

REMEMBRANCE AND SOLIDARITY

studies

in 20th century european history

First World War Centenary

The Imprint on National Memory, Social Groups,
and Individual's Memories

1914-1918 as the Starting Point and Impulse for
Discussion about Memory of other Armed Conflicts
in the 20th Century



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ul. Wiejska 17/3, 00-480 Warszawa, Poland

tel. +48 22 891 25 00

www.enrs.eu

studies@enrs.eu

GRAPHIC DESIGN: **Katarzyna Erbel**

TYPESETTING: **Marcin Kiedio**

PROOFREADING: **Marek Darewski**

COVER DESIGN:  **RZECZOBRAZKOWE.PL**

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STUDIES IN 20TH CENTURY EUROPEAN HISTORY
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CONTENTS

Editor's Preface	6
<i>Editors</i>	

ARTICLES

INTERPRETATION AND MEDIA

Was the War Inevitable?	15
<i>Andrzej Chwalba</i>	

Turning Points in the History of War: Criteria for the Meaning of Violence in the Great War of 1914–1918	25
<i>Christian Wevelsiep</i>	

Memory in the Digital Age: First World War and Its Representation on the Web	47
<i>Aleksandra Pawliczek</i>	

The Christmas Truce of 1914 – Remembered in 2005. The Staging of European Similarities in the Movie <i>Merry Christmas – Joyeux Noël</i>	73
<i>Maja Bächler</i>	

The Murder of Armenians – Armenocide – Genocide – Genocide Prevention: Aspects of Political and Historical Comparative Genocide Studies	91
<i>Richard Albrecht</i>	

NATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

- Sites of Memory, Sites of Rejoicing. The Great War in Czech and Slovak Cultural History 109

James Krapfl

- “Neither for King nor Empire”: Irish Remembrance of the Great War in the 1920s 147

Mandy Townsley

- The Great War and Its Consequences from a Swedish Perspective 173

Paweł Jaworski

- Warsaw’s Forgotten War 185

Robert Blobaum

- European Intellectuals at the Intersection of War, Memory and Societal Responsibility: Gaetano Salvemini, Thomas Mann and the Interpretation of the Two World Wars 209

Mark W. Clark

CEMETERIES AND MEMORY

- Warriors and Victims: Commemorating War on the Stadtfriedhof Tübingen – A Local-National Perspective 229

Benedict von Bremen

- Mourning Aachen’s War Dead: Cultures of Memory during the First World War and the Postwar Period 257

Jens Lohmeier, Stephanie Kaiser

- Burdened by Imperial Memory: Rudyard Kipling, Collective Memory and the Imperial War Graves Commission 279

Chelsea Medlock

The Military Cemetery as a Form of the Cult of the Fallen Soldier: The History of the Idea and Its Destruction on the Example of Austro-Hungarian Cemeteries in “Russian Poland” <i>Jerzy Pałosz</i>	299
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BOOK REVIEWS

<i>The Black Cross. Remembering the Victims of War – for Peace</i> <i>Sabine Stadler</i>	327
Jan Salm, <i>The Reconstruction of Eastern Prussian Cities after World War I</i> <i>Małgorzata Popiołek</i>	331
Elisabeth Kübler, <i>European Politics of Memory. The Council of Europe and the Remembrance of the Holocaust</i> <i>Jenny Wüstenberg</i>	335

CONFERENCE REPORTS

European Remembrance. Second Symposium of European Institutions Dealing with 20 th Century History <i>Dominik Pick</i>	341
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FIRST WORLD WAR AND MODERN MEMORY. EDITOR'S PREFACE

The First World War centenary has been an inspiration for historians, popularizers of knowledge, museologists and exhibition curators in many countries all around the world for several years. Such an outburst of interest most likely results from the specific magic of round anniversaries, which seem to organize popular memory effectively and in the manner desired by society. Also, one should not underestimate the fact that for many decades our memory has become saturated with the subject of the Second World War. For many researchers and authors the recollection of the First World War is a kind of fresh breeze; and offers them an opportunity to deepen their reflection on the history of the twentieth century. And the First World War by all means deserves deep reflection because it radically changed the political map of Central and Eastern Europe, overthrew a number of powerful dynasties (as they seemed to be), became an extremely strong impulse for the development of anti-colonial movements all around the world and proved to be a necessary (though not sufficient) condition for the formation of both communism and fascism, and also Nazism. Likewise a number of researchers and journalists notice many resemblances between the situation of the world in 1914 and 2014, worthy of consideration and discussion. They include globalization, the rapid progress in pure and natural sciences and technology (military and otherwise), tensions over social and ethical issues, and serious shifts and changes in the top places of the list of world powers.

The invention and productivity of writers reexamining this war amazes. Psychologist Richard Ned Lebow throws to the market his book *Archduke Franz Ferdinand Lives! A World without World War I*. According to this counterfactual text, in the 1920s Hitler organized a mail-order trade in products of alternative medicine which was a great success and Lenin lectured Russian history and politics at the Columbia University (incidentally, he was not liked by his students). Neither JFK nor Barack Obama – obviously – ever became Presidents of the USA. The American pioneers of jazz emigrated to Europe and together with the klezmers created a new music genre which was adored by audiences; and so on, and so forth. Joe Sacco, a popular cartoonist, edited a book without words entitled *The Great War: July 1, 1916*, which is

composed of an extremely detailed, black-and-white drawing on one paper band, more than seven meters long, depicting the panorama of the events of the first day of the Battle of the Somme. In France, among the flood of new and renewed positions *sur la Grande Guerre* there are numerous, highly unconventional books for children.

However we are most interested in the achievements of contemporary historiography. It is hardly surprising that nowadays historians concentrate on the re-examination of the reasons for the outbreak of this war and the reconstruction of the events of the so-called *July Crisis*, i.e. the 4–5 weeks after the assassination in Sarajevo on June 28, 1914, during which decisions directly leading to the initiation of war were taken. It is interesting that the two most widely read books on this subject, *The War That Ended Peace: The Road to 1914* (2013), by the famous prizewinning Canadian historian, Margaret MacMillan (nowadays working at Oxford), and *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914* (2013) by Christopher Munro Clark, an Australian historian (working at Cambridge) specializing in the history of Germany, return to a personalized perspective of historical events. They treat these events primarily as a result of the actions of particular individuals and hence as phenomena deprived of inevitability arising from the operation of some great historical processes and regularities, but rather dependent on the will, knowledge and emotional structure of the participants in political decision-making processes, and also – quite simply – on coincidences. With this approach, the question of causes, agency and indirect responsibility for the outbreak of the Great War begins to be perceived as a very complicated issue. It is also important that the claim which, until recently, belonged to a kind of canon of knowledge even in Germany (since the addresses of Fritz Fischer in 1961), that German authorities were mainly responsible for the outbreak of the war, appears to be highly disputable.

The second issue of *Remembrance and Solidarity. Studies in 20th century European History*, in accordance with the profile of our periodical, is devoted primarily to memory: the memory of the First World War, i.e. the issue of the late and very late impact of the First World War on our mentality. The issue is divided into three parts. The first; *Interpretation and media*, opens with a short essay by Andrzej Chwalba *Was the War Inevitable?*. The author, an experienced researcher of the history of the nineteenth and twentieth century, analyses what we know now of the international relations, and of economic, social and cultural problems within Europe and the world at the time, and comes

to the conclusion that although the assassination in Sarajevo did not have to provoke it, the war was in fact inevitable. Christian Wevelsiep in the article *Turning Points in the History of War: Criteria for the Meaning of Violence in the Great War of 1914–1918* undertakes historical and anthropological considerations concerning the meaning of uncontrollable violence which affected front line soldiers during their many years' struggle in the First World War, the totalitarian visions of man which began to infiltrate into the society's consciousness, and also early and later attempts to derive sense from the events of the First World War. Aleksandra Pawliczek in her text *Memory in the Digital Age: First World War and Its Representation on the Web* offers a critical analysis of a number of online presentations focusing on different aspects of the First World War. She concludes that the quality of these presentations is extremely diverse and the poorly organized data hinders evaluation of quality, so they are hardly useful. Maja Bächler in her article *The Christmas Truce of 1914 – Remembered in 2005. The Staging of European Similarities in the Movie “Merry Christmas – Joyeux Noël”* analyses forms used in the picture of Christian Carion to describe an exceptional episode from the trenches of the Western Front during Christmas 1914 and emphasizes the fact that Christianity, shared music (*Stille Nacht*) and the sense of brotherhood of fate among the soldiers were depicted as the foundation for Europeanness. Richard Albrecht in the essay *The Murder of Armenians – Armenocide – Genocide – Genocide Prevention: Aspects of Political and Historical Comparative Genocide Studies* uses terminological issues as a starting point to present the role of the genocide of Armenian people during the First World War in the studies of other crimes of this kind, in the creation of the theory of genocide and in the formation of memory of them.

In the second part entitled *National perspective*, James Krapfl in *Sites of Memory, Sites of Rejoicing. The Great War in Czech and Slovak Cultural History* analyses the function of Czech and Slovak diary literature relating to the World War written before 1938. The authors of the diaries created and promoted a specific romantic model of Czechoslovakian patriotism based on active struggle and willingness to make sacrifices. They were supported by the authorities of the republic for whom *the liberation legend* was a typical foundation myth. The article “*Neither for King nor Empire*”: Irish Remembrance of the Great War in the 1920s by Mandy Townsley shows distinctly the uniqueness of the Irish experience during the First World War as well as the problems in commemorating this experience, as the memory of 250.000 Irishmen who fought as volunteers in the British Army (50.000 of whom were killed) was

consistently excluded from the main historical narration of their country. Pawel Jaworski (*The Great War and Its Consequences from a Swedish Perspective*) draws our attention to the very weak presence of the issues of the First World War in the memory of the Swedes. This is so even despite the fact that this conflict had a very strong impact on the directions of Swedish politics in the interwar period, contributing among other things it contributed to the democratization of the country. In the article *Warsaw's Forgotten War* Robert Blobaum presents the dramatic difference in the intensity of memory and the state of research regarding the fates of the inhabitants of Warsaw during the First and Second World Wars. The author states that the research on the history of the metropolis during the Great War is only “in its infancy” and he focuses on explaining what has been forgotten from the history of Warsaw during this time and the reasons it has been forgotten. In the article *European Intellectuals at the Intersection of War, Memory and Societal Responsibility: Gaetano Salvemini, Thomas Mann and the Interpretation of the Two World Wars* Mark W. Clark concentrates on the role the First World War had in shaping a very critical attitude in both the prominent Italian historian and the German writer towards fascism and Nazism and in their shared choice to emigrate in order to devote their lives to oppositional activity. Comparing their ways of life and achievements forms the basis for considerations on the issue of social responsibility of intellectuals.

The third part, entitled *Cemeteries and memory*, comprises three texts devoted to the history of cemeteries. In European culture cemeteries may be treated as objects well illustrating various, usually very meaningful, forms of remembrance and the attitude of later generations towards their past. Benedict von Bremen (*Warriors and Victims: Commemorating War on the Stadtfriedhof Tübingen – A Local-National Perspective*) analyses the ways of commemorating the deceased buried in the cemetery in Tübingen where the participants of the Franco-Prussian War 1870–1871, the First World War and the victims of Nazism are buried in different sections within the cemetery. Chelsea Medlock (*Burdened by Imperial Memory: Rudyard Kipling, Collective Memory and the Imperial War Graves Commission*) describes the great commitment of Rudyard Kipling during the First World War. The writer initially focused on pungent anti-German propaganda and the glorification of the war effort of the British, but later on, after his son John died at the front in autumn 1915, gradually shifted his activity towards the commemoration of the fallen British soldiers and cooperation with the Imperial War Graves Commission. In the article *The Military Cemetery as a Form of the Cult of the Fallen Soldier:*

The History of the Idea and Its Destruction on the Example of Austro-Hungarian Cemeteries in "Russian Poland" Jerzy Palosz presents the scarcely known and hardly optimistic history of war cemeteries of Austro-Hungarian soldiers beyond the former Austrian partition (Galicia), in the southern part of the former Russian partition. Soon after the war these cemeteries suffered extensive devastation and demolition until they were completely erased from the surface. At first, the Polish military administration and local authorities tried to protect them but in the course of time, when the official commemoration of the First World War concentrated on Polish Legions and their leader, Józef Piłsudski, "strangers" war cemeteries were *de facto* left to their fate. It is interesting that though the state of preserved First World War cemeteries in former Galicia is far from perfect, it is much better than that in "Russian Poland". The second issue of the journal closes with reviews and conference reports.

We hope you will enjoy reading the second issue of *Remembrance and Solidarity. Studies in 20th Century History*!

ÁRPÁD HORNJÁK
 PAVOL JAKUBČIN
 PADRAIC KENNEY
 RÓBERT LETZ
 MARIA LUFT
 JAN RYDEL
 MARTIN SCHULZE WESSEL
 MATTHIAS WEBER

ARTICLES

Interpretation and media

WAS THE WAR INEVITABLE?

Andrzej Chwalba, prof.

Jagiellonian University

Faculty of History, Institute of History

Department of Historical Anthropology

ABSTRACT

The question as to whether war was inevitable is tantamount to asking what must have happened for the order established by the Treaty of Vienna to finally collapse in 1914. An extensive search through libraries and archives has allowed us to venture a response to this question. As it turns out, the treaty protecting Europe from war was either a spent force or was being consumed by the virus of national chauvinism to such an extent that it was unable to play its role any longer. As it happened, Europeans were longing for war, the politicians and the military yearned for it, and this war-mongering mood was growing in intensity. The artistic avant-garde did their best to meet this demand in society, providing an ideal reflection of the atmosphere of the time.

During the war and following its conclusion, it was often heard that: “things could have worked out very differently,” or “war was entirely avoidable.” It has been said that we must not be drawn into taking a deterministic view of history, claiming that if war broke out, it must have been necessary. Was peace therefore truly within our grasp, and could the war have been avoided? It soon turned out that the hope of salvaging peace was based on a few fallacious premises. The first of these was the conviction that monarchs were bound by a sense of solidarity and were therefore reluctant to go to war. Indeed, the monarchs had close blood-ties and considered themselves a single family. Emperor Wilhelm II and the Tsarina were maternal cousins, as were Nicholas and Britain’s George V, who looked like mirror images of each other. Edward VII was the uncle of the Kaiser of the Reich and the Tsarina, while Irene of Hesse and by Rhine, the cousin and sister-in-law of the Kaiser, was her sister. Almost all the monarchs ruling in both the larger and smaller countries of Europe were either distantly related to the Sachsen-Coburg-Gotha Dynasty, or sprung from it directly. Bismarck disdainfully

called them the “fertile studs of Europe.” In the letters they exchanged, they called each other beloved and dear brothers, cousins, and friends. One sign of the solidarity of these “cousins,” these emperors, kings, and princes, was their joint decision to attend the funeral of Victoria, the British Queen, in 1901; for some she was an aunt, for others a grandmother. In 1914 seven of her descendants sat on European thrones. In 1910, during the funeral ceremonies for King Edward VII, the “uncle of kings,” there was a parade of monarchs, an unparalleled demonstration of royal solidarity. Ties between monarchs were based not only on family bonds, but also on shared traditions, similar values, and court etiquette. Nonetheless, quarrels, discord, and wars can even occur within a family, which is why, time and again, tension emerged in the royal family, in spite of its veneer of fraternity. As such, there was no guarantee that a Europe of related monarchs was immune to a great war. But even if the monarchs had made a joint stand against war, there still would have been no certainty that it would not have broken out, as none of the reigning European monarchs enjoyed absolute power or were able to impose their will. They were all compelled to hear out their advisers, ministers, generals, and, in this era of European constitutions, the voices of the people or the nation as well, however much the monarchs were the symbols of the state, the image of sovereign statehood, and however much their portraits adorned public spaces. Meanwhile, even if they had cared to, they would not have been able to halt the impending armed conflict. But did they want to? To this question it is difficult to find a definitive answer.

When the war had already broken out, the monarchs were forced to make a dramatic choice between the solidarity of the royal families and solidarity with their own nations. This choice was in fact made for them, as they could not oppose their subjects. This is why King George V – under pressure from his British subjects – changed his German name to the British Windsor, which British monarchs still use to this day. He deprived the Emperor of the Reich of his honorary command of the British army, and struck German and Austro-Hungarian names from the registry listing members of the officer corps. Knights of the Garter who belonged to enemy camps were also stripped of this honor. The other monarchs representing the warring parties behaved in like fashion.

Another source of faith that war could be avoided was the trust placed in diplomats who, even when the pressure had reached its boiling point, found ways to resolve disagreements without resorting to war. The diplomats traditionally sought paths to reconciliation between the restless sides, ever

pursuing the difficult art of striking a compromise. Most often they merely called a conference of the states which formed the “concert of powers,” and this sufficed. “In the impending war, which shall be spurred on for no compelling reason, what is at stake is not only the Hohenzollern Crown, but the very future of Germany [...] the provocation of war is not merely foolhardy, it is downright reprehensible,” warned the German Chancellor in 1913. It turned out in 1914, however, that neither the solidarity of the monarchs, nor that of the diplomats would suffice.

The third source of optimism that war was impossible was the stance adopted by the socialist parties with delegates at the Second International. They expressed the conviction that armed conflict was advantageous for international capital, imperialist states, and nationalist governments, but not for the proletariat. This is why the socialist-led proletariat had to struggle for peace. The socialists threatened to organize a general strike if war were to be declared. They believed that this threat would stop the war-mongers in their tracks. This hope for peace also proved illusory, and the anti-war demonstrations organized on the eve of the conflict were unable to prevent the war. Anti-war sentiment was particularly strong in Great Britain. The prospect of dying for – as the British press worded it – “the stinking Serbs” and the “drunken Russians” was less than alluring. When the war did break out, however, the pacifist socialists, including the British, vanished from sight, declaring solidarity with their own nations. The idea of national solidarity triumphed over the idea of class solidarity, which for many came as a considerable surprise.

Fourthly, military alliances – in particular, the Triple Alliance and the Triple Entente – were meant to safeguard against war, serving as insurance policies of sorts. These too failed, however. Nor were the political and economic ties between the states in the antagonistic blocs of any aid. These ties, sometimes bolstered by political treaties, could have raised hope for salvaging a state of peace. Nonetheless, the desire for war turned out to be stronger than the desire for peace.

Fifthly: Pacifists gave people hope for peace. Their writing had its readership, whose numbers were not negligible. Norman Angell’s treatise entitled *The Great Illusion* was a publishing success; its argument was that the European integration process was already so far advanced that a war that ruptured these ties would be a disaster for one and all. No less a publishing success was a multi-volume work by one of the world’s best-known authors, Jan Bloch, a Pole of Jewish extraction, and one of the wealthiest entrepreneurs

of the Kingdom of Poland. His work, published in 1898 and entitled *Przyszła wojna pod względem technicznym, ekonomicznym i politycznym* [The Future of War from a Technical, Economic, and Political Perspective] was translated into many of the world's languages. In Austria and Germany it was Karl Kraus who was most frequently read. Nevertheless, neither he nor Angell, nor any of the other pacifists, were able to create mechanisms protecting against war or pacifist movements. On the whole, they were isolated and politically insignificant. The German Emperor, for example, nursed deep contempt for the pacifists, whom he called eunuchs. At any rate, it soon turned out that pacifists could most easily laud peace in times of peace.

Sixthly, a chance to salvage peace was seen in the pressure being exerted by international concerns. Indeed, they were afraid of war, as it threatened to rupture all their economic and financial ties. They preferred to negotiate for their share of the markets – such as the businessmen from Britain and Germany who, two weeks before Sarajevo, negotiated a deal to build a railway from Baghdad to Basra. Two Englishmen were due to sit on the board of the German-controlled Baghdad Railway Association. Earlier, in mid-February 1914, entrepreneurs from France and the Reich signed a similar contract. Yet the influence of big business circles interested in a peaceful resolution to the conflicts was ultimately too weak to prevent war. The arms industry, on the other hand, generally declared itself in favor of the war.

The political tension between the states and, in particular, the powerhouses, was growing from one year to the next; the issues of dominance in Europe, the recovery of lost lands or the acquisition of new ones, influence in the Balkans or the Middle East, a new division of colonies, and rule over the seas and oceans led to rearmament on an unprecedented scale, and to an arms race. Did this rearmament inevitably bring war to Europe? It might have, though it is difficult to definitively declare that it led to the war. Such opinions do abound, however. The scale of the rearmament was unprecedented. All of Europe's large and small states, including Montenegro, increased their military budgets, which went to prove the popularity of the idea of war in parliaments, and was, at the same time, a way of making people accustomed to the real prospect of war. The inflated war budgets testified to the fact that most parliamentarians accepted the governments' proposal to fuel the fire. In the years 1909–1914 alone the European states' expenditure for arms rose, on average, by about 50%. In 1909 it was 3.5% of the GDP, while in 1913 it rose to 5%. Rearmament caused a serious fiscal burden for society.

For the Reich the burden was so severe that several warned that the state could go bankrupt. The only chance of avoiding this glum prospect was “pressing forward,” i.e. declaring war, during which time the state could suspend the debts it had incurred from its own citizens. Budgets assigned for naval weaponry rose particularly swiftly. The construction of warships was supported by dozens, and later hundreds of associations and organizations, which created effective pressure groups.

The new carving up of the world and the colonial lands was of most interest to Germany, while the Austro-Hungarian Empire was comparatively indifferent. The Germans believed that they had received less of the colonial pie than they deserved. True, they possessed around three million square meters of colonies spread over two continents, inhabited by thirteen million people, officially known as “protected territories,” but these were not generating enough profit or prestige. In his 1900 work entitled *The Great Powers*, Max Letz said that a war to divvy the ailing British Empire was inevitable, and in its place would come a German Empire. He argued that, in accordance with social Darwinism, the colonies should trade owners. The weak, such as the French, the Portuguese, and the British, would withdraw, while the stronger ones – the Germans – would step in. “Our future will be ensured when we conquer not only all of Europe, but also wherever we can across the ocean. Expanding our possessions is, after all, the basis of our nation,” said Heinrich Class, head of the Pan-German League, in 1913. The idea of war can certainly be traced to this mode of thinking, but thought alone was not enough to actually set it off.

Nor were the Germans satisfied with their place in Europe. Located in the center of Europe, they were constantly obsessed with the idea of being encircled by France and Russia, caught between the proverbial firing lines. In fact, these countries did not pose much of a threat, at least for the time being. This was more of an artificially generated psychosis than a real threat, but it did reinforce the pro-war mood.

The armament policy was fueled by the imperialist propaganda and pro-war rhetoric. Nationalism, which was growing into a national chauvinism, held pride of place in the nations’ preparations for the looming struggle. Apart from love of one’s country and nation and a national pride, it was composed of contempt and hostility for other nations and a national pride that sanctioned rule over others. The nationalists claimed that the path to achieving a high level of national solidarity and unity led through war. War, they argued

further, cleanses a nation of its weaknesses and shortcomings, and would work like a salubrious catharsis. The Italian nationalists stressed that war was the swiftest and most heroic means of attaining willpower and wealth. “To the nationalist circles war seems akin to salvation, a hope for change,” concluded Viktor Adler, a leader of the anti-war social democrats on 29 July 1914. Nationalism did not dominate the general mindset, and the nationalist parties did not dominate the political stage. The power remained, on the one hand, with the liberal and conservative parties, and on the other, with the socialist ones, though both the former and the latter did show evidence of being influenced by nationalist ideas and ways of thinking. In particular, the liberal parties succumbed to the pressure of nationalism. The nationalists’ advantage and strength was in the comparatively few in number, yet outspoken, punitive, hierarchically structured, and well-financed organizations and associations, such as the German Eastern Marches Society, the German Army League, the Navy League, the Pan-German League, and the Pan-German Union in Germany; England’s Imperial Naval League and the National Service League; France’s Patriotic League and *Action française*; Russia’s Black Hundreds; and the Nationalist Association of Italy. These organizations were capable of mobilizing public opinion around their aims, for rearmament and war preparations. They influenced governments, parliaments, and rulers.

Nationalism was nourished by a confused social Darwinism, which urged the need for a decisive armed confrontation in the name of national values and glory. Social Darwinism was popularized in England by Benjamin Kidd, author of *Social Evolution*, which was first published in 1893. Another Briton who made his name in Europe writing on the subject was Harold Watt, a founder of the Imperial Naval League; he claimed that “war is God’s test for the soul of a nation,” and that in history “the higher and more noble nations have triumphed in war, routing the lower races.”

The cultural climate also favored the war. In the late 1890s Positivism and Scientism were on the decline and Neo-Romanticism was on the rise. In the early twentieth century millions of people had already been convinced by artists and intellectuals that they were leading a bland, prosaic life, a life of consumer boredom, bereft of greatness, sublimity, and spirituality. They claimed that such a bourgeois existence was senseless. Thomas Mann wrote that “war should be a cleansing, a liberation, and a vast hope,” a manifestation of the “fitness of the nation.” War, it was said, ennobled people, and taught the virtues of discipline and obedience. The hopeless life of the wage

earner could only be changed by something sublime and revivifying – and this “something” was war. Wartime accomplishments and the life of the hero were important. Neo-Romantics and avant-gardists saw war as a manifestation of the strength of the spirit, as a sign of vitality and creativity. “War is a life-giving principle,” “it is an expression of the highest culture,” Friedrich von Bernhardt wrote in 1911 in a work which went through six editions in Germany in the space of two years. “When a man throws himself into the whirlwind of war it is not instincts, but virtues he rediscovers... In war everything is renewed,” stressed French painter Pierre Bonnard in 1912. In 1891 the French writer Emil Zola pointed out that “only fighting nations develop: a nation immediately perishes when it disarms. War is a school of discipline, devotion, and courage.” The Italian Futurists, headed by Filippo Marinetti, were enthusiastic about war, joyfully exclaiming that “war is the only hygiene of the world.” Generally speaking, the rebellious people of the avant-garde who roused others to rebel against the old world in order to build a new, better, and more noble one in its place, and who called for liberation from the suffocating girdle of custom, could, to a considerable degree, feel that they shared responsibility for the war.

Historian D.S. Landes has pointed out that many a war was believed to be a sort of spring break; he wrote that the tragedy of war lay “in the gullible vanity of people who thought war was a party – a kaleidoscope of handsome uniforms, masculine courage, feminine admiration, dress parades, and the lightheartedness of immortal youth. The war broke out for a lack of imagination.”¹ US President Theodore Roosevelt saw the eventuality of the outbreak of war in only a slightly different light: “Europe has not fought for a very long time, and has decided to rouse in itself the spirit of action. War broke out when Europeans had subconsciously grown tired of peace. Then war became acceptable, even desirable.”

Fashionable philosophers and historiosophers added more arguments in favor of the war: “The propriety of war is simply based on the consciousness of its moral necessity. Because [...] history must be in a state of eternal movement, war is waged; it must be regarded as an order established by God,” wrote Heinrich von Treitschke in 1887. People chose to heed his words, but also those of Joseph Maistre, an early-nineteenth-century conservative thinker who maintained that “war is the normal state of the human species.” Henri Bergson’s perception of thought also aided intellectual preparation for the war, stating that Europe urgently needed a spiritual rebirth through

a powerful clash of elements. Friedrich Nietzsche, who was popular in Europe, also contributed here. Nietzsche's call to action and violence, to do battle with idleness, bourgeois narrow-mindedness and hypocrisy, spoke to many, and his statements were printed on leaflets for soldiers; his idea that "war and courage have done more good than love for those dear to you" was found in the rucksacks of soldiers from various armies. Nietzsche called on people to take risks in life and promoted the value of a revolt against liberalism, tradition, and the *status quo*. Ideas directly or indirectly glorifying war were distributed to millions, and to young people in particular – and it was they, after all, who had to march off to battle.

The literature of the time made a clear contribution to psychologically and emotionally preparing people for war; it often portrayed armed conflict as a joyful and fascinating adventure. Spy novels and tales of the future enjoyed popularity. Novels published in installments that depicted Germans landing on British shores or Britons organizing landing operations on the German coast also proved exciting. Boys' adventure literature and new weeklies for young people prepared readers to slay their enemies, filled as they were with resourceful and courageous warriors ready to die for their homeland.

State history policies also contributed to preparing people for war, mainly through schools. School curriculae reminded pupils that there was nothing more valuable than a nation's victories on the battlefield, but also reminded them of the defeats, to inspire an urge for revenge. Anniversaries of wars that were important to the nation were celebrated, along with the deaths or births of heroes who had fought for the national cause. The French commemorated the victories of Napoleon, and the Germans the Battle of the Nations, which ended in Napoleon's defeat. In 1913, at the Monument to the Battle of the Nations, the authorities organized a great fete – a holiday of national unity – under the pretext of ringing in twenty-five years of Emperor Wilhelm II's rule. The Russians commemorated Napoleon's retreat from Moscow, and the French the 700th anniversary of the Battle of Bouvines (June 1914).

Solemn celebrations and shows of patriotism were organized in schools, and negative images of enemies were widely promoted. Hate propaganda was spread by newspaper and school bulletins. Army camps were organized for children and young people, there was drill practice during physical education classes, and military preparation courses were run. All this had a major impact on mental preparation for the conflict. School textbooks taught

“good patriotism,” indicating the significance of sacrifice, if the motherland should so desire it. “War is not likely, but it is possible. That is why France remains armed and always ready to defend herself. In defending France we defend the land in which we were born, the most beautiful and abundant land in the world,” we read in a French schoolbook of 1912. One way of mobilizing and educating school-age pupils was mass events, such as the Navy Days in Great Britain, or the German youth festivals.

The priming of nations for war was also crucially affected by a series of crises, beginning with the one caused by the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This was followed shortly afterward by the Moroccan Crisis in 1911 (the “Panthersprung” in Agadir). When this concluded, anti-French and pro-war hysteria erupted in Germany. The mob called for the Emperor to abdicate, calling him a coward, and demanded that the Chancellor resign from his position. Tensions were further stoked by Belgrade’s “Pig War” with Vienna, Italy’s war with Turkey over Libya in the years 1911–1912, and finally the Balkan War, which infringed upon the existing power structures. The fact that every war brought a new crisis meant that the atmosphere grew increasingly electric and ways of thinking feverish. Biases and mutual grudges intensified, along with mistrust and nationalist phobias. The constant tension was akin to a tightrope walk over an abyss. Each new crisis overlapped with the one before, building the tension until it all reached a climax. At any moment an armed conflict on a greater scale was expected to erupt. This led to a “dry” (today we would say: “cold”) war. The consecutive crises inclined nations to arm themselves on an even greater scale, to “try out” the militarization of their economies and to forge more “defensive alliances.” The disquieted populaces began asking questions about the coming war. “I always thought about the looming war. If it could be avoided,” wrote Daisy Hochberg von Pless in 1911. “In the early winter of 1912/1913 there was increasing talk of the possibility of war between the Austro-Hungarian Empire and Russia... There was quiet turmoil hidden in our country. The wheels of independence were turning feverishly,” recalled the Polish Princess Matylda Sapieżyna. Due to the tension, volunteers swiftly arrived for the Polish and Ukrainian rifle units in 1912–13 in Galicia. When the immediate threat of war seemed to subside, recruitment diminished.

And yet, even all of the above factors need not have sealed the outbreak of a world conflict. Further crises could have come and gone, resolved through established procedures, and the world could have kept on arming itself, continuing to train and parade its armies while war plans reposed in

carefully guarded safes. Even with all this going on, it would have been possible to live in peace, though a life of constant tension, from crisis to crisis, from conflagration to conflagration, was certainly not a source of comfort. How many years can one live on a powder keg? Not very long. This is why it should come as no surprise that it was often concluded that, in spite of the risk of war and the lack of certainty as to how things would turn out, an attempt needed to be made. "War [...] was inevitable and unstoppable, as a result of motives that drive states and peoples, like a storm which nature itself must release," wrote Joseph Conrad-Korzeniowski. Thus, if war is unavoidable, there is no point in delaying it. A surgeon would make a similar argument: an operation is the only chance to salvage the health of a patient, and the chance of its success depends on the speed with which it is conducted. "A just and necessary war is no more brutal than a surgical operation. It is better to give the patient pain and get blood on your fingers than to let the illness spread to such an extent that it becomes a threat to you and the world," wrote British journalist Sidney Low on the eve of the war. War is, after all, simply another means of gaining political aims. Meanwhile, there is what might be called the compulsion of war. All that remained was to choose the date. The bloody attack in Sarajevo of 28 June 1914 appeared to fulfill these expectations, setting off a chain reaction.

ANDRZEJ CHWALBA

Born on 11 Dec. 1949; he specializes in the social and religious history of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. He has been a professor since 1995. He has 380 publications to his name, including twenty-two books. He once served as Vice-rector of Teaching Affairs of the Jagiellonian University. He has received many awards for his books, including The History of Poland, The History of Krakow 1939–1945; The History of the World in the Nineteenth Century; The History of the World 1989–2011. He has also published six books in foreign languages: Polen und der Osten, Suhrkamp, 2005; Kurze Geschichte der Dritten Republik Polen 1989 bis 2005, Harrassowitz, 2010; Collegium Maius. A History, 2010; Polsko 1989–2008. Dejiny současnosti, Brno 2009; Poljska Nakon Komunizma (1989–2011), Zagreb 2011; Istorija na Trietaja Polska Republika, Sofia 2013.

ENDNOTES

- 1 David S. Landes, *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1999), p. 465.

TURNING POINTS IN THE HISTORY OF WAR: CRITERIA FOR THE MEANING OF VIOLENCE IN THE GREAT WAR OF 1914–1918

Christian Wevelsiep, PhD

University of Flensburg

External lecturer in Political Sociology

ABSTRACT

The focus of this paper is to discuss the criteria for the meaning of violence in the context of the history of war. To be able to classify the instances of violence during the First World War, the following paper will attempt to present the relationship between different levels of war, and thus to determine the criteria for the meaning of violence. The Great War of 1914–1918 was characterized by the transformation of how war was waged, as well as an unlimited awareness of violence (1./2.). Here we have in mind the most comprehensive of all images of violence: the totalitarian image of man. This begs the question of how we can generate an acceptable relationship between the mechanism of violence and violence awareness and thus bring about the renunciation of violence. This pivotal question can only be answered in the wider context of the history of violence. To understand the failure of reason in the battlefields of the Great War we need fundamental anthropological reflections (3./4.), which encompasses the essential significance of the site (5.).

Introduction

It is generally recognized that history does not boil down to reconstruction of actual life and experience. It also constitutes a process of interpreting which occurs in the minds of the subjects who create it. When looking at historical figures, historians demand that each person takes full responsibility for their own story.

In the context of the history of violence and war such a perspective first requires the formulation of rough definitions. A solemn speech about the solid foundation of war, about the *father of all things* (Ger. *Vater aller Dinge*) or just

about history as a set of rational rules and regulations, expires in the trenches of war. A glimpse at the inter-existential dimension is a look at the everyday reality of war, including the moments of mass killing. "The annihilation of a man as an individual forces us to perceive people as a mass. This is a totalitarian moment. Lenin recognized it, as did Mussolini, Hitler, and others. They perceived war as a powerful fatality in which everything sweeps away, as an uncontrollable torrent and a total power, which ends in nihilism." (Metz 2010, 191)

John Keegan, an eminent war theorist, also focuses on such an existential perspective, when he embarks on a journey to find *The Face of Battle* (Keegan 1978). To his mind, the classical military history records create a picture of war which leaves many questions unanswered. They delve into genre scenes and spectacle and create an atmosphere in which bravery, heroism, defeat, and attacks are described from a ruthless point of view. A traditional military historian can find words to describe great military moves and maneuvers, but not the individual deaths and individual lives of soldiers. Keegan, however, is intensely interested in the inconspicuous individuals and events behind the great wars. He sees the efforts to create a historical narrative as entwined with the commitment to comprehend the fundamental position and the existential condition of an individual in a battle. The difference between victory and defeat, which is the main way in which historians, commanders, and chroniclers approach the battle, fades away when we take a closer look at the reality. A soldier has no well-defined picture of a battle in his mind. Enormous danger is a more urgent concern, and therefore his fundamental position is different from the commander's. If in this way we grant an individual the right to veto, we treat everything less as a revolution in the historiography then, to put it mildly, a glance at the core situation, the bare existence and the image of war.

As we well know, the First World War meant the collapse of civil society. The reasons for this are varied, but they include the negation of what civil society essentially represented: the idea of a free individual who takes responsibility for his actions. Given the mass executions, the mud of the trenches, and the mechanized nature of war, this idea came to an abrupt end. Verdun and the Somme have shaped the face of battle. They represent a turning point in the history of violence as instances of theretofore unseen forms of battle of matériel and massive battles in the death zones of trenches. In the century of violence, war became an independent entity. It became ubiquitous anonymity and omnipresent death; the very essence of war was

exposed. Ernst Jünger (1982) formulated a famous and apt description of this turning point: it was not soldiers, but laborers who kept the battle running. They were characterized by their willingness to accept a subordinate role in the anonymous, mechanized, and technological operations, rather than adopting the warrior tradition. The workers who lost their lives in the hail of grenades and machine guns usually could not see their opponents; the enemies remained mostly invisible and beyond reach.

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Do we have to present the face of battle in all its hideousness, as evidenced here, and in many other historical examples? No; we are aware of the horrors of war, the suffering of soldiers and civilians, the fury of violence, and we do not want to increase our knowledge of it. Nevertheless, we must attempt to remember and to grasp the meaning of the horrors of war; a meaning which is difficult for us to decipher and which is overshadowed by constant doubt concerning our existence. For Theodor Lessing, for example, history in the face of war was an arduous process of making meaning of meaninglessness. Deeply affected by the First World War, he opposed the religious delusion by which history reflects reason and significance, progress and justice (Lessing 1983, 12). He doubted both the idealist and the materialist delusions in history. Hence, he tried not to present history with all its glorifying embellishments, but as an attempt to make meaning out of something which is inherently meaningless. Lessing's writing was controversial, but the way in which he posed questions was convincing. His aim was not only to demolish the solid foundations of war, but also to explicitly inquire into the criteria for potential meaning – criteria for meaning in the context of the history of war. This fundamental question is still valid *as a question*. How can sociology and historiography contribute to the understanding of the notions of peace and war in our day? It seems that this question may be answered off the cuff: one should forbid war, avert violence, and protect rights. This may serve as a starting point for the following reflections. To be able to classify the instances of violence and the totalitarian logic of the First World War, the following paper will attempt to present the relationship between different levels of war, and thus to determine criteria for the meaning of violence. The Great War of 1914–1918 was characterized by (1.) the transformation of war which, as we have mentioned, became totalitarian. It also showed (2.) an unlimited awareness of violence, which was not restricted to the mechanism of violence. The distance which was shaped

during mass executions was subject to the abstraction of new proportions and it also pointed to the most comprehensive of all violence abstractions: the totalitarian image of a man. How can we generate an acceptable relationship between the mechanism of violence and violence awareness and thus bring about the renunciation of violence? This pivotal question can only be answered in the wider context of the history of violence. To understand the failure of reason in the battlefields of the Great War we need a fundamental anthropological reflection (3./4.), which encompasses the essential significance of the site (5.). In this context, the role of historiography is far from insignificant.

1. Military capability: The transformation of war

The historical notion of violence can be discussed from various points of view. On the one hand, in the mechanized form of battle we have evidence of the radical, technically-oriented alienation of man: as many as 2.96 million bullets of a total weight of 21,000 tons were prepared to attack the British troops at the Somme. The use of chlorine gas made a new form of nervous impairment of the enemy possible. The massive annihilations of soldiers in June 1916 marked a tragic climax in the history of war. All these factors point to a radicalized, unrestricted, and industrialized form of violence. Hordes of people waiting in the trenches in order to trudge through destroyed devastated area and barbed wire towards certain death: at this point such an image recalls a form of totalitarian destruction which was to become a reality in the war yet to come (Metz 2010, 192; Keegan 1978, 304). Nevertheless, insight into the terrible events of the war also requires the wider perspective of the historian. We can therefore describe the history of the First World War as a process which was characterized by the transformation of war, in terms of a political, as well as material and technological change. After the relatively peaceful period of one hundred years before the First World War, when the five major European powers followed the policy of balance, the German Wars of Unification again raised the question of power. With the emergence of the German Empire a new power also emerged. The developing economic and military power resulted in a new form of imbalance (hereinafter Kennedy 1996; Neitzel 2008; Craig 1989). International relations fell into a trap which they managed to avoid throughout the comparatively peaceful nineteenth century.

Sobering, as these reflections may seem, the nearly ten millions casualties were nothing new when we consider the total population of Europe. The

novelty was not in the number of the casualties. The global dimension was not striking either, as it had already come into play during the Seven Years' War. The novelty was rather in the *method*, in the *way* decisions concerning human lives were made, and in the technological dimension of elimination. In the First World War armed countries clashed in a battle between man and machine. Thus we can identify the new military capability as the first "criterion for meaning" in violence analysis. The mechanization of war brought lethal innovations: poison gas, tanks, submarines, but also machine guns, which were invented a long time before, but were now being used on a massive scale. Compared to the war of 1870, over 58 per cent of the soldiers died of artillery fire. Hundreds of thousands of opponents lost their lives as a result of machine gun fire, which, in a symbolic way, marks a turning point in the history of violence. However, let me go back to discuss a distinct military capability of the great powers. When we ask how this "great seminal catastrophe" could occur in this form in the twentieth century, we must not turn a blind eye to the relationship between the production forces and the effective military capabilities. The main factors which promoted, extended, and shaped the war are well known. These were: an early stalemate, Italy's rather ineffectual entry into the war, apparent exhaustion, and the Russian inability to wage war, as well as America's crucial decision to join the war. The final collapse of the Central Powers must be perceived as closely correlated with the economic and industrial resources available to the Allies. We assess the actual capability in terms of absolute superiority of the productive forces rather than the quality of leadership and the generals' aptitude. By way of example, Kennedy (1989, 389 ff.) analyzes the Great War from the point of view of the relationship between economic changes and the military conflict. He perceives the Austro-German coalition at the beginning of the war as a military force with the superior military capability as its front troops operated efficiently and were supported by an increasing number of recruits. Russia and France, on the other hand, had difficulty in coordinating a military strategy. We are able to answer why the Allies did not manage to gain significance three years after the beginning of the war when we take a closer look at the notion of military capability. The Coalition was strong in the areas which could hardly contribute to a quick and decisive victory. For instance, the closing of the German overseas trade caused major damage, but was not as significant as British representatives expected. German export industry focused on military production and the Central Powers were self-sufficient in food supply as long as the transport system could be properly maintained. The Allies outnumbered their enemies,

but this did not contribute to their rapid victory, which was partly due to the type of war itself. Both parties used forces which were deployed over hundreds of kilometers. Major operations which were methodically and strategically prepared well in advance and aimed at a decisive blow were in fact split into hundreds of smaller operations on the battlefield. The events on the Western Front clearly show that the fronts on both sides could not achieve a real breakthrough and thus expand short-term territorial gains. Each side was able to make up for its losses through reservists, grenade supply, barbed wire, and artillery, and to minimize the advantage of the assailant. The major image inscribed in the memory of the war is that of prevented offensives and destructive crossfire. The role of the individual in the war is well understood: a growing number of new waves of recruits were mobilized at various sites to compensate for the loss incurred on the battlefields.

Hence, in order to assess the properties of the violence in the First World War, an analysis of the battlefields is insufficient. There is no doubt that the Great War electrified national economies and led to a significant increase in armor volume. Before 1914 armor generated less than four percent of the national income. Since the total war led to the increase of this number up to more than 30 per cent, it was inevitable that the overall production volume of the defense industry grew by leaps and bounds. The wartime governments grew to be in charge of the industry, workforce, and finances. The long-lasting complaints about the chronic shortage of ammunition on both sides ultimately led to the cooperation of politics with business and employment, the aim of which was to provide the necessary supplies. "Given the powers of the modern bureaucratic state to float loans and raise taxes, there were no longer the fiscal impediments to sustaining a lengthy war that had crippled eighteenth-century states. Inevitably, then, after an early period of readjustment to these new conditions, armaments production soared in all countries." (Kennedy 1989, 389)

2. The mechanism of violence, ideology and war

It appears that the main distinction used to analyze the Great War is therefore the organization of the state system – the separation between the countries' domestic and foreign affairs. In order to understand the role of separation of politics and economy in all matters directly relating to the war, one needs some additional background information (hereinafter Münkler 2006, 51 ff.). The so-called "Westphalian sovereignty," which had shaped international relations since 1648, must not be overlooked here. People waged wars for

a long time to achieve economic goals, but war itself was less an economic than a political goal. The Westphalian sovereignty was an attempt to place the state in the center of the war on a permanent basis, also with a view to separate religious or economic influences from political ones. The war between the cabinets and the war between the nations are the two classical types of war. For the next 150 years, when war was a matter of cabinets, it constituted a political tool, “which had never been this way before or afterwards” (Münkler 2006, p. 52). In this period the general public was completely excluded from the war events, at least they were not systematically used for defense purposes. The war was a matter of the governments which had manageable and limited purposes. The war was also to a large extent “tamed” so that the civil population in the war zone was as little involved in the action as possible. Opposing forces changed their positions, tried to cut off the enemies from the supplies or to confront them in a decisive battle. The population waited in the background and was responsible for financing the war and yet the costs incurred due to armed conflicts could often be extremely burdensome. (Kant’s plea for republican forms of government addresses this issue). Overall, it can be argued that the war of this period did not acquire an existential dimension. To some degree it remained calculable and, significantly, it was consistent with the justified renunciation of the use of force when the balance of forces was observed.

We recognize a significant turning point in the history of war when both mechanical calculability and moral factors gained significance in the course of battle. When the population, ready to take action and make sacrifices, was put in the balance in the course of revolutions, social power relations were renewed. As regards the form of battle, the era of strategic maneuvers had ended. In the re-defined ideological battles it was important whether “in due time and in the right place one had superior forces at one’s disposal and used them with absolute determination to win here and now” (ibid., 55). War was based on the requirements of the concentration of forces in a specific time and space. This meant a battle set-up which depended on the physical and moral exhaustion. In the early twentieth century this state of affairs was marked by specific military forces and forms of the organization of violence, especially the ability to use fossil fuels for the mobilization and deployment of forces, thereby affecting the speed of the troops’ advancement in the area and going beyond the logistical limits of the war. Civil infrastructure became a central element of modern military capability, leading to a long-lasting merge of civil economy and military

establishment. The unreasonable alliance between the state and war became visible (Krippendorff 1985). Its ideological aspect, however, should not be neglected. The “levée en masse” and the people who constituted the nation contributed to the fact that politics was no longer limited by the national borders. The violence mechanism that we observe in the age of extremes (*Hobsbawm*) goes back to the moral factor, in a sense that the nationalist fervor of the people became the resources of military capability. The turning point that we can observe here is complex and contradictory. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries there was the idea that a republican society, unlike an aristocratic one, would avoid and tame war, since it corresponded to the common sense of the citizens concerned, and it could now decide on questions of life and death. This idea was inextricably linked to the notion of political freedom, but it did not obtain the desired confirmation during the revolutionary wars. The war of modern times was a civilization war which was waged as an ideological and moral battle by those with the “right” attitude. The revolution engaged civil society again in the war. Out of the ideologization of war there emerged a new form of military force which, in turn, severely affected the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In this broader sense, the military capability and the violence mechanism encompass an expanded notion of violence awareness. The new army was a mass army characterized by unlimited recruitment possibilities. As a result, it could afford much heavier losses, provided that war was perceived as an existential notion (Metz 2010, 80 ff.). The total war of the nineteenth century became a totality, insofar as it introduced the possibility of exhausting human resources on the battlefield.

This form of a mass, total warfare was formed in the nineteenth century on the condition that the psychological mobilization of the masses was a consequence of revolutionary nationalism. Such a mobilization was then extended by means of technological and infrastructural resources. Factors such as crowd, technology and ideology formed the face of total war and, as a result, created the experience of physical and mental exhaustion which, in turn, resulted in the horrors of war. It is common knowledge that the economic performance of the countries involved in the war decreased throughout the war, and that the moral exhaustion of the entire population was also visible. The long war was also a battle against the enemy’s flow of resources and supplies: England took advantage of its superior navy to build a long blockade against the Central Powers. Germany to some extent relied on submarine warfare in order to cut off the enemy from essential supplies

by sinking merchant ships. Toward the end of the war one could see the signs of the future air warfare, when the infrastructure of the enemy was destroyed by bomber fleets (Münkler 2006, 57). Is it possible to summarize the “meaning” of the war, in terms of the organization and transformation of violence, in the way presented above? Ultimately, we are talking about a war whose aim was to let the enemy bleed to death at the risk of one’s own heavy losses. The only conceivable way to gain victory would be by means of mass slaughter in the form of subsequent attacks at the death zones – which were not militarily successful but certainly stemmed from the “reasonable” calculations. This is clearly visible in the German attack at Verdun, which cost 700,000 casualties in the period of ten months; an event where the war turned into “a blood pump, attached to a human material used for military purposes” (Metz 2010, 93). As early as this instance of senseless battle and rational military leadership we observe a turning point in the history of war, for which there are no compelling definitions.

3. Political existentialism: The failure of reason

Having discussed the criteria of violence organization, we can look at the First World War as an attempt to penetrate into the heart of the enemy country in a battle. After 1866 and 1870 it was certain that such a war was feasible. August 1914 marked the beginning of a war in which a seemingly unbearable tension culminated and was defused. To many people it seemed a liberation from existential emptiness. The ecstatic celebration of the August events was apparently followed by apathetic killing and anonymous deaths in the trenches. The longing for the existential human illumination and purification during the war were followed by dirt, stench, and death. When the following sections inquire into the causes which led to the failure of reason, and when we further inquire into the possibility of remembering the horrors of war, it is to be understood in a specific way. It is not simply about drawing “lessons” from history, but rather about gathering criteria for meaning from the history of war, criteria which appear to be fundamentally political notions.

Quite reasonably, the political explanations for the outbreak of war turn attention to the threat resulting from the Franco-Russian Alliance (1894), which Great Britain joined in 1904. The idea of preventive war was virulent, not least due to the fact that the progressive development of infrastructure made it technologically possible to use mass transport. Beyond this, however, we must ask why the failure of reason occurred, and to what extent politics and diplomacy prioritized the logic of military confrontation. We must ask

how the limits of diplomacy could be reconciled with the unleashing of violence. Also, we must not forget that there were definite attempts to let the *leap in the dark* (Bethmann-Hollweg) follow solutions involving the limited renunciation of the use of force. When in November 1914 there was no hope left for a quick military success, Falkenhayn asked Bethmann-Hollweg to negotiate a separate peace with Russia, then with France, in order to be able to confront England, the opponent, on an equal footing (Neitzel 2003, 136). This initiative was based on the notion of adhering to the policy of escaping from the war as soon as all the military resources had been used. The political leadership could not take a firm stand on this matter, as there was disagreement early on in defining Germany as the main war opponent. Although some models of freedom through victory were devised based on Germany's central geographical position, they still lacked a clear goal orientation. There was a policy that prioritized geo-strategic interests over reason. While the negotiation of a separate peace with Russia was postulated, at the same time Germany was trying to maintain influence in South-East Europe and the Middle East. Although the Foreign Office initially rejected the idea of freedom through renunciation, there were still Danish mediation attempts to explore the theoretical possibility of a separate peace with the Tsar. These "peace negotiations," as a result of which Danish State Council Hans Niels Andersen travelled to Saint Petersburg in 1915, did not go beyond exploratory talks. The successes on the Eastern Front boosted hopes for the "status quo ante" peace. There was hope to build bridges for Russia on which it could walk with its head held high. Although the Russian army suffered heavy losses, this did not have an impact on its determination to wage war. Russia adhered to the treaty of 1915 and avoided the exclusion from the War Coalition. In retrospect, one could definitely say that the path toward peace was obstructed by many parties. The Tsar and his political advisers were unable to define the load limits of the country. The Central Powers, on the other hand, probably due the understanding of their limited military capability, offered a push for peace but rejected the serious general Peace Congress vehemently (ibid., 137).

In this context it is worth asking why the only serious and genuine proposal of Pope Benedict X suggesting a solution to the exhausted Europeans was rejected, or why the policy of balance and a temporary limited peace never had a real chance of victory. Why could moral clarity be created only through a one-sided victory, by the "peace of defeat" (Metz 2010, 96)? At the beginning of the war there was euphoria which there was hope of preserving for

domestic policy and which also, to some extent, led to absurd expectations concerning the aim of the war. There appeared, for instance, memoranda of Pan-Germanism which called for far-reaching annexations and assumed an imperious and hegemonic role of Germany in Europe. The war and its supposed first “successes” awakened desires, fantasies of power, and a lust to establish the German Reich as global power which, together with the United States, Great Britain, and Russia, would form the core of world powers (hereinafter Neitzel 2003, 132 ff.). The tentative and ambivalent attempts to walk the path of non-violence in the face of imminent defeat were therefore problematized. In early September 1914 Bethmann-Hollweg, for example, established guidelines for a potential preliminary peace. According to the Chancellor, the main purpose of the peace dictated by Germany should have been to secure its own country from the eastern and western side for good, i.e., if possible, France was to be weakened so that it could not regain its status as a superpower and Russia was to be pushed away from the German border. Based on these symptomatic points we can see the core demands of the German policy concerning the aim of the war, extensive territorial claims and grandiose plans which, from the beginning, rejected the idea of returning to the status quo ante. The focus on a clear victory through peace was indeed strong and visible in all warring parties. The adviser of the U.S. president had to realize in 1914–1915 that there was no readiness in Berlin, London, and Paris to agree to a temporary renunciation of violence. In terms of the areas of influence and territorial borders, the warring parties, politicians, and military officers focused on improving the status quo. It seemed impossible at any time that a lasting peace could be established without moral clarity, and that the negotiated solutions could be taken into account, considering the military force of the enemy. This was clearly reflected in the German foreign policy since the spring of 1917. When, after an unsuccessful mediation attempt, President Wilson made an appeal to negotiate peace without victory on the basis of the nations’ right to self-determination, the German Reich communicated the peace conditions in order to show trust, but at the same time, engaged in the submarine warfare again with equal commitment. This political move led to the demolition of political relations, the entrance of the USA into the war in April 1917, and to the escalation of the long-term war which, with hindsight, was not an objective inevitability. More specifically, in order to understand why the path to a tentative renunciation of violence remained blocked, one has to consider the perception of reality of the German leadership, as well as the increasing powerlessness of politics against the independent military forces.

Politics at this time could no longer be regarded as “a possible chance for peace” (ibid., 157). Until 1918 people were led by the conviction that one could achieve peace through force. This may be illustrated in the peace treaties of Brest-Litowsk and Bucharest, which sort of reflected the aim to extend power at the expense of others and, even more, the degree of the denial of reality which was determined by the strategies used by military forces until the final shedding of blood. The forces which did not strive for settlement and the post-war order, but attempted to reach what appeared enforceable by means of their own military capability were key.

The fundamental notion of the turning points and the aspects of violence can be fragmented into various intertwined issues. From a historical point of view, it is crucial to realize that the extreme severity and relentlessness of the war was rooted in the unconditional desire to gain power. Is it sufficient for the purpose of this paper to point out the alleged lust of the decision-making elites, the circulating ideas of Social Darwinism, the excessive desire to gain prestige, or the overwhelming nationalism? Or is there be some other criteria for meaning that could be included in the summation? Nevertheless, the failure of reason remains enigmatic: nine million soldiers were killed before the end of the war, probably around the same number of civilians lost their lives as a result of hunger and disease. Is it estimated that, in Germany, around 800,000 people died of hunger due to the British naval blockade – all this apparently could not change the internal logic of politics. The War of the Nations headed for the “peace of defeat,” and for four years a fixation on one-sided victory precluded the conclusion of separate tentative peace, which was still conceivable in the wars of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. What remains worth mentioning is the *a priori* enmity which apparently constituted the approval of the senseless suffering. Even millions of deaths could not break the iron will of the governments. In a fight without a real winner, those who had greater military capability and power at their disposal determined the victory morale. As such, the meaning criterion of violence is not only technological, but also ideological. The willingness to wage war can ultimately be explained by the absoluteness of evil embodied in the enemy. Real redemption of the world through war could only be achieved by defeating evil, an obviously blind mechanism, which continued even after the horrors of Verdun. In this respect it is necessary to pose fundamental anthropological questions from the quagmire of political and state regulations and to disclose *the criteria for the meaning of violence and non-violence in the context of historical experience*.

In other words, how to explain the discrepancy between the civilizational accomplishments of the war between the nations and the historical evolution toward universal condemnation of the concept of war? The unrestricted nature of both world wars raises a legitimate question of why there were wars even after the consolidation of the modern statehood. Let us keep the devastating effects of war in mind. Then the question needs to be posed: How did it happen that an idea of war remained so firmly anchored as a signifier of meaning: as a *means to an end*, as apparently legitimate *continuation of politics*, as a *guiding principle* which nations adhere to? To understand this, it does not suffice to steer clear of the axiom of war as a political means (see Clausewitz), since this is anachronistic. Quite on the contrary, it requires insight into the political existentialism of a given time. A glimpse at the philosophical concepts of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries reveals an additional moral aspect. Fichte, for example, based his reflections in the *Address to the German Nation* (Ger. *Reden an die deutsche Nation*, 1808) on the civilizational existential crisis in Prussia. He aimed at the concept of the true war of his times, which was no longer a dynastic war of a sovereign, but a legitimate war that had to be a total, so that the people could be formed into a national unity. We can see how discrepant – or how similar – the nineteenth century was in relation to the beginning of the twentieth century, in the conviction that the war was no longer interpreted as an isolated political or military action, but rather that it embraced all of life. In the people's war “people fight for their own definition of a purpose, not for the conceived interest of a person who is born and dies in separation from them, and is certainly not one of them. But the real purpose is infinite, one can approach it but not reach it” (Fichte 1813, as quoted by Stadler 2009, 94). It is not easy for us today to comprehend the depth of political existentialism where the terms death, victory, country, and eternity are used in the same context without hesitation. In the history of war, however, it indicates the focus on the moral dimension necessary to understand total war: Fichte discusses the notion of war as a moral effort of the whole nation in its struggle to survive as a free community. If we are talking here about the philosophical struggle to overcome the anti-Napoleonic wars, then we pose a question which goes beyond the narrow historical context, i.e. how a group of people can form a nation.

During a war, a continuous collective battle, people become a nation. This marks a threshold of the national and moral awakening of the nineteenth century, which is important to the understanding of a modern total war of

the nations. The ambivalence becomes evident: if we no longer perceive war as a means to an end, or as a calculation used to achieve our clearly defined objectives, but rather as a non-material means of self-constitution, then a totalized meaning dimension becomes tangible. It is no longer simply a matter of rational interests but the existential relationship within large groups. It is necessary to overcome one's own humiliation and powerlessness, to increase power, glory, and one's own honor and, hence, to assert one's own national identity in the fight against what is foreign. The aspect of hostility becomes existential. The aim of a group of people fighting for their existence is to defend their own existence and to preserve one's own being (Schmitt 1932; *ibid.* 1963). One's own being becomes a "fundamentum incommutabile" (Waldenfels 1997, 46), an opinion and decision-making body that defines a case of emergency. One's own being does not require an external entity to satisfy its own interests in itself, it is a categorical entity which disposes of the external being. These philosophical reflections express the depth of the existential hostility which we noticed in the lasting failure of reason during the long war. We can comprehend the political situation of the early twentieth century only when we consider the criteria for the meaning of violence over an extended period of time. The development extending from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries was marked by the sign of a promising replacement, the essence of which is reflected in the conversion of eschatology into utopia. One set hope for salvation not in transcendence, but in worldliness. The focus was on the question of who or what would occupy the vacant position of metaphysics, who or what ought to serve as the highest and safest reality and, therefore, the final legitimate point of historical reality. It is known that there appeared at least two new worldly realities. The demiurges of "humanity" and "history" changed the legitimacy of the old policy and would manifest its historical-anthropological categoriality: the drastic destruction of a given reality, mediated by religious, political, or ideological stipulations is a contradiction to pure and autonomous self-disposal. The tragic climax lies in the fact that, in principle, a man cannot lead an *ex nihilo* life. This terrible freedom pertains to a type of historicity that may be based only on something which is predetermined existentially. The general meaning criteria may stem only from this "perplexity." This leads to a theory of history which results from the immediate functionality for a pragmatic and cooperative action but which aims at a more radical obligation: war as an act of political self-constitution.

4. On the role of historiography

Corpses with arms ripped off, parts of skulls, blood and carcass could be found everywhere. In this way a Bavarian soldier described the battlefield of Sedan on the day after the fight. The image of the bursting grenades, which literally tore victims into pieces, was “horrible.” The Battle of Sedan lasted only one day, but it surpassed anything “that anyone has ever seen” (Lorenzen 2006, 143). The Prussian-German army stored their entire artillery under a central command and aimed their fire not only at the enemy’s artillery posts, but also at the enemy soldiers. The trenches which characterized the First World War did not yet exist. However, Sedan anticipated some elements of the following world wars: the totality of the war in which all human values are lost. What, then, is the role of history if it does not include an element of superficial morality or a politically manageable “meaning”? In order to answer this question we also need to take a wider perspective and inquire into the criteria for the meaning of reason and non-violence as reflected in the human ability to create meaning. One of such creation of meaning is visible in the still-relevant idea of *war removal* which was pointed out at the beginning of the twentieth century as a *possibility*. The First World War brought an end to the bourgeois era in Europe (Mommson 2004); despite growing discrepancies, it was a period of economic prosperity and thus growing wealth. Slowly, democratic structures emerged in the European structure, but this process found no reflection in constitutional norms. All these factors – the idea of peace, increasing prosperity, vague democratization – could not, of course, prevent the acrimonious struggle of the European powers. There emerges a pivotal question which has been discussed in history studies to this today, i.e. that the narrative of non-violence could not gain acceptance, even though it was theoretically possible. It is important to emphasize one thing here: the explication of the meaning of political violence should include different aspects, i.e. political criteria for the meaning of the key functions of government, the sociological and technological dimension of the specific military capability of the rival powers, but also some fundamental anthropological criteria. Only in combining these aspects can we approach a profound sense of the understanding of violence.

Was the war inevitable? In 1899 and 1907 the Hague Peace Conferences were organized, with a view to creating an international legal framework for the prevention of war. Their effects were short-lived. Bourgeois pacifism, which now acted in public independent of church and religion, as well as of the state and its logic, remained abrupt. The international peace societies

in London in 1843, in Paris in 1889, and later in Germany and Austria, agreed on nothing other than the idea of the global peace. Their operations were far-sighted and visionary. The International Mediation Institute, the formation of an international court of justice and the establishment of a league of nations were the requirements which became reality as late as at the end of the following century. International successes such as *Lay Down Your Arms* (Ger. *Die Waffen nieder* 1891) by B. v. Suttner or the establishment of the Army Medical Services were possible at that time. Inspired by the battle of Solferino in the Franco-Sardinian war against Austria, Henry Dunant wrote *A Memory of Solferino* and sent it to the leading political and military figures. Under the impression of 40,000 casualties and the injured, he stimulated the formation of voluntary aid organizations. A conference in Geneva took place as early as the year of the report's publication. During the conference such proposals were discussed. The "Geneva Conference" created the framework which was later followed by European countries forming the first landmark agreement of international law. In other words, humanitarian ideas and the possibility of the renunciation of violence and peace as a bourgeois principle of reason were more than just lofty ideas.

All the possibilities of the renunciation violence beg the question of how the European, and especially German elites could engage in the nationalist transformation of politics and the world war, which surpassed the radicalism of previous conflicts. The vast majority of European societies were in a transitional phase, characterized by sensitivity and fragility. The key functions of the government were in the hands of a few elites, all this taking place in spite of voting rights, which were becoming widespread. It was simple to appeal to nationalist sentiments during political upheavals. Nationalist movements gained momentum. Under the influence of the zeitgeist, they developed into imperialist ideologies, which culminated in the demanding attitude of world empires. Only those with great military capabilities were capable of surviving. Only those who had to face the war for a long period of time could survive in the rings of power. These ideas, as we know, survived throughout the extreme twentieth century. The development of mass armies, the pillarisation of powers systems, the development of warfare technologies, the arms race, but also the general consent to the emerging war – all this contributes to explaining this ideological viewpoint. The "leap in the dark" was "inevitable," as it was politically desirable, but also because it reflected a general mentality of the time (Mommsen 2004, 21–35). European societies of the late nineteenth century were walking

a “slippery slope” (ibid., 23) and they were in the atmosphere of thrall until the events of August 1914. In Germany these days were perceived as an “incomparable shared social experience” (Fest 1973, 99). This traditionally deeply divided nation, which suffered for a long time due to its internal conflicts, overcame this discrepancy by means of commitment to the war conflict. Even if this was true for only part of the population, the virtually religious character, expressed in national excitement about the future and war-related hopefulness, was evident. The general consciousness perceived the war as a welcome opportunity to escape from the misery of normality, to succumb to the process of rebellion and to submit to the hegemonic objectives. There were days of solemn deceptions that were ended in September 1918 by the hastily appointed political leadership.

Finally, we will attempt to draw conclusions and describe the turning point of the war. If we do so, we are left with an irritating reflection. It was not reasonable to assume that the masses of republican citizens would join the war. According to Kant, history was no longer about the actions of the minority, but was supposed to reflect the actions of all the people. It was a transition from unconsciousness to consciousness of purposeful action that inspired the political progress of modernity, a form of history, “in which people had only themselves as a goal” (Metz 2010, 189). This “new” meaning was formed as a collective sense, as basic concepts of humanity, nation and proletariat. But, as we know, this future fell apart during the First World War. Which criteria for meaning can we finally gather from this tragic turning point in history?

5. The significance of the site

In 1914 death was looking for a new venue. With its tens of thousands of graves, Verdun is perceived symbolically as a “graveyard of Europe” (Schlögel 2008, 435). This is an inconsistent picture, since it encompasses both orderly arrangement of cemeteries as well as the radical devaluation of human life. It is important to ask how one can now shape the memory of the Great War. The meaning of history is based on the collective perception which is reflected in the notions of the “culture of memory” and “sites of commemoration.” Since the establishment of historiography as a “pure” science, it has been considered essential to separate myth from reality and to narrate the story *as it was*. One of the most basic views here is that, despite thorough examination and unbiased assessment, history is continuously shaped and reinterpreted, and therefore it is susceptible to

political interpretation. This, of course, particularly applies to the history of war: the well-known events of a war, the turning points and battlefields, are more than just space for what is accidental and possible. They are more than nodes of individual memories; they turn into events in the culture of remembrance, in which the battle for sovereignty in interpreting events is ignited and memory takes cultural and political shape. There are a plethora of examples, e.g. Magdeburg (1631), Leipzig (1813) and Sedan (1870), which need not be discussed in great detail here. Nevertheless, the criticism of the form of memory culture, in which “only” the interests of a political formation or calculations are manifested, should be discussed thoroughly in some respects.

Is it possible to preserve *the essential moment of a site* before it becomes a political instrument? This is an interesting twist in modern historiography. As opposed to the classical way of presenting events in a chronological order, as a temporal sequence, it points to the spatiality of all human beings' stories. The idea to perceive each historical process as spatial, in which history is expressed by means of an endless effort to control space, is of the utmost importance for the present considerations. It means less political instrumentalization than existential and political reflection. The location-oriented approach may oppose long-lasting deconstruction, the fragmentation of objects, as far as it maintains the mental reproduction of coexistence and allows the retelling of the history of the twentieth century with all its horrors, discontinuities, and fractures. To perceive a site as a historical moment is nothing less than to establish a reference to a single totality of historical formations and to focus more on spatial aspects of political matters.

Let us take a look at one such historical site: the Somme, July 1916. Between Noye and the Somme there is a strip of land which grows the most traditional product of the region – sugar beet. Plowing becomes arduous when, on closer inspection, there appear strange objects, i.e. remnants of the war. Mortars, howitzer grenades, aerial torpedoes and smoke shells have been found on this site up to the present day. The Somme was not the densest battlefield of the Western Front. When compared to other gruesome statistics concerning the use of grenades and the duration of shelling, the Somme did not rank first on the list, but still, for various reasons, the majority of blind shells have been found at the Somme. The region was an extensive attack front, where as many as twenty divisions could meet and use their resources. Here, endless suffering was mixed with impressive short-term

triumphs. On 16 September 1916 Great Britain first entered the ruins of the village of Flers in their tanks. 1918 was marked by the success of the first major armored breakthrough in modern military history, whereas earlier the most critical offensive of Hindenburg was brought to a halt. John Keegan presents an image of endless battles, characterized by violent confrontations and miserable terrain: "Between Ypres and Armenteurs, water is found everywhere close beneath the surface and much of the line had to be constructed of sandbag barricades instead of trenches. Almost everywhere, too, the Germans occupied what commanding heights there were: near Ypres, the Passchendaele and Messines ridges; in the coalfields, most of the slag-heaps and, until they were destroyed, the pithead towers. Compelled to struggle for possession of the higher, drier ground, the British had driven their lines in many places almost to within conversational distance of the Germans" (Keegan 1978, 245).

In this place, as in many others, we experience everyday death, but we also recognize the criteria such as proximity and distance. Despite heavy losses incurred by the British troops Flanders became their *homeland*. Behind the lines the troops often left the trenches and looked around in the villages for a feeling of closeness, a roof to sleep under, a bed of straw, some beer, or even a place to play football. The farmers of the region learned how to make a profit during the war. They opened canteens and cafés, which offered a welcome change. The British troops "conquered" not only geographical areas, but also some attractive places nearby. One can see this from the peculiar way in which some places were named, e.g. "Armenteurs" (Armentières), "Wiper", (Ypern) and "Plugstreet Wood" (Ploegsteert). These terms do not relate to the great battles, but to inconspicuous events occurring in the background of the war. This point of view opens the possibility of commemorating the war in a special way: essential to the orientation of the human world is the inescapable spatial character of experience, the irrevocability, the slope leading to death, the finality of the existential and historical events (Rentsch 1999). Historical acquisition also includes the aspect of vulnerability, powerlessness, and other criteria, such as responsibility and guilt. The relationships which orient us in the human world do not fall to pieces, then to create a form of memory, but rather we recognize the primary forms of meaning. We recognize basic historical facts in the finite totality of the existentially structured orientation space. We can neglect the finite totality of the existential space, conceal it, and keep it from ourselves. However, in this way historical time will never become an objectively defined world history,

from which one can distance oneself. There is a basic difference between the unique ability to create meaning for the primary world, the experience that we gain in the world of inter-existentially constituted practice, and the type of experience which is scientifically plausible. Historical experience ends when the existentially political vision of the primary world begins. At that point, all attempts to learn superficial “lessons” from history fail, for the technology available to the community culture during the war does not leave the autonomy of the primary world unscathed (ibid., 110 ff.). The military and technological possibilities penetrate deep into the experience of the common world and thus violate the principles of a singular totality. Therefore, insight into the comprehensive totality of the common life is essential to create historical memory. If ethical principles are to show themselves in the face of war, they must demand nothing less than a fundamental relationship between fragility and the claim for non-violence. In our shared world we can experience practices in which there is always risk of failure; practices characterized by uncertainty and vulnerability, which constitute meaning. The meaning which can be created in this context is secured by a negative. It reflects our groundlessness and elusiveness. We can objectify neither a single totality of life as a whole nor individual outstanding events in the history. We are not able to functionalize historical events in a sense that we perceive them as examples of a greater design. In other words, we can imagine the human experience as neither individually nor politically and instrumentally goal-oriented. The shape of the meaningful life emerges only in fragmentariness, and in the experience of poverty and paucity.

CHRISTIAN WEVELSIEP

Studied educational theory, philosophy, and political science. He finished his Ph.D in special educational theory in Dortmund as well as political sociology in Flensburg, Germany. He is currently working as teacher in Bochum and as external “Privatdozent” at the University of Flensburg. His main focuses of research are: theory of society, anthropology and ethics, and the history of modern violence. At the moment he is working on a monograph about the history of the war from basic anthropological view.

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MEMORY IN THE DIGITAL AGE: FIRST WORLD WAR AND ITS REPRESENTATION ON THE WEB

Aleksandra Pawliczek, PhD

Free University of Berlin

Friedrich-Meinecke-Institut, Institute of History

Department of History and Cultural Studies

ABSTRACT

In preparation for the centenary of 1914, a great deal of new sources and new information are being made available online as part of various projects. The selection of materials reflects the importance of the war for the national or regional remembrance and self-understanding. The materials as such are still fragmented and research through digital methods is possible only to a limited extent. The importance attached to the online availability of sources varies substantially between countries. The idea, on the one hand, that historical knowledge is ubiquitous in the digital era, and the amount of information available on the other hand, distort our perception of the value of the preserved materials, their actual relevance, and their geographical and institutional distribution.

The increasing digitization being carried out in various disciplines by individuals and institutions has contributed to the intensification and visualization of numerous historical discourses in recent years. As the centenary of the outbreak of World War I is about to be celebrated, the focus of research and the public attention has been particularly on this war, which entered the cultural memory of Europe and the world as the “Great War” and the “great seminal catastrophe” of the twentieth century (George F. Kennan). Memory of the first great war has changed over the past century. However, War World I has not lost its relevance to the individual and collective sphere of memories, as shown by the ongoing lively discussion on particular aspects and the general phenomenon of the war.

This is partly due to media dissemination and availability. It is especially visual content, such as movies and photographs which easily lodges in the

cultural memory, because of its direct visual impact. This process is also facilitated by the digital format of the materials available on the Internet, sometimes as materials in the public domain. Other forms of sources which pertain to the important events in the national and international context of 1914–1918 are being increasingly digitized, and the choice of materials and events for remembering indicates the self-images of those who remember.

In preparation for the centenary of 1914, a variety of new (source) information is being made available online as part of various national, European, and global projects, in the form of digitized materials or documents (EFG, EFG1914, 2013–07–15), virtual museum galleries, compilations of historical and socio-historical data, or selections of pre-existing archival material (IWM1914, 2013–05–16). A number of institutions and associations of institutions are mobilizing their workforces to provide researchers and the general public with access to condensed and interconnected information on the state of research and to sources related to World War I, using existing digital methods and practices, all on theme-based sites (CENDARI, FWWS, 2013–05–30). Numerous archives, libraries and museums are digitizing their collections and making them available (KS1914–1918, 2013–07–13). New virtual research communities are being created, becoming very active in publishing online articles, reports, and blogs about individual aspects of First World War research and offering links to other websites (GrandeGuerre; Calenda; WW1Centenary, 2013–07–21).

Information and sources

It is hardly possible to provide an overview of the past, present, and planned activities. Numerous conferences are to be held in the coming years, and there are a great number of publications and new research projects in progress. Hence, the visibility of individual initiatives might decrease. A systematic overview is not conceivable at the moment, though preparations for summer 2014 and the following years are now going full speed. We can, however, reflect on the developments so far, which have enhanced – or even initiated – the increase in online information resources relevant to research, the culture of memory, and remembrance policy. In this context, it is the secondary information on historical sources – and the digitized historical sources themselves – whose online publication is particularly worth analyzing. The online presence and visibility of remembrance might allow the regional cultures of memory to be considered (e.g. the case of Australians and New Zealanders, but also that of British and German officials). On the other hand,

online publications might result in a (new) imbalance in the knowledge and understanding of the existing historical sources relating to World War I. This could, as implied by the principle “on the Internet – in the world,” result in determining and limiting research focuses and interests and, consequently, lead to a narrowing of “collective memory” (Moller 2010; Erll 2011, 5f, 41ff.). A one-sided visibility creates an imbalance: aspects and historical sources relevant to the memory of events remain unseen as they find no representation on the Internet. It should be noted here that the presence and the activities of specific “communicators of memory” largely depend on the financial and human resources at their disposal, and more resources might be allocated when the events – or War World I in this case – play a central role in the “collective memory.”

The memory (memories) of World War I

What kind of a war do we remember? This question is directly related to how we remember and document past events and, consequently, it is particularly relevant in the context of the digital sources. The national narratives of the Great War differ, depending on the war experience and its consequences (White 1990, 1ff, 27ff.; Reimann 2004). Therefore it makes sense to have at least a cursory look at the preparations for the 1914 anniversary from a regional, national, and international perspective. This will make it possible to see how current research approaches relate to the range of digitized primary and secondary sources, and to use this knowledge to comment on the preparations.

The duration of World War I differed in various regions, and so did the impact of the war, both in terms of the army and the civilians. The moments and sites of memory which have been created reflect this imbalance. In many national narratives, the “great seminal catastrophe” of the twentieth century tends to be perceived as a “seminal event,” an event that triggered developments, or as an identity-building turn in the historical reorientation process. The collective experience did not result in a collective narration: the war experience preserved its specific regional or national character. The battles of attrition in France, the infringement of Belgium’s neutrality, the mobilization of Commonwealth forces from Australia, New Zealand, or Canada for a geographically distant war overseas – all this shaped the general perception of the event and produced the central issues for the public memory in a given country, which often correspond to the private identity. The problem begins with the differences in defining the dates of

World War I. The assassination in Sarajevo is, admittedly, generally accepted as the direct cause of the conflict. However, the Balkan Wars of 1912–13 might also be perceived, depending on one's point of view, as a directly related historical context and the origin of the global conflict (Becker und Kutbay 2013). In some countries, 11 November 1918 is commemorated as the Armistice Day, whereas in the United Kingdom it is celebrated as Remembrance Day. On the other hand, it is ANZAC Day on 25 April that is observed in Australia, New Zealand, and Tonga. This day of remembrance, a national holiday since as early as 1927, commemorates the landing at Gallipoli and the battle of 1915 which inflicted heavy losses. In Poland, on the other hand, since 1937/1989 11 November has been celebrated as National Independence Day, the anniversary of the restoration of the Polish state, even though it was not until 1921, after the end of the Polish-Soviet War, that Poland's eastern borders were established by the Peace of Riga. For Germany, the armistice of Compiègne was seen as a huge failure – and one which the Germans did not consider to be their fault for many years. However, the memory of Compiègne faded after 1945, supplanted by World War II (Mommsen 2004, 200ff). In the Soviet Union, the end of the war was not commemorated after the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk of 1917. Instead, it was the victorious revolution which was celebrated for many years, though it took some time to deal with the vision of the revolution as a “conspiracy” (RussiaWW1, 2013–07–29). Similarly, it was neither the long years of hardship nor the loss of the status of a major power that became the cornerstone for the Turkish national remembrance policy after the end of the Ottoman Empire. Instead, the remembrance policy would focus on the war of liberation of 1919–1923, also called a revolutionary war, which later developed into “elitist Kemalism,” while still claiming and preserving the power to interpret and construct memory (Plaggenborg 2012, 69ff.; Akin 2013; NAQ 2013). Furthermore, it is well known that the genocide of the Armenians has had a special status in the official narrative (Akçam 2012, 227ff. 373ff). This list of historical narratives could be extended to describe the specific situations of the Baltic States, Ukraine, Greece, Belgium, Sweden, and the United States. The multiplicity of narratives concerning the significance of World War I finds its reflection in historiography, and new moments of memory may be created in the process of historical research. The general perception of the war and, consequently, its public image and interpretation, have undergone fundamental changes. This is even more true now, when eyewitnesses are no longer among us, and World War I is gradually becoming a thing of the past, a closed series of events. The narratives are fairly

constant, yet not inflexible. The “war enthusiasm,” the *Augusterlebnis* (“August experience”), and the “Spirit of 1914” have already been deconstructed in many countries (Becker 1977; Kruse 1991, 73f.; Verhey 2000; Pennell 2012). In Germany in particular, dealing with “the question of responsibility for the war” resulted in a heated debate and the famous “Fischer controversy” of the 1960s (Fischer 2000 [1961]; Große Kracht 2005, 47ff.; Große Kracht 2004). New research questions emerged that refuted the image of Germany as an innocent participant in the war, which had previously been generally accepted among the Germans.

National and European remembrance

Though some researchers adapt comparative approaches and focus on world relations and interdependences in experiencing and coming to terms with phenomena, the hermeneutic approach to the culture of memory of World War I continues to exist (Krammeritsch 2009, 1f, 6f.). The narratives can be most easily contextualized if they are presented in the traditional way, which by no means meets the demands of “transnationality” or “globality.” Memory of World War I is still fragmented, mostly at the national level, but also in regional terms, and the provision of information is, in most cases, limited to nations, and to institutions as well, as the fragmentation results not only from the multiplicity of national narratives, but also from administrative responsibilities. Nevertheless, such institutional, political, or conceptual limitations can be overcome through virtual links, which allow them to complement, extend, and transnationalize information. The question therefore arises as to whether the new “digital history” will create the necessary preconditions for national memory to acquire a European, or even a global dimension. Will it allow or facilitate access to other lines of research and, most importantly, to other historical sources?

There is no shortage of initiatives created to pursue this approach. Besides the above-mentioned scientific, private, and public sites, making it possible for the community of professional or amateur historians to exchange information, there are projects that seek to create platforms for working together to make primary information available beyond state and institutional borders. Even though World War I is not always in the focus, all the projects still contribute to the digitization and the on-line publication process of sources relevant to this topic. The projects are of limited duration and their future is often unclear. A lasting solution to the problem of the long-term preservation of digital information is yet to be found, but every

project gives us hope that we are getting closer. At the European level, three main aggregator projects of great public impact can be identified, all three of which seek to contribute to transnationality and to the public or open access to archival data: *Europeana Collections*, *European Film Gateway EFG1914*, and *Archives Portal Europe* (APEX).

The *Europeana Collections 1914–18* project (as opposed to *Europeana 1914–1918*, focusing on family memorabilia from World War I) aims to present digital war collections from ten European libraries in 2014. This means making around 400,000 “sources” available to the public, including books and diaries, newspapers, maps, children’s literature, photographs, posters, pamphlets, and leaflets (EC1914–1918, 2013–07–26). These are partly archival materials, even though archival institutions as such do not participate in this subproject. The whole process is voluntary and it is the libraries which decide on the choice of materials for digitization. The collections of the National Library of Serbia, presented in the form of a virtual exhibition, with a great variety of visual materials and fewer texts, are a good example here (SNB, 2013–07–18).

EFG1914, on the other hand, presently includes as many as around 780 documents available on-line: newsreels, documentaries, and feature films relating to World War I, as well as film-related written materials, hailing from twenty-one European (film) archives in fifteen European countries, including Denmark, Belgium, Austria, Germany, Poland, Romania, the United Kingdom, Italy, and Estonia (EFG1914, 2013–07–15). The list of the movies available on-line can be found on the website of the project (EFG1914-Titles, 2013–07–26). All in all, it is a great repository, a veritable treasure trove which opens up the very much neglected medium of film for researchers and for all those interested, and also provides the users with contextual metadata. Still, EFG1914 is far from presenting all the relevant materials and important historical information. Once again, it is the institutions themselves which decide on participation in the project and the choice of materials to be made available.

The goal of APEX is quite different: first of all, the project is not devoted to World War I. Secondly, it defines itself as a “single access point” for European archival research. In the light of cooperation with national archives from twenty-eight European states, this appears justifiable (APEX, APEnet, 2013–07–18; Jeller 2013, 96f). Like other initiatives, the project strives to

extend its cooperation, both in the geographical and the institutional sense, which should lead to an increase in the amount of information available. In compliance with the archival standards for cataloguing and accessibility, the portal offers access to source guides and finding aids, along with both simple and hierarchical search functions with respect to individual countries, institutions, as well as specific funds and collections. Those users who are familiar with how the archive materials are structured will be able to find materials relating to World War I in the categories. If need be, one can also consult the dates of files; at the moment, the Archives Portal Europe includes no audio-visual materials.

These are only a few projects out of many. Numerous institutions – archives, libraries, and museums – have already put information about their collections online, either individually or in cooperation with other institutions (from the same country or region), or they are working on the presentation of war-related archival materials at the moment. Here we might mention only a few projects of this kind. The US National Archives and Records Administration, for instance, works in cooperation with regional archives and other institutions from the Washington D.C. area (ARC, 2013–07–18). Several years ago, Belgian archivists created a comprehensive inventory of relevant funds and collections of nearly all the Belgian institutions and published it as a PDF file (Vanden Bosch et. al., 2010). The Imperial War Museum from the UK set up online galleries which include not only descriptions of the items (documents, movies, photographs), but also excerpts from audio-visual materials. Moreover, in cooperation with JISC and the Wellcome Trust the museum published a list of war-related collections in British institutions (JISC-WW1, 2013–07–25). The Austrian National Library, on the other hand, works on digitizing numerous newspapers and magazines, including those published in 1914–18. Digital copies of many issues are now fully available on-line (ANNO, 2013–07–17). A similar project has been initiated by the National Library of Poland in cooperation with the Warsaw University Library. The number of digitized Polish magazines is not large yet, but it is on the rise (E-KCP, 2013–07–17). The *Arbeitsgemeinschaft deutscher Regionalbibliotheken* (a working group in the German Library Association *dbv*, concerned specifically with regional libraries) aims to publish their “war collections” by 2014. These include not only war literature, but also “field and trench newspapers from the front area, prints from military hospitals and prison camps, newspapers from occupied areas and the “home-land press” published by communities, associations, schools, companies or

congregations for front-line soldiers,” as well as “war maps, posters and leaflets, photographs, letters and diaries from the front, remains of the war economy such as emergency money and food ration cards,” along with “vivat ribbons, postcards, commemorative coins, postmarks and porcelain pieces with war motifs” (BLB, 2013–07–18). Archives are compiling lists of their war-related sources in the form of thematic guides and inventories (LA-NRW, 2013–07–29; Menzel 2013). General information on World War I has also been published in Germany as part of a special scientific web site (Clio, 2013–07–16).

Once again we find a great deal of digital information in various forms and implementations, a fragmented, regionally-oriented mass of data in which no transnational systematization can be identified whatsoever: isolated, manageable collections, visually attractive materials, along with archival systems and inventories. All of this information offers numerous possibilities for linking and complementing at the regional, national, and international level, at the public or official level, or for private use and processing. How to introduce links and cross-references, and whether they will be introduced at all – this is yet to be decided.

Private and the public remembrance

The topic of online sources relating to World War I is still far from being exhausted. On the one hand, some archival sources are made available for private purposes, such as genealogy and family history, but also the history of everyday life (*Alltagsgeschichte*). Lists of the fallen, soldiers, and war prisoners can be found, for instance, on the websites of British, Australian, and New Zealand national institutions (IWMLives; NA-OC; NA-YA; NAA; ANZ; CWGC, 2013–07–17), or the website of the In Flanders Fields Museum in Belgium (IFF, 2013–07–17). Furthermore, private documents are published on rather well-ordered, institutionally run sites or, at least, on public domain websites, which are reasonably clear and verifiable, and offer critical analyses of sources. Once again, we have to make a clear distinction. On the one hand, there are initiatives run by archives such as the US National Archives, which provide clear information on the origin and license of the ‘crowdsourced’ materials (NARA, 2013–07–18). On the other hand, we can find sites which apply the same methodology to the publication of highly diverse and fragmented materials in the public domain, as exemplified by the above-mentioned Europeana 1914–1918 project (World War I in everyday documents; Europeana 1914–1918, 2013–07–18) and the Great War Archive,

where anyone interested can share their family stories, along with documents which illustrate them (GWA, 2013–07–19). Here we should also mention the considerable (audio)visual resources of Wikimedia Commons, which, according to their own information, consist of over 17 million data files, including thematic collections on topics such as “World War I” or “Russian Revolution,” published either in the public domain with no copyright restrictions, or under various free licenses (WikiMedia, 2013–07–19). Nevertheless, the use of these online collections can be extremely problematic, as the conflict with the German Federal Archives in Koblenz has shown. In 2010, after numerous cases of copyright violation of photographs from their collections, the Federal Archives parted ways with the site (Kilb 2011).

The discussion about this kind of *public history*, which “considers the public as a reference to its practice” and tries to function as “a bridge between the process of dealing with the past in the society, the academic way of producing historical knowledge, and the politically motivated reinforcement of collective stories” (Tomann et. al. 2011, 11f.), has already started among experts who, however, have not placed particular emphasis on the digital aggravation of the problem. In the context of World War I, the attempt to engage the general public in the historical work, to preserve the authoritative power of interpretation belonging to memory institutions and to provide an academically sound methodological and theoretical basis for the general participation in cultural remembrance activities take on a particular importance. The temporal distance paired with the lasting public impact of World War I make it a remarkable case for applied history and for questions related to the way private and public memories are handled and produced. The protection periods of the archived materials have mostly expired, especially in terms of personal data protection. The issues of copyrights and rights of exploitation can also be usually solved beyond any doubt. Private genealogical research is booming and bringing new needs into play. The undying interest in the history of everyday life, “the history of ordinary people,” that of veterans and invalids, of the home front in general or the role of women in particular, contributes to the process of reselecting and reevaluating available sources. Therefore, the documents presented often take into account the current popularity and development of specialist and amateur history. The recorded memory acts as a link between what was experienced, what was handed down, and what was constructed. It prescind from national or even global perspectives and breaks down major events to private memories and sources.

Rudimentary metadata on the provenance and the item at least to some extent provides a methodological approach. However, more and more databanks and fora are being created as a result of private initiatives. These include, most importantly, genealogical source collections, but family stories are also made public by means of private documents (e.g. ICEM; Fourteeneighteen; LLT; Iten; Ancestry, 2013–07–21). Private materials often create vivid impressions of “the war behind the great war” and offer sources that cannot be found in any archives, as they are stored in private cases and photo albums. The critical evaluation of these sources seems, however, to pose a problem, not least because of their eclectic randomness, which is difficult to grasp with scientific methods: it is by no means a representative selection, and its usability for research purposes remains questionable (Stahlgewitter, 2013–07–19).

The reliability of this kind of sources, regardless of whether they belong to institutional or private collections, is limited also in another respect. Although digital files do not replace the original documents or movies, and the material sources stored in archival institutions can compensate for the unverifiability of digital sources, the constant data migration, which often results in a loss of information, makes it more difficult to provide references to specific sources. Links function only for a limited period of time, references to sources used become obsolete after several years. Digital technology is in a constant state of development, and proprietary formats with no built-in solutions for sustainability are used. Their usability depends on the will and existence of the companies that control and maintain them. This adds to the instability of available information and reduces its reference value.

However, the popularity of digital information is relevant, especially now, when the celebration of the centenary of the outbreak of World War I begins. The existence and diversity of digital information indicates the interdependency between the use of historical material on the one hand, and its availability or dissemination on the other. The increasing demand for specific types of sources correlates with their priority in various digitization projects; at the same time, however, the digital availability of these types of sources may result in their increased visibility (Hettling and Echterkamp 2013, 11 ff; Terzieva 2013).

Availability vs. unavailability, or mass vs. quality

In this digital dialectic, narratives of memory meet sources of memory. It would be an oversimplification to interpret official digital information

resources on the Internet as just a service for the interested public. On the other hand, digital resources are often in compliance with some of the official precepts of remembrance policy, which in turn are shaped by public opinion, research, and politics, with all the upswings and downturns, and the whole restructuring process that has taken place in recent decades. Creating a comprehensive system is desirable, yet not viable for the time being, neither at the national nor the transnational level. Identifying priorities by means of more or less transparent selection criteria is therefore a must if we want to have at least a basic overview of existing materials. Despite the fragmentation, such an overview would reflect the range and diversity of the historical material relevant to World War I. The context of the available fragments of memories is, however, not always evident. It is not rare for projects and institutions to publish information about the share of digitized collection items in the entire archive contents. The National Archives in the UK have digitized about 5% of its contents so far (NA-OR, 2013–07–14), the German Federal Archives claim to have a “representative selection of over 200,000 pictures” out of the total number of eleven million (BA-DB, 2013–07–29). Details of the written materials are not provided. In Poland, seven million scans of documents from all the Polish archives have been recently put into one central state archive, the National Digital Archives, and another set of two million scans is scheduled for 2013 (NAC; Szukaj, 2013–07–24). The website of the initiative features a sample of around 200,000 documents, mostly photographs, which, at the moment, translates into a bit more than 1% of the entire archive contents, with a tendency toward growth (NAC-online, 2013–07–24). Nevertheless, the data usually lack topic-related specifications, and users cannot determine how much material relating to World War I is actually available. Moreover, the material included in the digital collections varies considerably, and includes not only the actual digitized items, such as documents or photographs, but also digitized finding aids and inventories, i.e. lists with titles of files or photographs, without the respective content in a digital form.

The information that seventeen million data files can be found on Wiki-Commons is also very confusing and deprived of any context, as it does not allow us to draw any conclusions as to how many millions of items have yet to be digitized. Analogously, the participation of ten national libraries in the Europeana Collections project allows us only to determine and narrow down the integrated information, but it does not give any overview on those collections which have not been included in the project.

It not infrequently happens that large amounts of information conceal the fact that all the relevant data cannot be found online. There is so much material available (despite its fragmentation) that it has already become unmanageable, and because of the numerous parallel research possibilities we already have, it is easy to overlook what has yet to be published. In other words, you see such a massive amount of data that you no longer notice what you cannot see.

The unavailability of information on relevant materials means that we face the danger of considering whatever is available in digital form as conclusive. The selection of relevant information may reflect certain valid political or scientific criteria, which thus reproduce themselves and reduce room for innovation, new questions, and research. National images are perpetuated, valid theories and methods are applied and reinforced. The selection and structure of available materials depend on the relevance of the World War for the regional and national historiography.

Therefore, the question must be asked which criteria we adopt, and what significance we attach to respective archival sources when deciding on the digitization and publication of materials. It is also important to discuss the gaps and to indicate clearly the context of online collections, not only in the historical and critical sense, but also simply by means of numbers and statistics. Digital information does not replace the war-related physical material which is stored on the shelves of archives, waiting for someone to discover, interpret, digitize, and publish it – material existing in such quantities that achieving full digital availability in the national and international context might be impossible.

It should be mentioned that these gaps of unavailability are of a diverse nature. On the one hand, there are “perfectly normal” gaps caused by war, destruction, theft, and other disasters. Historical research must be able to come to terms with the gaps of this kind, and has indeed learned how to do this; they are part of the discipline. On the other hand, we have gaps in the presentation of digital information. It is true that archives and other institutions are not allowed to put online materials which generally cannot be published – partially or in full – due to their legal status, i.e. because they contain personal or copyright-protected data. However, as various portals offer the chance to see how various items relate to each other, it seems highly relevant to include the information about the items which are part of a given collection or a set of data but have not been made available.

In terms of the materials relating to World War I, the legal restrictions, at least concerning archival protection periods, are limited. Due to the time that has elapsed since their creation, written records related to individuals have become freely accessible. Questions of copyrights, rights of exploitation and use, which apply especially to audio and visual materials, are more difficult to examine.¹

Finally, there is yet another kind of gap: digitization gaps, which may be the easiest ones to fill by means of technology, but at the same time they require the greatest amount of time, and human and financial resources. For legal reasons institutions are allowed to digitize only on their own, as outsourcing could, depending on the contract with a proprietary company, result in the loss of rights to the digital version, or even to the material as such. Archives and libraries are not authorized to make such decisions, and it cannot be in their interest to lose control over archival information as a result.

In view of the large amounts of stored materials, the comprehensive and systematic digitization and publication of all archival sources, with or without thematic profiles, at the institutional or at the national level, can hardly be seen as a goal. It is necessary to make a selection. Anniversaries offer at least a starting point for the selection. Still, the digitization of archival materials involves the digitization of context materials, i.e. metadata. It is mostly about presenting classifications, special hierarchical lists (*Tektonikbäume*), and finding aids for respective collections, which include the information about the origin, creators (creating institutions), content, and titles of items (e.g. files). Thematic guides and inventories which show whether the existing collections are relevant to World War I – like the above-mentioned Belgian project or the inventory of the Westphalia branch in the archives in North Rhine-Westphalia – already reveal how extensive each of the thematic compilations is supposed to be. In nearly all collections which include items dating back to 1914–1918 (or 1912–1913/1919–1921), we can find historical materials relating to World War I, its causes and consequences. These might be useful depending on our research interests and questions, as well as trends in historiography, which we can hardly anticipate. If we know where we can find the material we need, it obviously adds to its visibility and usability. However, behind each and every title in all the finding guides and inventories of all institutions there is a document or, often enough, a set of documents, a specific administrative file which describes a specific administrative process. The file may comprise several hundred pages – and

every page would be an object of digitization. This simple calculation makes it clear that most documents, files, reports, letters, and orders will still be available for examination and intellectual work exclusively on-site, and not on the ubiquitous Internet. The availability of isolated digital versions of representative written materials, declarations of war and peace treaties, only proves this rule, and the digitization process of this material is not free of redundancies, not least because it is multilingual.

Therefore, in the digitization process of single archival items the preference has been given so far to visual media (Europeana 1914–1918; LOC-WW1; NLS; BfZ, BA-PD, 2013–07–25). No matter how high its resolution is, a three-hundred-page file, which makes you click over and over again to open one digitized page after another, is no competition for the kind of direct visual availability that posters, photographs, maps, plans, or movies offer. Besides their quantitative manageability, these historical items bring yet another advantage: they appear to be immediately accessible, even though they cannot, by definition, be treated as information separate from the context description: the time or place of creation, other details of origin, and the content. The authentication of these items, a task carried out traditionally by archives, has been made even more difficult due to digital processing. There is no need to discuss the possibility of manipulating digital images here. At any rate, visual materials rely much less on textuality, whereas the multilingual nature of written sources determines – and will always determine – their usability.

Searching and finding on the Internet

It is clear that all fora, portals and digital collections offer only what is already available as digital information. Some countries take active part in the digitization and publication process, whereas others have, at least so far, been somewhat reluctant. The costs are huge, and the financial participation of different institutions and countries varies tremendously, depending both on economic considerations and the general cultural or political status of the event known as “World War I” and the related archive material in the public eye.

Therefore, (at least) two questions must be posed. The first one is: What do we actually find online, and how much of all the data is available? Or, in other words, what can we do in order to remember all the material that is not available online, but can be accessed otherwise? And the second question is: What searching possibilities can we introduce to the existing material so

that, in the mass of information, we can find what we are looking for – and maybe also what we are not looking for? This is also, implicitly, a question of old and new orders of knowledge, as different domains of knowledge meet in digital space, representing different “logics” of cataloguing and browsing: archive and library, historians and humanities scholars, technicians or computer scientists, laymen and experts.

As in the case of the analogue organization of information, digital information services can only be as good as the recorded and searchable information, as good as material indexing and the range and granularity of the metadata produced. Information linking, connecting published data to authority files, with controlled vocabularies and existing thematic ontologies, obviously make the data more visible at the transinstitutional and transnational levels, and consequently, raise their value – and we can indeed observe such a tendency. At least, we are exploring the possibilities of how “allied material,” stored in other places and in other countries, may be indexed, and how we can bring digital technologies to archives’ daily work (ICARUS; EnArC, 2013–05–12). Nevertheless, the processes of making digital information available usually still run parallel and in isolation. The creation of associations and common catalogues of associated institutions, practiced by libraries for decades, once played a different role for archives. Due to the singularity of collected archival holdings, no synergy of cooperative search catalogues was to be expected (SEZAM, 2013–07–12; Archivschule, 2013–07–30). However, global linking not only increases the visibility of the archive’s own material, it also improves the chances of integrating and contextualizing the unique historical material, and, consequently, the chances of its reproduction and linking, as well as, to a certain extent, the chances of achieving “transcendence” of the knowledge contained in documents.

For the time being, digital archive information is ordered in the same way as its analogue equivalent. The hierarchical structure of the general classification (described as *Beständetechnik* by German archivists) preserves the context in which the material was created and, consequently, its historical authenticity and contextuality. For those scientists who are familiar with how archives are organized, this kind of structure saves a lot of work. Other users need to learn the archival methods in order to use available digital aids.

The traditional ways of ordering and searching correspond to the logic of archives, but not to the logic of the World Wide Web, through which

the information is supposed to be accessible. The nearly endless mass of unorganized information online has led to the use of computer-generated full-text databases and search engines for browsing. The full-text search has become the customary way of acquiring information on the Internet. We are affected by the “Google syndrome.” Search engines are able to deliver results for almost all queries. Nevertheless, the completeness of results, and the results as such, cannot be verified (Haber 2011, 73ff.).

At this point we should discuss an aspect which is particularly important to the full-text search. The available digital information on historical materials, as well as the digitized materials themselves, are machine-readable only to a limited extent. Therefore, they are mostly invisible to search engines. The information does not use of the constitutive elements of the World Wide Web, such as hyperlinks or hypertextualization. Optical Character Recognition (OCR) is not used for most documents, so the textual data on the Internet are not processed. The information is static and to a certain extent analogue, despite its apparent digital format.

This means that if you want to find a specific piece of information, you have to know where to look for it, i.e. on which pages. This is a severe restriction, which does not make it any easier to browse through documents. You are provided only with the search results whose existence you have at least presupposed. Moreover, the information, particularly in the form of a text, often cannot be found, which is due to the large differences in access options, i.e. the diverse keyword indexing, which is sometimes less than systematic and does not comply with authority files. The indices used by institutions are usually based on original expressions from the document: If we search for “World War I” in archive data banks (regardless of the language we use) we find hardly any World War I documents in the results. This hardly comes as a surprise, for when the war started, it was not yet referred to as “World War I.” In archival practice it is the original titles of documents that are used for reference. Furthermore, the additional title information in institutional databanks can only be searched by keywords, which are, as we have mentioned above, still very much unorganized (LOCSH, 2013–07–29).

Of course, the Google principle also brings unexpected, lucky finds – but search engine research is only as good as keyword indexing and information linking, quite apart from the (in)completeness discussed above. Hence, we have two scenarios, which seem contradictory. On the one hand, we have

the targeted search for clearly defined information on websites that can be considered to be informative and authoritative. On the other hand, there is randomness, which may – or may not – lead to unexpected discoveries. In both the cases of the eclecticism and the “white noise” of lucky finds, further investigation aiming at a lasting scientific approach and authenticity is needed.

Advantages and disadvantages of digital source research

It is a pipe dream to imagine that it will ever be possible to create a system that would comprise all the available online materials and show every piece of the existing information in the context of related data. It is probably just as naïve to believe that we could ever achieve a completeness of information, so that all the global knowledge would find equal and full digital representation. Similarly, we will never make the information available and verifiable in its entirety (Haber 2011, 75ff.).

In the end, the historian is left to deal with the problem by himself. He has to rely on the scientific methods at his disposal, including the source-critical method. The scientific eclecticism that may and does emerge from the ample supply of war-related sources and secondary information available online, from the information compiled with the help of algorithmic randomized calculations, is prone to reinforce the existing lines of research and, sometimes, to serve the opaque interests of information providers. A critical approach is therefore necessary, so that the Google principle does not undermine the established scientific instruments used in historical sciences, and so that we can benefit – using such instruments – from the massive amount of available information, which is able to and indeed does create new digital structures of knowledge. Traditional methods of scientific verification are more in demand than ever. The fragmentation, or even atomization of knowledge about World War I suggests the need to relearn online search methods, and to ensure, once again, their validity, in order to filter out the scientifically relevant information from the unsystematic and unorganized masses of data. The more difficult it becomes for the user – the historian – to synthesize data, the more important this need is. “Hybrid information research,” which draws equally upon analogue and digital sources, is a viable path for the moment (Haber 2011, 91ff.).

Searching historical online resources is still time-consuming if we do not want to use the Google principle. The extensive range of fragmented information leaves us with an impression of information overload, which makes it

extremely difficult to integrate and evaluate individual fragments. Nevertheless, information is not tantamount to knowledge when presented and processed outside of any context. The context is mostly still stored in analogue form, and due to the diversity and the amount of archival sources relating to World War I, this will not change in the foreseeable future. Paleographic or linguistic knowledge remains crucial to source work, whereas problems of authentication and data integrity require methodological development.

Despite all these concerns, the immense research activity relating to World War I is an enormous advantage for the international community of historians. On the one hand, it allows them to reflect on their own working methods in the digital era, which in turn leads to increased exchange between the specialist and the public domain. On the other hand, the open access projects, portals, and other initiatives on the World Wide Web described above allow for stronger networking and participation, getting involved in discussion fora, conferences, lines of research, new research questions and perspectives. We have achieved unprecedented transparency of globally active communities and individual researchers. The utopia of free knowledge and free access to historical resources emerges here, for the ongoing process must be *seen* as a process, as a way toward an as-yet-unknown goal. In theory, everyone can take part in charting the course. In this way, a public space, an “endless archive,” the ultimate site of memory in historical remembrance would be created in a utopian absoluteness of (re)presented knowledge, providing a basis for nearly all research paths and interests. As it stands, everyone can serve as a source or produce new sources.

Nevertheless, the digitization of information brings also other, more pragmatic advantages. Materials can be accessed from anywhere, which also means saving time. The knowledge of what you can find and what you cannot find somewhere makes it easier to decide whether you want to embark on a journey to see other materials stored in the archives. Furthermore, the randomness, which results from the lack of systematic structure, may, from time to time, render precisely the “right” results and provide us with a completely new research perspective. Within the incompleteness, a lot of historical work is possible and conceivable.

Digital archives and the memory of World War I

This concludes our brief overview of the digital activities just before the centenary of the outbreak of World War I. The structure of the paper

reflects the attempt to analyze various digital resources with respect to certain problems of particular relevance to historiography. A more comprehensive approach, involving individual verification of national sources, but also of the commercial and password-protected sources, has yet to be slated (as of 2013). This kind of presentation would suffer from the problems that are the focus of this article: gaps and discrepancies in the visibility of existing, but not always digitized information.

The selection of material, based on its relevance to the research or to the public, primarily reflects the selection criteria, and not the existing material as such. On the one hand, the digitization boom increases the importance of archival material types often neglected in historical research: elusive audio files are being rescued from oblivion, the visual media of film and photography are becoming increasingly important. This increases the imbalance between the visual and audio material on the one hand, and the textual material on the other. Text is less attractive, as text sources and their contextualization may require more work.

The more important the Internet is for the world and communities of experts, the more non-digitized materials – and also those materials that have been made available in digital format – become invisible or impossible to find, and the greater the risk of interpreting existing materials as conclusive. In this context, the question of material and financial resources only increases.

On the other hand, we have also observed a regional and national imbalance. Whereas in some countries we have observed a real digital “frenzy” in relation to World War I, large parts of Europe and the world have (so far) remained indifferent. The reasons for this situation vary: of course, finances play a fundamental role. But is it possible to look at the situation from the reverse point of view, and to draw – from the lack of financial resources – conclusions about the importance of World War I in the political and public awareness?

Certainly, we can observe an accumulation of project and archive work in English-speaking countries, with the British at the forefront, followed by New Zealanders, Canadians, and Australians. At the moment, it is still unclear whether (and to what extent) some activities are intended mostly for the “Decade of Commemoration,” and will not be continued afterwards (e.g. IrelandWW1, 2013–07–29). In the case of British historiography, Stephen

Heathorn even speaks of a “mnemonic turn,” which consists in the historicization of World War I in the changing memory and, consequently, the confirmation of the great impact that the war has had on public perception (Heathorn 2005; Todman 2012). The centenary of World War I is also being given striking prominence in the German-speaking countries, manifesting itself in information-aggregating platforms and numerous conferences, but also in the private domain. We find no similar number of projects in Eastern and Southern European countries, nor in the territories of the former Ottoman and Russian empires. In World War I research these countries, as well as those in the Middle East or Africa, are seen from the point of view of international narratives, influenced by the West-European or Anglo-Saxon perceptions. Will the histories of these countries, along with its national interpretation, lose their visibility? Will their cultural memory be reduced to a research subject? Or perhaps, intensive activities, possibly non-institutional ones, will soon be initiated in these countries to complement and influence the national and international remembrance discourse on World War I? This remains to be seen.

ALEKSANDRA PAWLICZEK

She studied modern and recent history, political science, as well as journalism and communication studies in Göttingen, Bristol and Berlin, followed by a doctorate from Humboldt University of Berlin on Jewish scientists in the German Empire and the Weimar Republic. During her doctoral studies, she also completed an archival training at the Prussian Secret State Archives in Berlin (Ausbildung für den höheren Archivdienst am Geheimen Staatsarchiv PK). She is a qualified scientific archivist for the Secret State Archives and the Federal Commissioner for the Stasi Archives. Since 2012 she has worked as a coordinator of the EU-funded CENDARI (Collaborative European Digital Archival Infrastructure) project at the Free University of Berlin.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Different archive laws in Germany, Europe and all over the world provide different protection periods for personal archive data. These end ca. 100 years after the birth or ca. 10 years after the death of the persons in question. Similarly, there are differences in the protection periods related to the copyrights and rights of exploitation and use.

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THE CHRISTMAS TRUCE OF 1914 – REMEMBERED IN 2005. THE STAGING OF EUROPEAN SIMILARITIES IN THE MOVIE *MERRY CHRISTMAS – JOYEUX NOËL*

Maja Bächler, PhD

Humboldt-University Berlin

Faculty of Philosophy, Institute for Social
Sciences, Department of Political Theory

ABSTRACT

The film Merry Christmas/Joyeux Noël by Christian Carion depicts the “war Christmas” of 1914 in the trenches of a German, a French and a Scottish division. While the film starts out as just another war film with genre-stereotypical requisites and narrative structures, the story takes a twist when a soldier begins singing Silent Night on Christmas Eve. Through the music and its religious content, the soldiers begin to leave their trenches and fraternize with their supposed enemies. The Christmas party sparks the realization that the bond between the soldiers – regardless of their origin – is stronger than their ties to the generals sitting by the firesides. Made in 2005, Merry Christmas tells us about remembrance and the amnesia of the First World War in recent times. The film adjures Christianity, classical music, and comradeship as common European roots at a time when the EU is failing to deepen its collaboration. Furthermore, the paper asks how far the film’s backward viewpoint goes to activate European cohesion.

European Collectivity

When inquiring into collective memory or recollections, we should examine not only what eyewitnesses have reported, but also how the public has made sense of this reporting. Sites of memory (*lieux de memoires*, Nora 1998), which should be understood not only in a spatial sense, are created as anchors for memories. Observers who took part in World War I are no longer with us; memory has turned into history. Events that have just

become history – and are therefore already subject to mythologizing narrative extension, iconographic depiction/representation/processing and ritual staging¹ – these can be used to commemorate the commonalities of identity while reducing contingencies.

Merry Christmas/Joyeux Noël by the French director Christian Carion, which was released in cinemas in 2005–2006, is discussed below, and forms the subject of this paper. The subject of the film is the “Christmas Truce of 1914,” a historically verified event during which French, British, and German soldiers emerged from their bunkers for a short-lived truce. The extraordinary circumstances of this real event have resulted its mythologization in the collective memories of the countries that took part, even if to varying degrees and in various forms. It was the clear wish of the director to use the extraordinary circumstances of this event in order to narrate the events of World War I through a different lens, and to interpret the Christmas Truce as a glimmer of hope, a sign of the return of humanistic ideals believed to have been forgotten in the wake of the world wars (Paletschek 2008: 218). In doing so, he seizes on a mythic romanticization of the idea of integration and repackages this into a European narrative of shared values amid the divisive evil of World War I. In the late 20th and early 21st century, the war has acquired a reputation as a conflict of a changing nature, as once postulated by Carl von Clausewitz. At the latest since the second Gulf War (1990–1991), the asymmetries (as defined by Münkler 2003 and 2006) show their effects in warfare, of which reportage and media coverage are important elements. Whereas we note some symmetrical uniformity in the typology of real wars – from the classic battles of the Thirty Years’ War to the inter-state wars of the 20th century – and compare them to asymmetrical conflicts (Münkler 2003 and 2006), we do not make the exact same differentiation in war movies. In the category of films with “war” as their main subject, the two world wars belong to the same category and form the basis of the classic war film genre.² The First World War is a classic inter-state war, even if the bunkers and high numbers of casualties in this war – soldiers and civilian alike – brought with them a change in how war is represented and processed visually, as compared to, for example, the battle paintings of the 19th century (Jürgens-Kirchhoff 2007: 445). Asymmetrical new wars have developed their own forms of media rehabilitation in fictional films (Greiner 2012; Bächler 2013) that have almost become a new sub-genre of war film unto themselves. By way of contrast, classic war films remain focused on inter-state wars rather than civil wars, wars leading to state disintegration,

and terrorism. Furthermore, such films preserved elements typical of the genre. *Merry Christmas* is deeply rooted in the classic war film genre (see the IMDb entry for *Merry Christmas*) and features emblematic aspects of the genre, as can be seen, for example, in the scenes that take place in the trenches. However, it also contains elements of historical drama set in World War I, as well as elements of a romantic film.

The 1990s saw a renaissance of classic war films, the last being *Saving Private Ryan* (USA 1998, directed by Steven Spielberg). This is even more surprising in light of the wars waged in the 1990s and early 2000s: the war in the Balkans, the “War on Terror,” and the wars against Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden should be considered rather as new, asymmetrical conflicts. What accounts for this return to the old, classic approach of the war film, or, in the case of *Merry Christmas*, to the historical drama within the war movie? When we think of war films, movies like *Rambo* (USA 1982, 1985, 1988 and 2008), *Platoon* (1986) or *Saving Private Ryan* spring to mind. In popular culture, war films produced in the USA dominate the genre; what could have motivated Carion and his European film team with its cast of well-known actors and actresses of various nationalities to shoot this particular film in 2005? What follows below is an attempt to answer such questions, with the greater goal of understanding what this film about World War I is trying to tell us about 21st-century Europe.

What to a large degree connects Europe today is its common experience of two World Wars, which, no doubt, are rather negative elements of Europe’s collective memory. *Merry Christmas* embodies this commonality: it seizes upon various myths and tries to establish the Truce during the war as a positive European memory. Its narrative of cultural similarities and origins in 1914, when the film is set, offers a new interpretation of what/who was perceived as the concept of the enemy, and adjusts it to the European 21st narration. The peace in the midst of the war introduces a European dimension, whereas, in fact, it would be better described as peace *because of* war. Only the experience of the two world wars led to the creation of an interdependent Europe that has rendered war between European states in the 21st century highly improbable, to say the least. The idea of setting the narrative about a common European identity (see, among others, Schmitt-Egner 2012) during World War I, in which European states faced each other as foes, raises certain problems. In order to resolve these, *Merry Christmas* focuses on four specific topics and narrative devices that attempt

to dissolve this conflict-ridden moment in European history, all of which figure prominently in the present analysis.

The first device that pervades the film is Judeo-Christianity as a transcendent religion found in all the nations across Europe. A second, also dominant, theme concerns music as an integrative force in old Europe which also assumes the role here as placeholder for a common (high) culture heritage. These two narrative devices inform the entire structure of the film and serve as the main focus of the movie's view of European similarities. To borrow Carl Schmitt's terminology, they tell the story of the friend who became an enemy during the war. According to Schmitt, the friend-enemy narrative – the narrative of the internal homogenization of possible heterogeneous entities – always requires an outer force. In the film we can observe the recast concepts of the enemies (Schmitt 1933).

A third theme that falls into the category of the “creation of the concept of the enemy” establishes a dichotomy between dominator and dominated as it relates to political, religious, and military policy-makers on the one hand, and front-line soldiers on the other. In doing so, it touches upon questions concerning the social stratification of all the parties involved in the war. A fourth theme to be mentioned does not concern narrative in any real sense, but rather focuses on what is not narrated. The film describes the comradeship between Britons, Frenchmen, and Germans, while other nations are excluded. Belief in a strong old Europe occurs during the absence of the USA (which entered the war later on). The USA and other European allies remain missing from the positive collective memory of the 1914 Christmas Truce mostly because an attempt was made to render authentic historical events in the film. All the same, questions of “inside” and “outside” should also take the year of 2005 into account – the context of the film production. Not least, an observation of the outside leads us to ask whether war itself is portrayed in the film as the enemy, and whether we should understand the film as another “anti-war” film.

Religion, music, and Christmas – a celebration primarily based on a sense of community (see Maurer 2004: 44–46; Bausinger 1997: 169–183; Bausinger 1983: 390–404) – are intimately related. One would not exist without the other, and, as result, these three elements are meshed in the film in the name of collectivity and sociability.

2.1. The Religious Integration of Europe

Merry Christmas opens with a Scotsman declaring the beginning of the First World War to his brother in the Church of Palmer, the Anglican Priest; he has enlisted them both to serve as volunteers. The contemplative work of the quiet brother, Jonathan, who is restoring wooden figures in the church, contrasts with the boisterous reaction of Williams, who enthusiastically greets the outbreak of the war by ringing the church bells. This dichotomy between war and religion, violence and peace, noise and silence, persists throughout the film and manifests itself in several respects. Thus, after the main characters are introduced in their local settings, the first twenty-five minutes of the film foregrounds the events of the war. As in most war films, the depictions of hostilities in the bunkers features loud artillery shells and rifle gunshots and quick cuts. In most “real” war films, Christmas and birthday celebrations serve to disrupt the death-filled battle scenes with soldiers, in order, or so it seems, to create a short-lived break in the action for the soldiers, when in reality the break chiefly serves the viewer. However, in *Merry Christmas* the break from the battle becomes the main topic of the movie. In a war film, pauses in the combat are, as a rule, employed to show the bonds between the protagonists and their respective homelands, and, in doing so, to individualize them. To this end, films usually use props, such as photos of family members or – in the case of *Merry Christmas* – show the quirks of the individual soldiers. Thus we see, for example, the French Adjutant Ponchel setting his alarm for ten o’clock each morning to remind himself of his mother and the coffee he would share with her at that time (*Merry Christmas*, min. 0:27:34 and 1:10:27). He wants to safeguard the comforts of home, which seem odd amid all the fighting, from the war. In so doing, his character undergoes an individualization in the film that is essential in forming an empathic bond with the viewer. It is by such means that the viewer comes to know the characters, and through which a sense of identification is enabled. This is of intrinsic significance in the course of the film, when a character dies. *Merry Christmas* begins like a classic war film, with the depiction of the deplorable conditions inside the bunkers among all three combatant nations. It focuses on at least one person from each nation, whose story is uncovered over the course of the film and offers a point of contact with the public: the French lieutenant will be a father soon; the Scot Jonathan loses his patriotic brother Williams soon after the beginning of the movie and, as a result, rejects the whole notion of comradeship; the German is Jewish and talks repeatedly about his stays in Paris and, at practically the end of the film, confides to the French

officer that he actually has a French wife. These highly personal snapshots are connected to individual stories through various ephemera (photos of the pregnant wife, food packages from the mother, letters that cannot be received due to precarious war conditions), and by technical means, achieved through close-ups of each character.

The individuality of the stories prefigures the possibility of identifying religious commonalities. Of course we – the viewers in 2005 – know that Europe neither was religiously homogenous during World War I, nor is today. Even though non Judeo-Christian traditions are absent here, we can assume that there are Anglican, Catholic, and Protestant soldiers on the battlefields, and – significantly – a German Jew.³ Faced with the inhospitality of the war and the need for a sense of the homeland on the front, this religious pluralism is reinterpreted as a diversity of traditions, which might differ in form, but not in substance: they all share a firm belief in peace and reconciliation. Notions of reconciliation, which in the Christian tradition are connected with the birth of Jesus Christ, become a common religion – Christmas, in spite of its various traditions, can be understood as a “core pillar of European culture” (Schmelz 1999: 583). The multiplicity of individual stories and props all come together in the midnight mass where the Germans can be seen carrying their Christmas trees, the Scots their bagpipes, and the French their champagne and coffee. With this we witness a veritable potpourri of different, yet similar Christmas traditions.

Of course, the notion of the common Christian roots uniting Europe is in no way a new one, as Giovanni Reale has emphasized, pointing out to Benedetto Croci and Frederico Chabod. As early as in 1942, they argued that a modern united Europe could draw from its common roots: Christianity and the intellectual heritage of Antiquity (Reale 2004: 16). For many years, scholars have attempted to map out the contours of a united Europe through its shared roots, especially in the context of the “EU’s eastward expansion” of the predominantly Christian Baltic States, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Hungary and Croatia, which demonstrates the suitability of these countries for integration (Angenendt 1999: 482).⁴

2.2. *Adeste Fidelis*

“We will be home again for Christmas, laughing recruits called out to their mothers in August of 1914 [...] the victims went to the slaughter drunk and rejoicing, crowned with flowers and wearing oak leaves on their helmets,

while the streets echoed with cheering and blazed with light, as if it were a festival.”(Stefan Zweig)

As soldiers went off to war, Christmas clearly marked the end of the adventurous war in their minds. The desperate narrative of a quick victory was connected to the notion of a return home by December 24, 1914, at the latest.

“As one stresses the community component of Christmas, celebrating proves to be a mechanism of inclusion and exclusion, an identifying force and the full realization of history, a mechanism of the participation in the whole or in a certain socialization and collectivization in all corners from the state to the family.” (Maurer 2010: 9)

In *Merry Christmas*, Christmas is interpreted according to Michael Maurer’s view: as the reenactment of the reality of the religious and the political nature. For this reason, the integrative and exclusionary functions of celebrating are employed in order to contrast the diametrically opposed functions of fighting and death in war. For Maurer, the life-affirming significance of celebrations looms in the foreground (Maurer 2004: 7). This significance appears especially relevant given the stark environment in which the 1914 Christmas was celebrated at the front; here, Christmas is tied to the will to live.

Celebrations and wars both reside outside the realm of everyday experience. In the excerpt from Stefan Zweig, war and celebration are connected with one another: the positive war expectations in the First World War should become a celebration, a rite of passage for young men who want to prove themselves (Turner 1982: 24–27). This paradoxical connection is foreclosed upon in *Merry Christmas* where Christmas is, again, associated with peace and unity at the home of Europe, which stands in opposition to the war. Instead of portraying the coming of age of young recruits through war, as can be found in classic war films, the war fever of young men is explained as a catalyst for war, whereas the conservative, level-headed men are critical of the war.

The religious and musical integration of Europe are inextricably linked in the film. Of particular note, we find the singing of Christmas carols, especially those known in all three countries. The impetus for the truce, according to the film, comes from the performance of the German opera tenor Nikolaus Sprink (Benno Fürmann), who first appears as a celebrated performer of the Berlin Opera, and later is depicted as a simple recruit in the trenches.

His superior, Horstmeyer (Daniel Brühl), is rather bothered by him because he prefers to give orders to artisans rather than to artists from the “Haute-volée” (min. 0:27:01). Later on, he is called behind the front lines to sing for the Crown Prince – his lover, the opera singer Sörensen, had organized this. However, during this performance Sprink comes to feel a sense of kinship with his comrades to whom, after all, he returns on Christmas night accompanied by Sörensen. As the Scots unpack their bagpipes, melodies wash over the no man’s land and Sprink sings *Silent Night, Holy Night*, a song familiar in all three countries and languages. This song actually appears to have been sung in several trenches in 1914, as is the case of common prayers said in all three languages. This seems to be an attempt to confer a greater sense of authenticity to the film (see Eksteins 2012: 149f). Sprink leaves the trench and is then accompanied by Scottish bagpipe players who launch into the 18th-century song *Adeste Fidelis*. He sings the song in Latin, and not in one of the three languages spoken among the nations at war. *Adeste Fidelis* means “Here now you Believers” [Eng.: “O Come All Ye Faithful”]; it once again establishes Europe’s common religious roots. There is, in fact, much to be said about music and language in this film. At the beginning, everyone speaks his own native tongue. Over the course of the film, understanding becomes more important and the characters no longer limit themselves to their native tongues. Song is defined as a universal language. Religious unity is suggested through the use of Latin, for it is the use of Latin in the Roman Catholic Church in its beginnings that symbolizes – at least to all outward appearances – the unity of the Christian religion. As Figure 1 shows, Sprink crosses into the no man’s land singing, with a Christmas tree in hand. This deliberately emotional moment is, nevertheless, also somewhat comical in its representation; this comic element sometimes creeps into the the film’s serious aspirations, and turns it into – as one film critic has put it – a “multilingual Europudding with its pacifistic mentality of the 21st century (to function) as a retroactive homage to the historically unique founding of the European Union” (film review of *Merry Christmas*).

Fig. 1.
Merry Christmas,
 Benno Fürmann,
 seen here in the no
 man’s land, plays
 opera tenor Sprink,
 min. 0:47:51



In scenes of sharing food and drinks and collective singing, a keen sense of cultural bonds is expressed. Last comes the exchange of addresses, which the soldiers hope to put to good use when everything is over. In a curious way, one finds in this film the depiction of contact between alien “cultures,” which results in the portrayal of a homogenous European cultural community. The Latin language, which was taught in high schools among the “cultured nations,” and still is, though to a lesser degree, connects peoples by means of a historical bond passed down from the Roman Empire. They are connected here not only through melody – they can sing in the same language, and even if the words themselves are unintelligible, the unifying element is there. In addition to music and language, similarities are found in the way holidays, and, more specifically, Christmas, are celebrated by the three nations. Christmas is invested with similar attributes in all three countries: good food and drink, harmony, peace, family, and Christmas trees.

During the evening mass, the sole female protagonist of the film, Anna Sörensen (Diane Krüger), sings the *Ave Maria*, and functions as the embodiment of Virgin Mary herself. In *Merry Christmas*, the individual symbols serve – alongside the rites and the classic times of Christmas past – as a means to fraternize with the presumed enemy. The men eat, sing, and pray together, and speak of things like their families. The similarities outweigh the enmities that divide them and disrupt the neat dichotomy between friend and foe. It is in the midnight mass and the song sung by Anna Sörensen that differences in religion and traditions become irrelevant (min. 1:04:44), as shown by Figures 2 and 3. It is through the shared iconographic exaltation assigned by the men to the person of Mary (Fig. 3) that these soldiers find themselves united in belief and devotion alike (Fig. 2).

2.3. The external, inner enemy: Generals and Crown Princes

The function of Christmas in this film is the initial provocation of a sense in which one finds a greater emotional attachment to enemies in the field than to the “generals safely removed from danger.” This deep-rooted sense of social equality with the declared enemy is underscored through the shared equality before God (as seen in collective reading of the mass), as well as through the sense of common European roots. The interweaving of religious motifs and class affiliations is taken even further, when another external person is contrasted with the connection between the simple soldiers: a bishop of the Anglican church transfers the preacher, Palmer, to another sector of the front and reprimands him for reading the mass (min. 1:30:00).

Contrary to the experience of the soldiers during the truce, the Anglican bishop tells them:

Fig. 2
Merry Christmas,
Soldiers at
mass, listening
to opera singer
Anna Sörensen,
min. 1:00:30



Fig. 3
Merry Christmas,
Anna Sörensen
singing the *Ave*
Maria in the
no man's land,
min. 1:01:36



“Well, my brethren, the sword of the Lord is in your hands. You are the very defenders of civilization itself. The forces of good against the forces of evil. For this war is indeed a crusade. A holy war to save the freedom of the world. In truth I tell you, the Germans do not act like us, neither do they think like us. For they are not like us, children of God. [...]” (min. 1:32:38–1:33:21)

What is meant here is that the war, and the division of Europe which will follow in its wake, is caused only by the power hungry rulers of Europe: both the political rulers, represented here by the German crown prince, and the religious rulers, represented by the Anglican bishop. The “simple masses,” on the other hand, remain committed to the military ideal of comradeship, even among the enemy nations. For this reason, the Scottish preacher Palmer removes the cross from around his neck after he has heard this speech from his superior – not because he no longer feels tied to Christian belief, but rather because he feels detached from the ruling classes within the Church. For the same reason, the German opera singer Sprink returns to the trenches – against his orders – after he sings before the crown prince. He feels strangely alien before the ruler, sitting by a fireplace in a clean

uniform – although he should have been well accustomed to performing in front of the upper classes during his time with the Berlin Opera – and in spite of the fact that he has himself had been identified as a fellow member of the upper class by his superior Horstmeyer. Horstmeyer himself, along with the officers from the Scottish and French ranks, are shown to be men of cultivation, as evidenced by their multilingual conversations. In this way, the distinction between ruler and ruled is evident, rather than that distinguishing members of different social strata from one another.

Moreover, fighting in a war in which he did not voluntarily enlist changed Sprink, who turns himself in to the French as a POW at the end of the ceasefire. Over the course of the Christmas Truce, he came to understand the senselessness of the war. Though the fraternization of the “simple soldiers,” the Christmas Truce has a high potential for emotion, which makes it possible to introduce the positive connotation of European solidarity (Paletschek 2008: 216). Here the film ties together the commemorative cultures of the participating countries, insofar as the importance of the Christmas Truce can be seen as lying in its function as “symbols of the ‘little man’s’ yearning for peace” (Brunnenberg 2006: 49) and – for that reason – develops a politico-symbolic significance for a community that lay outside the war-obsessed powers.

Leaving behind one’s fellow soldiers is a definite *no-go* in the genre of war movies. The rule “no one is left behind” is repeated in war films and, not infrequently, even becomes the leitmotiv (*Black Hawk Down. Leave No Man Behind*, USA 2001, directed by Ridley Scott). Thus, just as no man should ever be left behind, nor should he ever leave his troops. But because Sprink decided to return to his comrades and now has to safely get Anna Sörensen away from the front – which equals the saving of a “participant” of the war, almost as if she was “one of them,” a comrade – Sprink does not betray the “ideal of comradeship,” but rather symbolizes the realization of the futility of the war. This situation is meaningful insofar as Anna Sörensen hardly embodies “comradeship or male bonding,” but rather femininity. Diane Krüger’s appearance as a blond, blue-eyed woman can be seen as the personification of the classic, northwest European ideal of beauty. Moreover, in the film she is meticulous about her make-up and lavishly dressed, as befits an opera diva. Up to her spontaneous decision to accompany Sprink to the front, she is cast as an assertive woman who can obtain things like a special permit to sing alongside Sprink before the crown prince at the front. Her

role as seductress or – to use a religious metaphor – as Eve, is transformed in the mass when she sings the *Ave Maria*. Here, she looms as the embodiment of all women in an elevated position, such that no man in the film can subsequently mistake her for being the object of lustful desires. Correspondingly, there are also no more sex scenes with Sprink; they lie next to each other, but clearly separate, like brother and sister. With the metaphysical elevation achieved through her singing of the *Ave Maria*, she has bestowed upon the soldiers a magical moment of unity and reconciliation that, in turn, fully qualifies her to be saved according to the “no one is left behind” ideal.

Sprink and Sörensen’s predictable survival embodies all that they represent in the film, namely, the cultural unity of Europe as achieved through a shared sense of music, religion and language. Sprink’s deeds are representative of what the future holds; the deaths of most soldiers who participated in the Christmas Truce is very likely, as we know by looking at the high mortality rates in the First World War. Their survival integrates them and therefore does not betray the ideal of camaraderie. While the incorporation of women into war films is difficult as a rule, the character of Anna Sörensen unites at least three main motifs: the seductress, the saint and “the comrade.” If one speculates over the gaps the film deliberately creates – for example, the exclusion of other European nations and the USA – it is worth pointing out that the presence of a female character has been inserted on purpose, as no female participation in the Truce can be historically established. If the film is permitted a certain amount of artistic license in creating a female character for the film to avoid ostracizing fifty percent (every female) of the European population from the notion of European integration, then it should have the freedom to dedicate a word or two to the other nations which fought in the First World War. The fact that it did not could be explained by the strong roles that the three nations played in the war, were it not for the Scottish division. Rather than portray French, German and English fraternity, the Brits are replaced with the Scots. The participation of several Scottish divisions in the Christmas Truce is indeed authentic (Eksteins 2012: 150), though it would nevertheless have been just as possible to insert the Brits. However, the inclusion of the Scots makes it possible for smaller states and regions to feel that they are part of the integration process. As a consequence, the three nations involved function more like placeholders – all the other countries can feel that the film is about them, insofar as they can relate to the motives for integration and the religious, cultural, and linguistic roots that they share. The inclusion of

a female character thus serves, primarily, to create empathetic moments between men, whose faces are shown in close-up and who – through Anna Sörensen – come to remember their own wives and children back home. It evokes “Scenes of Empathy” (Plantinga 2004: 213).

3. Collective Europe

The history of the Christmas Truce reached the home countries of soldiers through soldiers’ letters from the front. Contemporary newspapers also reported the events on the front lines (Paletschek 2008: 213). Many of these letters remain with us today; a few are cited and used as sources in works published in various countries with the subject of the history of the Truce alone, or of the entire First World War. In Belgium, where much of the Christmas Truce took place, we still find a strong commemorative culture, expressed through monuments and museums, of the event (Brunnenberg 2006: 20).

Since 1914, several works have been published featuring the Christmas Truce as one a central theme. At the turn of the 21st century, the pace of publication in the three countries involved (Great Britain, France and Germany) has increased sharply, though in different directions. In Great Britain, the website *The Christmas Truce: Operation Plum Pudding* was organized by two journalists who published part of the letters in a 2008 book entitled *Not a Shot Was Fired*. Here, war veterans and their progeny had an opportunity to offer their comments and reminiscences. In addition, academic and popular books have appeared in all three countries (Ferro 2005; Foitzik 1997; Jürgs 2003; Weintraub 2001). In 2005, two children’s books appeared in France on the theme of the truce in the trenches (Mopurgo 2005; Simard 2005). In Germany, renewed interest in remembering the event was only reflected in academic publications and popular science (Brunnenberg 2003; Bordat 2005). All this is deeply connected to the significance of the First World War in various commemorative cultures. While memory of the Great War still plays a large role in France and Great Britain, “in Central and Eastern Europe, continuities in memory and remembrance did not develop” (Korte 2008: 8). In Germany, the memory of the First World War has been completely superseded by the memory of the Second World War and the Holocaust (Korte 2008: 8).

The heightened number of publications might stand in connection to the 2005 appearance of *Merry Christmas* – though the swiftly approaching

centenary and the ninety-year anniversary (2004) of World War I probably also played a role – yet, the striking number of publications on this theme is noteworthy. It remains to be seen what accounts for the buzz of activity surrounding the Christmas Truce of 1914 in film, scholarship, and literature. Korte, Paletschek and Hochbruck describe the rediscovery of the First World War as a new and increased “obsession with history” and surmise that the upcoming anniversaries and the gradual demise of eyewitnesses, that is, the transformation of memories into history, have something to do with it.

Films, and particularly historical films, tell stories about fates within a certain time and place, but often reveal much more about the particular contexts in which they were produced – in this case the first decade of the 21st century. Here, Europe’s core is newly defined. The film tells us of a community which has shared religious and musical roots and therefore can be understood as a form of culture that bears the stamp of Christianity. Both the recounting of the Christmas Truce via film and the newfound fascination for the event, which has found parallel expression in various literary works, show that the Christmas Truce has a narrative power. Two actual narratives can be told through this story: first, the narrative of a Europe that was always connected through its shared cultural roots, and was divided by the nationalisms of the 19th and 20th centuries, represented by the rulers in the European countries; and second, the story of the pivotal founding moment of modern Europe, reflected in the motto “no more war.”

Merry Christmas came to cinemas after “EU’s eastward expansion” of 2004, during which ten states were admitted into the European Union, and after the Constitution for Europe was vetoed by a hostile referendum, first in France on May 28, 2005, and three days later in the Netherlands. Since 2004, when the constitution was signed by the heads of government, discussions on the treaty took place, with a focus on the details of the document. A shared constitution could have resulted in an obligation for the member states to strengthen their common interests, and could have promoted a united representation of the EU through the planned creation of a European foreign ministry. Of course, the film’s creators could not have predicted the outcome of the referendum, though they were able to refer to the current discussions in the film, and to participate in them. The film contributes to cultural remembrance, and is focused on an intensification of Central European cooperation more than on expansion. To this end, themes that have long since been discussed in academic contexts are included

in the popular discourse. Lucia Faltin has spoken of a “sabbatical from enlargement” in the European Union since 2007 that was necessary in the wake of the failed declaration of a common European Constitution. She also favors a return to Europe’s Christian roots (Faltin 2007: 5–9). The film suggests *how* commonalities in Europe might be better put forward: through a shared education in the service of the memory of Europe’s cultural roots. *Merry Christmas* opens with the recitation of propaganda poems by French, English, and German children. The propagation of poems about “child-killing Huns, and barbaric Frenchmen and Britons” (min. 0:01:33–0:02:34) should be replaced with education to provide a greater sense of a shared European identity. In this way, the film retains its function, with the “power to circulate” (Hardt/Negri 2003: 355) symbols and discourses relevant on a contemporary level. It not only picks up the discourses, but also serves to perpetuate them.

This extremely conservative interpretation of the options available to Europe as revealed in the form of religion, culture (via classical music) and paternalistic education read like the party program of a Christian-conservative political party. The suggestion of a fraternization of the ordinary people instead of the “powerful” and the “rulers” can scarcely interfere with this narrative, even if the Europe signaled here is made up of men and women rather than institutions. The film is not able to offer a vision for the true union of diversity, a Union that lies in cooperation rather than assimilation. This certainly is caused by the historical event of the Christmas Truce itself, but maybe the First World War is better suited to remind us of the reasons behind and for European unity – to eliminate potential conflict between the member states – instead of narrating the story of a new Europe of the future. The kind of Europe envisioned by *Merry Christmas* is based on the past. It recalls common roots that are no longer feasible for many Europeans. Or, as Peter Rietbergen put it:

“Despite the nostalgia of many, Europe will be a world in which the church towers, the crosses and the ringing of bells will no longer most instinctively evoke a multitude of emotions and images which, all-encompassingly, describe culture and solidarity” (Rietbergen 1998: 463).

For the reasons described above, a classic war film which depicts war in all its cruelty, and which thereby becomes paradigmatic of the shared European slogan “no more war,” is in my opinion better served in reminding us of the

reasons behind a European community than a film that attempts to conjure up a common Europe based on Christianity, classical music and (manly) comradeship. The Christmas Truce was an event that really took place, and one that harbors potential for mythologization, due to its inconceivability, which is why it should not be neglected. However excessively mythologized and iconographically burdened the Christmas Truce of 1914 might be, it is unique, and has the power to remind us of the human condition – one not necessarily inclined to violence, but rather capable of finding peace in the middle of a war. But then again, that is not a particularly European quality.

MAJA BÄCHLER

Has studied history, politics, and law in Freiburg/Breisgau, at the Freie Universität, and at the Humboldt University of Berlin, having written her Masters on French and German modes of reasoning in European integration. She wrote her doctoral thesis at the chair for Military History/Cultural History of Violence at Potsdam University, which was published in 2013 (Inszenierte Bedrohung. Folter im US-amerikanischen Kriegsfilm 1979–2009 [Staged Danger: Torture in American War Films 1979–2009], Frankfurt am Main and New York: Campus). Since 2012 she has worked at the Chair for Political Theory (the Humboldt University of Berlin) as a research fellow.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Herfried Münkler has explained these four levels in a seminar at Humboldt University in Berlin in 1998/1999 (personal notes).
- 2 The first war films were documentaries on the US civil war, as well as the fictitious 1915 film *Birth of a Nation* (USA 1915, directed by David Wark Griffith).
- 3 It is quite safe to assume that it is no coincidence that of all the characters, it is the German officer Horstmeyer (Daniel Brühl) who is of Jewish descent. It is a clear reference to the persecution of Jews during World War II. It is a known fact that even their participation in World War I could not save Jewish veterans from the concentration camps.
- 4 Angenendt takes this further, and states that the above-mentioned countries see each other as a part of a common religious and cultural “space,” which can be defined as “West European.” In order to prove this provocative thesis, I believe that we need to research this topic further by means of source studies and discourse analyses in the single member states. In addition to this, the argument of Christian-Jewish roots provides politically conservative parties with a supposedly good reason to deny the Turks admission into the European Union: they simply lack the common Christian roots.

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THE MURDER OF ARMENIANS – ARMENOCIDE – GENOCIDE – GENOCIDE PREVENTION: ASPECTS OF POLITICAL AND HISTORICAL COMPARATIVE GENOCIDE STUDIES¹

Richard Albrecht, PhD

ABSTRACT

This article discusses the genocide of Christian Armenians in the late Ottoman times in World War I: the first historical “worldwide festival of death” (Thomas Mann), which has been denied in Turkey, the perpetrating country (Türkiye Cumhuriyetiz), until today. In his analysis of this first state-run “organized and planned genocide of the twentieth century” (Edgar Hilsenrath), the author, who is a social scientist, points out both the historical and conceptual context. Furthermore, he brings up the fundamental issues of remembrance, memory work, genocide, eliminationist racism, genocide policy, and genocide theory in the twentieth century.

Musa Dagħ

In 1919, the Prague writer Franz Werfel (1890–1945) wrote the novella *Not the Murderer* (*Nicht der Mörder, der Ermordete ist schuldig*), released in 1920 by a publishing house specializing in Expressionist literature.² The catchphrase *the murdered is the guilty one* from the title of the original German edition became almost a proverb in the Germany of 1920s. Even today, several generations later, it might appear as if Franz Werfel had developed his artistic vision to anticipate the “trial of Talaat Pascha”³ which took place a while later.

A dozen years later it was again Franz Werfel who, in an artistic visionary overview, recognized and stressed the relationship between racism and genocide. After the handover, the takeover, and the exercise of power by National Socialists in Germany, starting on 30 January 1933, the author emphasized the necessity to “rescue the incomprehensible fate of the Armenian

people from the depths of history” in the postscript to his novel *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh* (1933).⁴

In his statement the author draws our attention both to the central vanishing point of our memory (to “rescue” something, instead of leaving it in “the depths of history”) and to the specific “case” of “the Armenian people” and their “incomprehensible fate” during World War I, “far away in Turkey.”

Armenocide

Like “genocide” and “Holocaust,” the English word “Armenocide”⁵ is a coinage, made up from “Armenius cidere” and translated into German as *Armenozid*. It refers to the genocide of the Armenian religious, ethnic, and political minority in the Ottoman Empire during World War I. This was the first state-run genocide of the twentieth century. The word itself includes a reference both to the victims (Armenians) and to the murder (*cidere*). Unlike the much more well-known coinage “Holocaust” (*holokaustos*, lit.: “burned completely”), it does not indicate the form of the murder, even though it was more the Armenians who were burned alive during World War I, for instance in their churches, than the Jews, who were murdered on a massive scale in extermination camps, “factories of death,” in the occupied East during World War II.

Rudolph Rummel, a genocide scholar who applies quantitative analysis of victim statistics in “the Dismal Science of Authorized Terror” (Irving Louis Horowitz),⁶ gives a total victim count for the Armenian genocide in Turkey, “the first complete ethnic cleansing of this century.” He estimates it at around 1.883 million, i.e. almost 1.9 million people.⁷

Memory work

The historically-oriented social scientist, involved in theoretical reflection on political and sociological aspects of comparative genocide studies, empirical research, and scientific publications, is less interested in the (certainly relevant) ethical dimension of memory, which may stand for reconciliation, which includes the Christian sense of the word, or dealing with the essential consequences arising from the culture of impunity, which favors genocide and genocide denial. Instead, the focus here is on another memory-related dimension, the possible genocide prevention with regard to the lasting generational and biopolitical consequences of a real genocide event. *Public memory* here is an essential duty of art in general and narrative art in particular, in the

form of novels and novellas, stories and poems, as shown by the example of Werfel's novel *Musa Dagh*.

Aryans on paper

The relation between racism and the “genocide which Young Turks have on their conscience,”⁸ recognized by Franz Werfel, did not escape the notice of German “friends of Armenians” either. As Christians, they tried to draw a lesson from their subjectively perceived co-responsibility for Armenocide: the genocide of the Armenian religious, ethnic, and political minority in the Ottoman Empire during World War I. By a letter of 31 May 1933, the board of the German-Armenian Society, represented by Paul Rohrbach and Ewald Stier, led to the issuing of the decree of 3 July 1933 by the Reich Ministry of the Interior. According to the decree, Armenians in the Third Reich should not be considered, in the light of fascist ideology and its racist implementation, as “Semites,” but as “Aryans.” In an official letter of 31 August 1933 addressed to Stier, the “expert on racial matters in the Reich Ministry of the Interior” wrote: “In accordance with the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service, Armenians are to be considered Aryans.”⁹

Jews of the Orient

The German(-language) literature presented both an ambivalent image of Armenians as well as a stereotypical perception of them as “*the Jews of the Orient*” (long before the National Socialist eliminationist racism).¹⁰

The negative stereotype of Armenians was promoted by a German mass entertainer who remains popular to this day. In 1897 Karl May published his short story *Der Kys-Kaptschiji*, in which he presented the anti-Armenian stereotype as follows:

“One Jew outwits ten Christians; one Yankee outwits fifteen Jews; one Armenian is, however, worth one hundred Yankees; that is what some say, and I have found out that, even though this is an exaggeration, it is based on the truth. Those who travel to the Orient with their eyes open will agree with me. Wherever malice or treachery is planned, a hooked Armenian nose must be involved. Where even the unscrupulous Greek refuses to commit a villainy, there will certainly be an Armenian ready to earn the ignoble payment.”¹¹

Anti-Armenian stereotypes were promoted in the 1920s in the form of the violent *Armenophobia*, with reference to the economic dominance in the Orient,

by Halide Edib Adivar (1884–1964), a Young Turk ideologist and a popular author, known also in Germany for her 1916 novella *Yeni Turan* (translated into German as *Das neue Turan – ein Frauenschicksal*) and her 1924 novel *Ateşten Gömlek* (translated into German as *Das Flammenhemd*, and into English as *The Daughter of Smyrna* or *The Shirt of Flame*). What *seems* to be just a manifestation of the early Kemalist Anti-Armenianism in her books *Memoirs [of Halide Edib]*, trans.] (1926; 1972) and *The Turkish Ordeal* (1928),¹² was – and still is – nothing but an anti-human and life-threatening fascism-related ideology.

Eliminationist racism

Hitler's conception of the world, shaped by the bitter hostility towards Jews, the panic fear of Bolsheviks, as well as his contemporary pseudo-scientific and pseudo-Darwinian racism, was neither original nor intellectually developed. It was essentially a convenient recapitulation of the right and far-right *Zeitgeist* in the spirit of German power.

After the decision had been made about “who should live in this world and access its resources” and “which peoples should be annihilated because they were considered inferior or a hindrance to the winners”¹³ (Gerhard Weinberg 1995), Hitler, as a representative of the supposed master race, rehashed the eugenic racist stereotype of Armenians and Armenia in his so-called “Weltanschauung.”¹⁴ This has also been reflected in a few recorded anti-Armenian remarks made by Hitler in his table talks and conversations, according to which he talked several times about the “non-Aryan blood” of Armenians and the resulting distrust of them in the military policy.¹⁵

No elaborate, in-depth hermeneutical interpretation is needed to recognize that the last Reich Chancellor (and, at the same time, the first one “with a migration background”) had also internalized the stereotype of a sly and unreliable Armenian, “Jews of the Orient,” which was so widespread in Germany.

In the two volumes of Hitler's political manifesto *Mein Kampf*,¹⁶ first published in 1925/26, no references to “the Armenian question,” “Armenians,” or Armenia can be found. Nevertheless, there are records of Hitler's anti-Armenian prejudice more than twenty years apart. Without a “solution to the Jewish question” the German people would be “a people like the Armenians”, remarked Hitler, a German *völkisch* racist, in 1922.¹⁷ As a fascist eliminationist racist in 1943, he is said to have emphasized in his “paranoid insanity”¹⁸ that peoples, if they “did not deliver themselves from the Jews,”

would hit the bottom just “like the Persians, once a proud people, who now lived their miserable lives as Armenians.”¹⁹

The anti-human contempt of Armenians and the murderous hatred towards Jews, on the one hand, paired with an admiration for historical authority figures like Genghis Khan and the cruelty of his Mongolian army, and the approval of the twentieth-century Turkish proponents of power politics such as Enver and Kemal, on the other hand, constitute Hitler’s racist power-political ideology and the resulting powerful ideological policy of the National Socialist eliminationist racism.

The Terrible truth

Foreign observers of those times were aware of the “terrible truth” (*furchtbare Wahrheit*, Georg Glaser) of the relation between the Armenian genocide in Ottoman Turkey in World War I and the persecution of the Jews, which started as early as in the spring of 1933 and was formalized and legalized in 1935 by the implementation of the Nuremberg Laws, one of the steps leading to the genocide of European Jews in World War II. The German racial laws of 1935 reminded Eric Mills, the British Commissioner for Migration and Statistics in Palestine, of “the elimination of the Armenians from the Turkish Empire,”²⁰ as he wrote in a letter to his superior.

On the eve of World War II, in February 1939, the exile executive committee of the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SoPaDe) referred to the historical events while expressing their opinion about the persecution of the Jews in the Third Reich:

“In Germany, a minority is being inexorably exterminated, by the brutal means of murder, torturing to insanity, plundering, aggression, and starvation. What happened to Armenians in Turkey during the war is being exercised on the Jews in the Third Reich, more slowly and more systematically.”²¹

Genocide

In 1944, Polish-American international law expert Raphael Lemkin (1900–1959) defined a new word, *genocide*, referring to what for decades had been described as a “murder of a nation” (*Völkermord*):

“By ‘genocide’ we mean the destruction of a nation or of an ethnic group [...]. Generally speaking, genocide does not necessarily mean the immediate

destruction of a nation [...]. It is intended rather to signify a coordinated plan of different actions aiming at the destruction of essential foundations of the life of national groups, with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves. The objectives of such a plan would be disintegration of the political and social institutions, of culture, language, national feelings, religion, and the economic existence of national groups, and the destruction of the personal security, liberty, health, dignity, and even the lives of the individuals belonging to such groups. Genocide is directed against the national group as an entity, and the actions involved are directed against individuals, not in their individual capacity, but as members of the national group.”²²

In this context, not only the short-term goal of mass murders (“annihilating the groups themselves”) and the respective destruction plan are of relevance. It is the long-term strategic, biopolitical and intergenerational effects which are characteristic of genocide. This opinion, concerned with present actions which determine future developments, was phrased by Lemkin (1944) in the form of a definition:

“[...] genocide is a new technique of occupation aimed at winning the peace even though the war itself is lost.”²³

This means that whoever loses a war may also be the winner, at a biopolitical level, of the postwar time (or, as Lemkin puts it, “peace”) for many generations. This is one of the dimensions of genocide, the relevance of which for the international law (*ius gentium*) was recognized by Lemkin as early as the 1930s. After World War II, in December 1948, Lemkin’s observations were also incorporated into the definition of the criminal act of international law, included in the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (Convention pour la prévention et la répression du crime de genocide; Konvention zur Verhinderung und Bestrafung des Verbrechens Völkermord).

The Holocaust before the Holocaust

In the preface to the French edition of *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh* (1986) by Franz Werfel, Elie Wiesel – a Jewish intellectual, an American author and a Nobel Peace Prize winner – wrote of the “Holocaust before the Holocaust.”²⁴ This, however, was recognized in America much earlier, right after the end of World War II, when the publicist Joseph Guttman wrote an article (1948, first published in Yiddish in 1946) that not only sought to

recall the Young Turk genocide of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire during World War I, but also compared both genocides with regard to their main methods. He came to the main analytical conclusion that – prototypically – “the Armenian genocide” showed traditional features of a primitive mass slaughter, whereas “the Jewish genocide” was rather an implementation of a highly-organized industrial “scientifically”-founded mass murder plan in which gas chambers were used.²⁵

Furthermore, as early as in 1946, Joseph Guttman pointed out the destructive ways of developing forces of production. He considered the mass murders in genocidal factories in the militarily occupied East during World War II as a qualitatively new aspect of Nazi extermination camps. The massive destruction was in no way unorganized. On the contrary, it was a process, a series of carefully planned state-run murder actions against “Gypsies” (nowadays called Sinti and Roma) and other supposedly “antisocial” people, “burdensome, unproductive eaters” (1939–41). The extermination of millions of people, which started in the fall of 1941 and focused on the social group of European Jews, defined as “objective opponents,” went beyond the imagination of contemporaries, including many Germans. Today as well, there are many German contemporary historians who have considerable difficulty in the scientific understanding of the real genocidal event known as the Holocaust.

Uniqueness

Hannah Arendt (1906–1975), the author of *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951), whose German-language version *Elemente und Ursprünge totaler Herrschaft* was published in multiple copies and editions,²⁶ made a pertinent point about the nature of genocide. In her book *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (1963, German-language edition in 1964), Arendt considered genocide as a *crimen magnum* which leads to further massive genocidal crimes:

“[...] once a specific crime has first appeared, its reappearance is more likely than its initial emergence could ever have been.”²⁷

This observation, so important to genocide prevention, was made by a political philosopher and intellectual of great importance and argumentative effectiveness. Despite these qualities, Hanna Arendt showed long-lasting ignorance as to the first planned and state-run genocide of the twentieth century. The “genocide of Armenians” was recognized and judged by

contemporaries as the “Murder of a Nation”²⁸ and the “destruction of the Armenian nation.”²⁹ To this day, the Armenocide, also referred to as “Turkish Genocide”³⁰ and “türkischer Völkermord”³¹ of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire during World War I, has been condemned by countries all over the world (but not by the present Republic of Turkey, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti*, and its insular appendix *Kuzey Kıbrıs Türk Cumhuriyeti*). Uruguay was the first country to recognize the events as “genocide” (by decision of the Senate and the House of Representatives, 20.04.1965), followed by the United States (the House of Representatives, 09.04.1975), Argentina (the Senate, 05.05.1993), Canada (the House of Commons, 23.04.1996), and other countries. In the Federal Republic of Germany a unanimous decision was made by the Bundestag on 16.06.2005.³²

In her report on Eichmann’s trial (1964), Hannah Arendt reminded of the “Armenian Tindelian” [in the (online) English book edition I used it is “the Armenian Tehlirian” – trans] in the context of a political assassination. She must have meant Սողոմոն Թեհլիրյան (1897–1960; Soghomon Tehlirian, also: Soromon Tehlerjan), “who, in 1921, in the middle of Berlin, shot to death Talaat Bey, the great killer in the Armenian pogroms of 1915, in which it is estimated that one third (six hundred thousand people) of the Armenian population in Turkey was massacred”³³ The author also pointed out that the assassin was acquitted only a few weeks later, during a highly-publicized public trial. The total victim count for “the first complete ethnic cleansing of this century” (around 1.883 million Armenians murdered in the “genocidal cleansing of Turkey”³⁴) was reduced in Arendt’s book by approximately two-thirds, which – along with the references to the assassin – is an example of a shocking lack of knowledge and ignorance. What is more, these indications emphasize the underlying fact which is relevant regardless of the specific situation with all the respective details: if there is no historical confirmation, we always face the risk of selective remembrance in the form of an “ideological memory” (*una memoria ideológica*), as opposed to the memory of witnesses to history (*una memoria histórica, testimonial*) as defined by Jorgé Semprun (1977).³⁵ In his post-doctoral speech on 1 February 1989, the author of this article discussed the intergenerational and biopolitical effects of genocide policy:

“Contrary to the popular singularity claim for the genocide of European Jews in World War II, it is only the industrial form of the mass murder with the use of gas which that be considered unique. What *is* comparable, on the

other hand, are the effects of genocide policy for generations of victims, as observed by Raphael Lemkin, and the fact that the genocide policy along with the irrevocable consequences of mass murders made it possible for the inferior firepower of the party of perpetrators to ensure a biopolitical victory, both in the First and the Second World War. [This biopolitical victory] being decisive for the destructive efficiency of genocide policy, the effects of which can still be seen several generations later.”³⁶

Criticism of unique uniqueness

In the light of the uniqueness thesis, the Holocaust was a historical event with unique characteristics. For years, the thesis of its “unique uniqueness” or singularity had an impact also on the relationship between the genocide of the Armenians and that of the Jews, Armenocide and Holocaust, as the two historical genocides in the first half of the past century. In 1977, the historian, political advisor and publicist Klaus Hildebrand recapitulated this theory in a concise way. Not only did he focus more on the form of the genocidal murder than on its content, but he also revealed an ideological variety of the thesis: *Theoriefeindlichkeit* (the antipathy to theorizing), which builds on anti-Marxist resentments and is remarkably widespread in Germany, both among economists and contemporary historians:

“The far-reaching ‘measures’ – if we stick to the language of the regime – of genocide, ‘breeding trials’ and euthanasia programs which go beyond all functionality – that is the essential, singular feature of the Nazi racial policy. No general theory of ‘fascism’ can be expected to provide an accurate description of these measures or to allow us to understand them, if that is at all possible.”³⁷

In Germany, the Holocaust-uniqueness theory was influential to such an extent that it resulted in the temporary tabooization of analytical comparisons and, consequently, impeded comparative (genocide) research. Furthermore, it led to the creation of victim classifications where Holocaust victims would belong to the first category, whereas Armenocide victims would be considered part of the second category.

The theory of the uniqueness of Holocaust is nonsensical on a linguistic level and unacceptable in historical research. Like its English equivalent, the German word *Genozid* is not a *singulare tantum* (the term for a noun which appears only in the singular form). On the contrary, it is a central category,

a generic term for various “modern” historical genocides in the twentieth century. Hence, it cannot be considered as the unique characteristic of the Holocaust. Furthermore, the ideology of singularity is non-scientific and impedes research progress. Those who focus on the dialectics of the general and the particular, in the spirit of the principle of *definitio per genus proximum et differentiam specificam*, who do not shrink from arduous work and want to contribute to scientific knowledge, need to introduce preconditions and prerequisites for the purpose of scientific understanding, in order to make it possible to compare state crimes as forms of historical reality. The genocide of the European Jews, known as the Holocaust or Shoah (more rarely: Judeocide), which took place in the occupied East during World War II, was neither deprived of preconditions and unorganized, nor unique. On the contrary, the massive destruction of “lives not worth living” was a process, a series of carefully planned state-run murder actions:

“Forced sterilization, killing (genuinely or allegedly) sick children in hospitals, killing adult inmates of institutions with gas in medical killing centers (euthanasia), killing (genuinely or allegedly) sick inmates of concentration camps, and finally, the mass murders of Jews.”³⁸

The “state-organized genocide”³⁹ of 1941–1945 was not unique as such. It was rather the destructive forms of actual working forces’ development and the bureaucratic organization of the large-scale industrial mass murders in the “factories of death” in the occupied East during World War II that could be considered singular – as qualitatively new moments of the Nazi mass murder and genocide policy.

Genocide theory

In 2004, Micha Brumlik, the director of the Fritz Bauer Institute in Frankfurt am Main, tried to define the place of “the Young Turk mass murder of Armenians” in history more precisely in the light of the theory of genocide. According to Brumlik, what

“at first was only considered to be one of the many massacres of Armenian subjects, committed by Ottoman rulers, is seen until today as the paradigm of a ‘genocide’. That is why it is so crucial for both the European and the global development of a historically-aware culture of remembrance that the Kemalist Turkey [...] has not recognized the events as a genocide until today and, above all, sanctions all those who dare to think differently, at home or

abroad. In the debate about the Young Turk genocide of Armenians, we can identify a number of problems and conflict areas relating to the notion [of genocide]. We could ask whether a planned crime of this kind is demonstrable in its full extent and its genocidal intentionality.”⁴⁰

Furthermore, Brumlik observed that the war plays “a causal role in regard to the genocides of all kind” but, on the other hand, the term “genocide” denotes a specific form of a mass murder which is different from mass slaughter and wartime atrocities in general. Brumlik also noted that underlying each genocide is a racist ideology which provides a new “inclusion/exclusion model” and is supposed to exonerate the perpetrators. He made the observation that each sociological theory of genocide also contributed to the “systematics of genocide prevention”. At the same time the author recognized that the events described as “the genocide of the Jews” (the Holocaust), which belonged to the historical German *Sonderweg* in the form of “totalitarian anti-Semitism,”⁴¹ had been presented as unique and singular for decades in German writing on postwar history.

From this perspective, Brumlik seems to offer a late recognition of the 1980 thesis developed by Irving Horowitz which considered totalitarian anti-Semitism as state-run eliminationist racism.

“Genocide is a national policy with adherents throughout the world, whereas the Holocaust was a specific practice of the Nazis which entailed the total murder of an entire population.”⁴²

Future perspectives

The large-scale industrial extermination of millions of people, which started in 1941–42 and focused on the major social group of European Jews, defined as “objective opponents,” might have gone beyond the imagination of contemporaries, including many Germans. Today as well, there might still be many German contemporary historians who have considerable moral and intellectual difficulty in the scientific understanding of the real genocidal event known as the Holocaust.

The ideology of singularity or uniqueness was, and still is, not good – quite the contrary. Moreover, it rejects the tentative results of a relatively new research perspective: comparative genocidal research (*internationale vergleichende Völkermordforschung*).⁴³ The proponents of such an approach want, in part,

to overcome the problem of the miserable status of competing groups of genocide victims. This is possible, and the problem is being overcome increasingly, which is definitely a positive development. Following Hannah Arendt, past experiences may be perceived as a task for the future – one of genocide prevention, or as a “saving-lives” policy⁴⁴ which applies to universal and indivisible human rights, as argued by the American genocide researcher Irving Louis Horowitz (1976). If that is the case, then there is only “one human right” in the end: Hannah Arendt’s (1949) inalienable “right to have rights,”⁴⁵ or the Right to Life and the Physical Integrity (*Grundrecht auf Leben und körperliche Unversehrtheit*),⁴⁶ accepted in the Federal Republic of Germany. According to Hannah Arendt, the right to life is the core of the human right to have rights. Or, as Heinrich Heine wrote while discussing diverse conceptions of history (1832/34), life as such is a right,⁴⁷ also a right to revolutionary processes: “Life is neither means nor end. Life is a right.”

RICHARD ALBRECHT

Social scientist (graduated in 1971, PhD. in 1976, post-doctoral in 1988). First an outside lecturer (until 1989), now he works as an independent research journalist, editor and author in Bad Münstereifel, where he lives. In 1991 he published THE UTOPIAN PARADIGM. 2002/07; editor of the online magazine rechtskultur.de. 2011. His latest book is HELDENTOD. Kurze Texte aus Langen Jahren. Bio-bibliography: <http://wissenschaftsakademie.net>

ENDNOTES

- 1 The first publication of a speech delivered by the author on the “Remembrance Day for the Victims of the Armenian Genocide,” 24 April 2009, Armenian Community in Cologne. The printed version was slightly expanded and supplemented with footnotes.
- 2 Franz Werfel (1920), *Nicht der Mörder, der Ermordete ist schuldig. Eine Novelle* (Munich: Kurt Wolff, p. 269).
- 3 Der Prozess Talaat Pascha (1921). Stenographischer Bericht [...], m.e.Vorwort von Armin T. Wegner und einem Anhang (Berlin: Deutsche Verlagsgesellschaft für Politik und Geschichte, 136 p.); new edition, m.e.Vorwort von Tessa Hofmann (1985), Göttingen: Gesellschaft für bedrohte Völker, XI/136 p. (= program [typo? – trans.] series); Rolf Hosfeld (2005), *Operation Nemesis. Die Türkei, Deutschland und der Völkermord an den Armeniern* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 351), pp.13–31.
- 4 Franz Werfel ([1933]; ²1959; ³1985), *Die vierzig Tage des Musa Dagh*. Roman (Frankfurt/Main: S. Fischer, 808 p. [= Gesammelte Werke]); regarding the novel and its impact: George Schulz-Berend, *Sources and Background of Werfel’s Novel [...]*; in: *Germanic Review*, 26 [1951] 2: pp.111–123; Artem Ohandjanian, ‘Diese Sucht, zu erniedrigen...’ Über Franz Werfel und seinen Roman [...]; in: *die horen*, 35 (1990) 160: pp.158–163.

- 5 Richard Albrecht, "Murder(ing) People. Genocidal Policy Within the 20th Century – Description, Analysis, and Prevention: Armenocide, Serbocide, Holocaust As Basic Genocidal Events During the World Wars," in *Brukenenthalia*, 2 (2012): 168–185; idem, «nous voulons une Arménie sans Arméniens» Drei Jahrzehnte Armenierbilder in kolonial-imperialistischen und totalitär-faschistischen Diskursen in Deutschland, 1913–1943; in *Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Religions – und Kulturgeschichte*, 106 (2012): pp. 625–661.
- 6 Irving Louis Horowitz, "Counting Bodies: the Dismal Science of Authorized Terror," in *Patterns of Prejudice*, 23 (1989) 2: pp. 4–15.
- 7 Rudolph J. Rummel (2003), "DEMOZID" der befohlene Tod. Massenmorde im 20. Jahrhundert. Prefaces by Yehuda Bauer [and] Irving Louis Horowitz (Münster-Hamburg-London: LIT, xxiii/p. 383 [= Macht und Gesellschaft 1]), pp. 177–202; *ibid.* (1998), *Statistics of Genocide. Genocide and Mass Murder since 1900* (Münster: LIT, ix/527 [= Macht und Gesellschaft 2]), pp. 78–101.
- 8 Johannes Lepsius, "Mein Besuch in Konstantinopel Juli/Aug. 1915," in Johannes Lepsius (ed.) *Orient. Monatsschrift für die Wiedergeburt des Ostens*, 1 (1919) 1–3: 21–33.
- 9 Quoted after the bulletin of the German-Armenian Association e.V. (Berlin), 2.1938: 32; similar observations in subsequent issues; in his articles "Der Orient in Bewegung" (10.1940: 129–132) and "Armenier und Armenien" (15/16.1943: 193–197) Rohrbach later recalled the "radical elimination of Armenians" which started in 1915 in Constantinople and caused "one and a half million" casualties in World War I.
- 10 Hans-Lukas Kieser, "Die Juden des Orients. Die Armenier waren Träger von Fortschritt und Bürgerlichkeit. Die jungtürkischen Nationalisten verfolgten und töteten sie in blindem Haß," in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (24.04.2005: p. 15); also earlier idem (2000), "Der verpasste Friede. Mission, Ethnie und Staat in den Ostprovinzen der Türkei 1839–1938" (Zurich: Chronos): pp. 504–508; online: <http://www.hist.net/kieser/pu/a&j.html>; cf. also <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anti-Armenianism> [and] <http://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antiarmenismo>.
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17 Eberhard Jäckel; Axel Kuhn (1980, eds.), Hitler. Sämtliche Aufzeichnungen 1905–1924 (Stuttgart: DVA, 1315 [= Quellen und Darstellungen zur Zeitgeschichte 21]), 557 [December 1922].

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ARTICLES

National perspective

SITES OF MEMORY, SITES OF REJOICING. THE GREAT WAR IN CZECH AND SLOVAK CULTURAL HISTORY

James Krapfl, prof.

McGill University

Faculty of Arts, Department of History

ABSTRACT

This article's title alludes to Jay M. Winter's influential Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History. By considering the interwar Czechoslovak memory of World War I, the article demonstrates that Winter's conclusions – drawn from British, French, and German evidence – do not apply across Europe. While Czech and Slovak veterans whose only fighting experience was in the Habsburg army recalled the war in ironic terms similar to those of Winter's soldiers, veterans of the Czechoslovak Legions produced unequivocally romantic memoirs. Regardless of wartime trajectory, moreover, Czechoslovak motivations for representing memory differed significantly from those farther west. Narrative theory, emphasizing narrators' perceptions of agency within social relationships, can help explain these differences and facilitate a genuinely pan-European understanding of the Great War's impact on cultural history.

On the basis of literature produced by veterans of the western armies, World War I has often been seen as an appalling and needless slaughter that dragged the world into modernism. In Paul Fussell's (1975) interpretation, the Great War accomplished the transition from a "low mimetic" to an "ironic" mode of symbolic representation, which he equates with modernism. Soldiers with direct experience of the front condemned the naive and romantically patriotic representations of the war that civilians at home produced, offering instead their own, eventually dominant interpretation of the war as cruel, meaningless, and dehumanizing.¹ More recently, Jay Winter has shown that the war did not really mark a sharp break between

“traditional” and “modern” forms of representation – that in the face of the “symbolic collapse” caused by the war, many Europeans found refuge in the traditional language and representational forms of mourning. Winter concurs, however, that soldiers experienced the war as dehumanizing, and that it engendered a crisis of meaning which effectively expunged simple patriotism and heroic romanticizations from veterans’ symbolic vocabularies (1995, 204, 226).

Fussell and Winter base their arguments on evidence from Britain, France, and to some extent Germany, but evidence from other parts of Europe suggests that their conclusions are not valid for the continent as a whole. Czech and Slovak representations of the Great War between 1918 and 1938 are a case in point. Though Czechoslovak veterans writing about the war in these years may have agreed that it had been cruel, they were far from unanimous about its being meaningless or dehumanizing. On the contrary, veterans of the Czechoslovak Legions, which fought alongside the Entente in Russia, France, and Italy, were virtually unanimous in describing their years in the Legions as the most meaningful, indeed the most beautiful and empowered of their lives. Whereas soldiers on the Western Front evidently rejected the romantic representations of warfare used by ignorant civilians, Czechoslovak Legionaries on all fronts used forms that can only be called romantic, comparing themselves to medieval knights on a quest to liberate their (feminine) homeland.² Interpretations of the war more consistent with the standard Western understanding *were* voiced by Czech and Slovak veterans who had not joined the Legions, remaining until war’s end in the Austro-Hungarian army or as prisoners of war in Entente countries, but it was the Legionary memory that came to be privileged in the First Czechoslovak Republic, informing officially sanctioned literature, monuments, and sociopolitical rituals from 1918 to 1938. Subsequent developments largely erased this memory, however, so it has been easy for scholars to overlook it. Since it was Legionary veterans who most vociferously, albeit fruitlessly, advocated armed resistance to Hitler in the late 1930s, the Nazis proceeded to destroy monuments and literature about the Legions when they occupied the Czech lands in 1938–39. In rump Slovakia – an independent state allied with Germany from 1939 to 1945 – the new regime had no choice but to rely on Legionary veterans to fill commanding positions in the army and foreign service, such that active suppression of the Legionary memory did not commence until the Legionary-supported Slovak National Uprising of 1944 and the resulting Nazi occupation of the country. In southern and eastern

Slovakia, however, Legionary monuments and records were destroyed when Hungary annexed these territories in 1939. The Communist regime was no less hostile to the Legionary memory of the war, privileging instead the narratives of socialist non-Legionary veterans, whose memory was more in line with the standard Western narrative.³ A quarter-century of post-Communism has not sufficed to restore what previous regimes destroyed.

By examining the Czechoslovak memory of World War I in the interwar period, this article aims to accomplish two things. First, it seeks to extend scholarship on the memory of the Great War beyond its existing western European boundaries, to contribute to the integration of “western” and “eastern” European history. Second, it proposes to correct common wisdom about the “sobering” cultural legacy of World War I by demonstrating that there were more ways of remembering the conflict than scholars have hitherto addressed. To fulfil these tasks, the article analyzes the memoirs of Czech and Slovak veterans written between the two World Wars. This was a period of considerable cultural and political freedom in the newly created, independent Czechoslovakia, such that memoirs could be written and published without the kind of censorship which distorted some other nations’ memories of the war (see, for example, Orlovsky 1999). The only factors preventing an author from publishing his memoirs were those normally operative in a free society: sufficient leisure for the author to write and cooperation of a publishing house. (Failing the latter, some writers arranged the printing and distribution of their memoirs independently.) Memoirs published in this period are therefore quite likely to reflect the authors’ real opinions, though, as we shall see, opinions prevalent in society did not fail to exert a shaping influence. Before discussing the memoirs, however, it is appropriate to review the seminal literature on the memory of the war in the West.

War and Memory

The pioneering work on the memory of World War I is Paul Fussell’s *The Great War and Modern Memory*. Fussell insists that the Great War generated myths that have become “part of the fiber of our own lives”; his task is to identify the forms these myths have taken (1975, ix). To do so, he employs the literary critic Northrop Frye’s theory of modes. Frye’s is a mimetic theory, according to which “fictions may be classified [...] by the hero’s power of action, which may be greater than ours, less, or roughly the same” (1957, 33). In classical myth, romance, and the “high mimetic” of epic and

tragedy, the hero's scope for action is greater than ours. In the "low mimetic," exemplified in post-Enlightenment novels like those of Flaubert, Stendhal, and Proust, the hero's power of action is roughly the same as ours. The final category, wherein the hero has less freedom to act than we do, is the "ironic" – which Fussell also calls "modern" – exemplified perhaps nowhere better than in Dostoevsky's *Notes from the Underground*. In Frye's scheme these categories follow one another in historic progression, beginning with classical myth and descending to the ironic before, he suggests, returning to myth. Fussell argues that the memoirs of World War I can be read as fiction (giving convincing examples of the overlap between the two), and that the memoirs of the Great War mark a transition from the low mimetic to the ironic. Memoirs of the Great War, Fussell writes, are replete with

literary characters (including narrators) who once were like us in power of action but who now have less power of action than we do, who occupy exactly Frye's "scene of bondage, frustration, or absurdity." Conscription is bondage ("It was a 'life-sentence,' says Hale's Private Porter); and trench life consists of little but frustration (Sassoon, Blunden) and absurdity (Graves). The passage of these literary characters from pre-war freedom to wartime bondage, frustration, and absurdity signals just as surely as does the experience of Joyce's Bloom, Hemingway's Frederick Henry, and Kafka's Joseph K. the passage of modern writing from one mode to another, from the low mimetic of the plausible and the social to the ironic of the outrageous, the ridiculous, and the murderous. It is their residence on the knife-edge between these two modes that gives the memoirs of the Great War their special quality. [...] (1975, 312)

As a result of their position of powerlessness during the Great War, in other words, Fussell's veterans remembered the war in ironic terms. To find symbols representing what they felt to be the essential meaning (or meaninglessness) of World War I, veterans scanned the field of physically remembered experience and selected scenes of irony and absurdity.

Fussell can be criticized on two important counts. First, the lenses of perception he borrows from Frye are teleological, such that he sees evidence of transition from the low mimetic to the ironic among those writers who,

he says, “most effectively memorialized the Great War” (1975, ix), while he dismisses evidence of continuity between pre- and post-war recollections. An example of how Fussell forces the evidence to fit his scheme is his presentation of “Thomas Hardy, Clairvoyant” (3–7). Fussell takes a collection of depressing, nihilistic poems written before the war as representative of the war, uncannily foreshadowing it. The Great War is then presented as the cause of a subsequent spiritual crisis of Western man. Another way of presenting the evidence, however, would be to argue that the crisis preceded the war and that the war, if anything, merely extended it or made it more visible.

In choosing his sources, it has been amply noted that Fussell relies “almost exclusively [...] the ruminations of white Anglo-American males of literary inclination who served on the Western Front” (Vance 1997, 5; see also Hanley 1991, 18–37). While there is nothing wrong with focusing on Anglo-Americans if the goal is to understand Anglo-American memory, and nothing wrong with emphasis on males if the goal is to reconstruct soldiers’ memories of the war, there is a problem with relying disproportionately on veterans who wrote memoirs of “conspicuous imaginative and artistic meaning” (Fussell 1975, ix). The problem is a logical one, for if literary quality is the criterion for source selection, and if literary quality is defined as that which is “imaginative,” it follows tautologically that the sources will provide evidence of innovation. By assuming that sources of “literary quality” are most representative, the historian’s understanding of the social memory of the war is predetermined. While Siegfried Sassoon, Wilfred Owen, et al. may have been talented writers, this does not mean that their memory was typical. Indeed, as Rose Maria Bracco (1993), David Englander (1994), and others have pointed out, tradition and conservatism were also prominent features of interwar memories of World War I in western Europe.

While Fussell sees the memory of the war expressed firmly in a modern, ironic fashion, Jay Winter adopts a more nuanced position. In *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning*, Winter argues that memories of the war involved both old and new forms of representation. Winter dispels the notion that forward-looking apocalyptic artists prior to 1914 somehow predicted the war, reminding us that there was already enough real or potential violence within their societies to warrant reference to despair and fiery transformation. While invocation of apocalyptic images remains an example of the ironic mode reaching back toward myth, Winter makes it

clear that the crisis which motivated this invocation preceded the Great War (1995, 153).

Winter suggests that representations of the war, both during and after, looked back to traditional forms while simultaneously looking ahead to innovation. The reason, he argues, is that “the traditional vocabulary of mourning, derived from classical, romantic, and religious forms [...] helped mediate bereavement.” “The backward gaze of so many artists, politicians, soldiers, and everyday families [...] reflected the universality of grief and mourning” (1995, 223). Drawing on an impressive range of sources, including film, sculpture, painting, poetry, and prose, Winter finds widespread evidence of mythical and romantic representations of the war in Britain, France, and Germany. Examples include the *images d’Epinal* – posters which allegorized the war in a traditional, sentimental fashion, as well as the spiritualist poetry of Rudyard Kipling, in which fallen soldiers achieved peace in another world (72–73, 122–133). According to Winter, these naive and childlike representations were neither taken literally nor intended so. People knew that the reality was worse than the representation, but the romanticized representation made reality easier to bear (127). To reach his conclusions about the coexistence of the traditional and the modern, Winter considers not only veterans’ memoirs, but a host of material created by or designed for the families who stayed behind the front lines. He argues that they can be considered together with soldiers’ artefacts, because both soldiers and civilians were confronted on a massive scale with the death of loved ones as a result of the war. Nonetheless, he notes one significant way in which soldiers remembered the war differently from civilians: “What many soldier poets could not stomach were the loftier versions of civilian romance about the war. Those too old to fight had created an imaginary war, filled with medieval knights, noble warriors, and sacred moments of sacrifice. Such writing in poetry and prose, the ‘high diction’ of the patriots, was worse than banal; it was obscene” (204). It was obscene, Winter suggests, because it betrayed the memory of those who had fallen amid horrors which those at home could not imagine. In misrepresenting the perceptions of those who had experienced the war most directly, it betrayed a galling lack of concern for them. It revealed that those at home regarded the soldiers as means, not as ends. Winter thus meets Fussell in underscoring the sense of separateness which many soldiers felt with respect to those at home – the sense that they had experienced something civilians could not comprehend. Winter also echoes Fussell in writing that veterans sought to “expose civilian

lies while expressing both the dignity of the soldiers and the degradation to which they had been subjected” (204). Using Frye’s mimetic standard rather than one based on representational form, the position of even Winter’s soldiers was ironic.

Curiously, in Czechoslovakia, it was not primarily “those too old to fight” who created an image of war filled with medieval knights and such; it was primarily the veterans themselves. Members of the Czechoslovak Legions fighting against the Central Powers identified with the early modern Slovak folk hero Janošík, or with Libuše, the mythical medieval founder of Prague.⁴ In visual representations of themselves, as well as in their memoirs, Legionaries portrayed themselves as the Knights of Blaník – the fulfilment of an apocryphal medieval prophesy that, when the Czech nation should be in greatest need, the knights of St. Wenceslas would emerge from Bohemia’s Mount Blaník to set their people free. Evidently, Fussell’s and Winter’s conclusions about the memory of the war do not apply universally.

Czech and Slovak Experiences of World War I

On the eve of the First World War, Czech opinions on the proper place of their nation *vis-à-vis* the Habsburg Monarchy were politically diverse. At one extreme, the Moravian Catholic Party argued for preservation of the monarchy in its existing, centralized form. At the other, the tiny State’s Right Progressive Party advocated independence (Mamatey 1977). Most Czechs envisioned a future within the Monarchy, but sought greater national rights and autonomy, either through recognition of the sovereignty of the Czech crown or some kind of trialism that would make the Empire’s Slavs equal to its Germans and Magyars in political power. When war broke out, there was deep ambivalence among Czechs about precisely what the conflict might mean to them. The schoolteacher Rudolf Medek, who ultimately became a Legionary, writes that when crowds gathered around the newly posted mobilization proclamations in Hradec Králové, they were hushed, with many faces pale. Some, he writes, thought that a “small punitive campaign” was an appropriate response to the assassination of Francis Ferdinand and his wife, while others grew dismayed at the idea of what the German emperor William II was calling “a war between Slavdom and Germandom” (1929b, 1:27–32). Virtually all eligible men reported for duty when called upon to do so, whether out of true loyalty to the Emperor or lack of other options. Whatever the reasons, enthusiasm for the war among newly mobilized Czech troops was noticeably less than among Austro-German or Magyar

troops – instead, the evidence suggests that many Czech recruits felt immersed in absurdity. Men of the 28th Prague infantry regiment marched through the Bohemian capital bearing the Czech colours and chanting “jdeme na Rusi, nevíme proč [we’re marching to Russia, we don’t know why]”; later they surrendered *en masse* to the Russians (Paulová 1937, 205). Civilians cried “Don’t shoot your Slav brothers” to passing Czech soldiers, and trains bearing Czech troops to the fronts were chalked with anti-war slogans (May 1966, 1:353). Seasoned members of the 28th Písek home-defence regiment were even reported to have wept (Šefl 1922, 12–13).

Slovak attitudes toward the war reflected the rigorous Magyarization policies and limited political freedoms of the Hungarian half of the monarchy. Use of the Slovak language was forbidden in schools, so that upwardly mobile Slovaks tended to become Magyars; students who resisted were expelled and often went to study in the Czech lands, where they further cultivated existing pan-Slavic sentiments. The Hungarian government allowed only one Slovak political party to exist and frequently harassed and imprisoned those who dared run for office on its ticket, such that its official program was limited to proposing greater cultural rights for national minorities. When war broke out, there was no great enthusiasm among those Habsburg subjects who identified as Slovak, but few questioned their duty. As a result of Magyarization or uncritical loyalty to their King, Slovaks ultimately comprised only about 7% of the Czechoslovak Legions (Miskóci 1933, 9). Among this minority we can usually identify ambivalence toward the war and pan-Slavic sentiments similar to those among Czechs. Mikuláš Gacek, for example, recalls that as a nineteen-year-old on the train to Galicia in 1915 he and his friends practised Russian for their anticipated surrender, but he notes that his parents never understood his support for independence (1936, 7, 91).

Save for one small group, surprisingly little is known about the wartime experience of those who remained behind.⁵ The group in question consists of Czech and Slovak politicians – particularly the network that developed around Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, Eduard Beneš, and Milan Rastislav Štefánik to work for the creation of an independent national state of Czechs and Slovaks. Masaryk, a Reichsrat deputy for the Czech Realist Party, and Beneš, also a Realist, left Austria early in the war to advocate the Czechoslovak cause in London and Paris; Štefánik, a Slovak, had already been in France when war broke out. For the remainder of the war, these three men worked and travelled in Britain, France, Russia, and the United States to

influence public opinion and raise awareness among politicians and military leaders. At home the National Liberal Karel Kramář managed to pass an editorial through the censors, wherein he developed the notion that the war was a struggle between Germandom and Slavdom, implying that Czechs should side with the Russians and await liberation from this mighty Slav brother (Z. Zeman 1961, 43; Mamatey 1977, 7). Members of the State's Right Progressive Party circulated copies of Tsar Nicholas II's manifesto of solidarity with the Slavs of Austria-Hungary, attracting immediate repression (Rees 1992, 13). The Czechs Josef Scheiner (head of the Sokol nationalist gymnastics organization), Přemysl Šámal (head of the Realist Party in Masaryk's absence), and František Soukup (a leading Social Democrat), together with the Slovak Vávro Šrobár (who had spent a year in prison for seeking election to the Hungarian parliament) joined Kramář in organizing a secret society, the "Mafia," which sought to cooperate with Masaryk, Beneš, and Štefánik from within Austria-Hungary (Beneš 1971, 44–45).

Another group of Czechs and Slovaks who would play an important role in the war were those living abroad, especially in Russia. Over 120,000 Czechs and Slovaks were living in the Russian Empire in 1914, many of them descendants of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century agricultural immigrants, others technical advisors, apprentices, or students (Bradley 1991, 14). In the summer of 1914, just before Russia declared war on Austria-Hungary, Czechs in Moscow asked to be allowed to establish a volunteer unit within the Russian army. Originally the army command intended this "Družina" (band) to be strictly an intelligence and administrative unit, but as the number of volunteers increased, they were allowed to fight alongside regular Russian troops (Bradley 1991, 16; Hoyt 1967, 21). The Russo-Slovak "Memories of Štúr" cultural organization endorsed the Družina, which Slovaks began joining (Bôčik 10). The Družina thus became the base of the Czechoslovak Legion in Russia; beginning in December 1914 the Družina was allowed to recruit members among Czech and Slovak POWs and in December of 1915 it was reorganized as a full-fledged regiment under Russian command (Bradley 1991, 17–19). The Revolution of 1917 substantially changed prospects for the growing Legion. In July 1917, after Czech and Slovak soldiers had distinguished themselves in the Battle of Zborov, Kerensky reorganized them into a division with four regiments under Czechoslovak command (Hoyt 1967, 50–52). Following the October Revolution and the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, when the Eastern Front dissolved, Masaryk (who by this time had become the acknowledged leader of the Czechoslovak

independence movement) decided to move the Legion from Russia to France. Initially the Bolshevik government permitted this, and a few companies left via the White Sea while the majority set out across Siberia for transport from Vladivostok. On their way, however, armed conflict erupted between Bolsheviks and Czechoslovak troops. The Czechoslovaks fought their way successfully to the Far East, but then the Allies asked them to remain, first in the hopes of renewing the Eastern Front and then with the prospect of overthrowing the Bolshevik regime. The Allies ultimately decided to cancel their intervention in Soviet affairs, but not before the Legion had regained control of the entire Trans-Siberian Railroad and the lower Volga River valley. As a result of their extra mission to combat Bolshevism, the war experience of Czech and Slovak Legionaries in Russia was prolonged, and it was not until 1920 that their army of nearly 70,000 was able to go home (Bradley 1991, 156; Michl 2009, 285).

Czechs resident in France at the start of the war also volunteered to fight against the Central Powers. Of the roughly 1,600 Czechs living in France, some 300 volunteered in August 1914 to fight in the French army, and by September the French administration had agreed to form a Czech company, along the lines of Polish, Belgian, Spanish, and Italian companies that were also developing within the French army at this time. In late October they were sent to the front (A. Zeman 1926–29, 1:169–173). As the war progressed, Czechs and Slovaks from Britain, Canada, the United States, and neutral European countries joined the “*Nazdar*” company in France (the word *naẓdar*, initially meaning “for success,” emerged as a nationalist greeting among Czechs and Slovaks in the latter half of the nineteenth century). Czech and Slovak POWs from Serbia and ultimately Romania and Italy also helped swell its ranks (Sychrava 1927, 248–254). In December 1917 the French government agreed to permit the establishment of an independent Czechoslovak army on French soil, under the leadership of a Slavophile French general. When the war ended, this army consisted of about 12,000 men in four regiments (Kalvoda 1985, 425; Michl 2009, 285).

The entrance of Italy into the war created another major front for Austria-Hungary, and soon there were thousands of prisoners of war in Italy. In one prison camp, in January 1917, thirty Czech and Slovak prisoners established the Czechoslovak Volunteer Corps, offering their services to the Italian war effort. By April 1918 their organization had grown to 10,000, but the Italian government hesitated to accept their offer. At the same time, Czechs

defecting from the Austrian army turned against the Austrians at the front, helping the Italians achieve significant local victories. František Hlaváček, a first lieutenant in the Habsburg army, brought valuable military documents when he defected and thus gained authority to negotiate with the Italian government about systematic involvement of Czech and Slovak volunteers. Following the disaster of Caporetto in October 1917, where 400,000 Italian troops were lost, the government finally agreed to arm the Volunteer Corps and permit the creation of a Czechoslovak Legion under Italian command (Kalvoda 1985, 425–430). By the end of the war, this Legion consisted of approximately 26,000 men (Lokay 1970, 27; Michl 2009, 285).

While all the Legions originated on the basis of independent local initiative, they all came eventually under the direction of the Czechoslovak National Council in Paris, which Masaryk, Beneš, Štefánik, and the exiled Agrarian Reichsrat deputy Josef Dürich established in 1916. This process was not without considerable interpersonal squabbling, during which Dürich fell out of the picture and Štefánik came into conflict with Hlaváček, but ultimately the leadership of the Paris Council was accepted and Masaryk was acknowledged as the “little father” of the Czechoslovak independence movement (Mamatey 1973, 14). Following the creation of an independent Czechoslovak republic in October 1918, the Czechoslovak Legions became the core of the new state’s army.

Depending on whether they remained to the end of the war at least ostensibly loyal to the Habsburgs, or joined one of the Czechoslovak Legions, Czech and Slovak soldiers experienced the Great War in radically divergent ways. Veterans of the Legions tended to recall an existential transition from absurdity in the Austro-Hungarian army to synergy in their own volunteer corps, while veterans who remained in the Austro-Hungarian army described an intensifying experience of absurdity and frustration, finding release (perhaps) only in the end of the war and return to their now-independent homeland.

Absurdity in the Austro-Hungarian Army

In their memoirs, Czech and Slovak veterans unanimously describe their time in the Austro-Hungarian army as a miserable experience. In Hegelian terms, they did not see themselves reflected in their work, such that their enforced participation in the Habsburg war effort was an affront to their human dignity. The primary reason that most memoirists give is that Austria-Hungary’s war aims conflicted with their own nationalist and pan-Slavist

sentiments; powerlessness in the face of official decisions that soldiers considered inept or immoral made matters worse.

Veterans repeatedly testify to having professed nationalist or patriotic convictions well before the outbreak of the war. The national awakening of the nineteenth century had created an awareness of Czech national history which permeated the Czech school system and the grassroots Sokol organization. The nationalist version of Czech history emphasized the independent medieval Czech kingdom, the reform movement of Jan Hus, and loss of independence to Austria after the Battle of White Mountain in 1620. Rudolf Medek, who surrendered to the Russians in Galicia and later joined the Legion, recalls that he had written poetry in the third grade about Jan Hus and the Hussite general Jan Žižka. Following the Bosnian crisis of 1908, he had come to the conclusion that Austria-Hungary should be broken up and the Czech kingdom restored (1929b, 1:9, 12). Karel Zmrhal, who also joined the Legion in Russia, was typical of many Czechs who regretted the catastrophe of White Mountain, as a result of which “For almost three hundred years we as a nation have borne the sacrificial candles of our lost freedom” (1919, 53). The Slovak Legionary Ferdinand Čatloš had earned expulsion from his school in Upper Hungary for collaborating on an underground Slovak literary magazine (Čatloš 1933, 17; Gacek 1936, 45). Even before the war many Czechs and some Slovaks had believed that their position in the Dual Monarchy was an unjustly subordinate one; this perception carried through to the Habsburg army.

Closely related to Czech and Slovak nationalism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was pan-Slavism. As a minimum, pan-Slavists advocated cooperation among Slavic peoples; at most, they sought the unification of all Slavs in a great political entity under Russian leadership. When Stanislav Neumann set off in 1914 for Montenegro, he hoped secretly that the Entente would win the war (1928, 13). The idea of fighting fellow Slavs was absurd for him, as certainly for many of his compatriots. “The little Czech soldier, who in schools and patriotic books was inspired by pan-Slavic ideology and heroic tales of Montenegrin chetas, neared and looked upon Mount Lovćen with a peculiar emotion. Wearing an Austrian uniform – all too justly hated [...], feeling clearly that he was in the service of imperialism, everywhere equally putrid, forced to impinge upon the fate of a brave and healthy tribe, he saw in the peak of Lovćen a martyr’s crown, which the Austrian army and its despotic ruler had illicitly placed there” (81). Josef

Šefl, on his march to the Eastern Front, also felt profoundly absurd about having to fight fellow Slavs. “We [Czechs] knew that those against whom we were fighting were our brothers, fighting for us and for our independence” (1922, 10). Mikuláš Gacek writes that he and his schoolmates had made plans with Serbian friends before the war that Serbs would come from the south to assist the Slovaks, while “the august Russian Tsar, when he sees how Slovaks are struggling for freedom, will come and help” (1936, 46).

Disorganization that Czechs and Slovaks perceived in the Austro-Hungarian army provided a vehicle for further justifying their irritation. “It often happened that a given order contradicted an order given just a minute previously,” writes Šefl (1922, 15). Cyrill Růžička (n.d.) dilates on an incident when he was ordered by one officer to boil water and by another not to use any fuel. Augustín Drobný laments that his regimental officers once ordered an attack on their own forces, and he complains that “only those at the bottom are the executive organs – everyone else just gives orders” (1933, 69, 121). While such absurdities may be characteristic of all armies to varying degrees, the use of these comments in the memoirs was primarily to provide further evidence of the rottenness of Austria-Hungary, not necessarily to highlight a root cause of dissatisfaction. Drobný, however, does suggest that Austro-Hungarian ineptitude was worse than necessary, contrasting the effectiveness of German weapons with the unreliability of his own army’s and noting that, in the marshes of eastern Galicia, Austro-Hungarian trenches were impossible to maintain, whereas the Germans’ were “perfectly organized” (116, 165).

More grievous to Czech and Slovak soldiers were what they saw as the moral excesses of the Austro-Hungarian command. Šefl and Růžička both protest against the ruthlessness with which the Austro-Hungarians treated prisoners in Galicia and Serbia, respectively. When the Russians attacked Przemyśl, Medek notes that they approached without artillery support or even hand grenades. His commander (who happened to be Czech) ordered them to keep shooting, even though the result was a gratuitous massacre, and Medek writes that he was not the only one to feel ashamed (1929b, 1:115). Several veterans draw attention to the medieval forms of corporal punishment that officers inflicted on their own soldiers when they collapsed due to heat, hunger, sickness, or exhaustion, sometimes to the point of caning them to death (Drobný 1933, 93–100; Fidrich 1933, 30; Potůček 1933, 68). Drobný uses the intervention of Imperial German officers on one occasion

to point up the absurdity of Austro-Hungarian practices, for the Germans evidently shouted, “You tyrants! You barbarians! [...] You want to win this war? These men are supposed to follow you?” (100).

In sum, Czech and Slovak memoirists widely perceived their participation in the Austro-Hungarian war effort to have been, in Medek’s words, “vain, stupid, and pointless” (1929b, 1:119). Many soldiers described a feeling of being led like sheep to slaughter, but added that they felt powerless to do anything about it (Medek 1929b, 1:119; Šefl 1922, 10).⁶ While certainly there were Czechs and Slovaks sincerely loyal to Francis Joseph and Charles who did not question their orders (Bôčik 1933, 12; Kajan 1933, 97; Klátik 1933, 101; Michal 1933, 38), the experience of most was one of relentless absurdity. Some soldiers were compelled to deal with this absurdity until war’s end, while others found a way out.

Synergy in the Czechoslovak Legions

Over 100,000 Czechs and Slovaks managed to escape the absurdity by joining the Czechoslovak Legions. Some surrendered intentionally to the Entente with hopes of joining the struggle against the Central Powers, while others learned of this option only after spending some time in prison camps. Memoirists describe the experience as a breathtaking personal transformation. “It is Christmas [1917],” writes Karel Zmrhal, quoting from his diary, “the Christmas of a Czech volunteer. What a difference...! It is a Christmas with thoughts so peaceful, like never before. I feel that I am fulfilling my responsibility, and I have only one wish, just quickly to return to a free Bohemia and to my loved ones. In old Bohemia I would not feel satisfied even among my dearest” (1919, 62). A metaphysical boundary had been crossed, and neither the world nor the self appeared to be the same. “It was as if we had been completely reborn, become new beings,” recalls Štefan Michal (1933, 37). Jan Tříška writes that when his father joined the Legion in Italy in 1918, “he could hardly believe the sudden, dramatic, and sweeping change in his fate. From a wretched member of a despised, defeated army, he was elevated, almost by magic, to the honorable position of a valued soldier in the army of his own free country, a sovereign state, a respected member of the Allied Powers!” (1998, 117). The reasons for the metaphysical metamorphosis which Czech and Slovak soldiers experienced after joining the Legions can be summed up in Hegel’s old, familiar formula: they now saw themselves reflected in others and reflected in their work, to a significantly greater extent than before.

Social relations were markedly better in the Legions than in the Habsburg army. All the Legionaries spoke a common language (Czech and Slovak are mutually intelligible), and all were volunteers fighting for a cause in which they sincerely believed and for which they were willing to risk death. Perhaps for these reasons, there were closer relations between officers and troops in the Legions than in the Austro-Hungarian army. Memoirists quote their commanders and speak of them with reverence. A former officer remembers correcting a new volunteer who addressed him with Habsburg-style deference, impressing on him that “we’re all brothers here” (Michal 1933, 43). Another veteran memorializes his first captain, who “could spend hours walking with any brother” (Gacek 1936, 109). Still another recalls that when General Štefánik visited Russia he shook the hands of all the troops and invited all the Slovaks for an informal chat. Štefánik’s penetrating, confidence-inspiring gaze, he writes, was something he would never forget (Čechovič 1933, 74).

In recalling his experience with the Legion in Russia, Josef Pitra draws attention to the feeling of unity and brotherhood that prevailed among the troops there. Following usage adopted by all Legionary writers, Pitra writes of his fellows not just as fellows, but as brothers – all sons of a common Motherland. This brotherhood applied regardless of whether a fellow soldier was actually known or not. Near Penza, for example, one of five Czechoslovak trains heading toward Vladivostok was attacked by Bolsheviks. Alerted in advance by their scouts, the troops managed to set up a line of defence, which the Bolsheviks placed under siege. “Let us not lie here forever! wrathfully cried an *unknown brother*. It’s best to charge at them now – now!” (Pitra 1922, 51, emphasis added). This feeling of brotherhood fostered identification as well as tolerance. When Pitra found another soldier sleeping in his hole, he did not get angry, but just went to dig another one (Pitra 1922, 43). A day of heavy rain, which leaked into a Legionary train, was an opportunity for yet another experience of solidarity. “Places where the rain did not drip were tightly occupied from the ground up. And it wasn’t bad! A joke struck like lighting, a memory sprang forth, a song was whistled into being, and our spirits shone. We were home! Our home was our train, our wagon. We were one family!” (Pitra 1922, 67). Mikuláš Gacek, too, writes explicitly of his fellow Legionaries as members of a common family (Gacek 1936, 46). For Jenda Hofman, serving with the Legion in France, “the solidarity among us was the best” (quoted in Werstadt 1923–35, 1:22).

While the trains may indeed have felt like home, the soldiers never lost sight of the fact that the freedom of their homeland was their goal. Rudolf Medek (1929b) summed up his whole experience of the war as “a pilgrimage to Czechoslovakia” (the title of his two-volume memoir). The sense of a sacred mission found its way into romantic analogies which the soldiers represented in words and art both during the war and after. During the war, Legionaries stylized themselves as the heirs of Jan Žižka and his Hussite army, which in the fifteenth century had maintained the independence of Bohemia and the Utraquist Church against the assaults of all surrounding powers (figure 1). Their regiments were named after Hussite generals, and their flags and gravestones bore the Chalice – an old Hussite symbol – rather than the Cross. On train cars in Russia, Legionaries painted images of Janošík, a Slovak folk hero prophesied to return to earth with his comrades in his people’s hour of greatest need (figure 2). Memoirists included photographs of such images in their books, recalling fondly how they had impressed members of their host armies during the war. A Legionary chronicle, published for veterans after the war, proclaims: “Hardly had the enemy heard the singing of God’s warriors when they threw down their swords, abandoned their banners, and in panic-stricken horror and fear, fled before the Hussites” (Vaněk 1922–29, 4:5). The chronicle speaks of “how strangely the old legends about the Knights of Blaník were fulfilled, as well as the prophesy of Comenius [written after White Mountain], ‘to thee shall return the rule of thine own things, O Czech people,’” (Vaněk 1922–29, 4:4).

Figure 1

An earthen barrack of the Czechoslovak Legion in Russia, visually identifying the Legionaries with Hussite soldiers. The words are a quotation from a Hussite battle-hymn: “Ye who are warriors of God and of his law, pray to God for help and place your hope in Him.” (“Zemljanky v Baryševce” [A. Zeman 1926–29, 3:249]).

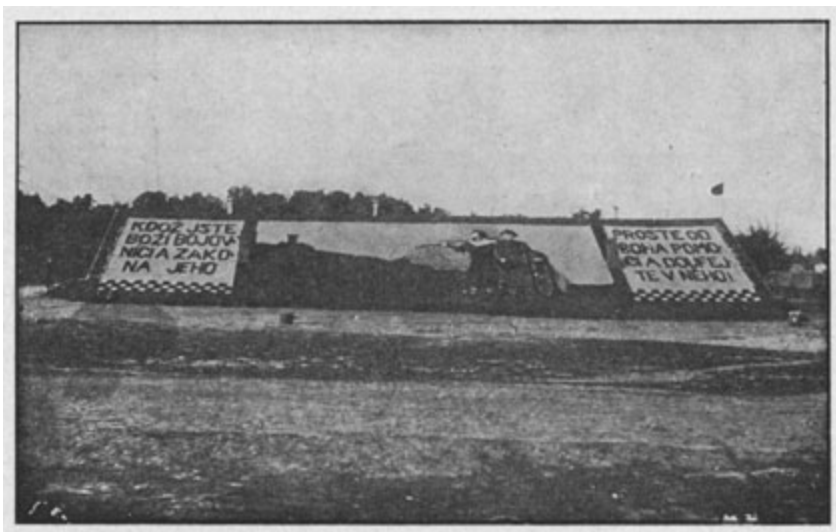




Figure 2
Janošik represented
on a train car of the
Second Battalion
of the Legionaries
in Russia (Pitra
1922, between
pp. 144 and 145).

Among at least some memoirists, this sense of a sacred mission took on messianic proportions. Reference to Jan Hus, who in Czech and Protestant Slovak nationalist historiography had really started the Reformation, informed this sense; Legionary heirs to Hus confirmed it.⁷ According to Otakar Vaněk, “the great truth of free human conscience, which today is the property of all humankind, is a Czech truth, the Czech national idea, the greatest Czech victory that has ever been – immortal” (1922–29, 4:5). Rudolf Medek, interpreting the entire Legionary experience in Russia, writes of the Czechoslovak nation as “a nation which, though numerically not among the greatest peoples of the world, had proved that in its struggle for law, order, and freedom, it could achieve great things. From that time dates the truly international character of the Czechoslovak national movement” (1929a, 35). In Russia, after the October Revolution, Legionaries saw themselves as liberators, teaching the Russian peoples how to organize and defend themselves. Some, at least, came to see their cause as self-determination for all

subject peoples. “Freedom of my nation and those of others,” wrote Karel Zmrhal, “or death!” (1919, 63; see also Gacek 1936, 87).

Legionaries distinguished themselves at the Battle of Zborov on the Eastern Front, of Artois on the Western, and of Doss Alto on the Italian. Russians called the Czechoslovak *Družina* “the Battalion of Victory or Death” (Medek 1929a, 34). István Deák suggests that “whatever their motivation for joining, [the Legionaries...] fought well, for they were convinced that they would be executed as traitors if captured by the Austro-Hungarians” (Deák 1990, 198). While this may indeed have been one of their motivations, the memoirs suggest that it was incidental. Legionaries do not recall fighting out of fear, but out of love for their nation. It should be remembered that the Legionaries were a special group, who had volunteered for their task in full knowledge of the risks. At least as much as fear of execution, nationalist fervour coupled with the intense social synergy of the Legions should be acknowledged as motivating factors. Jan Tošnar, whose fluency in Italian enabled him to evade recognition as a Czech Legionary after Hungarians captured him in the battle of the Piave, writes that he feared being discovered not because it would mean hanging for treason, but because such a death would not help his nation (1930, 84–85). Karel Zmrhal provides another perspective: “Here we have learned how to think and speak freely, and we desire freely also to act. We know today only one thing: freedom. For freedom we are sprinkling this beautiful white Ukrainian snow once again with blood. For us there is only one road: to a free Bohemia, or death!” (1919, 57–58).

Veterans of the Russian Legion attest to having shared a feeling of invincibility. “No one doubted,” writes Pitra; “faith in our success was universal” (1922, 59). As Gacek puts it, “We were convinced there was nothing on earth at which we would not succeed, if only we really wanted it” (1936, 116). Legionaries repeatedly emphasize their ability to defeat the Bolsheviks with minimal casualties. What could explain it, given that they were so outnumbered? According to Pitra it was the “good Spirit of our nation, which directed our actions and did not permit that we might be the first to lift a hand to fight with the disillusioned and misled Russian nation” (1922, 14). If the good Spirit of their nation was for them, who could be against?

In Russia, Czechoslovak soldiers found an excellent “Other” against which to define themselves. Zmrhal speculates that one of the reasons why the Tsarist regime had agreed to the *Družina*’s formation was that Czechs

were more cultured (1919, 54). When the Revolution began in 1917, the Czechoslovak army “did not succumb to the Russian revolutionary chaos and disorganization. It became an island in the storm, an island of discipline and order in the wild confusion which shook the old Russian Empire to its very foundations” (Medek 1929a, 7). Indeed, Czechoslovak troops “defended the ‘Russian Revolution’ against the reactionary and imperialistic armies of William II in the great Battle of Zborov” (Medek 1929a, 13). Gacek quotes with reverence a speech Masaryk gave in Russia in the summer of 1917, in which the Czechoslovak leader evaluated the ongoing Russian revolution. “We can see how anarchy has established itself where there should have been democracy; let us take this as a cautionary tale in planning our own course of action” (1936, 105). After the Bolshevik Revolution, when the Legion was compelled to set off across Siberia, Legionaries insisted that it had not been they who started the fighting, but the promise-breaking Soviet government (Medek 1929a, 8). Rudolf Pitra emphasizes that Czechs showed far greater respect for life than the Bolsheviks, whose barbarisms he declares too gruesome to describe, and that everywhere the peoples of Russia and Siberia hailed them as liberators from Bolshevik tyranny. Eventually, of course, they had to leave liberated townspeople to their own devices, but “not before teaching them what a people’s democratic army really is” (Pitra 1922, 27; see also Medek 1929a, 18).

Reinforcing solidarity among Legionaries in France, and the feeling that they were fighting with a purpose, was the need to prove themselves to their French hosts. “Everywhere we meet with unfamiliarity and misunderstanding,” wrote Jenda Hofman in his diary. “Let us not forget that we are not free, that despite the rights we enjoy here, in England, and in Russia, very few have absolute faith in us. Let us show them who we are, that we are not ciphers” (quoted in Werstadt 1923–35, 1:22). In Russia, after American, Canadian, French, and Italian troops got involved in the Civil War, Legionaries reported feelings of superiority with respect to their Allied partners. “The peculiar psychological conditions in Russia and Siberia,” writes Medek, “began to tell on foreign armies unused to the stifling and chaotic atmosphere of a war that was, after all, a civil war. The Czechoslovaks alone did not succumb to this disorganization, and seeing the hopelessness of further enterprise in Russia [after the Allies had given up], they, too, set off for home” (1929a, 31).

The soldiers in the three Czechoslovak Legions fought different battles and experienced different living conditions, which naturally produced

significantly different memories. Nonetheless, the mode used to structure memory remained overwhelmingly romantic across the three groups. Their experience in the Austro-Hungarian army had been one of contradiction and absurdity, while fighting with the Legions for the independence of their homeland was a liberating experience in itself. The Legionary experience, however, was not the most common one for Czech and Slovak soldiers in World War I. Most remained to the end in the Austro-Hungarian army, or awaited the end in hospitals and prison camps.⁸ Now it is time to consider how they remembered the war.

Alternative Memories

Veterans who had not served in the Legions published far fewer memoirs in the interwar period than did Legionary veterans. The reasons for this are open to speculation. Perhaps most Czechs were happy about their independence and saw the Legionaries as directly responsible; for this majority the Legionary story would be more interesting than their own absurd experience. Most Slovaks, if Slovak Legionaries are to be believed, were as indifferent to independence as they had been to the war, and so might have felt no particular need to document their experience (Jokel 1933, 36; Kajan 1933, 96; Potôček 1933, 81). The intense synergy of the Legionary experience, by contrast, may have given Legionary veterans more motivation and social support to write. In any case, it is clear that a standard narrative of World War I emerged early in the interwar period, and it was the narrative of the Legionaries. Memoirists of the Austro-Hungarian army experience had to respond to the “liberation legend” either explicitly or implicitly; they can be classified on the basis of whether they reinforced or subverted it.

Josef Šefl’s book is an apology, seeking to explain and justify his own non-participation in the Legions. He writes that he missed the chance to be captured by the Russians when he fought them in Galicia, because at that time (1914) he still expected the war to end soon, with Russia occupying Bohemia. Instead of allowing himself to be captured, he used his authority as a non-commissioned officer to order his men to retreat (1922, 26–27, 42). Stuck in the Austro-Hungarian army, he writes that he joined other Czechs in conducting a “passive” revolution, even while the Legions abroad were carrying on the “active” revolution (58). Evidently he was not passive enough, for he ended up being arrested for treason in November 1914 and spending six months in prison, before being sent back to the front for lack of men. His crimes: 1) saying that officers had fled a battle, 2) saying that soldiers

were hungry, 3) saying that a revolution would break out in Bohemia, 4) saying that Francis Joseph should have had himself crowned King of the Czech lands, and 5) saying that his parents wrote to him what was going on at home (68). Šefl emphasizes the absurdity of his situation, and that of all Czechs in the Habsburg army.

The explicit purpose of Augustín Drobný's memoir is "to describe the suffering of Slovak and Slavonic troops fighting under foreign flags, for foreign interests" (1933, 5). A student in Germany when the war began, he was called home to Pressburg when Francis Joseph ordered general mobilization, and sent to the Eastern Front in 1915. Initially he did not question his duty, though he was by no means enthusiastic, but as the months went by he became disgusted with the brutality and hypocrisy of Austro-Hungarian officers as well as the "lords" at home who required innocent young men to kill one another while they sat in safety and profited from the want of common citizens. As Drobný came in contact with Russian POWs and soldiers dying on the battlefield – people "just like us" – he developed pan-Slavic sympathies, and as he engaged in battle after horrible battle – which he describes in grisly detail – he became a self-avowed pacifist. "The bitterness of our present life is poisoning us," he writes. "We are indifferent to everything. We don't know why we are fighting. The brutality of war has stripped us of our humanity and turned us into animals" (215). An escape attempt failed, though he was not caught; he learned of the Czechoslovak Legions only in April 1916, just before he was seriously wounded and sent home for the remainder of the war (140, 240). Though he states that a goal of his book is to prevent future wars, he is equally insistent that peace can be maintained only if the rising generation is always ready to defend the Slovak nation and the democratic Czechoslovak state, which were freed from a militaristic monarch and nationally chauvinistic aristocrats only by the sacrifices of the previous generation and particularly the Czechoslovak Legions (5). "The truth," he insists, echoing Masaryk, "must prevail!" (240, 248).

Whereas Šefl and Drobný present narratives of the war very much in harmony with the "liberation legend," Stanislav Neumann does not. He opens each chapter of his memoir with a discussion of death by disease – which in the Balkans, he writes, was ironically more common than death at the front (1928, 5). He writes of Austrian officers as "parasites," protesting that even when all the soldiers were hungry, they had plenty of food. Only one officer – a fellow Czech, who "liked to talk and joke with us" – escapes Neumann's

indignation (8). Inclined toward socialism before 1914, wartime injustices like this evidently pushed Neumann further to the left, and afterwards he joined the Communist Party. While at the beginning he had placed his hopes in the Allies and especially France, he writes that he was ultimately “disillusioned” by the western powers, who seemed more interested in themselves than in humanistic ideals. For Neumann, the war was “dirty,” and the order that emerged afterwards not much cleaner (85).

Josef Váchal, who served on the Italian front, makes the ugliness of war his central theme. An artist by profession and Buddhist by confession, Váchal claimed not to be concerned with who might win the war. For him, war was simply a means for restoring ecological balance between humans and other animals when natural catastrophes failed to do so. “All those whose limbs and innards will soon be torn apart in the trenches,” he writes, “have in any case trespassed against their brother animals and nature in general” (1996, 144). Nonetheless, the gruesomeness of death in the trenches weighed heavily upon him, becoming the subject of several woodcuts and poems. He thought he had escaped these horrors when a serious injury sent him to a field hospital, but ironically, when he had sufficiently recovered, he found himself assigned to the manufacture of grave markers. In sum, Váchal considered the war to have been a pointless evil, which could have been avoided if men had been content with the simple joys of family and craft. Even the post-war independence of his country Váchal regarded as of little consequence; all he desired was to be with his family and to pursue his art (218–221).

While relatively few memoirs present a non-Legionary perspective of the Great War, interwar novels partially fill the lacuna. Many, of course, like Rudolf Medek’s pentalogy, merely retell the liberation legend in fictional form, but others speak with a sense of disillusionment characteristic of what Fussell considers great war literature in Britain. Jan Weiss’ *Cottage of Death*, Karel Konrád’s *Dismissed*, and Vladislav Vančura’s apocalyptic *Tilled Fields* are all gloomy documents “of the psychology of post-War *mal de siècle*” (Hostovský 1943, 83). By far the most popular and famous of these novels was Jaroslav Hašek’s *The Good Soldier Švejk* (1921–23). Hašek, who had fought with the Legion in Russia until he joined the Soviet Communist Party, created a hero who, many Czechs believed, personified their wartime predicament of having to fight for an empire they hoped would lose. Švejk is an enigmatic character, simultaneously clever and stupid, who engenders absurd situations by ostensibly serving the Austrian cause with enthusiasm.

By taking regulations more seriously than army officers themselves, Švejk actually undermines the Austrian war effort. Naturally, Hašek's novel attracted the condemnation of Legionary veterans and other adherents of the emerging standard narrative, not only because of what they saw as his wartime treason, but because they believed Švejk set a bad example.⁹ Czech heroes, they argued, should be brave and chivalric, like the Legionaries who died fighting for Czechoslovak independence; *Švejk* was an insult to their memory (Medek 1929b, 1:123).

Death and the Morality of Memory

In *The Great War and the British People*, Jay Winter suggests that British veterans wrote their memoirs for three reasons: to memorialize their fallen comrades, to expose the ugliness of war, and to address their feeling of guilt for having survived (1985, 289–304). In the Czechoslovak case, the first of these reasons appears frequently, the second occasionally, and the third not at all. Instead, we find two more reasons: to preserve veterans' own sense of identity, and to contribute to the building of a new society.

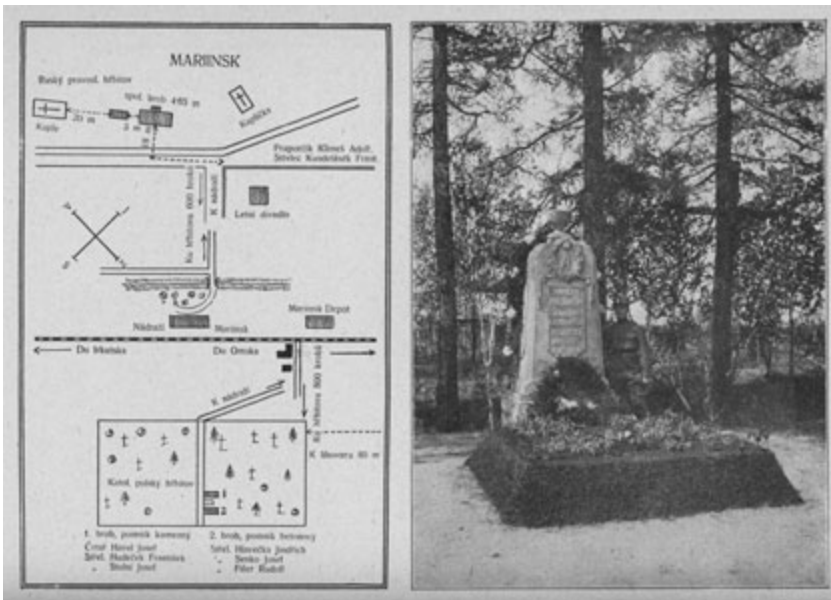


Figure 3
A map of Czechoslovak graves in Mariinsk with an image of one of the monuments erected there (Ivičič 1924, 212).

All Legionary memoirists speak respectfully of their fallen “brothers,” and it is clear that a major purpose for writing was to memorialize them. Václav

Ivičič, in his history of his Russian Legionary regiment, provides photographs of all known resting places of comrades who fell in Siberia, as well as maps of their cemeteries (1924, 212–43) (figure 3). Rudolf Pitra writes that the fallen still “live with us in spirit... in our memories” (1922, 57). Veterans do not speak of the dead with sadness, however, but with a certain confident joy. In Siberia, remembers Pitra, “we spoke of them lightly and without concern – in a way that no one who knew the difficulty of our situation could understand.” After burying four brothers, Pitra recalls, Legionaries even invoked humor: “Where there are four Czechoslovaks, there it is good – like home!” (1922, 61). This phenomenon may be partly attributable to the intense bonding that took place among Legionary brethren, in conjunction with the deep sense of mission they felt. The death of Legionary soldiers was widely considered to be an efficacious sacrifice for the freedom of their homeland (Gacek 1936, 145, 161; Sajda 1933, 7; Zuman 1922, 12–13). An exhaustive chronicle designed to be an heirloom for Legionary veterans, which includes a nameplate at the front for owners to record the details of their own participation, closes with an image of a fallen soldier, his last gaze looking through parted clouds to the shining spires of liberated Prague – a direct pictorial connection between the sacrifice of fallen Legionaries and their country’s independence (figure 4). The chronicle indicates that “our brothers lie with smiles on their lips” (Vaněk 1922–29, 4:841).

Figure 4
A fallen Legionary
gazes through
parting clouds
toward liberated
Prague (Vaněk
1922–29, 4:841.)



If the monuments built to Legionaries after the war are any indication, the belief in a direct causal relationship between the Legions and Czechoslovak independence was widespread. Šefl and Drobný say as much in their non-Legionary memoirs. This was a memorialization of the dead which emphasized not death, but life. As one author proclaimed, fallen Legionaries “did not live in vain” (Dančenko-Němirovič 1922). In the memoirs of Neumann and Váchal, however, death does not assume a heroic mask. Insofar as Neumann discusses death, it is casually or ironically, as if to emphasize the pointlessness of it all. Váchal, too, insists that the terrible deaths he witnessed in the Italian trenches served no purpose besides an ecological one. Neither author memorializes individual soldiers; they merely protest the social forces that caused such a great and absurd loss of life.

Of the memoirs we have discussed, only Drobný’s and Váchal’s make the ugliness of war a central and insistent theme. The other authors acknowledge the ugliness, but either push it to the background – more or less as a matter of course – or seek to understand its social origins. Perhaps because the war in the Balkans was such a mobile war, in which the Serbs suffered far more than the Austro-Hungarians, Neumann and Růžička do not find the violence there worthy of any special comment. For the Legionaries, the horror of the war did not seem to be as noteworthy as the spirit of solidarity and purposefulness which prevailed among them. “It was a horrible and beautiful time,” writes Jaroslav Werstadt, who proceeds to focus on the beauty (1923–35, 1:5). Even in their visual representations of battles, Legionaries tended to create beautiful images of good triumphing over evil (figure 5). Drobný insists on describing the horror of fighting on the Eastern Front, but still sees good beyond the evil in the Legions he never joined, as well as in honest common soldiers who occasionally found enough humanity within themselves to resist or mitigate the inhuman orders of their superiors. In Váchal’s memoir and his woodcuts, on the other hand, there is only violence, with no good to be seen (figure 6).

Survivor guilt is a common part of grieving, either out of desire to undo the past or dread of the future. It is characteristic of a state of mind wherein bereavement cannot be placed in a meaningful historical scheme. While such guilt may have been common in Britain, it does not seem to have characterized the collective Czechoslovak memory of the war, whether Legionary or not. Legionaries insisted that their brothers fell for a cause – the independence of their homeland – and with this cause achieved, their

deaths did seem not without meaning. Moreover, they maintained that any one of them would have accepted the same fate. Drobný and Váchal, who echoed Western assertions that World War I was a needless slaughter, did not profess any guilt either. Guilty for them were the powerful – the monarchs and aristocrats (Drobný) or the politicians and capitalists (Váchal) who had caused the war. The ordinary people, with whom they identified, were in principle innocent – save those who sought their own prosperity within the existing power structures.

Figure 5
František Kupka,
Blaničtí rytíři
(The Knights of
Blaník) (A. Zeman
1926–29, 3:249).



A central reason for writing both memoirs and histories of Legionary regiments was the need to reinforce identities that soldiers had assumed during the war, and to preserve the synergy they had shared. As Ferdinand Čtloš wrote, “nowadays these meetings [of Legionary veterans] are being organized in order to preserve a spirit, to strengthen national groupings and to build a tradition of military solidarity, friendship, and community, to keep faith to oneself and to one’s comrades – faith, which in those most horrible times full of tests, joined us and united us, for it was often sanctified with blood” (1933, 17). Rudolf Pitra wrote that just before finally leaving Russia, “we strolled among familiar places, looking one last time on a countryside

that will never disappear from our memories. We were glad to leave, even though we felt that a piece of ourselves would remain here, a captivating episode of our lives" (1922, 72). Many veterans recalled the Legions as the most glorious period of their lives, a time when they had discovered hitherto unsuspected strengths, when they had transcended their former selves. Writing and reading about their experiences provided a way to revisit and potentially even recapture that spirit.



Figure 6
Josef Váchal,
Ex libris (Váchal
1996, 8).

Perhaps the most prominent reason why Czech and Slovak veterans wrote their memoirs was didactic. Proponents of the standard Legionary narrative wanted to provide inspiring examples of the new political morality they hoped would characterize the new republic. "Even if we don't like to remember the painful days, months, and years of the world war," writes Josef Šefl, "we dare not, in this post-war chaos and turmoil, forget the recent past. It is good to look to bygone years, to draw lessons from them, so that we might truly value the Freedom for which our brothers suffered and

died on all the battlefields of the world” (1922, 7). The fact that so many Legionaries had died to bring their country independence made it a moral imperative for survivors to tell their story. The struggle for freedom had not ended with the establishment of Czechoslovakia; the Legionaries now had to make sure their people were trained for freedom (Čechovič 1933, 42). Taking a pessimistic view of things, Rudolf Medek asked: “Is it worth it to these rascals, that for the freedom of their land and for a better future for their children the Czech Družina bled in Russia and assembled a great army, which should come to the Czech lands and Slovakia and proffer the banner of liberty to the hands of immature, weak, cowardly, and even refusing people? Won’t we hear some speak of the full coffers of Egypt, or how under Austria it was better?” (1929b, 1:119–20). Such questions are very similar to those featured in the French film *J’Accuse* – which Winter discusses at length in *Sites of Memory* – wherein the dead rise up to visit a French town and see whether the living are worthy of their sacrifice. The moral implication in both cases is that readers and viewers should mend their ways, lest the sacrifice lose its meaning.

Masaryk and the Legionaries with him stood for active involvement in political life – even at the risk of personal loss. Adherents to this political philosophy found the passivity which so many Czechs and Slovaks had demonstrated in the war to be problematic. As Karel Zmrhal proclaimed, “Woe to those who slept while others created” (1919, 74). Socialist writers like Neumann and Hašek, and writers with socialist inclinations like Váchal, challenged the standard war narrative upon which all this didacticism was based. With very few exceptions, divergences in the Czech memory of World War I crystallized into a schism between the dominant “liberation legend” and a subversive socialist interpretation. That, at least, is how contemporaries saw it. One of the few revisionist Legionary memoirists protested against this polarization. “The ideology of the class struggle and the political reaction to it,” he wrote, “have stifled any realistic history of our revolution, which would be based on historical fact and actual developments. Politics has triumphed over science and real history” (Zuman 1922, 10).¹⁰

The socialist counter-interpretation was not as pronounced in Slovakia, where the main cleavage in the public memory of the war seems to have been between the Legionary minority and a silent majority. Slovak Legionary memoirists, however, did occasionally draw attention to misunderstandings with their Czech brethren during the war – misunderstandings that

at the time they had tried to overlook, but which in retrospect appeared as intimations of future tragedy. Mikuláš Gacek recalls being delegated by his regiment with one other Slovak to travel to distant Borispol, where Masaryk in July 1917 was to address the main Legionary host. "He spoke entrancingly," writes Gacek. "We trembled. Our hearts were fully open... And with every transition to a new thought our spirits quivered with the happy expectation: now, here it comes – the next words will be for us, for Slovaks." Alas, Masaryk spoke extensively about Czech history and the mission of the Czech nation, but never once mentioned the Czechs' partners in the Czechoslovak Legions (1936, 102–06). In January 1919, when a new, mostly Slovak regiment was created in Irkutsk, the Slovak officers petitioned their Czech colonel to make Slovak the unit's language of command, suggesting that Slovak POWs would be more likely to join the Russian Legion if their language were the language of administration in at least one regiment, and since theirs was already mostly Slovak, it was the logical choice. The Czech commander refused, however, on the grounds that Czech was a richer, more established language and that all Slovaks understood it. When the Slovak officers complained at higher levels, they were accused of separatism (Gacek 1936, 198–280). Incidents like this did not lessen Slovak Legionaries' commitment to the Czechoslovak cause, either during the war or after, but they did warn that, "as a result of misunderstanding from the Czech side, Slovaks might really become separatists" (Gacek 1936, 205; see also Vnuk 1933, 200).

Throughout Europe, the memory of the Great War held the key to two fundamental social questions of the interwar period: Who are we, and where are we headed? Veterans wrote in order to answer these questions for themselves and for their people. The five motivations we have discussed were really different ways of posing the questions. Memorialization of the fallen was an essential component of these meditations because of the critical question of sacrifice. If soldiers' deaths were clearly related to a positive result, then survivors had a moral responsibility to honor their ideals. If there was no correlation – if, in other words, the sacrifice was ineffective – then the beliefs and institutions that had required this sacrifice needed to be reconsidered.

Conclusion

This article has argued that those Czech and Slovak soldiers who recalled the war in positive terms did so because they had been involved in the genesis of a new, transcendent sense of community. Whereas the experience of

World War I may have been an experience of disillusionment for British, French, and German soldiers on the Western Front, it was an experience of profound “illusionment” for those Czech and Slovak soldiers who left the Austro-Hungarian army and joined the Czechoslovak Legions. Whereas British, French, and German soldiers may have enlisted enthusiastically and optimistically, only to find their hopes ironically and absurdly shattered, Czechs and Slovaks tended to find their participation in the Austro-Hungarian war effort absurd from the beginning. For those who remained in the Emperor-King’s army, the sense of absurdity proved enduring and even comparable to that experienced in the west; for others – a small but important minority – incorporation into the Czechoslovak Legions endowed the war with profound, even sacred meaning.

It still remains to consider Czechoslovak memory of the Great War according to Frye’s modes, and to compare Czechoslovak and western cases in their light. Insofar as they deal with life in the Austro-Hungarian army, Czech and Slovak memoirs fall unambiguously into Frye’s ironic category. These documents emphasize absurdity, their humor is black, and they depict the plight of powerless souls with minimal freedom of action. Legionary memoirs, on the other hand, use a mode best described as romantic. Their writers compare the Legionaries to medieval knights, their language is elevated, their humor noble. The scope of action they describe is grander than that of ordinary men in ordinary times. Pitra writes that, after reading Jack London’s *Adventures*, captured from the Penza soviet, he had been moved by these tales of how people in exceptional circumstances develop exceptional abilities and energy; Pitra identified with these characters and poured his enthusiasm into his writing (1922, 77).

Both the Legionaries and the standard Western narrative’s British, French, and German soldiers agreed that “he who wasn’t in the fight belongs to another world” (Pitra 1922, 59), yet they do not seem to have belonged to each others’ worlds, either. One might be tempted to attribute the difference to the novelty and peculiarity of trench warfare, which was indisputably most gruesome on the Western Front and figures so prominently in the disillusionment which British, French, and German soldiers described. If the Western Front were the only factor, however, then we would expect Czechs and Slovaks fighting there alongside the French to have experienced a similar sense of dark irony. This is not the case. On the contrary, Czechoslovak veterans of the Western Front recalled the same experience of synergy

described by their comrades to the east. Legionaries in France did notice the demoralized mood of French troops, but found it puzzling rather than resonant with their own perceptions of the war. Jenda Hofman described his surprise at French morale in his journal, published posthumously in 1924: "Could it be that they have forgotten why we are fighting? It would be an unforgivable sin on all our parts, if these years of labor and all those victims should be for nothing" (quoted in Werstadt 1923–35, 1:24).

A further hypothesis might be that the Legionary narrative is characteristically a "winner's narrative." The British and French also won the war, however, and the insular British even experienced less domestic hardship than Czechs and Slovaks in the blockaded Habsburg Monarchy. Only two conclusions are possible: either the standard narrative of irony and disillusionment was not as pervasive in Britain and France as historians and literary critics have believed, and veterans there also articulated elements of a romantic "winner's narrative," or the type of warfare at the various fronts is not the only factor behind the divergent standard narratives of interwar Czechoslovakia and western Europe.

Since the modal difference between irony and romance is mimetic – a difference in the scope for an individual's independent action with respect to others in a real or imagined social relationship – these relationships are the place to seek a resolution to our dilemma. In explaining why a soldier's experience was ironic or romantic, it may be that the structure of his metaphysical relations with fellow soldiers, with officers, and with his nation was at least as important as the physical conditions of warfare. While physical circumstances can, of course, constrain agency, there would seem to be an important correlation, on one hand, between egalitarian or quasi-familial relations within an army and the experience of freedom in its ranks, and on the other between a more regimented structure and an experience of powerlessness. It is significant, for example, that Legionaries remained volunteers even after they joined; unlike British, French, and German soldiers, who frequently enlisted voluntarily only to be bound thereafter to inescapable military discipline, Czechoslovak Legionaries were as free to leave as they had been to join, and some did (Gacek 1936, 128; Styka 1933, 86). This freedom heightened the sense of responsibility among the majority who remained – a responsibility inseparable from an awareness of agency. Czech and Slovak veterans frequently recall that, because of the nature of social relations in the Legions, the experience of serving in them was itself

liberating (Čatloš 1933, 23; Gacek 1936, 45). The revolution in which Legionary veterans universally claimed to be participating began, as they recall it, not in the future, with the achievement of Czechoslovak independence, but in the present, with the creation of a new society in their own ranks. It was, to be sure, a nationalist revolution (Legionaries themselves describe it in these terms, e.g. Čatloš 1933, 23), but it was not yet an imperialist nationalism. Whereas regular soldiers in the Great Powers' armies could question whether the patriotism for which they were asked to kill and be killed was really a form of oppression, volunteers in the Czechoslovak Legions were convinced that they were fighting for their own national liberty. While nationalism provided the framework in which a specifically Czechoslovak revolution could be organized, moreover, with respect to feelings of empowerment it was far more important that this revolution was democratic. Indeed, it was precisely after December 1918, when the new Czechoslovak state introduced a more regimented structure (including former Austrian officers) into the Legions-turned-Army, that veterans recall their enthusiasm waning – despite the continuation of the war in Russia and the need to secure the new state's borders at home (Gacek 1936, 190–253; Tošnar 1930, 241–42).

A cursory examination of Polish memoirs would seem to confirm these tentative conclusions. The Polish case is comparable to the Czechoslovak because of the Legions that fought for the restoration of Polish statehood under Pilsudski, but it is also more complex, not just because the Legions became divided between the 2nd Brigade, which swore “brotherhood in arms” with Germany, and the 1st and 3rd Brigades, which refused, but also because Polish troops fought in the regular German, Austrian, and Russian armies on both sides of the Eastern Front (not to mention the Southern and the Italian). Nonetheless, the patterns by which Polish veterans narrated their memories in the interwar period closely match those of their Czechoslovak counterparts. Veterans of the three regular armies consistently describe their experience in ironic, even dystopian terms, frequently recalling a sense of powerlessness and indifference as to whether they won or lost (Henning-Michaelis 1928–29; Iwicki 1978; Rapf 2011). Veterans of the 1st and 3rd Brigades, by contrast (especially the 1st, led by Pilsudski himself), relate stories of heroism in romantic pursuit of a glorious future and emphasize their sense of fraternity and equality in the Legions. They describe even the period after the Oath Crisis, when they were interned as POWs or drafted into the German and Austro-Hungarian armies, in romantic terms, for

sacrifice was necessary to achieve the “resurrection” of Poland (Skladkowski 1932–33, 1:196; see also Herzog 1994; Porwit 1986). Veterans of the 2nd Brigade – whose officers came from the Habsburg army and used German rather than Polish as the language of command – do not seem to fit either pattern. For example, the major theme of Stanisław Rostworowski’s (2001) memoir is duty, initially harmonious between Habsburg and homeland, then painfully conflicted, but ultimately resolved through the interplay of individual probity and external circumstance. This memoir falls between the high mimetic of romance and the non-mimetic of irony in the realm that Frye calls the “low mimetic,” where the protagonists’ power of action is constrained by social forces, but not slavishly so.

The Polish evidence can help us make sense of a further difference between British and Czechoslovak memory: survivor guilt as a motivation for writing in the former case and its absence in the latter. Whereas most Polish veterans align with their Czech and Slovak counterparts on this matter, those who were officers in the 2nd Brigade and the regular armies do occasionally acknowledge survivor guilt (Orobkiewicz 1919; Rostworowski 2001). Agency, of course, is a prerequisite of guilt. It would appear that most Polish veterans of the three regular armies, like Czech and Slovak veterans of the Habsburg forces, do not evince feelings of guilt because they regarded their position as powerless from the moment they were called up to the time when death, injury, capture, or the end of the war set them free. Veterans of the Czechoslovak Legions and Piłsudski’s 1st and 3rd Brigades do not describe feelings of guilt because they felt they were fulfilling the “sacred” destiny of their nation (Čatloš 1933, 17, 21), acting in complete harmony with its “good Spirit” (Pitra 1922, 14), mutually reinforcing with their peers an extraordinary sense of agency that approached the divine (Gacek 1936, 187–88). Winter’s (1985) British soldiers and some Polish officers were capable of experiencing survival guilt precisely because they possessed – at least at the outset – an “ordinary” sense of human agency. Even if British soldiers may not have felt free in the trenches, they had grown up in a relatively free society, accustomed to personal responsibility. It is, as Fussell suggests, “their residence on the knife-edge” between low mimetic and ironic that gives British war narratives – like the memoirs of some Polish officers – their distinctive character.

Further transnational comparison would be necessary to test and refine this hypothesis. Consideration of Serbian memoirs, for example, might confirm

that egalitarian, familial relations – like those Victor Komski (1934) recalls in the Serbian army, where even King Peter donned an infantryman's uniform and shared the sufferings of his host in its retreat across Albania – are correlated with subsequent romantic interpretations of the war. In order fully to understand the diversity of ways in which Europeans remembered World War I, and the reasons behind this diversity, a genuinely pan-European study is necessary. This diversity, it bears emphasizing, had important consequences. The Nazis' ability to launch the Second World War depended very much on the diverse ways in which Germans remembered the First. The diverse European responses to the Nazi threat corresponded extremely closely with the ways in which particular European societies remembered the Great War. It is no coincidence that the British and French, who tended to remember the war ironically, chose the path of appeasement, while Poles and Serbs, among whom a romantic memory of the war prevailed, chose resistance in the face of certain defeat. In Czechoslovakia, as mentioned at the beginning of this article, veterans of the Legions were among the foremost advocates of armed resistance to Hitler – even after the western democracies had refused to support Czechoslovakia at Munich. The behavior of France and Britain confused Czechoslovak public opinion, however, such that Slovaks and especially Czechs began increasingly to suspect that the socialist interpretation of World War I – which emphasized the bourgeoisie's selfish disregard for humanity – was after all the correct one. The course of European history even after the Second World War would depend, to a significant extent, on how Europeans remembered the First.

JAMES KRAPFL

Teaches European history at McGill University in Montreal, specializing in modern Central Europe and the comparative cultural history of European revolutions. He is the author of Revolution with a Human Face: Politics, Culture, and Community in Czechoslovakia, 1989–1992 (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013). Dr. Krapfl completed his PhD at the University of California, Berkeley, in 2007 and has commenced a new project on the popular experience of the late 1960s in Central Europe.

ENDNOTES

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- 1 Samuel Hynes' *A War Imagined: The Great War and English Culture* (1991) is another prominent, albeit theoretically less profound, example of the "modernist" interpretation.
- 2 The word for homeland in Czech and Slovak, *vlast/tě*, is feminine.
- 3 For examples of Communist-era interpretations of World War I, see Jindřich Veselý's *Stalinist Češi a Slováci v revolučním Rusku, 1917–1920* (1954), and Karel Pichlík's more balanced but still ideologically committed works, *Červenobílá a rudá: Vojáci ve válce a revoluci 1914–1918* (1967), and *Zahraniční odboj 1914–1918 bez legend* (1968).
- 4 For details of these and other Czech (and Slovak) legends, see Alois Jirásek's canonical *Old Czech Legends* (1992).
- 5 A partial exception, *Domov za války* (Žižek 1929) provides some information on the everyday life of ordinary people behind the lines, but most space is devoted to the activities of political conspirators.
- 6 British soldiers in Serbia reported seeing railway cars chalked with the words "Export of Bohemian Meat to Serbia" (May 1966, 1:353).
- 7 Though Protestants were a minority among Slovaks, they were significantly more likely to join the Legions than their Catholic co-nationals.
- 8 According to Jan Křen, roughly one million Czechs and Slovaks served in the Austro-Hungarian army during the war; of these, about 300,000 ended up in prison camps. The ratio of Legionary to non-Legionary veterans was approximately 1:9 (Křen 1989, 386).
- 9 It was only Masaryk's general amnesty that allowed Hašek to return safely to Bohemia (Pytlík 1983, 59–63).
- 10 Zuman protested as well against what he saw as a by-product of this polarization: the tendency of Czech adherents of the "liberation legend" to see Russia only in negative terms. (Slovak Legionary veterans generally retained their affection for Russia, if not for Bolshevism.) Zuman had lived in Russia for 23 years before the war started and had been one of the first volunteers in the Czech Družina. While he was antagonistic to Bolshevism, he remained faithful to the old idea of pan-Slavic union. He was therefore dismayed that, with independence, Czechs had seemed to abandon pan-Slavism. *Před dvaceti lety* (Šapilovský 1934) is another work in this vein.

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“NEITHER FOR KING NOR EMPIRE”: IRISH REMEMBRANCE OF THE GREAT WAR IN THE 1920S

Mandy Townsley, Doctoral Candidate

Washington State University in Pullman

Department of History

ABSTRACT

This article addresses the difficulties of Irish remembrance of the Great War from 1923 to 1930. This period of the Irish Free State, newly independent of the British Empire, demonstrates the difficulties for a new state in crafting their national identity in the wake of empire and the problem of remembering events that do not easily fit into a new national narrative. The different spheres of remembrance that interacted and influenced the way the Irish came to understand their Great War experience are examined.

Wars are rarely integrated into a national narrative with ease, particularly for a new nation. While the Great War was interwoven into the tapestry of British history, it remained a difficult subject for the Irish. Although the Irish voluntarily sent 210,000 Irishmen to war, roughly forty percent of their service age population, between 1914 and 1918 the postwar period was rife with questions about loyalty, empire, and remembrance. For men like James Clifford, who served at the Battle of Gallipoli and lost his arm at Loos, the 1920s in Ireland represented a repression of the war experience. His brother's wife, an ardent nationalist, forbid discussion of Clifford's service and threw away his medals and mementos of the war out of disdain for these symbols of an oppressive imperial conflict.¹

The familial censorship by Clifford's sister-in-law was not unlike what would happen in the public realm during the 1920s. It was during the early 1920s that the Irish experienced significant violence in their bid for independence, and in the wake of this violence, the Irish had to decide what an independent Ireland would represent. The rise of the republicans and their contextualization of the Great War as an imperial one meant that official

and popular remembrance of the war was fraught with tension. Yet despite this current of chaos, on a personal level many Irish people found ways of remembrance and commemoration that were solidified during this period. During the 1920s the Irish Free State was in the most nebulous period of its relationship with the experience of the Great War. It was during this era that the Irish people negotiated what role the Great War would have in their society. Because the government took an ambivalent stance on remembering the Great War, the fate of war remembrance was fought out in public sphere. Ultimately dissension over this issue, as played out in the public, relegated memory of the war to the personal level. Men like James Clifford had to find their own ways of commemorating a war that irrevocably altered so many lives.

While scholarship on Great War commemoration in Ireland has increased in the past fifteen years, these discussions often focus on one aspect of commemoration, most commonly monuments, parades, or memorials. Too few have examined the interplay between official, popular and personal forms of remembrance in the Irish Free State. These spheres of remembrance influenced and communicated with each other. Therefore we must consider each of them to fully understand remembrance of the Great War in the Free State. This is important, not only to gaining a more complete understanding of this moment in Irish history, but more importantly, this illuminates a little studied aspect of remembrance. Perhaps the Irish case can provide insight into other nations with difficult pasts to better understand how official, popular and personal remembrance interact, contest, and compete with each other.

Collective war memory, sometimes regarded as monolithic, is comprised of a complex interaction of official, popular, and personal remembrance. These spaces of memory communicate with and influence each other. Official spaces of memory often convey a specific meaning behind a war experience as endorsed by a government. This realm of memory can be contested, supported, or even ignored by popular or personal remembrance. Popular remembrance, sometimes called public memory, is represented by the differing layers of the populace which can find expression in newspapers, public speeches, song, etc. Personal war memory is expressed through private acts of remembrance like the creation of rituals within a family, by an individual, or through personal documents meant to encapsulate the memory of an event.

In their seminal works, George Mosse² and Jay Winter³ attempted to flesh out the complexities of grief and the impulse to memorialize the Great War in Britain and Germany. What emerges from these works on Great War memory is that there were attempts across Europe to cope with the bloodshed of the war through commemoration and remembrance. While these attempts occurred at various levels, it is important to note that remembrance of the war was a phenomenon across Europe. Public and private attempts at commemoration were fueled by individuals because “states do not remember; individuals do, in association with other people.”⁴ Therefore, as Winter argues, understanding the process by which individuals remember the past is important because it informs the public manifestations of remembrance.⁵ So then individuals are the core of memory, and in the case of Winter’s study, Great War remembrance. He also asserts that groups of like-minded individuals form collectives that interact with other collective remembrances of the war.⁶ With this precedent set, this article pushes Winter’s premise further to reorient discussion of the memorialization of the Great War around the interaction of these layers or collectives of remembrance to better understand how war memories are created and sustained. This article argues for the importance of the interaction of these layers: governmental apathy and dissension within the popular sphere forced remembrance to the personal level.

In Ireland, instead of official methods creating a commemorative atmosphere with a semblance of popular support, there was a struggle to create either form of memory due to deep political divisions within Irish society. Yet people “needed to find a kind of solace, a way to live with their memories.”⁷ 49,500 Irish soldiers died in the conflict and thousands returned, many with debilitating chronic emotional, physical, and psychological problems stemming from their war experience. Forty percent of the Irish service age population volunteered and a quarter of them never returned. This meant that significant portions of the Irish were impacted by the war directly through war service or indirectly through family or friends. Personal remembrance occurs in every war-torn society, and the Irish certainly were not alone in their difficulty of post independence commemorations of wars fought under an empire. For the Irish it was at this personal and private level that remembrance of the Great War became isolated yet preserved as the only effective level of remembrance due to questions of imperialism and national identity. This article contends that in the early Free State we can see the contestation between these different layers of memory: ambivalence

on the part of the government forcing the role of the war to be violently decided within the populace, the outcome of which was that the republican sentiment prevailed and individuals and families had to commemorate on a personal and private level in order to avoid slanderous claims of imperialism and anti-Ireland sentiment.

Official Remembrance

The end of the Great War was not the end of violence for the Irish. They were almost immediately plunged into a War for Independence against Britain which culminated in Irish independence in 1921. Under the treaty provisions with Great Britain, Ireland was partitioned, which meant that the northern six counties remained part of the United Kingdom, while the southern counties became the Irish Free State. Many republicans who had fought against the British during the War of Independence felt that partition was a sham committed by the British government, while others felt it was the best possible compromise. This disagreement over whether or not to accept the treaty led to the Irish Civil War, which ended in 1923, and the permanence of partition. As the newly independent Free State moved on from the horrors of almost a decade of war, this meant deciding which events and symbols would make their way into the new national narrative. While the 1916 Easter Rising, War of Independence, and Civil War entered the arena of potential inclusions alongside the Great War, each would find difficulty finding a seat in the emerging pantheon of Irish history.

The 1916 Easter Rising is often touted as the birth of independent Ireland. If any event of the early twentieth century offers the most clear-cut potential for inclusion as a site of memory for the Irish Free State, it is this. Yet even this event did not easily fit into the new Irish state. While the Rising with its heroes and idealistic hopes for Ireland seems the inception point for a birth of the state myth, in actuality remembrance of the rebellion was not an all-encompassing, uniting force. Both pro- and anti-Treatyites claimed the martyrs of the rebellion, which was untenable in the post Civil War period. The fact that both sides claimed these men and the event itself begged the question: How could the Rising be the creation of a state that had gone to war with itself? Politicians of all stripes attempted to claim the rebels of 1916 at one time or another to legitimize their party.⁸ The Rising was often dragged into political debates in service to contemporary desires, and thus it was a fluid event that never became a coherent rallying point for the state. The specters of the dead “constantly disrupted all attempts at

origin, continuity and history itself.”⁹ Additionally, because “emphasizing one interpretation of the past necessarily meant marginalizing another,” the Rising might be usable to reconcile the pro – and anti-Treatyites but it would still marginalize Unionist and nationalist interests in the Great War.¹⁰

The Rising was sometimes pitted against the 1916 Battle of the Somme. The Somme became a badge of honor for the Unionists, who viewed their bloodletting on this battlefield as evidence of their loyalty to Britain and a reinforcement of their contract with the Empire.¹¹ This was contrasted with the Rising, which reinforced the nationalist Catholic agenda for independence, and was soaked in the religious connotations of martyrdom, redemption, and sacrifice.¹² These events became counter-narratives to each other and to the larger debates that had long faced Protestants and Catholics in the country. The Somme was held up to “contrast the centrality of the Rising” and the Rising allowed republicans to emphasize their opposition to the Unionist/Protestant agenda.¹³ These diametrically opposed positions on two of the most important events of the early twentieth century in Ireland dramatically affected how the Great War was understood in the Free State. While the Rising was not easily commemorated, the Great War became associated with the Unionist/Protestant agenda such that “discursive imaginings of the First World War are thus inextricably connected to the dynamics of political conflict and divided loyalties in Ireland, and are themselves contested.”¹⁴

If the Easter Rising did not clearly fit into a new Irish narrative, how could the Great War, the War for Independence, or the Civil War, all of which were arguably even more complex in their meaning for the Free State? They were uncomfortable reminders of the tensions between the government and ardent republicans.¹⁵ The War for Independence, seemingly destined for commemoration, was marred by intense Treaty debates and the Civil War which followed. The ghost of the Civil War hung over the memory of the War for Independence, making it difficult to use it as a unifying event, since it led to more war. The Civil War presented a challenge since, as all such conflicts do, it had divided the nation, and celebrating the pro-Treaty victory was seen as only furthering those divisions. As Anne Dolan argues, the Civil War was difficult to integrate into the Free State narrative, partially because both the pro- and anti-Treatyites wore their service proudly, which begs the question, “After civil war can the winners honour their victory; can they commemorate it [...] with the blood of their comrades still fresh on

their boots?”¹⁶ Though President Cosgrave attempted to use the Civil War to boost his Cumann na nGaedheal party, which took power when the Civil War ended, ultimately the conflict did not retain a prominent position as a commemorative event in the Free State. The complexities of remembering an event that tore the nation asunder and continued to breed bad blood proved too difficult. This war had been a dirty one, won through “atrocities and execution, lacking the requisite laurels and blazes of glory,” so it became necessary to repress some memories in order to get on with governing the Free State after 1923.¹⁷ The Civil War became the dividing line for politicians in the Free State and “rehashing the old row seemed somehow more alluring than the reality that politics had retreated to the unheroic inanities of living the independence they had coveted for so long.”¹⁸ For much of the Free State, the Civil War was not past, but present. The fact that it was constantly affixed to political parties and arguments meant that commemorating it, at least publicly, was a difficult endeavor. Much like remembrance of the Great War, this remembrance was also relegated on a private level, as noted in Anne Dolan’s work. While the two events bear some similarity in this fact, they are vastly different, in that the Civil War difficulties in remembrance were due to destruction of Irishman against Irishman in a fight for the direction of the independent state, whereas remembrance of the Great War came to represent a battle of national identity and the rejection of empire.

The constant struggle against the British government led many republican leaders to shun any residual connections with the Empire after independence. Other European nations sought to commemorate and make sense of the Great War tragedy in the 1920s. After 1923 Ireland sought to establish itself as a new nation. Though Ireland, like Finland and Czechoslovakia, was newly independent after the war, Ireland’s independence came at the cost of both a war for independence and civil war that further embedded fierce dissension over their former imperial rulers. Unionists, predominantly Protestants, rejected this new independence from Britain. Because Unionists treasured their imperial connection, commemorating the war was far easier than for Irish republicans, who were predominantly Catholic. During the 1920s those few Unionists within the Free State became inextricably linked by the government and in the public eye with Great War commemoration. In its attempt to eschew British ties, the Free State government also eschewed ties with the Great War. Because the Irish fought in the Great War under the British flag it was seen as a British war for imperial gain and had no place in the new national narrative of an independent Ireland. This

attempt to eradicate British ties would have significant consequences for ex-serviceman, their families, and the families of those who did not return.

The 1920s was a decade of tremendous contestation about the perceived imperial legacy of the Great War in the Free State. The government had to walk a fine line of allowing Armistice Day ceremonies, while also appearing as a strong nation independent of Britain. It was so near to the end of the war it would have been politically inadvisable to disallow such commemorative activities. President W.T. Cosgrave's administration did not desire to stop them altogether, yet Armistice Day celebrations were not government funded, nor were they attended by major leaders. The administrations of the 1920s essentially walked a tightrope between republican sentiment, which desired a total excision of everything British (and therefore imperial), and the rest of the Irish population. They were trying not to look too British, while acknowledging that there was a demand for these services. Ultimately the administration of the 1920s allowed parades and services but did not endorse them. The Great War and its combatants were not part of the new Irish nation and therefore would not garner its support. This would cause debates over the role of the First World War and its potential as an imperial symbol to be negotiated in the public sphere.

Armistice Day parades, which commemorated the end of the Great War, took place in many European nations and often served as a national moment of mourning and commemoration. Though the government allowed Armistice Day parades in the Free State, many members of the government and their affiliated agencies felt such commemorative acts were imperialist in nature and would only cause violence. Military marches involving British Army uniforms, standards, the Union Jack flag, or anything deemed militaristic in the parades were regarded as especially dangerous, prompting this response from Chief Superintendent of the Ennis Garda Edward O'Duffy in 1928,

"The Armistice parade [...] was a definite Imperialistic display, and not a commemoration to the war dead, as it ought to have been. The continuance of exhibitions of this kind which are hateful in the eyes of nine-tenths of the people will undoubtedly court trouble. It is not suggested that any action should be taken against the men concerned on this occasion,

but I respectfully beg to renew my recommendation to have permission for such displays refused in future years.”¹⁹

O’Duffy viewed the parade as a demonstration of the British Empire which would only cause problems among those who viewed the Empire as a former oppressor. In his request to have such parades banned O’Duffy was not alone. A letter stamped “secret” to the secretary of the Department of Justice argued that these marches were “intended much more as a military display than a bona fide commemoration service for the dead, to which latter there can be no objection, though there appears no necessity to perpetuate this form of ceremony.”²⁰ It is clear some government officials felt that commemorations were not necessary to the Free State, although they were willing to allow them as long as such events were devoid of military displays which promoted the British Empire. In both cases, the authors note that if such an event was devoid of imperial symbols and tone and was purely an act of remembrance, parades would be acceptable. Herein lies the larger difficulty for the Irish of the Free State: how intertwined was the Empire and postwar commemoration? As to whether or not remembering the war could be extricated from the Empire, that would ultimately be decided in the public sphere.

This perceived intertwining of empire, the war, and Armistice Day caused the Free State government concern that Great War remembrance activities were causing more harm than good. The early morning violence of November 11, 1928 seemed to bear this out. At various locations around the island, bombs exploded near monuments to British kings and poppy²¹ depots were ransacked. A movie theater was raided and the film *Verdun*, set to show the next day, was stolen.²² Such violence against symbols of the war was problematic for the Free State government and though they did not endorse such violence, they did not endorse the commemorative symbols either. The new government was stuck.

The Irish Free State government attempted to appease the organizers of the Armistice Day celebrations while simultaneously withholding direct support to mollify republican sentiment. Although they took an official stance of ambivalence towards the symbols and ceremonies of the war, this period of post-civil-war tension was one of negotiating the new state’s symbols. Symbols are integral to the visualization of a new state “and they play an important role in creating emotionally charged bonds of social solidarity.”²³

Just as symbols can breed solidarity and national identity, they can breed dissension. As the Irish of the Free State attempted to craft an independent national identity they had to decide which symbols would represent them. Officially the state chose the green, white, and orange tricolor flag, a symbol born out of the republican movement, as the official state flag. This decision was highly contentious since those who had won the civil war and were in government chose it, while the losing side also felt the tricolor was their symbol. Enter into this debate the Union Jack and “God Save the King,” traditional symbols of the British Empire and its army. Republicans saw these symbols as evidence of an imperial minority representative of the centuries Ireland had endured under the boot of the British Empire.²⁴ As such, the Union Jack and British anthem become inextricably linked with empire and the Great War in this heady era of negotiating national identity. What is unfortunate about this simplistic view is that it does not allow for more complicated understandings of these symbols. While there were undoubtedly many who sympathized with the British, there was also a strong contingency of those who saw these symbols as commemorative of the Great War rather than imperial fervor. It is this debate over symbols and the identity of the Irish nation that would come to a head in the public sphere over popular remembrance.

Questions over a permanent representation of war through a memorial also fueled debates over the role of the war in Ireland’s identity. While England, Germany, and France were busily erecting war monuments in the 1920s, the proposed monument in the Free State caused outcry and debate. War memorials and monuments present an opportunity for people of a nation to reflect and grieve.²⁵ The arguments and delays that would plague the Irish attempt to create a national memorial for the Great War demonstrate a loss of this opportunity to reflect and grieve publicly.

From the initial proposition in 1919, the national war memorial took twenty years and multiple redesigns before it came to fruition. These delays and arguments demonstrate how divided the government and Irish public was over commemorating the war. The first proposal for a memorial veteran’s home, submitted by the Comrades of the Great War organization, was rejected by the government on the practical grounds that, although they had raised £50,000, the group had no long-term plans for funding. Changing tack, in 1924 a second proposal was submitted to the government for a war memorial in Merrion Square in Dublin. This proposal met with stiff

resistance in the Dáil (parliament). Some argued that a memorial was a poor way to assist ex-servicemen, many of whom were disabled and would benefit from social services, as evident in one Irishman's comment, "If the Irish Imperialists wish to show an appreciation of the heroism that gave Britain and her Allies the victory of 1918, let them attend to the survivors of the War who are in need of such help. Dead men cost nothing to maintain."²⁶ This was a prevalent opinion among many Irish people who believed that a memorial did little to ease the suffering of ex-servicemen. The author's equation of the Comrades Association with imperialists shows how supporting remembrance of the war publicly became interlinked with support of the British Empire.

Dissenting voices from the government often argued that such a physical representation of the war would ultimately be a memorial to the British Empire and send the wrong message to the world about the new Irish state. Placement of the memorial in Merrion Square, disturbingly close to the seat of government, was also a point of contention. While some government leaders argued that a memorial was acceptable, they disputed the Merrion Square location, contending that it should be farther from government buildings, so as not to give the impression that the Great War was in any way connected with the Free State government.²⁷ Here, as with debates over the usefulness of Armistice parades, "private grief and public acknowledgment constantly conflicted with each other."²⁸ The government sought to allow the expression of remembrance, as long as said remembrance did not taint the identity of the new state with its perceived imperial symbolism.

By 1927 there was no consensus on the memorial and the proposal was withdrawn from the Dáil. Undaunted by the amount of controversy the memorial created, the planners restructured their next proposal for a memorial archway to Phoenix Park, the largest park in Dublin and central to the city. This proposal was rejected in 1928. Within a decade of the first proposal the Dáil had rejected three memorials, at which the organizers inquired if any area of the park would be amenable. They were offered Islandbridge, an area far from the seat of the government, and in 1931 a model for a memorial on the site was approved. Construction began in early 1932 and President Cosgrave requested that Irish ex-servicemen comprise fifty percent of the work force. After a decade of political wrangling, the Great War national monument was finally approved, although it was not government funded. The Free State government's approach to this problem of remembering

a war with perceived imperial tones demonstrates the larger concerns over Ireland's new identity. While the monument was completed in 1939 on the outskirts of Dublin, it never had an official opening ceremony and almost immediately fell into disrepair. The monument could hardly have been less integral to the new state's national identity, thus demonstrating that the Free State government saw no place for the Great War in Ireland. While the government did not ban Armistice parades or the monument, they established a stance of ambivalence and apathy which forced discussion of the war's role to take place in the popular sphere.

Popular Remembrance

Questions over national identity and the place of the Great War found expression and debate in public remembrance. While official remembrance was marred by internal ambivalence bordering on the hope that such commemorative activities would soon dissipate, popular memory was far more openly opinionated. The debates over the National Memorial engendered commentary from the public; some believed that a stone monument was not the best way to assist the ex-servicemen. In the poem "Broken Soldier" S.J. Fitzgerald wrote "Stone crosses help not those who languish/In fetid slum – in want and cold" noting later in the poem "They need no monument, psalm or psalter, /But a chance t[o] live; they are destitute."²⁹ Many Irish recognized the plight of returned soldiers yet felt the best way to help them was not through parades or monuments but through social programs.

Others voiced their dissent of an imperial display more starkly, "We are pleased to know that the renewal effort to make Merrion Square a permanent monument to British jingoism, while men who took part in the different bloody battles are in want and dire hardship, is not likely to be successful."³⁰ The connection of the Great War to the British was made all the more evocative by a contributor to *Honesty*³¹ in November 1926, who argued that memorials to the Irishmen of the Great War were tantamount to memorializing the Black and Tans. The Black and Tan police force, utilized by the British during the War of Independence from 1919–1921, had a sinister reputation in Ireland for their wanton use of violence. In response to the Merrion Square proposal the author argued, "Have we not... quite sufficient memorials already up and down through the country to the memory of the infamous 'Black and Tans' in the shape of the many crosses... that mark the scenes of their brutal murders?... No further memorial of a kind such as is contemplated in Merrion Square is needed."³² The comparison

of Irish soldiers of the Great War to the Black and Tans, a group perceived by many Irish as brutes of the Empire, was, perhaps, the most incendiary connection possible. By arguing that “For an Irishman, therefore, Poppy Day is simply a memorial to the ‘Black and Tans,’” the author implied that Irish soldiers were no better than the men that had terrorized the Irish during the War of Independence.³³ The author’s assessment of the Irish ex-servicemen shows that for some republicans, an Irishman in British uniform was no Irishman at all. The fact that the Black and Tans had terrorized the Irish people and the Irish soldiers had fought in France, Gallipoli, etc. made no difference. Irish soldiers were guilty of being imperialists because of the uniform they once wore. Because of their service to Britain they were guilty by association.

The emotional fervor attached to the question of imperialism fueled violence, particularly against ex-servicemen or those participating in commemorative events. One aspect of Armistice Day commemorations that resulted in violence was the wearing of the Flanders poppy. The poppy was a symbol of the Great War across Europe and was sold to raise money for the British Legion, an organization which provided services for ex-servicemen. Antipathy for this symbol of the imperial war was widespread among Irish republicans. On November 7, 1925 John Brennan wrote in the newspaper *Honesty*, that the poppy was “the emblem of sleep for the dead and ‘dope’ for the living.”³⁴ Brennan observed the dire situation of ex-servicemen in the Free State and noted that no one was helping them find employment. They were offered “instead, a poppy flower once a year – a little insidious flower, from which is gathered the opium to drug and enslave the masses of India and China, and the workers of England and Ireland.”³⁵ Furthermore, in Brennan’s estimation, the republicans did not deny the bereaved their grief or need to remember, rather they were concerned that the popularity of the poppy was “an attempt to fasten the minds of the workers on the glory of sacrifice for imperial purposes, so that when again the recruiting sergeant makes his appearance in our streets – and our pulpits – he can call upon the ‘poppy seeds’ to go across the seas and renew the blood-red crop.”³⁶ So within the popular sphere of remembrance was a concern that the bereaved were duped by imperialists into wearing a symbol of empire to commemorate their dead and wounded: “you whose dead lie in foreign fields or in Irish prison graves, remember your dead in your prayers, but do not play England’s game by swallowing the poppy drug and wearing England’s emblem this November eleventh.”³⁷ Like the arguments of government

officials, this author contends that if remembrance could be stripped of imperial symbols, in this case the poppy, then it could accurately commemorate the dead. What begins to emerge here is the republican wish for the symbolism to disappear, yet it is often within the symbols that people found solace and solidarity.

Others were angrier than Brennan in their assessment of the use of the poppy on Armistice Day. In an open letter to *Honesty* an anonymous writer rages against the poppy sellers, “Your motives are hatred of Ireland, rather than love of the dead... You know that as well as I do, but your mission is Imperialism, your tools the ex-soldiers...”³⁸ The author goes on to suggest that the Irish are willing to pray for ex-soldiers and the dead of the Great War, but that if these imperial symbols are not disused, violence will ensue.³⁹ Such virulent reactions to the poppy demonstrate the enormity of the debate over identity, symbolism and memory in the Free State. To some the poppy was a physical representation of the soldier’s experience, particularly on the Western Front, of the horror and bloodbath of war. To others it was a symbol of Irishmen sent to fight, yet again, for the British, in an imperial war that only caused the Irish harm.

Far from being just words, this tension over the remembrance of the Great War took to the streets. On Armistice Day 1925 Dublin experienced violence between the commemorative crowd and republicans. Smoke bombs were thrown at the Celtic Cross at Trinity College while members of the crowd attempted to continue singing “God Save the King.” The Irish tricolor flag was flown alongside the Union Jack, causing no end of frustration to those who saw these symbols as antithetical to each other. The smoke bombs caused chaos resulting in poppy wearers chasing non poppy wearers, with the Irish Civil Guard in hot pursuit. The day was also marked by the burning of a Union Jack by college students in front of Trinity College.⁴⁰ The city of Cork also experienced violence during the 1925 Armistice Day events. A Celtic Cross memorial was the focus of an explosion. Originally built to honor the dead of the South African War, after the Great War it became the focus of Armistice activities. This was the second attack on this particular memorial and the *Cork Examiner* notes that, prior to the attempted destruction, an Armistice wreath was burned.⁴¹ According to the *Cork Examiner*, 5,000 ex-servicemen participated in the Armistice parade that year; the newspaper noted that both Catholic and Protestant church services were held for the purpose of commemoration.⁴²

Acts of violence toward commemorative acts and sites were frequent in the Irish Free State in the 1920s, yet not all resulted in such direct violence. During a 1926 Dublin memorial service at St. Patrick's Cathedral (Anglican Church of Ireland) a crowd of ardent republicans consisting of thirty Fianna Fáil scouts demonstrated outside. One young man argued, "We won't recognize Imperial demonstrations. We respect these people's church: but we won't have Union Jacks flying."⁴³ These comments indicate that the young man saw a separation between protesting the Protestant church itself and protesting the memorial service. He took offense specifically at the memorial service and the imperial symbolism of the Union Jack. The crowd marched outside blasting bugles and shouting "Up with the IRA!"⁴⁴ This public attempt by republicans to disrupt the memorial service was a less violent, yet revealing incident. Though the demonstrators may have seen themselves as protesting commemoration of the Great War that happened to take place in a Protestant church, ultimately they were protesting at an Anglican church holding a memorial service for the dead. This shows just how inextricably the war was bound up with the British Empire. The public sphere of remembrance was increasingly overshadowed by the violent rejection of perceived British imperialism.

The frequency of these types of protests at Protestant churches furthered the republican concept that the war and those who commemorated it were imperialists and/or Unionists. Clearly not all protesters drew a direct connection between their demonstration against imperial symbols and the Protestant church, as evident from the young man's statement above. Even so, these confrontations were often violent or, at the very least, drew attention and made newspaper headlines. This brought attention to the protests and, for those republicans who did equate Protestantism with the empire and the war, furthered their own belief and helped funnel popular memory of the war into the same singular association.

Even as acts of violence were occurring, in Cork in 1925 there were also attempts to remember the war in a more honorary manner. On the local level, sometimes small memorials or commemorative plaques were created for the fallen of that town. On Armistice Day 1925 the Cork Young Men's Association unveiled a Memorial Room and tablet in Gregg Hall of the Incorporated Church of Ireland in honor of their members who fell in the Great War. In attendance were families of the deceased, members of the British Legion and the Independent Ex-Service Club. Fifty-nine men from

the Young Men's Association died in the war and it was noted that, "their names, which were engraved on the tablet would never be forgotten; they would be remembered with pride and gratitude (applause). They did not fail in their great fight for justice and right."⁴⁵ Even as contingents attempted to tear apart Armistice Day events, local groups sought to remember and commemorate. That this, like so many across the Free State, was a Protestant church event attended by the British Legion, an organization seen as the pinnacle of imperial vestiges by many, further intertwined war remembrance with supporters of the Empire.

Some businesses, predominantly Protestant owned, also attempted to memorialize the war. Guinness published a commemorative book, the *Roll of Employees Who Served in His Majesty's Naval, Military and Air Forces, 1914–1918* in 1920. This book listed each name of the 800 Guinness employees who served in the war, including the 100 who died.⁴⁶ This book was published not for public consumption, but for the men who served and the families of the fallen. The intent of the volume was to provide some recognition for the men's service: "To those who fell we render reverent homage; to those who survive we offer this small, but none the less sincere, expression of heartfelt gratitude."⁴⁷ The short introduction alludes to the perspective of the company on these men's service, "who gave their services – and in many instances, their lives – for the defense of the Empire at the most perilous and critical period of its history."⁴⁸ It is important to note that this book was published during the War for Independence between Ireland and Britain, yet the Guinness Company was able to differentiate between the service of the soldiers and the contemporary conflict. Even so, the connection of the war as one for the protection of the British Empire was ingrained during the 1920s Irish Free State. The Congested Districts Board and the Bank of Ireland also produced commemorative books for the families of their employees. These publications were easier to justify for Protestant-owned businesses due to long-held connections between Protestants and the British. These commemorative books were small succor for the loss of a father, son, or brother but they were a gesture of support for those affected by the war.

Despite acts of violence and harassment towards those who strove to publicly cope with their grief, there were those who supported open remembrance that sought to distance remembrance from the imperial stigma. In response to the success of Cork's Poppy Day, held on November 14, 1925, the *Cork Examiner* offered this assessment, "to the generous spirit of

Cork's citizens, who, recognizing the debt of gratitude which is owed to the erstwhile defenders of ours whom the times have treated harshly, gave freely and ungrudgingly, and in token wore the Flanders Poppy 'In Remembrance'."⁴⁹ This article distanced the poppy and those who wore it from the imperial stigma, asserting that many people were buying them out of gratitude for the soldiers' sacrifice rather than in support of Britain. A year later the newspaper furthered their argument concerning the true nature of the poppy as a symbol: "[...] the Flanders Poppy, chosen because [...] for us in these islands the Western Front was the centre of our interest, and much of that eight hundred mile battleline ran through Flanders fields, where in its season the poppy showed its brilliant red on every side – its emblem of the red carnage of war."⁵⁰ Others sought to reclassify the Great War in Ireland as one that deflected the darkness of German imperialism, arguing that "theirs was the task, and what greater or nobler under the heavens, to aid those who were answering the Prussian demand to rule the world with a spirit-stirring 'No!' that was thundered high above the dreadful diapason of Germany's greatest guns."⁵¹ The rhetoric of anti-imperialism raises its head again, yet the author of the newspaper article attempts to shift the tone of his criticism towards German imperialism rather than British. This was an attempt, however unsuccessful in the long run, that at least tried to reorient discussion of the empire and the Great War toward the continent, rather than Ireland's long, checkered past with Britain.

Violence against supporters of commemorations juxtaposed with this minority of supportive voices meant that republican sentiment prevailed in the fight over the role of the Great War. Even those who supported public remembrance did so for different reasons, some out of imperial allegiance, others out of satisfaction that German imperialism was defeated, and still others out of gratitude for the willing service of the soldiers. While no war engenders one unified popular memory, what is significant in the case of Ireland is just how violently the popular memory of the war was torn apart and how, within only a short time, the war was inextricably linked to the British Empire in a way that would preclude public commemorations devoid of the imperial stain. Ultimately, the decreasing interest in Armistice celebrations stemming from this violent disagreement over the role of the Great War worked in the government's favor. In the opinion of many government leaders, the war was a British one, and they only bowed to public pressure in allowing commemorations. The public debate over the role of Great War remembrance was ultimately won by republican sentiment.

Personal Remembrance

Despite the problems in creating official or popular remembrance, those affected by the war found other ways to remember and commemorate because “families and communities must repair the rent in the domestic and social fabric.”⁵² Drew Gilpin Faust’s *This Republic of Suffering* on the American Civil War gets at the core of the difficulties in commemorating the dead of a war when those dead seemingly have no positive place in the national narrative. She argues that regardless of which side the dead fought for, their relatives felt compelled to restore meaning to their deaths. This is similar to the Irish affected by the Great War. Personal grief and strife rarely follow political boundaries; many families affected by the war simply wanted to remember, and entered into the identity debate when accused of being imperialists. “Death without dignity, without decency, without identity imperiled the meaning of the life that preceded it,” and many affected by the war felt compelled to bestow some meaning upon that loss.⁵³ When told that a relative’s sacrifice in the war was unworthy of commemoration because it was conducted in service to the British Army, it is reasonable to suggest that many Irish resented that the meaning they bestowed on death and service was stripped away. Approximately 50,000 Irish families were bereft of a member and 150,000 coped with an ex-serviceman’s survival. Personal remembrance endured despite the violence and ambivalence of the 1920s and found a way to express itself in a less public, more private manner that enabled distance from ardent republican accusation.

For some Irish, this personal remembrance began during the war, as Irishmen were felled across the Western Front. Diaries of the women left at home provide significant insight into how remembrance of the war was created on a personal level almost immediately. The diary scrapbook of Mrs. Emilie Harmsworth provides just such an insight. In lieu of a funeral and burial for the fallen, this scrapbook takes the place of a physical manifestation of mourning. This commemorative scrapbook contains only information relating to the death of her brother. It is a relatively thin book of about forty pages of letters and other documents. There is no inscription on the front cover and the documents immediately jump into information concerning Emilie’s brother. Clearly from the organization of the book it was intended for herself and her family, who would already be familiar with the background of the situation.

On October 24, 1914 Emilie received the devastating telegram that her brother Henry was killed in action at the Battle of Ypres. In the British

Army since 1894, Henry was a captain in the Leinster regiment. Emilie and Henry were the youngest of thirteen children born to a barrister in Finglas, Co., Dublin, and were only a year apart in age. By the time of the Great War both had entered their early forties, yet Henry never married. It is significant to note that the War Office telegram, in addition to all major communication concerning Henry's death, was sent to Emilie rather than their older siblings. That she was designated as his next of kin speaks to the closeness of their relationship. Although the death letter informed Emilie of the end of Henry's life, it was the start of a much longer process for her, because, as Faust notes, for survivors "...death was literally endless."⁵⁴

This process began with three years of letter-writing for Emilie, starting almost immediately, when she wrote to members of Henry's regiment for his affects and confirmation that he was, in fact, dead. For a month after the telegram, Emilie feverishly communicated with soldiers in the Leinster regiment, hopeful that her brother was instead a prisoner of war. After several letters confirming her brother's death and burial, by early 1915 Emilie shifted her letter-writing to having Henry's last possessions returned to her.⁵⁵ From her actions it is clear that Emilie was emotionally traumatized by her brother's violent end. It is not unusual that she was this fixated on the events surrounding his death. It is almost as though she believed that more information might equal understanding of what seemed to be a senseless death.

Each letter written to her concerning locating and mailing her brother's possessions was carefully incorporated into the scrapbook. Each bit of evidence of Henry's death, letters of condolence from his regiment, the death telegram, Emilie's last postcard returned, and Henry's last postcard were carefully included. Even the War Office listing that accompanied her brother's possessions is included in this memento of her brother's death. As Emilie's letter-writing campaign shifted from determining if Henry was a POW, to gaining her brother's possessions, to ascertaining the details of his last moments, she carefully kept the reply letters that indicate her ongoing desire to accumulate everything concerning Henry's death.⁵⁶ While Emilie created the scrapbook to preserve the memory of her brother's death, it was also a physical means of passing on his memory to her children. They were old enough to have known their uncle but, given the closeness between Emilie and Henry, it is reasonable to suggest that she most likely worried

that his absence from the rest of their lives would cause him to fade in their memories.

Like so many heartbroken women before her, by tracking down the physical remnants of Henry's life, Emilie attempted to make his death real because lacking a body made acceptance difficult and denial easy.⁵⁷ Funerals allow the bereaved a public and formal method of expressing their grief.⁵⁸ In lieu of this act of mourning women like Emilie had to create their own methods of mourning, and in her case, the scrapbook about Henry's death was that method. Like the survivors of the American Civil War, Emilie and thousands of Irish families had to integrate the experience of war death into their lives often without the benefit of traditional death ceremonies.⁵⁹ The scrapbook of Henry's death *was* his funeral, his tombstone to be revisited through the years in remembrance.

Like Emilie Harmsworth, ex-servicemen also struggled to remember a war they had survived while so many died. With the atmosphere of commemoration making public remembrance uncomfortable at best, and violent at worst, during the 1920s ex-servicemen increasingly found their own quieter moments of remembrance. These were devoid of disparaging comments accusing them of being imperialists. For some, like Bartholomew Hand, a veteran of Gallipoli, taking his son Paddy, to the War Memorial at Islandbridge every time they rode their bicycles in Dublin was a way to remember his service and his comrades, and to pass along that experience without the tumult of the organized events. On these bicycle rides Hand showed Paddy churchyards where his fellow Gallipoli veterans were buried. Paddy recalled that it was not until later in life that he realized this had been a pilgrimage for his father.⁶⁰

Other ex-servicemen also had difficulty remembering the war and their fallen comrades in the politically tense atmosphere of the 1920s where attending commemorative events branded them as imperialists. Many of these men saw themselves as Irishmen and republicans and found this branding contemptible. Still, they desired a way to commemorate their experience. Like Bartholomew Hand, Bernard Flood found attending Armistice Day activities difficult, viewing them as bombastic events in honor of a horrible experience. However, Flood found his own way to remember his fallen friends. Every year Flood laid a wreath at the war memorial in Drogheda.⁶¹ Though Flood refused to discuss his war service, he commemorated it

with his own pilgrimage, devoid of the political tensions over imperial symbolism.

Some men braved Armistice Day events in spite of the imperialist slander they were often branded with. After the war Kieran White had to contend with this imperial slander from the Irish Republican Army (IRA) men. White confronted one these men and a fight ensued, in which White was the resounding victor. White later explained that he did it “so [he] could always hold [his] head high.”⁶² He further challenged the expectations around him by making appearances at local Armistice Day events regardless of gossip. In an era where the IRA represented some of the staunchest republicans, White’s willingness to defend his British army service demonstrates that ex-servicemen were subjected to harassment based on the sole fact that they were former British soldiers rather than members of the IRA. Some ex-servicemen chose not to engage with this harassment or commemorations for fear of persecution. White chose to defend himself and to attend Armistice Day activities, knowing full well the tensions inherent in doing so.

Memoirs also represent personal forms of memory. In the 1920s Frank Laird wrote of the harrowing experience on Gallipoli in 1915. He wrote only for himself and had no intention of publishing his account. He wrote “the memory of D Company remains supreme as a possession forever and to meet an old D company man afterwards was always to find a friend.”⁶³ It was after his death in 1925, as a result of wounds to his lungs sustained on Gallipoli, that his wife and sister organized his writings for publication. So while Laird’s writings were very personal and intended to memorialize his experience and fellow soldiers, the publication by his family was yet another expression of personal remembrance. These women clearly regarded the publication as a way to remember Laird.

Mementos of the war often provided ex-servicemen or their families a venue for remembrance. Sometimes a war medal, a last letter or postcard, the death telegram, or, in the case of Jeremiah Fitzgerald, a photograph, became a constant venue of commemoration. At sixteen Fitzgerald enlisted in the British Army and fought at the Battle of Mons and Ypres. During the war he came into contact with Father Francis Gleeson from the Dublin archdiocese. Father Gleeson was a cherished addition to the Royal Munster Fusiliers, Fitzgerald’s regiment, credited with organizing the men

for a counterattack against the German forces after the officer corps had taken heavy losses. This act, unusual for a member of the religious corps, was regarded as one of the utmost bravery. Father Gleeson's courage, held in high esteem by Fitzgerald, led him to keep a picture of the Father with him for the rest of his life.⁶⁴ This was a positive and touching homage to a man he well regarded. A photograph, maintained for life, in this case is a clear memento of remembrance.

Others were tortured by their war experience and that of their families. William Grey of the Irish Guards enlisted following the death of his brother Edward at the Battle of Mons. Lacking specific details about Edward's death, William enlisted to find out what happened. While in France William lost a length of bone on the Somme in 1917 and was discharged in 1918. Yet despite his emotional and physical losses, William did not uncover more about his brother's fate. In the postwar period William agonized over Edward's death and his failure to find out the facts. William was so tortured by Edward's death that he frequently wept, saying, "Where is Eddie? What happened to him? Is he still alive?"⁶⁵ Such concerns occupied his thoughts for the rest of his life, and William died not knowing his brother's fate. This obsession is an example of the personal grief that could find no respite and was indifferent to the politically tense realm of governmental ambivalence and popular anger.

So while the government saw no use for the Great War in the Free State and the discordant voices in the public argued over the potential imperial nature of commemoration, families and ex-servicemen were left to cope and remember largely on their own. Though Armistice parades carried on through the 1930s, the 1920s marks a period of negotiation over the symbols of memory and ultimately the new state's identity. Questions over identity and the Great War's role were fought out in the public realm with the government taking a backseat. As acts like wearing a poppy or attending a parade increasingly became contentious, families and ex-servicemen turned inward; this is a trend that would continue in the 1930s. Arguments over the new Irish identity would ultimately rule in favor of republican sentiment and the sphere of popular remembrance of the war would almost completely dissipate by the 1940s. Then it was only at the level of personal remembrance that the war was commemorated, even in the smallest ways. Ultimately the disputes over commemorating the Great War were a matter of whether or not a war fought under Britain could be included

in an independent Ireland. It could not be integrated, as evident from the violent opposition and the resulting focus on more private commemorations. While official frameworks faltered and popular memory tore itself apart over the question of imperialism and identity, personal memorialization distanced itself from overtly public displays of remembrance in order to avoid the taint of imperialism with which republicans had branded the war.

MANDY TOWNSLEY

Doctoral candidate at Washington State University in the United States. Currently she is preparing a dissertation focusing on the concurrent remembering and forgetting of the Great War in Ireland during the Free State period.

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THE GREAT WAR AND ITS CONSEQUENCES FROM A SWEDISH PERSPECTIVE

Prof. Paweł Jaworski, PhD

University of Wrocław

Faculty of Historical and Pedagogical
Sciences, Institute of History

ABSTRACT

Swedish media reports of successive anniversaries of the end of the First World War usually provide general commentaries concerning the military struggles on the continent. The war is seen as having had a minor effect on the fate of Sweden itself. Several years ago, a historian from Lund University named Kim Salomon even hazarded the thesis that “World War I scarcely marks a significant moment in the history of Sweden,” given that the country remained neutral, and thus remained in the ‘viewers’ stand’.” The lack of a more wide-ranging discussion on the legacy of World War I in Sweden is somewhat alarming, particularly considering the fact that there is a wealth of Swedish historiography relating to the period of 1914–1918. Although Sweden remained neutral, the war was felt to a considerable degree. Shortages of supplies, numerous demonstrations, riots – all this laid the foundation for increased political activity in a society that wanted to democratize the system, improve civil rights, and socialize the economy. 1917 seemed to be the year when the radicalization reached its peak, but major changes arrived only with the end of the war in November 1918. There were the revolutionary events in Russia, which were later exploited in Germany in the ongoing political struggle to introduce democracy. The new order imposed in Europe by the Treaty of Versailles forced the Swedish government to come to terms with the situation that was produced and to engage with affairs on the continent to a greater degree.

The various anniversaries of the end of World War I are chiefly reported in the Swedish media with a general commentary on military struggles in the history of Europe. It could be that concentrating on these aspects of the war have caused it to be seen as an event that had little impact on Sweden

as such. Several years ago a historian from Lund University, Kim Salomon, even ventured the opinion that “World War I scarcely marks a significant moment in the history of Sweden,” given that the country remained neutral, and thus remained in the “viewers’ stand” (Salomon 2008). Journalist and writer Niklas Ekdal, perhaps convinced that Swedes were poorly versed in the history of Europe, suggested that the issues of international policy of a century past could be viewed from a contemporary perspective. To help understand the genesis of the Great War, he compared the rivalry of the European powers at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to the threats facing us in the early twenty-first century. To his mind, the present economic crisis would lead to economic nationalism and the closure of borders, and thus to serious political clashes and conflicts between states. According to Ekdal’s concept, the contemporary world with its several growing powers (apart from the United States, he lists China first) recalls the camps competing for political influence and raw materials in the late nineteenth century (Lagerfors 2008). Once again, Sweden was peripheral to the author’s deliberations.

Alongside these recollections of the Great War as a conflict that had no bearing on Sweden we also find a publication by the popular historian Peter Englund (known for his numerous books concentrating primarily on the history of Sweden in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries). His in-depth work based on personal documents (journals, diaries, letters) entitled *Stridens skönhet och sorg. Första världskriget i 212 korta kapitel* [The Beauty and the Sorrow: An Intimate History of the First World War] recreated the wartime reality from the point of view of ordinary soldiers from various countries and divisions, as well as a surgeon, a nurse, a bureaucrat, a German student, and an aristocrat. The author wove his own reflections on war into the narrative, which is punctuated more generously by the futility of armed conflicts than the “beauty and the sorrow” contained in the title. He attacks the blind nationalism in these conflicts and the obduracy of the politicians, who used propaganda to justify what could have been avoided. Englund states: “While there are undoubtedly conflicting interests involved, none of the problems is so insoluble as to make war necessary, and they are certainly not sufficiently acute as to make war unavoidable. This war became unavoidable at the point when people considered it unavoidable. When causes are vague and goals uncertain, however, it becomes necessary to fall back on the bloated and honeyed words of propaganda” (p. 14). He later adds that: “faced with the dark energies released by war they can

only look on, dumbfounded and questioning; they stand apart from the nationalist rhetoric that has created the war and the wild hopes the war has created” (p.29). Reviewers wrote that it was “a fascinating read about the real lives of real people at a moment when faith in the ongoing progress of civilization began to collapse” (Kälvemark 2008). The universal anti-war oratory is replicated by Lotta Lotass’ novel *Red Sky* (*Den röda himlen*, Albert Bonniers, 2008), which describes the daily lives of foot soldiers in the trenches (Bergqvist 2008).

Perhaps the only classic of academic work in recent years that broaches the subject of World War I (not counting the standard monographs on military history) is a book by Lina Sturfelt, a historian from Lund University, whose work entitled *The Flash of a Flame: World War I in the Swedish Imagination* (*Eldens återsken. Första världskriget i svensk föreställningsvärld*, Sekel Bokförlag/Isell Jinert, 2008) analyzed the image of World War I in the pages of Swedish weeklies published in 1914–1935. The articles from this epoch described the war as senseless carnage, but also as a kind of courtly saga, a holy sacrifice, a jolly picnic, or a necessary and elemental cataclysm. These images were paired with the opposing, almost unvarying depiction of Sweden’s role as a country that was perhaps somewhat indifferent, profit-hungry, cowardly, and effeminate, but above all, an isolated idyll and moral stronghold defending civilization from the chaos and barbarity of Europe (*Första världskrigets återsken*, 2008). This work was continued in the research by Sofi Qvanström on the presence of the I World War in the Swedish literature (Qvarnström 2009).

The lack of a wider discussion on the legacy of World War I from a Swedish perspective is somewhat alarming, particularly considering the fact that there is a wealth of Swedish historiography relating to 1914–1918 which proves that the period marked a watershed moment for the country (Zetterberg 1994). There is also no doubt that the events in Europe influenced development of the situation in Sweden (Andræ 1998).

As we know, during the First World War, Sweden and the other Scandinavian countries remained neutral. They took no part in the fighting, nor were they attacked by aggressors. Swedes became acquainted with the cruelties of the war only through correspondents from the battlefield and prisoners of war (mostly invalids or those seriously injured), whose exchange between the warring parties was organized by the Swedish authorities. Few Swedes

volunteered to join the ranks of the various armies (Gyllenhaal & Westberg 2004). After one hundred years of peace, Swedes viewed war as unnatural. A philosopher from Lund, Hans Larsson, regarded militarism as a manifestation of man's bestiality and barbarity. He rued the support for the war that came from Germany's intellectual elite – to his mind it was a politically and culturally irrational phenomenon that disrupted the social order and testified to a crisis of the human personality. Larsson promoted the principle of compromise and negotiating positions at all costs, becoming a precursor of the Swedish policy of non-engagement and practicing activities of a humanitarian nature during times of armed conflict (Piotrowska 2006).

Although Sweden was not officially on either side, it did have to respond to changing conditions and the actions of the European powers. Swedish society, on the other hand, had its deeply rooted sympathies, which most certainly lay with the Central Powers, as a result of strong economic, cultural, and political ties with the Germans. Tage Erlander, who was the long-time premier of Sweden after World War II, was a secondary school student and then attended Lund University during World War I. He recalled that his father – the owner of a shop that sold blueberries – had traded with Germans during the war, and was fascinated by them. He saw them as the most efficient nation in the world, known for being industrious and frugal. He also admired the sense of community he saw as quite characteristically German (Erlander 1972, 47–48). On seeking the origins of this fascination, we might add that there was an equally deep-rooted aversion toward Russia. Any enemy of Russia was a friend. The Swedes were fascinated by the German military successes on the Eastern front in 1914. In general, the majority of Swedes, regardless of their origins and status, nursed a contempt for the states of the Triple Entente and an admiration for Germany. Recalling her childhood, family home and the attitudes of the Swedish peasants, the famous children's writer Astrid Lindgren wrote succinctly: "Most supported the Germans and believed they would win" (Lindgren 1992, 57).

The social mood was in tune with government policy. Up until 1917 the government of Hjalmar Hammarskjöld favored the Germans: it used diplomatic methods to keep Great Britain, Italy, and Romania from joining the war, it did not recognize the Entente states' naval blockade of Germany, and it supplied Germany with grain, animal fodder, and petroleum (Carlgren 1962). In fact, the Swedes reaped large profits by trading with both sides. They imported goods from Great Britain and France and then exported

them to Germany at a high profit (Kersten 1973, 333–334; Norborg, 1993, 258–259). However, the blockade applied by Great Britain and the resultant supplies crisis of 1917 complicated the domestic situation and led to Hammarskjöld's dismissal. Swedish policy changed, increasingly favoring the Entente, particularly after Germany declared unrestricted submarine warfare, and after the "Luxburg Affair," wherein it was revealed that a German MP had used the Swedish Minister of Foreign Affairs to pass on information concerning shipping maneuvers on the Atlantic. Hammarskjöld's successor, the moderately conservative Karl Swartz, was incapable of dealing with the growing crisis. Hunger riots broke out, during which shops were plundered; there were clashes with the police. The February Revolution in Russia further radicalized the social mood. In 1917, when the socialists planned the First of May March, they hung posters that read "May 3rd in Blood." Many passers-by decided it was better to stay at home on the third of May, fearing a revolution could break out, as had occurred in Russia. The message, however, was more of a general reflection on the events in Europe – and the fact that the May First demonstration was being held once again with the world war raging in the background (Erlander 1972, 50).

Shortages of supplies (there was insufficient milk, butter, and potatoes; coal shipments from Germany were cut back), numerous demonstrations, riots – all this made Swedish society take a new interest in politics. There was social pressure to democratize the system, to increase civil rights and to socialize the economy (Klockare 1981, 171–175). In early June 1917, 30,000 demonstrators were only kept from entering the seat of the Riksdag through the intervention of Social Democratic Party leader Hjalmar Branting, who pacified the incensed crowd. In October 1917 there were parliamentary elections in which the Conservatives were defeated. These resulted in the formation of a new government under history professor and liberal Nils Edén. The Social Democrats also entered the cabinet, having begun to grow into the country's most important political force. The bulk of power now shifted from the headquarters of King Gustaf V to the parliament. The monarch now consulted with the government before making any political decisions and never went against the government, so thereafter very seldom had more than a symbolic function (Norborg 1993, 100). The triumph of the parliamentary-cabinet system, however, was not the end of the internal political changes.

The new government strove to reach an agreement with the allies to receive much needed help for the economy. After long negotiations this was

achieved in the spring of 1918, in part due to the strong contacts between Branting's Social Democrats and their ideological partners in France, Belgium, and Great Britain. Supplies came in exchange for providing the allies with access to half of the Swedish merchant fleet. On balance, Sweden came out of the vicissitudes of wartime at an economic profit. One historian has even called the country a "neutral victor" (Koblik 1972). At any rate, the social mood had improved. Yet the postulate to democratize was ever-present in public debate and, as historian Ivar Andersson has claimed, this was not because of the successes of radical parties in the elections: "Views on the issue themselves had been radicalized." This was sparked by trading scandals, which undermined those who treated money as a measure of man's intellectual and moral values, and consequently, negated the effects of the property qualification in the parliamentary elections (Andersson 1967, 320–321). The decisive factor, however, was the general wave of European radicalism. This appeared to peak in 1917, but it was only with the end of the war in November 1918 that the "democratic breakthrough" occurred.

The revolution in Germany, the collapse of the imperial army and the downfall of Emperor Wilhelm II turned out to be of capital importance for Sweden's future. These events caused conservative circles to worry a great deal about a local revolution. When the Germans requested a truce, the Bishop of Karlstad, Johan Alfred Eklund, declared that his political world was collapsing (Erlander 1972, 49). A capitulatory mood was tangible among right-wing politicians. The Social Democrats, on the other hand, sought to use these favorable circumstances to achieve their ends, starting with universal suffrage.

Ernst Wigforss, later the long-term Minister of Finance in the social-democratic governments of the inter-war period, recalled the last months of 1918 as "the most emotional period that his generation experienced." He had in mind the legal changes to the constitution that compelled the privileged who held power to consent to introducing general elections. Wigforss stressed that this was not entirely of their free will, as it was done under the pressure of the revolutionary events in Europe, which echoed through Sweden itself (Wigforss 1951, 94). Nonetheless, Branting was committed to staying the legal course and bringing about change through the existing legal system. A social democratic expert in international policy named Östen Undén predicted on 11 November that the defeat of Germany would render the Swedish right wing "docile" (Wigforss 1951, 95). News from Russia only

enhanced the danger of the situation and made the specter of Bolshevism loom large (Palmstierna 1953, 223). The leading extreme conservative Ernst Hederstierna spoke openly of his fear of a revolution, which could have provoked the right-wing's obstinate refusal to change the constitution. Hugo Hamilton, one of the leading liberal parliamentarians, noted a meeting in the seat of the First Chamber with Hederstierna and another conservative, Otto Silfverschiöld, on 2 December 1918: "It is characteristic of the present situation that two such conservatives were utterly cognizant of the fact that any kind of compromise was impossible and that the right wing had no choice but to capitulate" (Hamilton 1956, 343). Social Democratic activist Torsten Nothin wrote in his memoirs of a "revolution of the fall of 1918," stating that "although there was no open revolt, the mood was revolutionary," adding that it was said at the time that "nobody prepares a revolution, it comes all on its own" (Nothin 1955, 14).

In effect, the political struggle ended in a compromise, though public opinion took the forecast constitution change as a loss for the right wing, who were succumbing to the fear of revolution (Klockare, 1981, 166). According to the above-cited Nothin, it was the resolutions of November 1918 that made the danger of a revolution subside. Apparently King Gustaf V was even prepared to flee abroad at a moment's notice, were the situation to get out of hand. At any rate, he was shaken by the news from Germany, and he was frightened of the import of Bolshevism. It is known that he mediated conversations between the political parties in order to reach an agreement (Nothin 1955, 15–18; Klockare, 1981, 165; Franzén, 1985, 326). He was certainly concerned by the threat of a general strike (Franzén, 1985, 345). By the same token, there were Social Democrats who did not believe that things would come to a revolution. Gustav Möller, for example, confessed that the Social Democratic Party was merely using scare tactics when it threatened to stop at nothing, as the actions taken by Branting and his colleagues were aiming to reach a compromise (Leche-Löfgren 1941, 162). Historians agree, however, that a revolutionary mood reigned in Sweden in 1917, while by the fall of 1918 the threat of revolution did not truly exist (Franzén 1986, 362–366).

The reform of the new suffrage law drew on for three years. In May 1919 there were general elections for the lower chamber of parliament. In the upper house – the Landsting – an indirect election system was meant to be in effect. First, communal elections were held, then local government institutions were meant to send their representatives to parliament. Through

this reform the Social Democratic Party became the most powerful, both in the lower chamber and in the upper Riksdag. The more radical social democrats pushed for a one-chamber parliament, a republic, and a workers' council system, but the party leadership did not agree to any of these. The young social democrats – including Zeth Höglund and the later long-time premier of Sweden, Per Albin Hansson – even demanded a dictatorship of the proletariat (Cornell 1998, 116–117). Branting publicly declared that he wanted a democracy, not a dictatorship (Franzén, 1985, 325). The leading democrat, Erik Palmstierna, joyfully recorded the political events of the last weeks of 1918 in his journal: “The Swedish nation has a personality after all! Quiet and unceremonious, almost indifferent, but under great pressure it has accomplished a great thing and made a true achievement. Now no one speaks of constitutional reform, and yet this was a feat that will build a foundation for a new epoch in our inner lives. [...] We can feel a great, cultured sense of admiration in our nation when it so swiftly and calmly solves problems that lead to bloody conflicts in other nations!” (Palmstierna 1953, 267). The democratic breakthrough in Sweden did, in fact, take place without any serious socio-political shock waves.

Among the changes were social reforms, which included employer-paid accident insurance at work and the eight-hour work day. The first social democratic government was instituted in 1920, headed by Hjalmar Branting, who created the first Ministry of Social Aid, introduced a progressive income tax, increased the tax burden on large corporations, and decreased the period of military service. In 1926 the Social Democrats were voted out, only to regain power a few years later, and have dominated the Swedish political scene for decades. In 1921 women received the right to vote (we should recall that as late as 1918 a leader of the conservative party, Arvid Lindman, explained to the Riksdag that a woman's place was in the home, and not in the state's political life, and that this was to the advantage of both women and the country [Franzén 1986, 354]). The very same year saw the abolition of capital punishment (a prisoner was executed for the last time in 1910 with the swipe of an ax). In 1922 there was a prohibition referendum, but its supporters were overruled. Alcohol production and consumption remained legal, though some restrictions were introduced under the Dr. Ivan Bratt System, i.e. the rationing and control of alcohol consumption.

The results of the Great War and the changes in the political map of Europe left the Swedes with new economic and political challenges in the

international arena. The end of the war brought Sweden a relief of sorts, as the German blockade of the country was lifted, and the allies ended the blockade of the Baltic. Historians point out that the economic problems in the blockade years encouraged Scandinavian countries to cooperate on a more regional basis (Piotrowski 2006, 121), but the key trading partners remained Germany and Great Britain. This is why Stockholm eagerly awaited a peace treaty. Only after its signing were trade restrictions with Germany to be annulled.

Above all, however, Sweden's new strategic position after World War I is the major subject of study. Russia was practically pushed out of the Baltic Sea, while Germany was sufficiently weakened to abandon its vision of order for the region. In December 1918 the states of the Entente suggested that Sweden maintain stability in the Baltic region itself. The government in Stockholm was to stand at the forefront of a block of new, smaller states, notably Finland, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, and to prevent chaos in Northern Europe through integration. For Erik Palmstierna, such a special role for Sweden in the Baltic region initially seemed "unnatural" (Palmstierna 1953, 259). These first signals from the capitals of the victorious European powers indicated that Sweden was standing before dilemmas which demanded unprecedented decisions in foreign policy.

The restitution of the old countries of Central-Eastern Europe and the creation of new ones was observed with interest, but there seemed no reason to meddle in their affairs. The civil war in Finland, however, was the subject of keen attention. Many Swedish volunteers took the side of the "Whites" in this Finnish war for independence. The hope was that Finland would survive as an independent state, strengthening Sweden's strategic position in the long run. Poland's bid for independence was seen in a similar light. The creation of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, on the other hand, were viewed with skepticism. Swedish politicians could be heard commenting that Russia would soon reclaim these territories (Larsson 1996, 42–44).

There was also resistance to the projects of the victorious states to carve up German territory and impose severe reparations on the Germans. Hjalmar Branting saw imperial Germany as a threat to European peace, but a democratic Germany, where power had been seized by the social democrats, was ideologically close to him. This is why he appealed to the allied powers not to obstruct "Germany's first steps as a free nation" (Franzén 1985, 322).

Small wonder, then, that he criticized the Treaty of Versailles. Stockholm was particularly critical of the final settlement of the German borders. The Swedes believed that giving Poland Pomerania and Silesia would only provoke conflict between the nations, aggravating any existing animosity between Poles and Germans. Poland's excessive ambitions were seen as a festering evil. For the Swedes, this meant ending the war without a real peace settlement, as a new arena was created to continue old conflicts and start new ones. They were not only concerned about Germany, but also about the civil war in Ireland, the Italian/Croatian struggle for Fiume, and other border issues in Central Europe.

Ultimately Sweden recognized the new political order in Europe and entered the League of Nations (Gihl 1951, 393–404; Agrell 2000, 15–20). At the same time, it criticized the decision and actions of the League and the Western powers, which it saw as unwarranted or unjust. On the one hand, the ideas, associated with the League, of acting to avoid war and a general disarmament plan fitted the mandates of the social democrats. On the other, however, the League's methods were often viewed with distrust. Swedes were most pained by the Council of the League of Nations' 1921 resolution to award the Åland Islands to Finland. Their Swedish population wanted to join Sweden on the basis of national self-determination, but the Western states saw international policy concerns as more important. There was no desire to weaken this small neighbor of Russia, which was still in the process of bolstering its statehood (the shift in Swedish public opinion leading to the final acceptance of this decision was honored in the person of Branting, who was given the Nobel Peace Prize in 1922).

Moreover, membership of the League created further dilemmas, as it required active participation in organizational affairs, and participation in discussions on problems often more remote than those that Stockholm was used to. The question kept on arising: Does participation in the League of Nations mean abandoning neutrality, and even if it does not, what are the limits of neutrality in a system of collective security?

As such, the end of the Great War was an important historical moment for Sweden, in terms of both domestic and foreign policy. The battles between the European powers left their mark on this country. The revolutionary events in Russia, and then in Germany, were exploited in an ongoing political struggle to introduce democracy. The new post-Versailles order in Europe

forced the Swedish government to come to terms with the new situation and join in with the Continent's affairs to a larger degree. It is another matter that – as local observers confess – the years 1914–1918 have slowly vanished from the Swedish “cultural memory” and, if anything, it is World War Two that is most vividly remembered.

PAWEŁ JAWORSKI

Researcher and instructor at the History Institute of the University of Wrocław. His research interests include the history of Poland and the world in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the history of Scandinavia and Polish-Scandinavian relations, the history of Central-Eastern Europe, and Czechoslovakia in particular, and the history of diplomacy and international relations. He has written Independent Poland and Scandinavia 1918–1939, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, Wrocław 2001 and Dreamers and Opportunists: Polish-Swedish Relations from 1939–1945, Wydawnictwo IPN, Warsaw 2009.

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WARSAW'S FORGOTTEN WAR

Robert Blobaum, prof.

West Virginia University
Department of History

ABSTRACT

By the winter of 1916–1917 most Varsovians likely believed their world was coming to an end, as their city was being visited by rapidly escalating incidences of starvation, disease, death, and conflict over increasingly scarce resources. Overshadowed by the greater horrors of a war yet to come, the existential crisis of Varsovians during the Great War has largely been forgotten. This article draws on various theoretical perspectives from the field of memory studies, particularly of the political and cultural structures which create silences, in an effort to explain why the First World War is likely to remain Warsaw's forgotten war.

By the winter of 1916–1917 most Varsovians likely believed their world was coming to an end, as their city was being visited by rapidly escalating incidences of starvation, disease, death and conflict over increasingly scarce resources necessary to sustain human life. Were it not for copyright law, the title of Tadeusz Konwicki's famous novel, *A Minor Apocalypse*, would serve as an apt heading for a study of the impact of the world's first total war on the daily lives of the inhabitants of one of central Europe's great cities. Overshadowed by the greater horrors of a war yet to come, the *major apocalypse* of devastation and destruction which characterized Warsaw's amply-documented experience of the Second World War, the deprivation and desperation marking the existential crisis of Varsovians during the Great War has been largely forgotten. In Warsaw today, one is hard pressed to find any sign or site of public memory that might recall or reflect on the suffering of its citizens during the Great War, even as *minor apocalypse*. This is in stark contrast to the innumerable commemorative plaques, memorials and monuments devoted the Warsaw's experience of the Second World War that dominates the city's memory culture.

Not surprisingly, the historiography on Warsaw during the Great War is extremely limited, while that devoted to Poland more generally occupies little

more than a shelf in the stacks of the Warsaw University library. Again, the contrast with the ever-expanding literature on the city's experience of the Second World War could not be more striking. Moreover, in the traditional Polish national narrative that has dominated the existing sparse scholarship on the First World War, Warsaw figures little more than the major urban political setting in the larger story of the recovery of an independent Polish state (Królikowski and Oktabiński 2008; Wyszczelski 2008). One glance at the existing Polish-language secondary literature reveals an overwhelming preponderance of outdated titles on the military history of the war, devoted primarily to battles in which Polish legions participated, along with accounts tracing the activities of political parties and personalities during those years, especially those identified with the struggle for Polish independence. This has been supplemented in recent years by important German and English-language scholarship on the German occupation regime, which established its seat in Warsaw following the Russian evacuation of the city in August 1915 (Polsakiewicz 2009; Kaufman 2008). However, inasmuch as Warsaw appears in these studies, it does so mainly as a setting or target of German occupation policy, rather than a subject worthy of study in its own right.

The only real scholarly treatment of the experience of Warsaw's inhabitants during the Great War is the one written by Krzysztof Dunin-Wąsowicz, published nearly forty years ago (Dunin-Wąsowicz 1974). While Dunin's focus was directed partly at the material condition of the population and the demographic consequences of the war, his short monograph is descriptive rather than analytical and interpretive, and lacks any kind of comparative perspective. Given the context in which it was written, Dunin's book also ignored important issues related to class, ethnicity, gender, and culture that have inspired the best recent scholarship of the wartime experience of other capitals and major cities. Three years earlier, Dunin was also responsible for the publication of the only significant anthology of memoirs on the First World War in Warsaw, which informed and shaped his later study (Dunin-Wąsowicz 1971). The perspectives presented, as we shall see, were predominantly those of the male Polish intelligentsia and, as such, they focused more on wartime political developments than on everyday life.

Truth be told, literature on the urban experience of World War One in European metropolitan centers is still in its infancy. The pioneering volume of

essays on the war's social history in London, Paris and Berlin, *Capital Cities at War*, edited by Jan Winter and Jean-Louis Robert, was published only in 1997. This was followed by a second volume devoted to a cultural history of the war in the three capitals in 2007. In between, Belinda Davis, one of the contributors to the first *Capital Cities* volume, published *Home Fires Burning: Food, Politics and Everyday Life in World War I Berlin* (2000). Outside of the "Big Three" capital cities, David Rechter published an analysis of Jewish politics in wartime Vienna in 2001 (*The Jews of Vienna and the First World War*); but the real breakthrough came with Maureen Healy's *Vienna and the Fall of the Habsburg Empire: Total War and Everyday Life in World War I* (2004) with its focus on shops, street corners, schools, pubs, and apartment buildings, everyday sites of conflict and "communal disintegration" on the home front as a consequence of growing hunger, violence, and the deterioration of social norms. More recently, Roger Chickering's *The Great War and Urban Life in Germany: Freiburg, 1914–1918* (2007) adopted a comprehensive methodological approach to a micro-history that illuminates the wartime experience of a medium-sized frontline city.

If the literature on the social and cultural history of the Great War in major European urban settings has yet to extend much beyond London, Paris, Berlin, and Vienna to places like Warsaw Budapest and Prague, there is even less to be said of studies of war-related memory and memorialization in these latter cities. In Warsaw's specific instance, one basically needs to start from scratch. In its attempt to initiate such a discussion, this article draws on various theoretical perspectives in the field of memory studies, beginning with the classic "socio-constructivist" approach to memory originally developed in the 1920s and 1930s by Maurice Halbwachs (Halbwachs 1980), as well as its significant amendment by Jan Assmann to account for institutionalized commemoration through cultural evolution (Assmann 2011). It has also benefited from the considerable theoretical contributions of Pierre Nora and his collaborators, particularly those related to the "places" (or "realms") of memory, an academic enterprise developed over several decades (Nora 2001 and 2007). Michel-Rolph Trouillot's analysis of the relationship of power to silences in memory, commemoration, and the production of historical narratives (Trouillot 1995) is especially relevant to this study, which focuses not only on what has been forgotten from Warsaw's lived experience of the First World War, but also why it has been forgotten. At the same time, this article will contrast the forgotten war with the minimally memorialized one. Commemorating the social and economic experiences of non-combatants

in wartime is a challenge in any case, but a monument constructed in 1925 in Vienna's Central Cemetery depicting a grieving mother who was just as likely to have lost her child to malnutrition and disease as to battle during the war, suggests at least one possibility (Healy 2006, 54). Present-day Warsaw's memory landscape of the First World War, as we shall see, contains nothing of the sort.

A Past Buried by Memory

Over twenty years ago, in his famous discussion of the recovery of memory of the Second World War, the late Tony Judt argued that in contrast with Western Europe, the problem in post-communist Eastern Europe was not a shortage of memory, but its reverse: "Here there is too much memory, too many pasts on which people can draw. [...]" (Judt 1992, 99). For our purposes, Warsaw's Tomb of the Unknown Soldier (*Grób Nieznanego Żołnierza*) in present-day Piłsudski Square offers a case in point. In 1923, a group of anonymous Varsovians, inspired by state-sponsored monuments and commemorations originating in Britain and France, placed before the Saxon Palace, then the seat of the Ministry of War, a stone tablet commemorating the unknown Polish soldiers who had fallen during the years 1914–1920. This effort at commemoration already conflated two wars, the Great War of 1914–1918 and the Polish-Soviet War, not to mention the border wars and armed conflicts with Ukraine, Lithuania, and Germany. Soon enough, the initiative for an official tomb was taken up by the War Minister, General Władysław Sikorski; some forty battlefields were considered by the Ministry for removing and transporting to Warsaw the remains of an unknown soldier, and ultimately Lwów during the Polish-Ukrainian War in eastern Galicia was selected. On 2 November 1925 the ceremonial reburial was accompanied by a twenty-one gun salute and the lighting of the eternal flame by President Stanisław Wojciechowski (Ministerstwo Obrony Narodowy 2005).

The burying of memory of the Great War, by heaping on it more recent memory, had clearly begun. In fact, it was already in process before the appearance of the tablet of the anonymous citizens in front of the Saxon Palace. Without a doubt more unknown Polish soldiers had died on the battlefields of the Great War than in independent Poland's subsequent border wars and war with Soviet Russia. Accompanying this process of historical production were more fundamental silences about the everyday experiences and sufferings of Warsaw's non-combatants, who died in even

greater numbers than did its soldiers fighting in various armies during the First World War.

Let us return for a moment to the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. The Ministry's decision to use the site of the tomb to honor those who had died fighting for an independent Poland since 1794 contained a silence about the majority of Poles who had died fighting in the Great War in the service of the imperial Russian, German, and Austro-Hungarian armies. Of the thirteen battles of the years 1914–1918 currently inscribed on tablets at the site, all of them involve Polish legions and brigades which fought – presumably for the idea of independent Poland – under their own banner, but as part of other armies, particularly the Austro-Hungarian and French. If the reality of Pole fighting Pole (rather than for independence) for the greater part of First World War contradicted the emerging narrative, so too did the collaboration of Polish political elites with ruling regimes and occupation authorities, even if those elites were divided in their support of the Entente and Central Powers. This includes those rival political figures now credited through their combined efforts with the restoration and defense of an independent Poland, Józef Piłsudski and Roman Dmowski, to whom statues, squares, and roundabouts have been dedicated in Warsaw.

In any event, the thirteen battles featured in Piłsudski Square are not representative of Polish combat during the First World War. However, they are overshadowed by twenty-four battles from late 1918 to 1920, the years of the Soviet-Polish war and of Poland's border wars with its Ukrainian, German, and Lithuanian neighbors, when Polish soldiers were mobilized and fought for a Polish state. The Battle for Lwów, as mentioned, fits this category, and that one of its battlefields, Gródek Jagielloński, was selected over dozens of others for the removal of the remains of an unknown soldier was not accidental. General Sikorski had commanded troops there in fending off a bloody Ukrainian siege in January 1919 (Wapiński 1997, 471). The wars of 1918–1920, too, would be dwarfed after 1945 by the seventy-three inscriptions commemorating land, naval, and air battles of World War II in which Polish forces fought, or, like Katyń, were buried. They would also be bracketed by fifty-two “battles” prior to 1914, including terrorist attacks on Russian troops during the revolutionary years of 1904–1908. Thus, of the 162 battles featured at Poland's Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, approximately 45% are dedicated to World War II, 32% to the period 1918 to 1914, 15% to the wars of 1918–1920, and only 8% to the years of the

Great War – none of which, again, commemorate the thousands of Polish soldiers who died in the service of imperial armies.

“Commemorations,” according to Trouillot, “impose a silence on events they ignore and fill that silence with narratives of power about the event they celebrate” (Trouillot 1995, 118). Whatever the intentions of the Warsaw citizens and their homemade tablet in 1923, the state-driven narrative at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier is about the state, and those who fought and died for it for nearly a millennium. The tomb embraces accompanying themes of victimization and martyrdom, while excluding and trivializing what does not fit the conceptual framework which shaped its creation and evolution. The effective silencing of Polish military casualties during the Great War is not the result of conspiracy or even a political consensus. Instead, its roots are structural. This memory structure is also reflected in Warsaw's larger monument landscape, which, in its few references to World War One, emphasizes its outcome – namely, independent Poland – at the expense of its actual course.

One can hardly expect military cemeteries, even symbolic ones like the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, to commemorate non-combatants of any era, yet as Katrin Van Cant has shown in her analysis of the nearly eighty open-air monuments erected in Warsaw between 1989 and 2009, the emphasis on the heroes of recent Polish military history and particularly those of World War II is similarly pronounced in the city's streets (Van Cant 2009).¹ 30% of these monuments are directly related to World War II, the majority of which commemorate the Home Army and the Warsaw Uprising. By comparison, only 6.5% of the new statues refer to World War I. “The most natural explanation for this,” according to Van Cant, “is that in Polish national memory, this war, despite the terrific human and material losses on the Polish side between 1914 and 1918, mainly has a positive connotation, because of its outcome” (Van Cant 2009, 98–99). In other words, the Great War does not easily fit the dominant narrative told by Warsaw's monuments (any more than it did the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier), “of Poland and the Polish people as victims of their history, nevertheless always displaying an indestructible will to fight for the existence and freedom of the nation” (Van Cant 2009, 113).

However, if we look closely at these monuments, we will see that there is more to the story. None of the monuments in Van Cant's study refer to the Great War as it was experienced by non-combatants in Warsaw, but to its

“positive outcome” for the Polish nation. That outcome had been a relatively taboo subject in the communist era, during which not a single monument was erected to commemorate a person or event that took place prior to 1945, with the exception of the monument to the Polish communist and founder of the Soviet secret police, Feliks Dzierżyński, in the city center.² The 1998 *Memorial to the Military Action of the Polish American* is dedicated to Polish-American soldiers who fought under the command of General Józef Haller in France and against the Ukrainians in eastern Galicia in 1918. There is also the 2005 memorial to Father Jerzy Skorupka, a chaplain in the Polish army who died in 1920 during the war with the Soviets. In the 1990s three statues were dedicated to Piłsudski, the acknowledged “founder” of the interwar state, and a final one to Dmowski in 2006. Due to Dmowski’s primacy of place in the pantheon of Poland’s radical right, the monument and surrounding roundabout in his name proved the most controversial, despite Dmowski’s “positive” role at the Paris Peace Conference.

Also honored, in Skaryszewski Park, is Colonel Edward M. House, advisor to the American wartime president Woodrow Wilson and “friend of Poland,” whose 1932 statue was removed by the communists in 1951 and restored in 1991.³ Wilson and Herbert Hoover are two other Americans connected to the First World War honored in the Polish capital. Tellingly, Wilson is honored with a plaza (*plac* in Polish) for making an independent Poland one of his Fourteen Points and an American war aim. Constructed in the interwar period as a major transportation hub, *plac Wilsona* and its name survived through and beyond the communist era. Meanwhile, Hoover, the head of the postwar American Relief Administration responsible for saving thousands of lives, is honored with a *skwer* (which really isn’t a square) adjacent to Warsaw’s most prominent boulevard, *Krakowskie Przedmieście*. *Skwer Hoovera* remains the only physical marker of Warsaw’s existential catastrophe of the Great War. In 1922 a monument “of gratitude to America” had been erected in Hoover’s honor that portrayed two women holding children who had presumably been saved from starvation as a result of American relief efforts, but by 1930 the sandstone sculpture was already falling apart and had to be removed from the square. It was subsequently destroyed during the Second World War. Under the communist regime, the square was stripped of Hoover’s name along with the pedestal for the original monument, but the square’s original name was restored in 1992, accompanied by a stone memorial. Plans to restore the original statue of 1922, however, have not been realized to date (Hoover Institution 2005).

Two groups, as Van Cant shows, are completely underrepresented in Warsaw's public monuments – women and Jews. Three of Warsaw's currently standing monuments commemorate Jews, all of them directly related to World War II and the Holocaust, of which only one was erected after 1989, in the distant suburb of Falenica. Women come off slightly better, with four new monuments since 1989, raising the total to seven, which honor “the fighting (and caring) woman and first-class patriot” (Van Cant 2009, 109). Primarily viewed as non-combatants during the First World War, no member of either group is remembered for this time period. More significant, however, is that Varsovians themselves are woefully underrepresented in the monuments and statues of their own city. Only a few local heroes have been honored with their own monument in Warsaw, and none of them are connected to the First World War. The emphasis is clearly on the national rather than the local. As Van Cant explains, “Warsaw as the capital fulfills the role of visiting card to the entire country” and the narrative delivered by its monuments is firmly focused on the later history of twentieth-century Poland “because it was extremely traumatic and [because] the scars inflicted by those events are still very fresh in the national consciousness” (Van Cant 2009, 112). However, the problem with remembering the First World War in Warsaw may run much deeper than a preoccupation with what came after it, but with how its “history” was recorded in the first place, in its very sources.

The Root of the Problem

The recording of history, Assmann argues, gives rise to “a dialectic of expansion and loss,” the latter “through forgetting and through suppression by way of manipulation, censorship, destruction, circumspection, and substitution” (Assmann 2011, 9). According to Trouillot, “[Sources] privilege some events over others, not always the ones privileged by the actors [...] Silences are inherent in the creation of sources, the first moment of historical production” (Trouillot 1995, 48 and 51). If, as Trouillot argues, “History is the fruit of power” and “in history, power begins at the source” (Trouillot 1995, xix and 29), what can be said of the sources available for an examination of the everyday lives of ordinary Varsovians during the First World War?

Let us begin with the archival evidence. Warsaw was under Russian rule during the first year of the war, until early August 1915, after which the city came under German occupation. The documents written and compiled by these political authorities obviously reflect a certain perspective, if not

always from the top, then from various ranks of administrations concerned primarily with the preservation of order and control. Seldom do we hear from those who are the subjects of these documents, except when they offer resistance to or come under suspicion of the authorities. The most significant archival collection of Russian administration for the first year of the war, the files of the Warsaw Superintendent of Police, demonstrates a preoccupation with requisitioning and evacuation, along with ungrounded fears of Jewish espionage on behalf of the Central Powers.⁴ No attention is paid to the steady deterioration of living standards caused by the war and requisitioning, at least in the documents available to us. And what is available to us represents only a small fraction of the written record, since many documents were deliberately destroyed during the Russian evacuation, while others were transported from Warsaw, never to return. Thus what have survived are fragments, such as the files of the requisitions commission for Warsaw's fourth precinct,⁵ which historians may take as representative – at least for a particular process.

The documents of the German occupation authorities in Warsaw fared no better, in fact, even worse. Again, there was purposeful destruction. The majority of the most important and secret documents from the Warsaw Governor-General's office were burned in November 1918, as described in his memoirs by Bohdan Hutten-Czapski, the principal "Polish expert" of Governor-General Hans von Beseler (Dunin-Wąsowicz 1971, 478–479). Nevertheless, some 980 volumes were preserved, as were those of the Chief of Administration, and deposited in the *Archiwum Akt Nowych* (AAN). Following the German invasion of 1939, these documents were packed off in their entirety to Potsdam, where they were destroyed in 1945 during the siege of Berlin. Meanwhile, fragments from Beseler's personal collection had been preserved by his family and after World War II were transferred to the German federal archive in Koblenz. Some were reproduced on microfilm and photocopies and returned to Poland. Today, some thirty-six files as well as fragments from fifteen others, only a tiny fraction of what had once existed, are available to researchers at the *Archiwum Głównie Akt Dawnych* (AGAD).⁶ These consist primarily of Beseler's reports, the quarterly reports of the Chief of Administration, and a small number of announcements, declarations, orders and petitions. The collection of the Imperial German Presidium of Police in Warsaw contains only a few random documents, which are practically useless, since it is difficult to place them in larger contexts.

Nonetheless, the available German documents, taken as a whole, reveal more about wartime living conditions in Warsaw than the Russian documents, perhaps because their political implications grew as the war continued. Official quarterly reports, for example, discuss the refugee crisis the Germans encountered upon entering Warsaw, high inflation and unemployment, threats to public health, tensions in Polish-Jewish relations, fraternization of German troops with Polish women, and especially issues related to the food supply – its control and distribution, and associated activities, such as smuggling. Appendices to the reports of Chief of Administration contain particularly valuable statistical data on various diseases and levels of employment. What is striking, however, is the absence of references in these documents to the political situation in Warsaw, perhaps because these were precisely the kinds of documents that were purposefully burned in November 1918.

In an early report from the Fall of 1915, Beseler claimed that one of his main tasks was “to contain or deflect political propaganda” for independence.⁷ To do so, the German occupation regime first permitted cultural expressions of Polish (and Jewish) national sentiment and, as the war continued and the Russians failed to sue for peace, the establishment of quasi-state institutions and self-governing bodies such as municipal councils. Among the former was the Provisional State Council (*Tymczasowy Rada Stanu* – TRS), a consultative body formed to work with German and Austrian authorities to design state institutions in the occupied Polish Kingdom. Before it was replaced by one of those institutions (the Regency Council), the TRS lasted some seven and a half months, from 14 January to 31 August 1917. It is estimated that over 25% of its archive survived the Second World War,⁸ a far higher percentage than that of its successor, both of which are located in Warsaw’s AAN. Whereas one is hard-pressed to find references to the political situation in the German documentary collections housed in Warsaw-based repositories, this appears to have been a primary concern of the TRS, whose files reveal a careful monitoring of the Warsaw press, both legal and underground, thanks to which we have some evidence of incidents of unrest – food riots and student strikes in May 1917, demonstrations and political vandalism following the arrest of Józef Piłsudski in July 1917. However, such documents afford us only fleeting and fragmentary glimpses into the lives of ordinary Varsovians during the First World War, and these through lenses trained on other objects.

The same could be said of the collections of private papers of individuals who served in these “Polish” institutions which are also housed at AAN,

principal among them the Dzierzbicki and Drzewiecki papers.⁹ I mention these two in particular because of the positions held during the war by Stanisław Dzierzbicki and Piotr Drzewiecki, respectively. A civil engineer by training, Stanisław Dzierzbicki was a dedicated public servant who, during the war years, became involved in the provision of relief and assistance to victims of the war, most significantly as the president of the Main Welfare Organization (*Rada Główna Opiekuńcza* – RGO), after which he became a member of the Provisional State Council and Minister of Agriculture under the Regency Council. To judge by his papers, Dzierzbicki was concerned primarily with issues related to funding, provisioning, and the distribution of assistance before 1917 and, as his functions changed in that year, by outbursts of unrest in Warsaw's streets and universities. Piotr Drzewiecki, who had presided over a number of industrial and commercial boards before the war, was one of the founding members of the Warsaw Citizens' Committee, an NGO formed with imperial Russian approval in August 1914 in order to deal with war's side-effects, economic or otherwise, on the Warsaw home front. As the war continued and the needs of Warsaw's inhabitants mounted, the Citizens' Committee became the main welfare agency in the city. Following the Russian evacuation, its executive branch was transformed into the Warsaw city administration, where Drzewiecki served as vice president. Drzewiecki's papers for this period reveal the perspective of an administrator dealing with German demands for labor, unwelcome German supervision of the city's judicial and educational institutions, and a strained city budget. They also reveal a National Democrat concerned with electoral politics, in this case, the newly formed Warsaw City Council. In both the Dzierzbicki and Drzewiecki papers, with the focus on the administrative and political, only side-glances are offered toward the quotidian struggles of those whom they presumably served.

The best view of these struggles from the archives, at least for the first twenty-one months of the war, is contained in the minutes of meetings of the Warsaw Citizens' Committee and its presidium, which are available in the Warsaw city archive.¹⁰ The minutes of these meetings are quite detailed and demonstrate how the committee's responsibilities expanded in conjunction with the needs of the city and its population. From concerns about the city's unemployed, waves of refugees, energy supplies, and setting price ceilings in the early months of the war, to the provisioning of public kitchens, food rationing, the spread of infectious diseases and drafting an electoral ordinance during the first year of the German occupation, the

challenges facing the Committee are well documented. However, while the Committee's discussions of the reports of its sections and sub-sections appear in the minutes, they are abbreviated, while the reports themselves – which would provide an even closer view of everyday life on the ground – are not available. Thus, what we often see is in the aggregate – the number of refugees sheltered, or meals served in public kitchens over a particular period – instead of the specific. Far less complete are the archives of the Committee's successor organizations, the Warsaw city administration and the Warsaw city council, although what is available provides evidence of financially strapped city institutions trying to make ends meet while dealing with an implacable occupier and growing urban unrest, including a strike of municipal employees.¹¹ Basically, the documentary evidence is far more robust for the first year of the war, when Warsaw remained under Russian rule and before the Warsaw Citizens Committee and its sections were transformed into organs of self-government, than in the last three-plus years when the general economic crisis experienced by the city's inhabitants was gradually transformed into an existential catastrophe.

Indeed, a similar imbalance can be noted in a reading of the mass circulation press, the principal chronicler of everyday life. The difference can be explained by censorship, whose constraints were fewer under the Russians than the Germans. In part, this was because Warsaw's Polish-language daily press, by and large, was pro-Russian, as were the National Democrats, who possessed the strongest political organization in the city. Greater press freedom was also a consequence of the Revolution of 1905, which led to a veritable explosion of press titles in Warsaw, including those in Yiddish and Hebrew. Compared to its Polish counterpart, the Jewish-language(s) press in Warsaw was viewed with far greater suspicion by the Russian government during the first year of the war, to the point that it was shut down entirely as the Russians prepared their evacuation from Warsaw in the summer of 1915 (Zieliński 2005, 116). While reporting on the situation at the front, especially as it drew closer to Warsaw in the fall of 1914 and again in the summer of 1915, was largely taboo, the Polish press remained free to express itself on practically everything else, including the now perennial "Jewish question." More to the point, through featured sections titled "Z miasta" ("From the City"), dailies such as the long-standing *Kurjer Warszawski*, with its close ties to the city's Polish political and cultural elites, as well as *Nowa Gazeta*, representative of Warsaw's assimilated and liberal Jewish elite, were able to offer relatively clear snapshots of how the city's residents sought to

negotiate the hardships of the war's first year, although the accompanying commentary reflected the biases of journalists and editors.

This situation was reversed under the Germans, who were well aware of the politically destabilizing effects of the ever-deteriorating living conditions in the city, to which their policies of requisitioning and control of resources were the main contributing factor. Thus, reporting on those conditions and their consequences became increasingly taboo, particularly following the establishment of preventive censorship on 25 September 1915, which specifically targeted "all rumors, news and commentaries about the decisions of the occupation authorities, whether civil or military" and "all articles about incidents, accidents, epidemics and poverty."¹² While some circumvention of the censor was possible, as I have discussed in another article devoted to a discussion of Warsaw's "barefoot" phenomenon (Blobaum 2013), the issues had to appear politically innocuous to avoid scrutiny. One will therefore find no mention of Warsaw's major food riots of June 1916 and May 1917 in the officially registered Warsaw daily press – a most dramatic instance of silencing. What we know about these riots come from other sources – a list of ransacked grocery stores subsidized and administered by the city that *Nova Gazeta* and other legal dailies intended but were never able to publish, as well as accounts in the clandestine press. Interestingly, even in a media outlet whose self-proclaimed goal to provide information that could not otherwise appear in the Warsaw press, news about the May 1917 riots appeared in its back pages, this despite the fact that looting had lasted an entire day.¹³

As if in compensation, the German occupation authorities were more than willing to permit public expressions of Polish national pride in commemorations, the most significant being the celebrations of the anniversary of the Constitution of 3 May 1791, and in the press commentary leading up to them. Particularly welcome was the discussion of events in Polish history that had an anti-Russian flavor, such as the 1830 and 1863 uprisings. There was another form of venting, however, that proved even more valuable to the Germans. After an initial attempt to put a lid on public expressions of Polish-Jewish hostility in order to prevent disturbances in the rear of their armies, as the war continued the German authorities gradually began to lift it in order to release steam from frustrations built up by their own policies. By the end of the war, the vitriol in Polish-Jewish press polemics in Warsaw matched that of the last years of Russian rule.

The point here is that, over the course of the war, as everyday struggles in Warsaw literally became a matter of life and death, the Warsaw press moved away from these struggles in its coverage. One might blame the German censor in the case of the legal press, but the issues of malnutrition and starvation were not a priority of the uncensored “independent” press, even when the collapse of living standards resulted in food rioting.

Memoirs are often taken by historians as a more suspect type of primary source, even if they place too much faith in the value of archives and contemporary press accounts. However, it is important to raise questions about which memoirs get published and with what objective. A look at those compiled by Krzysztof Dunin-Wąsowicz in his anthology for Warsaw during the First World War is instructive here. As mentioned, despite its claim to represent a cross-section of perspectives, the anthology displays a clear bias in favor of political activists and journalists from the male Polish intelligentsia. Bogdan Hutten-Czapski, a landed Polish aristocrat close to the Kaiser who arrived in Warsaw as a member of the entourage of Governor-General Beseler, is the sole voice of the German occupation authorities in the anthology, while the perspective of the imperial Russian regime lacks a single representative. Despite Warsaw's pronounced demographic feminization during the war, excerpts were taken from the writings of only two women, Maria Kamińska and Władysława Głódowska-Sampolska, activists with ties to the radical left, ancestors of the communist regime which ruled Poland at the time of the anthology's publication in 1971, but who were politically insignificant during the war years. Further exaggeration of the role of proto-communist formations is evident through the inclusion of memoirs written by male activists Bronisław Fijalek and Aleksander Tomaszewski. The anthology also appeared three years after that regime's 1968 “anti-Zionist” campaign, a purging of Jews from the state bureaucracy, party apparatus, and positions of prominence in Polish society. Excerpts from the memoirs of two assimilated Jews – those of Kamińska (whose real name was Maria Eiger) and the journalist Aleksander Kraushar – do make an appearance, but their authors' ancestry remains unacknowledged by the editor. Wartime Warsaw thus appears in the anthology as ethno-religiously homogeneous, and without a single mention of Polish-Jewish relations, the defining issue of local politics following municipal council elections in 1916.

This is not to suggest that Dunin-Wąsowicz's anthology is worthless for the study of everyday life in Warsaw from 1914 to 1918. As mentioned, Dunin's

book on Warsaw during the First World War pays a great deal of attention to material conditions and their deterioration, and his anthology does provide space for the memoirs of social workers. One of the most revealing comes from Franciszek Herbst, who served as secretary of the Labor Section of the Warsaw Citizens Committee and continued to serve the city administration following the Committee's dissolution. Yet even Herbst writes that the distribution efforts of the Citizens Committee were exclusively carried out by women volunteers (Dunin-Wąsowicz 1971, 306). If women were in the front lines in the distribution of aid during the war, the direct recipients of this aid, first and foremost, were also women. These two categories of women are absolutely crucial to understanding the experience of war in Poland's once and future capital, but their voices are nowhere to be found in Dunin's anthology. Nor will we find them in the works of professional historians.

History and Memory

Pierre Nora has succinctly defined historiography as "the scholarly construction of memory" (Nora 2001, xx). Michel-Rolph Trouillot ties that "scholarly construction" to power and to "the size, the relevance, and the overwhelming complexity of the overlapping sites where history is produced, notably outside of academia" (Trouillot 1995, 19). "The value of a historical product," he argues further, "cannot be debated without taking into account the context of its production and the context of its consumption" (Trouillot 1995, 146). In this sense, history – as the story about what happened – becomes part of continuous myth-making and sanitization processes that include the creation of sources, the social construction of memory itself, and its cultural organization, commodification, and institutionalization through ceremony and commemoration. Despite professional historians' belief in scientific history and an ability to set aside their own preferences and stakes, only broad and profound transformations of consciousness and identity can create new ways of understanding the past – for example, of the kind in France identified by Nora which gave birth to memory studies.

In Poland, while the beginnings of such transformations may be perceptible, national consciousness and identity are still largely shaped by feelings of victimization and the "struggle" for independence which, in turn, have provided the conceptual framework that makes some narratives rather than others powerful enough to pass as accepted history. Except for its outcome, as we have already noted, the First World War ill fits this framework and the everyday travails of non-combatants on the Warsaw "home front" during

the war even less so. To demonstrate this point more specifically and the way that “history” can be made to fit an established and accepted framework, let us return for a moment to how women and their wartime roles are featured in the few studies devoted to them.

As mentioned previously, Warsaw's women, broadly speaking, can be divided into two categories. The first, to borrow Belinda Davis's term used throughout her study of wartime Berlin, were the “women of lesser means” (Davis 2000), who, in the case of Warsaw as well as Berlin, comprised the vast majority of women. In Warsaw this included the laboring poor, but more significantly the female unemployed, particularly former domestic servants, who before the war comprised the largest number of employed women in Warsaw and whose jobs were lost due to the evacuation of Russian officials and the growing impoverishment of middle-class and intelligentsia households. Joining these “women of lesser means” were single mothers and wives left temporarily or permanently without male partners due to wartime circumstances of conscription and labor out-migration. Among the most publicly and politically visible women in this category were the *rezerwistki*, soldiers' wives whose sense of entitlement was publicly acknowledged – that is, until it came to be perceived as a threat to the existing social order. Finally, there were the “women of loose morality,” as they were referred to in the press, occasional prostitutes whose numbers increased significantly in the midst of the city's economic destitution.

The second kind of women in Warsaw were similar to those identified by Maureen Healy in her study of wartime Vienna, defined as a vocal minority among affluent women who spoke on behalf of “women” in general, including “women of lesser means” (Healy 2004, 167). Although the numbers of women of affluence, if anything, declined in Warsaw during the war years as economic misery traveled up the social hierarchy, the size of the minority speaking on behalf of women grew noticeably as a small number of prewar feminists of conviction were joined by a much larger group of feminists of wartime circumstance. The latter can be defined as the female members of prewar social and cultural conservative elites whose perspectives and, ultimately, demands were shaped by their wartime experience in philanthropy, social work, and public assistance. These women, conservative in their political outlook but well aware of the importance of their wartime social roles, made and ultimately won the case for women's suffrage and equal political rights by the end of 1918.

Neither of these two groups of women, however, is featured in the scant literature on women during the First World War. Instead, the focus has been placed – or misplaced – on those women who served as volunteers in auxiliary military organizations, particularly those which supported the Polish Legions. These organizations, with a combined 16,000 members by the middle of 1916, were also the largest wartime women's associations on Polish lands. As noted by Joanna Dufurat, their agenda included the promotion of equal political rights (Dufurat 2008), but to assign the achievement of those rights to these organizations is to exaggerate. To claim, moreover, that “the most significant role” played by Polish women during the war years was their work in auxiliary organizations (Kuźma-Markowska 2011, 267), trivializes and even silences the wartime home front roles played by the majority of women, as consumers in dire need of philanthropy and public assistance and social workers attempting to meet that need, especially in urban centers like Warsaw.

The fact that women are featured at all in the Polish narrative of the First World War – even as patriots contributing to the recovery of an independent state – is the outcome of a slight alteration in the conceptual framework resulting from the introduction of women and gender studies to Polish universities since 1989. An even more fundamental change has occurred in the discussion of Polish-Jewish relations, starting in the late 1980s and accelerating with the publication of *Neighbors* by Jan Tomasz Gross in Polish (Gross 2000). Over the last couple of decades there has been a great deal of new research into the phenomenon of anti-Semitism in Poland (Blobaum 2005) and on the parallel and interrelated trajectories of modern Polish and Jewish politics (Porter 2000 and Ury 2012). For the period of the First World War, the work of Konrad Zieliński particularly stands out (Zieliński 2005).

There is a danger, however, in reducing the histories of Poles and Jews in the modern era to their “relations,” to the emergence of radical nationalism and anti-Semitism, and more generally to the rise of mass political organizations. I raise this issue as someone who recently has become conscious of his own participation in this distortion and, therefore, in the neglect of other possible narratives. As Assmann reminds us, the past is not something that can be “preserved,” but is “continually subject to processes of reorganization according to changes taking place in the frame of reference of each successive present” (Assmann 2011, 27). In this instance, professional historians have become prisoners not only of a fashionable historiographical trend focused

on the rise of modern and competing nationalisms, but also of sources that confirm their own predispositions, in particular the writings and memoirs of political activists and intellectuals, as well as the articles and columns which characterized a highly politicized Polish and Jewish press. In the process, we have taken evidence of political mobilization, the development of national identities, and growing antagonism between Poles and Jews to shape what is becoming an accepted narrative, while ignoring evidence to the contrary: namely, that majorities of Poles and Jews, even in Warsaw's hothouse, were not politically mobilized, and that the numbers of those who were not only waxed, but also waned.

During the First World War, only a minority of eligible voters participated in Warsaw's first-ever municipal elections in 1916. What then can be said of the even larger numbers of Poles and Jews, especially women, who were not embraced by the limited suffrage in the electoral ordinance approved by the German occupation authorities earlier that year? In the end, identity politics were likely of secondary or even tertiary concern to the majority of Poles and Jews who by circumstance should have been, and were, focused on pursuing strategies of surviving the wartime existential crisis, even if it came at the other's expense and, truth be told, at the expense of fellow co-nationals.

According to Trouillot, historians, whether amateur or professional, are full participants in the processes of historical production, of shaping and re-shaping of conceptual frames of reference that determine what is thinkable and unthinkable, and of making the unthinkable a "non-event" (Trouillot 1995, 98). Warsaw's two major food riots during the First World War, clear expressions of concerns at the street level, have thus become non-events in conceptual frameworks that contain space only for events of political and national significance. Recovery of the lived experiences of ordinary Varsovians during the war and the capacity of such a narrative to pass as accepted history require a fundamentally different, if not directly competing, framework. The odds, at least in the short term, are against its emergence.

Conclusion: An Imagined Centennial

The hundredth anniversary of the outbreak of the Great War is rapidly approaching. It will be interesting to see how this event will be commemorated in Warsaw, or if it will be treated as a "non-event." Given the layered structures of memory, commemoration, and historical production, one

can imagine possible scenarios. As a consequence of the war's "positive" outcome in November 1918 – the restoration of an independent Polish state – the centennial of August 1914 may not pass by entirely unnoticed. Perhaps a wreath will be laid at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in honor of those Poles who died as members of the Polish legions, to the neglect of those who did not. Perhaps honorable mention will be made of women who served in auxiliary organizations supporting the legionnaires. One might expect to hear speeches of politicians in front of Warsaw's two monuments to Józef Piłsudski, likely in competing claims to the founder's legacy. This expected accentuation on the end point of independence may not be entirely exclusive, however. Perhaps newspapers and magazines will publish articles by local, non-academic historians focusing on the nuts and bolts of the city's history to include stories from the war's first days and weeks – of a city in motion, of the run on banks, of panic-buying, of the shortage of coin to make spare change, of the prohibition on sales of alcohol.

Such stories, if they do appear, will not challenge the existing conceptual framework. No mention will be made of the thousands of young men who volunteered to serve in the Russian army, or of the support of Warsaw's political elites for the generally popular cause of Russian arms. No mention will be made of the thousands of young women who volunteered to serve on the home front as nurses and nurses' aides in treating the Russian wounded. No mention will be made of the Russian government's financial support for and fruitful working relationship with the Warsaw Citizens' Committee in managing the immediate economic consequences of the war's first weeks and months. Mention might be made of Warsaw's most popular political figure during the war's first year – Prince Zdzisław Lubomirski, co-founder and presiding officer of the Warsaw Citizens' Committee and the city's first president following the Russian evacuation – but a proposal to honor his contributions to the city's well-being and his efforts to fend off existential disaster is extremely unlikely. After all, in November 1918, Piłsudski technically seized power from the Regency Council, one of the quasi-state institutions created by the German occupier and headed by Lubomirski who had "collaborated" with not one, but two imperial regimes. To date the sole tribute to the well-meaning prince's activities during the war remains the publication of the diary of his devoted wife (Pajewski 2002).

Just as Lubomirski's profile fails to fit the statuary mold of hero and martyr, so too does that of Dr. Justyna Budzińska-Tylicka. Trained in France as

a specialist in tuberculosis Budzińska-Tylicka began practicing in Warsaw in 1908, where she became an early pioneer in the area of women's health and formed part of the leadership core of the prewar feminist movement that focused on equal rights. During the war years, Budzińska-Tylicka organized courses in the delivery of first aid and organized a field hospital for treatment of the wounded, while also continuing her advocacy of women's rights. In September 1917, she presided over the Polish Women's Congress, whose most prominent delegates came from the fifteen organizations that comprised the Union of Polish Women's Associations. Following the meeting of this "small women's parliament," as *Nowa Gazeta* called it at the time,¹⁴ Budzińska-Tylicka and the executive committee of the Women's Congress intensively lobbied the Warsaw city council and administration to revise the electoral ordinance of the previous year, while organizing mass meetings to pressure male elites into granting voting rights at both the state and local level. Following the war and the death of her son from the Great Influenza, and with the success of the suffrage campaign behind her, Budzińska-Tylicka became a prominent spokesperson for planned parenthood and birth control.

Budzińska-Tylicka's support for "conscious motherhood," including abortion, was condemned at the time by Poland's interwar Roman Catholic Church and would be condemned now by its more powerful and more politically influential contemporary version. Moreover, Budzińska-Tylicka opposed the Sanacja regime established by Józef Piłsudski following his *coup d'état* of 1926 (Sierakowska 2006, 80). Thus, despite Budzińska-Tylicka's prominent place in the successful women's suffrage movement of the war years, we should not expect to see a public monument constructed in her honor any time soon. A more likely candidate would be the better known "national feminist" Iza Moszczeńska, who, as founder of the Women's Military Auxiliary League sought to merge women's desires to participate in the struggle for independence with their emancipatory aspirations as early as 1913 (Dufrat 2008, 118). Moreover, Moszczeńska was an early twentieth-century defender of the more traditional notions of "Polish" motherhood (Blobaum 2002, 807), and thus better fits existing conceptual structures for commemorating women in Warsaw. That said, the odds against a Moszczeńska monument are long as well, given the general paucity of public statues devoted to women in the Polish capital.

There remains the monument of the desperate mother and her two hungry children which once stood prominently on Hoover Square – to my mind,

the most symbolic representation of everyday life in Warsaw during the First World War. The planned reconstruction and resurrection of that monument, originally announced in 2006, has been inexplicably delayed. I can imagine no better moment than the centennial of August 1914 for a ceremonial unveiling of that statue, not necessarily “in gratitude to America” (the inscription on the original statue), but in remembrance of a forgotten war and its horrific impact on the lives of the majority of city’s non-combatants. After all, a conceptual framework once existed to accommodate that statue in the heart of Warsaw. The question is whether one exists in the present.

ROBERT BLOBAUM

In Eberly Family Professor of European History and Director of the Transatlantic MA Program in East-Central European Studies at West Virginia University. His books include Rewolucja: Russian Poland, 1904–1907, which was awarded the Oskar Halecki Prize, and Antisemitism and Its Opponents in Modern Poland, both published by Cornell University Press. He is currently working on a book devoted to everyday life in Warsaw during the First World War.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Being interested primarily in the “street scene,” Van Cant’s study deliberately excludes cemeteries.
- 2 The monument to “bloody Feliks,” whose hands were repeatedly painted red by politically-inspired vandals in the 1980s, was removed immediately after the 1989 revolution.
- 3 This according to the inscription on the base of the statue.
- 4 Archiwum Państwowe m. st. Warszawy (APW), Zarząd Oberpolicmajstra Warszawskiego (ZOW).
- 5 APW, Komisja Rewizyjna IV Rejonu Miasta Warszawy (KR).
- 6 These are available in three collections: Cesarsko-Niemieckie Generał-Gubernatorstwo w Warszawie (CNGGW), Szef Administracji przy Generał-Gubernatorstwie w Warszawie (SAGGW), and Cesarsko-Niemieckie Prezydium Policji w Warszawie (CNNPP).
- 7 AGAD CNGGW 1, Beseler to the Kaiser, 23 October 1915.
- 8 Archiwum Akt Nowych (AAN), Tymczasowa Rada Stanu w Warszawie (TRS), description of collection.
- 9 AAN, Akta Stanisława Dzierżickiego (ASD) and Akta [Piotra, Ludwika i Wiesława] Drzewieckich (AD). The Drzewiecki collection, in addition to the papers of Piotr Drzewiecki, also contains those of his brother Ludwik and Ludwik’s son, Wiesław.
- 10 APW, Komitet Obywatelski Miasta Warszawy (KOMW), 1914–1916.
- 11 APW, Zarząd Miejski m. st. Warszawy (ZMW), 1915–1919.

12 APW, Redakcja *Nowej Gazety* (RNG) 1, Circular #12 of the Press Department of the Chief of Administration under the Warsaw Governor-General, 6 October 1915. This collection of documents from the editorial board of *Nowa Gazeta* contains communications and announcements from the German occupation authorities and offers a rare perspective on how one Warsaw daily dealt with German censorship.

13 See "Rozruchy żywnościowe wybuchły w Warszawie," *Komunikat Informacyjny* 1 (9–11 May 1917), p. 4. The same could be said for *Rząd i Wojsko*, an "independent" press organ published by Piłsudski's supporters; see "Głód i polityka" and "Rozruchy w Warszawie," *Rząd i Wojsko* 18 (20 May 1917), pp. 7, 8.

14 "Po zjeździe kobiet," *Nowa Gazeta* 446 (10 September 1917), p. 1.

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EUROPEAN INTELLECTUALS AT THE INTERSECTION OF WAR, MEMORY AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY: GAETANO SALVEMINI, THOMAS MANN AND THE INTERPRETATION OF THE TWO WORLD WARS

Mark W. Clark, prof.

The University of Virginia's College at Wise
Department of History and Philosophy

ABSTRACT

Scholars have written extensively about the efforts of intellectuals to shape the collective memory of the two World Wars in Europe. The Italian historian Gaetano Salvemini and the German novelist Thomas Mann were central to those efforts. Their theoretical and practical responses to the Great War caused them to become leading opponents of fascism, first in Europe and then in the United States. The resulting exile experience allowed them to offer some of the earliest, and most poignant post-war reflections on the second great European cataclysm. This essay examines their contributions to the scholarly and literary interpretation of the wars within a transnational and comparative perspective. It also places their work within the larger debate about the social responsibilities of intellectuals.

In the last twenty five years, historians have found fertile ground in the multifaceted attempts by European societies to memorialize the two World Wars. Indeed, there is a large and growing historical literature on memory, history, and identity. Almost as important has been the discussion about the role *intellectuals* played in interpreting those catastrophes, which is a subset of an ongoing debate about intellectual leadership in general. The cluster of issues that informs this debate, as well the criteria on which historians commonly judge intellectuals, emerged from the questions and responses of the generation to which the German novelist Thomas Mann and Italian historian and political journalist Gaetano Salvemini belonged. (Wohl 1979,

165, 167; Winter 2005, 21, 25) These men played a central role in shaping the memory not only of World War I but also of World War II. As they responded to and interpreted their own experience of World War I – and that of their countrymen – they also offered significant social leadership, first in Europe and then in the United States. Using a transnational and comparative approach, this essay examines the ways in which they helped to shape memories of both wars in their theoretical works and in their more practical leadership efforts on both sides of the Atlantic.

It was during the interwar period that intellectuals in Germany, Italy, and Europe more broadly, not only discussed the proper role for intellectuals but also sought to offer significant societal leadership. Perhaps the most famous statement by a European writer was that of Julien Benda in *Treason of the Intellectuals* (1928). Benda argued that intellectuals should not engage directly in politics or pursue material advantage, but rather should stand above the fray, searching for the truths and values through which humanity operated. Sometimes it was necessary to engage in public *debate*, but such engagement should always be the result of independent, rather than partisan, thought and should be based upon universal principles. Once they had proffered their ideas, intellectuals should return to their ivory towers, shaking the dust off of their sandals and leaving society to struggle as best it could with truth. To do otherwise was to commit intellectual treason – a crime of which many European intellectuals were guilty during and after World War I. According to Benda, writers such as Maurice Barrès, Charles Maurras, Gabrielle D’Annunzio, and virtually the entire German cultural elite, had become political partisans and nationalists and had fanned the flames of irrationalism. Benda, like so many others in the post-war period, was thus trying to explain and give meaning to the war and its attendant atrocities (Benda 1928).

Thomas Mann and Gaetano Salvemini had been partisans for their own countries during the war, and their experience of the war shaped their interpretation of the overall catastrophe in the aftermath. It also informed and reoriented their actions as public intellectuals. These two key figures became more explicitly political in defending democratic reform against attacks both from the traditional right and, subsequently, from the new violent, totalitarian political movements of fascism and Nazism. Even at great personal risk, they joined the effort to create and legitimize new understandings of the national community. Their opposition to Mussolini and Hitler, respectively, led to their exile from Italy and Germany to the United States, where they

became the leading anti-fascist voices of the European émigrés. The exile experience, in turn, provided them with fresh insights and a new perspective as they sought to shape the memory of the Second World War after 1945, even as their earlier interpretations of World War I continued to inform their thinking in significant ways.

Salvemini was the oldest son of poor land holders in Apulia, and this modest background shaped his political and cultural values. Despite becoming an academic historian at the University of Florence and a leading political journalist, he was, according to his most recent biographer, “an intellectual never completely at ease among intellectuals.” (Killinger 2002, 5–6, 100) Early in his career, Salvemini also exhibited an intense political engagement, writing short articles and polemical pieces in left-leaning journals such as *Critica Sociale*, *Avanti!*, and *La Voce*, the leading avant-garde modernist journal in Italy at the turn of the twentieth century. He criticized the long-standing political process of *transformismo*, the Italian liberal system under Giovanni Giolitti, and even the weakness of the Italian Socialist party. In 1911, he formed his own cultural/political journal, *L'Unità*, which became the mouthpiece of young intellectuals seeking a third way between Marxist socialism and traditional liberalism.

When World War I began, Salvemini lobbied for his own country's entry, but on the side of the more “egalitarian” Entente rather than the Triple Alliance. Even during immediate prewar years, he had campaigned against the *Triplice* not just because he opposed Germanic autocracy and militarism, but also because he wanted to keep the Austrians from expanding into the Balkans and further consolidating their control over ethnic Italians there. In fighting for democracy abroad, he believed, Italy would rediscover its own democratic roots. Salvemini thus “provided intellectual direction to the democratic forces who called for Italy to join the war in support of democratic principles.” (Killinger 2002, 89; Wohl 1979, 168) As a result, he came into conflict not only with the Italian Nationalist Party, which had much more far-reaching territorial aims, but also with the pacifists and the Socialists, who abjured any capitalist war fought for nationalist aims. Salvemini was already exhibiting the independent, critical voice that would characterize his public pronouncements throughout his long career.

Salvemini himself saw military action between 1915 and 1916 and then, in the last years of the conflict, he began to assess the war and its importance

for Italy. There was no point in mythologizing the war; rather, Salvemini believed it was crucial to offer clear, critical historical analysis. Italy's lack of democracy and economic reform, he argued, combined with the ineptitude of its statesmen, had led it into catastrophe. The short-sighted foreign policy followed first by the Marquis di San Giuliano and, after his death in 1914, by the intensely anti-democratic Sydney Sonnino, led to Italy's disastrous war experience. Sonnino, in particular, wanted to use the war to realize the territorial aims of the Italian nationalists: the Trentino, Upper Adige, Venezia Giulia, the coast of Dalmatia, and Trieste. He played a double game with the Entente and the Central Powers, always seeking Italy's advantage. Salvemini recognized that the more far-reaching territorial aims had been dangerously unrealistic from the outset, and he pointed out that "not one of [Sonnino's] hopes was ever realized." (Salvemini 1926, 302) It was no surprise to Salvemini that the British and French did not feel compelled at the end of the war to grant Italy all of its territorial demands. According to Salvemini, "Sonnino had bled his country to help win the victory, and he had freed his allies from any duties as regards the settlements of peace." (Salvemini 1926, 307)

The greatest harm created by the policies of Sonnino and the nationalists, according to Salvemini, was a moral one: "they brought the Italian people away from the Peace Conference despised by others and dissatisfied with itself." The Italian people thus came to believe they had been "robbed of the fruits of victory." If intellectual and political disorder had been rampant in the post-war period, "the tactics of the Nationalists have been in large part responsible." It could hardly be surprising, then, that "a people peacefully inclined," but "forced into a grueling war" and then sent home "with the conviction that all its effort has been in vain... kicks over the traces and begins to rear around" (Salvemini 1926, 310). If it did not fit well either within the orthodox Socialist view or the fascist glorification of the conflict, this interpretation of Italy's war experience nonetheless found wide resonance over time. There is little doubt that Italy, despite having been on the "winning" side of the conflict, came to consider itself a loser. The almost total lack of confidence in liberal institutions, statesmen, and politicians fostered an atmosphere in which a more radical solution was the likely outcome. Salvemini was seeking, unsuccessfully as it turned out, to offer an interpretation of the war that would lead to a new understanding of the national community.

For Salvemini, historical interpretation of the war and its origins was a crucial task, but no more so than his practical leadership efforts. At war's end, he

did his part to overcome the disorder – and bring about full democratization – by becoming still more overtly and formally political: he stood for and won election to the Italian parliament. Although he lost in the following election, he had in the meantime established himself as a great defender of the under classes by demanding housing, education, and infrastructure on their behalf (Rossi 1957, 27). After only a short term in parliament, Salvemini withdrew from direct political participation, though he can hardly be said to have repaired to his ivory tower. Indeed, he continued to engage in the public, political debate in Italy, and then abroad.

Salvemini was generally an astute observer of political dangers, but he was uncharacteristically slow to understand the threat posed by fascism. Like many in Italy, he initially saw Mussolini as the best person to translate the war experience into political renewal. As late as April 1922, he could write: “better Mussolini than Bonomi, Facta, Orlando, Salandra, Turati, Baldesi, D’Aragona, Nitti... Mussolini serves the useful function of crushing the old oligarchies” (Salvemini 1972, 163). Moreover, he tended to see fascism as little more than a reactionary movement, one that relied on traditional sources of support such as nationalists and industrialists, and thus unlikely to survive long as an independent force. After the murder of the socialist deputy Giacomo Matteotti in 1924, however, Salvemini became the most vocal leader of the anti-fascist opposition in Florence, a position to which he brought his full intellectual talents and, according to Eugenio Garin an “almost religious sense of a teacher’s mission [...] He considered the social duty of an intellectual [...] to show, at the risk of being always against everyone, what is fair [...] to exercise the right of criticism without which a man ceases to be human” (Garin 1959, 209).

Salvemini left Florence in June 1925 for Rome, where he was arrested for having collaborated in the anti-fascist paper *Non Mollare* (*Don’t Give In*). He was tried and, though not acquitted, granted “provisional liberty” (Origo 1984, 153). In August 1925, he escaped from his state-assigned guards and made his way through northern Italy into France; by December, he was in England, at which time the Italian government formally stripped him both of his academic post and his Italian citizenship. Ernesto Rossi, a student and friend, considered this “one of Mussolini’s gravest errors: he let slip through his hands his most decisive and intelligent adversary” (Salvemini 1925, 106; Rossi 1957, 2).

Salvemini responded by planning how best to reach a wide audience with his anti-fascist message. He began to warn that ousting Mussolini would

not suffice. Those complicit with fascism – including the king and leading industrialists – would have to be removed as well. Although he continued to refine his historical interpretation of World War I throughout the inter-war period, Salvemini largely abandoned his own professional writing in order to focus on his anti-fascist activities. He later told Iris Origo that he “would be ashamed to steal a single hour from his political activities, while in Italy his friends were fighting for the same cause at the risk of their lives” (Origo 1984, 159).

Oddly, exile offered Salvemini a “sense of freedom, of spiritual independence.” Rather than “exile” or “refugee,” he preferred the term *fuoruscito*, “a man who has chosen to leave his country to continue a resistance which had become impossible at home” (Salvemini 1960, 89–90). He and other *fuorusciti* began to arrive in the United States in the 1920s, bringing with them a clear anti-fascist agenda. Even those who were not political activists generally agreed in their opposition to the fascist regime. As such, the *fuorusciti* were almost all vocal opponents of Mussolini and fascism more generally. While a number of German émigrés, such as Mann, were staunch anti-fascists as well, many more fled primarily because of racial persecution. It was their intense commitment to anti-fascist activism that set the *Italians* apart from the larger group of European émigrés. They remained committed to the restoration of freedom in Italy, and this laser-sharp focus gave them a sense of purpose in the face of a prolonged exile.

In 1927, Salvemini embarked upon a lecture tour in the United States which, he hoped, would convince Italian-Americans to join the cause of anti-fascism. Fascism, Salvemini believed, could only be toppled by external force; Italy was not ready for the kind of revolution demanded by an internal conquest of fascism. America, he believed, was the best hope. In speeches, articles, and pamphlets, Salvemini thus played *his* part in an international campaign for anti-fascism by trying to win Italian-Americans, especially among the working class, to the cause. He did his best to demythologize Mussolini’s rise to power and to show clearly the demise of democracy in Italy in his speeches and his written work (Salvemini 1960, 234; Salvemini 1927).

In 1929, Salvemini, along with his former students Carlo and Nello Rosselli and Emilio Lussu, established a new anti-Fascist organization, *Giustizia e Libertà* (GL), focused in France. Its members rejected Marxism-Leninism as well as the liberal state, and pursued, instead, a free, democratic republic

based on social justice (Salvemini 1960, 119–121). According to one of its members, Aldo Garosci, it was to be “a democratic, active, militant, aggressive movement, of the sort that existed in the first half of the nineteenth century, when political liberty was won by revolutionary methods.” *GL* included members of the pre-Fascist parties, which it rejected in favor of a “supraparty” movement of individuals (Garosci 1973, 170). Salvemini wrote that *GL* was “an anti-fascist organization in Italy which brings together... men from all left-wing parties, and those who do not belong to any party, on the sole condition that their ideas are democratic and republican.” The émigrés “should do abroad what could not be done by anti-fascists who were still in Italy: that is, help them to keep the democratic tradition alive, thus preventing the victory of dictatorship from becoming total and final.” Instead of trying “to organize revolutionary expeditions to Italy from abroad,” *Giustizia e Libertà* “summoned men in Italy [...] to active resistance against the dictatorship” (Salvemini 1960, 124).

After Hitler’s invasion of Poland on September 1, 1939, Salvemini helped to create still another anti-fascist organization named after Giuseppe Mazzini. He and the other leaders launched a campaign to mobilize the American public and government against totalitarianism, monarchism, and clericalism, with a particular eye toward the postwar reconstruction of Italy. They correctly anticipated a strong U.S. role in determining the future of Italy and, fearing that Washington would tolerate Mussolini or an Italian kingdom governed by his fascist collaborators, wanted to convince the Allied forces to adopt their republican, secular Italian program. During the war years alone, Salvemini produced a stream of over 500 articles, or an average of two per week, on Italian politics for *The New Republic*, *The Nation*, and Italian language papers. The Italian historian thus became ever more the political crusader.

Mann’s activities in Germany and the US were much less explicitly political than Salvemini’s. A *Bildungsbürger*, he possessed the traditional attitudes of that class, including an aversion to “politics.” Mann believed it was his responsibility to promote and protect culture, to educate and guide the cultured middle classes. The true *Bildungsbürger* considered even politics from a “higher” standpoint. Unlike Salvemini, Mann thus never aspired to or held any political office, but he did gradually become more embroiled in public, and often explicitly political, debates. He understood that as a cultural leader in the mold of Goethe, a *Dichter*, a certain amount of *political* leadership was expected of him as well.

Mann's first political statements came during World War I, when he took a conventionally patriotic, and, in contrast to Salvemini, *conservative* line by defending the war, the German cultural tradition, and even the monarchy. Although he never saw military action, he wanted to help "[spell] out, [ennoble], and [give] meaning to events" (Mann 1970, 69). He made his full-length statement on the War, politics, and German culture in *Reflections of an Unpolitical Man*, an essay about the conflict between "culture" and "civilization," Germany and the West. Mann argued for a new Europe, reorganized around German culture. The idea of "world liberation" and progress through *Western* ideas was mere "superstition." Instead, "progress, revolution, modernity, youth, and originality are all with Germany." In contradistinction to Salvemini, Mann railed against "democratic doctrinaires and tyrannical schoolmasters of revolution" within Germany itself, especially "the literati, the 'intellectuals' par excellence, who claim 'the spirit,' while it is really lonely the literary spirit of bourgeois revolution that they mean and know" (Mann 1983, 78).

For Mann, politics was conterminous with democracy and ideology, and he believed that there was a "non-relationship" between the German citizen and political democracy. German high culture, in particular, "thoroughly resists being politicized. Indeed, the political element is lacking in the German concept of culture." Mann derided "politics" and "democracy" which brought chaos, destroyed traditional values and threatened "complete leveling" and "vulgarization." He wanted nothing to do "with the parliamentary and party economic system that causes the pollution of all national life with politics... I do not want politics." He defended monarchy "because it alone guarantees political freedom, both in the intellectual and economic spheres" (Mann 1983, 187–88, 201, 189).

With *Reflections*, composed mostly during the war, Mann interpreted World War I in a somewhat idiosyncratically aesthetic way, but one that found many supporters among the conservatives and nationalists. Germany, even more than Italy, was struggling to create a new postwar identity in the wake of a humiliating defeat and peace treaty, and Mann was seeking to reaffirm and strengthen traditional German identity and political arrangements. The backward-looking *Reflections* were thus very attractive to conservative opponents of the new socialist regime. These same supporters, however, quickly became bitter opponents between 1919 and 1925 when Mann gradually moved to support the Weimar Republic.

By 1925, Mann came to believe that culture needed a democratic political framework for protection because the Bismarckian compromise between the middle classes and the aristocracy had failed. If World War I had brought an end to certain traditions, and the monarchy, it had also opened the way for democracy, which Mann now found to be the form of the body politic most suitable for the contemporary German nation and for the future of humanity. He thus sought to legitimize the new Weimar Republic and offer a different understanding of the national community, even in the face of significant opposition from the right.

Unlike Salvemini, Mann remained ambivalent about egalitarianism. He understood democracy

[...] not so much as a demand for equality from *below*, but as goodness, justice and empathy from *above*. I do not consider it democratic when Mr. Smith or Little Mr. Johnson taps Beethoven on his shoulder and cries out: "How are you old man!" That is not democracy, but tactlessness and a lack of sense of distance. But when Beethoven sings: "Be embraced, millions, this kiss is for the whole world!," *that* is democracy. For he could have said, "I am a great genius and something special, while people are a mob; I am much too delicate to embrace them." Instead, he calls them all his brothers and the children of a father in the heavens whose son he is as well. That is democracy in its highest form. (Mann 1960, 933)

If he was not as fully egalitarian as Salvemini, Mann still could not stand silently by while the Republic foundered. Winning over the German educated middle classes, who always made up the core of his audience, was his greatest task, and this meant defending democracy and confronting various right-wing elements, including the Nazis. In his most important post-*Reflections* statement, "German Address: An Appeal to Reason," (1930) he pinpointed National Socialism, rather than western democracy, as the greatest danger to German culture. He attacked Nazism as antithetical to everything that was innately German. It was hatred "not of the foreigner but of all Germans who do not believe in its methods, and whom it promise[s] to destroy" (Mann 1994, 150, 153, 157, 159). Mann was also sharply critical of the general development of fascism in works such as *Mario and the Magician*. Here he warned against human degradation and the willing submission to the

power of dictators who had been proliferating in Europe during the 1920s. *Mario* was, he wrote, his “first act of war” against fascism (Mann 1969, 233).

Yet Mann’s decisive break with Germany did not come until 1933, after his speech “Leiden und Grösse Richard Wagners.” Here he pointed to Wagner’s unparalleled greatness as a synthesizer of musical styles and genres, but his *criticisms* of Wagner resulted in a signed letter of protest by the Munich cultural establishment. This “betrayal,” as he called it, was the beginning of Mann’s “national excommunication” (Mann 1933, 1). Mann’s former conservative supporters saw his reversal as political and intellectual treason, and they never forgave him for it.

By 1933, Mann had left Germany, initially for a lecture tour, and then, though he could not have known it, permanently. Mann at first was uncertain how to proceed, and he was unprepared to make a clean break. In 1936, however, he published an open letter attacking the Nazi regime as “directed against Europe and against loftier Germanism; [and] against the Christian and classical foundations of Western morality. It is the attempt to shake off the ties of civilization... [and] threatens to bring about a terrible alienation... between the land of Goethe and the rest of the world.” Convinced that nothing good could possibly come from the present German regime, he was compelled to shun the country in whose spiritual traditions he was deeply rooted (Mann 1970, 209).

Mann’s public attack on the Nazi regime also cost him his citizenship and most of his assets, but his open letter turned out to be an important step for him and the exiles. It reaffirmed the decision of many to fight Hitler and the Nazis from abroad. Moreover, it established Mann as the most recognizable leader of the emigration. Working first from Princeton, New Jersey and then from Pacific Palisades, California, Mann was able to maintain contact with Bruno Frank, Alfred Neumann, and Bruno Walter, all long-time companions from his Munich years, as well as with Franz Werfel, Wilhelm Dieterle, and Lion Feuchtwanger, the last of whom served as a reliable go-between with left-wing colleagues such as Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, and Bertolt Brecht (Frey 1976, 85). This collection of friends did not have the same cohesive political direction as the Italians surrounding Salvemini, but they were very influential in certain circles in the United States. Just as importantly, many would resume influential positions within divided Germany in the post-war years.

A vocal opponent of appeasement and isolationism, Mann agreed with Salvemini that outside force – American force – would be required for the defeat of world fascism, though he insisted that Germans must be part of the effort. Although his anti-fascist activities were not as far-reaching or as systematic as Salvemini's, Mann often served as a spokesman and advocate for all anti-fascist refugees in the United States. His plea before the "Tolan Committee on Internal Migration" in March 1942 was one primary example (Prater 1995, 339).

Mann also briefly participated in the "Free Germany Movement," a group that had been meeting in New York since 1940 to plan for the new Germany. Yet Mann quickly distanced himself from such efforts, refusing to associate too closely with communists such as Brecht or to endanger his candidacy for American citizenship. He believed it was neither his responsibility nor his right as an exile to give America advice on its approach to Germany. Thus he first signed and then withdrew his endorsement of an August 1943 manifesto insisting that a clear distinction be made between Nazis and the German people (Prater 1995, 358). It was impossible in any case, he felt, to distinguish between "the Germans," by which *usually* meant the *Bildungsbürgertum*, and their Nazi leaders. Indeed, Mann argued that the cultural elite had become complicit with Nazism, a theme he would pursue in both "Germany and the Germans" and *Doctor Faustus*.

In these two works, Mann offered his most definitive statement about the cultural crisis, Nazism, and World War II. He also directly connected previous German history, including World War I – and his own interpretation of it – to the second great conflict. Mann pointed out that other countries in Western Europe had experienced a cultural and political crisis that had led to World War I, the rise of fascism and World War II. However, Germany under Hitler and the National Socialists bore the primary responsibility for the overall catastrophe. The Nazis, he believed, had tapped into deep currents of German history including nationalism, anti-Semitism, and authoritarianism. He was particularly critical of the German conception of liberty, which "was always directed outward; it meant the right to be German, only German and nothing beyond that." And this German conception of political liberty, which was both racial and anti-European, "behaved internally with an astonishing lack of freedom, of immaturity, of dull servility." The German understanding of liberty was tantamount to inner enslavement because Germany had never experienced a revolution and had "never

learned to combine the concept of the nation with the concept of liberty” (Mann 1973, 39).

At bottom, National Socialism had to do with cultural foundations as they emerged through German history, and the cultural elite, of which Mann had been so important a part, had played a leading role. The central idea of the *Doctor Faustus*, he wrote, was “the flight from the difficulties of the cultural crisis into the pact with the devil, the craving of a proud mind, threatened by sterility, from an unblocking of inhibitions at any cost, and the parallel between pernicious euphoria ending in collapse with the nationalist frenzy of Fascism” (Mann 1961, 40).

More specifically, *Doctor Faustus* was a criticism of the German intellectual elite and its political irresponsibility. This elite had attributed the highest social value to artistic and philosophical endeavors and thereby missed its mission of societal leadership. Mann insisted that “Hegel, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche contributed to the shaping of the German mind.” To deny the guilt of intellectual leaders would belittle “them, and we Germans today have every reason to be concerned with the ambiguous role of German thought and the German great man, and to ponder it.” (Mann 1970, 377) Because Mann himself had been an apolitical artist, had posited that Germany was unpolitical, and had been an enthusiastic nationalist during World War I, the novel was also a recognition of the part he himself had played in the catastrophe.

In short, Mann confronted Germans with the truth that National Socialism was not “without roots in our nature as a people,” and that it was not brought about by a small elite but rather by “hundreds of thousands of Germans.... [G]ood and evil, the beautiful and the ominous, are mixed in the most peculiar manner” (Mann 1960, 924–26). Germany’s sins had to be punished, because the nation as a whole was guilty. Perhaps the most painful truth Mann articulated was that the “ignominy” of the crimes committed would affect the perception of “all that is German – even German intellect, German thought, the German word. Whatever lived as German stands now as... the epitome of evil” (Mann 1997, 505–506).

Neither the full text of “Germany and the Germans” nor *Doctor Faustus* was available in Germany immediately after their publication, but in other speeches and interviews Mann continued to emphasize collective German

responsibility for Nazism and its crimes against humanity. If there was “a general culpability” in the West for the catastrophe, Mann insisted that “the Germans have played a special, terribly authentic role in the drama” (Mann 1970, 350). He expected Germans to accept responsibility, and when they did not, he responded angrily. In one interview with *Die Welt*, he said that the Germans lacked “the insight that all the sorrows and misery are the final and necessary consequences of a collapse... and they themselves are responsible for their own misery and not some democracy or occupation troops.” Thus, they needed to understand and admit that they had “squandered their national power, the German intelligence, their spirit of inventiveness, courage and efficiency in the service of a mad regime” (Mann 1983, 33).

Such comments left a bitter taste and invited bitter recrimination, especially when taken in conjunction with *Doctor Faustus*. One interviewer noted in 1947 that it was easy to understand why Mann had so many enemies in Germany: “Mann has not yet forgiven and forgotten, and has, at the same time, rejected the position of intellectual in the old tone.” He had thus become “the chief of enemies in a land where the national socialistic resentment continues apace, almost unconsciously” (Mann 1947, 284).

Further complicating the reception of Mann’s post-war pronouncements was his refusal to return to Germany. Mann rejected repeated requests from the so-called “inner emigrants” to “come like a good physician” to “heal his land.” When he finally did visit Germany again in 1949 for the *Goethejahr*, he visited both the Federal Republic of Germany and German Democratic Republic. In a speech presented both in Frankfurt and Weimar, he argued that it would have been “disloyal” not to have visited both zones. Goethe, after all, belonged to all of Germany and he, along with Mann himself, offered something that could unite the two zones. Beyond the ideological, political, and economic differences, Eastern and Western Germany “have found each other on cultural grounds, and have awarded [...] their Goethe prizes to one and the same literary personality. [...] Who should stand for and represent this unity today if not an independent writer whose home, untouched by zonal divisions, is the German language” (Mann 1949, 20).

Mann’s efforts to bridge the cultural/political divide by pointing to his own cultural centrality did little to heal the wounds between him and his homeland(s). Mann exacerbated the problem upon his return to the United States: he publicly stated that the picture in the Germanys was very bleak. He

noted the ineffectiveness of denazification and saw a resurgent nationalism. Furthermore, because of the Cold War realities, “East Germany is totalitarian; West Germany is reactionary and fascist. [...] One does not see how both parts can come together again” (Mann 1950). Although he continued to speak and write about Germany until his death in 1955, Mann’s reputation in West Germany – and especially his interpretation of the German catastrophe in *Doctor Faustus* – remained low until the 1960s when a new generation began to reflect critically upon the Nazi past.

Salvemini’s historical interpretation of the fascist era also met with significant resistance in Italy, even though he refused to indict his nation in the way that Mann had indicted Germany. The Italian historian was much less interested in long-term *cultural* trends than Mann, and he had little use for arguments based upon a supposed national character, or *Volksgeist*, or the irrationality of the epoch. Although he admitted that “at given moments each group of mankind presents given features of its own, not only physical but also psychological,” he *did* dispute that an historical development can be explained by “instinct or ‘Volksgeist’ of ‘national character.’” It was thus necessary to ascertain “why and how the Fascist movement arose in a given country, what social groups contributed to it, why and how the struggle between Fascists and anti-Fascists developed, and why and how the Fascists overcame their foes” (Salvemini 1942, 68).

Salvemini found the bacillus of fascism in Liberal Italy and the First World War, but also in the interwar period. In the fifty years after unification, Italians had made some progress toward democracy. Because “the lower classes had gradually raised themselves to a higher economic, intellectual, and moral level [...] they demanded and got an ever-increasing share of economic and political influence.” For all its strengths, however, the Italian parliamentary regime suffered from a serious disease: “the falsification that the government made of the will of the electorate every time there was need” (Salvemini 1942, 68, 73, 59, 85). Echoing themes he had developed in his interpretation of World War I, Salvemini argued that the Italian political system and the people it represented were particularly vulnerable to the radical challenge of fascism.

If Benito Mussolini bore the greatest responsibility for fascist *Ventennio*, however, there was culpability in all sectors of Italian life: the intelligentsia, the middle classes, the conservatives, and even the working classes (Salvemini 1942, 121, 127–8). Italians had proven too politically immature to resist

fascism and its nationalist appeal. Ultimately, Mussolini's doctrine of fascism was nothing more than the doctrine of the nationalists: "the Fascists took over wholesale the Nationalist doctrine" (Salvemini 1942, 74). In short, Salvemini's interpretation of the advent of fascism emerged from his interpretation of the problems that had led Italy into World War I. To be sure, the fascist regime developed differently because it emerged from the botched peace and a political crisis, but its origins were to be found in the pre-1914 period. Salvemini's solutions were not significantly different from those he proposed, and worked toward, in 1919: the restoration of individual freedoms, decentralization of power, provision of land, housing, and justice for peasants, and an end to the governmental role of the Monarchy and the Vatican (Salvemini 1942, 38–40, 88–90). These demands were based upon the belief, strengthened by Salvemini's experience, that the major problems that had plagued Italy for its entire existence had helped lead it into fascism.

If Salvemini argued that Italy needed *more* democracy, however, his visit to his homeland in 1947 also convinced him that Italy first needed "a period of democratic pedagogy, based on theories of democratic elitism and democratic empiricism" (Tintori 2011, 140). Unlike Mann, he was guardedly optimistic about the future. The history of post-war Italy had not yet been written. Because "the malady" had been long, "the convalescence cannot be brief." At least ten years would be needed to strengthen the new Republic and guard against a return of old conservative forces (Salvemini 1980, 747–762). In this way, Salvemini modified his earlier demands for immediate and full democracy. Combined with his conception of democratic competition and political participation, this made him an outsider in post-war Italy, polarized as it was into two competing ideological camps: the Communists and the Christian Democrats.

Like Mann, Salvemini refused at first to return permanently to his home country despite pleas from his friends and former colleagues. Of course, Salvemini had been absent almost ten years longer than Mann and had been at odds with the Italian government even before Mussolini. But he had been much less inclined to indict the entire Italian people and much *more* willing to point toward positive future development. For example, he believed that the Action Party, coming out of *Giustizia e Libertà*, could provide a Socialist-Republican coalition, which would be able to unite reformists and genuine democrats. During his trip, he met with many younger activists and became confident that they could be educated to adhere to such a third way.

The Cold War context closed off the possibility of Salvemini's third way, and soon he found himself alienated even from many of his earlier anti-fascist colleagues and friends who adjusted themselves to the new reality. As Luca La Rovere has recently pointed out, even independent socialists and liberals – former associates of Salvemini – accepted the need to look beyond the brown past, including the long-hoped for third way, and move forward toward a new party democracy, even if, on some level, they were aware that old patterns of thinking remained unchanged (La Rovere 2008, 39–41). So, too, in Germany a confluence of events conspired to create a “conspiracy of silence,” and Mann's interpretation of World War II was shunted to the side for a generation (Clark 2006, 119–124).

If the career trajectories and life experiences of Mann and Salvemini differed dramatically in many ways, they converged around a sustained anti-fascism during the 1920s, 1930s and early 1940s and the attempt to interpret the entire fascist epoch for contemporaries. Their former position as insiders, combined with their exile perspective, allowed them to offer some of the first significant theoretical reflections on fascism and World War II as well. As we have seen, these reflections were refracted through the lenses of their earlier interpretations of the First World War. Mann and Salvemini were among the first to articulate the meaning of both wars for their contemporaries and thus helped establish and define this role for intellectuals.

Neither Mann nor Salvemini ever managed to disengage from the mundane world of politics to lead from above the fray, though Mann came closer. Both sought, in some measure, to appeal to individuals and prescribed groups in their fights against fascism – the exile Salvemini turned to individuals rather than parties, while Mann, though disillusioned, retained some faith in the role of the non-political cultured citizen. For both, there was something inherent in each nation that permitted the success of fascism. From abroad, Salvemini looked to the working class to rise up against Italian fascism while Mann looked less to Germans within Germany than to a larger international audience. Both, however, were explicit in assigning blame for the success of fascism to the wider populace of their respective nations. Predictably, Mann took the more self-flagellatory role in accepting responsibility with the publication of *Doctor Faustus*; Salvemini recommended instruction – education – in democracy for Italy as a precursor to its embarking upon a republican path. While Salvemini tended to look to political history to explain the rise

of Italian fascism, Mann, rather more tragically, placed responsibility for Nazism in the very German culture which lay at its heart.

To be sure, their practical and theoretical efforts were not altogether successful, especially in the post-1945 period, but there were always limits to what could be accomplished in this context. For reasons too complex to take up in this essay, there was a long period of silence about the fascist past in both countries until the 1960s, when the work of Mann and Salvemini again became important. Yet they had put forward new interpretive frameworks and articulated key issues for their home countries. Their work thus provided an important frame of reference for determining the meaning of catastrophic events, and for formulating responses to them in the generations to come.

MARK CLARK

Kenneth Asbury Professor of History at the University of Virginia's College at Wise. A European intellectual historian, Clark has published widely on German and Italian culture in the twentieth century. Clark's most significant publications include a book on German cultural reconstruction after World War II – Beyond Catastrophe – as well as journal articles on various German and Italian intellectuals including Bertolt Brecht, Benedetto Croce, Karl Jaspers, Guido de Ruggiero, Thomas Mann, Friedrich Meinecke, and Gaetano Salvemini. His current major research project is a transnational and comparative study of German and Italian culture after World War II.

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ARTICLES

Cemeteries and memory

WARRIORS AND VICTIMS: COMMEMORATING WAR ON THE *STADTFRIEDHOF TÜBINGEN* – A LOCAL-NATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

Benedict von Bremen, M.A., research fellow

American Studies Department

Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen

ABSTRACT

The Stadtfriedhof Tübingen has three burial sites connected to wars. The Kriegerdenkmal 1870/71 and the Kriegerfriedhof 1914/18 contain and commemorate soldiers who died in Tübingen hospitals during the Franco-Prussian War and the First World War. The Gräberfeld X is a burial and memorial site for the mortal remains of victims of Nazi rule whose bodies were used in the university's anatomical institute. Analyzing and interpreting these three local war memorial grave sites and putting them into the larger national context of remembrance shows how the German memory culture of wars has changed over time from warriors to victims.

Introduction

The town of Tübingen, Baden-Württemberg, in southwestern Germany has one of the country's oldest universities, the *Eberhard Karls Universität*, founded in 1477. A great number of its professors have been interred in the *Stadtfriedhof*, the city's central cemetery, dating to the first half of the 19th century and located near many of university's academic and medical buildings. Moreover, this graveyard is particularly known for the burial sites of famous Tübingers such as the German Romantic authors Ludwig Uhland and Friedrich Hölderlin, as well as Kurt-Georg Kiesinger, third chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany. However, there are also burial plots that commemorate the casualties of three wars that have shaped German history in the past 140 years. While the *Kriegerdenkmal 1870/71* and the *Kriegerfriedhof 1914/18* commemorate and hold the remains of soldiers who died in Tübingen hospitals during the Franco-Prussian War and the First World War, respectively, the *Gräberfeld X* is a burial and memorial site

for the mortal remains of victims of Nazi rule whose bodies were used in the anatomical institute of the university's medical faculty. What can these commemorative graves, whose only commonalities, it seems are their close vicinity in the same cemetery and the wreaths dedicated to the victims of war laid down each November on *Volksstrauertrag* (German Memorial Day), tell us about the memory of the aforementioned armed conflicts in Germany history? By analyzing and interpreting these three local war memorial grave sites and their architecture and putting them into the larger national context of remembrance, this article aims to show how the memory culture of Germany's last three European and interconnected wars and the focus of commemoration has changed over time, from warriors to victims, and what this can tell us about the meaning attached to these conflicts.

Kriegerdenkmal 1870/71

The defeat of France by a Prussian-led coalition of German principalities in the War of 1870 resulted in the creation of the *Reich*, or German Empire, in 1871 – the first unified German nation. While its emperor was the Prussian king, the Reich itself was a federation made up of the various German principalities, among them the Kingdom of Württemberg. The latter's university town of Tübingen on the Neckar had, during the war, housed wounded German soldiers from various contingents in its hospitals. A number of these soldiers died, and thereby constituted a problem: How to commemorate them (Hoffmann-Curtius 1986, 45)?

The Napoleonic Wars sixty years earlier had seen a change in how the war dead were remembered. After earlier armed conflicts, it had been princes or generals who received post-war monuments and equestrian statues to celebrate their leadership and battlefield heroism. With the mass armies and accompanying mass casualties of the armed conflicts in the early industrial age, the common soldier began to be the focus of remembering a war, especially the dead who had sacrificed their lives on the altar of the evolving notion of a "nation." This particularly found expression in architecture: the names of fallen soldiers of a community were engraved in public plaques, often on church walls. By doing this, a community commemorated the loss of its sons and thereby showed its gratitude for their sacrifice for posterity (Rieth 1967, 11–12; Vogt 1993, 16ff.).

On the other side of the Atlantic, it was the American Civil War of 1861 to 1865 with its approximately 620,000 casualties that spawned an outpouring

of monuments to the memory of its casualties. Often in the form of a statue of a common soldier, these memorials, erected on battlefields and town commons, commemorated the heroism of the rank and file and the part that they had played, at least in the eyes of Northerners, in saving the Union, or nation, as well as remembering the ultimate sacrifice of the fallen. Therefore, battlefield heroism and death, as well as the concept of the nation, were entwined in the North's memorial culture after the war. National cemeteries were built on important battlefields to inter and commemorate those who fell far from their homes. (Piehler 2010, 224–227).

The situation in Tübingen after 1871 was both different and similar to that in America. The war between the Union and the Confederacy was a civil war, while the Franco-Prussian War was not.¹ Both wars, however, were nation-building conflicts: the outcome of the American Civil War was that the United States would, after the defeat of the slave-holding South, be based on the North's principles of industrialized free labor, while the War of 1870 resulted in the unification of Germany under Prussian domination. Although the German princes had fought alongside each other against France, the Reich's political map was still characterized by the regional nature of various principalities, from duchies to kingdoms, and an accompanying sense of *Heimat* that was very much rooted in local identities. The victory over France rekindled nationalist sentiments that had been smoldering since the wars of liberation against Napoleon and during the absolutist restoration period that had followed, ultimately leading to the proclamation of the Prussian king as German emperor in the mirror hall of Versailles in January 1871.

Tübingen's role as a university town with continuously expanding medical faculties and its spatial proximity not far from the battlefields of France had made it a *Lazarettstadt*, a military hospital city that received wounded soldiers from different principalities' military contingents. Fourteen of them died and were to be laid to rest *in situ*. This posed an issue: How, in what form, were these soldiers to be remembered? Shortly after the end of the war, in 1871, this question was addressed. It was decided to commemorate the dead with a monument in the cemetery where they were interred – the *Stadtfriedhof*. A debate ensued about the architectural form of the monument, and from among a number of designs one was finally chosen (Hoffmann-Curtius 1986, 47f.).

WARRIORS AND VICTIMS...

Kriegerdenkmal
1870/71,
Stadtfriedhof
Tübingen (author's
photograph,
May 2013)



The result was a stone obelisk, adorned with old swords and helmets, laurel wreaths, and an *Eiserner Kreuz* (Iron Cross), with the names, ranks, and regiments of the deceased soldiers engraved on the sides, and the words

VIERZEHN /
DEUTSCHE KRIEGER /
IM KAMPFE /
FÜR /
DAS VATERLAND /
SCHWER VERWUNDET, /
BIS ZU IHREM TODE /
IN UNSERER STADT /
VERPFLEGT /
RUHEN HIER /
IN HEIMISCHER ERDE /
1870–72 /²

Kriegerdenkmal
1870/71 obelisk,
Stadtfriedhof
Tübingen (author's
photograph,
May 2013)



Unlike monuments erected for the commemoration of regiments that were tied to a specific city, such as that of the *Nassauisches Infanterie-Regiment Nr. 87* garrisoned in Mainz until 1918, and thereby deeply rooted within a certain locale, the *Kriegerdenkmal* on the *Stadtfriedhof* Tübingen³ addressed the memory of soldiers who did not hail from the town where they are buried. This was because of the nature of the Franco-Prussian War and the set-up of the German armies, together with Tübingen's role as a *Lazarettstadt*.



Memorial for
*Nassauisches
Infanterie-Regiment
Nr. 87*, Zitadelle
Mainz (author's
photograph,
February 2011)

From an architectural perspective, the newly-found nationalism of the Reich after the War of 1870 expressed itself in the Iron Cross on the *Kriegerdenkmal* obelisk. The Iron Cross was a military decoration for common soldiers to acknowledge their bravery that had been instituted by Prussian King Frederick William III in 1813 during the wars of liberation.⁴ While the Christian cross would have been the usual and religious choice as the symbol of decorating graves, selecting the Iron Cross, a symbol of Prussia, points to the need to subsume the fallen from different German states under a sign that symbolized the new nationhood of the Reich. This also replaced traditional religious notions with the symbolism of a nation by overarching the heritage of single principalities and constituting a new and higher order (Vogt 1993, 35ff).



*Kriegerdenkmal
1870/71,
Stadtfriedhof
Tübingen*, Iron Cross,
detail (author's
photograph,
May 2013)

WARRIORS AND VICTIMS...

Moreover, as this was a monument to commemorate dead soldiers in a cemetery and not a leading general or prince in a more central locale such as a public square, and as these soldiers' sacrifice in the fight for the newfound nation was a thing to be remembered, their names were engraved on the obelisk for posterity – for future generations to be reminded of what these soldiers and their deaths (or, to go by the inscription, being wounded first in the fight for the fatherland) had accomplished for the new nation symbolized by the Iron Cross. Still, their regional identity and heritage was deemed important, as was the mention of their regiments, which were closely tied to regional identity. But they rest “IN HEIMISCHER ERDE,” which again emphasizes the shared fatherland they had fought for, despite their regional backgrounds. They are buried at home away from home.

*Kriegerdenkmal
1870/71,
Stadtfriedhof
Tübingen, detail
(author's
photograph,
May 2013)*



In addition to pointing out the regional and regimental affiliation of the dead soldiers, a distinction is made between their ranks. The name of a fallen lieutenant is not found on the obelisk, but received a separate grave slab.⁵ The social gap between the officer class and the rank and file, was becoming increasingly permeable, especially for members of the upper middle-class after the Napoleonic Wars,⁶ and therefore also the German social hierarchy of the time; here it finds an embodiment both architecturally and spatially.

Furthermore, the architectural design of the obelisk signifies the fashion of the time. Implementing swords reminiscent of old Greek edged weapons and a helmet from the same time are examples of the Neoclassicism that swept the western world at the time (Hoffmann-Curtius 1986, 48). The previous century had seen a renewed interest in antiquity, its architecture and literature (Watson 2010). By using Ancient Greek armaments, reference was made to heroic legends, such as the *Iliad*, thereby also denoting the dead soldiers buried and commemorated in Tübingen as heroes of the successful recent war for unification.

Looking at monuments for the participants of the Franco-Prussian War in other regions of Germany, we detect similarities to the *Kriegerdenkmal*.⁷ In the square in front of the train station of Bad Dürkheim, a wine-growing town in Rhineland-Palatinate, then part of the Bavarian *Rheinprovinz*, a large ashlar of sandstone erected in 1911 commemorates the town's participants in the War of 1870. Their names are arranged in order of importance (alongside soldiers who served in Bavarian regiments are some civilians, including women, who contributed to the war effort) and therefore according to social status. All around the ashlar are Ancient Greek helmets and laurels. In contrast to the *Kriegerdenkmal* on the *Stadtfriedhof*, the statue of a lion holding a shield adorns the Bad Dürkheim monument. The use of allegorical representations of animals on war memorials was common at the time (Riecht 1967, 12); most likely, the lion stands for the coat of arms of Bavaria, while the shield might represent the proximity of the Palatinate, or *Rheinprovinz*, to France and Bavarian troops acting as defenders in the first days of the war. Another War of 1870 memorial is in the neighboring village to the south, Wachenheim, this one adorned by an eagle. What the Bad Dürkheim memorial lacks, though, is the Iron Cross. This is perhaps due to Bavaria's reluctance to join the new Reich and the strong feeling of Bavarian patriotism, creating an aversion to the centralized power of Prussia

throughout the *Kaiserreich*. Of course, it should not be forgotten that these two monuments commemorate local participants of the war against France, while the *Kriegerdenkmal* remembers non-Tübingeners, which might attest to the lack of national symbolism.

Kriegerdenkmal
1870/71, Bad
Dürkheim (author's
photograph,
June 2005).



Kriegerfriedhof 1914/18

The War of 1870 and the French cry for revenge after a humiliating defeat and a loss of territory (Elsace-Lorraine) were among the factors, such as Germany's military stockpiling and saber-rattling, that contributed to the outbreak of another war between Germany and France, a conflict that started locally, with a mortal injury to the Austrian archduke in Sarajevo, and became global with the involvement of European imperialist powers' colonies and the 1917 entry of the United States. The Great War saw the clash of mass armies in industrialized modern warfare and unprecedented numbers of casualties, about two million military in Germany alone. Tübingen, which had become a garrison town in the late 19th century, extending its medical faculties, and Germany on the whole, had to deal with the vast number of war dead and the political and ideological aftermath of the *Kaiserreich's* defeat and the effects of the Treaty of Versailles. In this context, the *Kriegerfriedhof*

1914/18 on the *Stadtfriedhof* Tübingen can be seen as a culmination point of issues concerning local and national war remembrance.

The debates on a monument for Tübingen's veterans of the Franco-Prussian War, and thus on commemorating an earlier conflict, heated up once again in the early 1910s, but were overtaken by the events of the time (Hornbogen 1995, 155). With the influx of wounded to Tübingen's medical facilities, the Württembergian city once again faced the task of both interring and remembering the war's dead, but now on a scale that by far superseded the War of 1870. In addition to the great number of casualties, the end of the war, Germany's capitulation, and the Treaty of Versailles played important roles in giving significance to the war and its dead.

In 1921, the *Kriegerfriedhof* 1914/18 was inaugurated. Its name shares the "Krieger" of *Kriegerdenkmal*. Choosing to use not *Soldat* (soldier) but *Krieger* (warrior) is already an interpretation. *Krieger* conjures up images of Germanic or medieval warriors, both legendary and real, already familiar to German schoolchildren at the time, with an added connection to heroes like Siegfried from the *Nibelungen* epic or medieval *Helden* such as *Kaiser Barbarossa* or Emperor Frederick I.⁸ These figures were appropriated to create an overarching national German history and identity, as well as role-models in the highly militarized culture of the *Kaiserreich*, with its emphasis on soldiering, loyalty, obedience, and sacrifice. This is emphasized by the inscription on the large central stone wall of the *Kriegerfriedhof*, DEN HELDEN DES WELTKRIEGS – "to the heroes of the world war."

And just as Siegfried was murdered from behind by the unfaithful Hagen von Tronje in the medieval epic, the *Dolchstoßlegende* emerged after World War I. Because the Reich had not been, for the most part, a battlefield⁹; because the real brunt of a war economy with food shortages only had real effects on the civilian population in 1917–18; because German troops were successful on the eastern front, forcing Russia to sign a separate peace contract; because the reversals of the German spring offensives of 1918 and the subsequent retreat to defensive lines nearer to Germany itself were played down by the *Oberste Heeresleitung*'s propaganda; because the armistice, planned by the military but signed by the new democratic government of November 1918, seemed to many Germans sudden and unexpected; and because the revolution of 1918 to 1919 was, in part, accompanied by Bolshevik-inspired *Arbeiter- und Soldatenräte*, the myth that the German armies, allegedly *unbesiegt*

im Felde (undefeated on the field of battle), had been stabbed in the back by the revolutionaries and the new Social Democrat government took hold in Germany, especially in conservative and right-wing circles. The Treaty of Versailles with its implications of territorial losses on the outskirts of the Reich and of its overseas colonies, the scaling down of the German armed forces, and especially the article that stipulated that Germany alone was responsible for the outbreak of the Great War added insult to injury; it was, in German eyes from the extreme left to the extreme right, a *Schandvertrag*, a shameful treaty that insulted Germany's honor (Krumeich 2001, 585ff).

Therefore, Germany had to grapple with a number of questions. Why was the war that seemed heading toward a victory suddenly lost? Who was responsible? And what did almost two million German soldiers die for? Some of these issues were addressed in architecture, most prominently war memorials, of which the *Kriegerfriedhof* in the *Stadtfriedhof* Tübingen is one example.

The warrior cemetery was inaugurated on October 30, 1921 in the presence of participants of a number of groups that shaped the commemoration of the Great War during the Weimar Republic, most prominently the *Kriegervereine*. These veterans' organizations had emerged after the War of 1870; its members wanted their contemporaries and future generations to appreciate what soldiers had accomplished during the war. They did this by funding and erecting monuments, through reunions that took place in the public, and lobbying through the media. At the inauguration of the *Kriegerfriedhof*, the *Kriegervereine* were present, along with other military veteran organizations and student fraternities, standing at attention, holding flags, singing martial tunes, commemorating dead comrades, and giving speeches. In one speech, a motif that runs through the remembrance of the First World War's casualties in Weimar Germany is that their sacrifice for the fatherland should not have been in vain (Hornborgren 1995, 157). The underlying sentiment was to take revenge for the lost war, and especially the Treaty of Versailles.

Kriegerfriedhof 1914–1918, *Stadtfriedhof* Tübingen, detail of memorial (author's photograph May 2013)



Architecturally, the most important motif was the *Feldgrauer*. Just before the Great War, the contingents of the different principalities that made up the imperial German army had adopted a field-gray uniform, a drab color that was suited to the trench warfare of the First World War. In 1916, the German imperial army introduced the *Stahlhelm*, the steel helmet with its distinctive design reminiscent of certain Germanic medieval helmets. The *Feldgrauer* figure that was representative of all German soldiers (Jeismann and Westheider 1988, 9) therefore derived his name from this uniform, with the addition of the iconographic silhouette of the steel helmet.



Kriegerfriedhof
1914/1918,
Stadtfriedhof
Tübingen, memorial
(author's
photograph,
November 2008)

In the *Kriegerfriedhof*, a *Feldgrauer's* head is engraved on a centrally placed stone memorial reminiscent of an ancient tomb. His face stares determined into a distant future. This is a metaphor expressing that Germany had not really been defeated – or that it was, at least, going to set things straight, to revise the Treaty of Versailles, in a future conflict (Hoffmann-Curtius 1986, 58). Similarities can be found in other World War I memorials all over the Germany. In Düsseldorf, the *Ehrenmal für das Niederrheinische Füsilier-Regiment Nr. 39* memorial shows columns of armed *Feldgrau*e marching straight from the tomb into a new battle, while in Worms four *Feldgrau*e representing the *Infanterie Regiment Prinz Carl (4. Großherzoglich Hessisches) Nr. 118* stand at attention. In the Palatinate town of Herxheim am Berg, three stone field-gray-clad soldiers march forward, their rifles at the shoulder. In the oldest church of Lindau on Lake Constance, the *Peterskirche*, a marble *Feldgrauer* lies on his

deathbed – still fully clothed with helmet, overcoat, boots, belt, clutching a rifle in his hand, ready to spring up and do his duty again at a moment's notice.¹⁰ The war memorial of Hardenburg, a district of Bad Dürkheim, depicts a *Feldgrauer* on the ground, at first glance looking beat, holding a broken short sword in his hand – but he is not yet completely defeated, as he is still propped up on his arm. The small Palatinate village of Forst's World War I memorial, though, is not as aggressive or revisionist. Here, *Feldgrau*e without helmets rise from their deathbed and pray to Jesus Christ. Similarly, religious undertones can be found in the First World War memorial in the Swabian town of Burladingen, where an angel takes a *Feldgrauer* in its arms.¹¹

Infanterie Regiment
Prinz Carl (4.
Großherzoglich
Hessisches)
Nr. 118 memorial,
Worms (author's
photograph,
February 2011)



Peterskirche,
Lindau (author's
photograph,
May 2009)



World War
I memorial,
Hardenburg/Bad
Dürkheim (author's
photograph,
June 2005)





*Ehrenhalle für die
Gefallenen des
Ersten Weltkriegs,
Forst (author's
photograph,
August 2009)*



*Kriegerdenkmal
Herxheim am
Berg (author's
photograph,
November 2012)¹²*



*World
War I memorial,
Burladingen
(author's
photograph,
March 2011)*

But as in the example of the *Stadtfriedhof's Kriegerdenkmal 1870/71* and its contemporary memorials in other German towns, the *Kriegerfriedhof* lacks the rootedness in the city where it is situated. Its connection, however, is to an important part of Tübingen – its medical facilities. As during the War of 1870, soldiers from all over Germany were treated here, and, in some cases, died here. Their sheer numbers also necessitated that the *Kriegerfriedhof* be much larger than the *Kriegerdenkmal*. While the latter is located in a small area with only an obelisk, some steps leading to it, and a low wall all around, the *Kriegerfriedhof* is an actual cemetery. About 261 soldiers – among them some allied soldiers – are interred in the warrior cemetery (Hornbogen 1995, 156). Instead of putting all their names on a single architectural structure, as with the *Kriegerdenkmal* obelisk, each soldier got his own marker. The rank and file received small marble stones with their name and their year of death. These markers are arranged in subsequent lines according to the years 1914 to 1919. The large number of markers and their arrangement are representative of the mass casualties of World War I, and evocative of the lines of soldiers going over the top that were mowed down by one of the latest instruments of modern warfare, the machine gun.

Kriegerfriedhof 1914–18, Stadtfriedhof Tübingen (author's photograph, May 2013)



As with the *Kriegerdenkmal*, the rank and file in the *Kriegerfriedhof* are separated from officers and non-commissioned officers. The latter received actual crosses bearing their names, ranks, units, and complete date of death, while

the common soldiers' markers only bore their names. Additionally, there is a path between the long rows of small stone markers and the smaller number of crosses, which are nonetheless equally arranged by years and in rows. The spatial separation of the graves symbolizes the separation of the (non-commissioned) officer and common soldier's classes, a continuity from real life, where officers had more privileges even in death, as in the *Kriegerdenkmal*, thereby showing the class-based system of the Reich.



*Kriegerfriedhof
1914/18,
Stadtfriedhof
Tübingen. Markers
for private soldiers
in the front, the
crosses for (non-
commissioned)
officers in the
back (author's
photograph,
May 2013)*



*Private soldier's
marker (left) and
officer's cross (right),
Kriegerfriedhof
1914/18,
Stadtfriedhof
Tübingen (author's
photograph,
May 2013)*

The cult of the *Feldgrauer*, together with its implications of martially repealing the Treaty of Versailles, continued into the Third Reich. After 1933, the university quickly expelled Jewish professors and ideologues like philosopher Theodor Haering (Hantke 1991, 179ff). After the re-introduction of general conscription in 1935, new military garrisons for the *Wehrmacht* were built, among them the *Hindenburg Kaserne*. Its entry was adorned with a statue of

a *Feldgrauer* (Vogel 1991, 45). In addition, a monument celebrating composer Friedrich Silcher was erected in the *Platanenallee* on the Neckar. Below the statue of Silcher himself, it depicts, on the one hand, a pair of lovers, Silcher's *Volkslieder* celebrating the *Heimat*. On the other hand, two *Feldegräue* are part of the monument. One of them is marching forward, while the other has been struck by a bullet and falls at the feet of his comrade. This is a reference to "Der gute Kamerad," a sad poem by Tübingen Romantic author Friedrich Uhland about a soldier's loss of a comrade in battle, written during the Napoleonic Wars. Twenty years later, Silcher composed a tune for this poem, and "Der gute Kamerade" became (and remains) a staple of German military songs, especially when commemorating dead soldiers during funeral ceremonies. Unveiled just before the invasion of Poland in the summer of 1939, the *Silcher Denkmal* with its *Feldgrauer* iconography not only pointed to the past and to the sacrifices of World War I, but also to the future, where more German soldiers were to lose their lives on the battlefield (Loistl 1991, 171ff). Unlike the Great War, however, the commemoration of World War II and Nazi rule dead would take a different turn in the post-war years.

Gräberfeld X

On May 8, 1945, Nazi Germany surrendered unconditionally to the Allies. Millions of people, soldiers and civilians alike, had died during the Second World War in Europe. In contrast to the end of World War I, though, Germany was completely occupied and a process of demilitarization, denazification, and democratization was set in motion by the (western) Allies to prevent Germany from ever starting a war again. In Nuremberg, high-ranking Nazi officials faced a war crimes trial for instigating the war and causing the deaths of innocent civilians. The liberation of concentration camps, which Allied soldiers often forced German civilians from nearby towns to visit, and the release of films documenting Nazi atrocities showed the world and the German public the results of Adolf Hitler's reign. Several other war criminal trials were conducted over the next years. Many Germans, however, tried to forget the twelve-year *Tausendjähriges Reich* and began rebuilding what the war had destroyed in their respective occupation zones. Nonetheless, some did not want to forget.

An organization of those who were once politically persecuted, the *Ver-einigung der Verfolgten des Naziregimes* (VVN), opened the discussion on the *Gräberfeld X*¹³ in the Tübingen *Stadtfriedhof* in 1950. They demanded that victims of the Nazi state that had been interred in the *Gräberfeld* should be commemorated. During the late 1930s and the war years, the anatomical

institute of the university's medical faculty had received a large number of bodies for dissection; many of these people had been executed because they had opposed the Third Reich, or just because of their alleged racial inferiority. Among them were German passive resisters who had doubted the successful outcome of the war, as well as forced laborers from German-occupied countries who had been intimate with German women and thereby violated the 1935 *Nürnberger Rassegesetze*, all offenses punished by death under Nazi law. After their execution – whether official ones in prisons or unofficial ones in labor camps, all in Württemberg – their corpses were used for study purposes at the anatomical institute, and some specimens might have been used as late as 1990 when the medical faculty had some questionable specimens removed from its collections and interred in the *Gräberfeld X* (Hayes 2013, 50–52; Schönhagen 1987, 7–10).

These were victims of Nazi rule with its racist and anti-opposition ideology. With Germany having been liberated from this rule and the war criminals being punished, those who were persecuted and had survived their ordeal wanted the memory of their dead fellows to be preserved, not least to keep future generations from letting something like the Third Reich happen again. The Tübingen city council decided to erect three stone crosses with the inscription “1939–1945,” an architectural form common for remembering the (military) dead of World War II and symbolizing Christ's crucifixion and reconciliation. Through this general depiction, though, different types of casualties were subsumed into a larger community of the victims¹⁴ of World War II, regardless of whether they belonged to the armed forces of the aggressor nation (Germany), civilian victims of air raids, for example, or to ethnic or political groups persecuted by the Nazis (Hayes 2013, 40–42; Schönhagen 1987, 11). This is also shown through the ubiquity of these three crosses in war cemeteries all over Germany. They can be found, for example, in the World War II victims' memorial in the Tübingen *Bergfriedhof* commemorating most of all those Tübingers who had died serving the German armed forces during the war (Hayes 2011, 133–144; Hayes 2013, 40–41).



World War II memorial, *Bergfriedhof* Tübingen (author's photograph, Volkstrauertag 2010)

WARRIORS AND VICTIMS...

In the early 1960s, new demands arose. Especially in light of the fact that the *Gräberfeld X* was run-down, unkempt, and overgrown, the city decided to clear it and, because of the continual demands from various groups, opted to add a plaque to specify more who was buried here. After heated debates, the following inscription was chosen:

HIER RUHEN MEHRERE /
HUNDERT MENSCHEN /
VERSCHIEDENER VÖLK /
ER DIE IN LAGERN UND /
ANSTALTEN UNSERES /
LANDES EINEN GEWALT /
SAMEN TOD FANDEN /¹⁵

*Gräberfeld X,
Stadtfriedhof
Tübingen, with
Volksrauertag
wreath (author's
photograph,
November 2008)*



But despite being more specific than the three crosses with “1939–1945” on them, this wording is still very vague, and it does not really specify who exactly is buried in the *Gräberfeld X*, or why they were killed (Schönhagen 1987, 14–15). The difficulty of finding an appropriate way of honoring the victims of Nazi rule buried in the *Gräberfeld X* represents the difficulty West Germany had with its Nazi past during these years. While some wanted to forget or felt that it was enough to commemorate all victims the combined, regardless of why they were killed, others saw importance in adequately and frankly remembering different victim groups. In turn, this struggle of defining national remembrance shows on the local level of Tübingen, where groups with different opinions clashed. The 1962 plaque was a compromise between those who wanted to remember and those who felt at least some obligation to do so, but were not willing to be more specific and who, moreover, wanted to be rid of the past – a *Schlussstrich*. Getting more concrete would have meant dealing with what had actually happened in their immediate vicinity, that is, in the city of Tübingen, and the surrounding region of Württemberg. In turn, this would have shown that the crimes of the Nazi regime did not only happen in a distant occupied territory, but right at home as well (Hayes 2013, 42–43; Schönhagen 1987, 14). Thereby, the disconnectedness of Nazi crimes and the *Heimat* that pervaded the early post-war attitude of not having witnessed or even knowing the Third Reich’s crimes in the fatherland was perpetuated, something that, in hindsight, is hard to believe, as forced laborers, euthanasia clinics, and concentration camp death marches occurred right before the Germans’ eyes¹⁶, but in the postwar years, forgetting the past was the rule, with a few exceptions.

Therefore, it took another twenty years before the *Gräberfeld X* became a focus for the Tübingen public once again. As in the 1960s, the *Gräberfeld* had overgrown, and was in need of re-structuring. A published photograph of a bulldozer left by a gardener on top of some graves resulted in public outcry from many sides, as this was seen as dishonoring the victims of the Nazi regime. The *Gräberfeld X* was back in the spotlight. Shortly thereafter, bronze name plates were set next to a path that led to the three crosses and the 1962 stone plaque. On *Volkstrauertrag* 1985, the Tübingen *Oberbürgermeister* Carlo Schmid held a speech at the *Gräberfeld X* for the first time, connecting what happened on the Tübingers’ doorstep, and putting this in the larger context of the Nazi policy of extermination.¹⁷ He also announced that the city government of Tübingen would commission a study of the backgrounds of those interred there (Hayes 2013, 47–50). While the

political group of the 1950s had known some of the people's fates, it was historian Benigna Schönhagen's 1987 study that tried to establish how many victims of Nazi rule were actually buried in the Gräberfeld X,¹⁸ as well as some of the individuals' stories, thereby exposing the interconnectedness of Tübingen and the Third Reich – of local and national history.

Bronze plaque,
Gräberfeld X,
Stadtfriedhof
Tübingen (author's
photograph,
May 2013)



This new type of remembrance can be seen in the larger context of remembering the casualties of World War II in Germany. It took almost forty years until special emphasis was added to the general remembrance of all victims, commemorating those who perished as a result of Nazi policies, until what is today called *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* became widespread (Hayes 2011, 132–133). Some have attributed this to the temporal distance from the war years and the aging or dying out of witnesses, victims, and perpetrators, and therefore also their disappearance from the public. While there had been war crimes trials up until the 1960s, such as the Auschwitz trials, the crimes of the Third Reich were mostly attributed to a small group of high profile perpetrators, leading Nazi figures like head of the SS Heinrich Himmler, or lower-ranking but influential people like Adolph Eichmann. It was only over time that both historians in academia and amateurs in local historical societies began unraveling the mechanics of the Nazi regime and the participation of many population groups, thereby providing a more

nuanced picture of the *Täter*, or perpetrators, how much the “average” German knew or was him – or herself involved in, for example, profiting from *Arisierung*, or being involved in Nazi organizations such as the *Hitlerjugend*. Moreover, the student revolt of the *68er* and their questioning of what the *Vatergeneration* had done in the war – if their fathers had “only” served the fatherland or had, in the course of the war, participated in crimes – added to a more critical perspective on a past that was not so distant, both in space and time. Concentration and labor camps had been spread all over Germany, forced laborers had worked for farmers and corporations, and the depiction of the Wehrmacht as a clean army removed from the *Weltanschauungskrieg* (as opposed to the ideological Waffen-SS) began to be overturned as well.¹⁹

As such, this critical reception and interpretation of the Nazi past also deviates from how earlier wars were remembered in Germany. While the War of 1870 was a victory and the First World War a conflict whose outcome was disputed, World War II had been a total defeat that was seldom glorified.²⁰ This led to neither the creation of an idealized past where the military had helped build Germany, as with the Franco-Prussian War, nor to the sense of an important foundation for the strength of the country, as with World War I and the instrumentalization of its memory by the Nazis (leading to the next world war, and even more disastrous results). The Second World War and the Nazi years came to be seen, over time, as a dark chapter of German history that should not be repeated. Instead of glorifying the fallen heroes – soldiers – the critical reception of the past that continues in Germany to this day does place no emphasis on remembering the military casualties of World War II, but the victims of the Nazi regime, for which the German armed forces was an instrument of power. The heroization of a martial past instrumentalized for nationalism is less the focus than the remembrance of the victims of a criminal regime and a historical imperative never to repeat the Third Reich or to achieve political aims through war.

In the *Gräberfeld X*, this type of remembrance is visible in a variety of ways. For one, like the soldiers’ graves, the identified names of victims are represented in a number of bronze plaques set on both sides of a trail leading to the main architectural monuments to keep their memory alive. While the three stone crosses are still there, another plaque was installed, founded by the university and thereby acknowledging the part that the medical faculty

played (Hayes 2013, 50–54). It finds more concrete words for the people buried in the *Gräberfeld*:

Verschleppt Geknechtet Geschunden /
Ofer der Willkür oder verblendeten Rechts /
fanden Menschen Ruhe erst hier /
Von ihrem Leib noch /
forderte Nutzen eine Wissenschaft /
die Rechte und Würde des Menschen nicht achtete /
Mahnung sei dieser Stein den Lebenden /
Die Eberhard-Karls-Universität Tübingen /
1990²¹

Plaque, *Gräberfeld*
X, Stadtfriedhof
Tübingen (author's
photograph,
May 2013).



Soon though after its inauguration in 1990, the plaque was violated by people who painted swastikas over it, and a new version was installed (Hayes 2013, 53). Before entering the *Gräberfeld*, which is surrounded by a hedge, just as the *Kriegerfriedhof* 1914/18 is, a signboard gives detailed information about the *Gräberfeld* and its history of commemoration – unlike the two soldiers' cemeteries, which are devoid of any inscriptions indicating to their historical contexts.



Sign-board,
Gräberfeld X,
Stadtfriedhof
Tübingen (author's
photograph,
May 2013).

While all three burial sites receive wreaths on *Volksstrauertag* and some graves at the World War I cemetery are adorned with flowers, there are often events in *Gräberfeld X*, especially on days like May 8, the day of the German capitulation in 1945, where anti-Nazi groups and historical societies meet, sometimes with family members of some of the deceased present. Some dedicated individuals try to keep the memory alive of those interred in *Gräberfeld X* by researching individuals' stories and establishing contact with their families, often from Eastern Europe, to provide information about their relatives' fates (Hayes 2013, 55–58). In general, there are various individuals and societies in Tübingen, such as the *Geschichtswerkstatt* and the *Verein Lern – & Dokumentationszentrum zum Nationalsozialismus e.V. Tübingen*, which research the past and cultivate its memory, and especially its lessons, and present them to the public through lectures and publications.

Conclusion and Outlook

The *Kriegerdenkmal 1870/71*, *Kriegerfriedhof 1914/18*, and *Gräberfeld X* on the Tübingen *Stadtfriedhof* are, at a first glance, no more than three burial sites connected to the past three European wars through their German participants and their spatial proximity. Looking more closely, however, we see they are also intertwined because of their connection to Tübingen medical institutions and their place in the context of commemoration of the War of 1870, World War I, and World War II in Germany. The burial

sites are part of the cemetery in Tübingen, but most of those interred are not Tübingers. Regarding the *Kriegerdenkmal 1870/71*, finding a way to commemorate the dead soldiers of this war from different German principalities was also a task of moving beyond the regionalism of German states to the concept of a nation state. It were not any longer just kings and generals that were remembered, but the sacrifices of the common soldiers on the altar of the nation received a place in memory as well. This development strengthened with the *Kriegerfriedhof 1914/18*. Those who died in Tübingen hospitals were seen as part of the sacrifice of the *Feldgrauer* in general, and their commemoration as part of interpreting the Great War as a conflict that German soldiers had not lost; its results, mainly the Treaty of Versailles, were revised so that the sacrifice of the war heroes was not in vain. The total defeat in World War II and the *Gräberfeld X* show how the focus of commemorating war dead shifted from soldiers (seen as warriors) to non-combatants, especially those who were victims of Nazi rule, to illustrate the criminality of said regime. This development needed many decades and re-interpretations to take hold in German public memory. As such, these local burial sites also mirror the changing national memory and debates on how wars and their casualties are remembered in Germany.

While it took a long time before the commemoration of those interred in the *Gräberfeld X* became a focus of public memory, just as on the national scale, its way of remembering the victims of Nazi Germany has also become the dominant form, just as the historical public consciousness in the Federal Republic of Germany focuses on the Third Reich, its crimes, and its victims. In light of this, the commemoration of earlier wars steps into the background, and the *Kriegerdenkmal 1870/71* is also spatially removed in the cemetery, overgrown with moss, just as this conflict has almost vanished from public memory. Still, it is impossible to disassociate the War of 1870, the Great War, and World War II due to their historical relationship, as well as their function as markers of how the memory of wars has changed in Germany in the past 140 years.

BENEDICT VON BREMEN

Born in 1984 in Marsberg, Germany. From 2005 to 2011 he studied at Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen, majoring in Modern History and American Studies. His M.A. thesis was One of the Horrors of War Strayed from His Era into Yours: Ambrose Bierce and Civil War Memory. Since October 2011 he has been a research fellow at the American Studies Department, Tübingen University. He is a founding member of the Verein für ein Lern – & Dokumentationszentrum

zum Nationalsozialismus e.V. Tübingen in November 2010. Since June 2012 he has collaborated on “NS-Täterbuch Tübingen.”

ENDNOTES

1 France hoped in 1870 that the southern German principalities such as the kingdoms of Württemberg and Bavaria, which had, for the most part, been aligned with Austria and defeated in the War of 1866, would take France’s side and turn against Prussia and its allies in the *Norddeutscher Bund*. On the contrary, a nationalistic war fever at the prospect of victory against an old enemy swept through the southern German principalities allied with Prussia.

2 “Fourteen German warriors who were severely wounded in the fight for the fatherland and cared for in this city until they died are buried here, in the soil of the homeland, 1870–72.”

3 Tübingen only became a garrison town in the 1890s (Starzmann 2009).

4 The Iron Cross was then founded again during later Prussian and German wars (Vogt 1993, 18–20).

5 Unfortunately, this slab is now overgrown with moss. At least to the best of the author’s memory, the fading inscription speaks of a lieutenant buried there.

6 Resulting from the need for more officers to lead the growing mass armies of the industrial age, as well as an opportunity for upper middle-class men to rise in the social hierarchy where the rank of officer was strongly tied to the nobility (Rumschöttel 1973, 41ff).

7 The ideas for a central monument commemorating the Tübingen veterans of the War of 1870 did not materialize; a plaque was only hung in a Tübingen church (Hoffmann-Curtius 1986, 52ff).

8 The symbolism of the *Kriegerdenkmal 1870/71*, as mentioned earlier, was rather Hellenist-inspired.

9 The Russian offensive into East Prussia was stalled by Field Marshal von Hindenburg’s army in September 1914 and only a few southwestern German towns were targets of air raids.

10 In German folklore, *Kaiser Rotbart* (or *Barbarossa*) sleeps in a mountain, to wake up one day to save Germany in its darkest hour.

11 World War I memorials in other European countries give the war a different meaning. Many French war monuments depict the *poilu* as a citizen soldier returning to his family, without the martial undertones of German *Feldgrauer* depictions (Jeismann and Westheider 1988, 9f). A Great War memorial in the Belgian town of Dinant puts the memory of Belgium being invaded and the fight for its liberation in the foreground (here, German soldiers committed war crimes after allegedly being shot at by *franc tireurs* in 1914, leading to mass shootings of civilians that were taken up, among other similar incidents, by Entente propaganda as the “Rape of Belgium”).

12 Cf. the attachment of 1939–1945 plaques on almost every monument pictured.

13 The *Stadtfriedhof* is divided into various smaller burial plots, ordered A to Z. Cf. The *Kriegerdenkmal 1870/71* is situated in *Gräberfeld N* while the *Kriegerfriedhof 1914/18* is the *Gräberfeld S*.

- 14 For an interesting distinction between “sacrifice” and “victim,” see: Hayes 2011, 132.
- 15 “Here rest several hundred people of various nationalities who found a violent death in camps and institutions of our country.”
- 16 For example, the author’s maternal grandmother told him in the early 1990s, when he was still a child, how she had witnessed the nighttime evacuation of her hometown’s “insane asylum.” But fearing being sent to a “Konzertlager” (euphemism for concentration camp), many Germans kept quiet.
- 17 Wreaths had been laid down at the Gräberfeld on Volkstrauertag since the 1960s, but without any special mention of who was buried there or why (Hayes 2013, 44).
- 18 Before the Nazi years, the bodies of people whose fate was not connected to the Third Reich, but which were nonetheless used in the anatomical institute, had been buried in the *Gräberfeld* as well; it was more or less the disposal grounds of the anatomical institute. It is still not quite clear how many Nazi victims are buried there—the estimates range from 400 to 700 (Hayes 2013, 39; Schönhagen 1987, 8, 23).
- 19 See, for example, the heated discussions about the *Wehrmachtsausstellung* in the 1990s.
- 20 For changes in how the World War II era was dealt with in Tübingen, cf. Ulmer 2011.
- 21 “Deported, enslaved, ill-treated, victims of arbitrariness or misunderstood laws, it is only here that these humans could find rest. A science which did not respect their rights and dignity still wanted to use their bodies. This stone shall be an admonition to the living. The Eberhard-Karls-Universität Tübingen, 1990.”

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*Gräberfeld X,
Stadtfriedhof
Tübingen (author's
photograph,
May 2013)*



MOURNING AACHEN'S WAR DEAD: CULTURES OF MEMORY DURING THE FIRST WORLD WAR AND THE POSTWAR PERIOD

Stephanie Kaiser, Doctoral Candidate

Institute of History, Theory and Ethics in Medicine
Medical School
RWTH Aachen University

Jens Lohmeier, Doctoral Candidate

Institute of History, Theory and Ethics in Medicine
Medical School
RWTH Aachen University

ABSTRACT

The First World War proved costly to European societies, resulting in numbers of human casualties which went far beyond the imagination of the time. Coming to terms with these losses required new ways of coping, both on a broader social level and in terms of individuals and families.

The focus of our study is an examination of the forms that the mourning of the war dead took at the local level. Special emphasis has been placed on semi-public and private remembrance in the German society of war times, and more specifically, in the city of Aachen, which has seldom been addressed in scholarship.

To this end, we have analyzed hitherto unexamined archival sources containing obituaries from local newspapers from the war period, as well as materials on the construction of monuments, commemorative celebrations, and books from the 1920s and 30s.

In the majority of private obituaries, one detects a national-patriotic glorification of the dead, which tapered off somewhat in isolated cases towards the end of the war. Public memory of the war changed towards the end of the Weimar Republic into a commemorative culture supported by the state with no regional

differences, before being put into the full service of military revanchism by the beginning of the Third Reich.

Introduction

“Why Germany Has Forgotten the First World War.” Thus reads an early 2013 cover of the national newspaper *Die Welt*, offering in stark terms an examination of a German blind spot as regards the country’s efforts to make sense of its own history. This occurred in spite of the fact that Germany was named “World Champion of Coming to Terms with the Past” by the Nobel Prize Committee Chairman Péter Esterházy (Stepanova 2009, 17). After the end of the Third Reich, memory of the First World War disappeared almost entirely from German public view, as the Second World War cost nearly four times as many human lives as the First, once held to be the war to end all wars (Kershaw 2011, 511). The twelve years of National Socialist rule remain one of the best-researched epochs in German history, though the cost of such unyielding attention has been a tendency to consign other chapters of German History to oblivion. In the other European countries that participated in World War I, its memory is both more present and more carefully preserved. While preparations to commemorate (in 2014) the 100-year anniversary of the outbreak of the war are in full swing, Germany wants to yield primacy of place to the war’s victors and maintain only a secondary role (Schmid 2013; Alpcan 2013). Aachen, the site of the first battles of the German army on the Western front that commenced during the invasion of neutral Belgium on the occasion of the 1914 conquest of Liège, is planning extremely limited celebrations for the anniversary. In 2014, the “International Newspaper Museum of the City of Aachen” will hold events to commemorate the war, whereas the city will primarily focus its attention on celebrations devoted to the 1200th anniversary of Charlemagne’s death. Beyond that, a World War commemoration ceremony will be organized in the Aachen Cathedral as part of the nationwide activities of the Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge association. These contributions can only be deemed very limited when we remember that this city lost more than 3,000 of its citizens as soldiers in the war.

Dying and Death in the “Great War”

As in the first global war, the First World War was not fought on the Europe’s battlefields alone; rather, it encompassed the colonies in Africa and East Asia, the Near East, and the world’s oceans. It was a war of unimaginable dimensions, involving Europe’s “Great Powers” at the beginning of the

“Short Twentieth Century.” A war involving an intense arms race and major geo-political rivalries, it raged on for four long years. The soldiers died in skirmishes on as well as under the ocean on fronts that spanned the entire world. They found death in the skies, they died of poison gas, machine gun fire and artillery attacks. For contemporaries and later generations alike, this war would come to be known in collective memory as the Great War, *der Große Krieg*, or *la Grande Guerre*. On the Western Front in particular, the war was remembered as characterized by immobile attrition and murderous battlefields resembling wastelands, with enormous costs to both man and material. After only a few months it became clear that the war would in no way be the brief and decisive conflict that many at the time thought it would be, one whose ultimate aim was to secure “a place in the sun” for Germany. Instead, it stood as an unparalleled example of technical modernization and “total war.” Never before had so many soldiers been mobilized – more than sixty million from five continents marched over the course of the war – nor so many people killed: there were seventeen million casualties. These included nearly ten million soldiers and almost seven million civilians killed. As a ‘total war’ – the first of its kind – the First World War tore a swath of demographic destruction throughout the European states. For the German Empire, military losses amounted to some two million soldiers lost or 15% of the 13.2 million men who served, and over five million soldiers who suffered permanent disability (Bihl 2010, 298; Beckett 2007, 438–440; Overmans 2003, 664–665).



Fig. 1
The “Ehrenfriedhof”
(cemetery of
honor) of the
City of Aachen.
Photo: private/
Stephanie Kaiser

Efforts to come to grips with the mass death of soldiers in this boundless war, which has come to be called “the great seminal catastrophe of the twentieth century,” stands at the center of this paper. The mass grief that followed in the wake of mass death transformed European societies into societies of mourning (Janz 2002, 554). We will examine the reactions to the war death, often euphemistically referred to as “the sacrificial death” (Opfertod), or as “hero’s death” (Heldentod), which implied that death was never viewed as senseless, but rather as a necessary part of an important and successful attack (Janz 2009, 79). Death was therefore significant, as it would inspire further heroic actions among the survivors (Janz 2009, 80).

This brings us back to the question of how this grief played out in city communities. It is likewise important to determine whether there were qualitative differences in displays of private (for example, obituaries by relatives) versus public (for example, in the inauguration of memorials to war casualties) grief.

This question will be dealt with by taking an approach that looks at a regionally delimited example. As Germany’s westernmost large city, Aachen is in many respects ideally suited for the purpose: it sheltered a garrison of the Prussian-German army – the Lützow Infantry Regiment – and was the first site of a military hospital in the Reich which could be reached from the northern part of the Western Front. The first German soldiers of the war died directly west of the city in an attack on nearby Liège. Aachen thus was relatively early forced to find rituals and coping mechanisms in order to come to terms with the war dead, in both the private and public spheres. And what was true for Aachen was true for the rest of the Reich over the course of the war – grieving was now to take place in the absence of corpses or physical remains of the deceased, which almost always remained at the front. For most family members of the fallen, this represented death at a distance and led to a heightened need to represent and communicate the events verbally (Janz 2009, 71).

Our analysis of the transformation of private and public mourning practices of a city community torn between the emotional and psychological needs of the surviving family members and the requirements of the state, which valued nothing more than morale and perseverance, can be summed up as follows:

1. Analyzing the obituaries published in Aachen’s local press during the First World War. The processing of and coming to terms with the war dead was

dictated by the public will to persevere. Private grief was limited to a narrow field. In the foreground stood the purpose of the soldiers' death for the "emperor and fatherland," though this was undermined by the endless number of death notices.

2. Employing memorial books, convocations and commemorative events dating from the postwar period, which was shaped by social and mental transformations. These were especially prominent in Germany due to the defeat, the war guilt clause, reparations and the military occupation of parts of the country, and caused the German efforts to overcome their war trauma to manifest themselves through (memory) repression and political activism (Krumeich 2002, 7).

3. Investigating Aachen's cemeteries and memorials relating to the years 1914–1918. The first cemeteries date back to the wartime period. In Aachen, the construction of memorials was still underway in 1933 when the Nazis seized power. This event marked a further transformation in the mourning of casualties from the First World War. The culture of mourning was placed fully into the service of preparations for war.

4. Analyzing programs of memorial services from the 1920s and 1930s.

Material

The culture of mourning is easily identified in public spaces by the presence of war monuments and cemeteries which, alongside commemorative events and celebrations, figured among the most significant testaments to the fallen after the war. These collective and public forms of war remembrance are among the most cited in contemporary research, whereas individual and private expressions of grief within urban communities (excepting Europe's major capitals) have scarcely been examined.

The sources analyzed for this study are all found in Aachen's city archive.

The monuments, which up to the present day have offered proof of the human costs of the Great War, are described in the pages of the *Heimatblätter des Landkreises Aachen*, as well as in the journal of the Aachen Historical Society (*Zeitschrift des Aachener Geschichtsvereins*). Information on the origins and development of the cemetery of honor are to be found in the administrative records of the city. Also analyzed are publications commemorating regimental reunions among units stationed in Aachen (though available only for the Nazi period), as well as local organizations and the university.

In order to capture the sentiment behind private mourning rituals, we consulted 2,500 private and semi-public obituaries in the local newspapers (e.g. *Echo der Gegenwart*, *Politisches Tagesblatt*, *Volksfreund*; see Öffentliche Bibliothek 2006) which were published during the war. These obituaries were published at the behest of family members and friends, but also of employers, organizations, or military units.

Aachen in the First World War

In the First World War, the old imperial city played no special military role. However, the northern part of the Western Front had to be provisioned from Aachen, and the city's industry profited from the production of armaments. The military and organizational structure within Aachen changed; the number and size of military hospitals and garrisons increased significantly. At the end of the war, in November 1918, Aachen was occupied by French and Belgian troops. The French had withdrawn their troops by 1920, but the Belgian occupation lasted eleven years. Although the years between 1914 and 1918 marked a major transformation in world history, this period's impact on Aachen has seldom been researched and is lacking in both comprehensive large-scale surveys as well as detailed individual studies of the social, economic, and political cataclysms characteristic of the period.

Results

I. Obituaries

City obituaries

During the four years of the conflict, written regimental reports of the city of Aachen included "plaques of honor," which honored city workers who served and died during the war as conscripts. The plaques for these men were symbolically adorned with the iron cross.

In the first year of the war, thirty-six men died, "a hero's death for the fatherland. [...] The city of Aachen will forever preserve these fallen heroes' honored memory." (Bericht über die Verwaltung 1915). The second "plaque of honor" from the year 1916 honored sixteen city workers – here, however, reference to a "hero's death" is absent. It is only the word "fatherland" which is mentioned (Bericht über die Verwaltung 1916, 5). In 1917, fifteen men died as "heroes who secured our abiding remembrance" (Bericht über die

Verwaltung 1917, 5). In 1918 seven men fell, for whom the exhortation read: "honor their memory!" (Bericht über die Verwaltung 1918, 5).

The "hero's death" was utterly fraught with political meaning and served to motivate both soldiers and German society to carry on the struggle (Janz 2009, 79–80). The individual's death seemed to retreat into the background. On other "plaques of honor," the city found itself repeating phrases, especially "On the field of honor, our regiment lost..." (Garde-Kameradschaft Aachen 1937, 21). Here, an honorable death was implied which was seen as requiring suitable tribute and gratitude from those at home. The human loss and the oftentimes barbarous and undignified circumstances in which death occurred at the front were ignored.

City obituaries generally had the purpose of transmitting the homeland's support and the identification of the public sphere with the war, its causes and its consequences. It was all about patriotic, unreflective, uncritical grief, which became ever more impersonal, in as much any kind of information (apart from name and date of birth/death) regarding the fallen was completely absent.

Semi public and private obituaries

An important element for the culture of mourning during the war was the publication of obituaries provided by families, employers and social circles – for example, clubs or associations. For the city of Aachen, there exists a considerable collection of such sources from the time of the First World War. The majority of obituaries pertained to the inhabitants of Aachen who had lived in the city before the outbreak of the war. However, there were also death notices for people who did not live in the city themselves, but whose immediate family members were inhabitants of Aachen. Finally, there were obituaries in the local papers for people – mostly those of high social rank – who had at one time called Aachen home but no longer resided there.

It should be noted that the obituaries followed established patterns that had emerged in peacetime for private obituaries (cf. Zeck 2001). In most instances, they are colored by a clearly Catholic character, as revealed through references to saints or masses for the dead. This is to be expected, given Aachen's Catholic majority (about 91% of the population) (Kühl 2011,

29). Distinct Protestant notices are nowhere to be found, and only one obituary commissioned by a Jewish organization and devoted to a deceased fellow-believer who died in an Aachen military hospital stands out. There is a particularly strict, militaristic mode of expression that emerges in a large portion of the obituaries (Capdevila & Voldman 2006, 119): they are often adorned with an Iron Cross that serves to denote military service. Inscriptions bearing the rank of the deceased often figure prominently. In contrast to those who died in peacetime, soldiers did not die in their homeland; as a result, obituaries contain rough mention of the place of their demise, often only whether the soldier died on the Western or Eastern front. Deviations from this formula were seldom seen. In a few select cases, the time of the funeral was provided – this was only possible if the deceased passed away in an Aachen military hospital or if family members had arranged for the transport of his body back to Aachen from the front.

Fig. 2
The “Ehrenmal”
(monument of
honor) of the
City of Aachen,
from the outside.
Photo: private/
Stephanie Kaiser



The obituaries generally fall into one of two groups: 1) private expressions of grief from relatives and friends and 2) those stemming from employers, organizations, or military units. Both groups kept the nobility of the “hero’s death” at the forefront by emphasizing his death in service of the fatherland,

and less commonly, for fatherland and king. This way of making sense of the soldier's death is true for the whole period under investigation.

1. Most private obituaries reveal the society's widespread expectation of the "silent and steadfast" mourner. Particularly dominant was the romanticization of the hero, especially in evidence amid the boundless elation that accompanied the first year of the war (1914). Obituaries often claim that the last words of the deceased were, "but we were victorious" (obituary of 29 August 1914) while in other cases they were invested with even more positive meaning: "(He) died the most beautiful death a man possibly can." However, the elation of the war hero was not an obligation, as shown by the example of a 1918 obituary involving two brothers. The first brother's obituary was just being written when the news of the other brother's death reached the family. In this case, the myth of the "hero's death" is completely absent. In fact, the family spoke of "horrible tidings" that had reached them. In a few other cases (n=3) – likewise towards the end of the war (1918) – the expression "victim of the war" (*Opfer des Krieges*) is used in place of the notion of the 'hero's death' (*Heldentod*), which still remained very frequent. In these cases, affected family members were distancing themselves from the invariably strong patriotic attitudes of society. Nevertheless, the term "victim of the war" was used in less than 1% of obituaries and was limited to private ones. In fact, it only emerged in 1918. Over the course of the war, the numbers of those who had lost more than one family member increased. This became apparent for the public through private obituaries in which references to the repeated loss of the family became more and more frequent. The death of successive family members was perceived as a multiplication of the sorrow already experienced.

Throughout the entire war, obituaries contained surprisingly frank and graphic descriptions of the circumstances surrounding soldiers' deaths. It is true that there were occasions in which the suffering on the front was portrayed in romanticized terms; for example, when death was recounted as occurring amid a "circle of comrades" or there was mention of the grave prepared for the deceased by his comrades. A comforting picture of death in the field was painted on the home front through these descriptions, often in stark contrast to the reality. Nevertheless, entombments and day-long suffering from deathly injuries and gassings were also reported. In this way, the horror of the war crept into the mourning culture at home in small doses.

2. Obituaries by organizations and employers are clearly more formulaic. This is particularly the case of obituaries commissioned by the Erholungs-Gesellschaft Aachen (a social club which still exists today), which differed solely in the names of the deceased. Obituaries from employers often indicated the significance of the loss for the company and listed the credentials of the fallen employee. Organizations, on the other hand, often included the number of their dead in the obituaries ("Of the thirteen comrades who have served in the field to fight for Germany's rights and honor, the second from our ranks who has died a hero's death in France in the name of king and country is..."). School obituaries proved especially eager to celebrate the virtuous and exemplary character of their dead heroes, particularly in the first two years of the war. This presumably had the express purpose of encouraging other young men to enlist for military service, an incomprehensible didactic approach from today's perspective.

Obituaries that were commissioned on behalf of organizations or companies that had no family relationship to the fallen played a clearer role within society than privately commissioned obituaries. They showed sympathy despite lacking any kinship to the deceased and owed a considerable debt to mourning rituals prevalent in times of peace from before the war. Even when semi-public obituaries contained actual expressions of grief, these sentiments took on a more distanced and formulaic guise compared to those appearing in private obituaries. Obituaries commissioned by comrades clearly represent an exception, as the number of these obituaries is very small. In the case of dead soldiers of higher rank in particular, one finds obituaries commissioned by their units in which the fallen are praised for their heroic courage and model character. In addition, poems dedicated to the dead penned by comrades were printed as obituaries in Aachen newspapers. They represented a link between mourning family members and grieving comrades, between the front and homeland. Nevertheless, in most cases the public and private spheres of mourning remained clearly separate. In conclusion, our analysis reveals that obituaries took the kinds of forms we might expect. Patriotic displays, which declined over the course of the war – though they never disappeared entirely – were present throughout. Given the prevailing censorship of the time, the most remarkable obituaries were those which clearly distanced themselves from a patriotic interpretation of death, as well as those in which there was a clear description of the circumstances of death: they set themselves apart from most obituaries, in which a quick, painless death is described in reassuring standard phrases.

II. Commemorative Books, Events and Celebrations

In the wake of the war, numerous organizations and social groups of the most varied sort celebrated their anniversaries and issued celebratory pamphlets for the occasion. These publications hovered somewhere between the public and socially influenced culture of mourning, with elements of personal inflection mixed in. All these groups were affected by the war and suffered losses. Was an anniversary the right occasion to commemorate the war dead, or was the memory of tragic death pushed aside to celebrate joyfully? A glance at the reports of RWTH Aachen University, of sporting organizations, shooting and hiking clubs, as well as fraternities, reveals that they all honored their dead. The range and scope of these commemorations, however, varied greatly: While certain organizations only mentioned their losses while discussing limited club activities, the RWTH – and above all, the student associations – devoted much more attention to the war dead. Nevertheless, our source base revealed that the majority of commemorative groups seldom dedicated more than a single page to their dead, in most cases numbering mere paragraphs or short chapters. Next to the names, the rank of the fallen was sometimes given. On the other hand, the Aachen gymnastics club printed photographs of its fallen members – a measure which was not taken elsewhere.

This marginal, somewhat distanced approach to mourning within groups not part of the inner family circle was disrupted by direct queries for missing soldiers from those left behind. A 1938 celebratory report commemorating the 125th anniversary of the former von Lützow infantry regiment contained two such queries for missing soldiers, and this more than twenty years after the end of the war. Relatives searched for more information about their fallen family members, such as descriptions of the circumstances surrounding their deaths. Information that the widows could provide included the name and rank of the soldier, the regiment number, as well as the date the soldier went missing, was wounded, or died. They were trying to locate eyewitnesses (comrades) who might be able to provide details that went beyond the formulaic military letters of condolence:

Seeking comrades who served together with (P.D.) in the 11th Company. The above-named fell on 9–19–1914. Can someone please provide information about the circumstances surrounding his death and where he is buried? Contact Mrs. (E.D., maiden name D.) at Aachen, Pontstraße 101. (Inf.-Reg. Lützow 1938, 11)

This was an attempt to bring death that had occurred on the battlefields or in military hospitals back into the private sphere. For the deceased's relatives, death generally happened (geographically) far away, violently, and very suddenly, in a public space, in circumstances of total anonymity, and outside of the family's reach. Eyewitness accounts made it possible for those left behind to participate emotionally in the death of those dear to them (Janz 2009, 72). In the extant sources, only one query for a missing soldier appeared.

It is important to note that the majority of organizations and groups did, in fact, make mention of their dead, but only to a certain extent can this even be defined as an explicit culture of mourning. The dead were scarcely granted a hearing. Reflections on the meaning of their deaths are scarce.

These commemorative depictions, which mention war deaths only in passing and position them outside the center of the analysis, stand in contrast to books whose only purpose was to honor the fallen. Of particular interest was the depiction of the Catholic Aachen student association *Franconia* (Hurck 1923). They honored their war dead with a small publication with general depictions of the war, the role of fraternities, and stories surrounding the individual fates of the fallen. In spite of all the war euphoria, the association did not shrink from showing pictures of the severe costs of war. Readers were spared neither the indescribably painful circumstances surrounding soldiers' deaths, nor gruesome stories – like one about a corpse that had lay tangled in barbed wire behind enemy lines for three weeks. Still, they also functioned as an example of “proud grief” that left no doubt about the significance of the soldier's death and his model character. The depictions of *Franconia* and other student organizations included in the RWTH anniversary pamphlet show that cultures of mourning within organized student groups in the 1920s were already being used to serve the mobilization of a new war (Gast 1921).

III. Cemeteries and monuments

In 1907, a ten-meter-high monument in the form of a stylized “B” was dedicated in the Aachen Forest. On top of the monument sat a princely crown and orb, the entrance was emblazoned with a bust of Bismarck. The “Bismarck tower” paid tribute to the “Iron Chancellor” and founder of the Empire who had lived in Aachen during his tenure as a government intern (Aachener Stadtgeschichte, 2012). Originally conceived by his architects as a nationalist project and used by the citizens of Aachen as a landmark

lookout tower, it acquired new significance as part of the “cemetery of heroes” (Ropertz 2011, 83). The Bismarck Tower was a favorite excursion site for the citizens of Aachen, which was perhaps one of the reasons for the erection of a cemetery in that place: the war dead would thereby somehow remain a part of the society through the presence of visitors, instead of being excluded from the city community, as would have happened had the cemetery been placed in a remote location.

The construction of a cemetery was indispensable for the city of Aachen after the first soldiers from the western front died in Aachen infirmaries in August 1914, or, as one source put it, here “death relieved them of their suffering” (Bericht über die Verwaltung 1914, 44–45). As a result, a resolution was passed to set aside a parcel of land in the Aachen Forest behind the Bismarck Tower that would serve as a “cemetery of honor” for all who had taken part in the war and died in Aachen. German, Austrian, and even foreign soldiers found their final resting place in this cemetery. Its function was, as the city put it, “to honor those who gave their lives for the fatherland and to secure heartfelt appreciation from all of posterity” (Bericht über die Verwaltung 1914, 45).

The soldiers’ cemetery in Aachen was modest in appearance and laid out in rows with graves marked by simple wooden crosses. It was designed in the austere form found throughout the Reich: burial plots were to be harmoniously arranged and enclosed within the untamed, primordial natural surroundings (Fig. 1). Its simple modesty and undifferentiated character symbolized the fallen who were all equal in death but whose own position was elevated by their separation from civilian burial sites (Ropertz 2011, 73; Latzel 1988, 77). The natural surroundings of the soldiers’ cemeteries show the Germans’ special attachment to nature compared to other nations (Mosse 1993, 108) – an attachment which became even more pronounced under National Socialism in the form of the “heroes’ groves” (*Heldenbainen*), and which remains characteristic to this day (Poschardt 2013; Palzer 2010).

The first twenty Germans were interred in the cemetery of honor in Aachen Forest in August 1914 (Bericht über die Verwaltung 1914). The commemorative book of the *Harmonia* men’s singing group describes how members of the organization provided musical accompaniment to the funeral ceremonies. Here, one sees how the civilian population became involved, if only to

a limited degree, in the grieving process, one that acquired a military quality due to the absence of family members (mgv 1924).

Only one year after its construction, the city council agreed to extend the cemetery. Additional expansion followed in 1917, deemed necessary due to the "large number of victims claimed by the long war" (Bericht über die Verwaltung 1915, 46; Bericht über die Verwaltung 1917, 52).

From the beginning of the war through to the end of 1920, 2,848 people directly involved in the war were interred in the Aachen cemetery (2,164 Germans, two Austrians, one Hungarian, one Turk, and 676 people from other nations, as well as four nurses), making it the largest soldiers' cemetery in the area surrounding Aachen (Bericht über die Verwaltung 1920, 5 & 64). Apparently, the grave site continued to be used during the Third Reich: a city report mentioned the solemn burial of 91 people in April 1944 (Ropertz 2011, 74). 2,623 more were buried during the Second World War. There were no observable differences in the manner of burial when comparing the two wars. A 1965 law conferred eternal peace unto the war dead.

In the first years following World War I, few Germans could visit burial sites located in other countries; as a result, monuments in Germany had to serve as the primary sites for those working through the grieving process. The repatriation of bodies back to Germany was a rare occurrence (Brandt 2002, 243). At the same time, soldiers were often not given a proper burial when they perished abroad, with about 25% designated as "missing in action" (Brandt 2004, 204).

It was remarkable that Germans had created monuments to their dead for a war that they had lost. Monuments typically serve to commemorate victories and successes: "If such misfortunes inspire the building of commemorative symbols then it is because the death of citizens as a consequence of a failed military or political action is very much in need of some sort of justification" (von Looz-Corswarem 2004, 213).

The construction of memorials during the Great War was subject to these severe restrictions. Politicians were convinced that war memorials undermined the perseverance of the German people, so that the majority of the structures in honor of the fallen were erected many years after the end of the war in 1918 (Weigand 2001, 213–214).



Fig. 3
The inside of the
“Ehrenmal” of the
city of Aachen.
Photo: private/
Stephanie Kaiser

In Aachen, in the aftermath of the First World War, only two war monuments were built: 1) the “Ehrenmal” (memorial) in the city center and 2) the Rothe Erde war monument. Today, both monuments serve to honor the memories of those who died in the First and Second World Wars.

1. In August 1933, a little more than six months following the Nazi “Seizure of Power,” the “monument of honor” at the Marienburg, a tower built in 1512 outside the city walls of Aachen, was dedicated (Figs. 2 & 3). Various regiments were honored in the treasured commemorative books, notably the Lützower Infantry Regiment, which was defiantly remembered as “unbeaten in battle.” The tower at Marienburg was seen as a former defensive site and an emblem of the glory days in the history of the city that produced the “proud” Regiment. At the same time, it was seen as a future place of remembrance and gratitude. The monument was not only to serve as a means to grieve “our casualties in the war,” but rather as a reminder of the “living strength and right to life of our German sons in the borderlands” (*Festschrift Inf.-Reg. Lützow* 1933, 25). The Christian theme of eternal life was secularized and reinterpreted: the soldier sacrificed his life, and the nation was held as the highest benchmark of worldly transcendence (Janz 2002, 565). Suffering in the name of the Volk and the fatherland reached its culmination point, according to the interpretation of monument constructors,

in the newly restored militarism, in the new Reich of renewed vigor and strength (Festschrift Bundesführer 1935). As he visited the monument, the visitor could look towards the horizon, “where, during the storming of Liège, for the first time ever German military power shone brightly, and further on, towards the blood-soaked battlefields of Belgium and France, where for years our troops used their bodies to throw up an impregnable wall against an entire world of our enemies” (Festschrift Bundesführer 1935). The theme of the supposedly undefeated German troops of World War I, which formed the basis of the later myth of the “stab in the back,” along with the antagonistic superiority of Germany’s enemies, were widely cited by contemporary observers and found reflection in a number of popular fixed expressions. These could be put into service by National Socialism in order both to mobilize society in readiness for the “coming war” and to call for revenge against Germany’s enemies (Weigand 2001, 217). The exact causes of the war were depicted in a distorted fashion and portrayed as actions necessary for defending Germany’s borders. The “worth” of the Volk was measured by its willingness to militarize; that it was “ready to serve the fatherland with property and blood [...]. We believed in this in 1914 and believe in it today, and we will believe in this forevermore” (Festschrift Bundesführer 1935). The grief and the vast human losses were absent from the general discourse, one was rather proud of the victims “who died for the homeland and the empire.” (Festschrift Bundesführer 1935) It was thus a duty of the survivors and future generations to achieve the (alleged) goals for which the soldiers had died (Brandt 2004, 202). The architectural style of the monument, the circumstances of its formal dedication, as well as the speeches declared during the official ceremony show the strongly militarized lens through which the dead were remembered at the end of the Weimar Republic and the beginning of the Third Reich. Death was viewed as a duty and suggested a renewed readiness to fall victim to the war and sacrifice in the name of the people’s community (*Volksgemeinschaft*). There was, however, no such thing as “victims,” only “heroes.”

2. The Rothe Erde war memorial was built “by the parish of St. Barbara for its fallen heroes who perished in the World War of 1914–1918” (Fig. 4). Not even the Aachen Office for the Preservation of Historical Monuments has the year of construction in its files, a fact that speaks volumes about the minor value of these aspects of remembrance among present-day Aacheners. Presumably, the monument dates back to the 1920s. It is composed of white stone and adorned with a simple iron cross and two mourning women in prayer. The names of the war dead from World War I were perhaps once

inscribed in the middle of the monument, though today a commemorative plaque hangs there instead, to honor the victims of both world wars (Rothe Erde 2010). In contrast to the first monument, this one is devoid of any pathos. Its function was not to serve as a military monument, but rather to depict the grief and sorrow of those left behind through the gestures of the female figures. As sources from the city archive reveal, this intention was made clear from the outset in the inauguration of the monument, which was accompanied by religious fanfare, rather than military pathos and military music. In this way, it stands apart from the "monument of honor" whose later dedication had a clearly military character and showed the government's efforts to mobilize the country for another war.

IV. Commemorative Celebrations

The festival programs which emerged out of the reunions of regiments and associations that came to Aachen date back to the 1930s and, as such, clearly already bear traces of National Socialism. Festival day programs consisted of a wreath-laying ceremony at the cemeteries and monuments alongside commemorative celebrations and marches through the city. This was followed by officer addresses, toasts, the bestowing of awards, and musical tributes, often concluded with ceremonial artillery salvos. Speeches sung the praises of soldiers' chivalry. One of particular interest was given in Aachen in 1933 by (retired) General Major von Friedrich on the occasion of the reunion of the Landwehr Infantry Regiment 28: "strong in will, courageous in deeds, brave in victory, loyal to the death. So will live the 28th in our memory forever" (Landwehr-Inf.-Reg. 1933). Here, death received an expected form – as the heroization of death above all else, appealing to and making recurrent use of the active semantics and self-image of manly military virtue (Janz 2002, 563). Loyalty and belief in Germany was emphasized again and again, as was the model character of the fallen and the "fiery hearts" with which they served in the war, whose duration and severity could scarcely have been believed at the outset (Inf.-Reg. Lützow 1938, 9). Family members received no attention, as opposed to the fraternal community, which continued to exist. The regiments made their presence felt throughout the city: in their marching from monument to monument, in their gatherings in the central marketplace, and in their paying of respects at commemorative events and war cemeteries, not only in Aachen but at cemeteries in neighboring Belgium as well (Inf.-Reg. Lützow 1938, 2; Inf.-Reg. Lützow 1933, 7). For this reason, Mosse's observation rings true: soldiers' cemeteries after the war functioned as places of national meditation and pilgrimage (Mosse 1993, 115).

Continuity between the wars was present, the celebrations were organized not only “in honor of those fallen in the First World War.” Among those honored were also the soldiers who died during the wars of unification, as well as the “fallen heroes”(!) of the Third Reich (Inf.-Reg. Lützow 1938, 2; Garde-Kameradschaft Aachen 1937, 15). The “losers” of 1918 were part of the same tradition, standing alongside the “winners” of 1871 and 1933. As Janz has rightly put it, a politicized cult of the dead was established in the interwar period, populated by a range of organizations and institutions (Janz 2002, 556).

Fig. 4
The Rothe Erde
monument for
the fallen. Photo:
available online
at: [https://
upload.wikimedia.
org/wikipedia/
commons/7/73/
Aachen_
Gefallenendenkmal_
Barbarakirche.
jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/7/73/Aachen_Gefallenendenkmal_Barbarakirche.jpg), accessed
27.07.2013.



Remarkably, the presence of religious services or holy masses among the festivities is conspicuous in its absence (Inf.-Reg. Lützow 1938, 2; Garde-Kameradschaft Aachen 1937, 15; Inf.-Reg 1933, 7; Festschrift Bundesführer 1935). The presumed reason for this has to do with the fact that

state-prescribed mourning rituals did not carry an explicitly religious connotation. Rather, they were often confessionally and politically neutral affairs which focused on paying tribute to the soldiers (Brandt 2002, 249). There is, in fact, only one festival (from 1937) whose Sunday program began with a religious celebration: starting at 8 am “every hour a mass was read in all the churches throughout the city for Catholic soldiers, ending with the one at 11:30 am in the Kaiserdom. For Protestant comrades, an 8:00 am service was led in Christ’s Church on Martin Luther Street” (Garde-Kameradschaft Aachen 1937, 15). Particular emphasis was placed on the preponderance of Catholic soldiers in the overwhelmingly Catholic city of Aachen.

Conclusion

Mourning culture *vis-à-vis* the war dead of 1914–1918 in Aachen was, as we have seen, multi-layered. There were diverse efforts to adequately pay homage to the dead, from obituaries and commemorative books to celebrations and monuments. The sources used in this paper show what the differences were between the private culture of mourning in the city community, which this study illustrates mostly with examples from the war period, and the official culture of mourning, which continued to a larger extent after the war.

The obituaries published during the war clearly show the personal, intimate grief of family members. These obituaries are marked by pain, but they nevertheless show the heroization of death in public. In only a few cases a critical perspective can be found, which shows – only to a rudimentary degree – how enthusiasm began to wane towards the end of the war. Aside from references to masses for the dead, one finds no evidence of strong Catholic influence. A religious connotation of death is missing; grieving, as presented in newspapers, was solely permeated by a national, patriotic aura.

The culture of mourning the war dead of 1914–18 in Aachen was complex. Obituaries, commemorative pamphlets, celebrations and monuments were all part of the society’s effort to commemorate the fallen. The sources used in this paper date mostly from the war period itself, and underline how differently the society mourned the dead compared to the ‘official’ culture of mourning, prescribed much later by politicians and parties.

The obituaries published during the war clearly show how intimate and personal the grief of family members really was: even though their pain was obvious, their grieving was still characterized by a heroization of death,

at least on the surface. Only in a few cases is a critical undertone noticeable, which revealed how the spirit in Germany was changing towards the end of the war. Apart from masses, there is no mention of Catholic elements. The religious connotation of death is missing; it only resonated in a nationalistic and patriotic way, or so the sources indicate.

This paper is an effort to break new ground in its analysis of this specific period and region. It can therefore only represent a first glimpse into the culture of mourning in Aachen during the Great War. Further research is necessary, and it would be recommended to extend the range of sources to include funeral sermons, more commemorative texts that refer to the region, and private commemorative events and books.

JENS LOHMEIER

Studied History and Politics at the RWTH Aachen University. He has published studies on social aspects of military history in the 20th century. He is currently working on his doctoral thesis on health policy in the National Socialist daily press.

STEPHANIE KAISER

Studied History and Literature at the University of Mainz and Auckland. She works at the Institute of History, Theory and Ethics in Medicine at the RWTH Aachen University. She is an assistant in the "Transmortality" research project – funded by the Volkswagen Foundation. The topic of her doctoral thesis is body procurement for anatomical institutes in the Third Reich.

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BURDENED BY IMPERIAL MEMORY: RUDYARD KIPLING, COLLECTIVE MEMORY AND THE IMPERIAL WAR GRAVES COMMISSION

Chelsea Medlock, Doctoral Candidate

Oklahoma State University in Stillwater

Department of History

ABSTRACT

During the Interwar Period, the poet Rudyard Kipling worked closely with the newly-founded Imperial War Graves Commission to register British war dead, to construct permanent war cemeteries and memorials for the fallen, and to cultivate images of sacrifice, equality, and unity in the developing British collective memory of the Great War. Through his work in public relations, the drafting of memorial inscriptions, and the inspection of the progress of cemetery construction, Rudyard Kipling aided the Commission's mission to memorialize and commemorate the over one million individuals killed during the First World War, and both directly and indirectly molded the shaping of the British Empire's war memories during his eighteen years with the organization.

Like millions of parents all across Europe, the Great War deeply affected Rudyard Kipling both personally and professionally. At the outbreak of the war, Kipling joined the British war effort through his craft, as well as by advising the British government on war propaganda. However, after the death of his son, Kipling began to focus more on activities to sustain the memories of the war dead, in part by joining the Imperial War Graves Commission. Kipling worked tirelessly with the Commission to keep the memory and sacrifice of the fallen soldiers alive in the minds of Britons everywhere, and thus his work added greatly to shaping the “memory boom” that followed the war. Though his work with the Commission at times seemed to contradict his war writings and propaganda, both his literary works and volunteerism molded British collective memory of the Great War for generations, as did the work of the Imperial War Graves Commission itself.

Rudyard Kipling, though never a soldier himself, developed a general respect and love for the British military, especially the colonialists. The amiable relationship between the British military and Rudyard Kipling began early in Kipling's literary career. Kipling saw the military as the "essence of the empire"; this forged a bond in Kipling's mind between the role of the military and the need to maintain a sense of unity within the British Empire (Gross 1972, 40). The Anglo-Boer War (1899–1902) was the first British conflict to capture Kipling's attention, his imagination, and his sympathy. The harsh conditions in South Africa generated great interest for the welfare of British soldiers and their families (Gross, 1972, 86). This sympathy led Kipling to set up the Absent-Minded Beggar Fund for returning British soldiers and the families of men killed in action early in the war. He wrote in the *Daily Mail* in 1899, in the hope of reminding the British public of the sacrifice of its soldiers on a distant battlefield (Kipling, October 1899). This soldiers' fund was the first instance of Kipling's military philanthropy, a tradition that Kipling would follow for the rest of his life.

The outbreak of the Great War reignited Kipling's humanitarian interests as well as his patriotic sentiments. The German invasion of Belgium outraged both Kipling and Britain to the point of patriotic fervor. In the early months of the conflict, Kipling and his wife, Carrie, worked closely with the Red Cross, and helped to lessen the plight of Belgian refugees. Kipling routinely visited military hospitals and camps, many times publishing his experiences for the world to see. His most famous trip to the Western Front occurred in August 1915, leading to the publication of "France at War" (Amis 1975, 98). Despite these frontline trips, the war became a harsh reality when Kipling's only son, John, was killed in action at the Battle of Loos in September 1915. John Kipling was among the first to volunteer for the British war effort; however, like his father, the younger Kipling suffered from poor eyesight, which sidelined him from military service. However, given his adoration of the British military, Rudyard Kipling petitioned Lord Roberts to allow John to join the Irish Guards in 1915. The military commissioned John Kipling as a Second Lieutenant, sending him to the Western Front right after his eighteenth birthday (Mallett 2003, 161). John's body was never recovered, even after numerous attempts by both Rudyard Kipling and the British military to gather information on John's death (Ricketts 1999, 325–28). As an act of love, and maybe even penitence, Rudyard Kipling spent five and a half years writing the *History of the Irish Guards*, completing the work between September 1921 and June 1922. The purpose of the book, for

Kipling, was to record the history of the regiment, rather than to focus on the horrors of the war (Gilmour 2002, 268–69). And in a final, and most lasting, gesture of atonement for his son's death, Rudyard Kipling accepted an invitation from Fabian Ware, a fellow newspaperman and friend from the Anglo-Boer War, to join the Imperial War Graves Commission in 1917 (Pinney 1996, 15; Holt and Holt 1998, 139).

Prior to his decision to join the Imperial War Graves Commission, Kipling “claimed that he could not write from monuments.” He felt that he could not do justice to the sacrifice of fallen soldiers beyond writing the inscription “He died for his country” (Gilmour 2002, 278). The Commission “wanted a man of imagination and one who knew the [common] soldier” as literary advisor for the Commission, and pursued Rudyard Kipling for the position (Holt and Holt 1998, 142). Despite his lack of confidence, Kipling relented to the mounting requests from the members of the newly-formed Imperial War Graves Commission, being formally appointed as the literary adviser to the Commission in October 1917 (Kipling October 1917). Many, including Fabian Ware, believed that the loss of his son gave Rudyard Kipling “a natural empathy with the relatives of the fallen” (Summers 2007, 20–21). Kipling would remain a member of the Commission for eighteen years, until his death in 1936 (Birkenhead 1978, 277).

The industrialized warfare and high death toll in the early months of the Great War stunned much of Europe. Concern for the care of the dead occupied the minds of many, including Fabian Ware, an educationalist and former newspaper man. Ware joined the Red Cross in 1914; he was unable to join the British military due to his advanced age. However, he chose to redirect his passions into recording the location of soldiers' graves at the front. The British military officially recognized Ware's work in February 1915, giving him the rank of Major, and establishing the Graves Registration Commission for the task. As the war spread beyond the European Continent, the Graves Registration Commission developed into the Directorate of Grave Registration and Enquires. Its work to find the bodies of the Empire's dead came to encompass not only the Western Front but also Mesopotamia, Egypt, Palestine, and the Balkans (Cross 2008, 257). For Ware, the purpose of the Graves Registration Commission was to give the dead honorable burials, and to create a registry containing the names and locations of the Empire's dead for relatives and future generations. To this end, the Commission worked tirelessly to locate soldier cemeteries, exhume

isolated graves, and create new cemeteries for those who had not been formally buried in the heat of battle. In some cases, British soldiers had been buried in French and Belgian churchyards, alongside their allied comrades; however, as the preexisting cemeteries filled to capacity with the allied dead, Ware and the Commission began to negotiate with the Allied governments for the purchase of land to create new cemeteries for the British dead (*The Times* 1928, 13–15). This practice of purchasing foreign lands for new cemeteries became one of the basic practices of the future Imperial War Graves Commission, though Ware felt that his organization was severely hindered by having to work within the established military relations networks, leading to his call for the Commission to be given a royal charter that would separate the Commission into a separate entity, with powers to negotiate with foreign nations without the direct consent of the British military or the British government (Imperial War Graves Commission 10 May 1917, 5).

On 10 May 1917, the Commission, now renamed the Imperial War Graves Commission, received its charter from the King, giving it status as the sole organization charged with the remembrance and maintenance of the Empire's war dead. The 1917 Charter stated that the purpose of the decree was to create "a permanent Imperial Body charged with the duty of caring for the graves of officers and men of Our military and naval forces raised in all parts of Our Empire who have fallen, or may fall, in the present War." The secondary purpose of the Commission was to honor the memory of the fallen, without segregation of class, race, or religion, and perpetuate the ideals of their common sacrifice for future generations (Imperial War Graves Commission 10 May 1917, 1). To this end, the Commission was granted special powers, including the jurisdiction to acquire land for war cemeteries, to erect permanent buildings and memorials within war cemeteries, to provide upkeep for cemetery grounds (specifically headstone maintenance and gardening), and to maintain burial records and registries for the dead (Imperial War Graves Commission 10 May 1917, 5). The Imperial War Graves Commission met for the first time on 20 November 1917, to discuss not only the logistics of the Commission's operations, but also the major guiding principles for the Commission (Longworth 1985, 29).

In a pamphlet written by the Director of the British Museum and a member of the Commission, Sir Frederic Kenyon, and later in a booklet by Rudyard Kipling, the Imperial War Graves Commission laid out the guiding principles of the organization, which focused on issues of common sacrifice,

remembrance, and equality. The most influential principle of the new Imperial War Graves Commission was extending equal treatment for the Empire's dead regardless of "military or civil rank, race or creed." The purpose this principle was to honor the common sacrifice of officers, enlisted soldiers, and colonial soldiers (Cross 2008, 257). The Commission, including Rudyard Kipling, felt that the graves of the fallen should be uniform in appearance and maintenance, for each had died for a common cause, and if the cemeteries were allowed to become private memorials, the graves of the more-well-to-do soldiers would become more "ornate or imposing to distinguish their graves from others." Kipling and the Commission argued that the wealthy should not be allowed to "proclaim their grief above other people's grief" simply because the wealthy had "larger bank accounts." The Commission felt that the movement for special graves was a "demand for privilege in the face of death," which meant that the "common sacrifice made by all ranks would lose the regularity and orderliness most becoming to the resting places of soldiers, who fought and fell side-by-side." (Longworth 1985, 33). Another important principle of the newly-formed Commission was to respect the faith of the dead, including the minimizing of the Christian overtones of the cemeteries and the incorporation of the religious symbols of other faiths, including those of Jews, Muslims, and Hindus, all of whom fought for the British military and the Colonial militaries. The only major Christian symbol to be placed in the cemeteries would be the Cross of Sacrifice, along with the more religiously ambiguous Stone of Remembrance (Geurst 2010, 34). The purpose of the Stone of Remembrance was to harken back to the Paleolithic symbol of the altar and sacrifice, which was common in most cultures throughout the world. The Commission chose to include in its principles the desire to honor the burial customs and beliefs of the soldiers fighting for the British Empire. The headstones of non-Christians included symbols of their own faith and the major monuments of the cemeteries included Biblical phrases that did not specifically read as Christian; the best example of this principle can be seen in the inscription chosen for the Stone of Remembrance (Kenyon 1918, 10–12).

During the first two decades of the Imperial War Graves Commission, the organization located 767,978 graves, 180,861 of which had been unidentified. The Commission recorded the names of a further 336,912 soldiers killed in the war, who possessed no known graves (Ware 1937, 26). The work of the Commission following the Great War included the creation of 970 cemeteries in France and Belgium, approximately one thousand Crosses

of Sacrifice, 560 Stones of Remembrance, over 600,000 headstones, and eighteen memorials to those “Missing” (Ware 1937, 56–57). The work of the Commission, including its future work after the Second World War, has become one of the largest and most successful examples of the importance, maintenance, and steering of collective memory in the twentieth century.

After the Armistice in 1918, the Imperial War Graves Commission’s work truly began on an international scale. The battlefields were “systematically combed” for the graves of the British war dead, a process impeded by the constant bombardments of artillery. The relentless fighting destroyed the water management systems, especially on the Western Front, leaving the ground of France and Belgium “a muddy lunar landscape,” filled with decaying bodies and stagnant water (Geurst 2010, 56). In his pamphlet on the Commission, Kenyon mentioned that the burial sites range from isolated and mass graves on destroyed battlefields, to former sites of hospitals and casualty clearing stations, to French and Belgian civilian cemeteries, leaving the Commission with the responsibility to find and create cemeteries for over a million individuals, and the responsibility to remember the identities of the missing, who would never have formal graves (Kenyon 1918, 5). The cemeteries were originally constructed using provisional wooden crosses as grave markers. Over the decades, the Commission slowly replaced the wooden crosses with headstones fashioned from Portland stone. These headstones measured 2 feet 6 inches by 1 foot 3 inches and were uniform in design, with the only major differences between gravestones being the regimental badges and symbols of faith. The Commission consulted the various regiments of the British military, asking them to create their own special design for the headstones (Kipling 1918, 6). The Commission quarried more than 700,000 tons of Portland stone for the cemeteries during the Interwar Period, making the operation one of the largest industrial endeavors of the twentieth century (*The Times* 10 November 1928, 8).

Along with the construction of the headstones, the Commission devoted much time and effort to the design and construction of the two central monuments for the cemeteries: the Cross of Sacrifice and the Stone of Remembrance. It was agreed within the Commission that the central monument(s) needed to be simple, as well as “durable, dignified, and expressive of the higher feelings with which we regard our dead.” In the beginning, the Commission only desired the construction of a Stone of Remembrance; the Cross of Sacrifice was a compromise with the Christian Lobby in Britain, when its

suggestion of crosses for headstones was rejected by the Commission because it would ill suit soldiers of other faiths (Kenyon 1918, 10; Stamp 1990, vii; Aiden December 2007, 12–30). The Stone of Remembrance, designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens, was envisioned as a large stone altar approximately twelve feet in length, which would be placed on the “eastern side of each cemetery,” with the graves of the fallen facing the altar-stone, just as the British armies had faced eastward during the Great War (Kenyon 1918, 10–12). This was in stark contrast to the later construction of the Cross of Sacrifice, designed by Sir Reginald Blomfield. The Cross of Sacrifice stood above the graves, with a bronze sword at its center to signify the sacrifice of the fallen for the British Empire (Gibson and Kingley 1989, 52). Of all the policies of the Imperial War Graves Commission, the most contested was the policy regarding exhumations and repatriation. The Commission believed that it would not be fair to the lower classes to allow the wealthier sections of British society to bring home their war dead; this would go against the principle of equal treatment for the fallen. The idea of equality for all was so important to the Commission that it fought for the principle in the House of Commons in 1920, winning the right to reject repatriation and private memorials (King Spring 1999, 256–257; Gilmour 2002, 279). The Commission viewed their work as the creation of an “Imperial and National, not a Private Memorial,” leading the Commission to suggest that private memorials were for the home front (Burdett-Coutts 24 April 1920, 5). To appraise the public outcry over the policy regarding repatriation, the Commission agreed that relatives would be allowed to pay for a short, personal inscription on the individual headstones, though the inscription could not be longer than sixty-six letters (Kipling 1919, 11).

At the center of all of the Commission’s policies and decisions was Rudyard Kipling. Kipling had three main roles within the imperial organization, aside from his role as a voting member on the inner workings of the Commission. His most influential responsibilities to the molding of British collective memory included public relations, the formulation of memorial inscriptions, and touring the cemeteries to report on the construction progress. In the early days of the Commission, Kipling believed that it was important for the Commission to have a publicity department; this role eventually fell onto his shoulders. As the publicity department, Kipling was responsible for the regulation of publications, tours, and the publication of letters to British and international newspapers on the behalf of the Imperial War Graves Commission (Ware 6 February 1920). One of Kipling’s first duties was to

write a pamphlet for the British public on the policies and principles of the organization. The pamphlet, entitled “Graves of the Fallen,” was published in 1918 and briefly outlined a great deal of important information regarding the Commission’s work on the fronts, specifically the designs for the cemeteries, the policy of equal treatment, and memorials for the missing (Kipling 1919, 1–5). Kipling volunteered for the project in the hopes that his fame would help the Commission reach a wider audience and command greater attention (Arthur Browne 8th February 1919).

Another influential Commission project for Kipling was the pamphlet for King George V’s pilgrimage to the war cemeteries on the Western Front in May 1922. Kipling performed multiple roles during this royal tour; however, regarding his work in public relations, Kipling edited the pamphlet that covered the King’s tour and worked closely with Ernest Hodder-Williams & Stoughton Publishers to circulate more than 20,000 copies of *The King’s Pilgrimage*. Along with editing the pamphlet, Kipling also wrote a special poem to mark the occasion, one of his most moving pieces of the postwar years (Aiden December 2007, 26; Hodder-Williams 11 August 1922). As an added responsibility to the Crown, Kipling also wrote the King’s Speech, given at Terlincthun; this act led to a close friendship between Kipling and the Royal family, with Kipling writing a great number of official speeches for the remainder of his and George V’s lives (Holt and Holt 1998, 149; Amis 1975, 103). Finally, Kipling repeatedly agreed to attend the unveiling of war memorials in Britain and abroad, though many times he could not, due to his declining health during the Interwar Period (Kipling 6 October 1924). Kipling, along with Fabian Ware, became the public face of the Commission and its work for much of the 1920s and 1930s, giving the Imperial War Graves Commission both legitimacy and political standing both at home and in foreign affairs.

The most time-consuming responsibility for Kipling during his years as a member of the Imperial War Graves Commission was the drafting of special inscriptions for the war cemeteries, monuments, and memorials. Following his assertion that he was not qualified to craft the various inscriptions required for the Commission, Kipling originally suggested in 1919 that the Commission gather suggestions for inscriptions from the general public; however, after reviewing the majority of the responses, Kipling decided that most were unusable and that he would have to write the inscriptions himself (Arthur Browne 23 December 1919; Cemetery Entrance Inscriptions 15

January 1920). In all cases, the inscriptions chosen by Kipling were crafted to avoid “the language of Christianity” because Kipling felt that using overt Christian symbolism would offend soldiers of other faiths. In many cases, when Kipling did choose a passage from the Bible, the inscription focused on the ideas of sacrifice and memory, thus being universal in message and sentiment (Aiden December 2007, 19).

The first major inscription that Kipling drafted was for the Stone of Remembrance. He wanted the message to conveyance the Commission’s principles of honor and remembrance while remaining simple to verse. After debating the options, Kipling chose an excerpt from the Book of Ecclesiasticus, which honored famous individuals for their sacrifice, “Their Name Liveth For Evermore” (Kenyon 1918, 23–24; Kipling 19 November 1918, 521). In a conversation between Kipling and Lutyens, Kipling later remarked that Lutyens’s Stone of Remembrance was “an inspiration and it looked well no matter where it was put. The only mistake I made was to have an inscription on it. Even my proposed ‘Amen’” (Skelton and Gliddon 2008, 35). Despite Kipling’s and Lutyens’s sentiments regarding the symbolism of the Stone of Remembrance, the Anglican Church felt that the “War Stone,” as it was originally termed, possessed no true religious function in the war cemeteries. However, Lutyens noted years after the construction of his Stones of Remembrance that many were used as altars to the memory of the dead, much as the architect had hoped, therefore becoming a major instrument in the formation and maintenance of British collective memory for many visitors (Geurst 2010, 35).

For his work with the Commission, Kipling produced inscriptions for a wide array of monuments to commemorate the sacrifices made by the war dead; many consisted of tablets for the entrances of cemeteries, tablets for religious institutions, and plaques to memorialize individuals lost at sea. The most frequent type of inscription produced by Kipling was for general memorials, which commemorated the memory of the specific regiments fighting during the war. These inscriptions usually mentioned the regiment’s name, sometimes their nationality, and the location of the battle. The best examples of these more common memorials include the Egyptian Labor and Camel Transport Corps, who fought in the Middle East, the Egyptian Expeditionary Forces and the New Zealand Forces fighting during the Palestine campaigns, and the Indian Armies commemorated at Neuve-Chapelle, Delhi, and Reshire (Chettle 27 December 1923; Kipling 28 December 1923; Ware

4 November 1924; Chettle 14 April 1925; King 24 July 1930). For Kipling, the most important information to convey through these inscriptions was the idea of memory and sacrifice. For the inscription on the memorial to the Palestine campaigns, Kipling suggested the following message to memorialize the men fighting for the British cause: "This memorial chapel was erected by the Officers, Non-commissioned Officers, and Men of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force, to the honoured memory of their comrades who fell in the Palestine Campaign 1914–1918" (Ware 4 November 1924). Much like the memorial to Palestine, Kipling spent much of his time making sure that the Indian Armies received their due commemoration after the war. In one of his suggested inscriptions, Kipling chose the message "To the glorious memory of the British officers, Indian officers and men of the Indian Army who fell in France and Belgium during the Great War of 1914–1918. The names of those whose resting place is unknown are recorded here" for the Indian Memorial at Neuve-Chapelle in France (Chettle 14 April 1925).

Another type of inscription created by Rudyard Kipling during the course of his membership to the Imperial War Graves Commission was inscriptions for religious institutions including both churches and cathedrals, particularly in England, France, and Belgium. The Commission requested inscriptions for cathedrals in France and Belgium, including Notre Dame, as well as an inscription for tablets to be placed in Westminster Abbey. For the memorial tablets in Notre Dame, Kipling chose the inscription "To the glory of God and to the memory of one million dead of the British Empire who fell in the war for civilization 1914–1918 and of whom the greater part rest in France" (Kipling 24 May 1923). And much like the tablets in Paris, the memorial placed in Westminster Abbey focused on the memory of common sacrifice across the whole of the British Empire. The inscription crafted by Kipling for the occasion simply read: "To the glory of God and to the memory of one million dead of the British Empire who fell in the Great War 1914–1918 they died in every quarter of the Earth and on all its seas and their graves are made sure to them by their kin. The main host lie buried in the lands of our Allies of the war who have set aside their resting places in honour for ever" (Imperial War Graves Commission 19 October 1926). Of the two tablets located in religious institutions, the memorial constructed for Westminster Abbey plays a greater role in the development of British collective memory after the Great War, because more Britons visited Westminster Abbey than did Notre Dame, making the commemoration a larger part of Britain's daily life, especially in London.

The final type of inscription produced by Kipling for general memorialization focused on the memory of individuals lost at sea, especially mercantile marines, hospital ships, and steamships (Imperial War Graves Commission 8 February 1928; Kipling 24 March 1926; Chettle 1 December 1923). At the 107th meeting of the Commission on 8 February 1928, it was recorded that Kipling suggested the following inscription for the Mercantile Marine Memorial at Tower Hill in London:

To the honour of the British Mercantile Marine. Here are recorded the names of more than twelve thousand officers and men of the Merchant service who during the war 1914–1918 gave their lives unfalteringly for the needs of their country, who met death at the hands of the enemy and whose grave is the sea (Imperial War Graves Commission 8 February 1928).

Many of the inscriptions for lost hospital ships and steamships generally followed the above example, with Kipling requesting the public remember the various actors who sank with their ships during the course of the war (Kipling 24 March 1926; Chettle 1 December 1923). Like the other members of the Commission, Kipling often sought to commemorate as many of the dead and lost as possible, thus leading to the creation of numerous memorials and monuments to the dead, wherever they lie, even if their graves were the sea.

While many of the Commission's memorials focused on the graves of identified individuals, much of the public, as well as Kipling himself, worried about the memory of the dead who possessed no known grave; both Kenyon and Kipling specifically addressed this public concern for the unidentified and lost graves in their Imperial War Graves Commission pamphlets in 1918. The Commission decided that special memorials were needed to commemorate the lost souls whom the Commission could never identify. These memorials became known as the "Kipling memorials," named after John Kipling, who acted as an example for relatives' need for closure. According to the Imperial War Graves Commission, the Kipling memorials "commemorate a soldier who once had a registered grave in a known cemetery but whose grave was not discovered when the other graves in the cemetery were concentrated into another cemetery" as well as soldiers who were listed as missing in action, like Kipling's son John (Imperial War Graves Commission 17 November 1926). For such memorials, Rudyard Kipling chose the inscription "Their Glory Shall Not Be Blotted Out" for those known to

have fallen in the region, while the inscription “A Soldier of the Great War Known Unto God” for those individuals who possessed a formal grave but no formal identification (Gilmour 2002, 280). Of all of the Kipling Memorials constructed by the Commission during the Interwar Period, the memorial to the British fallen on the Menin Gate in the city of Ypres captivated the public’s attention the most, not only for its beauty but for the thousands of names recorded on this walls to the dead of Ypres Salient and the Somme (Blomfield July 1927). To commemorate the largest memorial to the missing, Rudyard Kipling chose the words “To the armies of the British Empire who stood here from 1914 to 1918, and to those of their dead who have no known grave,” as well as an inscription to be displayed over the stairs that led to the ramparts, which read “Here are recorded names of officers and men who fell on Ypres Salient, but to whom the fortune of war denied the known and honoured burial given to their comrades in Death” (Blomfield July 1927). For Kipling, the memorials to the missing were the most important work of the Commission, because without these special monuments, the names of the missing would rapidly become lost to time, which was unthinkable to the Imperial War Graves Commission.

The final role given to Kipling by the Imperial War Graves Commission was to tour the cemeteries and memorials under construction throughout Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa. Originally, Kipling and his wife Carrie travelled extensively in Europe, though France was their most frequent destination. After the Great War, the Kiplings continued their vacations abroad, though much of the time the vacations were paired with Kipling’s mission to inspect and report on the state of the burial grounds, particularly in France in the early 1920s (Amis 1975, 101). In the summer of 1920, the Kiplings travelled nearly 1,500 miles throughout France to view the progress being made on the cemeteries on the Western Front. This trip included a visit to the battlefields near Loos and the Somme, where the Kiplings then ventured to Chalk Pit Woods, the last known location of their son, John (Longworth 1985, 79; Gilmour 2002, 280). Kipling remarked to Edmonia Hill in 1921 that his role as a member of the Imperial War Graves Commission had made him very familiar with the Western Front, but that this familiarity had not diminished his feelings upon seeing the “ruins and spoliation” (Kipling 2 June 1921, 80). While inspecting the work being completed at Rouen, Rudyard Kipling remarked that he was struck by “the extraordinary beauty of the cemetery and the great care that the attendants had taken of it, and the almost heartbroken thankfulness of the relatives

of the dead who were there” (Longworth 1985, 79). The purpose of many of these cemetery tours for Kipling was to report on the conditions that he encountered, make recommendations to the Commission, and to push for great funding of the projects by both the British public and the British government (Gilmour 2002, 281). Two of the many recommendations sent to the Commission by Rudyard Kipling were the creation of enquiry offices and grave directories to help relatives and friends find the graves of their fallen loved ones. Along with the tours throughout the Western Front, Kipling was also asked by Fabian Ware to inspect the progress of cemeteries in the Middle East, Egypt, and Gibraltar (Ware 14 March 1922; Commonwealth War Graves Commission, www.cwgc.org/about-us/what-we-do/records/our-archive.aspx).

The work of the Imperial War Graves Commission, and therefore the work of Rudyard Kipling, both directly and indirectly influenced the construction of British collective memory, to focus on remembering the Great War as a moment of common sacrifice between soldiers and between nations. The purpose of the Commission regarding the memorialization of the fallen was to remember the individual identities of the war dead, to use the cemeteries and memorials as constant reminders to future generations to avoid war, and to unite both the Empire and the nations of the world in the common memory of sacrifice.

From the outset of its creation, the Imperial War Graves Commission pursued the ideas of comradeship and common sacrifice in its work. The Commission felt that the place for the “individual memorial [was] at home” while the purpose of the Commission and the war graves cemeteries was to be a “symbol of a great Army and a united Empire,” thus, the Commission believed that the dead of all ranks and backgrounds should be “commemorated in those cemeteries where they lie together, the representatives of their country in the lands in which they served.” If private memorials were allowed to be constructed, the memory of this common sacrifice and common service would be lost forever (Kenyon 1918, 6). The purpose of the Commission, first and foremost, was to secure the memory of the fallen in foreign lands. This involved the need for identification, memorialization, and preservation. One of the Commission’s most pressing concerns after the construction of the war cemeteries was the future preservation and repairs for the headstones and the monuments; the Commission felt that a lost name or a broken tombstone meant “a man forgotten” (Longworth

1985, 137). To this end, the Commission petitioned the Treasury for a fund to maintain the appearance and therefore the memory of the war dead. In 1926, the Treasury granted the Imperial War Graves Commission a fund of £5,000,000 for the upkeep of the cemeteries (Kenyon 1924/5). As the Commission worked diligently to immortalize the names of the British dead, it also worked to impress upon visitors to the cemeteries and future generations that the cemeteries were to be viewed as hallowed ground, and that the visitors were “in the presence of those dead through the merits of whose sacrifices they enjoy their present life and whatever measure of freedom is theirs to-day” (Kipling 3 December 1922).

Along with the Commission’s mission to remember the individual dead, the organization worked to help the British people, and by association other nations, to remember to avoid the horrors and consequences of yet another European war, though as history would show, this endeavor was doomed to failure. In the King’s speech written by Rudyard Kipling during the King’s Pilgrimage in 1922, the King, and by extension the Commission, expressed the importance of the war cemeteries as a reminder for the peoples of Europe to avoid future wars. The King stated “I have many times asked myself whether there can be more potent advocates of peace upon earth through the years to come, than this massed multitude of silent witnesses to the desolation of war” (Kipling 1922, 93). In his annual Armistice Day and Remembrance Day addresses to the nation, Fabian Ware often passionately pressed for the public and the government to remember the mistakes of the past and avoid future wars. In his radio broadcast on 9 November 1930, Ware stated that the cemeteries and memorials were a “standing and visible record of the cost of war” and an “insistent reminder of the dread consequences of the political conditions which obtained in the world before 1914” (Ware 9 November 1930). Ware repeatedly referred to the war cemeteries as “silent cities of the Dead,” a term coined by Rudyard Kipling during his time as a commissioner for the organization; Ware used this imagery of hundreds of silent cities and witnesses to remind the British public that the war had immediate and long-term consequences, which should not be forgotten owing to fear, grief, or callousness (Kipling 1922, 93; Ware 11 November 1926). Ware believed that the cemeteries needed to stand as a constant reminder, particularly for future generations, of the cost of war, hoping that the visible reminder of the Great War would keep the memories of overwhelming sacrifice from being swept away, as it had been in the past (Ware 9 November 1930).

Like the goals of remembering the individual and remembering to avoid future conflict, the Imperial War Graves Commission sought, albeit indirectly, to unite both the British Empire and the nations of the world through the memory of the Great War and both national and imperial sacrifice. In the 1922 pamphlet on the King's Pilgrimage edited by Rudyard Kipling, the Commission writes that the work of the Commission must serve to "draw all people together in sanity and self-control," and to establish better relations with the nations of the world through the memory of a "common heroism and a common agony" (Kipling 1922, 93). For the Commission, and the British government, the Imperial War Graves Commission was first and foremost an imperial body, whose purpose was to recall the role of the Great War in consolidating the British Empire through a common cause and a common sorrow. Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin, Rudyard Kipling's cousin, stated that the cemeteries constructed by the Commission would "testify to coming generations, to the quickening sense of Imperial unity which [had] grown out of our great trial" (*The Times* 10 November 1928, 3). The Commission not only signified a united Empire through its visible work around the world, but it illustrated the great effort of the British Empire to work together to remember the great loss of life during the war. The Commission was comprised of representatives from all the major regions of the Empire, including Canada, Australasia, New Zealand, South Africa, and Newfoundland, all of whom played a large role in the funding and construction of the war cemeteries and memorials throughout the world (*The Times* 10 November 1928, 3). While the Commission illustrated the unification of the British Empire around a common loss, the organization also helped to unite nations around the globe in peace during the Interwar Period. The Commission created transnational bonds of common remembrance between former allies and former enemies, which led to both the creation of the Joint Committees for the guardianship of the graves and the joint ceremonies of remembrance, as nations came together to collectively mourn the fallen every November (Ware 1937, 12; Ware 1933). The Commission often noted the existence of cults of remembrance, especially in Belgium and France, where local villagers traveled regularly to the war cemeteries of the Commission to remember "the strange soldiery that could not talk their tongue, but played with [the village children]," sometimes even bearing "personal tributes" to the war dead of a foreign nation (*The Times* 10 November 1928, 7). Many times, these private occasions of foreign remembrance continued for decades, long after the actual memories of the foreign soldiers had faded.

On 18 January 1936, Rudyard Kipling died in England, from a perforated ulcer. His funeral was held at Westminster Abbey on 23 January, just days after the death of King George V (HMSO 23 January 1936). The Imperial War Graves Commission, at the behest of Fabian Ware, sent a special wreath to Westminster; the wreath was wrought from flora found in many of the Imperial war cemeteries in France (Imperial War Graves Commission January 1936). The death of Kipling was felt throughout the ranks of the Imperial War Graves Commission as well as the British Empire and the world. In its sixteenth annual report, the Commission wrote that it wished to convey its gratitude to Rudyard Kipling for his years of service to the cause of the war fallen:

The Commission [desires to] place on record their deep and abiding sense of loss which they have sustained in the death of their colleague and friend, Mr. Rudyard Kipling. They feel that an association of no ordinary official nature has been broken; and they know that this feeling is shared by their staff, to whom, in consultation in London or on frequent visits to the cemeteries abroad, he gave encouragement, inspiration, and a sense of personal interest in their work and welfare (Imperial War Graves Commission 1936, 5).

Lt.-Colonel G.P. Vanier, representing the Dominion of Canada at the sixteenth annual meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission echoed the sentiments of many at the Commission as well as the rest of the world when he stated that

Only a really great man, or a child, could be as simple as he was, and I for one have no doubt that he will rank as one of the greatest writers and also, which is perhaps more important, as one of the finest characters of modern times... Rudyard Kipling was the great apostle of service, whether of obedience or of command: the subject's service or the King's. Unafraid to serve, and we can best honour his memory by serving.. (Imperial War Graves Commission 1936, 6).

It was clear to many that Kipling's death had left a gaping hole in the Imperial War Graves Commission, so much so, that when Kipling's cousin, former Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin, stepped in to replace Kipling on the board

of the Imperial War Graves Commission, it was assumed that no one man could replace the poet. The Commission was also forced to appoint the critic Edmund Blunden to help Baldwin take up Kipling's fallen mantle, leaving another generation of commissioners to carry on the memories of the fallen (Holt and Holt 1998, 203–04). In his book *The Immortal Heritage*, which commemorated the first twenty years of the Imperial War Graves Commission, Fabian Ware writes that “Rudyard Kipling gave of his genius freely and whole-heartedly in the service of the commemoration of the dead,” helping to further the major principles and ideals of the Commission and helping to maintain the memory of the Great War in the minds of future generations (Ware 1937, 61).

Shortly before his death, Rudyard Kipling remarked that the immense undertaking of the Imperial War Graves Commission was “The biggest single bit of work since any of the Pharaohs – and they only worked in their own country” (Ware 1937, 56). Rudyard, along with the rest of the Commission, worked diligently during the Interwar Period to preserve the memory of those who died for their country in the Great War. While this was the Commission's and Kipling's main purpose for decades, they also both directly and indirectly influenced the creation of British collective memory surrounding the First World War, through their spoken and written rhetoric and their visible endeavors. Of the various postwar outlets for British collective memory, the work of Rudyard Kipling and the Imperial War Graves Commission signify the most active and all-encompassing effort to mold the memories of the Great War, not only to remember the millions of dead across the battlefields, but to unite all peoples in a common memory of sacrifice and mourning, in the hope that by doing so, the world would not repeat the failures of the past. Many historians point to the Interwar Period as the rise of the Memory Boom in the West, and like the efforts of the Imperial War Museum and the Great War artists, the Imperial War Graves Commission spent much of these two decades focusing on the potent costs of the Great War and planting the seeds of hope for peace across the Continent.

CHELSEA MEDLOCK

Doctoral candidate at Oklahoma State University, specializes in the history of industrialization and its effects on British identity and collective memory. Ms. Medlock is currently writing her doctoral dissertation entitled, Re-Membering the Forgotten Legions: the Veteranization of British War Horses, 1870–1945. Her dissertation focuses on the changing perceptions of the British military,

animal welfare organizations, and the public regarding the employment and veteran status of war horses in the age of total war. Ms. Medlock has conducted research into both animal history and the history of industrialization, presenting at numerous conference in North America and Europe.

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THE MILITARY CEMETERY AS A FORM OF THE CULT OF THE FALLEN SOLDIER: THE HISTORY OF THE IDEA AND ITS DESTRUCTION ON THE EXAMPLE OF AUSTRO-HUNGARIAN CEMETERIES IN "RUSSIAN POLAND"

Jerzy Pałosz, PhD

AGH University of Science and Technology in Krakow
Department of Humanities

ABSTRACT

Fundamental changes occurred in the ways in which fallen soldiers were dealt with in the latter half of the nineteenth century in Europe and the USA. This evolution ran from their original apprehension as the "muck of history," buried anywhere, in whatever fashion was available, to the cult of the fallen soldier, which reached its apogee in the era of the Great War. The culminating point was "the ideology of the military graveyard."

Since World War One, we have witnessed the gradual disintegration of this idea. The development of nationalism led to a decline in the equitable treatment of war casualties, regardless of their nationality. The great cemetery-monuments (at Redipuglia and Tannenberg) are products of a different ideology.

In the countries of Central and Eastern Europe different processes took place, linked to the cult of a nation's own soldiers, felled in the struggle for the freedom of their homelands. This process was particularly strong in Poland, and was tied to the cult of Marshal Piłsudski and the Legionnaires. As a result, the cemeteries from the Great War were physically destroyed, and where they survived, they became – to borrow a metaphor from Paweł Pencakowski – "the forgotten graves of no one's heroes." This process, which continues to this day, will be described using the example of Austro-Hungarian cemeteries on the former territory of the Kingdom of Poland.

In his work concerning death in Western civilization, Michel Vovelle poses a fundamental question: How does a nation state perceive its soldiers slain on the battlefield? Does it merely ensure them glory, or does it use them for other aims? (Vovelle 2008, 610).

In 1914–1918 the governments of the warring nations, terrified by the massive number of casualties, created the idea of the military cemeteries as the highest (though not exclusive) form of the cult of the fallen soldier. The key principles of this idea were: the right of every soldier to his own grave, and – insofar as this was possible – that it be marked with his first and last name, with equal treatment for the bodies of the opposing army, their burial in shared cemeteries, though generally in separate areas, and the recognition of the battlefield – the place of the soldier's death – as the most worthy place to lay him to rest. The fallen soldier (*der Gefallen*) had become a hero (*der Held*). This went for the enemy as well. The Germans marked a boulder in the section containing fallen Russian soldiers in Piotrków Trybunalski (in the Łódź voivodeship, Poland) with the inscription: “In praise of a brave opponent” (*Ehre dem tapferen Feinden*). In all the surviving grave inscriptions in “Russian Poland” the opponent is always “brave.”

This form of the cult of the fallen soldier had surely transpired for the first (and, unfortunately, the last) time in the modern history of Europe. What happened to it after the war's conclusion, particularly in Eastern Europe, where nation states had replaced the great powers? I will use my own research to try to illustrate the processes that occurred, based on the examples of military cemeteries in part of what was once the Kingdom of Poland, that is, the region that Germans and Austro-Hungarians called *rusische Polen*.

The Austro-Hungarian “Russian Poland” – the MGG

After the summer campaign of 1915, the Russian armies were pushed back from the lands of the former Kingdom of Poland. This region was subdivided into two occupied zones: a larger one to the north, administrated by the Germans, and one half the size, administrated by the General Military Governorship in Poland (*Militärgeneralgouvernement in Polen* – MGG), with its headquarters first in Kielce, and, after 1 October 1915, in Lublin. The Austro-Hungarians also administrated the Jasna Góra Monastery in Częstochowa. This town was located in the German administrative zone, but because of its special religious importance for the Poles it was handed

over to the Catholic Habsburg Monarchy. The governor appointed by the Emperor was directly answerable to the Commander-in-Chief of the Army (AOK).



The Kingdom of Poland; territory under Austro-Hungarian administration marked with a bold line. Source: Lewandowski 1980, 40

In this area, measuring nearly 45,000 square kilometers and divided into twenty-four regional commands (Kreiskommandos), 729 cemeteries and mass graves have been located, in which 148,129 casualties were laid to rest before 1917 (AGAD, MGGL, cat. 1166, unpaginated). By October 1918 another 11,000 bodies had been located, making for a combined total of 159,633 casualties buried here. There were surely more of them; the remains of soldiers were found in the interwar period, and are still being found to this day. Thus, to the question: How many soldiers fell and were buried in

this area?, our only honest reply is: We do not know. We might well mention another number established by the Austro-Hungarian administration – 491 Polish legionnaires were among the fallen. In August 1916 the Tenth Division of Military Graves was created by the MGG. It answered to the Ninth Division of Military Graves in the Ministry of War. Military Grave Divisions with various Kreiskommandos were also active in the area.

The Genesis of the Ideology of the Military Cemetery

To begin, we ought to cite R. Koselleck's reflection which, though it may concern monuments, is equally applicable to other forms of the cult of the fallen soldier: the paradox of the cult of the fallen, politically speaking, is that its symbolism and function are identical, or can be interpreted in an analogous manner. Their messages, however, are always tied to the time and the place. The message can be ritually repeated, or the monument's function can change; it can be destroyed or forgotten (Koselleck 1994,10).

It is generally accepted that the roots of this ideology reach back to the Enlightenment, and specifically, to the French Revolution and the First Empire. There is much truth to this, but as an overgeneralization, it is risky. The more or less insane concepts for commemorating the slain and those who served the revolution include Jacques Cambry's project (1799) – a pyramid into which their ashes were to be poured – and Napoleon's idea to engrave the names of fallen soldiers of the Great Army into a church, thus turning it into a great war monument. These were unrealistic, but they did stir the imagination. Jacques Cambry's project made the simple soldier equal to the head of a revolution, while Napoleon's equated him with generals and marshals and made him the object of a cult which had theretofore surrounded only leaders and rulers (Mosse 1990, 38). This period ultimately left behind the Pantheon, where the most deserving were buried, and the Arc de Triomphe, which contains the names of the marshals and generals. Nonetheless – excepting the section for the National Guard in Pere Lachaise – the problem of a dignified burial for fallen soldiers was not resolved. In this respect things remained as they were – ordinary soldiers were buried in any old place and manner, if they were buried at all.

The French managed to “infect” their opponents (in particular, the Prussians) with some of their ideas. In 1792 the Prussian King funded a monument in Frankfurt for the residents of Hesse, where the names of all fifty-five soldiers who fell in liberating the city were inscribed (Mosse 1990, 39).

Gerhard von Scharnhorst's reform of the Prussian army had the motto: "We will take victory when, like the Jacobins, we learn to speak to the spirit of the people" (Lynn 2008, 230).

In 1814 general conscription was introduced. In May 1813 King Frederick Wilhelm III had ordered all the districts, at their own expense, to hang a memorial plaque in every church with a list of those who "fell for their king and their fatherland."

The time of the revolution and the Napoleonic Wars thus brought about the beginning of the cult of the fallen soldier. Nonetheless, a German doctor visiting the field of the Battle of Leipzig wrote of the naked bodies of the fallen, devoured by dogs and crows. Walter Scott recalled that – although the battle of Waterloo was mostly cleared – there were places of mass burial marked by an unbearable odor (Mosse 1990, 44). In 1814 the Prussians burned the bodies of four thousand casualties at Montfaucon (Thomas 1991, 175). This occurred once again in 1871 at Sedan, where the Belgians, bothered by the odor from the shallow graves, decided to exhume them, fill them with tar, and burn them (Aries 1989, 537).

The Austrian fortress of Alba Iulia (presently part of Romania, a town that has also been called Weißenburg and Gyulafehérvár) holds an 1853 monument to the soldiers of the squadron stationed there, who died between 1848–1849. The names of four officers are listed, with a characteristic note: "Mannschaft 44." This term described soldiers who were not officers. It is hard to believe that the officers did not know the names of their subordinates. We can see that it simply did not occur to them to commemorate their soldiers.

It took another twenty years for this state of affairs to change. First in the United States, during and after the Civil War, in which – let us recall – more American soldiers died than in both world wars put together. From 1860 to 1880 changes also began to occur in Europe, albeit slowly. The massacre at Solferino in 1859 evoked terror, but ossuaries for the remains of the deceased were created only ten years later. Respect was shown for those killed in the Battle of Oświęcim during the Austro-Prussian war of 1866, who were buried alongside one another in graves marked with their names, but we ought to recall that the cemetery as it appears today was created only in 1877–1882. Of course, military cemeteries do appear, first near field hospitals

(e.g. in Legnica), or, most often, in special enclosures in parish cemeteries (keeping to territories within present-day Poland, we might mention Nowa Ruda, Świebodzice, Kowary, and Chelmsk Śląski). Many of these provide the names of the fallen soldiers, and not necessarily those belonging to officers alone. It did happen that military enclosures were walled off from civilian ones, but this is more to glorify the dead, and not to stigmatize, as was previously the case (Mosse, 1990, p. 45).

What happened, then? Sometimes one encounters the view that this was a result of American experiences. This hypothesis is less than convincing, given the Eurocentric view of the world that reigned at the time. It seems we are dealing with a few coinciding events, which do bear some resemblance to those which transpired earlier in the USA:

1. The introduction of general or voluntary conscription. In 1868 it became mandatory in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, in 1872 in France, and in 1874 in Russia. The soldier ceased to be the sole property of the state, and returned to his community after service.
2. The democratization of the European states, the development of the ideas of rule of law and civil rights, elective rights, and of local governments meant that the soldier – even when subject to harsh military discipline – remained a citizen. Where a civic society did not emerge, as in Russia, nor did respect for the fallen soldier, to say nothing of the living soldier.
3. The growth of literacy in societies, the development of the press and communications. Just a few decades earlier the average villager learned of a war when enemy soldiers (or their own, which amounted to the same thing) were standing at the outskirts of town. In the late nineteenth century news of war reached the smallest of villages, as did, sometimes, information on the deceased – often family members or neighbors.

The governments of the time could not remain indifferent to these changes. The soldier had the right to his own name on his own grave (insofar as this was possible). This was first made law by the Americans during their war with Mexico (1846–48), and a similar inscription was found in the Treaty of Frankfurt that concluded the Franco-Prussian War – though the degree to which it was respected is another matter entirely (Koselleck 1994, 14).

In this way the basic cult of the fallen soldier was created, reaching its apogee during the World War I period.

The Military Cemetery: Ideology and Practice

“The most dignified place for the soldier’s grave is where he has died for his Fatherland. Thus it is only natural that we find military graves and cemeteries in battlefields. And we can be sure that the all-leveling force of death never so strikes the consciousness as when, after a mortal conflict, friends and enemies are buried alongside one another,” wrote a German ideologist of the new military cemeteries (Bestelmeyer 1917, 22). This is the crux of World War I military cemetery ideology. And, we might add, it is the ideology’s Achilles heel. After the war ended, exhumations of the corpses of fallen French and English soldiers took place on a mass scale. The same concerns the cemeteries in “Russian Poland.”

Today, it is difficult to unambiguously state if, and to what degree, ideological or pragmatic concerns were decisive in creating this standpoint – the armies had more than enough logistical problems as it was without dealing with the exhumation and transport of the soldiers’ bodies as well. All the more so in that their number exceeded all expectations. The latter was certainly of greater import, though it would be wrong to disregard the ideological, or at least the psychological factor. The societies of the day were unprepared for such a long-term conflict – the European wars had theretofore concluded within the course of a few months. Nor did anyone predict that the turn-of-the-century technological revolutions in the art of killing would yield such a massacre of soldiers. Nor was anyone able to predict how much of this nightmare a general conscript was capable of enduring. It is hard to dispute Pawel Pencakowski’s view when he writes that the nightmare of war required the creation of an ideological counterweight: “The notion and task of building monumental cemeteries were a logical response to the madness of destruction; their creation and construction responded to the chaos of the battlefield; the general mayhem engendered the harmony of art and nature; the wartime clamor, poetic strophes; hatred, mercy; and animosity, unity” (Pencakowski 2002, 150).

The architecture of the military cemeteries in the East differs from that of the West. This results from the different nature of the wars: in the West it was trench warfare, while in the East it was trench/maneuver warfare. This explains the larger numbers of scattered graves and small graveyards in the latter.

There are also differences between the architecture of the graveyards found in the lands once belonging to the Austro-Hungarian Empire (Galicia) and

Germany (Eastern Prussia), and those found in the former lands of “Russian Poland.” This is particularly visible in the case of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, where an archipelago of 400 Galician cemeteries, each of which is in fact a work of art, clearly differs from the more humble sites in the lands of “Russian Poland.” The Galician sites (like the Prussian ones) were to serve as patriotic education in the future. In “Russian Poland,” where the political future was less than evident, they did not need to serve this role. This does not alter the fact that the basic ideological components were the same. The difference applied less to the content than the form, which was made uniform. Directives of the Tenth Division precisely outlined, for example, the shape and dimensions of the grave crosses, which were produced by favored companies.

Basic differences between the German and Austro-Hungarian cemetery concepts are also visible. Their ideological messages were derived from the divergent recent histories of either state. For Prussia, the latter half of the nineteenth century was a run of political and military successes, while the successes of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the same period were disputable, to put it lightly. Prussia’s greatest accomplishment was the building of a powerful state, while the Austro-Hungarian Empire merely succeeded in surviving. This is why the German monuments and cemeteries more often refer to glory, victory, and triumph, while their Austro-Hungarian equivalents are more likely to speak of the fallen soldier’s sense of duty and loyalty to the Emperor and the fatherland. The soldier’s devotion became an autonomous virtue whatever the outcome of the war or battle (Reichl 2007, 119–121). This is somewhat analogous to the situation in the USA after the Civil War, where the monuments erected in the north and the south differed in a similar fashion (Siedenhans 1994, p. 377).

In terms of symbolism the Germans had the upper hand over the Austro-Hungarians owing to the Iron Cross – a clear and legible mark of strength, a soldier’s valor, and eternal glory. Where circumstances allowed, grave monuments took the form of the Iron Cross, which found no opposition even among families of Jewish soldiers (Łopata 2007, 23). This was a secular symbol, not a religious one.

In practical terms, the difference between the German and the Austro-Hungarian cemeteries in “Russian Poland” were reduced to the construction materials of choice. The Germans preferred stone, in the form of cemetery

walls, and the Austro-Hungarians earth and wood, which was more a result of economic concerns than ideological ones. The main component of the cemetery space was a Kurgan grave, which was essentially a mass grave for unknown soldiers, which could be seen as a response to the post-war cult of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. The *Brüderkreuz*, developed by Austro-Hungarian designers was a powerful symbol – it was a cross of brotherhood, a composition of several crosses with interwoven arms placed on mass graves.

Over its two years of work the Tenth Division of the MGG and its local units partly managed to consolidate the scattered graves and smaller cemeteries. As a result, the number of graveyards was reduced from 729 to 687. In spite of the centrally imposed models, many interesting designs were created. Unfortunately, most of these were not executed, owing to a lack of time and, above all, funds.

The Polish State and the World War One Cemeteries, 1919–1939

The Polish state was reborn at an exceptionally unfavorable time for the survival of military cemeteries. Of the three powers fighting for its territory, two had ceased to exist, and the third – Germany – had too many domestic problems of its own to tend to the graves of its fallen soldiers on Polish lands for at least a few years. The wars, particularly those with Soviet Russia, required the total commitment of the people and public funds, and moreover, it was necessary to take care of the soldiers that were killed in them.

New circumstances emerged after the end of war operations. Above all – galloping inflation, which practically ruled out the sensible planning of activities that looked more than a few months ahead. It also turned out that the scale of the problem, both with regards to the number of tasks and the magnitude of the required financial investments, greatly exceeded the most pessimistic prognoses. This was in spite of the fact that Poland had resigned from the idea of buying back cemeteries on private lands (formally speaking, Poland was not the legal heir to the partitioning powers, and was not obliged to cover the war damages they incurred).

As in France and England, the problem of exhuming bodies from military cemeteries arose in Poland. The available documents make it difficult to estimate the scale of the problem. In the report of the inter-ministerial

hearing of November 1920 chiefly devoted to this issue, there is talk of “masses of requests submitted from the families of fallen or deceased soldiers” (Central Military Archive, cat. I.300.63.228, unpaginated). Judging by the numerous and frequent legal regulations concerning exhumation (27.11.1919, 15.01.1920, 20.05.1920) the problem was a pressing one. Ultimately, a solution was adopted that resembled the Austro-Hungarian one: exhumation was permitted in the period from 1 November to 15 April, but only in single graves; the opening of mass graves was forbidden, permission from the sanitation department of the relevant General District Command was required, and there were, of course, a whole range of sanitary regulations.

Was it simple to gain this kind of permission? The available documents do not give us a clear answer. Nonetheless, this was a time of searching for a compromise between the principles established during the war and the realities of life. Poland participated in the Red Cross conference in Prague (March 1920) devoted to graves and war cemeteries, where the following compromise was adopted: in principle it was forbidden to exhume a corpse from a military cemetery, where the soldier lies amid his company in a place of honor; in particular cases, however, consent ought not only to be granted, but families ought to be given all possible assistance. It therefore seems that, as in the West, the ideology of wartime had to give way to the natural law of civilian life – the right to bury one’s loved ones in a family environment.

As far as the treatment of the First World War cemeteries is concerned, the interwar period can be divided into two sub-periods, characterized by a clearly differentiated handling of cemeteries as the loftiest form of the cult of the fallen soldier.

In the first, which ran until approximately 1928/1929, the state authorities tried to enact the principles for handling fallen soldiers developed during the Great War. It was impossible to carry them out in full, of course, as the new state had new heroes of its own, who had fallen in the border war with Ukraine and in the Bolshevik War. It is no accident that Warsaw’s Grave of the Unknown Soldier holds those who died defending Lviv, and the choice of coffin was made by the mother of three sons who fell in combat with the Ukrainians. In our part of Europe this is nothing exceptional – in Latvia, for example, the Brothers’ Cemetery in Riga became a national cult symbol,

though it commemorated not the Great War, but the war for independence (Aboltis 1995, 183).

The second period began with the tenth anniversary of the end of the Great War, which Poland commemorated as the anniversary of regaining independence. This period brought an end to the idea of the military cemetery as it had been understood during the Great War. From then on, the cult of the fallen soldier focused on the monuments and cemeteries of the Legionnaires, who had won Poland's freedom. Separate cemeteries were created for Legionnaires. The bodies of soldiers of other nationalities were brought to different cemeteries (Jastków, Czarkowy) or, in some cases, located in separate, unmarked mass graves, which over time became forgotten (Bydlin).

Immediately after independence was regained, the cemeteries and military graves were tended to by military units, which was justified by the war that was being fought. The initially somewhat chaotic system run by the Military Graves Departments, the Military Constructions Council, and the various decanates was consolidated in December 1919 by the establishment of the Offices for the Care of Military Graves (UOnGW), which answered to the General District Commands (DOG), which in turn answered to the Ministry of Military Affairs. Beginning in early 1923, the upkeep of cemeteries was assigned to civil administration, the Ministry of Public Works, which was subordinate to the local UOnGW.

The first task was to register cemeteries and military graves. Although the relevant orders were released in December 1919, no wider inventory was carried out until 1921.

The results were horrifying. People had stolen all, or a significant portion of the cemeteries' accoutrements. The first to disappear were the wooden items – fences, gates, and crosses (where the Austrians had placed wooden ones). Of the several dozen visitation reports from the Miechów district, not a single one fails to mention a lesser or greater degree of devastation. We can assume that the robberies occurred in the winter of 1918/1919, which was exceptionally harsh.

Iron crosses had also vanished. In Wierzbnik, in the Kielce Voivodeship, police found a major stockpile of them in an estate. The policeman astutely

observed that it would be hard to find any use for them in a village farm, and that they were surely stolen to sell as scrap metal.

The main damage caused by these thefts was that the name plates of those laid to rest in certain graves vanished along with the crosses. Most often these were impossible to relocate on the basis of archival materials. As a result, one of the key rights of the fallen soldier was annihilated on a mass scale – the right to a grave marked with his name. The scale of the problem is demonstrated by the fact that, among all those buried in sixty-five cemeteries and military grave areas in the four regions in the north of the Małopolska Voivodeship, only in a single case has a concrete grave been assigned to a concrete soldier (Palosz 2012, 238).

There are also recorded examples of the dismantling of walls surrounding a cemetery. Here the explanation is simple – someone needed some well-worked stone for the foundation of his house. Father Tomasz Jachimowicz thus described his visit to the cemetery of German soldiers in Mieczysławów, in the Kozienice district: “The horror I found [...] all the monuments and gravestones destroyed, the crosses broken, and even stolen, apparently for use on farms. There was a chapel on the site that was dismantled for the foundations of huts. The iron gate no longer exists. Although the Germans are our enemies, it doesn’t matter, what is of concern in the present case is the embarrassment to our state and degradation of our national culture” (APKielce, UWK I, cat. 15221 index 68).

It was not only the military cemeteries and individual scattered graves that were at risk, but also the sections and mounds for buried soldiers in the parish cemeteries. It is hard to estimate the scale of this phenomenon in the interwar period. Complaints to authorities were made only sporadically, and generally concerned individual graves. The liquidation of larger sites was generally revealed by accident. One example is Stopnica, in the Kielce Voivodeship, where, in liquidating the Orthodox area (which was unfortunately the rule), the priest also liquidated the Legionnaire section, of whose existence he was allegedly ignorant. It seems that it was more often the case that cemetery areas were pilfered gradually. They were also devastated, though to a lesser degree than military cemeteries proper.

The state authorities fairly quickly realized the extent of the problem. At the various meetings of the heads of the General Districts (7 July and

29 November 1920) the “mournful state” of the military cemeteries was raised. Responding to the Ministry of War on the subject of military graveyards, Sub-colonel Bronisław Pieracki emphasized “society’s lack of respect and devotion to graves and their lack of cooperation in conserving cemeteries and military graves,” but also the lack of activity on the part of the UOnGW. It was proposed that councils become more active and the community become more active, particularly through the Polish Association of the Mourning Cross, created in 1920, an organization based on the Austrian Black Cross (ÖSK), whose aim was to “provide care for the graves of fallen soldiers, both Polish, and those belonging to the armies of the partitioning states.” Ranks of workers were to be organized from prisoners of war and even Polish soldiers, and cemetery guards were to be employed, often recruited, from among war invalids (CAW, cat. I.300.63.228, unpaginated).

This failed to make much of a difference. The voivodes called for the devastation to end (in 1923 and 1927), threatening harsh penalties, but to little effect. The workers were disorganized, at least in the Lublin Province, because of the exchange of prisoners with Soviet Russia and the swift demobilization. The guards that were hired were laid off in 1921 and 1922, owing to lack of funds. Only those who agreed to work in exchange for the right to the grass clippings from the cemetery grounds were kept on.

Devastation and ordinary bureaucratic incompetence affected both the graves from the Great War and the Bolshevik ones. In undated instructions from the Voivodeship Office in Lublin, hailing no doubt from 1921 or 1922, it was noted that many scattered graves were lying about which had few crosses and “practically all of their identities are unknown” (APLublin, UWL, WKB, cat. 3190, index 96). On 15 November 1920 the MPs representing the Popular National Union tabled a motion in Parliament indicating that the graves of Polish soldiers were scattered across fields, plowed, and located in places that were utterly inappropriate (APKielce, UWK I, cat. 15181, index 27).

Judging by the lack of further appeals to the population and relevant decrees after 1927 we might hazard the opinion that, if plundering of military graveyards had not ceased altogether by the late 1920s, it was at least no longer a mass phenomenon.

The “Mourning Cross” turned out to be a misled notion. In the larger cities it had some degree of recognition, but in the counties and communes it scarcely existed. “Our society is so occupied with everyday life that it does not or cannot understand matters of such significance as caring for military graves,” wrote Lublin’s voivode in a letter to the Ministry of Public Works in April 1923 (APLublin, UWL, WKB, cat. 3190, index 170). More funding was brought in by public collections, generally organized by the mayors of the smallest rural administrative units on 1 November. The surviving letters from donors in 1922 in the Lublin area appear to suggest that these mayors simplified their work by imposing a kind of tax on estate dwellers, a sum of one hundred Polish marks per family. This was less than the price of one egg.

As previously mentioned, the first and basic task of the administration was to inventory and identify the cemetery sites. This was essential to begin adequate renovation work, but also to assess the situation on a nationwide scale. In February 1920 the Ministry of War wanted to present the government and Parliament with a breakdown of the costs needed to upkeep the cemeteries, in the hopes of acquiring necessary funds from the “occupying states.”

The official statistics were of fantastical proportions. In October 1922 the Ministry of Public Works estimated that, across Poland, 500,000 soldiers were buried in 6,000 cemeteries, 200,000 lay in scattered graves, and there was a need for around 300,000 crosses and grave markings (APLublin, UWL, WKB, cat. 3191, index 50). Meanwhile, in the early 1930s, and thus right after the partial consolidation, the Ministry of Internal Affairs declared that, in the territory of Poland as it stood, there were 1.3 million soldiers buried between 1914–1921 in 10,755 cemeteries (CAW, cat. I.300.63.228). The Ministry of Public Works thus underestimated the scale of the problem by about fifty per cent. In April 1923 the ministry caught an inconsistency in data concerning the graveyards of German soldiers: according to Lublin’s data there were eighty, and according to German data – 546.

The Austro-Hungarian bureaucrats were guilty of the same crime. As mentioned before, they counted 687 cemeteries in MGG territory. Meanwhile, the sum total of cemeteries in the early 1930s in the Lublin (425) and Kielce (653) voivodeships comes to 1,078. If we add the military areas in the parish graveyards to this sum (336), we arrive at a total of 1,414 (we should take into account that during the Bolshevik War new cemeteries were not established in the Lublin area; fallen soldiers were buried in military areas

or in scattered graves). Even the border changes of the Lublin Voivodeship cannot account for such vast discrepancies.

As for the scattered graves, every number is only approximate. To this day, private grave hunters find a few new ones every year.

In spite of the war, the lack of documentation and the problems with grave robbery, the new Polish state did have a chance to cope with the problem of the vast quantities of cemeteries and military graves. The obstacles they faced were a public funding crisis and gigantic inflation. In September 1923 the Lublin voivodes applied for additional subsidies to close the third financial quarter, an amount of 60 million Polish marks. In October they were informed that the combined subsidy of 75 million marks earmarked for the third quarter had run out, and they applied for 150 million for the fourth quarter. The mad inflation annihilated any sensible plan of action. If a liter of milk cost 400–500 marks in September 1922, a year later it cost 3,000–5,000 Polish marks.

The situation stabilized after Władysław Grabski's currency reforms (April 1924). This allowed for the gradual consolidation of military cemeteries. At any rate, such activities had been taking place – as far as funds and manpower allowed – since 1920. However, the Ministry of Public Works' rescript of 13 January 1923 (APLublin, UWL, WKB cat. 3190, index 178) and a range of accompanying decisions created a legal basis for cautious consolidation, particularly the transfer of soldiers buried in smaller cemeteries and scattered graves to larger "collective" cemeteries. The bodies of identified fallen soldiers were to be buried in single graves, and the obligation to transfer the cross or the name plate together with the body was stressed, as was the duty to keep them in a decent state. Unknown bodies were to be buried in common graves. They maintained the principle that collective graves containing in excess of twenty bodies were not to be exhumed.

In sum: until more or less 1928–29 the Polish government tried – insofar as this was possible – to maintain the basic principles of the policies toward cemeteries that were developed in the Great War.

The Time of Nationalism: Our Fallen Soldiers and Theirs

The turn of the 1920s and 1930s sparked nationalist moods in Poland and all across Europe. This was quickly reflected in policies toward war

cemeteries – fallen soldiers began to be divided into ours (superior) and theirs (inferior). Projects emerged to place “our” bodies in separate cemeteries, or sometimes to remove the “foreign elements” from “Polish” cemeteries.

This phenomenon was not unique to Poland. In December 1920, on the request of the Hungarian government, the Ministry of War asked the General District Commands if it was possible to clearly distinguish the graves of fallen Hungarian soldiers (APKielce, UWK I, 15196, 24). This request was reiterated in 1929, and further suggestions came a year later – that the cemeteries of fallen Hungarians be renovated first, that “Hungarian soldier” be written in Polish on their gravestones, and that Hungarian bodies should be, as far as possible, put in separate graves. Poland agreed to some of these requests, while stating that they would be possible only when the cemeteries were being reconstructed (APKielce, UWK I, cat. 15196, 166). Representatives of the Hungarian embassy occasionally visited the graveyards where their countrymen lay buried (in Lublin, for example, in 1928).

In Bielany, near Warsaw, an Italian cemetery was built in 1926; prisoners of war buried in Poland were exhumed here. Exhumation concluded in the territory of the latter-day MGG in 1929. In the fall of 1928 the Turks submitted a request for their deceased to be exhumed, establishing a cemetery near Lviv (APKielce, UWK I, cat. 15182, 53).

In Poland the changes in military cemetery policy were tied to Józef Piłsudski's May *coup d'état* (1926) and were a consequence of the burgeoning cult of the Marshal and the Legionnaires. The conviction formed (or was formed) that the Legion was the main reason why Poland had regained independence.

In late 1929 the Minister of Public Works, Jędrzej Moraczewski, suggested “creating, as far as possible, Polish military cemeteries which hold mainly Polish soldiers, transferring the grave mounds for foreign soldiers to other cemeteries, mixing the bodies of the soldiers of the occupying armies” (APLublin, UWL, WKB, cat. 3187, 122). The style of this document is significant. It indicates how far we had moved from the conception developed during the Great War.

The way in which the bodies were treated also changed. When, in 1932, the remains of Polish soldiers were exhumed in Okraja (Lublin Voivodeship),

this was a ceremonial occasion. The bodies were laid in decorative coffins, and a special mass was held in a nearby church. The remains of the “soldiers of the occupying countries” were carried in paper sacks. In June 1929 the Lublin Voivodeship Council considered the complaints of three local mayors against a Voivodeship Council delegate leading the exhumation of scattered graves. They complained that the “remains of soldiers’ bodies were transported in a small paper bags” and that he had recommended they be buried, at the cost of the local governments, in the nearby cemeteries. One mayor claimed that the delegate had been drunk (APLublin, UWL, WKB, cat. 3191, 39–40).

In the early 1930s Legionnaire cemeteries began to be established, as in Jastków (1931, Lublin Voivodeship) and Czarkowy (1937, Kielce Voivodeship). A problem arose, however: What was to be done with the bodies of the Austro-Hungarian and Russian soldiers buried there?

During a visit to Jastków in 1929, a representative of the Legionnaires’ union suggested that the cemetery be completely rebuilt to hold exclusively Legionnaires. The twenty-three Russian soldiers and 108 Austro-Hungarian soldiers buried there in a mass grave (according to other data – 255 Russians and 117 Austro-Hungarians) were to be transferred to another cemetery (APLublin, UWL, WKB, cat. 3191, 10). This was, in fact, accomplished – in 1930 they were exhumed and transferred to nearby Garbów (Dąbrowski 2004, 105). It is a small irony of history that, two years earlier, on the tenth anniversary of the regaining of independence, in this very cemetery, the local people raised a chapel with the inscription: “To the knights who fell fighting for the freedom of the Homeland, on the tenth anniversary of independence, 1928.” Not a single Polish soldier is buried in this cemetery. This also anticipates a tendency that was to become almost universal after 1989.

Apparently, the same occurred in Czarkowy, though on a greater scale. A chance discovery of a Legionnaire grave by the road to the cemetery led to a monument to the “victory of the Legionnaires” being erected here in 1928 (Oettingen 1988, 107). This was followed by a decision to reshape the existing cemetery into a Legionnaire one. In total the ashes of over a dozen Legionnaires were placed here (Oettingen 1988, 106). To this end, the remains of 473 Austro-Hungarian and Russian soldiers were removed in 1937 and taken to a nearby cemetery in Opatowiec. This did not, however, cause the latter cemetery to be expanded. “The remains of the bodies will be buried

in the area confined by the embankment surrounding the cemetery,” we read in the Voivodeship Council’s letter to the Regional Government Office in Pińczów (APKielce, UWK I, cat. 17483, 254–257). Because the cemetery in Opatowiec is relatively small (around twenty-eight by thirty-one meters), it is difficult to imagine a dignified burial for almost five hundred bodies.

We find an explanation of this phenomenon in correspondence concerning another exhumation. It was fairly common practice to carry bodies to the military enclosures of parish cemeteries. This did not require the consent of the priest, as the remains were buried between preexisting graves, thus not increasing the surface area of the section (APKielce, UWK I, cat. 17484, 189–90; cat. 17483, 221, 268).

Specialists from the Jurajski Forum, researching the cemetery in Kotowice, in the Myszków district, have come across human remains barely 30–40 cm below ground. There is evidence to suggest that the cemetery in Kluczy in the Olkusz district was only partly exhumed, and that bodies were certainly left in mass graves (research is still underway). The reason for this was the constantly reiterated appeals of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (after the liquidation of the Ministry of Public Works in 1932, responsibility for military graves passed to the Ministry of Internal Affairs) to exercise maximum frugality in consolidating cemeteries.

Was even a symbolic religious ceremony organized in relocating bodies? It would seem not – though exceptions did occur. In 1937 the Voivodeship Council in Kielce applied to the head of the Tenth Corps Region for consent to transfer parts of a military cemetery to a new location. For financial reasons, there was a request to be free of the obligation to bless the new grave, arguing that during the time when the military cemeteries and enclosures were established they were, in the main, not blessed (which was not actually true). The council appealed to the Ministry of Public Works resolution of 5 January 1931, whereby soldiers’ bodies were to be transported “with all caution, gravity, and respect, but incurring no costs beyond reasonable necessity.” In response, the Catholic dean of the Tenth Corps District reminded the council that “in times of peace all transport of bodies should be accompanied by a brief service, out of concern for the piety and reputation of the local population,” and that, moreover, in this case, it would cost nothing, as the blessing was performed free of charge by the priest of the garrison in Sandomierz. His objection was supported by the head of

the district (APKielce, UWK I, cat. 17483, 357–362). Judging by the other archival documents, however, this was more an exception than the rule.

Consolidation

The act of 28 March 1933 pertaining to military graves and cemeteries (Dziennik Ustaw No. 39/1933, art. 34) regulated the issue of military cemeteries in a complex fashion (it holds to this day, in an amended version). Cemeteries were, from then on, to be located on state lands (apart from religious cemeteries). If they were located on private lands, the state powers were given a choice: exhumation, purchase, or – inasmuch as this was possible – appropriation of the land where the cemetery lay. The state was responsible for the affairs tied to military cemeteries, while the communes took care of the local management. The regulations concerning exhumation were liberalized at the family's behest – the decision was made by the voivode.

This act placed a great financial burden on the Polish state, and thus it was clear that the number of cemeteries had to be reduced to a reasonable figure. The general tendency was consolidation. Documents from the early 1930s show that the scope of the liquidation was enormous. In the Kielce district 290 cemeteries were to remain out of 653, and in the Lublin area, 180 out of 425. There were no plans to reduce the numbers of military enclosures in civilian cemeteries. However, the number of graves, both single and collective, was to be reduced.

Consolidation plans were modified as time went on. To judge by surviving correspondence between the Ministry of Internal Affairs, voivodeship councils, and local mayors, the basic criterion for keeping or liquidating a cemetery was the answer to a question: What comes out more affordable – exhumation or buying the land? (APKielce, UWK I, cat. 17483, 35–37, 173, 175, cat. 17484, 187, 205–208). Thus, unfortunately, it happened that cemeteries that had recently been renovated were liquidated in spite of being architecturally interesting, their only drawback being that they were located on private land.

The main objection toward consolidation – apart from the negligence in its enactment – is the fact that it brought no “added value” to the state of the surviving cemeteries. The reason for this was obvious: frugality. This is clearly expressed in a Ministry of Internal Affairs letter dated April 1939 to the Kozienice district authorities: in the remaining cemeteries only

“provisional repairs” were to be conducted (APKielce, UWK I, cat. 17484, 187).

An act of 1933 broke with the World-War-I idea of the military cemetery once and for all. This ideology, however, had long since died. The cemeteries – to paraphrase the title of Paweł Pencakowski’s work – became “the forgotten graves of no one’s heroes” (Pencakowski, 1996, 3).

World War II and the Post-war Period: A Time of Destruction

The Germans restored a few cemeteries, including six in the Lublin district (Dąbrowski, 2004, 51). In destroying the majority of Jewish cemeteries, they liquidated many neighboring military grave enclosures at the same time (the rest were, unfortunately, destroyed immediately after the war).

The problem of secondary burials also cropped up – fallen Polish, German, and Soviet soldiers were buried in the First-World-War cemeteries and military enclosures. When Soviet (and later German) soldiers were exhumed in separate cemeteries, the remains of those killed in the First World War were also often collected.

World War II trauma caused the World War I cemeteries to vanish from the community’s memory. “Whereas military cemeteries were liquidated in the interwar period through the consolidation of graves [...] after 1945 these cemeteries disappeared through a lack of interest and upkeep” (Oettingen, 1988, 62).

The history of this “disappearance” of military cemeteries and enclosures is fairly well documented in the literature (Dąbrowski, 2004, 52–53, 123–124, Lis, 2001, 71, Oettingen, 1988, 62, 101, 173, 186, Ormanowie, 2008, 136–137, 152, 160, 183, Pałosz, 2012, 225–231), and thus we need not delve into the problem here. Firstly, those cemeteries on private lands that had not been exhumed or purchased in the interwar period disappeared. Many of these were plowed up, in some cases (Wierzychowisko near Wolbrom, Stogniowice near Proszowice, Kraśnik in the Lublin Voivodeship) they were joined to private properties, and one example is known of the construction of a residential home on a cemetery (Skrzeszowice IV near Krakow).

This does not mean that such a fate was shared by the majority of military cemeteries or enclosures during the time of World War I. Where there were

no cemeteries of those killed in World War II they served the role of “tombs of the unknown soldier.” As the oppositional mood increased in the 1980s, some came to serve as local *ara patriae* – altars of the Homeland. Symbolic crosses appeared, honoring the memory of Polish officers murdered at Katyń (as in Biórków Wielki or Olkusz) or – in more contemporary times – sites for the cult of President Lech Kaczyński and other victims of the Smoleńsk catastrophe (Włodowice, the Zawiercie environs).

This was not the first example of the “appropriation of fallen soldiers.” In 1953, during the preparations to commemorate the ninetieth anniversary of the January Uprising, some First World War graves of unknown origin (at the time) were renamed graves of the Insurgents of 1863 (e.g. Złotniki I and II near Kraków). However, as the Polish proverb says, every evil brings some good results – and surely it is for this reason that they have survived to this day.

The Appropriation of Fallen Soldiers

The year of 1989 saw crucial changes to how First World War cemeteries were treated. The role of the Austrian Black Cross (ÖSK) can not be overestimated here, as it first financed, and then inspired the renovation of the World War One cemeteries. This period also saw increased interest among local populations in the history of their “little homelands.” Happily, there are still people whose parents or grandparents told them stories about the First World War and the graves found on their land. It does, however, often happen that these “discoveries” are tainted by stereotypes shaped by the decades in between, above all the fairly widespread conviction that in 1918 Marshal Piłsudski’s Legionnaires fought for Polish freedom. Thus it frequently occurs that, in cemeteries or grave enclosures where not a single Legionnaire is buried, there are inscriptions claiming or suggesting that they contain the bodies of Polish soldiers who fell in the struggle for independence in the years 1914–1918. An extreme example is the military grave enclosure in Igołomia, just over a dozen kilometers east of Kraków, which holds the remains of 127 Austro-Hungarians (judging by the course of the battle in this region, they must be primarily Tyrolians) and twenty Russian casualties. The towering monument is dedicated to “the nameless Polish soldier” who fell in the fight for independence. The image of this “Polish soldier” on the facade of the monument is a curiosity of sorts: he wears a helmet resembling those worn today in China, a Russian overcoat, and holds something recalling a Kalashnikov in his hand.

Such cases, unfortunately, are abundant. Probably the largest cemetery appropriated for the Legionnaires is Opatów I, where 929 fallen soldiers are laid to rest, including one Legionnaire (who was certainly exhumed, at any rate). There are scarcely fewer (855) at the cemetery in Ogonów near Wolbrom, which is devoted to Legionnaires (in reality one lies there). Marek Lis has found at least seven cases of mislabeled cemeteries in the Sandomierz area (Lis 2001, 61), and Marian Dąbrowski has found the same number in the Lublin area. An initial attempt to sum up the number of bodies declared to be legionnaires finds that it exceeds their combined total in 1914. We have two contradictory tendencies. On the one hand, there is the development of associations and informal groups (e.g. the Jurajski Association and the Austro-Hungary Internet forum) with the relevant knowledge. On the other, we are dealing with the spontaneous acts of people who remain under the influence of Legionnaire ideology or who lack knowledge and competence (which cannot, after all, be expected of them).

Excessive generalizations, however, are risky. My research into the First World War cemeteries in the northern districts of the Małopolska Voivodeship indicates that, of the twenty-one marked cemeteries (not counting those which have been plowed over or otherwise destroyed), eleven are correctly marked, five are wrongly or ambiguously marked, and five are not marked at all. In terms of the military sections of cemeteries, twelve are correctly marked, one is unmarked, and thirteen are marked wrongly or ambiguously (Palosz, 2012, 245–246). Here, too, the destroyed sections have been omitted.

Unfortunately, the members of The Jurajski Association continue to wage a battle, both fierce and hopeless, against scrap collectors; in Wronin in the Małopolska Voivodeship only one cross remains of the several dozen donated by the priest in the neighboring Biórków (which ought still to be regarded as progress, as for several decades after World War II there was only a local garbage dump on the site). It would seem that the lack of respect for military cemeteries found outside of parish or communal graveyards will be remarkably difficult to mend. This does not alter the fact that military enclosures are sometimes liquidated in parish cemeteries. In 2011 in Aleksandrowice (a district of Bielsko-Biała, Silesian Voivodeship), for example, there were visible traces of new burials in the grounds of a former military enclosure – between freshly-dug civilian graves one could find abandoned metal crosses, which generally signify soldiers' graves.

The liquidation of small local schools and the decline in importance of the scouts means that cemeteries and mass graves once maintained by school children are gradually disappearing (in the Krakow region, this has meant the disappearance of the cemetery in Marszowice and the mass grave, Skrzyszowice III).

The most difficult issue, however, will be dismantling the mythology of the Legion and departing from the “us and the occupants” formula; showing the fallen soldier in this most senseless of wars in the history of Europe as an ordinary person whom politicians tore from his natural environment, gave a uniform and a weapon, and ordered to kill others like him, but in different uniforms. Only to fall dead in a country that was foreign and hostile.

Will such a transformation in the perception of the cemeteries that remain after World War I ever be possible? Not in the foreseeable future. The legend of the Legions is inscribed in Polish historical mythology, where historical truth has no role to play.

JERZY PAŁOSZ

A lawyer and a historian, a journalist for many years, presently an employee at the Faculty of Humanities, Cultural Studies Department of AGH University of Science and Technology (Krakow). He has written a range of publications on the subject of military cemeteries from the Great War and the history of the cult of the fallen soldier. In 2012 he published the book Śmiercią złączeni. O cmentarzach z I wojny światowej na terenach Królestwa Polskiego administrowanych przez Austro-Węgry [Death of the United: On World War One Cemeteries in the Kingdom of Poland administrated by the Austro-Hungarian Empire] (pub. Libron, Krakow 2012). He has spent years heading the inventory of the remains of cemeteries from the Great War in the former lands of the Kingdom of Poland. He has received the Black Cross for Service to Austria.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Sabine Stadler PhD

University instructor

**THE BLACK CROSS. REMEMBERING
THE VICTIMS OF WAR – FOR PEACE
(WIENNA: BM FÜR INNERES, 2012)
DAS SCHWARZE KREUZ.
KRIEGSOPFERFÜRSORGE-ARBEIT FÜR DEN
FRIEDEN (WIEN: BM FÜR INNERES, 2012)**

The Austrian Black Cross is an organization that dates back to the First World War. It looks after and renovates graves and cemeteries of soldiers who perished in the two world wars.

The Republic of Austria spent a great deal of money in publishing a large report on the activities of the ÖSK. The ÖSK was founded after the First World War to commemorate the soldiers who had died in the war. The organization is responsible for Austrians of the former Wehrmacht and their graves abroad, as well as for all graves, graveyards and cemeteries of foreign and refugee soldiers in Austria. The ÖSK has its office in the center of Vienna, and a large scientific and administrative board, headed by Dr. Stefan Karner, a history professor at the University of Graz. The administrative board is composed of representatives of the nine federal states, and South Tyrol, a province in Italy. Its duty in the nine federal states is to maintain the graves and graveyards of the soldiers, and ensure visitation rights for their families from all over the world. Anyone who has an ancestor in an Austrian cemetery has the right to visit the grave. The central office in Vienna works like a travel agency; it employs several translators and organizes group excursions from Ukraine, Russia, and Eastern Europe to visit graveyards. Maintaining the cemeteries where soldiers are buried and commemorating the deaths of our ancestors are the tasks of the Black Cross.

Academic research and publications are created by the LB Institute für Kriegsfolgenforschung, Universität Graz, where large conferences are held, and books and individual articles are published. A book has been issued,

for example, on all the cemeteries in Austria and all the graves of Austrians in other European countries and South Russia. Since the Second World War the Black Cross has been involved in care for and commemoration of stone monuments and ceremonies in graveyards, helping to locate graves, to identify people, and to inform families. The organization also maintains foreign soldiers' graves in Austria. Its photographs and documents are used for scientific reports all over the world. Some examples of its cooperation are the Austrian-Italian peace meeting, and the peace service for the Near East in North Israel-Syria (for the UN). The young people's organization of the Black Cross offers practical assistance for graveyard work. The documentation contains a list of all the foreign programs since 1963–2011. These special programs are located in Poland, Croatia, Italy, Germany, and Austria.

Young people have come to St. Pölten from Germany, Austria, Russia, Poland, Eastern Europe, and twice from Russia.

Every federal state in Austria has its own organization.

Forty-seven locations are cemeteries, thirty-eight for the Red Army or Russians.

Nine hold Austro-Hungarians, Serbs, Italians, Dutch, Romanians, or laborers from the east. All of Burgenland is full of graves of Russians who died in 1945 as a third Ukrainian army. Vienna's roll-over to the Nazi troops is history, but the number of victims is not. Lower Austria is another province which holds an enormous number of graves, but cites 202 cemeteries, with the graves of the parents of Austrian oligarchs like Abramovich or Deripaska among them (all Zwettl).

Twenty-one were dedicated to German Wehrmacht, thirty-two to the Red Army, thirty-four to the Austro-Hungarian army, seven to Germans expelled from the Czech Republic, and small graves for Russia, Italians, Serbians, Romanians, and Montenegrins, as well as three cemeteries for Jews.

The list of grave-related activities concludes with gardening, preservation, tourism etc.

The second emphasis is on the foreign work on World War I and II graves abroad. In the years 2007–2012 old graves were renovated and reconstructed

in Italy. This work was done by a organization of volunteers called Alpinis und Fantis. The Austrian Black Cross paid for part of the work, but the bones of Austrian soldiers were exhumed and placed into “Sossarien.”

The nine federal states and South Tyrol describe their activities on all graveyards. Only men take part in the work. The masculine character of the organization is overt, and as such, the Black Cross is denounced as conservative or reactionary. It is a gathering of soldiers, officers, and military personnel from the Austrian army, as well as high-ranking civil servants. The organization is gathered in nine boards, the general assembly, with two heads and two vice-secretaries, presently managed by General Barthou, in Vienna, on behalf the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The various tasks are a very important factor in the life of the organization, and the nine federal states describe their history and practices to date, as well as the tradition of the groups, the people, the journeys, the cemeteries, the spending policy, and public opinion. South Tyrol is a special case, as it is Italian; its three cemeteries, in Meran, Brixen, and Bruneck hold 699 Austro-Hungarian soldiers, 103 Russians, thirteen Serbs, and seven Romanian soldiers. The book ends with the foreign graves, as Austrians are buried in Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Germany, Italy, Croatia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Montenegro, Poland, Russia, Switzerland, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, the Czech Republic, Ukraine, Hungary, and Cyprus.

The timetable at the end is a summary of the activities from 2000–2011 (international conferences, work with children, commemoration ceremonies, peace services in churches, commemorative sculptures etc.)

SABINE STADLER

studied social sciences, political science, and European studies in Vienna and Paris. She is a social worker and documentalist; speaks five languages. She works for the Austrian after-care service and in the Federal Academy of Public Administration and the Austrian State Archive. She has been a freelance social scientist, adult educator, and museum/library/archive worker since 2000. She is an Austrian expert to the European Commission and University teacher in Slovenia, Slovakia, Czech Republic, and Russia. She has contributed around 140 publications in German, English, and Russian on Youth, Central Europe, Women, Russia and EU expansion. She is an expert in cultural heritage, and on the gray scientific literature in Austrian files.

Małgorzata Popiołek, Doctoral Candidate

Technical University of Berlin

Faculty: Planning – Building – Environment

Institute of City and Regional Planning

Department of Heritage Conservation

**JAN SALM, *THE RECONSTRUCTION
OF EASTERN PRUSSIAN CITIES
AFTER WORLD WAR I* (OLSZTYN:
THE BORUSSIA CULTURAL
COMMUNITY, 2006)**

JAN SALM, *OSTPREUSSISCHE STÄDTE IM
ERSTEN WELTKRIEG. WIEDERAUFBAU UND
NEUERFINDUNG* (MUNICH: OLDENBURG
VERLAG, 2012, GERMAN TRANSLATION)

In the summer of 1914 the Russian army crossed into Eastern Prussia, the easternmost region of the German Empire. That same year, after the German victory at the Battle of Tannenberg, discussion began on how the devastated cities and villages might be reconstructed. Until this time, East Prussia had been a somewhat neglected region of the Empire (apart from its cultural center of Königsberg), and, paradoxically, it was only the destruction of World War I that turned the attention of the German public toward the problems of this area. The efficient reconstruction of the Eastern Prussian cities did not merely aim to put roofs over the heads of the residents as quickly as possible; it was, above all, an important tool of German propaganda during the still-raging war. Over the next ten years, architecture changed not only outwardly in the Prussian East; it acquired an entirely new political significance.

After 1945 Eastern Prussia's architectural heritage was located on Polish and Soviet territory. While the Teutonic castles and medieval churches enjoyed a great deal of interest from their new owners, the architecture of the early twentieth century was less appreciated, in part because it was newly built.

Architectural historian Jan Salm is among the first to turn attention to this issue, after having read a volume from 1928 entitled *Der Wiederaufbau Ostpreußens. Eine kulturelle, verwaltungstechnische und baukünstlerische Leistung*, which he stumbled across in the Łódź University Library. This book opened the floodgates to the lost land of Eastern Prussia and its architectural heritage from the first two decades of the twentieth century.

There are dwindling numbers of architectural sites built on the ruins of buildings destroyed in World War I in Eastern Prussia: what was not consumed by World War II and the Red Army in 1944/1945 was gradually dealt with by the policies of the People's Poland and subsequent neglect. After 1945 Eastern Prussia was primarily researched by historians who dealt with it from their own specific angles.

Jan Salm's book is the first in-depth publication on the manner and course of reconstruction of the cities in Eastern Prussian after World War I from the point of view of architectural history. The book includes source materials culled from Polish and German archives and analyses of selected sites. The publication is also furnished with maps of various cities with markings on areas that were destroyed during World War I. A most definite advantage of Jan Salm's book is its depiction of the reconstruction of Eastern Prussia set against other tendencies in European architecture of the time, and the ways in which cities in Belgium, France, Italy, and Poland were rebuilt after the First World War. The rebuilding of Eastern Prussia harnessed the most important tendencies of European architecture: a longing to return to the style ca. 1800, the search for a national style, reform architecture, an interest in "local architecture," and the attempt to create a stylistic "national" alternative to the aesthetics of historicism and Art Nouveau. The architecture of the reconstructed Eastern Prussian cities, which was meant to express the German spirit on the Eastern borderlands of the German Empire, was in fact deeply rooted in the European architectural trends of the day, and one finds numerous parallels to ways in which cities in other parts of Europe were reconstructed.

For inhabitants the ravages of war mean losing the roof over their heads and the landscape they know; for architects it is generally a chance to rebuild and modernize. No reconstruction aims to recreate old mistakes, it rather brings the opportunity to improve both the aesthetics and the layout of architecture. And although the reconstruction of the Eastern Prussian

cities destroyed during World War I carried a clear political agenda, the architectural roots of the reconstruction methods were derived from the European architecture community, which transcended political divisions.

Jan Salm's book reveals an architectural picture of Eastern Prussia that is full of gaps and question marks – a land which had, until recently, evoked political resentment, is treated as a research area without the historical baggage. One might say that the author's research has come at the very last moment, though for some sites it is already too late, and others have lost their urban contexts. We can be sure that this book does not exhaust its topic. It expresses the hope that it will merely serve as a point of departure for further, more detailed work.

MALGORZATA POPIOŁEK

She is an art historian specializing in history of architecture and city planning. She studied art history in Warsaw and in Freiburg im Breisgau, as well as heritage conservation in Berlin. In 2012 she began writing her PhD at the Technical University of Berlin on the reconstruction of monuments in post-war Warsaw and its European context.

Jenny Wüstenberg, PhD

Free University of Berlin

Associate Fellow, Berlin Program for Advanced
German and European Studies

**ELISABETH KÜBLER, *EUROPEAN
POLITICS OF MEMORY. THE COUNCIL
OF EUROPE AND THE REMEMBRANCE
OF THE HOLOCAUST* (BIELEFELD:
TRANSCRIPT, 2012)**

ELISABETH KÜBLER, *EUROPÄISCHE
ERINNERUNGSPOLITIK. DER EUROPARAT
UND DIE ERINNERUNG AN DEN HOLOCAUST*
(BIELEFELD: TRANSCRIPT, 2012)

As Elisabeth Kübler notes at the outset of her book, while memory studies has seen considerable development at the level of nation-states and comparative studies, the European level has been treated mostly in speculative essays or normative epilogues. Moreover, the plethora of studies on European integration and identity rarely question the meaning of the Holocaust in the context of the European project. Kübler's *Europäische Erinnerungspolitik. Der Europarat und die Erinnerung an den Holocaust* [European Memory Politics: The Council of Europe and the Memory of the Holocaust] is one of the first efforts to examine memory at the transnational level in a comprehensive way and through a political-science lens. In her persuasively-argued and clearly-written study, Kübler takes stock of the memory politics occurring within and under the participation of the Council of Europe (CoE), which has been largely neglected by scholars of European integration. By placing the CoE in the context of both the existing research on European memory politics and its international environment, Kübler provides a wide-ranging overview of the relatively novel policy field of Holocaust remembrance in European institutions.

Based on numerous interviews with key actors, as well as a careful review of documents and publications issued by European institutions, Kübler paints a comprehensive picture of the institutional structures that shape European memory politics, the ideas that are promoted, and the policies that have emerged from this complex field. The book succeeds in offering a helpful introduction to the topic, while also making nuanced arguments about the political, educational, and normative agenda of the CoE. Moreover, Kübler critiques the focus of the CoE's memory politics on (universalized) victimhood and a somewhat depoliticized emphasis on "European democratic citizenship." Further virtues of this book are its straightforward organization, its clear language, and its sharp style of argumentation. While this book is a highly competent contribution to the field, it does have some weaknesses of omission. Its lack of attention to the practical and informal politics behind the official narratives of the CoE, as well as to the influence of memory discourses that compete with those of the Nazi past, are issues that might be addressed in future research.

Kübler's first chapter lays out her central arguments, discusses the relevant terminology and the state of the research, and provides an overview of the development and work of the CoE. Kübler argues that close scrutiny of the CoE's memory policies brings an enhanced understanding of how Holocaust remembrance has been shaped at the transnational level by the interplay of competing interests and ideologies. Like any other policy field, the implementation of Holocaust memory strategies is determined by institutional structures, funding priorities, and particular strategic interests. Kübler also identifies the important normative framework of "European citizenship," according to which Holocaust remembrance serves to guide individual action in order to prevent the repetition of history and to shape a positive future for Europeans. While Kübler's study, then, primarily offers detailed insights into the work of the CoE and other European organizations, she also shows that norms can play a determinative role in international affairs. Moreover, she demonstrates how "culture" can actively be made into an object of "policy field" creation. The author's overall goal is to evaluate Holocaust memory politics in Europe through a traditional political-science lens. The book is an exploratory study that is concerned with the institutional context and the substantive focus of Holocaust remembrance policies of the CoE, as well as the image of "Europe" that is being promoted through it.

The second chapter is the most interesting and innovative: it provides a comprehensive “map” of transnational memory politics in Europe. Kübler discusses the most important international players in European memory politics and situates the CoE in the European institutional landscape, whose actors compete and cooperate, but rarely find a way to usefully complement each other’s work to join forces for the cause of Holocaust remembrance. Kübler is to be commended in particular for providing a clear overview of the European landscape of memory policy, while still bringing home the considerable complexity of structures and approaches at hand.

The third chapter provides an in-depth analysis of the specific memory policies of the CoE. Based on a Grounded Theory approach, Kübler carefully assesses documents, speeches, brochures and other items that have emerged from the CoE’s relevant programs, above all the “Teaching remembrance” project. The integration of memory policies into the CoE’s educational agenda profoundly shapes its character: the primary focus is the provision of training and the development of educational material for school teachers. In a highly critical section, Kübler examines the CoE’s programs for support and cooperation of the continent’s Romani population. The author argues that this is where all the components of the CoE’s agenda for Holocaust education are combined and put to the test in a practical sense.

Assessing the general nature of the CoE’s memory discourse, Kübler writes that Europe is presented as a project-in-the-making “that is based on the normative trio of the Council of Europe (human rights, rule of law, and pluralist democracy), as well as the admonition of Never Again” (p.208, reviewer’s translation). The unifying narrative of these memory policies is the ideal of a European democratic citizenship through which the individual feels empowered to “make a difference.” Kübler rightly critiques this somewhat depoliticized reading of the meaning of Holocaust memory, which is not well suited to address the complicated questions about the reasons for persecution and of biographical entanglements in crimes against humanity. However, she also points out that the size of the CoE and the diversity of its member states make a more nuanced and critical approach to the Holocaust hard to achieve.

In a short conclusion, the author argues that the CoE’s concentration on human rights and democracy education through Holocaust remembrance means that it has an important contribution to make to the idea of European

memory writ-large. The CoE is actively engaged in the building of a “European identity” by establishing a link between Holocaust memory and the individual notion of what it means to be “European.” A significant aspect of Kübler’s book is to show how such connections are built in a conscious and strategic way. Her work serves as a case study of how culture and individual identification can be created strategically and through policy mechanisms. Of course, as Kübler points out, it remains to be seen how effective such policies are on the ground. The reception of transnational memory initiatives is an important arena for future research.

While this book is a much-needed and innovative addition to the literature on European and transnational memory, it remains too closely wedded to the official narrative issued by these institutional actors. In other words, Kübler expertly answers the *who*, *what*, and *where* of the CoE’s memory politics, and thereby does much to enhance our understanding of these transnational processes. However, what she neglects to examine is the *how*: How is European memory negotiated on the ground and on what (sometimes unspoken or unofficial) interests, agendas, or identities is it based? Such considerations do appear in the book, but they are not well developed. One burning question, for instance, is why Holocaust remembrance policies – if they are indeed as important as political leaders would have us believe – are so chronically underfunded. The CoE’s core program, “Teaching remembrance,” must make do with an annual budget of 15,000 Euro (p. 78). It would be fascinating to find out more about the everyday politics and boundaries of European politics that prevent the adequate financing of Holocaust memory.

JENNY WÜSTENBERG

A political scientist currently living and working in Berlin, Germany. After receiving PhD in Government & Politics from the University of Maryland, College Park in 2010, she taught at the School of International Service at the American University, Washington D.C. From 2012–13 she was a postdoctoral fellow at the Free University of Berlin, before becoming a Research Associate working with the “Independent Academic Commission at the Federal Ministry of Justice for the Critical Study of the National Socialist Past.” Dr. Wüstenberg’s research interests include German, European, and comparative politics, as well as memory cultures, civic activism, and qualitative methodology.

CONFERENCE REPORTS

“EUROPEAN REMEMBRANCE” SECOND SYMPOSIUM OF EUROPEAN INSTITUTIONS DEALING WITH 20TH CENTURY HISTORY

Date and place: Berlin, October 10–12, 2013

Organizer: European Network Remembrance and Solidarity, the Federal Foundation for Reappraisal of the Socialist Unity Party Dictatorship (Berlin), and the European Solidarity Centre (Gdańsk)

Dominik Pick, PhD

Day One, October 10

The Symposium “European Remembrance” co-organized by European Network Remembrance and Solidarity, the Federal Foundation for Reappraisal of the Socialist Unity Party Dictatorship (Berlin), and the European Solidarity Centre (Gdańsk) is addressed to representatives of European institutions and dedicated to the study and promotion of 20th century history. The second edition of the Symposium was held in Berlin on October 9–11, 2013. This edition was an attempt to answer the question “How much transnational cooperation does European remembrance require? Caesuras and parallels in Europe”. The symposium was attended by over 180 participants representing 133 institutions from almost all European countries.

In the opening speeches, the directors of institutions organizing the symposium, Anna Kaminsky, Rafał Rogulski and Basil Kerski put emphasis on the social importance of both the research of remembrance and the discussion on the past issues in a transnational environment. They announced also a continuation of the meetings in subsequent years.

The academic part of the symposium was inaugurated by the lectures of Andrzej Paczkowski (Polish Academy of Sciences, Poland) and Keith Lowe

(historian and writer, Great Britain) who spoke on “European remembrance. A comparison between East and West”. Andrzej Paczkowski noticed that the theme suggested by the organizers actually refers to the division from the time of the Cold War which is not identical with geographical division. In his opinion, the boundaries between diverse attitudes towards history in Europe do not reflect solely this division. Political opinions for example, which exert a considerable influence over historical narration are equally important. According to Paczkowski, the key element of European remembrance is the memory of the events related to the Second World War. He showed how complicated the discussion about the war is, when one takes into account perspectives of various European nations, of which almost each not only suffered because of the war, but also made other nations suffer. Paczkowski said: “each nation has skeletons in its own cupboard but prefers to peer into a neighbor’s cupboard.” While commenting on the fact that memory of the war is not the same for everybody, Paczkowski called to “be wary of memory as a source of knowledge about the past.”

Keith Lowe presented a similar opinion. He noted that all European nations struggle with similar problems concerning the memory of the past. The Europeans are reluctant to deal with the difficult aspects of their past – collaboration with Nazism or communism, or violence against the others. Lowe said: “these are the shadows that lie behind every act of remembrance”. He stated that we focus on the perception of ourselves as martyrs or heroes, without any sensitivity to other nations. We want our history to be a nice memory. Like most of the speakers at the symposium, Lowe found existence of a uniform vision of history unrealistic, an even dangerous. He pointed out clearly that there exists one element common to the memory of all European nations – the memory of the Holocaust as the major tragedy of the twentieth century. While speaking about the differences between fascism and communism Lowe stated that currently there is a tendency to concentrate mainly on the crimes of communism because these are much more recent. He asserted, however, that precisely because of Auschwitz and the Holocaust, fascism should be condemned much more severely than communism. In the summing-up Lowe expressed an opinion that sensitivity to the perspectives of other people plays a very important role in remembrance: “Remembrance should be the bearer of truth – not a French truth, or a German truth, or a Polish truth – but a complicated mixture of all our truths simultaneously. We are all retreating to our own nationalist perspectives, and our own nationalist myths, without even bothering to look back at what it is we are throwing away.”

Day Two, October 11

On the second day of the symposium Rafal Rogulski (European Network Remembrance and Solidarity, Poland) expressed his conviction about the necessity of exchanging knowledge, reflection and experiences between various communities, nations and institutions. In his opinion this task is difficult. There exist major differences between national historical narrations because, as the speaker noticed, “our heroes are sometimes your enemies.” Rogulski also recalled the film *Our Mothers, Our Fathers* as a negative example of discussion about history and an unacceptable example of manipulation of history.

Dan Diner (University of Leipzig, Germany), while referring to important dates in the history of Europe said that not only “we cannot write national histories” but also the historical narration on European level is not sufficient. In the era of globalization history should be treated from global perspective. In an attempt to illustrate this statement Diner pointed at the attitude towards the date of May 8, 1945 as a memorial day. This date marks the end of the Second World War but in fact its connotations in Western and Eastern Europe are different. It was the day when the German Instrument of Surrender in Reims was signed but it was also the day when the Act of Military Surrender in Karlshorst was signed and for the nations of Eastern Europe this act was the beginning of another period of occupation. Furthermore, this is also the date of the Massacre in Setif (Algeria), where several thousands to tens of thousands people were killed by the French army. This event from May 8, 1945 also deserves remembrance in the globalizing world. While referring to *entanglement history* Diner indicated another example – the “Bengal Holocaust” from 1943. The events which took the toll of lives of several millions of Indians were closely connected with the warfare in Europe. Diner perfectly illustrated the problem of treating dates as memorials by reminding the particular anniversaries of November 9 in the history of Germany: the establishment of Weimar Republic in 1918, the Munich Putsh in 1923, the “Crystal Night” in 1938 and finally the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. This date posed so many problems for German collective memory that after 1989 not this day but the colorless anniversary of German unification was chosen as a national holiday.

In his extensive commentary, Gyorgy Dalos (writer and historian, Hungary) who was speaking from his Hungarian perspective, presented a slightly different view on remembrance. Dalos referred to a conviction which is popular in the Danube area, that Hungary played a unique role in the history of

Europe, namely defended Christianity against the Ottoman Empire. Dalos indicated that the Hungarians share this conviction with some other nations in the region. This fact proves that rising above a national perspective about which Diner had spoken earlier is necessary to fully understand the events from the past. Unlike his predecessors, Dalos devoted little attention to the Second World War and indicated that this memory is problematic in Hungary, because the country was an ally of Hitler. Dalos pointed out that initially the Hungarians were quite well-disposed towards this alliance, as it offered them a chance to revise the unfavorable Treaty of Trianon. After the fall of the Third Reich, the whole blame was laid on the Germans. According to Dalos, the memory of the events of the year 1956 is much more vivid in Hungary and it is much more important for the Hungarian identity.

A discussion followed between Oldřich Tůma (Czech Academy of Sciences, Czech Republic) Aleksandar Jakir (University of Split, Croatia) and Jan Rydel (Pedagogical University of Cracow, Poland). The speakers focused mainly on the issue of remembrance in Central-Eastern and South-Eastern Europe. Discussion with the audience suggested that the topic of a specific type of remembrance in Czech Republic, Poland and Croatia is of little utility for participants from Western Europe. This fact well shows how big the differences in the attitudes towards memory in different parts of the continent are.

In his speech Tůma noticed that in the Czech Republic, unlike in Hungary, historical events from before the twentieth century are to a large extent forgotten. He recognized the Munich Agreement in 1938 as the focus of Czech remembrance and proved that this topic has been the crucial element of political discussions in the Czech republic until nowadays. Referring to a possibility of writing a common European history Tůma noted that a national perspective still dominates. And a history of Europe composed of separate chapters on each country would be of little value.

Aleksandar Jakir referred to Croatia as his example and pointed out that the differences in historical narration pertain not only to various nations but also to various social groups. He put emphasis on the diverse attitude to history in Croatia and the existence of many different narrations in one nation. He supposed that it might be the result of the turbulent history of the Croats who in the twentieth century changed their citizenship several times without leaving their homes. Jakir also stated that memory finds its focus in some symbols and here he mentioned Josip Broz Tito as an example.

The speaker appealed for writing history not only from a national perspective but with other narrations taken into account. In his opinion national issues are losing importance and he suggested that historians should focus on values and not on the history of nations.

Jan Rydel referred to Polish historical memory and stated, like Tůma, that in general historical events from before the twentieth century do not play any important role nowadays. He found that important “memorial points” are the events connected with wars: November 11, 1918 – the date when Poland re-gained independence after the Partitions, September Campaign in 1939, Katyn massacre in 1940, and the outburst of Warsaw Uprising in 1944. All these anniversaries have had political meaning until nowadays and all of them evoke numerous emotions. Rydel also expressed his concern about the decreasing knowledge about the historical events which are celebrated.

In the evening participants of the Symposium could visit German Historical Museum. There the director Alexander Koch gave a lecture followed by a discussion. Koch spoke about the problems and main tasks which the museum has to face. He pointed out that besides fulfilling the traditional role of collecting objects, the museum must also show history to the public. German Historical Museum devotes a large part of its activity to temporary projects, like *Entartete Kunst*, or Gulag history which is on display at present, and a number of these projects take place outside the museum building. At the end of the day participants had an opportunity to see a fragment of the permanent exhibition devoted to the twentieth century which provoked many critical opinions.

Day Three, October 12

Pavel Tychtl (European Commission, Czech Republic) spoke on the importance of the remembrance issues for the European Commission. He covered the range of their activity and indicated two notions which are important for the Commission: “sense of belonging” and “engagement in the participation”. Both these notions suggest that social activity and projects which reinforce values that are commonly accepted in Europe are very important for the Commission. These notions also encompass discussion about remembrance and the past. Tychtl also pointed out how much recollections of the past differ, not only among different nations but also among the inhabitants of the same places. Here he referred to the memory about the Holocaust which constitutes one of the central elements in collective European memory.

Wolf Kaiser (Haus der Wannseekonferenz, Germany) stated that one common European memory is neither realistic, nor necessary, and it might even be destructive. It is much more important to exchange information and understand one another. In his speech Kaiser concentrated on two areas of memory which are fundamental for the Europeans: the Holocaust and the remembrance about the victims of Nazism. He pointed out that in many European countries remembrance of the Holocaust is very limited. This is true particularly about the countries which were not directly involved in the tragedy of the Second World War. At the same time in other countries many sites of the greatest Nazi crimes are practically unknown, while the best known symbolic sites like Auschwitz and Buchenwald play the most important role in the transnational discourse.

Hans Altendorf (Stasi-Unterlagenbehörde, Germany). Stasi-Unterlagenbehörde is one of the seven members of the European Network of Official Authorities in Charge of Secret-Police Files. All the institutions belonging to the Network are involved in research and study of secret police files in communist dictatorships. Altendorf pointed out how closely all the Network institutions are bound with politics and how important it is for them to remain independent though it is not always possible. All these institutions perceive themselves as belonging to the European culture of remembrance and they are busy in the field of academic research and development of the history of the communist countries.

Johannes Bach Rasmussen (Baltic Initiative and Network, Denmark) introduced a transnational social initiative which does not receive any regular funds. The main objective of Baltic Initiative is to improve mutual understanding among the countries around the Baltic Sea on the basis of the exchange of information about the newest history. The starting point for their work was the poor knowledge of the Danish people about the life "behind the Iron Curtain". Nowadays the Initiative operates in all the countries around the Baltic Sea and finds it important for each country to present its own history as well as exchange information with other countries.

Jiří Sýkora (Visegrád-Fund, Slovakia) introduced the main objectives of the Visegrád Fund, for whose support any organization or individual citizen can apply in co-operation with other partners. The two main pillars of the Fund are mobility and grant programs. Sýkora pointed out that all the projects supported by the Fund must refer to the countries forming the Visegrad Group.

Vesna Teršelič (Documenta, Slovenia) introduced an international initiative Coalition for RECOM which operates in the area of Former Yugoslavia. This initiative is supported by a number of institutions of diverse provenience. Its aim is the creation of a commission tasked with establishing the facts about crimes and victims during the wars on the territory of the Former Yugoslavia. Such a commission should operate in the area of whole Yugoslavia, and should not limit its activity to confrontation with national discourses. Initially this initiative gathered little political interest; nowadays the first steps towards the establishment of the commission are taken.

Goran Lindblad introduced the activity of the Platform of European Memory and Conscience and presented a reader for older secondary school students which was edited with the support of the program Europe for Citizens and Visegrad Fund. This was the opening of a discussion with participants of the Symposium.

Gesine Schwan (Humboldt-Viadrina School of Governance, Germany) gave the final lecture of the Symposium. She described the changes in the German perception after the war. Initially the Germans saw themselves primarily as victims of war, but in the course of time they began to feel co-guilty for the crimes of National Socialism. She emphasized that discussions among scholars are important, however they are not well-audible in Europe. She shared the opinion of Andrzej Paczkowski that the dividing lines do not run only along the state borders. Religious and political divisions are equally important for the remembrance of history. While speaking about the future, she claimed that common memory can only be based on values accepted by everybody, like the rights of man. In her opinion the diversity of perspectives is a good sign, a symptom of normality which enriches Europe.

The Symposium closed with a debate between Oldřich Tůma (Czech Academy of Sciences, Czech Republic), Jan Rydel (Pedagogical University of Cracow, Poland) and Matthias Weber (Federal Institute for Culture and History of the Germans in Eastern Europe, Germany). Tůma emphasized the fact that the Symposium once again proved the inexistence of one European point of view on history, even though most discussions focused on the Second World War. We may agree that the worst perpetrators were the Nazis, and those who suffered most were the Jews, but if we look closer at the history of the Second World War, things get much more complicated, even within one national discourse. Tůma shared the opinion that a diversity

of views on history is valuable. He was convinced that beside academic discussions it is important to talk about the more practical implementation of historical knowledge. Matthias Weber agreed with Gesine Schwan that remembrance about the past cannot be enforced on anybody but he stated that much can be done to protect the past events from being forgotten. Weber remarked that though most participants of the Symposium share opinions on the necessity of transnational discussions, the question about the ways of passing the academic knowledge to wider audience remains unanswered. In his opinion it is necessary for the Symposium to be more down-to-earth oriented. It is also necessary to discuss how to base an approach towards history on values. How to avoid heroization and rivalry of victims and how to step out of national narrations? Even though we agree that it is not possible to present one European vision of history, the question about the alternatives for the future remains unanswered. Jan Rydel supported Weber's suggestion that people with a more practical attitude to history should be invited to debates. He emphasized the number of problems which have not been solved so far. Finally, the organizers announced that the third edition of the Symposium will be held in Prague (Czech Republic), on April 9–11, 2014.

During the Symposium most speakers declared that the Second World War and Holocaust are the central elements of European remembrance of history. It was also emphasized that European memory cannot be uniform. It must be diverse because Europe itself is a diverse continent. It was also emphasized that though at present national historical narrations dominate, often there is no one single opinion about the past even within one nation. Lines of division run not only between nations but also along religious and political divisions. Discussions during the Symposium showed that a more practical approach to history is necessary. In future the Symposium should present a greater number of practical activities, good actions and practical ideas of how to popularize history.

*RESOURCES FROM THE SYMPOSIUM ARE AVAILABLE ONLINE:
EUROPEANREMEMBRANCE.ENRS.EU.*

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