



EuParl.net Newsletter

**EU
PARL
NET**

European Information and
Research Network on
Parliamentary History

Spring/Summer 2018

NEWS

EuParl.net Board of Directors Meeting in Nijmegen

The Radboud University in Nijmegen and its Centre for Parliamentary History hosted the annual EuParl.net board meeting on 19 April 2018. The Board discussed the network's current projects as well as planned activities. It also held a feedback session on the new coordination scheme, including its activity on social networks. To expand the cooperation, all member organizations will convene at a plenary session in Berlin in March 2019.

Back in Their Benches



Right to left: Zdeněk Jičínský, author of the Czechoslovak Federation Act of 1968, Václav Žák, Vice-President of Czech National Council 1990-1992, and Milan Uhde, the Council's last President in 1992. Czech Chamber of Deputies, May 2018 (see page 2, Neglected 1968 Anniversary)

Dear readers,

Tony Judt in his final book expressed regrets over how much was lost of the original post-war consensus on the importance of public sector as a source of social cohesion. Parliamentary historians have yet to gain similarly clear view on what democratic parliaments are losing in Europe today. What is certain is that they no longer seem to be the stable institutions enduring and balancing political representations.

Substantial parliamentary reforms are being prepared in France and Italy. Parliaments in two EU member states, Poland and Hungary, keep on adopting legislation that is incompatible with EU law. The Czech government led by the mogul Andrej Babiš has been in office for a year now without asking the parliament for vote of confidence. At the same time it keeps tabling an idea of abolishing its upper of chamber. Parliaments seem to be open for change, and we, the EuParl.net community, want to understand what is in store. I hope you find our projects and suggestions for further reading an inspiring touch for a splendid summer.

Adéla Gjuričová





PROJECTS

A Too Uncritical Parliament?

The committee of inquiry which investigated the supposed secret deal between the Dutch government and the House of Orange permitting the royal family to avoid paying full property taxes have finished their job. The team led by Carla van Baalen from the Dutch Centre for Parliamentary History/Montesquieu Institute concluded that the Parliament had been informed about the scheme, but it showed too little criticism. [Download full report here.](#)



Carla van Baalen hands the final report to Prime Minister Mark Rutte

Neglected 1968 Anniversary

The Czech Chamber of Deputies hosted a conference organized by the Institute of Contemporary History. It marked the 40th anniversary of the Czech National Council, the first Czech legislature in Czechoslovakia, that was founded in 1968. Although the event is rarely commemorated, the federalization turned out to be the only reform that survived



the Soviet-led invasion. The conference explored the different faces of the Council: two decades of socialist parliamentarianism (or was it not?) in the 1970s and 1980s, as well as its democratic transformations after 1989, before it was transformed, in 1993, into the parliament of independent Czech Republic.

A Constitution sur mesure

Jean Guarrigue from University of Orléans / SciencesPo Paris co-authored TV documentary *La Ve*, une constitution sur mesure. The film reconstructs the French constitutional reform adopted in 1958 that established the French Fifth Republic. Subsequent events led to the referendum introducing popular presidential vote in 1962. “This is a perfect moment for telling the story, because in 2017 we experienced an upheaval comparable to 1958, an earthquake that broke the political landscape into pieces,” director Bénédicte Loubère noted. [Watch the film here.](#)



Entangled Parliamentarisms

The ERC project led by Ivan Sablin from the University of Heidelberg explores the histories of deliberative decision making, political representation and constitutionalism on the territories of the former Russian and Qing Empires and compares cases of Russia, Ukraine, China and Mongolia between 1905 and 2005. The methodology overcomes narrow state-centred approaches, using the methods of transcultural history and new imperial history. EuParl.net is keen to hear how it goes, Ivan!

Women Entering the Stage

The period of 1918–1919 saw women across a number of countries to enter parliamentary scene. The EuParl.net conference “Entering the parliamentary stage. Women in Parliament and Politics. An international comparison”, convened by KGParl, Uni Jena and Czech Academy of Science, will mark the centennial of women’s suffrage in Germany 1919 and analyse women’s current status in politics.

It will explore the moments of introducing women’s right to vote in different countries, various modes of parliamentary careers among women, specific aspects of their everyday life in parliament, as well as the media coverage. Join us in Berlin, 6–8 March 2019 ([Cfp is open now!](#))

EVENTS

Political Transitions and Federal Projects (late 18th-early 21st centuries)

Workshop. Sciences Po, American University of Paris, 23-25 May 2018. The workshop explored federalist thinking and federations in historical perspective through a number of case studies of transforming federations. Lively debate explored socialist federations and their democratization, e.g. a comparison of Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union with particular focus on projects of its re-framing during *perestroika*. The workshop also served as an opportunity to present the EuParl.net network and its activities.





EVENTS

Political Controversies Relating to Social Security Reforms for the Elderly in Post-War Europe

International Conference, Nijmegen, 19-20 April 2018. How come British pensioners are the poorest in the world? Is the Dutch system really the best? Have parliaments anything to do with that? The conference confronted several European pension systems and their histories, including the best and the worst pension schemes in the world, along with the hopes for developments of mixed system that most countries use. [Detailed report here.](#)



Radboud University, Nijmegen

SAVE THE DATE

A Century of Women MPs: Conference, London, **6–7 September 2018**. Programme/Registration: <https://acenturyofwomenmpsconference.wordpress.com/conference-programme/>

ICHRPI Annual Conference: Vienna, **10–13 Sept. 2018**

Das „demokratische Europa“? Demokratie- und Parlamentarismusgeschichte Europas seit 1970“: Workshop, München, **15–16 November 2018**

Entering the parliamentary stage: Women in Parliament and Politics. International conference and a plenary meeting of EuParl.net members, Berlin, **6–8 March 2019**

Cosmopolitan, International, Supranational, Global, Transnational: A European History of Concepts Beyond Nation States, Finnish Institute in Berlin, **15-16 March 2019** Contact: pasi.t.ihalainen@jyu.fi

REVIEW

RECKER, Marie-Luise – SCHULZ, Andreas (eds.): *Parlamentarismuskritik und Antiparlamentarismus in Europa*. Düsseldorf, Droste 2018

The English–German volume originated in a 2015 EuParl.net conference convened by KGParl in Berlin. The aim was to differentiate between criticism of parliamentary practice and anti-parliamentary thinking. The present volume proves, however, that even collections of conference papers can indeed become substantial books.

Its first section, offers transnational perspective of the repertoire of anti-parliamentarism. Remieg Aerts provides historical overview of rejecting representative democracy as a mistaken implementation of the “true” democratic principle in wide geographic space. He distinguished six phases: establishing parliaments

as “gentlemen’s clubs” in 1815–1848, expanding voting rights in the late 19th century and devising new approaches to parliament, including obstruction; the challenge of new Socialist, Fascist, and Catholic anti-parliamentarism after 1918; parliaments proving themselves as humane and efficient political systems after 1945 (including the project of people’s democracy in the Communist-dominated Central and Eastern Europe); a new wave of dissatisfaction with representation in the 1960s; and, finally, democratic parliaments proving as a global standard after 1989, but facing populist challenge. Jean Garrigue and Nicolas Roussellier used French material to show that anti-parliamentary attitudes emerged with the origins of the republican experience.

Michael C. Bienert then explored the post-1945 Landtage in the Soviet Oc-





REVIEW

cupation Zone. Describing the gradual imposition of control over parliaments, while exploiting the – alleged and real – workers’ pressure, he provides most interesting material for analysis of anti-parliamentarism in an extreme political context. Andreas Biefang’s chapter attracts most attention: it explores rectal imagery in political caricature. The analysis begins with 18th-century coloured engravings and ends with breath-taking anti-parliamentary writings from Weimar Germany, including a 1930 photo of uniformed National Socialist deputies in the Bundestag. The subsequent two sections use case studies to describe possible arenas and actors of anti-parliamentarism. Among the most valuable, Andreas Schulz analyses the Darmstadt Talks, a series of public discussions with prominent speakers, organized by former anti-Nazi activists or exiled opinionmakers. The Talks provided an alternative to the “party democracy” in West German parliament. Adéla Gjuričová brings a surprising point into the discussion: the Czechoslovak dissident

and political leader Václav Havel who did not act in favour of an independent legislature during the democratic transition of Czechoslovakia; as President Havel engaged in a long and painful conflict with the legislature.

The well written and profoundly argued volume is highly plausible in portraying anti-parliamentarism as a popular phenomenon as well as elitist behaviour. It makes it quite obvious that, once the popular mood and efficient anti-parliamentary leadership converge, democracy has a problem. The volume would have benefited from a final synthetic chapter that would relate the historical ideas, arenas and cases to contemporary experience. Parliamentary historians have not had yet to deal with utter anonymity of internet discussions or with the rejection of the left-right and other classical political cleavages. Perhaps it is up to us to make the first analytical step.

Tomáš Zahradníček,

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of the Czech Republic

ESSAY



Parliamentary novices in Reichstag, 13 October 1930
(photo by Erich Salomon; in *Das Ideale Parlament*, ed. by A. Biefang and M. Leenders, 2014, p. 73)

BOOKS / SOURCES

Contributions to Contemporary History / Prispjevki za novejšo zgodovino, Vol. 58, No. 1 (2018) – special issue on Thinking About the Revolution: 100 Years After. Open access at <http://ojs.inz.si/pnz/index>

GARRIGUE, Jean: *Les grands discours parlementaires: De Mirabeau à nos jours*. Paris, Armand Colin 2017

WIELENGA, Friso, BAALEN, Carla van & WILP, Markus (eds.): *Eine zersplitterte Landschaft. Beiträge zur Geschichte und Gegenwart niederländischer politischer Parteien* [A splintered landscape. Contributions to past and present of Dutch political parties]. Amsterdam, Amsterdam UP 2017

WIESNER, Claudia, HAAPALA, Taru and PALONEN, Kari: *Debates, Rhetoric and Political Action. Practices of Textual Interpretation and Analysis*. Palgrave Macmillan 2017

Fifty Shades of Federalism is a web project established at Canterbury Christ Church University to share articles on the theory of federalism, case studies, and federalist policies. <http://50shades-offederalism.com>

Verfassungsblog publishes articles in English on challenging topics of current constitutional law, including memory laws, the legal regulation of gender options, constitutional courts and populism, the constitutional changes in Poland and Hungary etc. <https://verfassungsblog.de/>

BIEFANG, Andreas: *Leopold Braun (1868–1943). Kunst, Politik, Bohème und die Frage: Wozu malt man ein Parlament?* Düsseldorf, Droste 2018

