

Session call for papers

Subversive Donations: Political Philanthropy in the Romanov Empire, 1801–1917

Conference: Joint 11th Annual Tartu Conference on East European and Eurasian Studies and 17th Conference on Baltic Studies in Europe (CBSE) (<https://sisu.ut.ee/tartuconference/>)

Date: 16–18 June 2027

Location: Tartu, Estonia

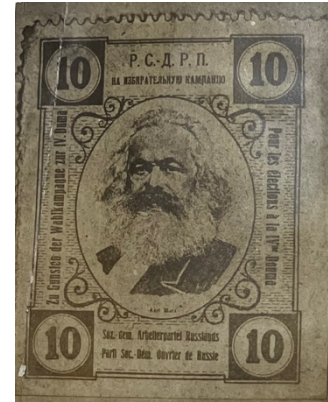
Abstract:

The Romanov Empire actively promoted philanthropy's ostensibly benevolent aims in many spheres of everyday life. Historians have showcased the range of charitable initiatives that were supported by the state, such as the Institutions of the Office of Empress Maria or the Red Cross (Lindenmeyr 1996; Ulian'ova 2005; Ringlee 2016), as well as the emergence of voluntary associations with philanthropic aims (Bradley 2009; Hackmann 2020). At the same time, officials closely monitored and often prohibited fundraising for activities deemed undesirable. This was particularly the case in the empire's borderlands, where groups such as Jews, Poles, or Armenians were subject to additional restrictions on establishing charitable organisations and gathering money (Lindenmeyr 1996: 204).

We would like to organise a session to bring together case studies from different regions of the empire to examine, on the one hand, activities conducted under the auspices of philanthropy which provided opportunities to self-organise and fund activities that might otherwise be considered illegal. On the other hand, we are also interested in the range of charitable activities which the state sought to clamp down on and prohibit. Presentations might touch upon the various causes (e.g. fundraising for political emigres, prisoners (Finkel 2024), or revolutionary activity) and methods (e.g. charity concerts, bazaars, theatre performances, or printing stamps and postcards) of political philanthropy both within the Romanov Empire and across its borders.

Deadline: If you are interested in being part of the session proposal, please contact Anton Kotenko at anton.kotenko@ut.ee by **10 December 2026**. Once the session proposal is assembled, it will be submitted to the conference programme committee for review (deadline **10 January**) and we expect a decision by 15 February.

Organisers: This session is being organised by members of the project "Empire of Solidarities: A Connected History of Private Charity Across a Decentred Romanov Empire, 1855–1914," which is supported by ERC grant (EMPSOLID grant no. 101162204). Project website: <https://empsolid.ee/>



Stamp issued by the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party to raise money for the election campaign to the 4th Duma (1912). Source: RA, EAA.296.9.1259, 43.