



UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI
DI PADOVA



PREWARAS

• THE DARK SIDE OF THE BELLE ÉPOQUE •

PRE-WWI ARMED ASSOCIATIONS



Industrial vigilantism, strikebreaking and patterns of anti-labour violence, 1890s-1930s. A comparative and transnational perspective.

23-24 October 2018, Oxford, United Kingdom

Deadline for submissions: 30 June 2018

Organizers: the ERC- StG project, “The Dark Side of Belle Époque. Political violence and Armed Associations in Europe before the First World War,” in association with the Department of Historical and Geographic Sciences and the Ancient World of the University of Padua, the University of Oxford Faculty of History and the Oxford Centre for European History (OCEH).

Conference Rationale

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Europe, North America and large areas of the globe experienced labour unrest and multiple strike waves, some of which developed a quasi-revolutionary momentum. Although considerable research has been done on the formation of labour movements and on the social, economic and institutional realities of labour conflicts, rather less attention has been paid to the repressive policies and practices of employers, and of local and national state authorities. In response to the steady growth of socialism and a renewed burst of revolutionary fears, exacerbated by the long drawn-out effects of economic competition, industrial firms and corporations increasingly resorted to the employment of paramilitary units, special police, vigilantes, professional strikebreakers and private detective agencies against organized labour and in the protection of their assets and investments. These groups typically operated on the frontiers between the legal and the extra-legal, drawing their strength from the language of the law, but often stepping outside it to carry out acts of violence, intimidation, and subversion.

The ERC-funded research project PREWarAs hosted by the University of Padua, the University of Oxford Faculty of History and the Oxford Centre for European History (OCEH) invite scholars, at any stage of their academic career, to submit their abstract for a conference devoted to a comparative and transnational examination of industrial vigilantism, strikebreaking and labour violence in the



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period from the 1890s to the 1930s to be held in Oxford, United Kingdom, on the 23rd and 24th of October, 2018. By putting scholars working on Europe and other world regions in conversation, the conference will provide a unique opportunity to gain knowledge on the rise of a market for anti-labour violence across regional, national and international boundaries and within the fluctuations of an expanding, integrated world-economy. It will also make a significant contribution to understandings of the violent transitions to mass politics in Europe in the early decades of the twentieth century. In this view, the conference organizers are keen on inviting proposals that discuss the formation and structuration of private or semi-private security services (e.g. N.F.L.A, Fédération nationale des Jaunes de France, Zechenwehren, Pinkerton, etc.) and their recognition within national and imperial legal systems and the relationship between private security bodies and law-enforcement agencies.

The conference is open to multi-disciplinary approaches and to both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. In particular, it will explore the complex relationships between private agencies, semi-public groups, and local and national police authorities. One particular focus will be the development of organizational forms of strike-breaking, notably through the emergence of self-defence groups and community police patrols during or in anticipation of strikes. The conference will also explore the role of ideologies and emotions in the generation of violence, whereby groups felt legitimized in their decisions to defend social order, state authority and economic freedom. Such actions were often simultaneously local as well as national, and national as well as international. Particular consideration will therefore be given to papers addressing transnational networks, information sharing, communication and solidarity actions among employer associations, yellow unionism and commercialized strikebreaking.

Regional and Global areas of investigation:

While the conference will primarily focus on Europe and North America, we will also welcome contributions from scholars investigating other regions of the world, including Africa, Asia, the Middle East, Oceania and South America.

Potential themes include, but are not limited, to the following:

- The rise of paramilitaries, vigilantes, private police and detective agencies, in the field of labour relations
- Revolutionary fears and civilian schemes of anti-labour mobilization
- The development and consolidation of company (or yellow) unions
- The relationship between State authorities and non-State actors in the repression of labour



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- The formulation of anti-labour and anti-socialist legislations.
- Transnational circulation of anti-labour ideologies, discourses and practices
- Anti-labour international cooperation and exchange between employer associations
- Cases of anti-labour violence

How to apply:

Please send a 500-word abstract (single spaced) and a short academic CV, to alessandro.saluppo@unipd.it. The subject of the email needs to be: Industrial vigilantism, strikebreaking and patterns of anti-labour violence, 1890s-1930s. A comparative and transnational perspective. The deadline is June 30th, 2018. Early submissions are welcomed.

Funds are available for presenters to support travel and accommodation expenses. For more information, please contact: alessandro.saluppo@unipd.it



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Dipartimento di Scienze
Storiche, Geografiche e
dell'Antichità - DiSSGeA

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