established in the former belligerent countries with the aim of preserving what they considered the good heritage of war: comradeship, honor, bravery, equality, self-help.

In some countries the spirit of the trenches survived in paramilitary organizations. For some of these groups, war carried on after 1918. The Irish Republican Army, for instance, was still fighting for national independence.



In Germany and Italy paramilitary organizations contributed to a broad scene of radical nationalist organizations and they also played a part in the development of fascist or fascist-like movements. Similar movements were also established in other European countries such as France, Spain, Hungary, Romania and Austria. The transnational aspects of European interwar paramilitarism have recently captured the attention of many scholars. Despite the different national contexts, all these movements shared several similarities and they were shaped by and rooted in the experience of war.

Gaining the support of the workers was a vital necessity for paramilitary movements, as well as for radical nationalist movements. By providing aid for the workers and their families they planned to beat the influence of socialist movements and trade unions. In the immediate post-war period, then, paramilitary and veterans' organizations organized welfare nets and coordinated relief activities for their members. They established employment services and offered legal assistance, acting as trade union-like organizations. This often proved very effective as a cover. Fascist movements developed political programmes with a strong emphasis on social issues. In their view, labour issues could be solved through the creation of an "organic state", i.e. an ordered, harmonious and hierarchical society that was able to overcome class differences through the concept of a national or racial community.

The goal of the conference is to study the transnational dimension of labour, welfare and social policies encouraged by paramilitary movements, right-wing organizations and parties, and by extreme right regimes in the interwar years, with the aim of mobilising and controlling the political potential of the veterans and of its organizations. We therefore invite applications for papers dealing with the following topics:

- the social activities of paramilitary and veterans' organizations;
- the social programme and activities of radical nationalist political organizations or parties;
- the role of workers in the success of radical nationalist organizations;
- nationalist ideas on how to solve the "worker's question";
- the social policies of nationalist, fascist and fascist-like regimes.



Proposals concerning the political and social impact of demobilization and veteranism, especially in a comparative or transnational perspective are warmly encouraged. We invite contributions focusing on European countries (including Turkey) in the timeframe 1918 to 1945. Longer-range perspectives are also welcome.

Young scholars (doctoral students and recent PhDs) interested in presenting a paper should **send a short abstract** (500 words) **by 25<sup>th</sup> December 2011**. Participants will receive full boarding and accomodation in Trento. The organisation will be able to offer only a very limited amount of travel allowances for overseas participants.

**Papers proposal must be sent to:**  
[conference.contemporaryhistory@lett.unitn.it](mailto:conference.contemporaryhistory@lett.unitn.it)