

Hidden from History: Voices of the German Revolution 1918-1919

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Peace Museum

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The Home Front in Germany at the end of the First World War erupted with revolution. After enduring four years of food shortages, strikes and unrest, men and women took to the streets to demand peace, bread and an overhaul of the political structures they believed had led to the war. At the beginning of November 1918, the revolution was sparked in Kiel, a naval town in North Germany, when a group of sailors refused to follow orders and the townspeople joined them in protest. The revolution spread rapidly, engulfing Germany within two days.

Often these events are told from the position of the military and political leaders of the time. But what about the people involved in the revolution? What were their perspectives? This talk will tell the story of the revolution by including the voices of the revolutionaries themselves. Using eye-witness accounts, it will introduce some key figures who have been almost written out of history today and explore the visions for peace they shared. It will conclude with a discussion of whose history we tell, and what happens to our understanding of historical events when we add the voices of those hidden from history.

Ingrid Sharp and Corinne Painter are from the University of Leeds, working on a project examining the end of the First World War and finding women's voices. This project has contributed research to the Peace Museum's exhibition and will culminate in a new play "Women of Aktion" in Autumn 2018.