

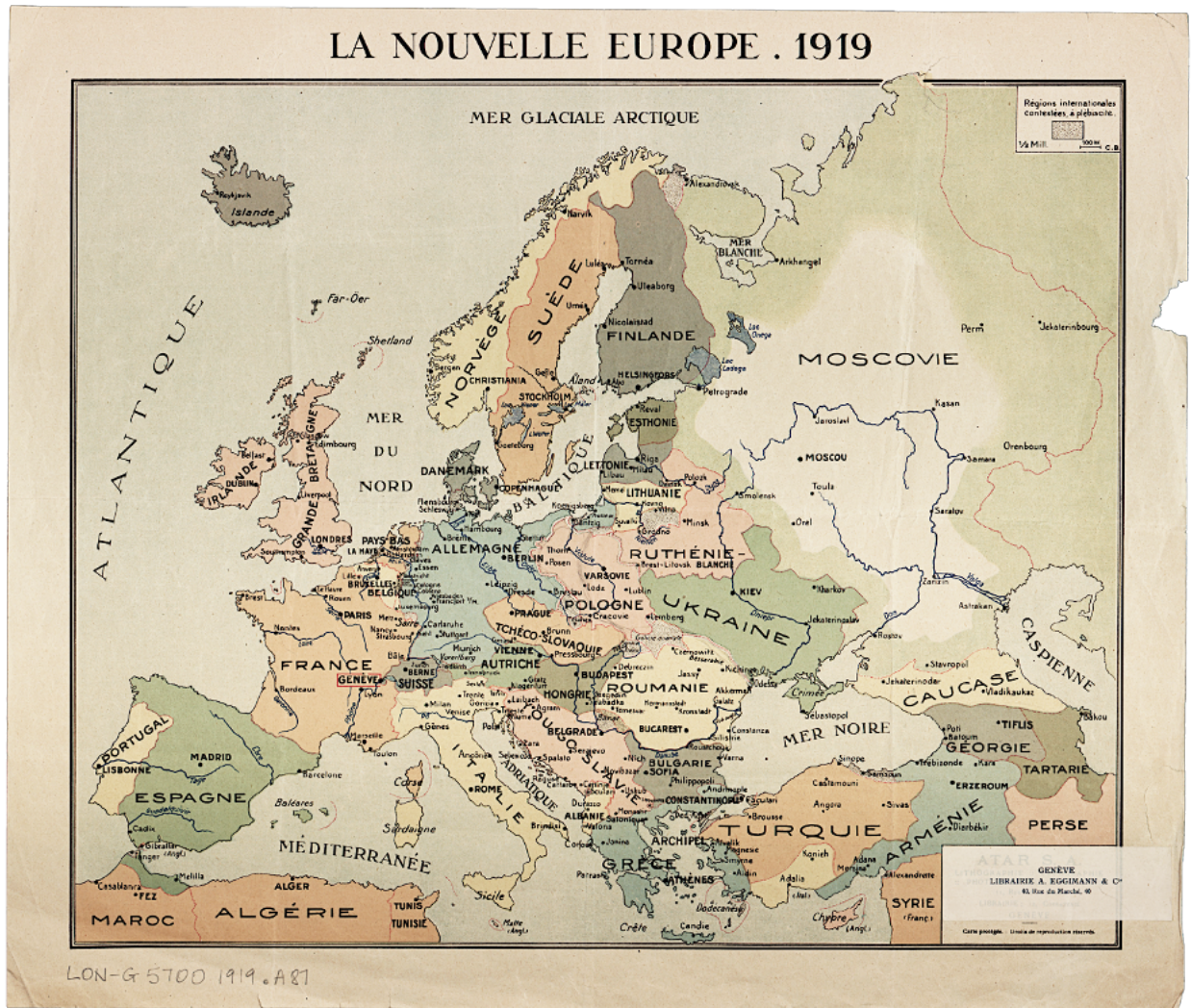
Universität
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UNIVERSITÉ
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CALL FOR PAPERS

SWITZERLAND AS AN INCUBATOR OF POLITICAL IDEAS FOR THE FUTURE OF CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE BETWEEN 1848 AND 1918



La Nouvelle Europe, United Nations Archive Geneva, LON-G5700 1919.A87

CONFERENCE

Organised by

Prof. Dr. F. Benjamin Schenk (University of Basel), Prof. Dr. Korine Amacher (University of Geneva), Sarah Evison (University of Basel)

Place

Basel

Dates

8-10 September 2027

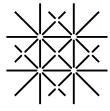
Deadline

30 June 2026

Over the course of the 19th century, Switzerland became one of the most important destinations for political exiles in Europe, including those from Central and Eastern Europe. Its central geographical location, its democratic constitution and extensive freedoms of the press and assembly made Switzerland an important place of refuge. Cities such as Zurich, Geneva, Lausanne and Bern became hubs for political activity in exile.

Previous research on political exiles from Eastern Europe in Switzerland has long focused on exiles from the Russian Empire – or ‘Russian emigration’ – as well as on anarchist and socialist movements. This narrow focus meant that the ethnic diversity of exile communities from Central and Eastern Europe and the variety of political movements often remained overlooked. However, for many scholars and political activists from the multi-ethnic empires of Eastern Europe, it was precisely life in exile that contributed to the formation of national identities and the establishment of national associations. Armenian, Lithuanian, Jewish, Hungarian, Croatian, Bulgarian, Polish, Ukrainian and Georgian (among many others) exiles founded national associations and publications in Switzerland and, under the protection of exile, developed political visions for a future political transformation of the imperial order in Central and Eastern Europe. These activities intensified particularly during the First World War. In those years, Switzerland developed not only into a laboratory for socialist and anarchist ideas, but also into an incubator for concepts of federal restructuring as well as national emancipation, autonomy and independence. Many individuals who had studied in Switzerland or found refuge there as exiles before the First World War went on to hold key political positions in the restored or newly established nation-states of Central and Eastern Europe after 1918 and had a lasting influence on their development.

What role did Switzerland play during the long 19th century as an incubator of political ideas aimed at reshaping the imperial order in Central and Eastern Europe? In which places and under what conditions did political groups that developed federalist concepts or visions of national emancipation, autonomy or independence form in Switzerland? What role did Switzerland’s political system play as a model for similar systems? How might one describe the relationships between the various political groups of emigrants from Central and Eastern Europe in Switzerland and with other centres of political exile in Europe? What role did Swiss universities play in the education of new elites? What opportunities did exile and study in Switzerland open up for women, and to what extent did these experiences contribute to challenging existing gender orders? Which individuals played a role in the reorganisation of the political landscape in Central and Eastern Europe after the First World War? – These questions form the focus of the planned conference.



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The conference is organised jointly by the Chair of Central and Eastern European History at the University of Basel and the Department of Mediterranean, Slavic and Oriental Studies at the University of Geneva. The conference will take place in Basel with English as a working language. The organisers will cover the participants' travel, accommodation and meal expenses. A publication of selected papers is planned following the conference.

This call for papers is aimed at PhD students, postdoctoral researchers and senior scholars in the field of history and related disciplines. We particularly welcome submissions based on new research or the exploration of new source materials that address one or more of the questions outlined above. We welcome papers on the transnational biographies of individual actors, as well as contributions on political groups, national movements and geographical centres of political exile in Switzerland. Researchers from Central and Eastern Europe are explicitly encouraged to apply.

Application documents: We welcome proposals for conference papers in the form of an abstract in English, not exceeding two pages (max. 5'000 characters). We also ask you to provide a brief CV (including a list of publications) of no more than two pages.

Please send your application as a single PDF file by **30 June 2026** to:

Sarah Evison: sarah.evison@unibas.ch