

## European Commemoration: Locating World War I

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ifa Edition Culture and Foreign Policy

## European Commemoration: Locating World War I

Edgar Wolfrum, Odila Triebel, Cord Arendes,  
Angela Siebold, Joana Duyster Borredà (eds.)

ifa



UNIVERSITÄT  
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# European Commemoration: Locating World War I



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**EUROPÄISCHE  
ERINNERUNGS  
KULTUREN**  
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**Edgar Wolfrum, Odila Triebel, Cord Arendes, Angela Siebold and Joana Duyster  
Borredà (eds.): Introduction**

The commemoration of historical events is neither something that suddenly happens nor something static. On the contrary, commemoration depends on current views of the past and on the meaning that people attach to history and memory. It is therefore bound to change over time. What meaning is given to the past, is more a question of present perspectives than of historical facts. This makes it even more of a challenge to hold appropriate discussions about historical commemoration between different spheres such as politics, society, education and science, but also between regions, nations, and even continents.

In 2014, numerous institutions all over Europe commemorated the outbreak of the First World War one hundred years ago and government representatives from around the world remembered the beginning of the four-year war which, particularly in Western Europe, became known as the Great War, *la Grande Guerre* or the *Urkatastrophe* of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>1</sup>

Politicians requested and encouraged museums and political and educational institutions to gather ideas and promote initiatives that evoked the history of the First World War. But not only political demand ended up stimulating a plethora of discussions, exhibitions and lectures on the “partly forgotten time”. Many social projects, cultural initiatives, scientific lectures and publications also sprang up of their own accord alongside the political initiative. These included the House of European History which aims to become a “reservoir of European memory” (Mork, Chapter III) and the bottom-up initiative *Europeana 1914-1918* (Drauschke/Karun, Chapter III).

The conference “*Europäische Erinnerungskulturen – European Commemoration 2014*” held in December 2014 at the German Federal Foreign Office in Berlin aimed to represent the different spheres where memory is constituted and contested in order to give an overview of the initiatives, narratives and commemorations taking place across Europe. This expert conference provided an opportunity to analyse some common perceptions and conclusions and to discuss different opinions about what the First World War still stood for a hundred years later. Designed as an interdisciplinary conference where scientific, social, educational and cultural experts could meet and exchange their experiences,

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<sup>1</sup> However, the commemoration process was not initiated by politicians throughout Europe. In Germany for example, politics did not play such a proactive role, see Epkenhans 2015: 135.

the discussions gave a multi-faceted insight into diverse commemorative projects, practices, expectations, experiences, challenges, and conclusions. Since Europe is a place with very different memory cultures, this conference provided an opportunity to discuss possibilities for transnational commemoration.

### **Facing up to national and intercultural perceptions**

Despite a noticeable increase in Europeanisation, when remembering the First World War most narratives are influenced by national readings. What are the correlations between national, transnational, European or even global perspectives on the war? In what way are there similarities between the national interpretations? Why are there differences?

The societies of the various European countries commemorate and perceive the First World War in very different ways. In Germany's national memory in particular, the "guilty" connection with the First World War and the "shameful peace" left its mark on war commemoration for a long time. In the United Kingdom and France, *La Grande Guerre* is seen as a national defensive war, while in other parts of Europe it became a "forgotten" war (Drauschke/Karun, Chapter III). In many countries it was overshadowed by the horrors of the Second World War. Totalitarianism and the Holocaust, the *Zivilisationsbruch*, became much stronger *lieux de mémoires*.

Given these differences, what does it mean to establish a European perspective? Is there a difference between a European perspective and multiperspectivity? Should "European" mean strengthening perspectives that exist independently of the national point of view e. g. violence, grief, exclusion and expulsion of minorities, transnational movements such as socialism, the women's movement or peace activism? On the other hand, are these stories of violence and suffering seen as universal stories of war even if they also form part of national narratives? These questions and the focus on these anthropological universalisms represent a turning away from the heroic epic towards a post-national narrative style and towards the topos "united in senseless death".

However, at the "*Europäische Erinnerungskulturen – European Commemoration 2014*" conference, participants agreed that a uniform European memory, in the sense of a shared narrative of the First World War, is undesirable and maybe even impossible. The commemorations of 2014 have shown different perspectives of the war across Europe and in other parts of the world. The difference is not solely one of "content" but – as we have seen – one of "presence": not only do the terms and narratives differ, but for some countries and regions – for example in Eastern Europe – the First World War does not even form part of

an active cultural memory. Explanations why this is the case can be found in Maciej Górný's paper (Górný, Chapter II). Ideally, therefore, diverse narratives could exist on an equal footing. In order to achieve this goal, however, it seems necessary to increase the understanding of Europe's diversity and plurality by communicating the variety of narratives and experiences of the First World War. As Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs Frank-Walter Steinmeier says in the speech following this introduction: "What matters is something completely different, namely openness – without false relativism – to how our neighbours view history." Mutual acknowledgement will be possible only on the basis of knowledge of alternative forms and narratives of memory. Consequently, interest in what others have to say is the precondition for "shared commemorations". In conclusion, it can be said that the focus should be on the sharing of memory and on common remembrance. What is important, then, is the process of remembering – sharing memory with each other.

So is it possible – and does it even make sense – to construct a European narrative about the war? Do we need a common space for commemoration? National and European perspectives should not be mutually exclusive. The goal should not be a uniform European memory, but rather the sharing and subsequent recognition of divergent memories. Disagreement should not be made a taboo subject, but be integrated into a shared memory. So dialogues concerning the conflict-ridden past should take place mainly at the level of civil society – but even so, different positions and interpretations must be challenged and scrutinised using empirical analysis. This will make it possible to foster knowledge about other perspectives – and only then – to create shared commemorations.

### **How to remember – bottom up or top down?**

The role that politics played and still plays in commemoration remains vital. This is mainly because it defines the scope of the relationship between societal commemoration and the politics of memory: from the bottom of societies, from everyday experiences and family memories to decision and promotion in a top down-process by politicians and their interests. Memory is neither solely a social phenomenon, nor is it – at least in democratic systems – decreed. Collective memory is a product of a discourse that runs permanently through generations and through all spheres of society.

A clear example of how memory can be reconstructed and reference the present is the book "The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914" by historian Christopher Clark, which has been widely discussed across Europe and particularly in Germany, above all because of the debate on liability for the war (*Kriegsschuldfrage*). The book suggests that the intense interest in the First World War might be related to the hope that it is

possible to learn from history and avoid “tumbling” into a new war (Goldsworthy, Chapter II). In the current conflicts with Russia relating to the crisis in the Crimea and Ukraine, journalists and politicians often endeavour to present a picture of “sleepwalking” diplomats whose imperative is to prevent political miscalculations and errors. Against this backdrop, it is no surprise that current political questions such as the relationship between Russia and Ukraine or the political discussions on the Armenian genocide played a significant role during the last year’s remembrance of 1914, and still do today.

As the history of the First World War is not over yet, the discussions that went on throughout 2014 on the remembrance of the First World War became a highly political and high-profile subject.

At the beginning of 2014, many concerns were raised about the politicisation of war commemoration and the normative dimension of commemorations. What role do governments have? How do they shape the commemorative agenda and should they be involved in shaping it? However, the view all over Europe and the outcome of the conference produced a different picture: multiple memories came up on a communal level and communities developed ways of understanding the significance of soldiers’ sacrifices – for the past and also for today. It remains a challenge to find a balance between the political re-actualisation of history and promoting public discourse on the First World War that assesses and contextualises these statements in an appropriate and non-aggressive way against former so-called “enemies” who are today building a common vision of Europe.

### **Time, memory and remembrance?**

While memory is sometimes seen as a solely internal and personal matter, more recently it has been recognised as an active process which is formed and defined on different societal and cultural levels. But what exactly is the difference between memory, remembrance and commemoration? What is the relationship between memory and history, and what role does time play in this relationship?

Time and memory are intertwined. The time span of a hundred years means that most of the witnesses of the past no longer form part of the communicative memory (Assmann, Chapter I). But what does the generational loss of eyewitnesses mean for the memory of the First World War and subsequently also for its commemoration? It seems sensible that the move from short-term cultural memory to a long-term memory will also affect the content and form of the cultural memory. According to Aleida Assmann in this publication’s paper, the former *lieux de mémoire* are dissolved or reintegrated into new

*lieux* of the cultural memory. What does this mean for the teaching of history and the understanding of young people across the world?

Or as Joke van der Leeuw Roord asks in her paper: how much attention should be given to these commemorations in history classes, what do such anniversaries mean for the young generation, why should teaching about the commemorated events matter? (Leeuw Roord, Chapter I) History education is very much linked to commemoration practices and influences the future of the cultural memory within a society, as Felicitas Macgilchrist argues in her paper (Macgilchrist, Chapter I). What lessons do we want our children to learn from the war? Which narratives are important? What do we want the next generation to know about and learn from their neighbours?

It seems that in the last couple of years educators have come to the conclusion that it is multiperspectivity and knowledge about each other's history that should be taught in classes. This transnational approach is also pivotal in the extra-curricular projects that bring together young Europeans from across the continent (who in addition often have to deal with much more recent war experiences), as described by Bogdan Murgescu and Frank Morawietz (Morawietz, Chapter III and Murgescu, Chapter III). Thilo Kasper shows how new forms of communication may help to reach young adults and trigger their interest in history (Kasper, Chapter III).

### **The question of space and Europeanisation**

Europeanisation, the search for multiperspectivity and common narratives was one of the guiding themes during the Centenary. The First World War as a "European experience", a war that not only affected the whole continent but also affected the people on the continent in similar ways has been central to many projects.

Several commemorative events within nation states were planned, at least in part with a European focus, and in this way transcended traditional boundaries. This marked a significant change from earlier years, when the focus lay much more on the remembrance of national narratives and victims. As an example of this change in national cultures of memory towards a commemoration of the First World War as a European experience, many conference participants referred to the Ring of Memory at Notre-Dame-de-Lorette in France, which is dedicated to all soldiers who died in the First World War, regardless of nationality (Assmann, Chapter I).

The centre of today's Europe is also the centre of the interpretation of the First World War. Many participants agreed that in most of the discourses and debates held in Western Europe, it is still Western Europe that is meant when the talk is of "Europe". The Eastern countries, Armenia and the Balkans are seldom taken into account, or they are considered within separate narratives (Lazarevic, Goldsworthy, Demoyan Chapter II). The impression arises that the eastern part of the continent is "delayed" in its memory of the First World War, and must "catch up" with regard to commemoration and coming to terms with history.

On the other hand, maybe the focus on the "Europeanness" of the First World War is a little too narrow anyway. Shouldn't the emphasis be placed on global perspectives rather than on the European experience of a "World War"? When looking at the First World War from a global perspective, worldwide developments following the First World War, such as the movements protesting imperialism in Asia and North Africa and the independence movements in the Near East and the Ottoman Empire come to the fore. The international women's peace movement is also part of such a process, as Ingrid Sharp shows in this publication (Sharp, Chapter II).

How a new look on the global dimension of the First World War and the memory associated with it can challenge former narratives of the War is shown by the paper of Guoqi Xu. The Chinese labourers who were employed in work crews during the First World War, mainly in France, to compensate for the loss of French workers represent a subject whose importance has been underestimated. The young Chinese republic could perceive itself as a partner on an equal footing within the global community. The paper illustrates the importance that dispatching these workers had for the construction of national identity in China, and hence the need to re-evaluate this subject within the academic field of history (Xu, Chapter II).

At many points during the conference it became evident just how rewarding fundamental shifts in perspective can be for breaking down borders in research on the First World War. The globality of war must therefore be incorporated into cultural memory in order to achieve multiperspectivity, and much more needs to be done to get to know and understand the (South)-Eastern European perspective.

### **Provoking new scientific and methodological approaches**

Telling the story of the First World War beyond the long-standing, exclusive and often hierarchical narratives makes it necessary to exploit new approaches in the historical discipline. It is not only the history of statesmen and national heroes that has to be taken into

consideration, but also people's history as a way of renewing the memory of war scientifically. For example, this people's history focuses on the experiences of the common soldiers in the trenches, the views of the women at the domestic front, or the children's perspectives on the four years of war. By incorporating social history perspectives, as it has taken shape since the 1970s, classic military history has been supplemented and expanded by the addition of aspects of culture, mentality, and everyday life, while classic military history has lost some of its significance.

Such approaches help to reveal forgotten subjects of the war and foster the questioning of existing master narratives. Alongside these new perspectives on the war with regard to the players and the dominating narratives, historians should also increase the restructuring of spatial perspectives by focusing on neglected or forgotten regions as well as on entangled stories, relations and mutual dependencies. Herbert Ruland, for example, takes a look at Belgium's regional narratives on the First World War (Ruland, Chapter II). As is shown by various articles in this volume, the history of war is not (only) a history of states or the history of the "big" countries. Geert Buelens has collected poems and shows in his paper how to retell a cultural perspective on the First World War by questioning the existing literature canon (Buelens, Chapter III), while Molesini addresses general questions of art and historicity (Molesini, Chapter I).

Different, regional, national, and ethnic perspectives, along with the process of increasing Europeanisation, the questions of how to remember and what to remember appear to be questions of our prevailing present, and not (only) of history or tradition. Some questions and challenges remain: how to implement the results of historical research in different fields such as education, school, culture or the media? What can and what should be the goal of historical education concerning the First World War? What can young Europeans learn by discussing the diverse perspectives on the events as well as the commemoration of that war? What is worth striving for and what is realisable?

To end with an observation by Alan Kramer, it can be said that "Memory cultures are still rooted in the region and the nation, even if pioneering work is being done that transcends borders" (Kramer, Chapter I). Even 100 years after the First World War there is still much to be said and much left to be researched. It will be a recurring task of future generations to pose new questions, find different answers and in this way shape future memory cultures.

**Federal Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier  
at the "Europäische Erinnerungskulturen – European Commemoration 2014"  
conference in the Weltsaal at the Federal Foreign Office, 17.12.2014**

Ladies and gentlemen,

Our topic this evening is the presence of the past in our various European cultures of remembrance – and how it influences our thinking and actions.

Tonight's event is the final act in the anniversary year of 2014 in which we have been commemorating the centenary of the outbreak of the First World War. We are concluding our series of events on the topic of "1914 – 2014. Of the Failure of and the Need for Diplomacy", in which Herfried Münkler, Christopher Clark, Gerd Krumeich, Kevin Rudd, Laurent Fabius, Michael Thumann, Adam Krzemiński and Igor Narskij – to name just a few – took part with great dedication and passion.

At the same time, we are bringing the two-day European Commemoration conference here at the Federal Foreign Office to a close.

\*

Ladies and gentlemen, the anniversary year may be coming to an end, but the past remains present. This year has certainly brought that home to us in full force. History did not end in 1989 with the lifting of the Iron Curtain and the end of the Cold War. Some people may have dreamed of this "end of history", but I suppose none of us ever really believed in it.

This year's radical upheavals in foreign policy have certainly shattered the hypothesis of the "end of history". At the same time, these upheavals have shown us more clearly than any anniversary or commemorative event that European history continues to cast a long shadow to this day.

Twelve months ago, who would have thought that the anniversary year of 2014 would itself go down in the history of our continent? Hardly anyone, I imagine. At the start of our series of events here at the Federal Foreign Office almost exactly a year ago, I myself said that a war in Europe had become inconceivable. But something made me add, "However, ladies and gentlemen, this was also once the case, 100 years ago."

And this is what has happened. Nowhere has this become clearer than in the crisis in Ukraine that has been keeping us in suspense for almost exactly a year. This crisis is intrinsically linked to a complex historical background.

\*

The events in Ukraine also shine a glaring spotlight on how much we still need to learn about our neighbours in Europe and their cultures of remembrance. This is particularly true for Russia because regardless of whether it is a friend or foe, a partner or an opponent, Russia will still be our neighbour, no matter what happens. With this thought in mind, I travelled to Yekaterinburg last week to keep the channels of communication open.

Ladies and gentlemen, halting the crisis in Ukraine requires clear and also tough action. It requires a resolute stance on principles, as well as clear judgement, also when complex matters have to be weighed up.

Today, this also involves spelling out to our Russian neighbours, in no uncertain terms, that the attempt to revise borders 70 years after the end of the Second World War in Europe – and to revise them unilaterally, without respect for national sovereignty and without reference to the processes of the international community – is no way to treat each other!

But it is also true that more is needed to point a way out of the crisis, indeed to resolve a crisis peacefully. This also requires the ability to understand others and the willingness to consider their view of history.

Obviously, this does not mean justifying the actions that other people extrapolate from their interpretation of history. However, it does mean thinking about what motivates them.

Let's be honest. Here in Germany we often still have only a vague idea of how people in Ukraine and Russia feel when they look back at the past. Just take the First World War, for example.

Who in Germany can gauge the far-reaching repercussions of the Ukrainian state being formed on the points of German bayonets in 1918, or of the defeat of that first Ukrainian state of the modern era being defeated by the Red Army not long afterwards? And have we truly understood which internal conflicts broke out in Ukraine at the end of the war, and how they continue to have an impact today?

What do we know about how profoundly war and revolution have shaped Russian society? On an emotional level, can we understand how the history of the erstwhile Russian Empire reverberates today in Moscow, St Petersburg or Yekaterinburg and how some people in Russia ask themselves how it might be possible to build on this past in the world of the 21<sup>st</sup> century?

We need to look far more closely at such questions than we have done so far in order to interpret the events in Ukraine correctly. The anniversary of the end of the Second World War, which we will mark on 8 May 2015, will give us plenty of scope to do so.

We will only be able to take the crucial step, that is, to restore communication, once we understand the lessons our neighbours take from the past, as well as the dreams and traumas their history has left them.

This is not only a matter for historians. We diplomats in particular need to understand these issues. The July Crisis of 1914 showed us all too clearly where a breakdown in communication between diplomats can lead in the worst case. When words failed and the channels of communication collapsed, the two shots in Sarajevo were enough to plunge the entire world into the abyss.

No, understanding something doesn't mean one sympathises with it – and it certainly doesn't mean one agrees with it! But understanding is the prerequisite for communication – and without communication, it is not possible to end a conflict. Understanding is the fundamental requirement for critical dialogue – and without critical dialogue, it is not possible to resolve a dispute peacefully.

\*

Because this task is so challenging, I am glad that you chose the plural for the German title of today's event: “*Erinnerungskulturen*” (cultures of remembrance) rather than “*Erinnerungskultur*” (culture of remembrance).

If you had used the singular, the conference would have been very different. Although this summer's joint memorial ceremonies on the battlefields of the First World War were important and moving, there cannot be and there will not be a shared memory of the 20<sup>th</sup> century any time soon because our forefathers experienced this history too differently and because this history continues to have such a different impact on our countries to this day.

This has also become obvious in the Ukraine crisis. Just think about the different viewpoints within the European Union – in Warsaw, Paris or Berlin. Our historical experiences with each other, with Europe and with Russia have affected us differently. The western part of Germany did not have to live under the yoke of the Soviet Union – but Poland had a completely different experience, and things were different again in France.

We need to listen very carefully to the historical echoes resounding in our neighbouring countries. We need to understand the historical backdrop against which our Polish neighbours in particular view the crisis in Ukraine. Naturally, this is reflected in the ways and means we conduct foreign policy. Naturally, this means that we interpret events differently time and again.

But what counts is what connects us in the European Union despite differences between us, that is, the determination to stand and act together in the here and now despite our different cultures of remembrance. It is precisely this determination to stand united that provides the inner logic and the heartbeat of the European Union. And this logic is proving its worth, even in the acid test of the crisis in Ukraine. If we can draw one encouraging thought from this crisis, then this is it.

For this reason, it is not desirable or necessary that we turn our different cultures of remembrance into a “uniform narrative”. What matters is something completely different, namely openness – without false relativism – to how our neighbours view history. What matters is respect for the fact that the dreams and traumas our neighbours have as a result of this history are not the same as ours. What matters is the shared willingness to provide joint answers to the questions of our time, despite different views of the past.

\*

Ladies and gentlemen, we should never forget one thing. Europe’s history may cast a long shadow. One hundred years after the outbreak of the First World War, this history may be confronting us with extremely difficult foreign policy tasks. But it is up to us to determine the future of this history.

Diplomacy does make a difference, be it for better or for worse. This is why we need to act responsibly and to weigh up consequences with a level head. We need the tools and the willingness to explore compromises and to resolve conflicts – all things that were lacking on the eve of the First World War.

And no matter how difficult this task sometimes is, as historians and foreign policy makers we should take to heart what the Israeli historian Menachem Ben-Sasson told me a few days ago: "History does not only cast shadows on the present. It also casts light."

**Alan Kramer:**

**“Too early to say?” Centennial perspectives on the First World War**

The much quoted, much misunderstood reply by Chou Enlai to a question by Richard Nixon in 1972 is not the worst way to approach the history of the First World War after one hundred years. Several aspects of the war’s historical significance are still subject to debate, and some aspects are only beginning to come into focus with the passage of time (on recent historiography see Kramer 2014b & 2014c). Perspectives on the war can differ also according to geographic or political standpoint.

**Geopolitical outcomes**

One of its results was the geopolitical shape of Europe and the Middle East; since the end of the Cold War the map of Europe has become more similar to the post-1918 map than it was after 1945. Some of these consequences are still being worked out, with a new Russian expansionism and a series of popular uprisings, regime changes, and quasi-religious wars across North Africa and the Middle East superimposed on ethnic unmixing processes which can be traced back to the disintegration of the Ottoman empire and the attempt of the Allies at the Paris Peace Conference to establish a new order. As we look back on one hundred years of world history, it is indeed “too early to say” what all those consequences will be.

Other consequences were apparent early. The melancholic words of the British foreign secretary Sir Edward Grey as the war began, “The lamps are going out all over Europe; we shall not see them lit again in our lifetime”, foretold the secular shift in global power. Europe’s economic predominance was shattered, not only because of the physical devastation, but also more profoundly because of the shift in trade patterns and capital flow. New York replaced London as the world’s financial capital, and Europe was no longer the creditor to the world. 1918 thus marked the rise of the United States and Japan as world powers.

It was inevitable that the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution, Western Europe, could not maintain its lead forever, but the war accelerated this development. The political shift of Europe’s imperial power was indicated by the movements for colonial independence and for the autonomy of the white dominions. Although the success of the colonial liberation movements came only after the Second World War, the year 1919 was the crucial “Wilsonian Moment”, as Erez Manela has shown. Employing the language of national

self-determination, protest movements against imperialism broke out almost simultaneously in early 1919 in four key countries: Egypt, India, China, and Korea (Manela 2007).

Existing movements of the local elites who before the war were prepared to accept imperial hegemony, such as the Indian National Congress which had advocated greater autonomy within the British Empire, now demanded independence. In the Middle East, the British and French had secretly divided up their spheres of influence in the Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916 under which the British obtained Ottoman Mesopotamia (Iraq) and the French most of Syria and the Lebanon, decisions that were confirmed by the Paris Peace Conference.

The Egyptian and Indian nationalists, like their counterparts in China, Korea, and elsewhere in the colonial world, enthusiastically took up the American President Woodrow Wilson’s ideas about national self-determination in a liberal international order. Wilson, who had little idea of how to implement the principles in Europe, was even less well informed about and less interested in the colonial world. But his ideas took on a life of their own, and nationalist leaders in the colonies saw no reason why they should not apply outside Europe, too.

Moreover, the prestige of the European powers had been tarnished by the war that had exhausted them and exposed the hypocrisy of their claim to superior civilisation. The empires were now morally indebted to the colonial peoples who had fought and died alongside Europeans – one million Indians, half a million from the French empire, 140,000 Chinese labourers – and they returned home with new ideas about equal rights (Kramer 2014c). China’s 4 May movement – a protest reaction to the betrayal of Chinese interests by the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 – was the impetus for three decades of internal division and conflict in China until a further Japanese occupation was overtaken by the Second World War, civil war, and the victory of Mao Tse Tung’s peasant army. The political shape of today’s communist China thus emerged, indirectly at least, from that fateful decision of 1919.

South Africa, which had had its own recent experience of total war, sent black and white volunteers to fight and labour in four theatres of the war. For General Smuts and the Afrikaners the aim was sub-imperial expansion, for the English-speaking whites it was to show solidarity with the Empire, and for the black and coloured men it was to gain racial equality. Little came of these dreams, least of all equal rights for the black population. By contrast, the war was a transformative experience for the 200,000 black soldiers in the

American army: for African Americans, going to fight in France was about winning the “respect and right of law” they were denied in civilian life. The civil rights movement in the United States thus owes a part of its origin to the experience of the First World War.

### **Destructivity of modern war**

The war itself fundamentally transformed culture and the relationship of civilian society to war. Jay Winter has pointed out that one novel feature of the war was mass terror: everyone could potentially fall victim to violence, not just the soldier on the battlefield, for aerial bombardment and long-range artillery could bring destruction a long way into the hinterland (Winter 2014: 14). In previous wars, occupations and invasions could also bring devastation and famine to entire regions, as Germany knew too well from the Thirty Years War, or the American South in the Civil War. But now the mobilisation of entire societies producing for the war economy or producing war culture meant that all civilians, anywhere, could be targets.

Two features of the earliest phase of the war are especially noteworthy. First, invasions were accompanied by the deliberate killing of civilians and the destruction of cultural heritage. German troops killed 6,500 Belgian and French civilians in the initial weeks of the war (Horne/Kramer 2001). This was in fact a general feature of invasions. Russian troops killed 1,491 German civilians in the invasion of East Prussia in 1914 (Watson 2014b). Austro-Hungarian troops killed 4,000 civilians during their abortive first invasion of Serbia, and more killings followed in the next three invasions (Überegger 2008). These war crimes anticipated warfare in the Second World War and the rest of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The second was the industrial-scale destructivity of modern war, which caused the vast number of casualties of the first twelve weeks of the war, unprecedented hitherto and not equalled at any subsequent stage of the war. The history of mentalities of the First World War is one of cognitive dissonance: the underestimation of the destructive forces of modern warfare and the failure to adapt the mind to the speed of technological change and the ability of industrial economies to innovate and transform themselves. From the outset, both sides badly underrated their enemies: for example, the speed of Russian mobilisation, the resilience of the French army, or the potential of German and Austrian society to make great sacrifices to keep vast armies in the field (for the latter, Watson 2014a). When the German army command decided (against objections from some senior commanders) to use lethal poison gas in April 1915, one argument in its favour was that the Entente lacked a chemical industry advanced enough to retaliate in kind. All armies

underestimated the superiority of the defence; the British assumption that their artillery had destroyed the German defensive positions at the Somme in 1916 was one notable example of many.

Modern infantry weapons – the rifle with a range of 1,600 metres and the machine gun that could fire 400 rounds per minute – produced a zone of death that soldiers without cover could hardly survive. Trench warfare, which began in response, meant that they were better protected. But it also made war immobile, until the German offensive of spring 1918. The same logic applied on the Italian front, where warfare was similarly immobile until October 1917; the eastern front, by contrast, was characterised by long phases of trench warfare but also by great movements, largely owing to the dispersal of forces over a vast terrain.

Yet it was artillery that proved to be the most destructive weapon of the war. In trench warfare, 75 per cent of casualties were due to artillery fire (Storz 2014). A direct hit could obliterate the human body, leaving nothing recognisable behind, and no space for individual soldierly attributes: industrialised war meant impersonal mass killing. Attacks were usually prepared with massive artillery barrages, lasting sometimes for days, before the infantry climbed out of the trenches, and to use a phrase that has entered the English language, “went over the top”. This explains the shift from mobile warfare to attrition warfare, the attempt to wear down the enemy by causing more casualties than he could bear.

Verdun in 1916 was the prime example of attrition: the Germans did not even intend to break through, but to force the French to defend this symbolically important fortress city and in doing so “bleed the French white”. Verdun holds a special place in French memory as a purely Franco-German contest: the entire French army was rotated through the “blood mill” of Verdun.

The battle of the Somme, by contrast, was an attempt to break through. It became a global theatre, where troops from twenty-five nations and colonies fought on the Allied side. It is often described as futile slaughter, in which inept British generals sent brave men to certain death: “lions led by donkeys”. The Allied plan was to destroy the German defences with an artillery bombardment, and the infantry would then easily take possession of the German lines. But the British commander Haig had underestimated the strength of the German defences: by 1916, the German shelters were often five, six, or even nine metres underground, with roofs of stone and concrete that would withstand almost anything. The German army had also developed defence in depth, stretching back eight kilometres.

The Allied artillery onslaught destroyed many of the front-line trenches, but not the deep bunkers. Relatively few German soldiers were killed, and when the shelling stopped on 1 July, the German infantry were quick to emerge and pour withering fire on the attackers. It is above all the unprecedented degree of impersonal, industrialised destruction that profoundly shaped the culture and memory of the war, refracted, however, through different national and political prisms.

### **National understandings of war**

One important insight we have gained through the recent advances in historiography is how national understandings of the war are separated from each other not only by language “but also by more general frames of reference and basic assumptions” (Winter/ Prost 2005). The French perspective on the Somme is very different from the Anglophone narrative of futile sacrifice; the French army was able to achieve all its objectives on the Somme on 1 July 1916, for comparatively light losses, because it had superior artillery which was concentrated over a smaller area. Nevertheless, by the end of the battle all sides had suffered tremendous casualties: the British some 420,000, the French 202,000, and the Germans between 465,000 and 500,000 – twice the total for Verdun.<sup>2</sup>

Although the Somme does not feature as a German “site of memory”, its impact on Germany was profound. The effect of the bombardment on the soldiers was devastating, more from their fear of an unknown fate than from direct impact. German soldiers for the first time began to write in their letters home of the “revolution” which would have to follow the war. In private, German military leaders admitted to being shocked. The nerve of the German chief of staff, Falkenhayn, already under pressure over his failure at Verdun, was broken by the Somme, and he was replaced by Hindenburg and Ludendorff, a fateful change in German military and political leadership.

The Somme signified the coming of a new age of warfare. As the young German officer and later nationalist writer Ernst Jünger noted:

“It was the days at Guillemont that first made me aware of the overwhelming effects of the war of material. We had to adapt ourselves to an entirely new phase of war... Chivalry here took a final farewell.... The Europe of today appeared here for the first time on the field of battle.” (Jünger 1929: 107, 110)<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See the discussion of casualty statistics in Philpott, 2010, pp. 600-03.

<sup>3</sup> This passage does not appear in the 2003 translation by Michael Hofmann, which is based on the final 1961 version.

Jünger, too, wrote of the “terrible losses, out of all proportion to the breadth of front attacked”. Contrary to what anglophone readers might assume, he was referring not to the British, but to the German losses, “due to the old Prussian obstinacy” of contesting each inch of the line. What had shaken the German commanders was the “almost complete air superiority [of the Allies]..., the superiority of their artillery ..., and the extraordinary quantity of ammunition they have”. The Somme also saw the first deployment of the tank, which was technologically still in its infancy. But by 1918, the French and British had produced nearly 6,000 much-improved tanks. The Germans disregarded it until it was too late, and could not catch up. By the end of the war, they had produced only 20 usable tanks. The tank revolutionised warfare, as both Hitler and De Gaulle later recognised. Germany’s problem was not only an incorrect decision by its supreme command: it had the industrial capacity to build either submarines or tanks. It could not build both. That realisation took a long time to sink in.

### **Ideological warfare**

Machine warfare in the First World War created vast spaces not only of physical destruction, but also mental spaces in which the war of the future was imagined. This enabled societies to reintroduce the simplifying language of heroism, unified community, and stable identity, and thus avoid having to deal with complex modern social and cultural structures. The mobilising dictatorships of fascism in Italy and Germany went furthest in applying this reduction of complexity, and Nazi warfare in the Second World War took it to its extreme.

Some of this was becoming visible in 1917 and 1918. The Allied advance and the German retreat both aimed at maximum destruction. The British and French now employed the rolling barrage which had no specific targets but to destroy the space in front of the infantry, not even sparing French villages. The militarised ideologies of the 20<sup>th</sup> century forced people to choose national, social, or ideological identities, just as warfare created the unambiguous tabula rasa of physical destruction.

The trend to ideological warfare became most apparent in the wars after the war: the Russian Civil War, in which not only real military enemies of the revolution were targets, but also the symbols and ideology of its enemies. In all, the World War, the Revolution, and the Civil War cost Russia eight million lives. The telephone, the telegraph, and the railway network enabled the Bolshevik state to overcome the vastness of Russian territory, lending ideology the reach it needed (Holquist 2004, Sanborn 2014).

### **Economic warfare**

The First World War was thus not only about military operations and war culture. It was also about mankind making use of the cluster of inventions that characterised modernity and globalisation emerging at the turn of the century. Another perspective opened up by recent research in this context is the development of the techniques of mass internment in concentration camps, already called that in the First World War, for the purpose of internal security and forced labour by prisoners of war and enemy civilians (Jones 2011, Greiner/Kramer 2013).

Ultimately, the outcome of the war was determined by economic resources, although it was a close-run thing. The Allied blockade and other measures of economic warfare effectively denied Germany, Austria, and Turkey access to global resources. Conversely, Britain, France, Italy, and to some extent Russia had access to global resources. The Central Powers exploited the resources of occupied Europe, and attempted to block the Allies’ access to global resources by their own version of blockade, submarine warfare. That caused a bad scare in Britain in 1917, but after six months the Allies had overcome the threat. Neither the blockade nor German U-boat warfare was formally in breach of international law. However, since they targeted the entire economy and the civilian population, they were contrary to the spirit of international law, and they represented another step on the road to total warfare in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Kramer 2014a).

The innovations with regard to economic warfare were not so much blockade, a traditional measure of warfare going back to the siege of Troy, but the new submarine warfare and other aspects of naval warfare such as torpedoes and aerial reconnaissance. Economic warfare was also no novelty, but given the high degree of global integration already reached in 1914, measures such as cutting international telegraph cables or blocking access to credit were effective in strangling the international trade of the Central Powers. This truly was global, total war.

The response of later militarist dictatorships, above all Nazi Germany and imperial Japan, was to turn away from open economies and world trade to autarky, continental domination, and the attempt to gain control of oil by wars of conquest. Total war itself was theorised, notably by Ernst Jünger in 1930 and Erich Ludendorff in 1935; and in political culture, too, the term “totalitarianism” was popularised by Mussolini and the Italian historian Emilio Gentile as a positive self-description of the Fascist state as a mobilising dictatorship.

The memory of the failure of food supply, leading to the death of around half a million German civilians in the war, produced its own political consequences. In common with much of the nationalist establishment, Hitler believed that Germany had lost the war because morale on the home front had collapsed and revolutionary subversives had stabbed the army in the back (Mason 1971). This “November 1918 syndrome” was an obsession that made the Nazi leadership ensure the home front would be kept well supplied with food and luxury goods plundered from occupied Europe. The strategy worked until late 1944, and the only real attempt to topple the Hitler dictatorship thus came not from revolutionaries but from within the military elite.

In land warfare, several other innovations had consequences for the rest of the century. Although chemical weapons were not used in combat in the Second World War, the use of poison gas in the policies of genocide, in Fascist Italy’s war against Abyssinia, by the Japanese in China, and more recently by Iraq under Saddam Hussein in the war against Iran, has meant that chemical warfare has become an enduring part of the nightmare imagination of the human race.

The attempt to wage strategic war against the enemy’s material and human resources, aerial bombing, was in its infancy in 1914-18, although both sides deployed bomber aircraft against civilian targets by 1917, and that year both the British War Cabinet and the Italian military theorist Giulio Douhet saw no moral problem in planning for the unlimited bombing of German and Austrian civilians in the belief it would break their morale. The British and the Americans took the air war to its extreme in the Second World War with the destruction of Hamburg, Dresden, and Tokyo; and with the atomic bomb the Americans showed that scientific innovation could culminate in the annihilation of the enemy’s entire war effort and civilian population at a stroke. In just thirty-one years since 1914, warfare had gone from infantry charges that Napoleon would have recognised to nuclear destruction.<sup>4</sup>

### **Different national memories**

The memory of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and on another level the memory of Auschwitz, have equally become part of the nightmare imagination of the human race. Yet although both represented the culmination of developments set in train by the First World War, they have driven out the memory of that war, to a greater extent in some countries than others. In Britain, the First World War occupies a large space in public memory, arguably

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<sup>4</sup> I owe this insight to an unpublished lecture by John Horne “The Changing Face of War” in 2014.

even greater than the Second World War. Armistice Day, the wearing of poppies, and mass pilgrimages to the battlefields of the Somme and Flanders symbolise that domination. English-speaking culture is influenced to such an extent by the literature of the First World War – from the war poets and novelists Robert Graves and Siegfried Sassoon to contemporary writers such as Pat Barker – that popular “knowledge” of the war is not derived from historical scholarship, but from reading war literature or watching ever-popular television parodies of the war.

By contrast, in the Soviet Union, the memory of the First World War was displaced by the Bolsheviks’ memorialisation of the Revolution and later by the vast sacrifices of the “Great Patriotic War”. In addition, most of the fighting had taken place on the territory of states that were independent after 1918, so there are practically no First World War memorials in Russia (Lohr 2010). In Eastern Europe, memory of national and regional history is composed of different layers of traumatic phases – Nazi invasion and occupation, Soviet invasion and occupation (twice, in some regions), the experience of Soviet dictatorship and foreign rule for decades, and the overthrow of Communism. Small wonder, then, that neither “memory” nor “commemoration” of the First World War exists.

With a lively, broad-based historiography, mass tourism to battlefield sites, and the establishment of a modern museum devoted to the First World War (the “Historial de la Grande Guerre” in Péronne/Somme which has had an average of 70,000 visitors per year since 1993, and 114,000 in 2014<sup>5</sup>), France is able to find an equally large space in public memory for the First and for the Second World War, for the Resistance and the Holocaust. In Belgium, the public place of the war is equally strong: the In Flanders Fields Museum in Ypres/Ieper attracted an average of 210,000 visitors per year (1999-2005); in 2013, 294,579 visitors came, and in 2014 no fewer than 483,741 visited the museum.<sup>6</sup>

The situation in Germany has hitherto been quite different. After 1918, the memory of the war was deeply engrained in the democratic Weimar Republic. Although memory of the defeat was repressed in official political culture, the war had a constant presence as a battleground for rival interpretations: on the one hand, the official and conservative-

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<sup>5</sup> Information kindly provided by Caroline Fontaine, director of the Centre International de Recherche de l’Historial de la Grande Guerre, 13.03.2015.

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.inflandersfields.be/admin/newsletter/stats/newsletter.php?id=1594EN> [13.03.2015]; plus information kindly provided by Peter Slosse, Commercial Director, In Flanders Fields Museum, 13.03.2015.

nationalist apologia for the imperial regime constructed the narrative of an imperilled, encircled Germany that was innocent of starting the war and of committing war crimes during the war, with certain victory stolen by left-wing and Jewish traitors, and on the other hand the democratic-pacifist majority held the view that the war, whatever its causes, had been a disaster for Germany and the world and that the only legitimate response was “never again war”.

The polarised political culture of Weimar meant that no agreement could be reached on a national war memorial, unlike in Britain with the Cenotaph or in France with the tomb of the unknown soldier at the Arc de Triomphe.

In Germany, the dominant narrative after 1945 was at first that of victimhood and suffering: Allied bombing, the expulsion and flight of 12-14 million Germans, and the division of the state. By the 1970s, a new generation shifted the perspective to the parents who were no longer figures of respect or innocent victims, but the shameful perpetrators of a secular crime against humanity. Not that the earlier narrative has been lost – the recent success of books on the Allied bombing of Germany shows that the victimhood perspective is still widely shared. Implicitly it relativises the suffering of non-German victims, but there is still very little space in political culture for those who would question Germany’s historic responsibility for the war and the Holocaust.

Nevertheless, the traumatic memory of the Second World War and the awareness of German responsibility have produced a fascinating response to Christopher Clark’s book “The Sleepwalkers” (Clark 2012). This was designed to show how a multinational event, the outbreak of a world war, cannot not have a monocausal, mononational explanation. The book, which hardly created a stir in the English-language market, proved to be a sensational success in Germany, with over 300,000 copies sold.<sup>7</sup> The main reason was that it purported to show that Serbian, Russian, and French politicians were responsible for provoking the Habsburg empire, which Clark sees as a multinational forerunner of the European Union; Austria-Hungary thus had no alternative but to take stern measures against the Serbian threat. Clark’s book is curiously reticent about Germany, except to find that the Reich government bore little responsibility, claiming that it believed the Austro-Serb conflict would remain localised, and that the Kaiser was a man of peace. The path-breaking book of Fritz Fischer on German war aims in the First World War, and publications by his students, established in the 1960s that nothing could be further from the truth.

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<sup>7</sup> Information supplied by Meike von Boehn, Press Department, Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 23.03.2015

Yet exculpating the former imperial regime has become popular among Clark’s mainly conservative readers of the older generation, keen to find absolution from the burden of a presumed accusation of German “sole war guilt” and from the Fischer thesis of continuity (Winkler 2014). Just as in the 1920s, exculpation has also become strangely important for the Federal Foreign Ministry, with its official support for a book that most experts in the field have rejected. In this way, too, current debates show that it is still “too early to say”: we do not have an internationally agreed explanation of the causes of the war, and perhaps we have to learn to live with dissent and advance our understanding through research.

### **Commemoration, memory and history**

Such debates about the past also tell us something fundamental about “commemoration”. As Tony Judt has argued, the instrument of recall is not memory, but history, above all in the sense of the professional study of the past. He went on to say that “evil ... can never be satisfactorily remembered”; in fact, no complex historical events and processes can be satisfactorily “remembered” (Judt 2010: 830).<sup>8</sup> Memory affirms and confirms itself; history, by contrast, by seeking evidence, testing and revising arguments, by applying rigorous scholarly methods of comparison, calls for constant questioning of assumptions.

The trends in international historiography and memory of the war confirm this. There has been a welcome turn towards the internationalisation of research. That is symbolised by the publication in 2003 of the *“Enzyklopädie Erster Weltkrieg”*, edited by Gerhard Hirschfeld, Gerd Krumeich and Irina Renz; the French and Italian encyclopedias followed in 2004 and 2008 (Hirschfeld/Krumeich/Renz 2003, Audoin-Rouzeau/Becker 2004, Ceschin/Isnenghi 2008). Excellent though each encyclopedia is, they remained focused essentially on Central and Western Europe or the Italian front, and most of the authors are based in these countries. The Eastern and Southern theatres, not to mention the global aspects, are left largely in the dark. John Horne’s *“Companion to World War I”* comes closer to achieving coverage of theatres outside Western and Central Europe, but by authors almost exclusively from the Western world (Horne 2010).

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<sup>8</sup> The epilogue to Tony Judt’s *“Postwar”*, *“From the House of the Dead: An Essay on Modern European Memory”*, is a wonderfully suggestive piece on contested memories in Western and Eastern Europe since 1945 and since 1989. However, its exclusive focus on the memory of the genocide of the Jews in the Second World War and the memories of Communist repression since 1945 crowds out almost every other possible kind of historical remembrance. The Spanish Civil War merits only one line, mass unemployment and the Great Depression do not rate a mention, and the First World War is reduced to memorials that are “gathering dust – visited, like the battlefields of the Western Front today, only by aficionados and relatives” (p. 830).

### **Transnational construction of memory?**

At the distance of a century, then, it is above all the transnational perspective capable of integrating the local with the global that increasingly characterises research. This perspective inspires “1914-1918 Online: International Encyclopedia of the First World War”, launched in October 2014. As is befitting for a new generation of scholars and a new generation of users, it utilises digital technology to produce an interactive, sustainable, multi-media reference work that meets all scholarly standards. Under its editor-in-chief, Oliver Janz, and an editorial board and panel of external referees made up of one hundred well-known historians, one thousand authors from one hundred countries are contributing the best in peer-reviewed research.

Does this mean, as Aleida Assmann asks, that we are moving from national to transnational memory cultures? While transnational research projects have self-evidently become feasible for the present generation of historians, the shift to transnational memory cultures is another matter. Memory cultures are still rooted in the region and the nation, even if pioneering work is being done that transcends borders.<sup>9</sup> Ultimately, this also is still “too early to say”.

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<sup>9</sup> For example in the Meuse-Rhine Euregio that encompasses German, Dutch, and Belgian regions and includes the city areas of Aachen, Maastricht, Liège, and Hasselt; its history network produced a week-long commemoration of the war in October 2014, in cooperation with partners in Belgium and The Netherlands.

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**Andrea Molesini:**

**Through the looking-glass of the Great War. Exploring the past to question the present**

The writing of a novel – particularly, a historical novel – is inevitably accompanied by a sense that one is betraying the truth, and therefore, oneself. In “The Genealogy of Morals”, Nietzsche says:

“Our treasure is there, where stand the hives of our knowledge. It is to those hives that we are always striving; as born creatures of flight, and as the honey-gatherers of the spirit, we care really in our hearts only for one thing – to bring something ‘home to the hive!’ As far as the rest of life with its so-called ‘experiences’ is concerned, which of us has even sufficient serious interest? or sufficient time? In our dealings with such points of life, we are, I fear, never properly to the point; to be precise, our heart is not there, and certainly not our ear. Rather like one who, delighting in a divine distraction, or sunken in the seas of his own soul, in whose ear the clock has just thundered with all its force its twelve strokes of noon, suddenly wakes up, and asks himself, ‘What has in point of fact just struck?’ so do we at times rub afterwards, as it were, our puzzled ears, and ask in complete embarrassment, ‘Through what have we in point of fact just lived?’ further, ‘Who are we in point of fact?’ and count, after they have struck, as I have explained, all the twelve throbbing beats of the clock of our experience, of our life, of our being – ah! – and count wrong in the endeavour.” (Nietzsche 2003: 22-23)

When writing a story set in a particular time and place, the narrator’s task is not to be true to the facts as recorded in extant source material. That is the job of the historian. What the novelist has to do involves continual “renegotiation” of fidelity to historical objectivity, a process that concedes space to the exploration of emotion. For emotions are what the tale leaves the reader; it is only through emotions that the author can court the truth, even though he or she knows that truth to be unobtainable. By stirring emotions, a story can fascinate the reader, thus becoming a mirror image of truth. The writer may betray the truth, but by writing about it, by courting it in the articulation of emotions, he dresses before it a mirror – the sort of looking-glass through which Alice has to pass. What lies behind a narrative built upon historical events? What still remains concealed in the crypts of history? Above all, what is it in the tale that manages to create emotional involvement?

**The heart of any story is its characters. Always.**

Precisely because we are so unknown to ourselves, we need to feel that we are participating in the emotions of others. Their suffering, their joy indicates one possible way of getting to know our own sufferings and joys. Emotional involvement without characters is impossible. It is through them that we participate; their deep contradictions resonate within us, who witness them play out their destiny. The contradictions within Anna Karenina, or Macbeth or King Lear are our own contradictions. Or rather, the mirror whereby we encounter contradictions that we did not know to lie within us until we find them exposed in the suffering soul of a character that has fascinated us. To achieve this end – to create personae who, on the printed page, are so vivid that the reader participates in what they are experiencing – authors have to draw upon the ferocious passion of their own involvement, rendered with linguistic skill and psychological insight. In effect, any genuine, believable character is a real – a historic – character; he or she inhabits, and is inhabited by, a specific time and place. Any character that is not an individual but a type is, by its very nature, an artificial representation. This is why every skilfully created character is more vivid for us than the people we encounter when we go to the office or to the supermarket. He or she is complete, even though contradictory – memorable precisely because of their mass of desires, ambitions and weaknesses, of cruelty and tenderness. And this is why they can break away from the specific historical context within which their story is set to take their place on a sempiternal stage, where they remain specific but not just part of the past. The sorrow and pain that leads to Anna Karenina's suicide is that of every woman caught between her own passion and the restrictions and prejudices that have been part of life in all societies throughout history. In "The Writing of Fiction" Edith Wharton observes: "The novelist's permanent problem is that of making his people at once typical and individual, universal and particular." If characters are imbued with their own individual life, they make choices; and in making those choices, they generate actions which, while participating in the flow of history, draw them into the elsewhere which is their fate. This is why Wharton stresses: "Verisimilitude is the truth of art, and any convention which hinders the illusion is obviously in the wrong place." What is involved here is not merely accuracy in details of setting and clothing; it is the recreation of an atmosphere. One must make the reader conscious of sounds and smells that have gone forever, of long-forgotten ambitions and terrors. With their specific ambitions and fears, men, women and children whose social conventions are no longer our own must not only be brought to life, but given life and soul. This is the challenge which must be met using the resources of the written word.

In writing the novel *“Non tutti i bastardi sono di Vienna”* (Molesini 2010, 2012, 2015), I had to tackle a problem which is, I think, typical of any attempt to depict characters in a specific historical context (here, the Great War) and a specific setting (a small town in Northern Italy) facing specific circumstances (in this case, a military occupation that has devastating psychological effects upon both occupier and occupied). In such a situation, each of the characters sees their moral integrity, their previous certainties, as being under threat. The story takes place in a rural environment within a nation where peasants still outnumbered factory workers, and the narrator is a seventeen-year-old youth who during the course of the story will experience sex and jealousy, betrayal and the desire for revenge. In a rural society metaphors are forged in a totally different manner to the way in which they are coined in our highly urbanised society. For example, at a point towards the beginning of the book a light drizzle revives all the smells of the countryside – the plaster on the walls, farmyard manure, the scent of wet grass – and Paolo, the young narrator, says: “The darkness was as dense as the breath of cattle” (Molesini 2015: 22). A simple, basic simile, but certainly not one that would occur to a modern-day youth in Rome or Venice, London or Berlin. The damp richness of cattle’s breath forms no part of his lived experience, thus no part of his imagination. Indeed, for many such youths, cows and bulls are a mere abstraction. Why on earth would he form a simile with reference to the breath of animals that are part of an ancient world but find no place in a modern urban landscape that suggests very different demons and angels? That one detail is a mirror of the whole, like the atom of a universe.

### **It is the details – every one of them**

And in a historical novel it is details – every one of them – which should serve to create the setting for events unfolding in specific historical circumstances. It is those details that make events vivid, make them part of the here-and-now that forms and defines our own lives.

When the story is played out in a historical setting that is of immense resonance – such as the Napoleonic Wars, the American Civil War or the Great War – then the author faces a hidden danger that is often overlooked: the historical prejudices that have set up house within his own mind and that of his readers. For it is always true that the prejudices of today differ from – conflict with – those of yesterday, any yesterday. For example, democracy has not always been viewed as it is now in the West – that is, as the best possible form of government. Furthermore, we do not even realise that what we think in such cases is a prejudice, something that we take for granted and are not willing to challenge. Jorge Luis Borges, the great poet of Buenos Aires, a truly original mind, dared to say: “Democracy is a superstition based upon statistics.” Though here, paraphrasing Eduardo

De Filippo, the Neapolitan playwright, one could add: “Superstitions may be for the ignorant, but it’s bad luck to trash them.”

In novels that are not very interested in reconciling the individual truth of characters with the, only slightly more objective, truth of a setting that has become codified within our collective memory, this is not a problem. Indeed, the prejudice and clear partiality of the public are either ignored or exploited in order to satisfy their expectations. But if the novel aims to communicate some truths regarding the joys and fears that are an integral part of our participation in the great spectacle of human action, it must impose an original vision, even if this offends readers. Think for example, of the notion of the “White Man’s Burden”, with its view of “sullen peoples, half-devil and half-child”. Taken for granted by Victorian/Edwardian society, it would be rendered ridiculous and untenable precisely because of a First World War which saw legions of whites and “coloured peoples” from the most varied of regions of the world mown down by the same machine guns, united in life and in death by the same courage and the same terror, the same rations and the same wretched living conditions.

In story-telling one has a responsibility both to the spirit of the age one is trying to depict and to the individual manifestations of that spirit, which lives through and conceals itself in, the characters. The story of one man is not a ring in a chain but one ring that fits one finger. Hence a novel of any value must be concerned with that ring and that finger. This is the one constant truth of Nature: every living thing – be it a man, an oak tree, a ladybird – is absolutely unique. This is the mystery of identity, of individuality, a mystery which art and literature defend by depicting the exception. Every exception is a mirror that presents us with the constant presence of exceptionality, the hallmark of our existence.

A few months ago I published a short novel – “*Presagio*” (Molesini 2014) – which has a very precise setting: Venice in the days leading up to the outbreak of the Great War. The story begins on 24 July and ends on 5 August, and part of my research involved studying the newspapers then being read in the city. On page 6 of “*Il Corriere della Sera*” for 24 July, the day after the Austrian ultimatum had been presented to Serbia, I found an article that had very little to do with what appeared on page 7 (the one then dedicated to foreign news). Its headline read: “Road Labourer Mauled by Crazy Donkey”. If my intention had been to write a historical account of those tense days, this article would not have retained my attention, the insignificance of the event was so glaring when considered in relation to what was then simmering away in the pot of history: the delivery to a sovereign state of an unacceptable ultimatum, whose rejection would unleash a conflict that

was hardly likely to remain confined to the Balkans. However, my concern was to bring those days to life, not to recount the events which made them so historically significant. How on earth could I overlook an episode that may have been minor but was so rich in metaphorical possibilities and unintentional irony?

“‘Road Labourer Mauled by Crazy Donkey.’ The commendatore appeared to be speaking to himself as he gestured with his pipe and crumpled the previous day’s *Corriere* in his hand.

‘Now that’s what I call news!’ None of your ‘Wilhelm interrupts Cruise to return to Berlin’ or ‘Franz Joseph remains in Ischl.’

He looked up as Jolanda, his secretary, handed him that day’s newspapers, still in their wrappers.

Whilst Jolanda drew back the curtain, allowing the sunlight to make the room a bit less gloomy, Nicolò realised how beautiful she was; she had plump lips and a lively behind, both features that were rather at odds with the severity of her face.

‘My dear Jolanda,’ he saw the sadness in her uncommunicative eyes, ‘this road labourer bitten by a donkey could well be an image of our future.’

‘I am not sure I understand, commendatore.’

Nicolò lit his pipe and then released the first mouthful of smoke.

‘The road labourer makes roads, Jolanda. He is someone who leaves home in the morning with his lunch tin of beans and chicory, and goes to work all day in order to feed his wife and children. And the donkey...’ here he had to relight his pipe, ‘...is the fate you are not expecting. You would expect to be torn to pieces by a lion! But by a donkey? At most, you’d expect to be brayed at!’

He looked up at the ceiling, as if there were inspiration to be found in the stucco-work. ‘It’s the stupidity of the lords of this earth, of governments, of countless scientists and poets, of bored young men’ he coughed a small cloud of pale smoke. ‘They’re that crazy donkey. We are. Insatiably hungry for human flesh.’”

The Great War resulted in 11 million deaths and left almost 6 million disabled. The latter were perhaps and in certain respects the more serious injury to Europe: one buries the dead, but the mutilated and disabled are left to walk around the streets, their continuing suffering a constant reminder of human madness. Each one of them was an example of how ordinary people, just like us, could be mauled by a crazy donkey. Unlike intelligence, stupidity knows no bounds. It is always with us; has put down roots in each and every one

of us. As Baudelaire said : *“J’ai senti passer sur moi le vent de l’aile de l’imbécilité”* (Baudelaire 1975: 1265).

In his *“ABC of Reading”*, published in 1934, Ezra Pound observes *“Literature is news that stays news”*. The goal of any artistic depiction of 28 July 1914 is to communicate to our present – the eternal present of individual humans who cannot articulate their identity, their here-and-now; who are continually striving to find their place within the destiny of the species – how this *“28 July 1914”* is always lying in wait for us. Like a bathroom mirror, it searches us out and judges us. The fact is that we human beings, live in a far from mystical cloud of unknowing. We do not know who we are, nor where we come from. Above all, we do not know where we are going – we never have. A gypsy curse goes: *“May all your wishes come true!”*

We carry this unknowing around with us. If, for the sake of argument – and convenience – one excludes the Yugoslav wars, then it is a fact that Europe has enjoyed 70 years of unbroken peace, thanks largely to the threat of nuclear annihilation. And the result is that we somehow believe ourselves protected against the temptations of war. But in doing so, we underestimate the power of stupidity, the force which – in the future as in the past – will take us by surprise. We do not know for certain, but we have some vague sense of the maelstrom simmering below the surface of things; the hidden ruptures in our individual and collective psyche. We like to think that we live in an interconnected world, a place so well-informed that it will be able to avoid the pitfalls of the past.

Of course, history never repeats itself verbatim. How could it? But we should never forget that we have always been *“sleepwalkers”*, given that the eras in history which were even vaguely tolerable have been so few and far between. The most recent of these, enjoyed by the tiny part of the world made up of Western Europe, began in May 1945. But who, now that 70 years have passed since the liberation of Europe from the fascist nightmare, does not have some suspicion that this lucky moment might be coming to an end? We just do not know.

In a very touching letter of condolence to the sister of his great friend, the mathematician Michele Besso, Einstein wrote: *“Michele left this strange world of ours shortly before myself. That means nothing. Not for people like us, who believe in physics and know that the distinction between past, present and future is nothing other than a stubborn illusion.”* That may well be the truth, but human beings are born not to understand but rather to live in *“this strange world of ours”*. Our senses explore and reflect that world without

being capable of deciphering its reality – a task which requires one to commit to the risk, the gamble, of theoretical thought and imagination. And few of us have the talent and energy to take that risk. Nevertheless for all of us, one necessary part of living is the re-counting of life, even if the stories that emerge have little to do with what actually happens.

Life does not last long, and no-one wants to die. This simple fact forces us to give full importance to the material of which we are all constituted: time. The limited amount of this material granted to us makes it particularly precious. Life involves our emotions and our five senses, all capable of generating more than cerebration, analysis and scientific inquiry. It is no coincidence that Demodocus, the poet at the Phaeacian court whose story so moves Ulysses, was blind: despite his lack of sight, his enhanced sense of hearing enabled him to give himself up to the flow of the world. It is the ear which is the organ of the poet, not the eye, for the eye serves to speculate, to see through things.

A story is the mirror of the great spectacle of the world; it depicts but does not decipher. And even less does it try to explain “what it all means”. So telling a story depends not so much on an ability to understand as on the ability to be moved, to feel emotions. On the contrary, recounting history is predicated upon making us understand what happened. However, ultimately, the emotional approach could – I stress, could – be more efficacious than that based upon rationality; a story could be more effective than an essay, emotions more telling than reflection. Obviously it would be foolish to argue that Christopher Clark’s “The Sleepwalkers” tells us less about the reasons for the First World War than do the numerous novels on the subject. They embody very different approaches, and each reader must decide which, at that particular moment in his or her life, is the approach they are looking for. But the fact remains that the Great War does mirror our here and now. And this is more than just a rational deduction; it is something we feel.

28 July 1914 marked the end of an era. And it was an era which, in its more fashionable expressions, flaunted an unshakeable faith in progress – scientific, technological and social. That 28 July put an end to such a positive view of the future; no one after that fateful day could fully adhere to doctrinaire optimism. But nor could they go on talking about “the White Man’s Burden”. What had been a Garden of Eden for some was now left empty. Up to that point, the aristocracies of Europe had, since 1870, enjoyed their own private decades of peace – if one excludes the Boer War, which anyway was at the far end of Africa. But now they discovered themselves to be worn out and grey. How could they look forward to a return of the “Good Old Days” when what returned from the Front were legions of men suffering in body and mind?

### **The Great War is a ghost that continues to haunt us**

It is art, and primarily literature – be it poetry or novels – which has the task of re-asserting Einstein’s claim that “the distinction between past, present and future is nothing but a stubborn illusion”. The truth of that observation is something we have always known instinctively, perhaps because we have always been sleepwalkers in search of sense and meaning. Yes, that is what we are: searchers after meaning and significance, even if we are often unaware of the fact. What holds at bay the shadows awaiting us all is that search, our insatiable curiosity and desire to learn.

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**Andrea Molesini**

teaches Comparative Literature at Padua University (Italy). He is a poet and author of children's stories, and some of his novels have been translated into French, Dutch and Japanese. His first novel *"Non tutti i bastardi sono di Vienna"* [Not All Bastards Hail from Vienna] (Sellerio 2010,) was translated into French, German, Spanish, Dutch, Danish, Slovenian, Norwegian, Hungarian and is going to be published in the US (Grove Atlantic) and UK (Atlantic Books). In 2011 he won the Campiello Literary Award for this novel. *"La primavera del lupo"* [Wolf in Spring] (Sellerio 2013) has been translated into French (*"Le printemps du loup"*) and German (*"Im Winter schläft man auch bei Wölfen"*). His third novel *"Presagio"* has just been published (2014) and is due to be published in France in 2016.

**Felicitas Macgilchrist:**

**History education and memory practices: on curricula, classrooms and media**

Engaging with the past in history classes should, according to at least one contemporary curriculum, enable students “to participate in their community’s cultural memory” (Niedersächsisches Kultusministerium 2008: 7). History education is, it seems, intimately linked with commemoration practices. History education is also, according to most curricular guidelines across Europe, crucial for students to understand the world in which they live.<sup>10</sup> While other goals are noted, such as developing historical thinking, constructing narratives and reflecting on their own and other’s use of history, one core vision for history education shared across Europe is to enable students to understand the contemporary world.

But what does it mean to learn about the past in order to understand the present? In France, history education enables an understanding of the present world by “consolidat[ing], expand[ing] and deepen[ing] the students’ common historical culture” (Ministère de l’Éducation nationale 2008: 2). This common historical culture consists of, among other things, the “diversity of cultures and of perspectives on the world” (ibid.). In Spain, history is seen as important since it enables students to observe social reality from a “global and integrated perspective” (Ministry of Education [Spain] 2015: 297). In Hungary, knowing about the past “serves the real understanding of the present”. To achieve this understanding, students should learn to see themselves as a member of multiple communities: their family, their hometown, Europe and “the human civilisation” (The Government of Hungary 2012: 78). In England, history “helps pupils to understand the complexity of people’s lives, the process of change, the diversity of societies and relationships between different groups, as well as their own identity and the challenges of their time” (Department for Education [England] 2013: 1).

In each of these cases – and many more could be quoted – understanding the present is intimately linked with a sense of thinking globally and of the need to engage with diversity (diverse perspectives, cultures, societies and relationships). Today’s world, it is implied, is made up of complex entanglements cutting across East/West, developed/developing or North/South divides (Mignolo 2014). According to the curricula, this is relevant

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<sup>10</sup> This analysis draws on European curricula for secondary school history found in the Curricula Workstation resource which holds over 6,000 international curricula for social studies subjects (<http://curricula-workstation.edumeres.net/>). If the reference language is not English, then translations are by the author.

not only for students who inhabit the category of ethnic minority (Marmer et al. 2010), but for all students in today's schools. In the following, I will focus on this global and diverse dimension of history education. How is this goal, formulated in introductory curricular statements, "operationalised" in the more specific sections of the curricula that stipulate which subject-specific knowledge to acquire and competences to achieve? How does it play out in classroom practice? And how is it represented in new educational media?

These questions point to one core challenge of European commemoration in today's schools which this essay will explore: how do the overarching goals set out by curriculum designers map to observable memory practices in schools, i. e. the situated ways of making the past present? The goals of history education have of course been widely discussed and debated (Parkes 2011, Schreiber et al. 2006, Seixas 2009, Wineburg 2001). It is not my aim to suggest how history should be taught. Instead I assume that curricula for schools are the result of a broad process of reaching consensus among educational policy-makers, historians and history educators. I will ask what happens if we take these "emic goals" (i. e. formulated from within the field of history education) seriously, and explore how the global dimension of the broad, overarching curriculum goals relates to, first, curricular specifications, second, classroom practice and third, educational media.

A case can be made that in each of these dimensions, a tension becomes visible. On the one hand, the complex, global and diverse histories of the abstract overarching goals, and on the other, the relatively simple, national and singular history of the specific enactments.

To outline the contours of this argument in some depth, this essay adopts a case study approach. It focuses on teaching and learning about the First World War in lower secondary school in Germany, the period when history is still a mandatory subject. Section 1 briefly outlines my understanding of selected key terms necessary for the argument, and describes the empirical basis for this essay. Section 2 engages with changes in curricular guidelines, Section 3 with aspects of contemporary classroom practices, and Section 4 with media available for history education. The conclusion sums up the essay by suggesting that the approach to history – and thus to remembering WWI – most prevalent in schools is curiously out of sync with the diverse perspectives thought necessary for students to understand today's heterogeneous, globalised world.

### **Terminology and approach**

As indicated in the introduction, I work with a broad understanding of "memory" as making the past present for the future. Where memory was long thought of as an individual

internal, mental process, and as having to do entirely with the past, it is now more often understood as (i) distributed among social agents and artefacts, (ii) a dynamic performance or enacting of remembering, and (iii) the result of controversy as much as of canonisation (Assmann 2006, Connerton 1989, Halbwachs 1992). Memory is seen as an active process, as socially/culturally/collectively constituted, and as “essentially contested”. To emphasise its dynamics, some scholars choose to refer to “collective remembering” or “remembrance” rather than “memory” (e. g. Middleton/Edwards 1990, Hoskins 2011).

The concept of “memory practices” aims to combine thoughts from this understanding of memory with thinking in practice theory, which understands practices as arrays of activities among human and more-than-human entities (Barad 2007, Ortner 1984, Schatzki 1996, Williams 1977). Analysing practices means taking specific, situated “doings” as the focus of empirical investigation of how particular events unfold and how society is produced, reproduced and transformed.

This leads me to emphasise the “doing” of memory in apparently mundane moments of daily life. Schools offer a unique space to investigate how media use, formal policy and inter-generational communication is entangled with what counts as worth remembering in a given society at a given time (cf. Macgilchrist/van Praet 2013, Macgilchrist et al. 2015). It also means that I understand everything that we do which makes the past present (whether in policy statements, classroom communication, or academic articles) as “doing memory”. Historiography is thus, for me, also part of memory practices.

Observations in what follows are drawn from an ongoing research project with my collaborators Johanna Ahlrichs, Patrick Mielke and Roman Richtera on memory practices in contemporary schooling. The overall project involves two ethnographies in schools, ethnographic discourse analysis in an educational publishing house, 30 semi-structured interviews with teachers, a structured survey of teachers, and 60 discourse-based interviews with curriculum designers, educational policy-makers, textbook authors and media creators.

### **Towards global perspectives in curricula?**

My case study begins with a new history curriculum, in its final draft at the time of writing. In Niedersachsen (Lower Saxony, a federal state in Northern Germany), historical thinking is about story-telling. The most important competence which history education should foster is narrative competence. By telling stories, so the guidelines tell us, people constitute their identity. The resulting stories can be simple (*einsträngig*) tales which “remind us” of origins and present continuity as permanence. Or they can be complex

(*genetisch*) stories which present continuity as development, and describe the underlying processes of transformation in a complex and nuanced way (Niedersächsisches Kultusministerium 2014b: 8). It is clear which kind of story this curriculum presents as less desirable and which as more desirable. In addition, by developing process-oriented competences, history education makes an important contribution to students' ability "to act in and understand a globalised world" (ibid.: 6).

In this section, I ask how this overall approach to history education maps to the specifications listed in curricula for teaching and learning about specific topics. The focus is the First World War. A survey of curricula in Germany over the last 60 years indicates that, overall, the amount of detail which is stipulated has been reduced quite substantially. Nevertheless, certain aspects have consistently been included. These include:

- The course of the war (Kriegsverlauf) 1914-1918: over the years the number of details listed (names, dates, places, technologies, etc.) has been reduced, but some form of who did what when and where remains.
- The USA: one detail invariably mentioned within the course of the war is that the USA joined the war in 1917. Berlin, for instance, has described WWI as a "European war until 1917" which then became a "world war after 1917" (Berlin Senatsverwaltung 1998: 2).
- The causes of war: in many curricula there are explicit references to the events leading up to the war. The entanglement of war and imperialism is made explicit in, for instance, the grouping of events. Section headings such as "Imperialism and World War I" suggest an intimate link between these two sets of processes.
- Soldiers' letters: often, teachers are encouraged to draw on letters sent home from the front as source texts for critiquing the war and/or war propaganda.

A range of elements which were previously required are now no longer mandatory. These include:

- "*Urkatastrophe*": previously WWI was described across the board, in line with Kennan's (1979: 3) expression, as the great seminal catastrophe of the twentieth century. In Niedersachsen, for instance, the single "expected competence" in the 2008 curriculum was that by the end of the unit on WWI, students will "evaluate the First World War as the *Urkatastrophe* of the twentieth century" (Niedersächsisches Kultusministerium 2008: 18). This concept no longer appears in the most recent curricula.

- Pacifism: a concept which disappeared some time ago is “pacifism”. In Sachsen, for instance, “pacifism” was one of four core concepts in the new post-unification curriculum in 1991, alongside imperialism, entente and the Curzon Line. In the revised curriculum from 1992, pacifism was linked to Bertha von Suttner and Karl May. In the 1995 revision it was no longer explicitly listed (Sächsisches Staatsministerium für Kultus 1991: 49, 1992: 34, 1995).
- Revolution: the most recent guidelines no longer foreground the interdependence of the Russian revolution and WWI. Changes in Berlin’s curricula show this most clearly: in 1978 the heading for teaching and learning about WWI was “The period of the First World War and the October Revolution in Russia”. In 1995 and 1998 the guidelines included a short list of three items to be covered when teaching about WWI, one of which was the Russian Revolution. By 2006 the section heading had become “Democracy and dictatorship” (Berlin Senat für Schulwesen 1978: 12, Berlin Senatsverwaltung 1995: 2, 1998: 2, 2006: 34). Here, as in other federal states, students deal first with WWI as one unit, and then, as a separate new topic (sometimes in the following school year), with the Russian Revolution.

Despite the decreasing number of mandatory topics in most recent curricula, new elements have been added. One is particularly relevant to the topic of this essay, and indicates the ambivalent relevance of the global dimension in curricula.

- Global history. Niedersachsen’s most recent curriculum, introduced in August 2015, includes a range of options for specific topics which “are particularly suited to opening up global historical perspectives” (*weltgeschichtliche Perspektiven*), e. g. decolonisation in the period after 1945.

On the one hand, this topic demonstrates that the global dimension has become more prominent in German curricula. It directly addresses the kind of complex global perspective which history curricula state as their goals. Two observations are necessary here, however. First, global perspectives are not included in the mandatory specifications. They are listed as one of the possible additions to the mandatory subject-specific knowledge (Niedersächsisches Kultusministerium 2014b: 27). Thus, while the mandatory curriculum presents the story of a European war with US participation, the supplementary topics invite students to engage with plural narratives, entangled histories, and diverse perspectives. Second, the consultation document from January 2014 included the First World War as one of these supplementary topics, and listed “images of the enemy, transport and

communication, war in the colonies” as sub-topics (Niedersächsisches Kultusministerium 2014a: 25). Due to planned changes to the educational system, the revised final draft version from December 2014 included several modifications, including the deletion of one supplementary topic: the First World War is no longer listed, and war in the colonies thus no longer an explicit recommendation (Niedersächsisches Kultusministerium 2014b: 27).<sup>11</sup>

Including “war in the colonies” as specifically worth remembering means discussing a range of widely neglected aspects of WWI, e. g., the diversity of people and practices involved in the war, and the interactions between different regions that are often not visible in public discourse. Engaging with the war as it played out in the colonies would thus enact the overarching curricular goal of understanding the present “globalised” world.

In the UK there has been a recent flourishing of research and reporting about the “forgotten soldiers” of the First World War, i. e. the soldiers who fought in the name of “Britain” and are rarely included in official commemoration events. David Olusoga’s BBC documentary, for instance, tells the story of WWI “from the perspective of those of who made it a truly global conflict: the thousands of Indian, African and Asian troops and ancillaries who fought and died alongside Europeans” (Olusoga 2014a, 2014b). He adopts a commemoration approach to veterans and civilians who died during the war. The story is told as “a multi-racial, multi-national struggle fought all over the world”, exploring “the experiences and sacrifices of four million non-white people”. This, one could argue, is eminently important for understanding WWI, and not only for students in the UK. Olusoga also documents, for instance, how Germany enrolled the Muslim peoples of North Africa and the Middle East to fight against the allies. And how in German East Africa, hundreds of thousands of Black Africans died fighting the allies (see also Njung 2014).

Returning to my question for this section – how the aim of opening up global perspectives in history education plays out in the curricular specifications – it seems that national or European perspectives still dominate. The Global North is included in the shape of the USA. Attempts to include the Global South or the entanglements between the North in the South and the South in the North remain “supplementary” and are among the first elements to be deleted when reductions are made due to systemic change.

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<sup>11</sup> During the consultation phase, Niedersachsen made a major change to reverse a recent reform. After a short period in which students took their Abitur exams (equivalent to A-levels) after 12 years of schooling, the state will return to the 13-year Abitur. This had a knock-on effect on the number of hours of history education allocated to each year. More hours were allocated to Grades 5 and 6 (where pre-history, Ancient Greece, etc. are taught), and fewer hours to Grades 9 and 10 (which deal with the twentieth century).

### **Classroom practice**

What do these curricular guidelines mean for classroom practice? Curriculum research has shown quite clearly that the relationship between policy guidelines and classroom practice is non-linear (Ball 2012, Edwards et al. 2009, Künzli et al. 2013, Oelkers 2006). Teachers rarely simply “implement” guidelines in a straightforward sense, but can be seen instead as “enacting” the curriculum in context-specific situations. These enactments are active practices of meaning-making which re-form and re-interpret guidelines (Bowe et al. 1992: 13). Even teachers who regularly refer to policy guidelines creatively appropriate their reading to meet their specific needs, including, and especially, the lack of time for history teaching in contemporary schooling (Künzli/Santini-Amgarten 1999: 155). The standardisation offered by formal curricular guidelines is therefore only ever “an (un)stable and precarious achievement” (Edwards 2009: 3).

Nevertheless, our ongoing research observing the use of teaching and learning materials in classrooms suggests that irrespective of the necessary creative appropriations of particular policy orientations, a phrase from media studies can be helpful for thinking about the relationship between policy and classroom practices. Bernhard Cohen, writing about the agenda-setting function of the media, wrote that “The press may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about” (Cohen 1973: 13). Appropriating this for schooling, we can reformulate: Curricular guidelines may not be successful much of the time in telling students and teachers what to think, but they are stunningly successful in telling them what to think about.

Current observations of teaching and learning about WWI indicate high levels of correspondence between the curricular specifications outlined above and classroom practice. The classes which we observed spent between four and seven 90-minute lessons on WWI. Students trace the course of the war, they discuss the characterisation of the war as “the great seminal catastrophe of this century” (*Urkatastrophe*), they engage with graphic and disturbing soldiers’ letters, they produce anti-war posters, and they investigate the causes of the war. The latter are found to lie largely in imperialism and the ruling powers’ cravings for power. Students primarily engage with material presenting the war as a (white) European war to which the USA also participated. A controversy which was discussed in some depth was the question of war guilt: was Germany alone responsible for the First World War?

In classroom practice, as in the curricular specifications, there is a sense of a causal progression from one event to the next. There is not much sense of parallel events, of the entanglement of war and revolution, or of the involvement of people from the then colonies. There is also little discussion of the many, diverse, often conflicting interpretations and narratives about the First World War. The descriptions in the guidelines as well as the text and talk in the classrooms suggest that understanding the events of the war is relatively straightforward and uncontroversial. To return to the curricular guidelines quoted above, it appears that policy and practice are offering students a “simple story” about the war rather than a “complex” one. The story being offered “reminds us” of (national) “origins” rather than presenting the underlying (global) processes in a complex and nuanced way.

### **Digital educational media**

One way of introducing novel (complex) perspectives is widely seen to lie in digital educational media. New educational technologies have been greeted as the solution to many educational “problems” for a long time. In 1922 the US-American inventor and entrepreneur Thomas Edison apparently remarked that “I believe that the motion picture is destined to revolutionise our educational system and that in a few years it will supplant largely, if not entirely, the use of textbooks”. Similar claims about the revolutionary potential for education have been made for radio in the 1920s, television in the 1950s, computers in the 1980s, internet in the 2000s and more recently Web 2.0 and mobile devices (Cuban 1986, Tröhler 2013, Watters 2014).

Today, digital educational media promise to “revolutionise” traditional schooling by personalising learning, by engaging students’ interest and by increasing educational and societal participation (Thomas 2011, West 2012, Williamson 2013). The European Commission has made euphoric statements about the promise of “the digital revolution in education” to stimulate “high-quality, innovative ways of learning and teaching through new technologies and digital content” (European Commission 2013: 2f.).

At the same time, critical observers urge caution in overly enthusiastic approaches to digital education. Before turning to digital media for history education, I will note two caveats. First, the field of educational technology (virtual learning environments, learning software, apps, digital textbooks, etc.) is a multimillion dollar business. Critics point to the increasing presence of an economic logic within educational spaces when profit-oriented corporations create learning materials with no formal approval process (Ball/Youdell 2009, Höhne 2012, Lohmann 2010).

In 2014 USD 642 million in venture capital funding was invested in the field of educational technology; 32 per cent more than 2013. Companies are particularly interested in generating “data” about their users and monetising this data. Personalised digital learning is, after all, only possible after tracking the users’ practices very closely. Knewton, one of the companies in this field, has partnered with Pearson, the largest educational media publisher worldwide. Since Pearson has tagged every sentence in their digital products, this enables Knewton to generate a wealth of interlinked data about its users. Jose Ferreira, Knewton’s CEO, has said that his company generates far more data about its users, i. e. school students, than Google does about its users: Knewton generates and saves 5-10 million individual data points per child per day. Ferreira (2012) said, “We literally know everything about what you know and how you learn best, everything”. It is important, I believe, to keep a sense of this “transparent society” (Han 2012) in mind when we are talking about the promises and potentials of digital media in schools.

The second caveat is that, as many have noted, a digital worksheet is still a worksheet. One frequently noted potential of digital media is that students can create, collaborate, amend, remix and share their work with a broad online community. However, despite the wealth of digital material available online for teachers to adapt and share, much of this remains for the student simply a worksheet to complete rather than a project to develop. Although the resources which I discuss below certainly offer novel perspectives on WWI which have the potential to engage students in new ways, very few of these digital media are about inviting students to themselves become media creators, remixing and sharing their own work online.

Following these caveats, what do digital media currently available for teaching and learning about WWI offer? With no claim to provide a comprehensive view of all the materials on offer, I suggest three bundles of particularly interesting resources: (i) live, i. e. closely interconnected with students’ daily lives, (ii) audio-visual, and (iii) non-linear and global. For each of these bundles, the online materials offer a wealth of digitised archive materials and personal recollections.

First, there are many fascinating digital tools for teaching and learning which bring the First World War particularly close to students’ everyday life. On Twitter, students can follow @greatwargazette (New York) or @FrontlineWW1 (Australia) to read the daily news each day as it was reported 100 years ago. Similarly, @RealTimeWW1 live-tweets events in a range of European languages. Several blogs reproduce lengthier diary entries written by soldiers and officers (see König 2014).

Second, one key affordance of the internet is to make audio-visual resources more readily available than video tapes or DVDs. Classroom observations show that elements of history which are experienced through audio-visual media are far more easily recalled by students than those events dealt with in written (offline or online) materials (Mielke, forthcoming). Examples of sources offering multimedia approaches to WWI include Oxford University's First World War Poetry Digital Archive with 7,000 items of text, images, audio, and video. Computer games such as "Supremacy 1914" available in multiple languages, or the Canadian War Museum's "Over the Top" (English/French) offer a particularly interactive approach to engaging with war strategy or with life in the trenches (Bernsen 2013). The BBC has made a collection of interviews with WWI veterans and civilians filmed in the 1960s available online. My search on YouTube for "World War 1" returned 9,630,000 hits; for "I wojna światowa" 78,800 hits; "Первая мировая война" 61,100 hits; "Première Guerre mondiale" 19,500 hits; and "Erster Weltkrieg" 13,100 hits. The sheer number of videos on YouTube indicates the diversity of positions which are available. The number of videos also indicates, of course, one challenge for teaching with digital media: deciding how to make appropriate selections.<sup>12</sup>

The third bundle of resources explores global connections in a non-linear and non-Eurocentric way. These I find particularly interesting given the over-arching aims of the curricular guidelines noted above. One such resource stems from collaboration between the Commonwealth War Graves Commission and the World War One Centenary Project (University of Oxford).<sup>13</sup> The Commission maintains a database of war graves for the approximately 1.1 million servicemen and women who died fighting for Britain during WWI. The WWI Centenary Project has turned the database into a map which users can navigate. Pins mark war graves across the globe. Using Google maps or Google Earth, users can zoom into specific graves in specific cemeteries in specific countries. Peter Francis (n. d.) discusses the relevance for teaching: "Ask yourself the question – why are there nine war graves in a tiny cemetery at Trekkopje in northern Namibia? What happened there? Immediately you start to see the value of being able to visualise the war in this way."

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<sup>12</sup> Poetry Digital Archive: <http://www.oucs.ox.ac.uk/ww1lit/>; BBC interviews <http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/group/p01tbj6p>; Supremacy 1914: <http://www.supremacy1914.de>; Over the Top: <http://www.warmuseum.ca/overthetop/>

<sup>13</sup> Links to the maps: <http://ww1centenary.oucs.ox.ac.uk/space-into-place/commonwealth-cemeteries-of-world-war-one/>

A further resource which speaks to global entanglements is “1914-1918 online. International Encyclopedia of the First World War.”<sup>14</sup> The project describes itself as “an English-language virtual reference work on the First World War”, resulting from collaboration among 1,000 authors, editors, and partners from fifty countries. The site aims to “provide nonlinear access to the encyclopaedia’s content”. This nonlinear access draws on the internet’s basic hypertextuality. First, users can choose to enter the site through years on the timeline, through particular topics, or through regions on a world map. Second, these elements are linked to one another through hyperlinks within each entry. Reading about “espionage” for instance, links readers to “Georges Clemenceau (1841-1929)” which links to “West Africa”, where we read not only that Clemenceau commissioned a drive for recruitment for the French army which led to the enlistment of 63,000 new recruits by the end of August 1918, but also about the Cameroon soldiers who fought for Germany to hold back Allied troops from, for instance, Banyo in 1915 and Mora in 1916. Similarly, a search for the Russian Revolution shows that its hyperlinks entangle it with the “Arms Race prior to 1914”, “Labour”, “The Way to War”, and “Revolutions” more generally. The latter article surveys various movements toward social, national, and political revolution that emerged during and after WWI in Russia, France, Bulgaria, Austria-Hungary, Germany, Italy and Greece.

This kind of digital resource thus goes some way towards offering a plural, complex, entangled understanding of history. The challenge facing educators is that neither of these two nonlinear/global resources was designed for classroom use. Each teacher using the resource will prepare their own learning activities.

### **Concluding thoughts**

At the beginning of this essay I observed that history curricula across Europe foreground globality and diversity as central aspects of engaging with the past. I asked how these overarching goals for history education relate to the more specific enactments in curricular specifications, classroom practice and educational media. I have suggested that, first, in contrast to the overarching goals, contemporary curricular specifications offer students simple stories about a Eurocentric historical progression. These stories largely foreclose more complex thinking about diverse, multiple, globally entangled processes, in particular those processes involving the Global South. Second, looking at the creative appropriations of curricula in classroom practice, it seems that even when formal curricula are not very successful in telling teachers and students what to think, these curricula do seem quite

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<sup>14</sup> Encyclopedia: <http://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/home/>

successful in telling them (us!) what to think about. For a number of reasons, including time constraints, if a specific topic is not included in the mandatory curriculum, it is unlikely to be dealt with in any depth. Finally, although digital media can offer the means for students to explore complex, nuanced, global, entangled and process-oriented histories, they do not always do so.

Thus overall, the challenge to European commemoration remains: on the one hand, the field of history education largely agrees that it is necessary and desirable for students to develop global and diverse perspectives on what is worth remembering. On the other, there remains a tension between the overall goals of the curriculum and the specific issues with which teachers and students are supposed to (according to curricular specifications) – and do (in classroom practice and educational media) – engage.

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**Aleida Assmann:**

**European Commemorations of the First World War – from national to transnational memory cultures?**

Since January 2014 European nations have been exhorted by the media and their cultural institutions to remember World War I. What first became obvious at the beginning of the commemoration year were the striking differences in European national memories. For some countries with continuous commemorative traditions of 1914/18 such as France, England, Belgium, Australia, New Zealand and Canada, this reminder was superfluous. In other countries such as Russia, Austria or Germany, but also the United States, World War I had dropped from public attention and often also from history textbooks in school. While the commemoration year has thus reminded us of histories of forgetting, it also confronted us with new forms of counter-memory emerging in countries such as Serbia where on June 28<sup>th</sup>, the date of the assassination of Franz Ferdinand and his wife was celebrated triumphantly with the dedication of a statue to Gavrilo Princip or Hungary, where the peace treaty of Trianon (1918), which effected the loss of two thirds of the country's territory, has a highly emotionalised and revisionist ring until this day. Given this situation of multifarious and even contradictory remembering and forgetting in Europe, can we speak at all of a "European memory culture" which is to be conceived as the frame for or result of the 2014 commemorations? Before I attempt to answer this question, I will look more closely into various national memories and commemoration practices that we could observe during the year 2014.

**The First World War in German national and family memory**

It has often been emphasised that the First World War was for the Germans very different from *La Grande Guerre* for the French and the Great War for the English. In France the last surviving veterans were buried one after another with military pomp and circumstance in a countdown that was heeded by the whole population and attracted much media attention. In German national memory the name "Versailles" remained for a long time the placeholder for this war (Schulze 2002). It was bound up with a memory of guilt, shame and an ignoble peace. For this reason, the First World War never really ended in the minds and hearts of many Germans, who prepared themselves for a subsequent war that was to give them back everything they had lost in terms of territories, pride and self-image. This was the war in which Hitler had fought and had received deep impressions that impacted on his political imagination, which is why he placed it at the centre of political commemorations during the Third Reich. The Germans had many reasons to forget the First World

War after 1945: because it led up to the Second World War and because the Second World War and especially the Holocaust dwarfed the First World War in the magnitude of the war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Compared to the Germans, the French and English came out of the war in 1918 with totally different feelings. Although they had been victorious, they were deeply demoralised and traumatised. In Europe the commemoration day is 11 November, the day of the Armistice in 1918 at the Western Front. On the same day the Germans celebrate the opening of their carnival season – a striking example of cultural variety within Europe. They also observe a public day of mourning on the Sunday after November 11, called *Volkstrauertag*, but they have utterly forgotten that this day was created in the 1920s to honour the soldiers of the First World War. As a personal memory the First World War is transmitted in local and family memory, but the national memory was buried under the memory of the Second World War and the Holocaust.

Do not get me wrong: neither world war was ever forgotten by the generations involved. They were the incisive, lasting and traumatic key events of the respective cohorts and became the nucleus of a rich literature. But the heroic national narrative reignited in Nazi Germany into which grandfathers, fathers and sons inscribed their personal memories and transmitted them to their children collapsed after 1945 and rapidly lost momentum among post-war generations. What no longer had a symbolic place in national memory was preserved for a while in the local memory of towns, villages and communities. The fallen soldiers of the Second World War were added to the names inscribed into the monuments of the First World War. In the meantime, the innumerable monuments of the First World War that were spread all over the country to preserve the names of fallen soldiers in the local memory of towns, villages and communities have become relicts of a strange and distant past.<sup>15</sup> Many other material remains of the time are still around and accessible in private households. In Eisenach, for instance, an exhibition on the First World War was put together exclusively from objects of the period that the residents found in the cellars or attics of their houses.

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<sup>15</sup> The artist Wolfram Kastner made a survey of monuments of the First World War questioning their inscriptions in the light of today's values. He was alarmed to find that they do not fit the values, language and ethical standards of our contemporary times, which prompted him to propose that these obstinate relicts of the past be changed or abolished. By taking out five letters from the inscription of a monument he transformed the words "Ruhm und Ehre" into "unEhre" (Rieber 2015).

The First World War is now moving out of the reach of living family memory. Its communicative memory, which circulates among three generations during a period of 80-100 years before it vanishes altogether is on the brink of disappearing but can still be reclaimed in sparse testimonies. To illustrate this ultimate limit of living memory I quote a German whom I interviewed for a documentary film on the generation of air-defence helpers born 1926-1928. His words opened for me a corridor through time, connecting three German generations of war:

“My father was born in 1896; he was an officer in the First World War and in our living room wall hung prominently his two sabres and the side-gun framing a picture of Frederic the Great. In this way, the war and being a soldier was a constant feature in our life. [...] In 1939 I lived with my grandfather in Stettin. What impressed me very much in retrospect was that everybody was enthused about the new war and my grandfather was moved to tears of joy. My grandfather had fought in the war 1870/71 and again in the First World War together with his two sons. I can understand that young people are enthusiastic about war, but I can't understand that he who had experienced previous wars was happy to see it start over again.” (Assmann 2013)

During the commemoration year, a new frame was being constructed through media presentations, scholarship and public debates that has rekindled German interest in the Great War. The situation of Germany was that of a country in search of its lost historical past, welcoming a new European edition of its “non-memory” of the First World War.

### **One hundred years: a watershed in the history of memory**

We often hear critical voices questioning the general prescription of a year of commemoration as an artificial construct. It has nothing to do, it is argued, with an inherent psychic inclination, but follows the abstract magic of numbers and is therefore considered to be a problematic external imposition on society. At the end of the year of commemoration, however, we can say that the stipulation of this artificial memory was very successful; it was widely embraced in Germany on a national and local level, attracting an extraordinarily high level of attention and interest. No one could have predicted this “commemorative avalanche” (Jay Winter) and the enormous public resonance with which it was met across many European borders.

The time span of a hundred years does not only have an arbitrary numerical value but also marks an important biological, social and cultural caesura. After 80-100 years, events sink back into the depth of history as the living ties of embodied and embedded

memories are gradually dissolved. To use the suggestive language of the French historian Pierre Nora we may say that after three generations, the milieu of a memory is about to be dissolved – if it is not re-inscribed into the *lieux* (i.e. sites and symbols) of a more stable cultural memory. This means that with respect to World War I, we have arrived at a temporal watershed, where the event is receding into the past. Thereafter, either it will be of interest only to historians, unless it is also actively reconstructed and supported as an individual and collective memory along new lines. After 100 years, in other words, we are not only looking back at the history of the events, but we are also looking into the future of their memory, considering the possibility of their reconstruction and perpetuation. This future-oriented aspect of memory is more than the mere preservation and continuation of what has been transmitted. It involves a new interpretation of historic events together with new social emotions and political commitment in the present. Moving from short-term communicative memory to long-term cultural memory urges states and nations to rethink their attitudes and practices in order to re-establish standards and to construct new foundations for the future. This is exactly what has been happening in the commemoration year: we were witnessing a temporal watershed at which memories of World War I were reconstructed, restaged, probed, reclaimed and transformed for the future.

### **Creating a new national memory for the future: the case of the United Kingdom**

This can be illustrated by a speech that British Prime Minister David Cameron gave in 2012 at the Imperial War Museum, “the centrepiece” of British commemorations of the Great War. Cameron expressed his hope that “new generations will be inspired by the incredible stories of courage, toil and sacrifice” (Cameron 2012).<sup>16</sup> He also referred to the watershed of public memory, conceding that the living memory of the Great War had vanished and that his own family memory dates back only to World War II. But he asserted: “I passionately believe we should hold on to this heritage and pass it down the generations.” Such a statement is more easily proclaimed than executed and implemented. Cameron, however, meant it. He confirmed that 50 million pounds had been committed to the year of commemoration. As a consequence of which, he had to answer the following question: “Why should we make such a priority of commemorations when money is tight and there is no one left from the generation that fought the Great War?” In his answer, Cameron named “the scale of the sacrifice”, “the length of the trauma”, the historical significance and the enduring emotional bond to the event, all summed up in the assertion that “there is something about the First World War that makes it a fundamental part of our national consciousness.” His idea of commemoration is framed as a national enterprise. This is his vision:

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<sup>16</sup> All subsequent quotations of the speech are from the official transcript.

“Our ambition is a truly national commemoration, worth of this historic centenary. I want a commemoration that captures our national spirit, in every corner of the country, from our schools to our workplaces, to our town halls and local communities. A commemoration that, like the Diamond Jubilee celebrated this year, says something about who we are as a people.”<sup>17</sup>

In his speech, Cameron made a concrete pledge. He promised to build “an enduring cultural and educational legacy [...] to ensure that the sacrifice and service of a hundred years ago is still remembered in a hundred years’ time”. A national narrative of “sacrifice and service” is indeed at the heart of the “truly national commemoration” that Cameron promised to construct and perpetuate. As his own most powerful First World War memory, Cameron mentioned his visit to the battlefields at Gallipoli, a place that for him, obviously, is “forever England”, to quote another famous War poem. In his speech Cameron named and honoured all of the Commonwealth colonial troops, inviting them into the inclusive “we” of British national memory, thus constructing a post-imperial memory for these troops rather than a more dialogic post-colonial memory with their new nations.

But although Cameron expressed a massive concern for the past, there was little concern for new contemporary allies and constellations. When he stressed the fact “that from such war and hatred can come unity and peace, a confidence and a determination never to go back”, he was referring to the Turks who respect and honour the cemetery for the Anzac troops in Gallipoli. This former foe has now turned into a strong ally in commemoration. He did not mention, however, that a similar transformation, an overcoming of conflict and hatred, also marks the EU project. Present day ties with other European nations (except for Belgium) were not expressed as part of Cameron’s concern. To the contrary, his post-imperial national memory appears to act as a veto blocking the possibility of a shared, or at least connected, European memory of the Great War.

### **The temporal and spatial extension of European memory**

However different and diverse the national memories, the members of the EU were made conscious of their own prehistory in the commemoration year. It was like a flashlight that suddenly exposed the unavowed circumstances of their common origin. The shots in Sarajevo triggered what is commonly referred to as the “great seminal catastrophe” (or *Urkatastrophe*) of the twentieth century (Kennan 1979: 3). It started a traumatic concatenation

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<sup>17</sup> The formula: “a truly national commemoration” (or monument) occurs three times in David Cameron’s speech.

of cataclysmic events unleashing unprecedented violence involving the Russian Revolution, another World War and the Holocaust. A new discourse about Europe, however, started only after World War II with the Great War at its back. The EU was explicitly founded on the premises that came out of World War II, choosing the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 and the Holocaust as the defining elements of the Union's identity. We had forgotten how closely these events are entangled and connected: many of those who drafted and signed the Declaration of Human Rights or became the spokesmen for a new Europe had been veterans of the Great War. In the course of the commemoration year we could witness how the temporal and spatial frame of European history and memory was enlarged. It is now the entangled European history of violence spanning the whole twentieth century that is taken into account. This extension concerns not only the temporal frame but also applies to the dimension of space. While the EU started small, with an economic association between France and Germany that more and more countries joined, the overall destruction of Europe started big, changing national borders and effecting deep transformations in the geopolitical landscape. Nor was it only a material battle introducing new mechanical weapons of mass destruction, but a battle that involved the drafting of all the warring countries' fathers, uncles and sons. The clashing of five empires also had global repercussions, involving the forced commitment of thousands of colonial soldiers. The history of Europe therefore proves to be intimately connected with global history. It has become apparent that the rise of a new small Europe was built on the demise of an expanded and entangled colonial Europe.

## **The Great War as a European memory?**

### **Mass media**

Many activities during the commemoration year transcended national borders, stirring common interest and public debates. There was a host of media presentations in various formats including films, documentaries and docu-dramas that brought World War I back to general attention. A prominent example was the book and TV series entitled "14 – Diaries of the Great War", which retells the big history from the small but emotionally engaging point of view of personal stories across national borders. It is based on 14 diaries of male and female, military and civil, known and unknown persons from France, Russia, Australia, the United States, Germany, Austria and the United Kingdom. In 2010 an international team of researchers and authors started to work on this project in the archives, sifting through more than 1,000 diaries and collections of letters. The print version, which soon became a bestseller, was transformed into a TV series. Events recorded in the diaries

were re-enacted by modern actors and interspersed with historical instruction and archival materials consisting of photos and film footage of the time. “For the first time”, the producer argued, “the war is being presented from a multinational perspective”. In a digital media extension, 14 was also offered on the internet as a German-language multi-media web special that made it possible for users to further interact with the film and the historical material. Interactive navigation through the series makes it possible to compare the different timelines of the 14 protagonists, thus discovering personal, national and cultural differences and similarities in this transnational framework.<sup>18</sup>

The mass media format presents the historical events as contexts in which known and unknown individuals were caught, having to adapt to brutal changes in their lives, being confronted with huge challenges, acting and making choices. By focusing on personal stories and the emotions of tangible protagonists, viewers today can easily share their experiences across national borders. This format supported a de-politicised access to the Great War that made it possible to empathise with individuals of seven nationalities, in whom the viewers could recognise common moments of human crisis, courage, suffering and distress across time and space.

### **Historical scholarship**

Historical scholarship has also contributed to a trans-national or multi-national memory in the commemoration year 1914/2014. Since January 2014 we have been flooded with new, impressive and fascinating presentations of the Great War by international historians. In Germany, these books have become bestsellers because they help readers to fill a gap in their general knowledge. Herfried Münkler’s study of the years 1914-18 is entitled “Der große Krieg” (The Great War), thus displaying a new European perspective already on its cover. What is really new in the international research on the Great War, however, is the integration of Germany into the network of nations and the bracketing of the question of guilt. The central proponent of the thesis that Germany was to be held responsible for triggering this devastatingly destructive war was German historian Fritz Fischer (1908-1999). He published three books about the Great War in the 1960s in which he describes Germany as an aggressive imperial power, continuously radicalising his perspective that Germany was alone to blame for starting this historical catastrophe. With these convictions he started the so-called Fischer-Controversy, but they soon became an international consensus. His historical positioning won Fischer the reputation of ‘the most important German historian of the 20<sup>th</sup> century’ in “The Encyclopedia of Historians and Historical Writing” (1999).

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<sup>18</sup> See: <http://www.14-tagebuecher.de/> [10.04.2015].

Looking into Fischer's biography, we can learn that he had been an enthusiastic member of the Volks-Youth movement in the 1920s, became an activist in a right wing Free Corps, and entered the SA and NSDAP in the 1930s. During the war in the early forties he lectured repeatedly on "the invasion of Jews into culture and politics".<sup>19</sup> In the light of this strong ideological engagement in the Second World War, Fischer's historical positioning may also be seen as the personal form of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* of a historian who transferred his own guilt complex from the Second World War to the First World War, a war in which he was not personally engaged.

The undisputed national and transnational bestseller of the commemoration year was Christopher Clark's "The Sleepwalkers – How Europe went to War in 1914", which attracted both high praise and severe criticism from colleagues and general readers. Born in Sydney in 1960, Clark belongs to a new generation of historians. His book shifts entrenched historiographical patterns, opening up new perspectives and controversies. Rather than participating in the polarised discussion about whether he is right or wrong, I would like to look at the way in which his book differs from other current publications. There are three aspects of his work that I want to stress in this context: the emphasis on the prehistory of the war, discarding the format of a narrative and the transnational and comparative perspective.

Clark's book does not retell the history of the Great War but excavates and analyses its prehistory. The two shots in Sarajevo on the 28 June 1914 are not the beginning but the end of his reconstruction and the dramatic peak and turning point of a much longer process. In doing so, Clark's book follows the advice of the American writer Henry James who once said that all good drama consists of "the art of preparations".<sup>20</sup> Preparations, indeed, are laid bare in his book on different levels and in diverse registers. He reconstructs a prehistory leading back to the Serbian regicides of 1903 and provides a comprehensive analysis of geopolitical dynamics, alliances and polarisations in the framework of a new global imperialism.

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<sup>19</sup> The connection between biography and historical writing had been tabooed after 1945 until the so-called "historian's controversy" focusing on the Holocaust and its place in history in 1986. The topic was for the first time systematically researched by Nicolas Berg (Berg 2003).

<sup>20</sup> "If the art of the drama, as a great French master of it has said, is above all the art of preparations, that is true only to a less extent of the art of the novel, and true exactly in the degree in which the art of the particular novel comes near that of the drama." (Toibin 2011: 86).

In his presentation, Clark dispenses with the historiographical format of a narrative. Instead, he uses the style of what ethnographer Clifford Geertz called a “thick description”. A narrative is a teleological and linear presentation that creates a consistent argument and necessarily includes a clear interpretation and evaluation of the events. Clark writes his book against the constraints of this standard, normative and almost insurmountable pattern of historiography. On every page he is concerned with multi-vocal perspectives and intent on balancing diverse views. No perspective is conceded hegemony, everything is put side by side without the effect of relativising it.

Clark’s decision to dispense with a narrative entails a great gain: his perspective restores the horizon of a yet open future. At no point the way into the war was determined and inevitable (Clark 2012: 423).<sup>21</sup> The future was still open, but became ever more confined (Clark 2012: 227, 470). What is the future, he asks, to whom does it belong, who limits its range? According to Clark, the future depends on the multiplication and reduction of options for action. Loss of future means pressure for action leading to escalation (Clark 2012: 457). Clark’s thick description can do without the ascription of national guilt. Instead, he reconstructs the entangled web of the power constellations, social structures of decision-making and personal actors. For this complex theme he does not offer a narrative but an image, which is that of the bomb and its igniter.

Germany, for instance, is presented by Clark as a “belated nation”, not in the usual terms of belated democratisation but in terms of a lack of colonial history. Within the constellation of the five superpowers Great Britain, France, Russia and Austria it is the “parvenu with empty pockets”, “arriving at the table with little space for the last member”. The rhetoric of admirals and the display of fleets in grand style is downgraded as part and parcel of the normal self-presentation of empires aspiring to participate in a new and still hardly defined form of global politics in Europe. In writing from a decidedly transnational perspective, Clark reconstructs the “mental maps” of the various empires, including their mutual projections, misconceptions and emotional dispositions. He stresses the point that they know so little of each other, acting in total ignorance of the aims and anxieties of their opponents (Clark 2012: 317). Clark does not speak of “warmongers” but registers a growing militarisation and polarisation, along with a rapid diminishing of trust in diplomatic solutions on all sides. In all European elites the readiness for war was rapidly growing.

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<sup>21</sup> My quotations refer to the German translation: *“Die Schlafwandler: Wie Europa in den Ersten Weltkrieg zog”*, DVA 2013.

Open aggression was exclusively imputed to the enemy, while one's own perspective was presented in terms of as a "defensive patriotism" (Clark 2012: 312).

Clark's innovation consists of a new comparative method. Every position and assessment is complemented by counter examples which show that very little at the time was specific for only one nation. Clark thus discovers similarities where previously the search for differences had structured the scholarly frameworks in their rendering of the entangled cluster of facts. We learn much from his book about the historical perspective of the French, Britons, Russians, Austrians and Germans, but we get to know them all as Europeans. What they have in common is much more than what separates them.

Clark's new presentation of the primal catastrophe of the First World War emerges from the perspective of an Australian who is linked to this event by two family memories, that of his own grandfather fighting in the British colonial Anzac troops and that of his wife's grandfather fighting on the side of the Germans. His style of reasoning is consistently pragmatic, resisting the constraints of a narrative that selects, combines and invests events with strong emotions (Clark 2012: 532). But Clark himself has also created a narrative, this time a European one. In spite of criticism by some of his colleagues his book is welcomed in 2014, because it allows the European nations to remember their stories no longer against each other but to place them in a common historical frame. The Europeans owe thanks to the Australian for this achievement.

### **Commemoration events**

On November 11, 2014, Armistice Day, French president François Hollande provided European access to the memory of the Great War when he dedicated a new monument in the North of France near the town of Arras. It is placed on a hill close to the French national war cemetery "Notre Dame de Lorette", extending and reshaping the existing memorial landscape. The huge circular monument consists of rows and rows of brass panels inscribed with the names of almost 580,000 soldiers from 40 countries who died in this region. Most of them came from the Commonwealth, many from Germany and France and its colonies.

The new and daring message of the monument is conveyed in the arrangement of the names, which are listed in abstract alphabetical order, thereby breaking up the communities of regiments and nations which had hitherto been so carefully preserved by the guardians of military commemoration. "Men from all over the world came to die here", the president commented in his speech. On the brass panels of the "ring of memory",

the names are listed devoid of rank and without any further information, uniting former friends and foes in a transnational democratic brotherhood of death. Hollande's vision of a truly European memory, however, has not yet been endorsed by his European partners. David Cameron did not join the opening ceremony, and neither did Angela Merkel who sent her minister of defence. It looks as though a European memory of the Great War is still in a process of negotiation.

The 1914/2014 year of commemoration is not only an artificial construction but also something of a Rorschach test. It brings to the fore common European values and shared emotions, but also divisive national traumas, anxieties and ongoing concerns. It offers the chance of a shared recognition of a traumatic entangled history of violence and suffering out of which the victors emerged traumatised and the defeated were infected with resentful heroism. Given this multiplicity of perspectives, it is more than doubtful whether there will ever be a European master narrative of World War I. Even though heroic narratives are still around, what has been emerging during the last months of 2014 is an empathic awareness of individual life stories across national borders, shared grief and a common facing of senseless suffering.

European memory is growing longer and more inclusive; below the ashes of the concentration camps Europeans are rediscovering in the killing fields and cemeteries of Ypres and Verdun another common point of reference and origin. Perhaps the great chance for Europeans in such commemoration years – and this might well constitute a course in European citizenship too -- lies in the possibility to learn more about their own and other countries' memories. This process was certainly advanced in commemorative projects and events that reached a wider international audience such as the TV series "14", Clark's "Sleepwalkers", and Neil Mac Gregor's exhibition "Germany – Memories of a Nation in London". Learning more about each other's memories could be a genuinely European way to arrive at a common historical framework that allows us to connect our personal and national memories without overriding historical differences.

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**Joke van der Leeuw-Roord:**

### **Rethinking commemorations, memory and remembrance in history education**

In 2014 public commemorations throughout Europe focused on the centennial of the beginning of World War I and on the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of D-Day, as one of the determining moments in the last year of World War II. This year a series of public anniversaries can be expected, including the 600<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Agincourt, the bicentenary of the Battle of Waterloo, the 150<sup>th</sup> commemoration of the murder of Abraham Lincoln, the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the bombing of Dresden and the end of the First World War. Many of these events have placed war commemoration at the forefront of public attention and political agendas (Varley 2014).

Principle 6 of the EUROCLIO Manifesto states that high-quality history, heritage and citizenship education recognises that its significance is related to current experiences and challenges and that such education should help students to understand the world they live in and support their orientation for the future (EUROCLIO 2013). Therefore it is important to question how much attention should be given to these commemorations in history classes. What do such anniversaries mean for the younger generation and why does teaching about the commemorated events matter? And, if it is important to bring these events of public remembrance into the classroom, there is a second big issue to address: how to transfer them into meaningful classroom experiences? With such questions in mind, participants in the education workshops at the “*Europäische Erinnerungskulturen - European Commemoration 2014*” conference addressed a variety of issues. These included how ethnically and linguistically divided regions such as Belgium and the Balkans deal with conflicting historical memories; the opportunities of extra-curricular historical projects; bringing eyewitness accounts into the classroom and the use of digital tools. Despite the diversity of speakers, topics and approaches, there was surprising agreement among the participants about how to make such commemorations meaningful in class room practice: they should be based on a critical, multi-perspective and cross-border approach, with a particular focus on individual experiences, giving students the opportunity to connect to the bigger picture of the past. This article tries to place the workshop discussions into a wider context of thought about the relevance of the subject for young people, especially in relation to the “Europe” project.

### **Multiperspectivity in history teaching**

In his recent paper entitled “European Historical Memory: Policies, Challenges and Perspectives”, Markus Prutsch wrote: “there might be historical facts, but there is no singular or static historical truth..., there is a multiplicity of ‘truths’ even at any given historical moment.” (Prutsch 2013) All participants in the education workshops shared his vision and stated that historical narratives are multi-layered and that history education should address this complexity. Their attitude is in line with current approaches to the learning and teaching of history in Europe and beyond, with many well-known advocates such as Bodo von Borries, Maria Grever, Peter Seixas and Robert Stradling (Black 2007, Stradling 2003, Grever/Boxtel 2014). However, looking at the abundant literature and listening to the workshop participants, we may conclude that multiperspectivity is a concept which can be understood in different ways.

Professor Bob Stradling asks the question “What is multiperspectivity?” in his acclaimed publication “Multiperspectivity in History Teaching: a Guide for Teachers” (Stradling 2003). After looking into a variety of voices on the concept, he identifies three distinct elements. Firstly, it means looking at historical events and developments from a multiplicity of vantage points and understanding what is heard, seen or felt. Secondly, Stradling notes that multiperspectivity requires looking at historical events and developments from a multiplicity of points of view and understanding the motives underpinning these various points of view. And finally he stipulates that such an approach requires historical events and developments to be viewed through a multiplicity of historical accounts and interpretations, including accounts produced at different times, for different purposes and for different audiences (Stradling 2003). His approach is certainly comprehensive, but in light of the fact that many others have given and are continuing to give definitions, it can be problematic for practitioners to understand the concept.

The concept is still widely accepted by history educators in Europe and they are willing to apply it in their classrooms. In many countries, practice in school history is quite contradictory to this desire as school curricula and textbooks often give little space to complexity in historical narratives. In 2009 a EUROCLIO survey asked, “On which of these concepts do you want to place more emphasis when teaching history at school?” Multiperspectivity was ranked second after critical thinking (EUROCLIO 2009). In 2010 a EUROCLIO survey asked if history practitioners throughout Europe agreed with the statement “My country’s approach to multiperspectivity is satisfactory.” Only 17 per cent agreed and 69 per cent disagreed: school resources in 2010 were still predominantly based on a single narrative approach (EUROCLIO 2010). This conclusion was confirmed by

several contributions in the workshops. Herbert Ruland, researcher and lecturer at the German-speaking community's university, the AHS in Belgium, gave evidence on how in a linguistically divided country like Belgium the three communities have their own interpretation of World War I. And Felicitas Macgilchrist, Deputy Head of the "Textbooks as Media" Department at the Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research, showed how educational professionals in Europe still struggle with many, often conflicting, interpretations and narratives of the First World War (Georg Eckert Institute 2015).

The participants in the workshops aired their concern that multiperspectivity may lead to an understanding that every perspective is of equal value, and that students cannot have a proper understanding about the different quality of the underlying evidence or the ethical aspects of the different perspectives. Stradling therefore stresses in his book the importance of questioning the reliability of sources by comparing and cross-referencing and by evaluating their contextual information in order to be able to consider the limitations of the perspective. It is important for history practitioners to emphasise that using different perspectives in the classroom does not mean justifying all possible points of view, as there is indeed a danger that students are unresponsive towards the ethical dimension of the perspective. In her recent book *"De Schaduw van de Grote Broer"* (The Shadow of the Big Brother), the journalist Laura Starink quotes from the diary of Michael Wieck, a Jewish musician who survived World War II in Koenigsberg. He writes that he could understand the cruelties of the Soviet Army but that there is no justification for their wrongdoings (Starink 2015). The German history education expert Klaus Bergmann agrees wholeheartedly with this observation: "Understanding does not mean consent!" (Bergmann 2000). On the website of the Canadian "Historical Thinking Project", the founding director Peter Seixas concludes that: "meaningful history does not treat brutal slave-holders, enthusiastic Nazis, and marauding conquistadors in a "neutral" manner. Historians attempt to hold back on explicit ethical judgments about actors in the midst of their accounts, but, when all is said and done, if the story is meaningful, then there is an ethical judgment involved. We should expect to learn something from the past that helps us to face the ethical issues of today." (The Historical Thinking Project, n.d.). However, finding a balance between allowing young people to form their own opinions and developing their sense of good and bad regularly poses real challenges for educators: there is a fine line between stimulating a transfer of values and indoctrination.

### **Cross-border, European and global approaches**

Giving voices to different countries does not necessarily provide a multi-perspective approach, however the participants in the education workshops agreed that today's young

people, living in an intercultural and global society, need history education which goes beyond the national perspective. Unfortunately such an approach in European history education is, even in 2015, often wishful thinking. Indeed, things seem to have gone backwards since 2000. Putin is not the only way to argue in favour of increasing national history in order to counter the presumed lack of a national sense of belonging (Grever/Stuurman 2007: 1–3, Rahim 2013, The Kremlin 2014). As soon as Cameron became Prime Minister he began advocating curriculum changes “to catch up with world’s best.” He wrote about what this means for history teaching in an article marking the 799<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Magna Carta in 2014,

“We should teach history with warts and all. But we should be proud of what Britain has done to defend freedom and develop these institutions – parliamentary democracy, a free press, the rule of law – that are so essential for people all over the world. This is the country that helped fight fascism, topple Communism and abolish slavery; we invented the steam engine, the light bulb, the internet; and we also gave so much of the world the way of life that they hold so dear.” (Cameron 2014)

Even the Netherlands, a country with a traditional international approach to history education, in 2009 introduced a curriculum based on the Dutch canon with 50 windows of Dutch history and culture.<sup>22</sup> And in surveys history practitioners from other European countries have repeatedly reported an increase of national history in their curricula. An in-depth EUROCLIO survey about developments in history education since 1989 reported a clear increase in the proportion of national history in history education (Van der Leeuw-Roord et al. 2004: 19). And in the annual EUROCLIO survey of 2010, 62 per cent of the respondents signalled to a large or a lesser degree an increase of national history in the school curriculum (EUROCLIO 2010).

Internationally, the interest in cross-border approaches in European history education has already been acknowledged for a long time. Since its creation in 1949, the Council of Europe has shown an active interest in the role of history education in the European integration project and has organised a multitude of seminars, conferences and projects related to the topic.<sup>23</sup> In the Berlin workshops the question was raised how to widen the

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<sup>22</sup> See for example: <http://www.entoen.nu/en> [10.04.2015]; <http://histoforum.net/history/history-canon.htm> [10.04.2015]

<sup>23</sup> See, Council of Europe, “History Teaching”, [http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/historyteaching/default\\_en.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/historyteaching/default_en.asp) [10.04.2015]

scope of classroom history without overburdening students with the history of every community and country. This concern also occupied the participants in the Council of Europe events, and when the Committee of Education of the Council launched a project in 2002 with the aim of stressing the European dimension in history teaching, the project was asked to examine the question of what could constitute a European approach and dimension.<sup>24</sup> The project concluded that such an international approach should focus on events, topics, themes or developments which are truly European either because they happened across much of Europe or had direct or indirect consequences for much, if not all, of the continent. It should encourage teachers to take a comparative perspective and set events in their own country against a broader European and global context. It should contribute to the development of young people's historical understanding, critical skills and knowledge and encourage teachers and students to examine key events, conflicts and developments from a multiplicity of perspectives.<sup>25</sup>

In recent years a variety of projects have been set up to make cross-border history available in the classroom, based on the criteria formulated by the Council of Europe project. There are three levels of internationalisation: bilateral tools, publications with a focus on one particular region and multilateral instruments. The most well-known bilateral approach is the Franco-German textbook "Histoire/Geschichte."<sup>26</sup> It addresses in three volumes the history of Europe and the world from antiquity to the present times from a German and French perspective and is published in both languages. The regional approach is applied using a variety of agents. The Council of Europe has been involved in cross-border work and publications relating to the Baltic States, the Caucasus and the Black Sea region.<sup>27</sup> The Center for Democracy and Reconciliation in Southeast Europe, based in Thessaloniki, has developed transnational textbooks on the Ottoman Empire, the nations and states of Southeast Europe, the Balkan Wars and the Second World War.<sup>28</sup> The EUROCLIO community has developed cross-border educational tools on the Baltic States, the Balkans and recently on the Caucasus, Ukraine and Moldova.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> See, Council of Europe, "History Teaching: European Dimension Project", [http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/historyteaching/Projects/EuropeanDimension/EuropeanDimensionIntro\\_en.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/historyteaching/Projects/EuropeanDimension/EuropeanDimensionIntro_en.asp) [10.04.2015]

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> See Histoire/Geschichte, <http://www.klett.de/lehrwerk/histoire-geschichte/einstieg> [10.04.2015]

<sup>27</sup> The so-called Tbilisi Initiative, available at [http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/historyteaching/Cooperation/RegionalCooperation/TbilisiInitiativeIntro\\_en.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/historyteaching/Cooperation/RegionalCooperation/TbilisiInitiativeIntro_en.asp) [10.04.2015]

<sup>28</sup> See, <http://www.cdsee.org/publications/books> [10.04.2015]

<sup>29</sup> For an overview of teaching tools developed by EUROCLIO, see <http://www.euroclio.eu/new/index.php/publications/educational-material-mainmenu-391> [10.04.2015]

The issue of forging a European sense of belonging through a common European school textbook has long preoccupied politicians in Europe. As an early answer to this call, in 1992 Frederic Delouche published in the beautifully illustrated “History of Europe”, written by twelve historians, and translated in possibly as many languages (Aldebert/Delouche 1997). However, this book does not fulfil any of Stradling’s criteria: it was a traditional chronological single narrative without any pedagogical purpose. For years, history education professionals showed little interest in creating a common European history textbook, as it was feared that such a book would result in a watered-down official European narrative. In 2007 EUROCLIO decided to radically change its adverse attitude to the idea of a common European textbook and support Germany’s appeal during its European Union Presidency to launch an alternative to a common European history book for school education using the new digital and internet opportunities. In 2015 “Historiana –Your Portal to the Past” is a continuously developing online educational multimedia tool that offers students multiperspective, cross-border and comparative historical sources to supplement their national history textbooks.<sup>30</sup> A wealth of cross-border resources are also available on “Europeana”, a European platform that brings together organisations that have heritage to share with people and sectors who want to view, share and use cultural heritage.<sup>31</sup> However this project needs more curation to make it really applicable for classroom practice.

Although an increasing variety of interesting cross-border materials have become available for classroom practice, the use of such materials is still limited, largely due to the fact that there is still little political interest in opening up national curricula to more experimental global learning and to the fact that in some countries it is even difficult to gain permission to use such cross-border tools as additional teaching materials. However, the history teaching community’s lack of familiarity with cross-border teaching tools is also hindering implementation.

### **Commemoration, remembrance and memory**

The last important element in the debates held by the education audience in Berlin was related to the connected issues of commemoration, remembrance and memory. Several speakers promoted addressing remembrance from a more personalised perspective in order to give young people a sense of connection with the past. They suggested the use of eyewitness accounts for this purpose and gave evidence for how important the role of

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<sup>30</sup> Historiana – Your Portal to the Past, <http://historiana.eu/> [10.04.2015]

<sup>31</sup> See Europeana, <http://www.europeana.eu/portal/> [10.04.2015]

Shoah eyewitnesses has been in educating young people about the ultimate atrocity committed by humankind. Clearly the numbers of eyewitnesses are falling and this valuable educational tool will inevitably disappear. The historian Bernd Körte-Braun presented some alternative opportunities by showing how survivors' testimonies could be used in the digital age. The audience was made acquainted with a highly sophisticated hologram of an eyewitness (Katz 2013). The high-quality example showed its potential but also left the historian Axel Doßmann and his audience with some serious questions. Oral history has become an important source of non-official history, allowing traditional silent voices such as migrant and minority communities, opposition groups, ordinary people and women to become vocal. However oral evidence should be treated like any other source material, which means questioning their reliability, cross-referencing the source and evaluating its contextual information. It is uncertain if a critical approach is possible with eyewitness accounts in classrooms as they generally hold deep emotional connotations. Changing into hologram eyewitness accounts will increase the concerns that have been identified (Katz 2013). Although the example allowed the audience to ask a variety of factual questions, critical questioning was not possible. This may exacerbate the problem that young people understand such testimonies as the real and only truth.

In the European Union the interest in commemoration, remembrance and memory has increased during the last decade. The issue of a common European culture of remembrance has become urgent since the accession of the former communist countries from Central and Eastern Europe into the European Union. Their different experiences of twentieth-century history have produced emotional debates, national and international conferences and academic papers (Grajauskas 2010).<sup>32</sup> European parliamentarians, many representing the Christian and more rightist parties from these countries, have regularly argued for the need to treat totalitarian systems such as Nazism and Communism on an equal footing. This culminated in the Prague Declaration of 2008, which represents the first official acknowledgement of communist crimes. The Socialist Group of the European Parliament contributed in turn to the debate with a publication on politics of the past, which argued against the abuse of history for political gain (Swoboda et al. 2009).

As an answer to the political debates, since 2007 the European Union has been creating a special action devoted to remembrance as part of the "Europe for Citizens" programme (European Commission 2014, European Commission and Education,

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<sup>32</sup> The Platform of European Memory and Conscience can be accessed through: <http://www.memory-andconscience.eu> [10.04.2015]

Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency 2014). Until 2014 the programme particularly focused on the breaches of fundamental European Union values such as freedom, democracy and respect for human rights caused by Nazism and Stalinism. The programme asked for projects “reflecting on causes of totalitarian regimes in Europe’s modern history (especially, but not exclusively, Nazism that led to the Holocaust, Fascism, Stalinism and totalitarian communist regimes) and to commemorate the victims of their crimes.” The programme for the period 2014-2020 has widened its goals, specifying that the programme focuses on “Europe as a peace project.” It continues to look at the causes of the totalitarian regimes but will also ask for projects that look at “other defining moments and reference points, and consider different historical perspectives.” In 2015 the programme will prioritise activities on “World War II and the associated rise of intolerance that enabled crimes against humanity and the consequences of World War II for the post-war architecture of Europe, its division and the Cold War and the beginning of the European integration process following the Schuman Declaration in 1950”.

In 2013 the European Parliament Culture and Education Committee actively debated the draft report on “Historical Memory in Culture and Education in the European Union” by the Polish Member of the European Parliament Marek Henryk Migalski (Migalski and Committee on Culture and Education 2013). At the request of the Committee, the European Parliament’s Directorate General for Internal Policies asked Markus Prutsch, senior researcher and research administrator at the European Parliament, to produce a background document. The publication, “European Historical Memory: Policies, Challenges and Perspectives”, is very much in line with the views of the audience at the education workshops in Berlin (Prutsch 2013). The author highlights the value of different multiple perspectives and notes that perspectives vary within societies and are not uniform within the borders of a country. He therefore also concludes that a European shared memory cannot mean a single memory (Prutsch 2013: 31). He also agrees that “historical events should be studied not in isolation, but bearing in mind their transnational dimensions and repercussions.” (Prutsch 2013: 31). According to him, a parallel critical examination of history both at a national and European level would be beneficial. Unfortunately the draft report entitled “Historical Memory in Culture and Education in the European Union” was never finalised due to political difficulties, which demonstrated again how hard it is for national politicians to distance themselves from their traditional single narratives and face a transnational, multifaceted past.

History education is a powerful tool in the hands of policymakers as it has tried and still tries to forge the minds of young people when it comes to a sense of national belonging.

Policymakers therefore have an active interest in bringing remembrance into the classroom. The question is, how can we deal with these different commemorations in schools in a productive way? The commemoration year 2014 offered many opportunities to engage schools with these memorials. The UK Prime Minister David Cameron declared in 2012 that the national commemorations of the centenary of the First World War in the UK would “capture (our) national spirit in every corner of the country.” (Wintour 2012). The British government allowed several students and teachers from each school to travel to the battlefields of Flanders and France. Across the world, national governments have been announcing ambitious plans for commemorations of the Great War to be held between 2014 and 2018; country-based commissions and committees have been created, celebration dates have been set and websites have been launched.<sup>33</sup> And obviously 2015 will draw attention to the end of World War II and the beginning of the communist domination of Central and Eastern Europe.

EUSTORY, an international network of organisations involved in research competitions for young people, and its German counterpart “Geschichtswettbewerb des Bundespräsidenten” showed in Berlin extracurricular attempts addressing remembrance with young people via enquiry-based learning on topics such as heroes, monuments and migration. EUROCLIO has developed a special remembrance programme, which “encompasses initiatives fostering professional development, cross-border cooperation and capacity-building for history, heritage and citizenship educators on a wide variety of historical periods, events and themes which still resonate in the public space today.”<sup>34</sup> It looks into practices of different generations in (re)interpreting key moments in their nation’s or region’s past and how these practices are reflected in European classroom practices. In 2015 teaching tools and professional training are centred on the commemoration of the Battle of Waterloo, World War I, Nazi and Stalinist internment and concentration camps and European integration.

The academic world is also showing increasing interest in the impact of commemoration, remembrance and memory in history classrooms. The topical “TeacMem” project engaged in reflection on competence-oriented teaching on historical memories of World

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<sup>33</sup> For instance, see the following websites. United Kingdom: [www.1914.org](http://www.1914.org); Italy: [www.trentinograndeguerra.it](http://www.trentinograndeguerra.it); Australia: [www.anzaccentenary.gov.au](http://www.anzaccentenary.gov.au); New Zealand: [ww100.govt.nz](http://www.ww100.govt.nz); Belgium: [www.100jaargrooteoorlog.be](http://www.100jaargrooteoorlog.be); [www.2014-18.be](http://www.2014-18.be); [www.commemorer14-18.be](http://www.commemorer14-18.be); France: <http://centenaire.org>, all accessed [10.04.2015]

<sup>34</sup> The programme is called “Reflecting Remembrance”. <http://www.euroclio.eu/new/index.php/work/reflecting-remembrance> [10.04.2015]

War II and developed and disseminated practical methodologies for teaching this topic.<sup>35</sup> The work programme 2014-2015 of HORIZON 2020 entitled: “Europe in a changing world: inclusive, innovative and reflective societies”, focuses on the cultural heritage of war in contemporary Europe and asks researchers to map the use of the cultural heritage of selected major armed conflicts in memorial practices. Currently HERA, the Humanities in the European Research Area, has launched a call for projects related to “Uses of the Past”. The call asks for projects that will provide Europeans with:

“new, more complex understandings of how the individuals and societies use and reflect upon the past, taking account of how cultural ideas, traditions and practices are constructed, transferred and disseminated among different agents and regions”.

In both programmes, education is one of the targeted agents, and partnerships between history education actors and academic institutes are in full swing.<sup>36</sup>

## Conclusions

In 2015 history education in Europe is still based on models of underlining national pride and victimhood and disregarding national guilt. In a recent email, Jörn Leonhard, history professor at the University of Freiburg, wrote that “history education at school impregnates very often all future views on history”. It is therefore important to question what is relevant to remember. Many commemorations are related to wars. For centuries, wars were the means to settle an argument and remained so for many politicians and soldiers at the beginning of World War I (Prutsch 2013: 28–34). However, in 2015 celebrating war and military victories seem rather inappropriate, and leads us to question how to make many of these commemorations meaningful and significant for young people. As the Historical Thinking project asks: are we obligated to remember the fallen soldiers of World War I? As Peter Seixas questions on his “Historical Thinking” page “What responsibilities do historical crimes and sacrifices impose upon us today?” (The Historical Thinking Project, n.d.)

EUROCLIO has regularly signalled that the habit of continuing celebrations of great historical events along national lines does not support the process of European integration. Prutsch argues in his paper that “pompous celebrations, memorial events and festivities” cannot craft a common historic trajectory. According to the author, the biggest challenge for Europe would be “to forge an open spirit, which is open to critical historic approaches.”

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<sup>35</sup> <http://blogs.epb.uni-hamburg.de/teacmem/about/aims-of-the-project/> [10.04.2015]

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.b2match.eu/hera-up-mme/pages/uses-of-the-past> [10.04.2015]

He suggests that an open spirit can be created through “an alternative historical teaching which increases awareness of the diversity of cultures, histories and memories in Europe, and promotes mutual respect, provides students with the necessary knowledge and skills to assess their own local and national past unbiasedly in comparison and relation with other European as well as global realities and thus encourages young Europeans to become active critical thinkers and participants of ‘historical remembrance’.” (Prutsch 2013: 30–31)

In 2015, everyday politics are also still loaded with the use of national remembrance. The author Laura Starink depicts in her book a variety of these levels of remembrance of twentieth-century history inside Latvia, Poland, Russia and Ukraine and demonstrates how these narratives continuously feed into the current political debates and developments. In order to be able to address the past in European classrooms as impartially as possible, a multi-perspective, cross-community and cross-border perspective is required. Such an approach can only be acquired through the results of international research projects and historians who are willing to look beyond national (language) borders. The newest publications by historians such as Clark, Douglas, Lowe and Leonhard with their critical analyses of twentieth-century European history are crucial to accomplish such demands for school history (EUROCLIO and European Commission 2013). In their classrooms, history educators have students from many different backgrounds who characterise different national memories, including feelings of pride and victory but also of guilt, remorse, and defeat. So teachers need to be supported by good research and also helped to cope with so many voices in their classrooms. This means investing in expert teacher education, a well-developed professional lifelong learning approach and the availability of high-quality teaching tools. Unfortunately the current economic crisis has decreased education funding in most European countries and there are also limited international training opportunities available.<sup>37</sup>

However, without national political support throughout Europe very little will change. Policymakers need to increase their willingness to rethink the focus on national school history and become accountable for providing history education that helps young people move towards a peaceful future. With this article I have tried to show that the discussions related to education during the European Commemoration 2014 event in Berlin do not stand in isolation but were a component of the discourses on responsible and inno-

<sup>37</sup> The Council of Europe’s training and capacity-building Pestalozzi Programme is available for education professionals. The European Wergeland Centre and EUROCLIO also offer regular transnational courses for history educators. However, their outreach is highly dependent on the availability of financial resources.

vative history teaching in Europe. The fact that a national government, in this case the German government, has acknowledged the importance of the place of history education with regard to European commemoration, remembrance and memory seems to be a ground-breaking step. However such a step only really becomes meaningful when the German and other national governments continue to pay attention to rethinking the role of history education in the Europe project. Only when national politicians take responsibility will practitioners be able to start implementing a history education based on a critical, multi-perspective and cross-border approach.

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**Vesna Goldsworthy:**

**The art of sleepwalking: transnational memory and its European blind spots**

One of the most paralysing contradictions at the heart of the European vision is the way the European Union pays lip-service to an ideal of transnational identity while in practice stimulating so many differences based on nationality and ethnicity, and fostering the vested interests dependent on such differences. The transnational ideal remains a permanent “not yet”, a eu-topia, while assertions of national and ethnic difference are shielded by humanist values no enlightened person should ever contradict: the freedom of self-expression and self-determination; the right to be “who you are”. However, the notion of “who you are” remains closely linked with blood and soil. The contradiction has wider repercussions than the commemoration of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the First World War, but such an occasion puts it in the spotlight.

In ways which are insufficiently recognised, the post First World War settlement anticipated the emergence of the multinational EU. It replaced defeated imperial projects with multinational states which were seen at the time as the embodiment both of their constituents’ aspirations to self-rule and a means of overcoming future conflicts: Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, even – why not? – the Soviet Union. These unions fell apart before the century ended, not without a helping shove from the EU which, although itself supranational, paradoxically acts as though national self-determination is one of its primary values. Nearly two million Yugoslavs who chose to identify “transnationally” were never given the same hearing, let alone the same right to a country, as the often much smaller national groups who were helped towards their own statehood: the latter had blood and soil on their side, the Yugoslavs only sentiment and a little recently-mixed blood. National states which quietly swept any troublesome minorities under the carpet also seemed to have a fast track to EU membership. The case of former Yugoslavia demonstrates the validity of this assertion. Among its successor states, the order of accession to the EU correlates directly to the degree of ethnic purity, whether pre-dating the collapse of the federation (as in the case of Slovenia) or manufactured in the 1990s (as in the case of Croatia). Macedonia and Bosnia, the most ethnically mixed, seem set to be the last in the queue (the all-but ethnically purified Kosovo may be the favoured child of some EU states, but its statehood is not even recognised by others). Was not the unification of Germany itself a national move carried out with more genuine energy than most wider European projects? If this move had not been national, and thereby seen as “natural”, West Germany could have unified with any number of European states, many of them smaller and needier than the GDR.

The ideal of a future beyond nationality lives on like a patient in a coma; it seems insufficient to banish the virility, even the virulence of nationalism. The European celebration of difference is reflected not only in EU's international politics but also in a myriad of smaller, seemingly innocent ways: in Europe's nervous shyness about assimilation and its pride in the many different projects through which it subsidises and fosters immigrant "communities", even as many immigrants suffer a great deal to reach Europe in order to leave behind the restrictive cultures their communities embody; in the voting in the "Eurovision" song contests which cements old alliances and diasporic allegiances; sometimes even in the protectionist definitions of terroir and *appellations d'origine contrôlée* in the food we eat; in fact in any fetishisation of "separateness", however inconspicuous it may be.

So transnationalism may be a *beau idéal*, but nationalism still gets the implicit support of EU organisations, whose practical moves not only in the former Yugoslavia but also in the former Soviet Union and the former Czechoslovakia, reflect a largely outdated concept of national self-determination, within pre-existing, arbitrary intra-state borders, as one of its key values. The European media reflect the same mindset to such an extent that it is almost a surprise when people vote for a union bigger than the nation, as Scottish people did when they decided to remain in the United Kingdom. Secular nationalism may in fact be the obvious *differentia specifica* of Europeaness. To judge by the European press in the run-up to the Scottish referendum in September 2014, one would be forgiven in thinking that the whole of the unofficial EU – except, perhaps understandably, Spain which has its own independence movements to contend with – was willing Scotland to leave the UK. Was it to enjoy the spectacle of having another "proud" new independent national state while watching the once-mighty UK, with its heretical scepticism about the EU, humbled? Or was it about more ambassadorial posts for everyone, more European capitals to discover on city-breaks? Pride in independent nationhood – particularly when it proclaims Europe as its immediate goal – is cast in a more appealing light than pride in an old union, whether that union is already in Europe or not, whether it works well or not.

### **Allied memories: 1914 and its commemoration in Britain and Serbia**

I belong to two countries which happen to have fought on the same side in World War One, although they have been at odds more recently. One is a union just over three centuries old (we can quibble about Northern Ireland); the other an independent state which has, depending on how one chooses to tell its story, existed intermittently for centuries, and most recently since 2006. Britain and Serbia both emerged victorious in 1918, yet the ways in which the "Great War" has been remembered by them are very different although the contrasts and comparisons are well beyond the scope of this essay.

Since 1918, Britain has witnessed the gradual evolution of rites focussing on the Armistice Day and now Remembrance Sunday with its televised ceremony at a symbolic empty tomb, the Cenotaph. It is one of those increasingly rare occasions which reminds one that Britain is part of the Commonwealth, an organisation whose formal birthday precedes the EU's by some eight years, and which grew out of similar post-imperial ideals. The Commonwealth Charter, which binds its 53 member states and their 2.53 billion inhabitants by its core beliefs in democracy, human rights, freedom of expression, gender equality, the role of civil society and the rule of law, is strikingly similar to the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. One can even imagine an alternative history in which the two organisations overlapped: in 1956, the French Prime Minister Guy Mollet raised the possibility of a union between Britain and France, an idea earlier mooted amid the throes of the French defeat in 1940, and discussed French membership of the Commonwealth with the British Prime Minister Anthony Eden (Thomson 2007).

The soldiers of the Commonwealth countries – many of them still British colonies in 1914 – contributed immeasurably to the British victory. The memory of that war, much more than the Second, reminds us that Britain is not only a European country (if it is that at all). Its links with the Commonwealth are not just (post)colonial but also linguistic and familial in a way which makes many Britons feel more at home in Auckland or Sydney than in Paris or Berlin. Deeper historical affinities in educational and political systems, even religion, as well as the lived historical experience, have also resulted in greater similarities in commemoration rites.

What Britain shares with almost all of the Commonwealth, but not with most of the EU, is that it avoided defeat and occupation in either of the two world wars, and the concomitant experiences of loss of autonomy, collaboration with the occupier and a breakdown of order. This fostered a still divisive heritage that often drives European acts of commemoration away from the specific and towards a generalised expression of anti-war sentiment. So ingrained is the legacy of humiliation and anguish across Europe that one needs to emphasise the contrast with the UK, which emerged bruised but triumphant from both wars, protected by the sea from the worst of the shattering upheavals on the continent. Therein surely lies a – the ? – major reason for the mutual incomprehension between my adopted homeland and European mainland.

Such considerations were certainly at play in Serbia, which did not develop any rites of commemoration of the First World War comparable to those in Britain. Its public remembrance was profoundly inflected – Serbian nationalists would now say stymied –

by the conciliatory narrative of the new unified South Slav statehood which emerged after 1918. Serbia banked its victory, taking the leading role in the creation of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia whose constituent nations fought on different sides in World War One. Many in the Yugoslav successor states, including Serbia itself, tend to see that kingdom as a historical mistake and are inclined to blame each other – and sometimes Britain and America – for its creation. A casual perusal of press coverage of post-independence election campaigns in the former Yugoslavia reveals that each constituent nation now sees itself as a victim of the South Slav project, while any benefits accruing from Yugoslavia's brief life are seen as having been reaped by other constituent nations.

The erasure of the "Great War" from popular Yugoslav memory was a feature of the period after the Second World War and the creation of the socialist federation, the "new" Yugoslavia. Monuments and graves remained untended and uncherished, the novels and poems the war inspired were largely forgotten, particularly if they were in any sense celebratory or "patriotic". With one or two rare exceptions, the literary tradition of the period which survived this purge is that created by the poets and novelists who fought in the Austro-Hungarian rather than the Serbian army: writers such as the Serbian Miloš Crnjanski who was wounded in Polish Galicia, or the Croatian Miroslav Krleža who fought on the Eastern Front, both of whose war writings are deeply disaffected, alienated and anti-war in sentiment. Let me hasten to add that the high literary merit of this tradition is such that it rightly deserves to be remembered. I am simply noting that rival strands of war art have been forgotten because they did not suit the dominant narrative of new statehood, rather than because of their demerits.

With Yugoslavia's disintegration in the 1990s, and the subsequent re-emergence of an independent Serbian state for the first time since 1915, the Serbs made some hesitant steps towards establishing new commemorative rituals with which to remember the First World War. There is as yet little consensus as to what these rituals should be, largely because there is no consensus about the meaning of Yugoslavia. Many observers claim that these rituals mimic somewhat half-heartedly the rituals already well established in Britain and France. In 2012, Serbia made 11 November, Armistice Day, a public holiday. At the same time, it introduced its own commemorative symbol inspired by the British poppy: a flower called Natalia's Ramonda (Ramonda Nathaliae), discovered in the 1880s in central Serbia and named after Queen Natalia Obrenović. Conveniently, this flower is also known as the phoenix-flower, because of its rare anabiotic properties; it can be resurrected with water even after its apparent death. While the floral symbolism is clear, particularly given the fact that the flower also grows on Kaimakchalan, the site of one of the most famous Serbian

victories on the Macedonian Front, the choice of 11 November was less clear-cut. Many Serbs wondered if Armistice Day was the best choice for a World War One-related public holiday. 11 November was of limited relevance for Serbia as its principal adversary Bulgaria had signed an armistice in September and Austria was already unravelling; it is instead associated with the history of the Western Front, which overwhelmingly dominates Europe's collective memory of the war.

Either from a fear of being seen to be nationalist yet again, or from a desire to be seen as fully European, Serbia used such western-inflected symbolism to fill the vacuum created by the erasure of Yugoslavia. It may not be ideal, but neither is the option other post-communist states have taken when they set out to resuscitate "ancient" rites and rituals, often of dubious authenticity, which evoke a romanticised pre-industrial past as though the First World War – let alone the Second or the communist epoch which followed it – had never happened. This move is perhaps best illustrated by the scattering of new, colourfully costumed presidential guard detachments across the capitals of "new Europe". I have written elsewhere about the way in which British writers and American film-makers have created imaginary Ruritania in the Balkans (Goldsworthy 1998). In their plumed shackos and an excess of gold braid I recognise the Balkans stepping up to the plate at the beginning of this new millennium, performing in their own version of "The Merry Widow".

### **"How do you tell a story that people want to hear?": Confronting commemoration fatigue**

"How do you tell a story that people want to hear?", journalist and film-maker Edward Serotta asked in his presentation to one of the art panels at the conference "*Europäische Erinnerungskulturen – European Commemoration 2014*" in Berlin in December 2014. Serotta was presenting the work of Centropa, the Vienna-based historical institute he founded in 2000, dedicated to preserving 20<sup>th</sup> century Jewish stories from Central and Eastern Europe and the Balkans. Some of the most interesting aspects concerned the educational outreach of Centropa's films. People are tired of war stories, of hearing about concentration camps and atrocities, Serotta argued; they think they have heard them all, and there is enough contemporary horror. The key to Centropa's educational films, he illustrated, was to discuss the war by not talking about it. Instead, his interviewees talked, often with palpable nostalgia, about ordinary, even mundane things: school dances, family gatherings, falling in love, memories of life before. The absence of its Jews gives much of central Europe the quality of a film which has lost both its colour and its soundtrack. Centropa's films illuminate those absences by not referring to what went wrong. They give us the outline of the horror by speaking right around it.

The conference was supposed to be talking about World War One, but our panels kept returning to World War Two. It seemed easier to discuss, more paradigmatic: World War Two was the war which had to happen, that could not be avoided, a war no-one would ever describe as futile. A century on, and particularly once we step beyond the national context, the memory of the “Great War” has in many ways ossified around this idea of “futility”. It is seen – like some of our contemporary wars – as a conflict leaders “sleepwalked” into, a war without winners. Many of its iconic images – like that of German and British soldiers playing football in the no-man’s land – would be unthinkable in the early 1940s. Even its most heroic chapters are often depicted as regrettable rather than glorious, as acts of sacrificial courage by the mythical “lions led by donkeys”.

Moreover, books and films depicting the First World War tend to be increasingly tinged by a misty-eyed sentimentality about the European world which came to an end with its outbreak, as though pre-1914 Europe was some cuddly, gently hilarious version of “The Grand Budapest Hotel”. Habsburg and Ottoman nostalgia are both resurgent. As books and films gaze lovingly at old-school officers in their tailored uniforms or aristocratic nurses striding purposefully through field hospitals in requisitioned French chateaux, the same romanticised sepia sometimes colours even the war itself, as though the well-documented Austro-Hungarian atrocities in the Balkans, or the poison gas experiments, were regrettable departures from that football match in Flanders field. The Austrian Emperor Charles, who presided over the use of poison gas, has been beatified and may soon become a saint (Deutsche Welle 2004; Traynor 2004): it is difficult to imagine the generals who sought to assassinate Hitler achieving a similar destiny.

Against so much wilful historical amnesia, the challenge for the makers of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary commemorative art projects became almost impossible. How do you create something that “people want to hear” while avoiding both bland clichés and the sensitivities of the former enemies, now European partners? Let us look at one national example and the controversies it sparked.

### **Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red**

Among the many artistic projects commissioned to mark the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the outbreak of the First World War in Britain, the installation entitled “Blood-Swept Lands and Seas of Red” must have been one of the most spectacular. It was certainly the most popular. Devised and created by the British artists Paul Cummins and Tom Piper, this work consisted of 888,246 ceramic poppies placed gradually in the moat around the Tower of London between July and November 2014. Each flower represented one British soldier’s death in the Great War.

The installation attracted over five million visitors, its magnitude revealed in stages as the poppies were “planted” by eleven thousand volunteers. Many of the visitors kept returning, to walk around the display and record it in films and photographs. In late July, the grassy space around the Tower, dotted here and there with bright flowers, still looked deceptively Arcadian. By 11 November, Armistice Day, the moat was brimming with red; a huge wave, the colour of fresh blood, rose up medieval walls and engulfed them. The installation was dismantled later that month. Although many wanted it to remain in place much longer, the awareness of its temporality seemed only to have increased the appeal of the display which drew huge crowds in its final days. The sale of the poppies, at £25 a flower, generated around ten million pounds for six service charities.

By coincidence, on 24 February 2015 — just as I am writing this — the two artists who created “Blood-Swept Lands” are at Buckingham Palace where they are to receive their MBEs from the Duke of Cambridge for services to First World War Commemoration. Their work was a result of a simple idea Paul Cummins had while researching WWI archives in his local records office. He came across the will of an unknown soldier who died in Flanders which contained the following verse: “The blood-swept lands and seas of red, where angels fear to tread.”

The installation may have been breath taking in its final form but its initial concept was straightforward and its symbolism familiar in a way which contributed to its appeal. The red poppy has long been the main symbol of remembrance in Britain and parts of the Commonwealth. Inspired by “In Flanders Fields”, a war poem by the Canadian John McCrae, the paper flower is produced and sold by the Royal British League for charitable purposes and worn by many Britons on their lapels every November. It is perhaps the most recognisable “brand” of Great War commemoration worldwide. On Remembrance Sunday – the Sunday nearest to 11 November – the two minutes of silence at 11 a.m. are followed by the laying of wreaths of poppies on war memorials around the country and abroad, and at the Cenotaph in central London.

While immensely popular, Cummins and Piper’s 2014 installation was not universally praised. In an article entitled “The Tower of London Poppies are Fake, Trite and Inward Looking – a UKIP style memorial”, the Guardian art critic Jonathan Jones wrote:

“In spite of the mention of blood in its title, this is a deeply aestheticised, prettified and toothless war memorial. It is all dignity and grace. There is a fake nobility to it, and this seems to be what the crowds have come for – to be raised up into a shared reverence

for those heroes turned frozen flowers. What a lie. The First World War was not noble. War is not noble. A meaningful mass memorial to this horror would not be dignified or pretty. It would be gory, vile and terrible to see. The moat of the Tower should be filled with barbed wire and bones. That would mean something.” (Jones 2014)

The online version of this article helpfully hyperlinks the words “gory, vile and terrible to see” to another piece by Jonathan Jones which offers reproductions of war art by the German artist Otto Dix as an illustration of the kind of art the author has in mind as a more fitting memorial.

On the internet, before the discussion was closed, Jones’s article attracted some two and a half thousand comments from the Guardian readers. The contributors ranged from those who called the critic “snobbish and elitist” to the ecologically minded who worried about the quantity of metal which had had to be imported to make the two-foot stalks for so many flowers.

In spite of Jones’s fears that the installation played to the nationalist, insular agenda implied by the headline reference to the UK Independence Party, most commentators invoked nationalism only as a possibility, and in the spirit of an all pervasive self-criticism. There was little national, let alone nationalist pride. The overwhelming majority of comments referred to the “war dead” in general, rather than the British dead. Some wondered if the White Poppy, an alternative symbol distributed since 1933 by the Peace Pledge Union, would have been more appropriate for the installation, while most seemed to agree that, whatever its artistic merit, the sea of poppies did not glorify war. In many ways, the discussion was a mirror of the dominant cultural narrative outlined above. There is pride, yes, but nowhere near as much as there is regret at the futility of the loss of life. Even expressions of regret have become such an overwhelming cliché that they irritate. They brim with so much complacent superiority towards our ancestors that it is tempting to restart the debate and explain again why vast numbers of British people volunteered to join the fight and remained proud of what they had sought to achieve.

If the Guardian critic had been consulted earlier on, and the moat of the Tower had been filled with barbed wire and bones, might the outcome have not been just as trite as, in his opinion, the poppies were – banal, but in a different way? One can hope for “*Der Krieg*” or “*Guernica*”, but they are extremely rare. Europe has many ugly monuments commissioned with the best of intentions and approved by expert panels; at least the poppies were temporary. What is the role public art should play in remembrance rites? What kind of impact do we expect it to have? Why do we need it at all?

Monuments, installations, performances, even whole museums, act as focal points for those rituals through which a largely post-religious Europe chooses to remember its past. The continuity of such rituals in Britain means that there is rarely an occasion to discuss them afresh. The anniversary and the installation at the Tower provided just such an opportunity. Jones's was a deliberately provocative piece of click-bait, albeit trying to raise important questions about the ways in which art should commemorate and reflect war, but it was a wasted opportunity.

It was sad that a debate which aroused such passion ended in setting one cliché against another: even the powerful anti-war works of artists such as Otto Dix have become clichés in their own right, like performances of "A Little Night Music" or "For Elise". Images which had once been potent and shocking have been invoked so often and described with the same shop-worn phrases that we no longer perceive them afresh – they might as well be reproduced on placemats at our dinner tables. Our school children are taken to see such paintings in museums and we force them to listen to what we have to say while their eyes glaze over (and then we complain if they misbehave). They think, perhaps, that the story of the First World War does not concern them and their world, although it does, profoundly, and in a way which is – transnationally – *echt* European.

The First World War precipitated a change in our continent's place in the world, and we are still and only gradually adjusting to its new position, lulled as we often are by the sense of superiority which permeates the EU's benevolent and democratic welfare states with their quiet hum of imported labour. The war left Europe exhausted and weakened, and it allowed America to play a leading role in world politics, a role which it cemented in the Second World War, and which it continues, despite the occasional stumble, to play.

Although I close by drawing attention to the way in which the First World War effectively establishes a recognisable outline of the US-led world we currently inhabit – an idea curiously untouched in the centenary year, in which the Europeans seemed yet again and tellingly more preoccupied with trying to reapportion the blame for 1914 – I am not going to conclude with some predictable anti-American rant, for America is an heir of Europe in most senses, other than, mercifully, Europe's anti-semitism. I have lived in this American-dominated world all my life and, although I have issues with it, it has been kinder to me than Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire were to my ancestors. It is pointless to regret the fact that we, Europeans, were once the centre of the world, and are now one of its many peripheries. That may be difficult to spot as you stand in a warm museum alongside members of Europe's ageing population while so many who are even worse off than you are trying to get in, but that is our shared transnational story.

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## Vesna Goldsworthy

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## **Ingrid Sharp:**

### **Legacies of war: international women's movements in the aftermath of war**

Commemorations of war often emphasise the military aspects, prioritise the stories of combat soldiers and honour the memory of the military dead. This is certainly the case at an official level in Great Britain, where the government has set aside money to send schoolchildren to visit battlefields and lay commemorative paving stones for Victoria Cross winners, while the events around Remembrance Sunday in November every year are becoming ever more militarised.

During these centenary years, it is important to remember other groups as well, including the minority who opposed the war. There are of course powerful if marginalised groups such as the Peace Pledge Union, No Glory in War and the Network for Peace<sup>38</sup> who are trying to ensure that the story of the Conscientious Objectors and anti-war campaigners is told – in November 2014, Veterans for Peace, a group of anti-war veterans of more recent conflicts laid a white wreath at the cenotaph after the official ceremony was over, but it was lost among the sea of red poppies.

In the United Kingdom, red poppies have become a powerful symbol for a commemoration that highlights the heroic patriotic sacrifice made by young men in times of war, a discourse that tends to make it harder to challenge the cause for which that sacrifice was made. The Peace Pledge Union, founded in 1934 by Dick Sheppard, canon of St Paul's cathedral, makes that point in the Autumn 2014 issue of "Peace Matters", claiming that "In a new guise and periodically refreshed to meet new PR challenges, Remembrance Sunday came to serve as a justification of war and exhortation to eternal vigilance – the passing of the torch and selling red poppies now the valuable corporate logo of the British Legion" (Peace Pledge Union 2014: 1). In this context, "lest we forget" takes on the meaning suggested by the original poem that inspired all the poppies, John McCrae's "In Flanders Fields", in which the third verse exhorts the readers to:

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<sup>38</sup> These groups are campaigning for peace in the United Kingdom today. The Peace Pledge Union was founded in 1934 <http://www.ppu.org.uk/> [07.04.2015]; No Glory in War was launched in May 2013 as a campaign "to use the first world war centenary in 2014 to promote peace and international understanding, rather than the nationalistic commemoration" <http://noglory.org/> [07.04.2015]; Network for Peace is an umbrella group coordinating the activities of 80 peace organisations, including Fellowship of Reconciliation and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, both of which were founded during the First World War <http://www.networkforpeace.org.uk/> [07.04.2015].

"Take up our quarrel with the foe!  
To you from failing hands we throw  
The torch; be yours to hold it high!  
If ye break faith with us who die  
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow  
In Flanders fields."

This suggests that beyond the imperative to remember, this poem in fact encourages a cycle of vengeance that is not conducive to peace-building.

Commemorations tend to be along national lines, too, as is shown by the massively popular installation from July to November 2014 of 888,246 red poppies at the Tower of London, each of which stood for one British soldier who died in the war, including Colonial and commonwealth troops. This installation, "Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red" by Paul Cummins and Tom Piper, was criticised quite harsh terms for "prettifying" the fallen, for example by Jonathan Jones, writing in the Guardian on 28 October 2014:

"...this is a deeply aestheticized, prettified and toothless war memorial [...] A meaningful mass memorial to this horror would not be dignified or pretty. It would be gory, vile and terrible to see. The moat of the Tower of London should be filled with barbed wire and bones. That would mean something."

UK commemorations so far have also tended to overlook the efforts made during and after the war to maintain international friendships in the name of shared humanity, reaching across battle lines and transcending national interests. A powerful example of such efforts is offered by women active in the women's movement, some of whom sought to use their international networks to oppose what they saw as a disastrous war which could only bring widespread misery and destruction.

This article will look at internationalism in the women's movement before, during and after the war, with a particular focus on women's international peace activism. My focus is middle class women's movements in a broadly liberal tradition rather than the socialist women's movements that were strong in Germany at the time, and which also had a rhetoric of internationalism based on class solidarity. I will look at the barriers to internationalism during the post-war period and assess the achievements of international women's organisations in overcoming national enmity and dismantling the mind-sets of war. I will reflect on their legacy and consider what resonances for today's world these

stories have, and what we stand to gain by including them in commemorations during the centenary years.

### **Internationalism during the war**

Until the outbreak of the First World War, the dominant discourse within international women's organisations was of the natural pacifism and the international solidarity of all women based on women's capacity for love and potential for maternity which placed a higher value on human life, a view expressed by the anti-war campaigner, Olive Schreiner in 1911:

“Men have made boomerangs, bows, swords, or guns with which to destroy one another; we have made the men who destroyed and were destroyed! We have in all ages produced, at an enormous cost, the primal munition of war, without which no other would exist. [...] We pay the first cost on all human life.” (Schreiner 1911: 174)

In 1914, there were two main international organisations, the International Council of Women (ICW) founded in Washington DC in 1888, and the International Women's Suffrage Alliance (IWSA - Alliance) founded in Berlin in 1904 to campaign more directly for the vote. Congresses had been held in Budapest in 1913 (IWSA), and Rome in 1914 (ICW) with the next Alliance meeting scheduled for Berlin in 1915.

However, in August 1914 in all combatant nations the overwhelming majority of organised women supported the war policies of their governments and suspended their international contacts for the duration of the war. In Germany for example the Nationaler Frauendienst (National Women's Service) led by Gertrud Bäumer<sup>39</sup> was ready to serve the nation within a day of war being declared. Only a very small minority of women in each nation opposed the war and retained or even strengthened their international contacts.

When it became clear that the meeting of the Suffrage Alliance planned for Berlin in 1915 could not take place, an alternative congress was planned jointly by women from

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<sup>39</sup> Dr Gertrud Bäumer (1873-1954) was active in the women's movement from 1896 until her death in 1954, first as a teacher and later as leader of the Bund Deutscher Frauenvereine (1910-1919), the umbrella group of the middle class women's movement. She published widely and was among the first women elected to parliament after women won the right to stand for election and vote in 1918. She rose to become deputy leader of the Democratic Party (DDP) and was the first woman to lead a ministerial department, being responsible for Schools and Youth in the Ministry of Culture. During the war she coordinated women's patriotic war efforts as leader of the Nationaler Frauendienst (National Women's Service).

Holland, Germany, Belgium, Hungary, and England. In April 1915, nine months after the start of the First World War, 1,136 women from 12 combatant and non-combatant nations met at The Hague to discuss ways of mediating between the warring sides, stopping the war and finding non-violent ways of resolving future conflict (Bussey/Tims 1965: 19).

The Congress, which was chaired by the American peace activist and social reformer, Jane Addams, brought the underlying divisions within the women's movement into sharp focus in many nations, dividing opinion in England and France as well as in Austria and Germany and creating a rift that continued well after the end of the hostilities. Among the four German congress organisers were perhaps the best-known German peace activists, the pacifist feminists Lida Gustava Heymann and Anita Augspurg<sup>40</sup>, who became extremely active in the international peace movement and at the League of Nations in the 1920s.

The aims of The Hague Congress were ambitious – as well as finding ways to stop the current war they wanted to create an international order that would bring about a sustainable peace. After the Congress, delegations of women travelled to neutral and combatant nations to talk to statesmen and rulers about the possibility of mediation for peace. The report written by the leading women of the American delegation, Jane Addams, Emily Greene Balch and Alice Hamilton<sup>41</sup>, reveals an understanding of war as over-

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<sup>40</sup> Dr Anita Augspurg (1857-1943) was a teacher, actor and lawyer, who campaigned tirelessly for female suffrage and women's rights. During the war she campaigned actively for peace, co-organising the Women's Congress at The Hague and co-founding the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Lida Gustava Heymann (1868-1943) was a wealthy woman who used her resources to campaign fearlessly and publicly for women's rights and against the double moral standard that criminalised prostitutes while allowing their clients to go unpunished. Like her partner, Augspurg, she campaigned for peace during the First World War, notably at The Hague Congress, and was a founder member of WILPF. Together they founded and edited the Journal "*Die Frau im Staat*" (Women in the State) in 1919 and were active in WILPF at national and international level. In 1933 they were forced to flee from the National Socialists and were unable to return to Germany before their deaths in 1943.

<sup>41</sup> Jane Addams (1860-1935) was a well-known American sociologist who founded Hull House, a settlement house in Chicago in 1889 and published a number of key works in which she set out her vision for mutually supportive and ethical human cooperation. In 1914, she co-founded and was elected Chair of the Women's Peace Party in New York and presided over the Women's Congress at The Hague in 1915. At one time considered the most popular woman in America, she lost public support when she continued to speak for peace once America had entered the war on the side of the Allies. In 1931 she was awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace and is today recognised as a pioneer in the field of social work as well as for her pacifism. Dr Emily Greene Balch (1867-1961) was also active in the peace movement

whelming, universal loss that could bring no advantages to the victor: "[T]he gains that either side makes are as nothing compared with their losses. [...] this all-outweighing fact is the intolerable burden of continued war." (Balch in Addams et al. 2003 [1915]: 55).

For the women who met at The Hague, the experience of the war showed the fragility of national integrity and the futility of pursuing progress in isolation: preventing future war would only be possible at international level and through transnational activism. War itself was seen as atavistic, a remnant of an outmoded way of organising human society and a profound failure of the system of government in 1914:

"Twenty-six governments of the world stood convicted of their own impotence to preserve life and property, they were directly responsible for the loss of ten million men in military service, as many more people through the disease and desolation following war, for the destructions of untold accumulations of civilized life."

(Addams 2010 [1922]: 26)

The pacifist women were isolated and often vilified in their own nations by the press, public opinion and "patriotic" women's organisations, so the sense of belonging and shared values available through their international ties played a significant psychological as well as a strategic role during the war years. Throughout the war, French, German, and English women exchanged emotionally charged greetings (Wilmers 2008: 43), for example in December 1915 French women wrote to German women: "We know that the majority among you think as we do and that is why we want to say to you that we are sisters and that we love you." German women replied: "We think as you do! We feel as you do! We suffer like you with our hands tied and must, like you, remain silent!" (Heymann 1920: 23-4). Gestures of reconciliation between enemy women became even more important in the bitter aftermath of the war.

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during and after the war. She lost her position as Professor of Economics at Wellesley College because of her publicly-expressed pacifism and worked full-time as the Secretary of WILPF, based in Geneva, where she was also able to lobby the League of Nations. She, too, was awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1946. Dr Alice Hamilton (1869-1970) was the first woman to be appointed to Harvard Medical faculty in 1919. Prior to this, she had worked as a University Lecturer in Chicago, where she also worked closely with Jane Addams at Hull House and worked alongside her for peace during and after the First World War. She attended the Congress at The Hague and was, with Addams, part of an international delegation of women that subsequently visited leaders of the warring nations to discuss peace.

As well as providing the women with vital emotional support, the deliberate stressing of ties of love maintained a sense of the shared humanity of the enemy, and women were thus able to maintain channels of communication not open to men both during and in the aftermath of the conflict. Removed from the febrile atmosphere of nationalist hatred, it was possible within this international community to imagine peace and to attempt to model interaction at international level.

Emerging from The Hague and Zurich Congresses was one of the most dynamic and radical forces for peace operating in the post-war period, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), a group still highly active today in the international politics of peace-building and post-conflict reconciliation.

### **Women's internationalism in the aftermath of war**

After the Allied victory in 1918, the victors met in Paris to discuss the terms of the peace. The ICW and the IWSA were represented as part of the Inter-Allied Conference that aimed to influence the negotiations, but their delegation included only women from the victorious nations. They were excluded from the peace talks, but did have some success in influencing the League of Nations, notably achieving the principle that all positions should be open equally to men and women. This was a major coup at a time when most nations excluded women from the diplomatic service due to their supposed unsuitability for an international role (Rupp 1997: 212).

In May 1919, while the statesmen of the victorious nations were meeting in Paris, The Hague Congress women met again in Zurich to formulate their own vision for a sustainable peace and to offer a model for the peaceful and productive cooperation of nations (Kuhlmann 2007). Historian Jo Vellacott (2007: 149) contrasts the women's approach with that of the men negotiating peace in Paris: women united by the terrible experience of war wanted to find solutions to shared problems and to identify and work to remove the causes of war – injustice, insecurity, anger and resentment. The men on the other hand saw the peace talks as a forum for retribution and the securing of advantages for the victors at the expense of the vanquished, in marked contrast to the terms of U.S. President Wilson's Fourteen Points, put forward in January 1918 (The Avalon Project).

The League of Nations, despite its flaws, became the focus of women's international activities in post-war period. WILPF set up its headquarters in Geneva and was one of the most active groups. Unlike the other international organisations, which had emerged from national groups and were keen to preserve national independence and identity, in WILPF

“women attempted to speak together not as citizens of disparate nations but as world citizens with common purposes and a common interest in maintaining peace” (Vellacott 2007: 153-4). Because of their commitment to creating conditions for sustainable peace, women of WILPF refused to restrict their interests to areas expected of women such as the humanitarian response to post-war famine.

One barrier to internationalism after the war was the continued division of nations into victors and vanquished. Despite the number of international groups founded by women between 1918-20, membership was often restricted to women from neutral and victorious nations, with German and Austrian women notably lacking. Even where membership was possible, as in the case of the ICW, IWSA and WILPF, it could be hard for women from vanquished nations to maintain links due to national circumstances. In Austria, Germany and Hungary, for example, revolutionary violence, extreme poverty and food shortages sapped the energies and diverted the priorities of women to deal with immediate human need. Many women lacked the money and leisure for the travel and correspondence necessary for engagement with international affairs. There were problems of communication and travel throughout the period, with infrastructures not geared to civilian travel and the necessary permits not always granted.

In the aftermath of the conflict, too, the vision of a global sisterhood was seriously undermined by continued bitterness and punitive attitudes towards former enemies among national women's groups. Even among those women who had shown support for pacifist ideas during the war, the harmonious face they presented to the world at the Zurich Congress in 1919 hid tensions that threatened the unity of WILPF (Wilmers 2008: 181-7). For example, most of the Belgian women refused to attend at all, stating that it was pro-German, and the belief that it was a *Verliererforum* (“a forum for losers”) was widespread (Wilmers 2008: 187). There were also tensions over the extent to which German women could be held responsible for German war crimes or blamed for their apparent failure to speak out against the occupation of Belgium and France (Wilmers 2005: 129-30).

### **Achievements and historical significance**

However, the limitations of the women's vision and the lack of practical results should not blind us to the real achievements of the women's organisations in overcoming the barriers to international cooperation during and in the aftermath of a bitter and bloody war. Despite the problems outlined earlier, women's groups overcame the division into defeated and victorious nations far more quickly than male-dominated international politics – arguably playing a role in re-humanising the enemy and normalising post-conflict relations through their rapid reintegration into their ranks of women from defeated nations.

Women's work in and with the League of Nations established the precedent that women should be included in international affairs. They demonstrated that "women's issues" such as trafficking of women and girls and the nationality of married women could be appropriate subjects for international legislation and their involvement in an advisory capacity even in small numbers established international relations, disarmament, war and peace as key women's concerns.

It is in the area of transnational work for peace that the women's organisation was most successful. Even though they were unable to exercise the slightest influence on the narrow and punitive approach reflected in the set of treaties signed after the First World War, the women at The Hague and Zurich formulated a remarkably forward-looking vision of peace based on social justice and gender equity. The resolutions they passed anticipated the present day principles of human security and of positive peace and rest on a discourse of social justice and respect for human rights.

In the world of 1919-23 there were neither the structures nor the political will to act on the women's analysis. It is notable that present day UN resolutions concerning women and war came about as a result of lobbying by women's groups, including WILPF, and that there are few areas included in UN Security Resolution 1325, passed in 2000, that were not already present in 1915 or 1919 (see Sharp 2013).

#### UNSCR 1325

"reaffirms the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peacebuilding, peacekeeping, humanitarian response and in post-conflict reconstruction and stresses the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security." (OSAGI n.d.)

Just as the resolutions at The Hague and Zurich suggested, UNSCR 1325 represents "a formal recognition of the important role of women in peacebuilding, the importance of monitoring the impact of war on women and girls, and a greater awareness of their vulnerability to violence, rape, and sexual exploitation." (United Nations Security Council 2000: Preamble).

#### **Significance for today**

What is the significance for today of these women's international efforts, and how is their contribution being marked in the centenary commemoration programmes in Europe?

If we look at how women's roles in the First World War are remembered today, we see an emphasis on nurses; those such as munitions workers and tram drivers who took on male roles on the home front as well as on victims, heroines like Edith Cavell, and mourning mothers and widows. Women's roles as combatants, military auxiliaries and international peace activists remain less well known and are generally not present in cultural memory.

However, key dates are coming up that will bring the roles of both women and peace-makers to the fore. Plans by WILPF to commemorate The Hague Congress with a massive conference in April 2015 and plans for a "Year of Conscience" in 2016 to commemorate the introduction of conscription in Britain will help to focus public and media attention on these aspects of the First World War. The Imperial War Museum is planning a major exhibition on Pacifism and Protest that will include the story of women's internationalism during the First World War and the women's story will also be highlighted at a major international conference, "Resistance to War 1914-1924" to be held in Leeds in 2016.

A major feature of this centenary is that access to online archives has opened up historical memory and made it more democratic: all over the UK, individuals and groups are researching memories of their families, street, district, town, or region. At the same time, memory has also become more global. Today's multicultural society means that those looking for their family history in the UK are not all white British and their research is highlighting serious gaps in archival holdings.

Commemorations along narrow national lines also exclude large sections of society within nations – there's a significant Turkish community in London for example who fought on a different side to Britain during the war. In this context, with a public hunger for stories that go beyond the "mud, blood and endless poetry" of the Western Front and the emphasis on the white male public school volunteer officer, I am confident that the story of women at The Hague will be able to enter popular and cultural memory.

Why is it important that it does so? For one thing it corrects a partial understanding of the conflict that in fact seriously distorts our cultural memory. The story of internationalism during the war is a story about peace and it is overwhelmingly female. Telling the story of the war and leaving out its most effective and persistent challengers is a blind spot that borders on the perverse. Even within peace history, The Hague congress is not taken seriously, despite the fact that no other peace society managed to meet during the war. What the women achieved was extraordinary, anticipating ideas that now form the mainstream of thinking on peace and human security and daring to oppose nationalist

hatred with a radical strategy of practical love. Surely this is a story worth sharing more widely, a legacy worth embracing during the centenary years 2014-18?

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### **Ingrid Sharp**

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**Maciej Górny:**

**Our war? Eastern Europe's experience and memory of the Great War**

On 5 August 2014 the Tower of London moat was filled with almost 900,000 ceramic poppies symbolising soldiers of the British Commonwealth fallen in the Great War. Seen from a distance, they resemble a sea of blood pouring out from one of the Tower's windows. Every day shortly after sunset, a moving ceremony took place here: a beefeater reads aloud the details of 180 fallen soldiers, including their names, rank and the military unit they served in. A guardsman accompanying him (or her) played the trumpet, moved spectators contemplated the moment in silence, disturbed solely by the traffic sounds. This ceremony was repeated every day till 11 November 2014, when the poppies were removed and sold for charity.

Watching the Tower ceremony, travellers from another corner of the European Union are faced with something they would most probably miss at home: a firmly established memory culture of the First World War that is capable of connecting old rituals to more modern staging ideas, based on convictions, symbols and images that are common to the vast majority of the country's population. For the British the Great War is one of the most vital *lieux de mémoire*, even if it still remains an issue that is disputed by professional historians. There are very few places in Eastern Europe that fall under a similar category, even on a smaller scale.

There are some objective reasons for that asymmetry, next to obvious cultural differences. First of all it would be extremely difficult to achieve British precision in estimating the numbers of killed, missing in action, mutilated or prisoners of war in Eastern Europe. How about regions that have been battlefields not once but in three or four subsequent offensives and counteroffensives? Do civilian victims of the great operations fought by the German, Austro-Hungarian and Russian armies on the densely populated territory of central Poland count as well? Secondly, how do you actually identify the nationality of the fallen imperial subjects? What was the identity of illiterate peasants who died for their tsar, emperor or king? And what about prisoners of war, refugees and expelled people who died in camps in Siberia, Austria or Bohemia, during their escape or upon their return home? What category of victims do they belong to?

The differences in memory cultures between Europe's East and West are partly an effect of the striking misbalance of historical knowledge about the course of the war and

its effects. Although collective memory and historiography are surely not the same, there is a connection between the two. The weakness of the memory in Eastern Europe is partly the cause and partly the effect of long-standing negligence on the part of indigenous historians. Therefore without a closer look at the memory cultures of Eastern Europe, any report on the current state of regional First World War studies would be incomplete.

### **The weak memory**

We live in a time when the division of Europe into the capitalist modern West and communist backward East is becoming increasingly irrelevant. The Elbe River, a once obvious border, has become less and less important in economic and political terms. Our memory, the memory of cataclysms of the twentieth century in particular, is a stronghold of the old order. In this light, in the East (not without exceptions, though) the status of the First World War is in fact slightly different, less prominent, than in the West. This paper addresses the following three issues: firstly, why is the war "forgotten" in this very part of the world? Secondly, are there any areas in this public amnesia in which the Great War plays a momentous role? And thirdly, what scientific, political, and social effects can be caused by recent phenomena – especially the short-lived boom connected with the centenary of the conflict?

The insignificant presence of the First World War in Eastern European communities' collective memory may come as a surprise, especially bearing in mind the physical consequences of these hostilities. The figures are really striking, even if we consider just the territory of Poland. More than four hundred thousand Poles in the military uniforms of three empires were killed, and over twice as many were injured (Holzer/Molenda 1967). The often-compulsory Russian evacuation in the summer of 1915 comprised nearly one million people, whose return stretched out until the mid-1920s. The destroyed cities and villages as well as the material and cultural losses were comparable with the worst-affected land near the front line in Belgium and northern France. The battles on the Eastern Front were no less fierce and bloody than those on the Western Front, only that they were fought in larger areas. Because it was a war of manoeuvre, more arduous and also more dangerous – to both the soldiers and the civilians – than a war of position.

There are a number of explanations for the absence of the First World War in Eastern Europe's collective memories, and each of them concerns not only Poland but also some other states in the region. In the East, in summer 1914 great empires fought with each other; however, it was mainly representatives of smaller nations who lost their lives. In spite of the fact that practically all nationalities remained loyal to the Russian, German, or Austro-

Hungarian throne, none of them could consider a potential victory of their state to be a dream come true. On the contrary, enfeebling the ruling elites in order to win concessions from them to Poles, Czechs, Slovaks, Romanians, Ukrainians, Belarusians, Lithuanians, Latvians, Estonians, Jews, Serbs, Croats or Slovenians was in the interest of the majority. Fighting spirit must have been mitigated by a feeling that fellow countrymen would most presumably fight and die in the uniforms of an enemy empire. In late 1918, when the war was over, that is to say, when the history of its memory and commemoration had begun, some events occurred that downgraded the previous four years almost completely. In most countries of Eastern Europe independence wars overshadowed the previous conflict. In some of them, notably Poland, Ukraine, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, Bolshevik threat was not a slogan but thrilling reality. The emergence of new nation-states was a result not of the war, but of the defeat of empires. When the dust of battle settled, it turned out that it was not the majority, namely, combatants who fought for the Tsar or the Emperor, who were in possession of collective memory – but representatives of numerically marginal groups. The number of Polish legionaries, like Czechoslovak soldiers or Croats fighting on the Allied side, never exceeded one per cent of the country's military personnel. The tale of war, which they had monopolised, did not become a common heritage. As a matter of fact, it was soon overshadowed by the memory of another war, the Second World War, whose consequences in this region were even more tragic. The year 1945 exacerbated the situation by subjecting memory to the rigours of geopolitics, and – in Yugoslavia – to “mandatory forgetting” of the conflict, in which Croats, Serbs, Slovenians and Bosnians dressed in Habsburg uniforms fought against Serbs. As it turned out later, making the First World War taboo in Yugoslavia seemed like a very reasonable idea. In the 1960s, when both historiography and pop culture rediscovered the heroic struggle of the Serbs and their tragic retreat in 1915 known in historiography as “Serbian Golgotha” and made it a pillar of the independent, Serbian collective memory, the hitherto consistent structure of the multi-ethnic federation began to break (Brunnbauer 2011: 363-365).

### **“Cultural heritage” of the First World War**

The weakness of memory of the war in the East has two sources. The first is an inability to relate with any side of the conflict, as most of the states there at the outset failed to survive until 1918. The second is a potentially toxic memory of the fratricidal conflict, or – in Serbia, Bosnia and Croatia – the conflict between nations inhabiting one state after 1918. However, if we take a closer look at local communities and civic initiatives, the picture becomes a tad complicated, and regional differences, which do not always respect present-day political borders, come to the fore.

These regionalisms have been justified by the material heritage. Yet, due to the turbulent decades after 1918 and especially 1939 many artefacts connected to the First World War disappeared or fell into oblivion. Warsaw, to take perhaps the most striking example, does not have a commemoration of the First World War. The only place that, albeit only partly, does justice to the soldiers of 1914-1918 is the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in the city's centre, erected in 1925. However, all of the battles from that period that had been inscribed on memorial tablets refer to the minor battles fought by Polish legions within the Austro-Hungarian army and the tiny group of Polish volunteers to the French army.

But outside the big cities of Eastern Europe there are places that preserve the memory of the First World War. An ever-present feature of the landscape of East Germany (including the former East Prussia), Austria, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary is crosses and small monuments commemorating those who died in one or both world wars. In Poland we can come across them in Cieszyn Silesia, for example. Military cemeteries, especially the ones established by Austro-Hungarian military authorities during the war, constitute a special vestige. Several dozen of them are outstanding creations of the Slovak architect Dušan Jurkovič<sup>42</sup> – fascinating both for their historical significance and for their artistic merit. In the area of the former Russian region of partition, and also in Ukraine, Belarus and Latvia, there are not as many symbols of affinity between local communities and casualties of the First World War, and, more importantly, only very few people can read them. Sometimes local memory preserves scraps of information about the First World War, yet it associates it with the “real” war that followed. In fact, it is hard to find cities and towns here whose experiences between 1914 and 1918 were so dramatic that the Second World War could not blot out the memory of them. Consequently, exceptions become even more prominent. In the Galician towns of Gorlice pulverised by German and Austro-Hungarian artillery in the wake of the great offensive in Spring 1915, and Przemyśl captured by Russia and re-captured by the Central Powers after months of disastrous siege, the First World War constituted the worst disaster in history. The battles of Riga, Belgrade, Warsaw, or Kaunas were merely a glimpse of the atrocities that followed.

As early as the 1980s, a grassroots social movement emerged for the protection of the heritage of the Great War, military cemeteries in particular. It developed during the following decade, as a renovation of necropolises in Slovakia and in Poland was initiated – often supported by Austrian institutions (chiefly the Austrian Black Cross). Recently, an

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<sup>42</sup> Dušan Jurkovič (1868-1947) a Slovak architect, promoter of folklore-inspired Slovak “national style” in architecture. Jurkovič authored more than thirty war cemeteries chiefly in Galicia.

informal network of Polish, Slovak, Austrian, Czech, and Hungarian associations have taken care of the cemeteries and propagated the knowledge of the First World War in the region. Many crosses and fences are wooden, material that is hardly permanent and in the 1920s, stealing lumber from cemeteries was extremely common. This phenomenon had the biggest impact in the former Russian region of partition, but ordinary citizens and then the nationalism of the new authorities left their imprint on military cemeteries in Galicia, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, too. Many of the cemeteries which had not been destroyed were "nationalised" by the new nation states. The procedure involved distorting the truth about the origin of the deceased. Multi-ethnic graveyards officially became the burial grounds of Polish legionaries or Latvian riflemen, although in some of them not even one representative of these formations had been buried (Pałosz 2014). Sometimes graves of victims of the following hecatomb appeared in – or next to – graves from the First World War.

The centenary of the First World War has enabled grassroots initiatives for heritage protection to come to prominence, to gain access to the media and regional education programmes, even though in most of Eastern Europe there were no official commemorations of the outbreak of the hostilities. It has also increased the (hitherto weak) interest of historians from Eastern Europe in the subject – partly due to external causes rather than an inner need: international projects need and actively seek local partners. A slight rise in interest in the First World War can be observed in Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Russia and Romania; but they have all been outdistanced by Serbia, where Christopher Clark's well-known book about the causes of the First World War has been discussed even more ferociously than in Germany.

### **Historiography of the "other front"**

So far Eastern Europe's weak memory of the First World War has been referred to on the level of state commemorations and collective memories. Does Eastern Europe's First World War represent a particular topic of professional historiography? The historians Jay Winter and Antoine Prost identify three phases of the development of First World War historiography. In the first phase the diplomatic history dominated, whereas military historians restricted their interest to generals and great battles. The absence of a "common man", a "poilu" or a civilian was an Achilles' heel of that paradigm. This weakness was then recognised mostly by Western European researchers who had been influenced by Marxism. In their view, which dominated the field throughout the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, social processes, accommodation and resistance to military discipline, along with the changing moral norms of European societies played the main role. The third "turn" in First World War studies started in the 1990s. Without abandoning the social bias of the latter,

it enriched the research perspective with cultural studies. Individual and group experiences of the war are typical topics covered by this research trend, along with cultures of memory, representations of the war and gender issues (Winter/Prost 2005). In practical terms this development shifts historians' interests from military to civilian issues. This in turn elevates the position and meaning of Eastern Europe in new military history. We should remember that the war of manoeuvre on the Eastern and Balkan front differed from that on the Western front precisely because of the constant proximity of military and civilian affairs. Unlike the more normal trench warfare, in the East soldiers met their civilian compatriots or the population of the enemy country on a daily basis. Specific modes of contact between civilians and the military present some of the most promising fields in studies of Eastern Europe during the First World War: occupation (of Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Belarus, Ukraine, Serbia and Romania), voluntary and forceful migrations as well as the phenomenon of violence which is inseparable from both the aforementioned questions. Interestingly enough, traditional military history seems to be in decline in comparison to these rising topics. It is surely not an accident that one of the most interesting recent studies of this latter genre devotes more attention to the political and symbolic conflicts around the alleged desertions of Czech soldiers in the Habsburg army than the critical events on the battlefields of Galicia (Lein 2011).

The main interest of specialists in military occupations in the East has been devoted – not without the influence of the historian Vejas Gabriel Liulevicius' seminal work – to the Ober Ost<sup>43</sup> (Liulevicius 2000). In many ways this bias distorts the perspective, since Ober Ost by no means represented a norm. The German occupation of the so called Congress Kingdom (the Russian partition of Poland) was as different in nature from the semi-colonial, militarist and brutal reign of Ludendorff over Lithuania, Belarus, parts of Latvia and Eastern Poland (that constituted Ober Ost's territory), as was the German occupation in Romania (Mayerhofer 2010). In Warsaw, Bucharest and other regional centres there had been local political representation capable of influencing the policy of the German General-gouvernement. Yet, interestingly, this fact has been largely neglected by historians up to the present. In recent works the consensual character of the German occupation is problematised and its liberal cultural policy rightly assessed.

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<sup>43</sup> Ober Ost – short for Oberbefehlshaber der gesamten Deutschen Streitkräfte im Osten. The term covers both the military regime behind Germany's Eastern Front and occupied territories of formerly Russian Lithuania, Latvia, Belarus, parts of Estonia, Poland, and Finland. The German military administrations withdrew in early 1919.

Voluntary and forced migration, known as the “Great Retreat”, was a common experience among many groups, including Belarusians, Ukrainians, Russians, Jews, Poles, Germans, Lithuanians and Latvians. Perhaps the most striking feature of studies devoted to this phenomenon is the separate treatment of individual nationalities, mostly but not exclusively by scholars representing this particular nationality. Researchers dealing with the Jewish community do not generally study similar war experiences among the Jews’ neighbours and vice-versa (Makar 2011). This “ethnic segmentation” is also typical of Polish scholars in the field (Sierakowska 2010; Korzeniowski/Mądzik/Tarasiuk 2007; Mądzik 2011). Interestingly enough, though rather unintentionally, this self-centred perspective dates back to the First World War itself. Already in 1914 the ethnicisation of refugee policy had been an issue. The inefficient Russian authorities (wherever they had not been evacuated in the wake of the first German offensives) delegated the bulk of charity work to organisations of an ethnic or religious character. In effect, Russians were mostly helping Russians, Jewish help went to Jews and the Poles helped ethnic Poles (Lohr 2001; Lohr 2003; Rozenblit 2001; Prusin 2005). Another interesting research question touches upon the refugees’ return to their homes. Thanks to the efforts of Peter Gatrell, the nationalist policy of the new Eastern European states has been studied relatively well (Baron/Gatrell 2004; Gatrell 2000/2005). Some local authors point to the connection between the Polish restrictions on returning Jews and the big wave of Jewish emigration to the USA in the early 1920s (Zieliński 2004). The latter ended abruptly by the mid-1920s, when the US-authorities restricted the immigration laws with the intention of decreasing the number of Jewish immigrants.

A common denominator of these two topics – forced migrations and military occupations – is violence. Some parts of Eastern Europe seem especially prone to this research perspective. The Ukrainian territories remain at the centre of historians’ interest. Another important chapter in the history of war-related violence concentrates on the Jewish community. This topic is by no means a novelty; as a matter of fact basic Polish contributions date back to the 1980s or earlier. Pogroms accompanying the successor wars in the former empires of Habsburg and Romanov had been analysed.

At least a considerable part of these studies abandon the traditional ethnocentric perspective. As a matter of fact, many new topics cannot be analysed adequately without a broader view of the region and beyond. Otherwise, international interest in the First World War quasi enforces at least some activity on the side of the local researchers, be it only as

contributors to international internet databases.<sup>44</sup> There are still many Polish authors for whom the First World War serves solely as a background to the Polish irredentist movement, but they no longer set the tone (Bator 2005; Grinberg/Snopko/Zachiewicz 2007). There seems to be some life in this particular branch of historical research, despite the virtual absence of the Great War from the collective memories in Eastern Europe.

## Conclusion

Will this asymmetry between memory and history last? Will historians' growing interest in the topic inspire the mass media and influence the public or, after a short mobilisation in the wake of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary, will it decrease? In my opinion, it depends on the status of the First World War in prevailing national historical narratives. In Serbia it is a significant element of such a narrative, but elsewhere, as in Poland, it matters far less. Perhaps the memory of the First World War might be rekindled by showing how strongly it is connected with events which have been important to local and national communities: the establishment or re-establishment of independence, the end of empires and the birth of the Europe of nations in which we live? By showing that there was practically no discontinuity between 1914 and 1920 and that the process occurred in the region as a whole? It seems that a similar thought inspired the poet Kazimierz Przerwa-Tetmajer in the early 1920s, when he wrote: "The war was a womb from whence the Poland came which we have now" (Przerwa-Tetmajer 1920: 23). It is worth thinking about it as our war, if only for that very reason.

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## **Herbert Ruland:**

### **Commemorating the First World War in Belgium, a divided country**

Belgium is known to be a complicated country because of its ethnic diversity. The opinion leaders from the two large ethnic groups – the Flemish and the Walloons – often hold different or even opposing positions on many issues. This essay aims to give an overview of how narratives of the First World War differ in Flanders, in the French and German-speaking communities. In addition it will show how the culture of remembrance and commemoration policy is based on different perspectives of the war and how these perspectives impact the teaching of history in schools in the respective communities. This is particularly important as the education systems of the Belgian entities do not have binding curricula. In the German-speaking community, for example, there are frameworks that give the individual teachers plenty of leeway to develop their own teaching plans<sup>45</sup>. Every teacher can decide whether and how the First World War should feature in their history lessons.

## **Flanders**

The Flemish authorities were the first to prepare activities to commemorate the First World War. The plans for the commemoration activities in 2014 were already well under way in early spring 2011. In June of the same year the first edition of a brochure called *“100 Jaar Grootte Oorlog in Vlaanderen”*, or *“One Hundred Years of the Great War in Flanders”* was published. It should be noted that the focus of the Flemish authorities was the commemoration of the First World War in Flanders and not the whole of Belgium. The brochure deals almost exclusively with West Flanders, which was a frontline area for four years and where very little was left unscathed. It states that the topic of the Great War should play an important part in secondary education in Flanders. Remembrance has already been an integral part of history education in Flanders. By 2009 a government-subsidised committee, the *Bijzonder Comité voor Herinneringseducatie (BCH)*, had been founded. This *“Special Committee for Remembrance Work in Education”* is mainly supported by representatives of the different Flemish educational networks and the most important Flemish establishments that commemorate the victims of the two world wars, such as the Flanders Fields Museum (Ypres), War and Peace in Westlanders (Diksmuide),

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<sup>45</sup> Free translation by the author: “The aim of history education is the establishment of a well-considered and self-reflective historical consciousness”, see: *Rahmenplan Geschichte Sek AU TÛ 2. und 3. Stufe*: [http://www.bildungserver.be/desktopdefault.aspx/tabid-2221/4415\\_read-31778/](http://www.bildungserver.be/desktopdefault.aspx/tabid-2221/4415_read-31778/) [07.04.2015]

Dossin Barracks (Mechelen), Memorial Fort Breendonk (Willebroek), Auschwitz Foundation (Brussels), and the Belgian National Institute for Veterans and Victims of War (Brussels).

In addition to the educational programmes in the museums, there have been various teacher training courses on the topic of the First World War. Moreover, relevant teaching materials have been developed and other projects are under way or have been completed.

As the above-mentioned brochure mainly concentrates on West Flanders, the other Flemish provinces have also focused on their own areas of special interest – and continue to do so – not least in the area of education. They deal with topics such as everyday life during the occupation, the people's relationship to the German soldiers, the mass exodus of civilians and soldiers to neighbouring countries and the deadly electric fence on the border with the Netherlands. From the first day of the war, the brutal attacks by German soldiers on the civilian population led to a mass exodus over the border to the Netherlands. Following the fall of Antwerp in October 1914, there were, at one point, one million Belgians in the Netherlands. The General Governorate in Brussels, which was instituted on 25 August 1914, tried with all its might to prevent people from leaving the country illegally. The border was closely guarded by third-class infantry.



*Picture 1: The Flanders Fields Museum in Ypres is situated on the second floor of the former Cloth Hall. The building, like the whole town, was destroyed during the First World War and had been reconstructed.*



*Picture 2: Remembrance activities in the province of Antwerp: the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the siege of Antwerp in October 1914 was marked by the building of a pontoon bridge across the river Scheldt by Belgian and Dutch military engineers. The project commemorated the thousands of civilians, Allied and Belgian soldiers who escaped across temporary bridges over 100 years ago as the German Army closed on Antwerp. The official inauguration took place on the afternoon of Friday 3 October 2014. The pontoon bridge remained there for three days.*

It was not just the old and frail who were going to the Netherlands to be interned there; many young men also travelled there because they wanted to carry on towards the front in Flanders. The neutral Netherlands were also a convenient destination for spies, career smugglers, prisoners of war and German deserters. In 1914 an electric fence had already been installed along the German side of a section of the Swiss border in order to prevent young Alsatians completely lacking in German patriotism from fleeing into the neighbouring country.<sup>46</sup> At the beginning of 1915 the General Governorate in Belgium decided to erect a similar barrier along the Belgian-Dutch border.



Picture 3: Monument to commemorate the victims of the electric fence at the Belgian-Dutch border Beusdael/Sippenaeken

### Wallonia

These Flemish activities for commemorating the First World War were followed by the “Wallonia Action Plan” exactly one year later in 2012. At the beginning there were discussions in the French-speaking part of the country about whether the commemorative activities should not focus on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the start of the First World War as in Flanders, but on the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Waterloo one year later in 2015.<sup>47</sup>

The person responsible for the 1914-1918 commemoration programme in Wallonia is Laurence van Ypersele, a professor at the Catholic University in Louvain-la-Neuve and a renowned expert on the First World War. The activities of the region are being coordinated by *Démocratie ou Barbarie*, a section within Wallonia’s education department that is responsible for remembrance work in schools and related teacher-training.

The remembrance work and thus also secondary teaching in Wallonia focuses on the commemoration of the approximately 6,000 civilians who were killed by German soldiers

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<sup>46</sup> Construction began in April 1915 and on 23 August the first eighteen-kilometre stretch from Aachen towards the Meuse river was completed. A few weeks later the whole facility was up and running. In German publications from this period the fence, if mentioned at all, is usually only depicted as the location of tense clashes between Allied spies and German counter-spies (Binder 1929, Vanneste 2013, Herzog/Rösseler 1998, Hirschfeld 2004, Roofl 2009, Ruland 2000, S. 22-38, Ruland 1999).

<http://www.grenzesgeschichte.eu/CommemorationActivities/Gedenken14-18englisch.html> [08.04.2015]

<sup>47</sup> These discussions were reported in the Belgian press several times.

in August 1914; the deliberate destruction of whole villages and towns by the occupying forces; the deportation of people to Germany for forced labour in 1916/17; the misery and starvation; the lootings carried out in the occupied areas, but also the first systematic famine aid project – the American Relief Committee. Moreover, it was decided that the Belgian soldiers who fought for national independence, freedom, democracy and solidarity should also be remembered, along with all civilian victims, whose fate still bears witness to how the values we nowadays consider essential like humanity, international law, respect for human rights and the protection of the individual were trampled on during the First World War.

In order to embed these topics in lessons in schools, relevant educational materials have been developed and publications have been made accessible to schools. Projects related to the topic have been subsidised by Wallonia and this will continue in the coming years.

### The German-speaking Community

Just like in the Federal Republic of Germany, memories of the First World War in today's German-speaking Community in Belgium (known as the DG) are, to a great extent, overshadowed by those of the Second World War and Nazi war crimes – particularly the Holocaust – and also of aerial warfare and total defeat.

In 1914 the districts of Eupen and Malmedy formed an integral part of the German Empire. It was from this very area and the nearby city of Aachen that, in the early hours of 4 August 1914, Germany launched an attack on its small neighbour that violated international law. In 1919 the Treaty of Versailles gave the two districts and the formerly neutral region of Moresnet to Belgium. Despite a rather peculiar referendum, on 20 September 1920 the League of Nations confirmed that the area was to be definitively handed over to Belgium. The period of commemoration in the German-speaking Community will therefore last for 6 years until 2020.



Picture 4: "Monument dedicated to Gabrielle Petit, the great Belgium patriot. Died at the age of 23. Victim of the German barbarity. Saint-Jean's Place, Brussels." Postcard 1923

### Commemoration work in the German-speaking Community

The commemoration work for the 1914-1920 period in the German-speaking Community is coordinated by GrenzGeschichteDG (Cross-border History) at the AHS (Autonome Hochschule in der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft)<sup>48</sup>, the local university in the German-speaking Community.

### Cross-border First World War guided tours “Traces 1914-18”

Another project, “Traces 1914-1918”, was created by the Rhineland Landschaftsverband, the association of the municipalities situated in the south-western part of North Rhine-Westphalia. It employs around 15,000 people and is responsible for numerous schools, special hospitals and museums. Partners in the Traces project included schools and museums from Oberhausen (Germany), Katowice (Poland), Le Creusot (France) and St. Vith (Belgium), as well as GrenzGeschichteDG (Belgium).



Picture 5: The project documentation

With the project “Searching for Traces of 1914 in the Museum” the LVR-Industriemuseum invited more than hundred students from four European countries – Belgium, France, Germany and Poland – to work together to “search for traces of the past” in their region and to exchange perspectives and stories across borders. The basic concept was to bring together schools and museums from different regions of Europe. The museums supported the students in searching for these traces and the necessary material about the First World War in their respective area. Because there is no corresponding museum in the German-speaking Community that could have supported the students, GrenzGeschichteDG took over this task and provided the students with material.

<sup>48</sup> The department GrenzGeschichteDG at the Autonome Hochschule in der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft (Autonomous University in the German-speaking Community) in Eupen (B) is a centre for regional contemporary and social history, memorial work and Holocaust education in the Eastern part of Belgium and in the Meuse-Rhine Euregio. GrenzGeschichteDG offers for example guided bus tours across the above-mentioned region to historically important sites that document the lives and sufferings of the people during the First World War. These tours are booked by German, French and Dutch-speaking schools in Belgium and also many adult organisations across the country.

The Belgian partners in this project were 5<sup>th</sup> year pupils at the Bischöfliche Schule (Episcopal School) in St. Vith. Before the students started their work GrenzGeschichteDG accompanied them all on an excursion to seek out traces in the region made up of the border triangle of Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands and to visit a number of historical sites.

The practical work began with the creation of a virtual exhibition during the 2012/2013 school year. The virtual exhibition covered a wide range of topics such as the home front, propaganda, (war) industry, childhood, culture and religion during the First World War. Media forms such as photo montages, texts, presentations, sound stories, videos and animations were created.<sup>49</sup> In a second part, in the 2013/2014 school year the students created analogue exhibitions to be shown in their respective partner museum.

In another project the students from St. Vith analysed a postcard album provided by GrenzGeschichteDG. These postcards were part of a large body of correspondence conducted by a housemaid called Odilia Gennes of Wallerode Manour with her friends and family during the First World War. After extensive research into the life of Odilia Gennes and an analysis of the correspondence, the students decided to transfer the communication methods of Odilias' time into a form of modern communication by creating a Facebook-page for her. They also created her family tree for the analogue exhibition.

### **Exhibition: "The People in the Border Area and the Great War – The Lives and Suffering of the Population"**

GrenzGeschichteDG planned and implemented an exhibition "The People in the Border Area and the Great War – The Lives and Suffering of the Population" dealing with the Great War in the region between Aachen, Maastricht and Liège. The idea was conceived by the joint development agency of four municipalities in the north-east of Belgium, two in the French-speaking Community and two in the German-speaking Community. This project was supported by the Walloon Region and the German-speaking Community. The aim of the exhibition was to facilitate a more complete view of the events that took place in our region in the years before, during and after the First World War, from a transnational perspective and with a focus on the everyday lives of the border population.

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<sup>49</sup> They can be discovered on <http://www.traces1914.eu/> [08.04.2015].



Picture 6: Collage from the exhibition in the Weiss-Haus

The exhibition shows how people lived and suffered before and during the Great War in the area where four countries came together around Aachen, Vaals, Gemmenich and Moresnet. The citizens in this area were “neutrals” from Moresnet; the South Limburgers had remained Dutch in 1830/31; the citizens of Aachen and Eupen had become Prussians with no consultation in 1815; and the French and Low German-speaking population was living on the Belgian border.

Before 1914, the border was almost completely irrelevant to these people, both conceptually and in practice. They sought work where work was given to them. And they happily crossed the border for celebrations, pilgrimages, weddings, homes, shopping and for the purposes of lucrative smuggling. Often the same language was used on all sides of the borders – Borderland Low German. One might say that the area represented globalisation in miniature.

The GrenzGeschichteDG exhibition opened on 2 August 2014 at the Weiss-Haus – Maison Blanche, the most important Prussian checkpoint building before the First World War, situated on the road between Aachen and Liege. This is where, on the morning of 4 August 1914 (at 09.00 GMT)<sup>50</sup>, two of six German brigades invaded Belgium.

<sup>50</sup> The time was 09.00 GMT (known as UTC since 1982), or CET in the German Reich. In Belgium in 1914, however, it was only 08.00.

More than 5,000 people visited this well-received exhibition, which finished on 3 December 2014. The information was presented in four languages and it was visited by schoolchildren and adults from all sides of the borders. There are also plans to bring the exhibition to other places, such as Brussels and Berlin, in the coming years with a view to enhancing knowledge of each other's regions and continuing transnational cooperation.

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### Picture credits

Picture 1: VLAAMSE OVERHEID /.../, 100 Jaar /.../, p.10.

Pictures 2, 3, 4, 6: Herbert Ruland, GrenzGeschichteDG

Picture 5: LVR /.../, Searching for Traces of 1914. Project documentation.

### Herbert Ruland

studied Business, Political Science, Sociology and Economics in Aachen, where he gained a doctorate (Dr Phil). In 1982 he became head of the teaching and research department for Regional Labour, Social and Contemporary History at the VHS der Ostkantone, an adult education centre in Eastern Belgium run by the Christian Labour Movement. Since 2007 he has been a researcher and lecturer at the German-speaking community's university, the AHS (Autonome Hochschule in der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft) and Research Director of GrenzGeschichteDG (Cross-border History). The history of everyday life in the region has been the focus of his research; he has written many publications and produced documentaries on this topic. He is currently working on a film project on Jewish life in the Eupen area and on a project on everyday life in the border area during the First World War. Herbert Ruland has also represented Belgium's German-speaking community on various national and international commemoration committees, such as the Interfederal Belgian Committee on the Commemoration of the Great War.

**Krsto Lazarevic:**

### **Hero or Foe? Gavrilo Princip and memory politics in Bosnia-Herzegovina**

On the 3 May 1791, the parliament of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth adopted a constitution that established a constitutional monarchy which was based on the ideas of the Enlightenment. One year later the Austrian Empire, Prussia and the Russian Empire partitioned the country between themselves, destroying the democratic project in the middle of Europe. Like most schoolchildren in Germany, I had never heard about this constitution in class. I was taught that the French Constitution of September 1791 was the first one on European soil that was based on the ideas of the Enlightenment and popular sovereignty.

The Balkans garnered even less attention in the German curriculum than the Polish neighbours. In the thirteen years that I had attended German schools, I can only remember one hour of class time where the region I was born in was mentioned. It was during a history class on the beginning of the First World War. To put it in drastic terms – in this lesson, I learned something crucial: if you are from the Balkans and you want your story to be part of the curriculum taught at a German school, you must shoot somebody whose native language is German – otherwise you have no chance. Moreover I learned that the assassin Gavrilo Princip was a Serb Nationalist – a statement that I am going to challenge in this paper.

### **Where does the Old Continent end? – Eastern Europe as a blind spot in European Commemoration**

In most history classes around Europe the story of World War I is presented as a story of superpowers fighting each other, leaving no space for the narratives of the small and young democracies in Central and Eastern Europe that first came into being after the end of World War I, when the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian empire broke apart. The history of much of Southeast Europe in itself does not seem to be important or interesting enough for the German education system. And Germany is not an exceptional case in Western Europe. Neither the 2004 enlargement of the European Union, nor the ongoing war in Eastern Ukraine has shed much light onto this blind spot in Western European commemoration of the history of the First World War.

As long as the history and memories of Eastern Europeans are not taught in Western European schools and as long as half of the continent is portrayed as a topic of special interest in the media which concerns only a select few, there will be no European public

and therefore no European commemoration which includes more than the memories and interpretations of Western Europeans. Polish and Bosnian pupils learn a lot about German, French or British history, but it is a one-way street. The lack of interest in memories and commemoration in Eastern Europe is not simply a question of justice and of letting the “other Europe” speak. Moreover, it produces absurd aberrations in attitudes towards certain subjects, such as in Ukraine nowadays, where we are trapped in a situation where we are forced to tolerate serious discussions questioning the sovereignty of the Ukrainian State.



Picture 1: Bridge

### **The street corner that started the 21<sup>st</sup> century: how a dilettante young men caused an international outrage**

A few weeks before the centennial in Sarajevo the faces of Archduke Franz Ferdinand and Gavrilo Princip emerged on the wall of a building next to the river Miljacka. On one side of the poster was the assassin Gavrilo Princip, on the other side Archduke Franz Ferdinand, and carefully placed between them was the catchy statement: “The street corner that started the 21<sup>st</sup> century”.

Almost one hundred years earlier, a few young men had been waiting near this spot to assassinate Franz Ferdinand. The Archduke’s motorcade was passing by the first

conspirator Muhamed Mehmedbasic, who was unable to act out of fear of being caught by the policemen who were standing behind him. Vaso Cubrilovic stood next to Mehmedbasic, armed with a pistol and a bomb. Frozen with fear, he was also unable to act. The third conspirator tried to execute the assassination plan. Nedeljko Cabrinovic threw a bomb at the archduke's motorcade. The bomb touched the arm of Franz Ferdinand, bounced off and exploded under the next car, wounding over a dozen people but not the Archduke. The unlucky assassin took a suicide pill and jumped into the river Miljacka. As was typical for hot summer days, the water levels in the river were very low and the pill was ineffective and only caused vomiting. Cabrinovic hurt himself while jumping into the nearly dried-out river. He was almost lynched by a mob before he was arrested by the police (Dedijer 1964: 26ff.). Gavrilo Princip watched this scene and decided to leave the place. He thought about suicide in order to escape his imprisonment. By a fateful accident, Franz Ferdinand's motorcade passed the Latin Bridge, and drove in front of the nearby food shop where Princip escaped. Gavrilo Princip reacted quickly. He took his gun out and shot Franz Ferdinand and his wife. The assassin was arrested immediately. During his trial, he stated that his intention was not to shoot Franz Ferdinand's wife but Oskar Potiorek, who had later commanded the invasion of Serbia (Dedijer 1964: 26).

Right after the news of the assassination spread throughout Europe, the struggle over its significance began. Was it legitimate for Austria-Hungary to declare war against Serbia? Did the First World War start because of the fight between the imperial powers or was it initiated by a terrorist group backed by Serbian Nationalists? This contention and debate over the causes of the war continues to this day and leads to different outcomes. The shots of Sarajevo became the great crime committed by the "primitive" people from the Balkans and "some hundred and fifty thousand young Americans died, because of an event in 1914 in a mud-caked primitive village, Sarajevo" (Gunther 1940: 437). It is only a small step from blaming the Balkans for World War I to blaming the Balkans for World War II, as did Robert Kaplan in the 1990s in his book "Balkan Ghosts", or as Christopher Clark is, at least partly, doing today with "Sleepwalkers". Inside Bosnia-Herzegovina questions around the shooting are still the subject of controversial debate. As I will illustrate later, the consequences of the war undergird the current segregation in Bosnian schools and society, and are crucial to understanding the socio-political make-up of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Gavrilo Princip himself was imprisoned in Terezín, a former military fortress which later became a concentration camp. He was not sentenced to death because he was still regarded as a minor according to Austrian law. On the 28 November 1918 he died of tuberculosis. He used a spoon to write the following words on the wall of his cell: "Our ghosts

creep through Vienna, whisper through the palaces and let the misters tremble" (Dedijer 1964: 591).

### **Historical perceptions of Gavrilo Princip and Mlada Bosna after World War I – from terrorists to heroes**

On 6 June 2014 the conspirators in the assassination of Franz Ferdinand turned into punk rockers. The premiere of the Serbian poet and screenwriter Milena Markovic's play "Dragon-slayer" brought discussions and interpretations of the assassination to the stage of the Yugoslav Drama Theatre in Belgrade. The play portrays young men seeking freedom while incorporating anarchistic 1977 aesthetics. Director Iva Milosevic mixed original quotes from the members of the Mlada Bosna<sup>51</sup>, poetic passages, documentary details and songs into a mosaic of the events in Sarajevo which she calls "heroic cabaret". The play concentrates on the pre-history and attitudes of the persons involved in the assassination of Franz Ferdinand. Portraying the conspirators of the Mlada Bosna in this manner would not have been possible up until recently, as I am going to explain.

In the local media, schools and on the street it is often said and written that Gavrilo Princip was celebrated as a hero in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes which was later renamed Yugoslavia. In this interpretation, the narrative of the Mlada Bosna fighting the occupiers that turned the Balkans into a slaughterhouse for over four years gave meaning to the suffering of the people. The Austrian journalist Adelheid Wöfl asserted that Gavrilo Princip would have returned to Sarajevo as a hero if he had lived a few months longer (Wöfl 2013). This viewpoint has currency in dominant debates, especially amongst Serbs, but the case proves to be somewhat more complex.

On 2 February 1930 a black plaque was placed at the spot where the Archduke was shot by Gavrilo Princip. This was the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the execution of the journalist and teacher Danilo Ilic, the teacher Veljko Cubrilovic and the member of the "people's defence" Misko Jovanovic, who were involved in the assassination and also members of Mlada Bosna. The three men received the death sentence for their role in the assassination and were hung on the 3 February 1915. It took almost 16 years until any plaque or monument commemorating the assassination was placed next to the Latin Bridge. On the one hand, the text celebrated the events, reading: "Princip proclaimed freedom on Vidovdan 15 (28) June 1914." On the other hand the sign was unveiled without any state ceremony or officials being present.

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<sup>51</sup> Mlada Bosna is the name of the revolutionary movement that organised and executed the murder of Franz Ferdinand.

Around this time, public opinion in Yugoslavia was changing and Gavrilo Princip and the other members of the Mlada Bosna were reconceived as heroes instead of terrorists (Djorgovic 2013).



Picture 2: *Völkische Illustrierte* 1 May 1941

The Nazis removed the monument upon conquering Sarajevo. On 20 April 1941 Adolf Hitler received the monument as a gift while travelling by train from Vienna to Graz. The monument to the national hero was removed from Sarajevo and transported to him as a gift on his 52<sup>nd</sup> birthday. When he received the gift, Hitler looked at the present and appeared to be pleased. He did not speak Serbo-Croatian, nor could he read Cyrillic, but he knew whose name was on the stone: Gavrilo Princip. 33 years after Princip died, Adolf Hitler was celebrating his victory over the young student. Hitler rearranged the map of the Balkans and destroyed the country the young man was dreaming of creating (Bazdulj 2014: 27). The Nazi regime's newspaper *Illustrierter Beobachter* published a picture of *Hitler* receiving his gift. In the article that was published along with the picture, it falsely contended that Gavrilo Princip and the other members of the Mlada Bosna were Jews and Freemasons. In this interpretation it was the Jewish-Bolshevik conspiracy that was to

blame for the start of the First World War and for the formation of the artificial Yugoslav state which forced the South Slavs into an unacceptable multi-ethnic state (Illustrierter Beobachter 1941).

After the Yugoslav partisans liberated Sarajevo, they replaced the commemorative plaque on 7 May 1945. It was erected during a mass meeting that was attended by the president of the parliament of Bosnia and Herzegovina and other local, national and foreign dignitaries. Princip became a national hero and martyr and the bridge next to where he shot the Archduke and his wife was renamed Princip Bridge. The Bosnian Communist Borko Vukobrat held a speech where he compared the Mlada Bosna to the antifascist struggle of the Yugoslav Partisans and unveiled a memorial sign that stated: "The youth of Bosnia and Herzegovina dedicate this plaque as a symbol of eternal gratitude to Gavrilo Princip and his comrades, to fighters against the Germanic conquerors" (Bazdulj 2014: 43).

The "sacrifice" of the Mlada Bosna became one of the most important narratives in Tito's Yugoslavia and Sarajevo's cityscape, including street names honouring their members. In 1953, a museum dedicated to Gavrilo Princip and the Young Bosnia was built and a new plaque was unveiled next to Gavrilo Princip's footprints on the exact spot where he had stood and shot the Archduke. The plaque read: "From this spot on June 28, 1914, Gavrilo Princip, with his shot, expressed the people's protest against tyranny and our people's centuries-long aspiration for freedom" (Smajlovic 1995: 109).

1945 was interpreted as a fulfilment of the failed attempt of 1914 and Tito's Yugoslavia was conceived as a materialisation of the goals of the Mlada Bosna, including the struggle and self-sacrifice of Bosnia's youth for justice and freedom; the liberation from the Germanic oppressor; the awakening of a revolutionary consciousness; and the spirit of brotherhood and unity embodied in the mixed ethno-religious backgrounds of the Young Bosnians and Partisans alike (Miller 2007). Paul Miller quoted from an article that was published in the Bosnian partisan newspaper *Oslobodjenje* on 28 June 1945, that the first Yugoslavia was "a dungeon [...] where the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina had no rights', while now 'the dream of Gavrilo Princip [...] and many others who gave their young lives for a happy homeland for all people of Bosnia and Herzegovina" had become true. Just as the 19-year-old Princip had lunged towards the Archduke's motorcade, the young partisans had thrown themselves in front of Nazi tanks (Miller 2007). This narrative was upheld by the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia during its entire existence until it began to disintegrate.

### **Divided commemoration: how Gavrilo Princip was turned into a Serb nationalist**

The Yugoslav crises of the 1980s led to a drastic rise of nationalism within the different ethnic groups of Yugoslavia. Slobodan Milosevic, who was a communist Apparatchik<sup>52</sup>, turned into a Serbian nationalist leader who attempted to prevent federal Yugoslavia from breaking apart. In 1991, Slovenia and Croatia were frustrated with Serbia's increasing control over the federation under Milosevic and declared their independence. Bosnia-Herzegovina declared independence in April 1992, an act which led to the most bloody of the post-Yugoslav wars.

During a late evening session which took place in February 1991, the three ethno-nationalist parties of the Bosnian Muslims, Croats, and Serbs had a "bitter dispute over the sovereignty of Bosnia" (Smajlovic 1995: 109). The Serb member of the Serbian Democratic Party warned that Serbs would never accept an independent Bosnia-Herzegovina, saying that: "The sovereign of your sovereign state would never make it past the Gavrilo Princip Bridge" (Smajlovic 1995: 109). Afterwards, a Muslim member of parliament took the podium and answered that in an independent Bosnia-Herzegovina, the bridge would not bear the name of a terrorist and Serbian murderer anymore and that it should be given its old name, Latin Bridge. Two days after the heated parliamentary debate, the Mlada Bosna Museum in Sarajevo was attacked. The word "Latin Bridge" was sprayed all over the wall and the plaque (Smajlovic 1995: 109).

After Bosnia-Herzegovina declared independence, the troops of the army of the Republika Srpska began occupying the city. While Serbian forces shelled the city, Bosniaks destroyed the footprints that marked the spot where Gavrilo Princip stood when he fired the two shots that set the world on fire. As the idea of "Brotherhood and Unity" drowned itself in blood, the narratives depicting Gavrilo Princip and the Mlada Bosna changed once again.

Yugoslavia was now interpreted as a means to an end for the Serbs to rule over Muslims and other ethnic groups within the state. Similarly, Gavrilo Princip was sanctified as a Serb nationalist and terrorist who did a great deal in placing Slavic Muslims under Serbian rule. Consequently, the days of Austro-Hungarian rule underwent a historical revision and were now romanticised as times of modernisation. The Bosniak public even demanded the rebuilding of a monument to Franz Ferdinand and his wife, which was placed next to the Latin Bridge on 28 June 1917 by the Austro-Hungarian occupiers.

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<sup>52</sup> Apparatchik stands for a professional functionary of the Communist Party (apparatus). In the former socialist world the word Apparatchik is comparable to the German *Schreibtischtäter*, describing a bureaucrat par excellence.

Moreover, Bosniaks interpreted Gavrilo Princip as being a mentor to Slobodan Milosevic and connected the Mlada Bosna to the project of a Greater Serbia. In the dominant hegemonic Bosniak discourse on Princip, the assassination of Franz Ferdinand became a starting point for Serbian rule over Muslims in Bosnia-Herzegovina (Lazarevic 2014). Some more radical voices even drew comparisons between the assassinations in Sarajevo on 28 June 1914 and the genocide in Srebrenica in July 1995.

Historians from 26 different countries gathered in Sarajevo for the Centennial of World War I, attending a conference titled: "The Great War: Regional Approaches and Global Contexts". The Bosniak Institutes that organised the conference said that the Bosnian Serbs did not want to come, while some Bosnian Serb historians said that they would have attended if somebody had asked them. Milorad Dodik, the president of the Republika Srpska called the conference "a new propaganda attack against the Serbs." Many Serbs felt offended by Christopher Clark's "Sleepwalkers", especially because he links Serbia's policy before World War I with the war crimes of the 1990s and partly blames the Serbian intelligence services for World War I, while taking a huge part of the blame away from German nationalism. This is the perfect mixture for offending a great many people in Serbia and becoming persona non grata, which Christopher Clark surely is in Belgrade. Despite the criticism from Serbs, it has to be noted that Mark A. Mazower from Columbia University delivered the keynote and that Christopher Clark did not play a leading role during the discussions at the conference.

A few days after the conference ended, a statue of Gavrilo Princip was inaugurated nearby, just a day before the centennial. The man who shot Franz Ferdinand was celebrated in Serb-dominated Eastern Sarajevo. Nebojsa Radmanovic, the former Serb member of the Bosnian presidency, gave a speech where he described Gavrilo Princip as a national hero and Serb patriot. He also painted a picture of Gavrilo Princip as a symbol of the desire to unite all Serbs under one nation state – a political goal which largely contributed to the Bosnian wars in the 1990s. Whilst in prison in 1916, Gavrilo Princip told the Austrian psychologist Martin Pappenheimer that he never wanted to be a hero (Princip 1926). Radmanovic interpreted the new statue as compensation for the plaque that was taken by the Nazis in 1941 and that was given "to the biggest enemy of the people, Adolf Hitler." Once again, Gavrilo Princip is characterised as a Serb nationalist who fought for a Greater Serbia. The only difference is that the Serbs admire him for his role in seeking to create a Greater Serbia, while the Bosniaks hate him for it.

Both sides are widely misinterpreting the situation. Gavrilo Princip and the other members of the Mlada Bosna were not “Serb nationalists” in the way we understand the term nowadays. Gavrilo Princip was a follower of Kropotkin’s ideas of a social revolution (Martinov 2014: 8). Before this social revolution that would make all members of mankind equal, the nations of Europe had to free themselves from imperial oppression, as Gavrilo Princip himself explained. He talked about the Czechs, Slovaks and Poles, but also about the working-class Austrians who deserved freedom and justice (Princip 1926). When the judge asked Cabrinovic and Princip about their nationality they did not claim to be Serbs, but as Serbo-Croatians who were fighting for the idea of Yugoslavia. They said that their political goal was the destruction of the conservative, feudal monarchy and the unification of the South Slavs (Princip 1926). These ideas have very little in common with the racist and chauvinistic Serb nationalism of today. The first potential assassin on Franz Ferdinand’s road was the Bosnian Muslim Muhamed Mehmedbašić. If he had been the one carrying out the assassination as planned, the whole narrative of Serb nationalists killing the Archduke in order to create a Greater Serbia would not work. Danilo Ilic was the one who recruited the young man who killed Franz Ferdinand. He was barely of full age at that time, but was already a translator of Kierkegaard, Ibsen and Edgar Allan Poe. He was sentenced to death by Austro-Hungary. The main ideologist Vladimir Gacinovic was a friend of Victor Serge, Julius Martov and Leon Trotsky – not a circle of friends where you would expect a Serb nationalist to be associated with (Horvath 2014).

Despite these facts, Gavrilo Princip is depicted as a Serb nationalist in schoolbooks, encyclopaedias and newspaper articles around the world, while the Mlada Bosna is often presented as a group that fought for a Greater Serbia. The ideologies of the members of the Mlada Bosna were diverse and Serb nationalism did play a minor role for some them. They also cooperated with the Serb nationalist secret organisation Crna Ruka. Nevertheless, portraying Gavrilo Princip and the other members of the Mlada Bosna as Serb nationalists in the sense we use and understand this term nowadays, is far from being factually and historically accurate. If they were living today, they would probably participate in some form of sub-cultural left-wing anti-imperialist group rather than in a nationalist organisation. Gavrilo Princip and the Mlada Bosna were never debated in a hard-headed or rational manner in the region. The people in Bosnia and Herzegovina will continue to argue as to whether Gavrilo Princip was a hero or a terrorist and will claim that he was a Serb nationalist. The Serbs will continue admiring him and the Bosniaks will continue to hate him for something he never was. Turning Gavrilo Princip into a nationalist mainly assists those circles in Bosnia-Herzegovina that incorporate a specific historical narrative for their own ethno-nationalist discourse in order to keep the society as separated as it is.

### **Segregated commemoration – segregated schools in a segregated post-war country**

In the post-war context of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the country has remained extremely segregated in various institutional and social contexts. The state has effectively implemented a “two school under one roof” policy, which designates the practice of dividing Bosniak, Croat and Serb children who attend classes in the same building but are separated from each other in different classrooms and taught different curricula. They are usually prevented from using the same entrance to the school and have recess at different times, so that the children are unable to interact with one another. The Federation’s Supreme Court declared this practice to be unconstitutional in October 2014, but it is unlikely that this ruling will engender any change on the ground, since the decision to abolish segregated schools must be implemented by the regional and local authorities. These authorities, however, are complacent and unwilling to implement the Supreme Court’s decision. The separate curriculums which are implemented by the different schools are inculcating intolerance towards the other ethnic groups. A large number of Roma children do not even attend school. The history of the Roma and Sinti is not taught in schools and is barely even researched.

Every constituent people have their own special commemorations, bank holidays, newspapers and TV channels. Young individuals who want to escape this polarising discourse often leave the country. These are the people who the country needs in order to build a civil society that is not just driven by foreign NGOs but made up of citizens who perceive themselves as Bosnians and not just as Bosniaks, Croats or Serbs. Moreover, the history of the Bosnian wars which is taught at these schools often posits a specific ethno-nationalist narrative in favour of that school’s particular ethnic group. Disputes about historical events like the outbreak of World War I make it almost impossible to establish school textbooks and common history classes for all children in Bosnia-Herzegovina. While the Serbian history textbook’s portrayal of Gavrilo Princip is very similar to the hegemonic discourse maintained by Serbs, Gavrilo Princip is not demonised in Bosnian and Bosnian Croat school textbooks, as he is demonised within large parts of the population. However it seems impossible to agree on a common curriculum for all Bosnian students in the segregated society of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

## Conclusion

The European Commemoration of World War I largely took place without the participation of Bosnian citizens. Of course, on the one side conferences and meetings and commemoration events with international historians and other guests took part in Sarajevo, but Bosnian views on the causes behind the outbreak of World War I are barely mentioned in any international academic journals.

Moreover, a hard-headed analysis of Gavrilo Princip, the Mlada Bosna and the reasons of the outbreak of World War I is unlikely to be found in the works of Bosnian and Serbian historians. It took until the eve of World War II for Gavrilo Princip and the Mlada Bosna to become popular amongst Yugoslavians as fighters against Austro-Hungarian rule. When the communist partisans came to power after World War II, the young conspirators were interpreted as communist liberators against the "Germanic" fascism that destroyed Yugoslavia during the Nazi occupation.

The reason why World War I is discussed in such an emotional and polemic manner in segregated Bosnian society nowadays has very little to do with World War I itself, but more with the Bosnian war of the 1990s. While for a lot of Bosniaks Gavrilo Princip is seen as an ideological father of Slobodan Milosevic, Ratko Mladic and Radovan Karadzic, Serbs are more likely to view him as one of the nation's liberators and fighters against a Western imperialism that bombed and destroyed the country in 1999 for the third time in a century.

While officials and historians in other parts of Europe are working on shared commemorations of World War I and other historical events, Bosnia-Herzegovina with its 3.8 million inhabitants is strictly divided in its commemoration activities. Bosniaks, Croats, and Serbs in Bosnia-Herzegovina cannot agree on a more objective and less emotional interpretation of the outbreak of World War I. Therefore textbooks, schools, as well as individuals in the country, where national identity far outweighs the importance of the individual, will stay segregated from each other. I wish I could give another outlook, but it is unlikely that the circumstances in Bosnia-Herzegovina will be changing any time soon. If there is one thing that Europe can learn from Bosnia, it is that nationalist interpretations of historical events are rarely adequate for conducting research and establishing a shared commemoration or even some kind of "nation building" within multicultural societies. We should bear this in mind when we look at opinion polls in the European Union and debates on Ukrainian statehood and sovereignty.

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## Picture Credits:

Picture 1: Ruben Neugebauer, Picture 2: Völkische Illustrierte 1 May 1941

## Krsto Lazarevic

covered the commemoration ceremonies and events connected to the beginning of the First World War while he was working as editor and reporter for the Bosnian daily newspaper *Oslobodjenje*. Krsto Lazarevic was born in 1989 in Tuzla, Bosnia and Herzegovina. He studied Political Science, Sociology and Gender Studies in Berlin, Frankfurt am Main, and Valencia. He works as a journalist for several media outlets in Germany, Switzerland, Austria and Bosnia-Herzegovina (*Arte*, *Die Welt*, *Der Standard*, *Wirtschaftsblatt*, *BH-Dani*).

**Guoqi Xu:**

**The Great War and today's China<sup>53</sup>**

2014 was the centennial anniversary of the outbreak of the First World War. One hundred years have passed and China has changed a great deal. The First World War was a turning point in China's national development and its international relations. This essay tries to briefly examine the war's impact on China and China's journey in the last one hundred years.

**The First World War and its long shadow in China**

When the First World War broke out, China was an extremely poor and weak nation with no functioning centralised national government. Many major powers had spheres of influence in China and China's efforts to consolidate into a new, modern nation were crippled by financial rot to a certain extent created by the great powers, which had inflicted huge burdens on the Chinese through indemnities, harmful loans, and many unequal treaties that constrained China's growth and development.<sup>54</sup> Today China is the world's second largest economy and largest trading nation with a powerful centralised government and a large, wealthy, middle-class population. During our current commemorations of the legacy and impact of the First World War, it is time for us to think deeply about the Great War and its implications and significance for China. This is a long overdue issue. First of all, the world, including the Chinese people themselves, have not paid much attention to the issue of China and its Great War. Secondly, the First World War, although it took place one hundred years ago, is still relevant in Asia today, especially when we try to understand why the Chinese and Japanese have had trouble getting along and putting history behind them. Thirdly, the First World War has played a powerful role in affecting China's national development, its foreign relations, and Chinese perceptions about themselves and the world. Fourthly, when China has become more and more influential in global affairs and economy, when the Chinese are still searching for a new national identity, it seems important for the Chinese and other people in the world to understand the role of the First World War on China. It might provide a magic key and provide answers to many important issues such as the widespread Chinese cry for bringing "Mr. Science" and "Mr. Democracy" to China's national development and into Chinese debates on the

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<sup>53</sup> The Hong Kong Government's Research Grant Council provided support for this project (HKU751013).

<sup>54</sup> For a recent study on China's unequal treaties see Wang 2005 and Zanasi 2010.

differences and similarities between Eastern and Western civilisations during the First World War time and its immediate aftermath. How to make China both democratic and highly developed economically and scientifically? How should China function in the world were burning questions to the Chinese then, and they still are to people in China and around the world today? These issues are still puzzling us all now.

Commentators, scholars, and politicians around the world have started to make frequent use of the First World War analogy when discussing China, especially with regard to its relations with Japan. Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in January 2014 told an audience at the Davos conference in Switzerland that the rivalry between China and Japan was similar to that between Germany and Great Britain before World War I, implying their differences could supersede their close trade ties and China could play the role of Germany. The Chinese of course are not pleased with the German analogy. At a news conference during the annual meeting of the National People's Congress held in March this year, Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi emphasised that "2014 is not 1914, still less 1894."<sup>55</sup> "Instead of using Germany before the First World War as an object lesson, why not use Germany after the Second World War as a role model?" Wang Yi suggested. But at the same time, in answer to a question from a Japanese reporter on the deterioration of China-Japan relations, the Chinese foreign minister warned that for China on the two issues of principle — "history and territory — there is no room for compromise" (Wong 2014). It seems that tensions between China and Japan have been playing out in diplomacy around the globe and everyone understands the hostile relations between the two nations. However, not everyone realises that during the First World War the relationship between the two nations was worse. The current Sino-Japanese relations can largely be understood and put into a historical context as a result of what happened during the war and its aftermath.

### **China's Great War**

To understand the significance of the First World War to today's China and Sino-Japanese relations, we have to understand what happened to China and Japan prior to and during the First World War. Moreover, to understand the importance of the Great War to China, we even have to go further back to the first Sino-Japanese war in 1894-95 since the 1894 war planted the seed, foundation, and motivation for China and Japan's eventual participation

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<sup>55</sup> "1894" refers to the war between China and Japan which started in 1894 and ended with China's humiliating defeat in 1895.

in the First World War.<sup>56</sup> The 1894 war made Japan a major power in East Asia and an empire with its first colony in Taiwan, which China was forced to cede. The war also laid the groundwork for Japan to acquire a second colony by forcing China to abandon Korea, traditionally a Chinese tributary state. Japan seemed to be bound for a major international military game as the new power in East Asia at the expense of China. In other words, the war with China in 1894 set the stage for Japan's ambition to compete with major world powers when the opportunity arose. As a rising power in Asia, Japan was determined to become a leading player in international politics and a master of China when the major powers were at war in Europe. This is why the outbreak of the First World War in Europe in August 1914 was considered by many Japanese to be a great opportunity. The Japanese had been waiting for their chance, and now with the European war, the "magic moment" had arrived.

Japan's planned aggression in China in the wake of the European war explains why it had inserted itself into the war the very month when European hostilities began. After Japan took over German concessions in China in late 1914, the real Japanese military effort actually ended with Qingdao's fall to Japan. For Japan, after it achieved its first objective in China by taking Qingdao, its next main goal was to set itself up as the master of China. On 18 January 1915, Japan presented China with the infamous "Twenty-one Demands." These demands consisted of five sections with a total of twenty-one articles. The most serious and demanding section was the fifth, which demanded that China appoint Japanese advisors in political, financial, and military affairs, and that the Japanese take control of Chinese police departments in key places across China. These demands were so severe that some called them "worse than many presented by a victor to his vanquished enemy."

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<sup>56</sup> Having witnessed what happened to China after the Opium War in the 1840s, the Japanese decided to join the Western system and follow in Western footsteps with the launch of the Meiji Restoration in 1868. In less than a generation, Japan had become sufficiently confident about turning into a Western-style empire that it took on China, formerly the economic and cultural giant of Asia. The military campaign that began in 1894 resulted in China being soundly defeated by 1895. If the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-95 set the stage for Japan's involvement in the Great War, it also nearly sealed China's fate and prompted her eventual entry into the same war. The Chinese defeat in 1895 meant many things. It certainly subjected the country to much more extensive foreign control, but its psychological impact was even greater. The Sino-Japanese War compelled the Chinese leadership to think seriously about their destiny and the value of their civilisation; more importantly, it caused them to question their traditional identity. The sense of frustration, humiliation, and impotence in the face of Western incursions and a Westernised Japan provided powerful motivation for change. The devastating loss to Japan was thus both a turning point and shared point of reference for Chinese perceptions of themselves and the world. For details on this war, see Paine 2003.

Obviously, the Japanese meant to make China a vassal state. Japan's blatant bullying confirmed for many Chinese that "Japan is our country's strong enemy," as a young Mao Zedong wrote in a letter to a friend on 25 July 1916. He predicted that China "could not survive without fighting within twenty years." The Chinese broad-based response to the Twenty-one Demands in 1915 later set the stage for the May Fourth Movement of 1919 (Xu 2011b, Chow 1960).

Japan's demands presented the biggest challenge yet to China's survival and its desire to become a fully-fledged nation-state. If Japan provided China with a crisis of national identity by defeating it in 1895, its demands to China in 1915 not only stirred up the Chinese national consciousness, but also helped China identify its first specific goal in responding to the First World War: attending the post-war peace conference. Although China contributed 140,000 workers to support the Allied war efforts, the most secure way to the conference was to join the war (Guoqi 2011a). This was why China tried hard to join the war repeatedly and succeeded in 1917.<sup>57</sup> For the Chinese, given their weak status in the world, the post-war peace conference might have been the only opportunity for them to recover their lost sovereignty, especially Shandong, which the Japanese took away during the First World War. Their expectations were even higher when they learned American President Woodrow Wilson would personally attend the gathering with his blueprint for the new world order. At the post-war peace conference, the Chinese were obsessed with the return of Shandong which they thought was the cradle of Chinese civilisation and a "Holy Land" (Zhang 1991).

However, despite China's brilliant performance at the post-war peace conference through its effective use of public diplomacy and public opinion, the secret diplomacy clearly was more powerful than justice and Japan simply refused to return Shandong to China. The major powers legitimised Japanese claims through the Versailles Treaty.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> As soon as the news of the European War reached China in the autumn of 1914, China proposed joining British military forces to attack Germans in Qingdao, a Chinese territory under German control since 1898. The British rejected the Chinese offer. In late 1915 after China received the "Twenty-one Demands" from Japan, the Chinese government planned to join the war again, but this time the Japanese were strongly against China's participation. In 1917, at the invitation of the Americans, with Japan's non-opposition after American participation in the war and once the Japanese had reached secret deals with the allied powers regarding their interests in China, China finally joined the war.

<sup>58</sup> At the Paris Peace Conference, Chinese took full advantage of American President Woodrow Wilson's national self-determination ideas to launch a diplomatic offensive against the Japanese. For details, see MacMillan 2003.

All the excitement, high expectations and hopes for the post-war peace conference were dashed for the Chinese. In a deep mood of anger and disappointment, China became the only country which refused to sign the Versailles peace treaty. During the Great War, for the first time in its modern history, China articulated a desire to join the world as an equal member and took action to do so. With this, China tried to correct the mistakes it had made in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries when it refused to accommodate the new international system and failed to acknowledge the power of the West. This time it was the West that refused to accept China, but at the Paris Peace Conference, the Chinese reacted. Their refusal to sign the Treaty of Versailles marked the first time since the Opium War (1839-1842) that China had stood up to the West. To an extent, Chinese bitterness toward the West after the Paris Peace Conference has coloured their perceptions about peace, development, security, and certainly the West itself.

What happened at the post-war peace conference led to an outburst of anger against the United States and Wilson and a deepening hatred for Japan. Some Chinese complained that Wilson's new world order had not come to China. Wilson's fourteen points for his new world order equalled nothing for the Chinese ("14 = 0"). The Paris Peace Conference had clear implications and significance for China and Japan. For Japan it symbolised Japan's transition from a regional power to a world power at the cost of China. But Japan's success in the First World War soon led to its total defeat in WWII. For the Chinese, the major powers' decision to sacrifice China for Japan sparked the May Fourth Movement, a key turning point in modern China's national development. The May Fourth Movement marked the end of any all-out efforts by China to join the liberal Western system, efforts that had begun by China's seeking to join the First World War.<sup>59</sup> With the May Fourth Movement, China's sense of trust in the West had been replaced by feelings of betrayal and disillusion, and by a determination among many Chinese to find their own way or the "third civilisation". The third civilisation turned out to be a socialist system. The May Fourth Movement in 1919 thus signalled the end of that age of innocence since it grew from some Chinese elites' disillusionment with the Western powers and their better understanding of themselves and world problems.

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<sup>59</sup> When news of China's failure to win back Shandong reached China on 4 May 1919, a body of over 3,000 students from across Beijing rallied and tried to meet with the allied ministers in the capital to appeal to them on China's behalf. The protest eventually triggered Chinese all-out effort to search for a new national identity and turn into a socialist country. For details on the May Fourth Movement and its significance, see Schwarcz 1990.

## **The Great War and China's great transformation**

If hostilities between China and Japan were a shared theme in both the First World War era and today, Chinese frustration about “what is China and who are the Chinese” is another important shared issue then and today. If the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-95 set the stage for Japan's involvement in the Great War, it also served as a beginning for China's century-long journey in search of a new national identity. China wanted to survive as a nation and the Chinese wanted to transform themselves in order for China to join the West-dominated world order as an equal member. Thus “change” had become a buzzword in China after its defeat by Japan in 1895 and China's social transformation and cultural and political revolutions coincided with the First World War. Therefore, the Great War provided the momentum and opportunity for China to redefine its relations with the world by inserting itself into the war effort. The clash of ideas, political theories, and the prescription of national identities strongly stimulated China's ideological, social, cultural, and intellectual creativity and engendered a strong determination for change. New ideologies, explanations of history, and even reactions to developments in the Great War abounded and could be found in new print media across the country. The appearance of new political ideologies (nationalism rather than Confucianism; nation-state, instead of culturalism); the return to China of Western-trained students; the activism of a new bourgeois class (rather than the old gentry and traditional mandarins); the emergence of a public sphere and modern print media; and above all, the changing international system together all pushed China toward self-renewal and new national identity. At no other time in modern Chinese history has the mobilisation of public opinion and its social and intellectual resources played such a crucial role in shaping China's political, cultural, and social directions, at the same time fuelling its search for national identity. At no time previously had the Chinese shown such enormous interest in international affairs and initiated a new diplomacy aimed at renewing the state and preparing its entry onto the world stage as an equal member. The coming of the First World War was the first major world event that engaged the imagination of the Chinese social and political elites, generating great fascination and excitement. Changes in the Chinese world view and the destabilising forces loosed by the war set the stage for China to play a role in world affairs. China's weakness and domestic political chaos provided strong motivations to enter and alter the international system. The Chinese revolutions in the 1910s also forced the Chinese to shift their attention to changes in the world system. The key to understanding China's 1911 Revolution, which turned China into a first republic in Asia and the May Fourth Movement, which led China to become a socialist nation in a long run, was China's obsession with its place in the family of nations and the international order.

Among the many countries that participated in the war, China was perhaps the most “unusual”. No neutral country had linked its fate with the war so closely, had such high expectations, and yet had been so humbled by the experience. Chinese interest in the war developed out of a sense of victimisation. Yet the very imperialist forces that had humiliated and oppressed China also served as inspiration. China sought to defeat imperialism by adopting the imperialists’ motivation and ideology. The new ideology of nationalism fuelling China’s revolution, internal renewal, and transformation was based in the Chinese desire to join the world, to become a modern nation-state and a strong and powerful country. This same nationalism, however, suppressed the traditional values that had formerly marked Chinese civilisation and undermined its unique character as a Chinese nation. After all, Chinese traditional Confucian values emphasised the moral persuasion instead of military strength. In a sense, the dynamism of the era is reflected in its combination of political nationalism, cultural iconoclasm, and diplomatic internationalism in China’s approach to world affairs. During the period of the First World War, Chinese elites tried to build a nation-state without preserving ingredients of Chinese culture and tradition. They tried to redefine China’s national identity in terms that had nothing to do with its own civilisation and experience. The coexistence of liberalism and “warlordism” was a strange mix that made China seem a monster with two heads, each facing a different direction.<sup>60</sup> In fact, a dual policymaking process existed during this period: on one side were modern, outward-looking bureaucrats and social elites who tried hard to push China into the international system; and on the other were the warlords and ultra-conservatives who wished only to stop the clock, effectively mortgaging China’s future for their own benefit. The tensions generated by this process created an acute dilemma that put in jeopardy the quest for a new national identity and made China’s entry into the international system difficult and circuitous.

### **Concluding Remarks**

Largely due to its intention to join the world as an equal member and prevent Japan from seizing Qingdao and further expanding its interest in China, the Chinese government and members of the elite wanted to join the Great War when it broke out (Xu 2011b: 81-92). In consequence, the First World War was profoundly significant in shaping Chinese society, politics, diplomacy, foreign relations, and popular perceptions about what it meant to be Chinese. If the First World War was a watershed event in China’s search for national identity and efforts to enhance its position in the world, it also left a lasting legacy by shaping

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<sup>60</sup> Between 1916 and 1928, China was actually in a state of civil war as big and small warlords fought among themselves for the power to rule China. For details on warlordism in China, see Waldron 1991.

Chinese perceptions of the world order and the West. Chinese bitterness at the injustice of the post-war peace conference would be rekindled whenever China was wronged by the powers as they refused to return Shandong to China in 1919. The war and its aftermath, therefore, should be considered pivotal in shaping modern Chinese historical consciousness and national mooring. In 1919, in the wake of the European War, China was fundamentally different from the China of 1914—socially, intellectually, culturally, and ideologically. Now as China enters another century, it does so in the wake of more unprecedented changes in its social, economic and diplomatic arenas stimulated by economic reform and the opening-up policy initiated in 1978 by Deng Xiaoping. The Chinese still struggle to assert themselves and remain obsessed with their nation's place in the world.

The First World War was in fact a defining moment, a turning point in shaping the Chinese world view and its further development. The outbreak of the European war essentially affected the fate of China in many unexpected ways. The Chinese twentieth century started with the broadly defined period of the Great War. The interaction between China and the war fully symbolised the beginning of China's long journey towards internationalisation, bringing China into the world and making the war an important part of its own history. China's involvement in the First World War is thus a unique chapter in both Chinese and world history. Its involvement in the war also brought China back into a larger world history of the twentieth century.

Like the First World War era, today's China is full of contradictions and the Chinese are still searching for a new national identity and answers to the question: "what is China and who are the Chinese." In 1912, the Chinese followed the footprints of the United States and France by becoming a republic. At the Paris Peace Conference, when the Western powers refused to accommodate Chinese demands for national self-determination and the return of Shandong, radical Chinese started to question liberal Western values and became interested in the new Russian revolution and socialism. The Chinese communist party was founded in 1921 with Russian help and in 1949 the communists finally took control of the whole country. To put it differently, in the aftermath of the Great War, China became a communist country and in theory it still is (Zarrow 2005, Mitter 2004). China today is both progressive and backward in the sense that when the Chinese demand democracy and full integration into the world the communist dictatorship tries hard to rein them back with censorship and political suppression. During the Great War and the May Fourth Movement, the Chinese asked for "Mr. Democracy" and "Mr. Science" to save China. Today's China is in urgent need of these two ministers, although Chinese cries for freedom are muted compared to the widespread political activism and rise of public opinion during the First

World War period. China might be richer and stronger internationally today compared to the First World War era, but its people still do not have democracy, and political suppression is everywhere internally. The Chinese are still calling out for "Mr. Democracy" and "Mr. Science."

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## **Hayk Demoyan:**

### **The Armenian Genocide and European history and memory**

The history and culture of the Armenian people are strongly connected with European history and remembrance. In 301 AD Armenia adopted Christianity as its state religion, and since then Armenia as a state and geographical name has been regarded as an important outpost of Christian Europe, although in medieval Europe there was a lack of knowledge about Christians in the Orient, until the Crusades. In the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries, Europeans discovered another, Little Armenia, or Cilician Armenian Kingdom, on the way to Jerusalem.<sup>61</sup>

After Armenia fell under the control of Persia and the Ottomans during the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, several delegations of Armenians were sent to European courts to discuss the possibility of the liberation of Armenia with the help of the European monarchs. Leon VI, the last king of Cilician Armenia, who came to Europe in search of help, subsequently became the senior of Madrid until his death in the late 14<sup>th</sup> century. Nevertheless, all these attempts were futile and resulted in only promises but no direct steps to launch a campaign for the liberation of Armenia from the Turks and Persians.

### **The “Armenian question”**

The history of the “Armenian question” and the Genocide of 1915-1922, are strongly connected with European history and memory. The questions of security and respect for the basic human rights of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire gave birth to the “Armenian question”, which was officially defined in Article 61 of the Berlin treaty in 1878, shortly after the Russian-Turkish war of 1877-1878. Reichskanzler Otto von Bismarck appeared as an “honest broker” between the Russian Empire and Ottoman Turkey to settle the outcome of the Russian-Turkish war. After the San Stefano agreement signed on 3 March 1878 Russia came out on top, which displeased the other powers, and particularly the British Empire. The above-mentioned article of the Berlin treaty says:

“The Sublime Porte undertakes to carry out, without further delay, the improvements and reforms demanded by local requirements in the provinces inhabited by Armenians, and to guarantee their security against the Circassians and Kurds. It will periodically

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<sup>61</sup> Medieval Europe knew very little about Christians in the Orient until the Crusades, when the first Europeans travelled to the Middle East.

make known the steps taken to this effect to the powers, who will superintend their application." (Elliot 2006: 397)

The packages of reforms to ameliorate the condition of the Armenian population under the Ottoman Empire, who became the targets of massacres, were proposed by the European powers to the Ottoman Turkish government several times but with no result. In fact, whenever Armenians started to talk about the need to implement the Berlin treaty commitments, this resulted in even harsher suppression and massacres.<sup>62</sup>

### **Pro-Armenian movements**

The security and defence of the human rights of Armenians who, since the very birth of the Berlin treaty, were threatened with mass violence and massacres, created a huge pro-Armenian movement in European countries in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and during and after the 1915-1922 Genocide.

Solidarity movements and relief organisations were very active, for instance in Germany, France, Great Britain, Italy, Switzerland and Russia. Many organisations were set up to adopt Armenian orphans or take charge of caring for orphans in Turkey. For example, in 1896-1899 there were "Swiss orphans" in Armenia – Armenian orphans who had lost their parents during the Turkish atrocities and were under the care of ordinary Swiss citizens.

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries European intellectual and political circles raised their voices on behalf of the Armenians. Many European political figures criticised the Sultan and his regime for their inhuman treatment of Armenians and called on their own governments to act. They included British Prime Minister William Gladstone, French Prime Minister George Clemenceau, French politician Jean Jaures and many others.

European intellectuals and human right activists were also involved in Armenophile/pro-Armenian movements, giving lectures and producing publications on the condition of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire. The French writer Anatole France, the Dutch philosopher and writer Georg Brandes and the Norwegian scientist and diplomat Fridtjof Nansen became part of a European humanitarian response to the issue of Armenia and the consequences of the Armenian Genocide.

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<sup>62</sup> Between 1894-1896 more than 200,000 Armenians were killed during the reign of Sultan Abdul-Hamid II, known in Europe as the "great assassin." In May 1909, shortly after the Young Turks came to power in the Ottoman Empire, more than 30.000 Armenian were killed in bloody massacres in the Aleppo and Adana districts.

### **The First World War period**

Although European nations were involved in the bloody fighting of the First World War, the issue of the Armenian Genocide and the extermination of Armenians still gained the attention of world leaders and governments. In 1916, the diplomat and jurist James Bryce and historian Arnold Toynbee published the famous "Blue Book" titled "The Treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire" which was the first collection of eyewitness accounts of survivors of the Armenian Genocide (see Bryce 1916). This book compiled statements from Armenian survivors and eyewitnesses from other countries including Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden and Switzerland, who all attested to the systematic massacre of innocent Armenians by the Ottoman government forces.

In May 1915, Great Britain and France joined with Russia to produce the historical and unprecedented declaration that communicated a threat to the "Young Turks":

"For about a month the Kurd and Turkish populations of Armenia have been massacring Armenians with the connivance and often assistance of Ottoman authorities. Such massacres took place in middle April (new style) at Erzerum, Dertchun, Eguine, Akn, Bitlis, Mush, Sassun, Zeitun, and throughout Cilicia. Inhabitants of about one hundred villages near Van were all murdered. In that city Armenian quarter is besieged by Kurds. At the same time in Constantinople Ottoman Government ill-treats inoffensive Armenian population. In view of those new crimes of Turkey against humanity and civilization, the Allied governments announce publicly to the Sublime-Porte that they will hold personally responsible [for] these crimes all members of the Ottoman government and those of their agents who are implicated in such massacres." (Bryce 1916)

Winston Churchill described the massacres as an "administrative holocaust" and noted that

"the clearance of the race from Asia Minor was about as complete as such an act, on a scale so great, could well be. [...] There is no reasonable doubt that this crime was planned and executed for political reasons. The opportunity presented itself for clearing Turkish soil of a Christian race opposed to all Turkish ambitions, cherishing national ambitions that could only be satisfied at the expense of Turkey, and planted geographically between Turkish and Caucasian Moslems." (Churchill 1929)

Although Germany was not directly involved in deporting or massacring Armenians of the Ottoman Empire, it bore its share of responsibility, especially the German military leadership controlling all the power structures in Ottoman Turkey. The German ambassador in Constantinople, Count Paul Wolff-Metternich, wrote to the Imperial Chancellor, Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg, in Berlin on 7 December 1915 as follows:

“...Our displeasure over the persecution of the Armenians should be clearly expressed in our press and an end be put to our gushing over the Turks. Whatever they are accomplishing is due to our doing; those are our officers, our cannons, our money... In order to achieve any success in the Armenian question, we will have to inspire fear in the Turkish government regarding the consequences. If, for military considerations, we do not dare to confront it with a firmer stance, then we will have no choice but... to stand back and watch how our ally continues to massacre.”<sup>63</sup>

In December 1915, in response to the criticism and outrage of German officials in the field over the inhuman treatment of the Armenians, German Chancellor and Foreign Minister Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg wrote:

“The proposed public reprimand of an ally in the course of a war would be an act which is unprecedented in history. Our only aim is to keep Turkey on our side until the end of the war, no matter whether as a result Armenians do perish or not.”<sup>64</sup>

At the same time German theologian Johannes Lepsius tried in vain to convince the Young Turk perpetrators to stop the deportation and massacre of Armenians. Einar af Wirsén, the Swedish military attaché in Constantinople, witnessed many German soldiers and officers returning their Ottoman medals and orders as a sign of protest about the terrible treatment of the Armenians (Wirsén 1942).

Many Europeans, and particularly Scandinavian women, who were citizens of neutral countries, witnessed the crimes committed by the Young Turk regime against the Armenian population. Numerous Swedes, Norwegians, Danes tried to lend the Armenian nation a helping hand and share the pain of this country that was the target of genocide.

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<sup>63</sup> See “The Armenian Genocide: Evidence from the German Foreign Office Archives, 1915-1916”, compiled and edited by Wolfgang Gust. New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2014. Quoted also in Asbarez, January 10, 2014.

<sup>64</sup> Ibidem.

Sources emphasise how in 1917 many Swedes came out onto the streets of Stockholm calling for the massacre of Armenians to stop.<sup>65</sup>

### **Documentation and sources**

The Armenian Genocide is well documented in European archives and is becoming a part of general human rights history in Europe. Tens of thousands of eyewitness accounts, diplomatic dispatches and letters prove the historical fact of the genocide. Materials from German, Austrian, French, British, Scandinavian and Italian archives have been published in many volumes.

The consequences of the Armenian Genocide as a part of European history and remembrance were not only visible in the numerous orphanages established in the Middle East, France, Italy, Greece, Cyprus, Romania, Bulgaria, and Switzerland. Turkey's current attempts to silence any mention of the Armenian Genocide or to question its historical reality are a direct threat to European remembrance. Turkey censors its own history and remembrance and controls how its history is written. Modern Turkish leadership has many phobias, such as the fear of possible reparations linked to the crimes and the deportation of the native population from Anatolia and Western Armenia.

Other sources include the Treaty of Sèvres and the Treaty of Lausanne. The Treaty of Sèvres: the "Sèvres Syndrome" has plagued Turkey's leadership from the very beginning of the establishment of the Turkish republic. Even Turkey's NATO membership and close military and political partnership with leading Western powers, especially the USA, have not eliminated the complexes and fears of modern Turkish leaders and society today.

The Treaty of Sèvres, signed on 10 August 1920, delineated the borders of Armenia and Kurdistan as separate states, which comprised many eastern territories of the modern Turkish Republic, historically known as "Armenia". Turkey succeeded in escaping the ratification and implementation of the treaty even after the arbitrary decision of the U.S. President of the time, Woodrow Wilson, in November 1920, due to the diplomatic and military manoeuvres of Kemalists, who were playing double games with the Allies and Bolsheviks. The question of the legitimacy of this decision from the point of view of international law remains open, and could be a subject for a final conclusion by a serious and unbiased commission of legal experts (Akçam 2001).

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<sup>65</sup> See Armenian genocide and Scandinavian response, Yerevan, AGMI, 2014.

Treaty of Lausanne: One may think that Turkey appeared victorious after signing the Lausanne Treaty in 1923, which allowed Kemalists to escape responsibility for the Armenian Genocide and all other violations against the Christian subjects of the Ottoman Empire using the Realpolitik approaches of the Western powers to the Armenian question. The Lausanne Treaty contradicted the Sèvres Treaty, but even the poorly-worded acknowledgement of minority rights in this treaty was violated by Turkish rulers from the very moment it was in force (Demoyan 2013).

### **Modern Turkey dealing with the past**

Turkey is responsible for eliminating early Christian civilisations in Asia Minor during WWI. It was regarded by the Young Turk regime as an important prerequisite for the establishment of the nation-state under the slogan “Turkey for Turks.” The consequences have been huge: nearly five thousand early Christian monuments, of which three thousand are Armenian, have been lost forever because of the state policy of destruction that was in effect in the last century. Turkey should take responsibility for the undeniable fact that these monuments were intentionally destroyed in violation of the Treaty of Lausanne. In addition, it is vital that UNESCO sends a fact-finding mission to Turkey to prepare a list of damaged, converted and totally destroyed Armenian, Greek and other Christian places of worship and cemeteries.

The current Turkish attempts to rename all cultural and historical monuments on Turkish soil with names of Anatolian origin is a soft way of hiding or at least blurring the identities of the unique and separate civilisation markers of the local cultures, bearers of which were killed, deported or are currently in exile from their native lands.

Within the last decade, the Turkish leadership proposed setting up a commission of historians to discuss “common pain” or the “events of 1915.” This proposal to discuss the Armenian Genocide issue with historians is a clear attempt to make the issue disputable rather than to accept the crimes committed and face the necessity of eliminating its consequences. The Turkish leadership does not hide this fact, even in public speeches. The commission will give Turkey the opportunity to debate the validity of historical facts that have long been supported by reliable, international sources.

It will be difficult to ensure objectivity and genuine intentions to uncover the truth because for decades Turkey has viewed recognition of the genocide as a serious threat to its national security. Therefore, it is not likely to accept the consequences of an objective discussion. The current iron-fisted position of Ankara leaves limited chances for winning

over Turkish opinion on the issue. Moreover, the Turkish side still keeps some archives closed to researchers, including Turkish scholars.

The Armenian-Turkish border is currently closed upon Ankara's orders, which creates some preconditions that are unacceptable to the Armenian side. The issue of the Armenian Genocide was raised by Ankara immediately after the collapse of the Soviet Union, with demands to make it one of the main preconditions for establishing diplomatic relations with Armenia. Since 1992 the Turkish blockade of Armenia has served as a "stick" or leverage for the country to pressure Armenia to "forget" its own past. Remaining silent about the Armenian Genocide is one of the preconditions set by Ankara to officials in Yerevan as part of establishing bilateral diplomatic relations. The Turkish-Armenian border is not just a frontier between two countries, but a crucial window for Armenia to be linked with Europe.

The Armenian Genocide is a part of European history. It is well documented in European archives. As a reaction to a gross violation of human rights under the Ottoman Empire, the Armenian question and the Genocide have a strong connection to European humanitarian history. Current attempts by Ankara to blockade Armenia and force Armenians to forget the tragic pages of their history are a direct insult to the collective memory of the Armenians.

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### **Hayk Demoyan**

has been the director of the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute in Yerevan, Armenia, since 2006. The Museum-Institute's aim is to accurately document and illustrate all materials related to the Armenian Genocide of 1915-1923. Hayk Demoyan was born in the city of Leninakan (now Gyumri) in Soviet Armenia in 1975. From 2002 till 2005 he was a lecturer at the History Department of Yerevan State University. He is a graduate of Yerevan State University and received his PhD from the Institute of Oriental Studies and Institute of History of the Armenian National Academy of Sciences. Hayk Demoyan is also a researcher and has written several books on such topics as the Armenian Genocide, Turkish foreign policy and Turkey's involvement in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict of 1991–1994. In addition to being the director of the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute, he is also the secretary of the State commission tasked with preparing the worldwide commemoration of the Armenian Genocide's centenary in 2015. Hayk Demoyan is author of 12 monographs and 40 academic articles.

**Michael Dreyer:**

**De-constructing Weimar and re-constructing it again. Weimar's political culture and post-WW II discourses**

**Phantom Pain: Weimar and the Federal Republic**

When Erich Eyck, historian and lawyer, and Jewish émigré to Great Britain since 1937, looked back at his Weimar days, he was not a happy camper. In fact, the first sentence in his preface to the two-volume seminal *“Geschichte der Weimarer Republik”* (1956) dealt with Eyck's previous books on the Wilhelminian Empire. And then the second sentence followed:

“But its devastating and dismal end puts its entire history in such a gloomy and melancholic light that the reflecting historian needs to overcome his reluctance in order to stick with it.” (Eyck 1956: 11)<sup>66</sup>

Eyck was not alone with his reluctance. Historians, constitutional lawyers and the politicians of the still young Bonn Republic were hardly willing to look at the Weimar Republic at all, and if they did, they followed Eyck's lead and started their survey from the end of Weimar. Since most of them were already academically or politically active adults during the Weimar period, the painful years of the demise of the Republic were only too present in their minds, not to mention the later years of exile, persecution, the Nazi regime and the war – to many people the immediate consequence of the Weimar Republic.

This paper will look closely at the role Weimar played in post-WW II discourses, with academic, political and public discourses being intertwined in complex ways. It will demonstrate how the Weimar image was, perhaps inevitably, distorted and deconstructed to fit the needs of postwar democracy, with scant regard for some Weimar realities. And it will then suggest a few consequences and remedies for this historically sorry state of affairs. In order to organise the material along the lines of this broad approach, it will present its ideas in the somewhat unusual form of concentrating them in one preliminary and ten regular theses, which will be put forward and then discussed.

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<sup>66</sup> *“Aber ihr erschütterndes und klägliches Ende wirft auf ihre ganze Geschichte ein so düsteres und melancholisches Licht, daß es den rückblickenden Historiker Überwindung kostet, bei ihr zu verweilen.”*

All translations are by the author.

Preliminary thesis: both the Weimar and the Bonn Republic are preceded by a devastating World War in which Germany is defeated. The reaction, however, is quite different: Weimar never comes to terms with its "founding disaster", while Bonn defines itself in direct juxtaposition to the war and to the regime which ignited it.

In a sense the preceding wars and the different reactions to them are symptomatic of the issues of legitimacy facing the two democratic systems in 20<sup>th</sup>-century Germany. In Weimar the war never served as a uniting rallying point; the interpretation of the war and of its end divided the political arena like no other topic. In fact, the right wing in Weimar never even acknowledged that Germany had lost the war in the first place; the *Dolchstoßlegende* ("stab in the back legend") placed the responsibility for the devastating outcome, including the Versailles treaty, squarely in the camp of the democratic parties. In Bonn, however, the defeat was too obvious to be called into doubt, and, moreover, the crimes of the Nazi regime were likewise too obvious to allow for any significant denial. Bonn was, in a sense, luckier than Weimar: a completely and utterly failed regime, which was bankrupt at both a moral and material level, was easier to denounce than Weimar's predecessors, which split the new democratic state into opposing factions. Even supporters of the Weimar Republic like the preeminent historian Friedrich Meinecke claimed that they were republicans by reason and monarchists by heart (*Vernunftrepublikaner* and *Herzensmonarchist*). In Bonn, nobody could claim that he was a Nazi by heart or that he wished that Germany had won World War II. This is also reflected in the culture of memory, where the "Great War" (as it is remembered in most of the former Entente countries) is overwhelmed by the even bigger disaster of World War II. After 1945 the defining memory of the first war tends to fade somewhat; up to the point when World War I is interpreted as the "good" war, where Germany, contrary to the verdict of Versailles, was not guilty. Compared to the crimes of the regime after 1933, almost everything looks better to many people. And compared to the end of the second war, which ended in the complete and devastating conquering of Germany, the first war was fought almost completely and to its last day outside of Germany. One can see how World War II overshadows World War I in the collective memory after 1945.

Thesis 1: The *Bonn ist nicht Weimar* narrative was a powerful presence in the 1950s, and also preconfigured later discourses on Weimar. It had its role in stabilising the second German democracy, which in the beginning was shakier than it might look today. It is time to lay it to rest.

The first Federal Parliament, the Bundestag elected in 1949, saw deputies from 11 different parties and three independent members on its benches. Coalition building proved to be difficult, and Adenauer won the chancellorship by the smallest of possible margins: by exactly one vote – his own. Several members followed extremist political ideologies; both from the right and from the left. Both of these were alarming, since the left followed the orders of Joseph Stalin, who ruled over Eastern Europe with an iron (and bloody) fist, while the right followed the monstrous ideology which had been defeated just four years earlier and which had left Germany and most of Europe in ruins. Nobody had forgotten that the Nazi group in the Weimar Reichstag less than 20 years ago had also only consisted of 12 members. The success of the second democratic experiment was by no means self-evident.

This explains the relief which accompanied the 1956 book by Fritz Allemann, a well respected Swiss journalist. The title alone, *“Bonn ist nicht Weimar”*, provided reassurance for a young democracy which was anything but sure of itself (Allemann 1956).<sup>67</sup>

And there were reasons for this lack of certainty. Dissolving extremist parties from the right (SRP 1952) and left (KPD 1956) via a verdict of the Federal Constitutional Court was not necessarily a sign of strength but rather of weakness. And while the 1953 election had brought some democratic consolidation to the Bundestag, it was still riddled with politicians who had played a less than stellar role in the dark ages just a decade ago.

The groundbreaking comparative study of Almond and Verba, which did their data collection in the late 1950s, confirmed the suspicion that Germany had not yet fully transformed itself into a democratic society (Almond/Verba 1963). While the constitution and the institutions fulfilled all the necessary requirements, the political culture to sustain them had to be classified as authoritarian and thus little better than a couple of decades previously.

Allemann's book was much more welcome in Germany. But while it was reassuring, it also seemed to indicate that the Bonn Republic could only sustain itself if it stayed clear of any connection with the Weimar Republic. If Bonn was not Weimar and if Bonn was to have a stable democracy, then obviously Weimar had to be the exact opposite of Bonn. Bonn received its historic legitimacy not just from being absolutely not the Third-Reich, but also from almost absolutely not being Weimar. That led to long lasting consequences.

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<sup>67</sup> On the consequences of this approach see Gusy 2003 and Ullrich 2009.

Thesis 2: The perceived need for the Bonn Republic to put thick walls between itself and the Weimar Republic skewed the scholarship of the 1950s and 60s. Weimar was almost inevitably thought through from the end. Since everybody knew the end and its terrible aftermath, there was no need to look at possible promises at the beginning of Weimar. At the same time, this view helped German society to avoid dealing with its own guilt and participation in the Third Reich.

The quote by Eyck at the beginning of this article is a fairly typical way of addressing Weimar, or rather avoiding to address it. A historian who had written about the world wars felt a sense of repulsion, not when describing the carnage of war, but when having to look at the peaceful Weimar Republic.

Erich Eyck, born in 1878, was by no means a right wing apologist for the unsavoury past. On the contrary, his background was that of a liberal left of centre local politician during the Empire and the Weimar Republic. Still, even though the highest political office Eyck ever held was an elected position as a DDP member of the Charlottenburg City Council, he had been a member of the political establishment in Weimar, even if somewhat marginal.

At the height of its popularity, the Nazi party had counted 7.7 million dues-paying members in 1943 (Grüttner 2014: 101). Stigmatising all of them and excluding them from politics and society was not feasible in post-war Germany, and that means both West and East Germany. In everyday life, the Third Reich was mostly ignored; the guilt of Hitler and a handful of cronies was no longer of concern to ordinary people.

The fly in the ointment, the one breach in the academic consensus on these years proved to be the Berlin habilitation of Karl Dietrich Bracher. Significantly, it was the work of a political scientist and not of a historian; in fact, it was the first habilitation ever of a political scientist in Germany. Bracher blamed the Brüning cabinet for the end of parliamentary government in the Weimar Republic, and not handing over the government to Hitler three years later (Bracher 1955). Historians did not like this deviation from the semi-official line, and the young scholar was severely criticised at the time, even though his work has stood the test of time (Quadbeck 2008, Bracher 1955: 192ff). But Bracher's interpretation was the exception; most mainstream historians preferred to interpret Weimar history with January 30, 1933 as its starting point.

### **Blaming the Victim: The Myth of the Doomed Republic**

Thesis 3: This leads to the myth of the doomed republic, which “deserves” blame for its own demise. Weimar became the negative blueprint which did everything wrong as opposed to the Federal Republic, which did everything right. Unless, of course, one followed the Marxist interpretation, in which case there was not much difference between Weimar, Hitler's totalitarian empire, and Bonn.

The narrative which blamed the Weimar Republic itself for its destruction maintained remarkable strength for a long period of time. It is revealing to note how academics from different disciplines favoured different culprits according to more general characteristics of their fields of research. To be sure, none of these narratives were completely mono-causal; they all took into account a variety of reasons for Weimar's downfall. But there is a definite leaning towards some discernible directions.

Like social scientists, political scientists tend to favour institutional and structural explanations over single events and personal preferences. Authors like Karl Dietrich Bracher and Werner Kaltefleiter tended to blame the Weimar institutions for not providing sufficient safeguards against the wilful destruction of its democratic political system. The latter explicitly singled out the electoral system and the lack of an equivalent to the Bonn “five-percent clause” as the factor most responsible for the rise of extremist parties.

Historians like Karl Dietrich Erdmann blamed the personnel at the top of the Weimar Republic for being insufficiently in tune with democratic policies and procedures. For him it was the failure to reach a compromise on raising the percentage for unemployment insurance in 1930 that was mostly to blame – that failure led to the downfall of the last administration with a parliamentary majority, and so to Brüning, and so to government by presidential decree, and so to Hitler.<sup>68</sup>

Authors who shared a special interest in the history of the working class and the unions tended to blame the mistakes made during the revolution, when Ebert and Scheidemann supposedly were only too happy to cut deals with the powers of the old regime instead of seeking a clear break and finding the power base for the new republic among its working class. The interpretations of Eberhard Kolb and Peter von Oertzen, among others, tended to go that way.

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<sup>68</sup> At Kiel University, where the author of this article commenced his university studies in 1978, the clashes of Kaltefleiter (Political Science) and Erdmann (History) were legendary and even more remarkable, since both professors otherwise shared a generally conservative outlook.

And, finally, there were the Marxist interpretations, which did not perceive a major break with the year 1933, but which rather figured the capitalist dominance of both the Weimar Republic and the Nazi regime as a combining factor. One of the earliest studies, the powerful narrative advanced by Arthur Rosenberg, went in that direction (Rosenberg 1934). The leading East German historian of the Weimar Republic, Wolfgang Ruge, favoured the same explanation:

“Was it possible for the Weimar Republic to rise to its historic task? Was it fate, was it bad will, was it the folly of individuals which led to its demise and to Hitler's barbarianism? The key for answering these questions can only be found if one considers that the most influential industrial tycoons, princes of the stock exchange, Junker and military men proceeded to establish a seemingly 'free' republic with the help of their puppets among politicians and party managers – but only because they felt the strong grip of the German proletariat, yearning for a lasting peace and for socialism, at their throat.” (Ruge 1969: 5)<sup>69</sup>

But all these bad guys secretly yearned for another go at world domination, so they destroyed their temporary creation at the earliest possible convenience.

These different approaches certainly all contributed important elements to an interdisciplinary understanding of the Weimar period. But they stubbornly and consistently advanced the master narrative that somehow Weimar itself carried the seeds for its own destruction in its genetic code. A strong narrative like that, which went mostly unchallenged for a long time, leads to the question of who benefited from it.

Thesis 4: Cui bono is not just a question for lawyers and legal proceedings. The narrative that Weimar was responsible for its own demise absolved those in positions of power in the early 1930 from historic accountability for their own flawed decisions. This suited many academics and politicians in the early years of the Federal Republic.

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<sup>69</sup> “Hätte die Weimarer Republik ihre historische Bewährungsprobe bestehen können? War das Schicksal, war böser Wille, war die Torheit einzelner für ihren Untergang im Strudel der Hitler-Barbarei verantwortlich? Den Schlüssel zur Beantwortung dieser Fragen kann man nur finden, wenn man sich vor Augen hält, daß die einflußreichsten Industriemagnaten, Börsenfürsten, Junker und Militärs damals mit Hilfe vorgeschickter Politiker und Parteimanager zur Etablierung einer 'freiheitlich' aufgemachten Republik schritten, weil sie den Griff der auf dauernden Frieden und Sozialismus pochenden deutschen Arbeiterklasse an ihrer Gurgel spürten.” All translations are by the author.

The question of who benefited from the denunciation of Weimar must be accompanied by the companion question of who would have benefited from defending Weimar. The answer to the second question is simple. Nobody would have benefited from defending the Weimar constitution, institutions, early promises and later democratic politicians. To some extent, the gloom and doom scenario won by default, since there were no voices to take up the case for Weimar.

There were, however, quite a number of influential people and groups who more or less benefited from a narrative which gave Weimar a huge part of the blame for its destruction, or, rather, its "going under" – even the words are deceptive, since "destruction", which was almost never used, involves much more activity on the part of "someone" than the passive "going under" or similar phrases.

Among the beneficiaries of the "nobody is to blame" school of Weimar scholars were those refugees who held positions of importance and power before 1933. If institutions are to blame, they must be without guilt and could not have acted differently, or at least not in a way that might have led to a different outcome.

Academics whose careers started after 1933 or were considerably advanced after that year, often at the cost of fired Jewish professors, were somewhat absolved by the "fact" that the Third Reich was inevitable, nobody's fault, and thus their career was not at all connected to the destruction of the Weimar Republic. Eminent historians of the early Federal Republic like Theodor Schieder (born 1908) or Karl Dietrich Erdmann (born 1910) were among those whose academic life flourished under the Nazi regime and who were extremely successful in keeping their early careers under wraps in later years.

But the same applies in dual measure to politicians who had actual leadership positions before 1933 and who once again took powerful positions in German politics after 1945. The vested interest they had in any narrative that absolved the actual politicians of the Weimar era from any personal guilt in the destruction of the political system is too obvious to need any further elaboration. How many leading politicians were involved in that way? A survey of the *Parlamentarischer Rat*, the parliamentary institution which drafted the Basic Law in 1948/49, is fairly persuasive.

Table 1: Leadership positions of members of the Parlamentarischer Rat and the Adenauer cabinet

Political institution	N	Member Weimar party	Holds political function	MP (Land/ Reich or executive	None	Nazi involvement
Parlamentarischer Rat 1948-49	77 <sup>1</sup>	61 (79.2%)	49 (63.6%)	30 (39%)	12 <sup>2</sup> (15.6%)	4 (5.2%)
Adenauer cabinet 1949-53	16	10 (62.5%)	8 (50%)	5 (31.2%)	5 <sup>3</sup> (31.2%)	1 (6.2%)

Source: Author's compilation.

1. All members, incl. Berlin and later entries.

2. Mostly due to late year of birth

3. Four high executives in various Weimar functions

It is obvious that a significant number of West Germany's leading politicians in the immediate postwar period held important positions during the Weimar Republic. This finding should not come as a surprise. The interval of the Third Reich lasted only 12 years, which meant that many Weimar politicians were still of an age where a political career could be pursued again. Also, where else should the new political system have found a source of personnel? The Weimar politicians were the only ones with experience and a more-or-less intact reputation.

But it is also obvious that they had no interest in closely examining their role in the declining Weimar years. Some have individually atoned for their mistakes; the most well-known being the outspoken regret of the first Federal President Theodor Heuss for having voted in favour of the Enabling Act of 1933, against his better instincts and out of party discipline (Heuss 1967: 24). But these were individual acts. As a class, the politicians of the second German democracy had no interest in looking for individuals whose failures may have played a role in the destruction of the Weimar Republic. And it goes without saying that leading industrialists and intellectuals who were in similar positions had no interest in pursuing this line of research either. This is not to say that they actively influenced academic research. But interests seem to have coincided nicely for once between groups which usually have a more diverse set of interests.

This depicts the starting position during the 1950s. How about the later time period, when the ranks of those already active during the Weimar Republic began to slowly thin out?

Thesis 5: During the 1960s the Weimar Republic somewhat disappeared from the public arena, but also from academic research. Instead, the Third Reich became a more

immediate academic and intellectual concern than ever before. The other major debate of the decade, the "War Guilt Question", focused on WW I and thus passed Weimar by from the other end.

The 1960s saw a fascinating phenomenon in German historical research. While there was a new generation of scholars growing slowly into professorial positions, their research interests were mostly focused on other questions. The hot topics of the 1960s were first and foremost a new look at the Third Reich and a new – or, rather, the first look ever – at the Holocaust on the one hand and a renewed interest in the Wilhelminian Empire on the other.

The interest in the Nazi regime, in World War II and in the Holocaust was partly fuelled by events outside the world of academia. The abduction, trial, and execution of Adolf Eichmann in 1961 set the tone for the entire decade and forced a complacent German public to address the issues raised by that trial. The three Auschwitz trials in Frankfurt, which lasted from 1963-68 drove the truth home that many more people than just Hitler and his immediate collaborators had committed crimes during the war, and that most of those people were still living among the rest of society.

The other *cause célèbre* during that decade was initiated when the Hamburg historian Fritz Fischer published his seminal book on Germany's war aims, which started the "Fischer controversy" (Fischer 1961). Up to that point, German historians had insisted that World War I was, in a manner of speaking, the "good war", while they readily conceded that World War II was unleashed by the criminal Hitler. Fischer and his disciples instead made World War I out to be a sort of dress rehearsal for the atrocities to come, and they particularly laid the blame for the outbreak of the war squarely at the feet of the German leadership in 1914.

Fischer doubled down in later books where he drew a direct line from German politics pre-WWI to Hitler (Fischer 1969), but for our immediate question at hand, the inference is a different one. Neither the interest in Hitler's regime and its crimes nor the more scholarly interest in WWI and its connection or non-connection to Hitler had any use for the Weimar Republic. In fact, the interest in the Third Reich seemed to reinforce the narrative that Weimar was just an interlude between two aggressive German political systems, which should be understood from its end and not from its beginning.

This neglect, which was both an academic failure and due to a lack of public interest and understanding, had consequences for the political and historical culture in Germany, and these consequences continue to play a role to this day.

### **Consequences: Weimar and the Legacy of Democracy**

Thesis 6: Consequences I: As a result of the phenomena described above, the Weimar Republic has not (yet) been fully accepted as a part of the positive heritage of German democracy. Public celebrations and memorials tend to concentrate on the resistance against Hitler or on the Paulskirche Revolution (1848), but not on the revolution of 1918 and the Weimar Republic.

There is plenty of evidence to support this thesis. While Germany can boast an overabundance of memorials and museums dealing with just about every aspect of its history and culture, there is still no such place devoted exclusively to the Weimar Republic. This neglect started at the very beginning of the Federal Republic, but it continued to be the case even after unification in 1990. While cultural affairs have been mostly within the realm of state and local authorities, now there is also a State Minister for Culture and Media as part of the Federal Government, and the federal level has asserted a strong hand in sponsoring cultural institutions. In fact, a list of federally funded cultural institution is quite impressive. It is divided into nine categories:

1. National cultural organisations, foundations and museums: 26 institutions
2. Foreign academies: 2
3. Memorials for victims of the Nazi regime: 12
4. Memorials for victims of the East German regime: 7
5. Foundations to memorialise statesmen: 5
6. German culture in Eastern Europe: 13
7. Culture of national minorities: 3
8. International German radio: 1
9. Archives: 3

This list adds up to a grand total of 72 federally funded cultural institutions<sup>70</sup>. All of them are undoubtedly important and worthwhile endeavours, but it is certainly not out of line to assume that the Weimar Republic should be on a par in its importance for German

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<sup>70</sup> The complete list can be found at <http://www.bundesregierung.de/Content/DE/StatistischeSeiten/Breg/BKM/2012-07-11-institutionell-gefoerderte-einrichtungen.html?nn=401036> [12.01.2015].

history and democratic development with a West Prussian Museum in Münster or a landscape park at Muskau – or a foundation dedicated to former Chancellor Bismarck, who was not exactly a champion of democratic institutions.

The city of Weimar has historically not done any better than the federal institutions. When Weimar celebrated its heritage as the European Capital of Culture in 1999, there was an enormous Goethe celebration in honour of his 150<sup>th</sup> birthday, and luminaries like Schiller, Wieland and Herder got their fair share of attention as well. Everybody knows that Weimar is the place where Bauhaus originated, and a museum was opened in 1995, with a major new museum in the works, to be opened in 2019. But neither the revolution of 1918 nor the National Assembly which wrote the Weimar constitution played any major role during the 1999 festivities. In fact, the only commemoration of the Weimar Republic in the city of Weimar during that year was organised by the State of Thuringia, and, to add insult to injury, housed in the Nazi buildings on the “Gauforum” somewhat on the periphery of the city. Within Weimar, only the plate at the German National Theatre, designed by Gropius, served as a memorial to the first German democratic political system.

This was in 1999. To give credit to the city, the year 2009 looked much better in this respect. The City Museum curated a major exhibition on the National Assembly, and the Friedrich Ebert Foundation with the sponsorship of the Federal Minister of Justice at the time, Brigitte Zypries, organised a major revisionist conference of Weimar scholars from different disciplines. Important books resulted from these endeavours (Ulbricht 2009, Schultheiß/Lasch 2009). Still, it is telling that in 2009 only the Social Democrats stepped up to their heritage and celebrated the Weimar Republic. The interest among the other parties and their foundations remained negligible; both the CDU (which has the Centre Party as its major predecessor) and the FDP (which grew out of both the Weimar DDP and the DVP) showed an astonishing lack of interest.

The neglect of the Weimar Republic and its democratic tradition which is palpable in the public sphere spills over into the area of civic education, both within schools and with regard to adult education.

Thesis 7: Consequences II: The neglect of the Weimar Republic leaves a gaping hole in the narrative of German civic education. Without the Weimar foundation, democracy in 1949 just happens, and the only connection to the past seems to be the Paulskirche Revolution. Weimar still mostly serves as an example to be avoided, not as a positive reinforcement of democratic traditions in Germany.

In civic education, the Bonn/Berlin is not Weimar narrative still carries an enormous cloud. The perceived weakness of the Weimar institutions can still be found in school textbooks and popular historical treatises. When the history of democracy in Germany is discussed, it might start with the Lutheran reformation and the Peasant's Revolt of 1525, then briefly mention Kant, move on to the Prussian Reforms of 1807, the war of liberation 1813, the Wartburg Festival of 1817, the Hambach Festival of 1832, and the failed revolution of 1848/49 – in order to jump from there directly to the foundation of the Federal Republic in 1949.

The contrast between the celebrated failed revolution of 1848 and the almost complete lack of interest in the successful democratic revolution of 1918 is puzzling. The same picture emerges when one looks at the martyrs of democracy. The leaders of the resistance against the Hitler regime are celebrated, and rightly so, even if some of the most famous heroes of the resistance were much better in their opposition to Hitler's crimes than in their embrace of democratic values. But where are the memorials dedicated to the martyrs of democracy during the Weimar Republic? The public memory holds warm spots for Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht. While their murder was certainly horrific, neither of the two were leaders of democracy; in fact, they both vehemently opposed the Weimar Republic and the National Assembly. The same goes for Ernst Thälmann, who has probably had a street named after him in just about every East German city. But how about Kurt Eisner and Hugo Haase (both murdered in 1919), Matthias Erzberger (murdered in 1921), Walther Rathenau (murdered in 1922) and a host of others? They hardly register, with the possible exception of Rathenau.

This state of affairs leads us to possible remedies. Fortunately, public memory is not static, and neither is academic inquiry and discovery.

### **Remedies: Re-Visiting the First German Democracy**

Thesis 8: Remedies I: For the last 20 years "revisionist" scholarship has begun to question the conventional wisdom of the Weimar weakling. While much of this research has been done by historical "outsiders", i. e. legal scholars and political scientists, by now the revised view of the Weimar Republic has to some extent entered mainstream history.

Pars pro toto we can take the rediscovery of Hugo Preuß as the starting point for the re-evaluation of the Weimar Republic. The first Minister of the Interior and author of the first draft of the constitution had been all but forgotten by the 1990s, when a group of scholars worked independently and together as they began to take an interest in his work.

Preuß was a left-of-centre liberal democrat, both during the Empire as well as into the Weimar Republic and until his death in 1925. He was both an active politician and a political theorist of remarkable foresight as an advocate of pluralism.

Legal scholars like Christoph Müller (Müller 2005) and Dian Schefold, historians like Lothar Albertin and Peter Brandt, and political scientists like Detlef Lehnert, Markus Llanque and the author of this article have written extensively on Preuß (Lehnert 1998, Lehnert 2011, Lehnert 2012, Dreyer 2002, Dreyer 1993). The Hugo Preuß Society, founded in 2000, has made his numerous academic and political writings, which were mostly obscured over time, easily accessible (Gusy 2000).

Other endeavours have been just as proficient. Among legal scholars, Christoph Gusy has called attention to the huge and mostly overlooked body of democratic thought during the Weimar era (Gusy 2000), while Eberhard Eichenhofer and Franz Josef Düwell have drawn attention to the innovative social law and labour law of the Weimar Republic (Eichenhofer 2009, Düwall 2009). The political scientist and historian Alexander Gallus has re-examined the revolution of 1918 (Gallus 2010).

And, finally, the nagging changes have reached the grand historical narratives about the Weimar constitution. Heinrich August Winkler had a much more positive view of the Weimar Republic than previous authors, and the newest concise Weimar history by the eminent Hamburg historian Ursula Büttner has absorbed many of the new revisionist views (Winkler 1993, Büttner 2008).

Much has been done, but even more remains to be done. There are many objects of desire, and the gaps in Weimar scholarship remain enormous. For example, the normative foundations of the Weimar Republic still generally need to be examined. There is next to nothing we know about the international aspects of the constitution, although a conference organised by this author started to shed some light on this topic.<sup>71</sup>

To mention just two topics which are currently under investigation by Jena doctoral students: Sebastian Elsbach is writing a comprehensive study on the *Reichsbanner Schwarz-Rot-Gold*, the major paramilitary republican force in Weimar. The last study on this topic was done half a century ago (Rohe 1966); since then new sources have been discovered

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<sup>71</sup> The conference proceedings, "*Vorbild Weimar. Internationale Wirkungen der Weimarer Republik*", have not yet been published. Wirsching 2007 followed a different approach.

and the entire research landscape has changed. Ronny Noak is working on the ways the Weimar parties trained and educated their future leaders and provided civic education, forming a huge network of schools, which have never been researched except for scholars of pedagogy, who naturally have research questions that differ from those of political scientists and historians.<sup>72</sup>

For all the complaining in the previous theses, this body of research is rather significant, and it has started to change the Weimar debates. But cutting-edge academic research needs some time to cut through the web of myths and half-truths surrounding a disputed topic in the eye of the public. And there are plenty of myths which need to be reconsidered with regard to Weimar.

Thesis 9: Remedies II: To reconstruct Weimar it is necessary to adjust the web of myths which has developed since 1945, if not since 1933. Weimar was not an outlier in German political and constitutional history; it was the connecting link between the semi-authoritarian Imperial Germany and the democratic Federal Republic.

This is not the place (nor is there the space) to debunk all the popular misperceptions surrounding Weimar. Larger volumes will have to be dedicated to that purpose. But as an appetiser we shall have a brief look at three of the most prevalent myths in this vein.

Myth #1: Weimar was a weak political system which could not deal with its enemies vs. Bonn's "militant democracy" as the lesson learned from Weimar's failure. In 1985 the Bavarian State Centre for Civic Education issued a book which claimed the elements of the "militant democracy" as Bonn's major achievement. If we take a closer look at the concrete legal and political measures advanced in that book, we find that almost every one of them is built on models provided by Weimar.<sup>73</sup> In some cases, especially with regard to the crown jewel of Bonn's militant democracy, Weimar in fact provided the same mechanism, only simpler and better. The long standing problems regarding a possible prohibition against the extremist NPD would have been resolved much more easily in Weimar, where extremist parties could (and actually were) prohibited several times, and not just for the entire Reich, but also for single states where they might have been stronger than in the rest of Germany (Ganßer 1985: 19, Dreyer 2009: 165, Dreyer 2012: 73).

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<sup>72</sup> Both Elsbach and Noak are doctoral students in the Political Science Department, working under my supervision.

<sup>73</sup> The claims are debunked in Dreyer 2009: 165. Also Dreyer (2012), Weimar as a "Militant Democracy", 73.

Myth #2: Weimar was doomed to failure due to its weak and incongruous political institutions vs. Bonn's beautifully harmonised and smoothly working system of government. This is the old "institutional doom" theory once popular among political scientists. It is based around the position of the President, Art. 48 and 25 of the constitution, the presumed lack of protection for basic rights, the supposedly weak role of federalism and other elements. This myth is easily debunked in two different directions. First, there are plenty of countries in the world even today which have a constitutional structure pretty close to the Weimar example, and none of them are on the brink of disaster. The dual executive with President and Prime Minister is the model for France's Fifth Republic, for Austria, Finland, Greece, and Taiwan. Parliamentary elections without a five percent threshold are typical of many parliamentary systems. The Scandinavian countries, the BeNeLux countries, Israel and others either have no such clause in their election law or their threshold is much lower than today's Germany. Like the Weimar Republic, these countries tend to have parliaments with plenty of parties. While this makes putting together a government somewhat more difficult, it is by no means impossible to do so.

The second debunking takes on a different topic. It is true that Weimar in the end failed as a democratic political system. But so did every other democratic political system which was installed in 1918/19, with the sole exception of Czechoslovakia. Every country which was already democratic in 1914 remained so in spite of all the post-war turmoil. And every country which became a democracy only after WWI was unable to keep that status. Czechoslovakia was destroyed by the Nazis in 1938/39, but all the rest did not need any outside help to reconvert to an authoritarian regime. Weimar had plenty of company in that respect; namely Italy (1922), Bulgaria (1923), Albania (1924), Greece (1925), Poland, Portugal and Lithuania (all 1926), Yugoslavia (1929), Austria (1933), Estonia and Latvia (both 1934), Spain (1936-39), and Romania (1938) (Dreyer 2012: 85). Obviously, Weimar was not alone in its conversion from a democratic political system to a dictatorial system. The only difference can be found in the consequences, since none of the other countries, not even Italy, had the bad luck of getting Hitler as their dictator.

Myth #3: Weimar was doomed to failure due to the lack of democratic spirit among its population vs. Bonn's civic society. There is certainly some truth to that statement, even though one has to keep in mind the previously discussed findings of Almond and Verba. It took some time before Bonn's civic society abandoned its authoritarian leanings. But even Weimar's electorate provided a solid majority for democratic parties up to and including the 1930 election.<sup>74</sup> And even as late as 1932 the combined democratic vote outpaced the

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<sup>74</sup> A graphic depiction of this and a more detailed interpretation can be found in Dreyer 2012: 78f.

Nazi vote significantly, both in presidential elections and in the parliamentary elections of 1932. In July the combined democratic vote scored two to five per cent more than the Nazis; depending on whom you count as a democratic party.<sup>75</sup> And in November the difference was up to eight per cent in favour of the democratic parties. This does certainly not mean an inevitable Nazi power grab, and democratic writers in December and January 1932/33 are for the first time in a long while almost universally optimistic that the Hitler phenomenon is about to fade away.

Next to the votes there was the street fighting power. The Reichsbanner had about 10 times as many members as the SA and the communist Rotfrontkämpferbund combined, and even the most active fighting brigades were stronger than the entire SA as late as 1932.

At the present moment, all three myths are alive and well in the general public and in the media markets. How can this be changed?

Thesis 10: Remedies III: Doing something! In order to restore (or create in the first place) the Weimar Republic's proper place in German history, bold actions are required on different levels – in transdisciplinary scholarship, in using Weimar as a model for democratic civic education, and in providing a physical space where exhibitions, museums, and multimedia presentations will allow Weimar a resonance for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The signs are quite hopeful. There is some movement, and cases in point are the Weimar exhibitions in the city of Weimar itself. There was nothing organised by the city in 1999, a small exhibition in 2009, a significant exhibition (which was built to last) in 2014 and the chance of a permanent museum for 2019.

In 2013 a Verein Weimarer Republik was founded, under the initial leadership of a powerful member of parliament, who happened to be the deputy for the district of Weimar, namely Carsten Schneider.<sup>76</sup> In October of 2014 this group organised a panel discussion at the Weimar Deutsches Nationaltheater, where 95 years ago the National Assembly deliberated on the constitution. The keynote speech was delivered by Heiko Maas, the Federal Minister of Justice (Maas 2014) who gave a passionate speech which stressed the interest of the federal government in the topic.

It is quite possible that an article like this one will be superfluous once the Weimar centenary comes around in 2019. That would be the best possible outcome.

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<sup>75</sup> DNVP and KPD are excluded from these models.

<sup>76</sup> The web presence of the group can be found at <http://www.weimarer-republik.net/> [24.02.2016]

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### **Michael Dreyer**

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**Bogdan Murgescu:**

**Teaching multiperspectivity in 21<sup>st</sup> century Europe. Challenges and limits of extra-curricular historical education projects**

Extra-curricular historical education activities have flourished throughout Europe during the last two decades. This trend responds to both the crisis of the traditional education system and to the expansion of civil society initiatives regarding the civic component of education (Schäfer et al. 1999). In the following, I will draw on my direct experience in shaping two such initiatives – the EUSTORY network of history research competitions and the production of alternative teaching materials for the Joint History Project of the Centre for Democracy and Reconciliation in Southeast Europe (CDRSEE) – and outline also some structural limits of such initiatives.

During the 1990s, the post-communist transition brought to the forefront the importance of history education in shaping identities and democratic values (Roberts 2004). At the same time, the wars which accompanied the demise of Yugoslavia increased the awareness that historical elements can be misused to foster images of hatred and contribute to ignite conflicts (Höpken 1996, UNESCO 1999).

**Promoting multiperspectivity through history research competitions – EUSTORY**

In this context occurred the expansion of EUSTORY, a network of non-governmental organisations carrying out historical research competitions for youth in various European countries. The origins of EUSTORY are to be found in the joint initiative of the industrialist Kurt A. Körber and of the federal president Gustav Heinemann, who, in order to strengthen the allegiance of young Germans for the democratic traditions, established in 1973-1974 a history research competition for youngsters (Schmid/Wegner 2002: 206-217). According to this model, the organisers (i. e. in Germany the Körber Foundation in cooperation with the Office of the Federal President) establish the general theme of each edition of the research competition, and the pupils (individually or in groups) choose a concrete topic relevant for the general theme and search for historical evidence in their immediate social environment; the entries for the competition are assessed by teachers and academic historians, and the authors of the best entries are awarded significant prizes, which are handed by the President of the Federal Republic of Germany. The topics of the German competition ranged from the liberal tradition of the 1848 revolution to the

everyday life during the Nazi regime, to the image of foreigners, to environmental history and to the history of intergenerational relations.<sup>77</sup>

In the 1990s, under the impulse of Wolf Schmidt, coordinator of the German competition, later manager and member of the board of the Körber Foundation, the model began to be exported to other countries, mainly to post-communist Central and Eastern Europe. Up to 2000 there were established similar history research competitions in 14 countries ranging from Wales to Russia; some of these competitions were based on local initiatives and resources, while others relied on the direct help of the Körber Foundation. In 2001 the organisations running history research competitions established the EUSTORY network and adopted the EUSTORY Charter (EUSTORY 2001: 1-3). The Charter started from the sobering acknowledgment that:

“Historiography, history teaching and the general perception of history [...] also played a part in:

- developing exclusive and assumed superior identities by various groups
- creating hate between nations, ethnic, social, political and religious groups
- justifying policies leading to discrimination, persecution, conflicts and wars”

Considering that “we live in a changing world, which requires a new awareness of history”, the Charter recommended developing a European perspective on history, having at its core multiperspectivity:

“The same historical subject has to be systematically checked from different points of view on three levels:

- sources and material
- reconstruction and interpretation
- implications for the present”

Or, as phrased by one of the main authors of the charter, “we have to look at the past through the eyes – or better the sources – of different stakeholders: our own national group and the others, women and men, winners and losers, the rich and the poor, minorities and immigrants and many others” (Schmidt 2010: 213).

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<sup>77</sup> The competition website (Geschichtswettbewerb 2014) provides a searchable archive of the competition entries (<http://www.koerber-stiftung.de/bildung/geschichtswettbewerb/datenbank.html>) and an annotated bibliography of publications originating from the competition entries (<http://www.koerber-stiftung.de/bildung/geschichtswettbewerb/portraet/bibliografie.html> [05.04.2015])

The political and educational goal of this approach was outlined as follows in the EUSTORY Charter:

“Developing multiperspectivity and the critical thinking of young people will contribute to the progress of intercultural and mutual understanding and cross-border dialog in Europe, thus helping living together in peace. Dealing with history will also help young people to develop their sense of responsibility and active involvement in the life of their own communities. A new understanding of the past is thus a means for an active integration in the current world. It is a way to prepare young people for the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.” (EUSTORY 2001: 4)

Since the adoption of the EUSTORY Charter, the network has expanded, encompassing in 2014 competitions organised in 25 countries.<sup>78</sup> Some 170,000 young Europeans have participated in the national EUSTORY competitions with about 85,000 contributions; about 2,500 teachers, experts, scholars and volunteers have supported the participants and/or the organisers of the competitions and of the international activities of the network (EUSTORY 2014). The network organises yearly two to four EUSTORY History Camps (previously called Youth Academies), where prize winners from all national member competitions meet and are exposed to various interpretations of history. These EUSTORY History Camps have a general theme and combine workshops with opportunities to get to know each other and to learn more about the host country. For the history teachers who act as tutors of young participants at the historical research competitions, the network has organised several workshops and has published on the website “Tips for Tutors” as well as a detailed set of work sheets with methodological advice structured under four headings: “Planning a project, Searching for material, Interpretation of sources, and Presentation” (EUSTORY 2014). Alumni activities have also flourished, starting from Internet forums and subsequent meetings on topics like “The Long Shadow of World War II: Young Europeans on “The Future of Remembrance” (2005) and “Remembering Protest, Resistance, Civil Disobedience. An International Research Project on Politics of Memory” (2006-2007) to various seminars and workshops like “The Desire for Freedom – European values in times of crisis” (2013).

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<sup>78</sup> The 25 participating countries are Belarus, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Israel, Italy, Latvia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine and Wales.

In recognition of its role in furthering the European integration, the EUSTORY network was awarded by the German National Foundation the German National Prize for 2007 (Deutsche Nationalstiftung 2008). Yet, the enthusiasm and various projects regarding the contribution of EUSTORY to building up a more integrated Europe were sobered by the economic crisis and by the slowdown of the integration drive in the European Union. EUSTORY succeeded to organise in 2009 a first Europe-wide history research competition with the topic “1989 – Images of change” (see the analysis in Murgescu 2010), but the number of participants was lower than expected, discouraging the resumption of such endeavours in the near future.

These ups and downs should not preclude us from pointing out some structural problems and challenges for the EUSTORY approach. Participation in history research competitions demands a considerable time and energy input from participants and their tutors, and therefore only a tiny minority of the relevant age group do take part to the EUSTORY competitions; besides, from those who participate, only a fraction really succeed to combine several perspectives on historical topics, and stand up thus to the requirements of the EUSTORY Charter. Another significant problem is the discontinuity of the competitions in several countries. Competitions in Turkey (organised only once in 1997-1998) and Scotland (founding member of the network in 2001, but having withdrawn in 2003) have been discontinued since a long time, while other five member countries (Finland, Poland, Romania, Serbia and Ukraine) did not succeed to organise competitions in 2014 (EUSTORY 2014).

### **Changing the teaching of history with additional teaching materials – the workbooks of the CDRSEE**

The CDRSEE is an international non-governmental, non-profit organisation founded in 1998 in order to foster democratic, pluralist, and peaceful societies in Southeast Europe by advocating principles of social responsibility, sustainable development, and reconciliation among the peoples in the region (CDRSEE 2014). Located in Thessaloniki, the Centre developed diverse activities, but history and history education were from the beginning one of its main focuses. Therefore, the Centre established in 1999 two committees, an Academic Committee and a History Education Committee. The latter, chaired by Professor Christina Koulouri, became the driving force of the Joint History Project, which is, according to the webpage of the Centre, “the original CDRSEE programme”, which “remains at the heart of everything we do” (CDRSEE 2014). Its goal is “to revise ethnocentric school history lessons”, to encourage critical thinking and debate, to acknowledge diversity and to promote the idea of multiple interpretations of one event (CDRSEE 2014).

The History Education Committee undertook first an analysis of the existing history textbooks, focusing on major controversial issues, like the Hungarian legacy in Southeast Europe, Macedonian identity, teaching Cyprus, the relations of the Albanians with their neighbours, Greek-Turkish relations, the heritage of Byzantium and of the Ottoman Empire, the history of Yugoslavia, and the relation between religious education and the view of the other. Seven workshops organised in different cities in 1999-2001 allowed the accumulation of a wealth of insights regarding various aspects of history education in the region. This phase allowed publishing first a short book with first insights (Koulouri 2001), and then a major academic contribution to the assessment of textbooks and political implications of history education in Southeast Europe: "Clio in the Balkans" (Koulouri 2002). Based on the experience of this round of seminars, which had united academic historians and history teachers, the History Education Committee started in 2002 the production of four workbooks designed to serve as additional teaching materials for history teachers in all eleven countries of Southeast Europe. In the attempt to focus on themes which are relevant to people from all these countries and which are crucial for defining identities and the relations with others, the History Education Committee chose following subject areas for these workbooks: the Ottoman Empire, Nations and States, Balkan Wars and World War II. According to Christina Koulouri, the general philosophy of the project is to provide "a lesson of method rather than content" (Koulouri 2005: 10). Therefore, the workbooks do not provide an authoritative and cohesive narrative of these historical topics in Southeast Europe, but supply a rich textual and visual documentation drawn from historical sources, illuminating various aspects of these historical topics from different perspectives. The choice of topics and the approach were based on recent scholarships in the field of history and on the experience of similar projects for reforming history education in other parts of Europe. The scholars who coordinated the four workbooks were helped by twelve national contributors in the various Southeast European countries, who identified historical sources, translated them into English and supplied background information related to them. The drafts of the workbooks were assessed in cooperation with history teachers from all Southeast European countries in four workshops organised throughout 2003. Finally, the workbooks were reviewed by five independent readers with different national, professional and intellectual backgrounds – CDRSEE board member Costa Carras, historians Robert Stradling, Maria Todorova, and Peter Vodopivec, and political activist Ivan Vejvoda – who provided valuable comments and useful suggestions for improvement. At the end of this laborious process, the English version of the four workbooks was published in early 2005 (Berkta/Murgescu 2005; Murgescu 2005; Kolev/Koulouri 2005; Erdelja 2005), and subsequently has been translated into Serbian, Greek, Croat, Bosnian, Albanian, Macedonian, Montenegrin, Bulgarian and Japanese; together

with a second (slightly revised) English version published in 2009 as well as a user's guide (Sutton/Sutton 2009). All these workbooks are available not only in hardcopy, but can be downloaded without any charge from the website of the Center (CDRSEE 2014).

At the same time, the History Education Committee engaged in a lasting endeavour of organising teacher training activities. At various workshops, teachers from different Southeast European countries shared the ways they taught various historical issues, exchanged ideas, became aware of the harming role of various prejudices and stereotypes, and engaged in finding mutually acceptable approaches, which at the same time were close to the historical truth. Besides their role in early identifying critical issues in history teaching and in assessing the quality of the workbooks when these were in the making, these workshops allowed the participating teachers to acquire the capability to use the workbooks effectively in their concrete teaching. By 2014, 1,950 teachers participated in 65 teacher training seminars, while 3,850 more received materials through their peers. It is estimated that these 5,800 teachers are teaching about 900,000 pupils/students (CDRSEE 2014). Besides, all interested persons, including teachers and pupils, can use the material online and download all the workbooks.

Based on this experience, in 2011, the Center has started planning the production of a second group of history workbooks for the region. Currently, the History Education Committee is steering the preparation of two new workbooks focusing on Southeast Europe in the post-1945 era, including the 1990s wars in the former Yugoslavia. In spite of its value and partial success, the approach of CDRSEE History Education Committee to use the workbooks to promote multiperspectivity and a more balanced and open way to teach history in the region is not without challenges. Various partisans of nationalist versions of history capitalized on the widespread ethnocentric sentiments of parts of the public and attacked specific attempts to provide a more balanced vision of the historical past – e. g. a moderate 6<sup>th</sup> grade textbook in Greece or the deconstruction of the misuse of the Batak massacre of 1876 - generating public controversies, for which professional historians as well as history teachers were often unprepared (Kechriotis 2013: 304-305). Besides, the use of the workbooks and the discussion of sources attesting multiple perspectives in history classes ask for more time, being thus in contradiction with the current situation, when “the curricula are generally overloaded and do not allow sufficient time to use interactive methods of instruction that foster critical thinking skills” (Fajfer 2013: 144). Besides, the situation in the classrooms varies a lot, both with respect to the ethnical composition of the classes and to the different levels and sources of pupils' interest in history (Koulouri 2010: 141-142).

### **Limits of the extra-curricular projects fostering multiperspectivity in history teaching**

If we are to conclude, it is obvious that, in spite of their differences, extra-curricular projects like the EUSTORY focusing on history research competitions and the Joint History Project of the CDRSEE providing workbooks of additional teaching materials for teachers to use in class, share some common difficulties and face similar challenges:

One of the difficulties resides in the resilience of ethnocentric visions of history, and in the fact that the use of multiple perspectives inexorably conflicts with the prevailing national narratives. Generally, the proponents of multiperspectivity try to avoid direct confrontations.

“Ignoring national identities, national myths, national views and experiences would result in failure. Nevertheless, a European perspective has to be introduced into national histories in order to overcome divisions. This means telling our stories not only for their own sakes but also for others, so that we all may gain access to history from a range of different perspectives. [...] Last but not least, we need a quality which is always useful when people of different backgrounds come together: sensitivity in giving our own interpretation without offending others.” (Schmidt 2010: 213)

A similar argument has been made by Christina Koulouri. Starting from the prudent assessment that “we were aware that national history would continue to be taught in all Southeast European countries and that it would be utopian to try to abolish its teaching”, she argues that the innovative attempt of bringing into the classroom perspectives from the other Southeast European countries and elements originating from a common Balkan cultural and institutional heritage “should integrate national history or at least be compatible with it” (Koulouri 2010: 140). This cautious and sensitive approach is obvious in the treatment of very sensitive issues, like war, trauma and human suffering. According to Koulouri, “the method chosen in the Workbook was neither to keep silent about violence and conflict nor to overemphasise suffering and victimization”, and the unveiled display of crimes and suffering throughout the whole region was supplemented by the documentation of examples of human solidarity in times of war despite religious, political and national differences (Koulouri 2011: 63-64). Bringing into the forefront the suffering of other ethnic groups and celebrating the courage of the individuals or communities who, often at the risk of their own physical survival, decided to help fellow humans in dire circumstances.

Prudence and the indirect approach supposed by the use of multiple perspectives generally helped to avoid massive backlashes. It is true, there were some nationalist reactions (Kechriotis 2013), but overall their impact was limited and both projects discussed above can document significant progress in the ability of involved teachers and pupils to use multiperspectivity.

Yet, more problematic is the cost-effectiveness of such extra-curricular history education projects. Organising history research competitions, producing additional teaching materials and running teacher training workshops and history camps cost money, academic expertise and various other resources. Inputs of time and energy are significant also for participants, be they teachers or pupils. The magnitude of the investment required by such projects limits their reach and puts at risk their sustainability. From a purely pragmatic perspective, the best solution would be to integrate the teaching of using multiple perspectives in understanding the past into the formal history education, and to make it thus available without additional costs for all young people enrolled in school. Yet, such a solution is not realistic in the current context. Even if governments and teachers would be willing to embark on a more open identity building process which would suppose teaching the pupils to consider various perspectives, sources and interpretations in their approach towards past and current social issues – a prerequisite which is by no means universally secured – this would demand allocating a larger slot of the curricula for history education, either at the expense of other disciplines, or at the expense of pupil's free time.

In fact, the current trend seems to lead in a different direction. The world has entered an age of "communicative abundance", dominated by "images of abundance, talk of information overload, and cornucopias of communication" (Keane 1997). Although this development is considered to favour the development of a more democratic society (monitory democracy), it entails also significant risks:

"Monitory democracy certainly feeds upon communicative abundance, but one of its more perverse effects is to encourage individuals to escape the great complexity of the world by sticking their heads, like ostriches, into the sands of wilful ignorance, or to float cynically upon the swirling tides and waves and eddies of fashion – to change their minds, to speak and act flippantly, to embrace or even celebrate opposites, to bid farewell to veracity, to slip into the arms of what some carefully call 'bullshit'."  
(Keane 2009: 747)

The use of multiple perspectives in understanding the past, or the present, is closely connected to a certain sense of complexity. The danger that people living in the context of communicative abundance will prefer the simplest explanations or interpretations of the world is not to be discarded easily. Equally threatening is the perspective that adults who have not been trained during their formative years to use multiple perspectives will no longer be able to perceive complexity, even if they will try to better understand what is going on with them and with the world they live in. Yet, as shown by the way young people use the plurality of information sources in their everyday life, we are not doomed to “the spread of a culture of unthinking indifference” (Keane 2009: 747). And the enthusiasm experienced by the participants to the history research competitions, as well as by pupils discovering new insights into the past by adequate additional teaching materials clearly points to the fact that the study of history can be both fun and intellectually stimulating.

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**Thilo Kasper:**  
**Internet memes: a handy tool for commemoration**

In the past decade, web 2.0 has multiplied the possibilities for making commemoration visible and accessible in new places and in this way addressed audiences who might not have felt spoken to by more traditional forms of commemoration. If our audience consists of adolescents and youngsters, a place in which they feel comfortable with the act of commemoration might be the screen of their smartphone, their laptop, or their tablet, and our artistic means might then be an “internet meme”.

What is an “internet meme”? You might be familiar with the term “meme”, coined by evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins in his book “The Selfish Gene” in 1976. It is an abbreviation of the ancient Greek word *mimeme*, meaning “imitated thing”, and also refers to the concept of genes. Memes are seen as units of cultural ideas, symbols or practices, transmitted from one human brain to another, through cultural acts like writing or speech.

“Examples of memes are tunes, ideas, catch-phrases, clothes fashions, ways of making pots or of building arches. Just as genes propagate themselves in the gene pool by leaping from body to body via sperms or eggs, so memes propagate themselves in the meme pool by leaping from brain to brain via a process which, in the broad sense, can be called imitation.” (Dawkins 1989: 192)

The term became very popular in the nineties but has since then been the subject of controversial discussions.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Discussions concern doubts about critical parts of the concept of memes, like the analogy between evolutionary genetics and memes. As Shifman points out “some works have taken this analogy too far, seeking cultural equivalents for all principal evolutionary genetic concepts, including genotype, phenotype, transcription, and code” (Shifman 2014: 11). Critics even question if memes exist at all, as James Polichak states “[...] memetics have grossly overstated the power of a memetic approach to understanding information processing and culture. They have much work to do to convince the skeptical (sic!) scientist of the value of the meme, much less its existence” (Polichak 2002: 675).

### **Communication templates spread millionfold over the internet**

Meanwhile, on the web, memes are celebrating a second career. In contrast to Richard Dawkins' original term, internet memes are not selfish at all.<sup>80</sup> They can be seen as communication templates, collaboratively used and adapted by online communities. Communication scientist Limor Shifman defines internet memes as "(a) a group of digital items sharing common characteristics of content, form, and/or stance, which (b) were created with awareness of each other, and (c) were circulated, imitated, and/or transformed via the Internet by many users" (Shifman 2014: 41). A very popular example of an internet meme is the ALS ice bucket challenge, which anyone using Facebook would have come across during the summer of 2014. The meme template was to make a video of yourself, dump a bucket of ice-cold water over your head and ask for donations for a foundation helping people who suffer from the neurodegenerative disease ALS. A simple recipe which hundreds of thousands of people have followed, spreading their results on Facebook and YouTube, including celebrities such as Bill Gates and Mark Zuckerberg. But internet memes are not necessarily videos, they can also be images, sounds, animations, illustrations, or texts spreading millionfold over the Internet, on social networks such as Facebook, Twitter or Tumblr and WhatsApp chats. They aim to be funny, and they offer a framework for self-manifestation, as well as the feeling of participation in a global pop culture.

The biggest part of internet meme culture consists of image macros:

"Image macros are named after macro instructions, scripts that save time and effort for a programmer by replacing a lengthy or repetitive task with a set of defined procedures. (...) rather than opening an image and placing text by hand, meme generators take the chosen text and set it automatically. The image itself and the style of text are largely fixed within the code of these meme-generating macro instructions. (...) An aesthetic formed; image macros multiplied, and further scripts mimicked the design choices of the original." (Berret/Bridau 2014: 309)

Pictures, often showing animals or popular motifs from movies, are combined with

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<sup>80</sup> Dawkins himself describes internet memes as "a hijacking of the original idea. Instead of mutating by random chance before spreading by form of Darwinian selection, internet memes are altered deliberately by human creativity" (Dawkins 2013). Limor Shifman suggests "that for internet memes—which are often based on an extensive and swift mutation rate—it may be useful to turn Dawkins' definition on its head by looking at memes not as single ideas or formulas that propagate well, but as groups of content items." (Shifman 2014: 41).

a humorous text in big, bold, white font. Websites like [imgur.com](http://imgur.com) provide templates for such image macros and tools to generate them. Some weeks ago I interviewed two German journalists, Karsten Schmehl and Duygu Gezen, who use these tools to turn news headlines into memes and publish them on their Twitter page: [twitter.com/DasMemeJournal](https://twitter.com/DasMemeJournal). "I have always been fascinated by memes and the way they serve as a common internet language. Yet we have realised that no one uses memes to deliver news. So we just tried it out", says Gezen, "the feedback we get from our audience is very positive". Along with every meme they send out web links to articles on blogs or online magazines and encourage their audience to do further reading. Thereby they use memes as anchors to make journalism visible in the news feeds of young readers.

Other projects work with sound. Smartphone applications such as Dubsmash or WhatsApp make it easy to record and share sound files on social network platforms. In 2014 the German website [crowdstory.de](http://crowdstory.de) asked their users to send in spoken-word messages about a specific topic using the messaging service WhatsApp. They collected hundreds of contributions which they used to create a web radio show. The topic of each show was a simple keyword which users could use in the same way as they would post a hashtag on Twitter. For example a keyword was *Neustart*, which means "to start over". One user sent in a short story about his experience of moving from Spain to Germany. Several users told stories of love and breaking up. A young girl talked about switching schools. The creators of [crowdstory](http://crowdstory.de) do not create the content. They create the template: one sound-file, one keyword, one story. Their work then consists of cropping the users' input, and bringing them all together. Out of this, a diverse and entertaining narration takes form, which comes to life through the participation of not one, but many authors.

### **"All you need is a template and a good idea"**

It is their simplicity which makes memes interesting. Not only in terms of their setup, but also the tools which are provided by the internet for us to produce them. Most of the tools are available for free or little money – for example, platforms such as YouTube or Twitter offer their own movie editors. With Google Images, Wikimedia Commons, [europeana.eu](http://europeana.eu) or [archive.org](http://archive.org) we can find graphical and film material which is free of charge. These low barriers are an important factor for how internet memes have become a global phenomenon. Last year I had the chance to do a Skype interview with Limor Shifman, who has recently published her book "Memes in Digital Culture". I asked her why she thought that so many young people are taking part in meme culture: "To produce a meme is easy. All you need is a template and a good idea", she told me, "another reason for being part of meme culture is that it is young, global and pop-cultural."

Internet memes are a natural part of the digital communication of teenagers. They can therefore be a handy tool in working with youngsters. In 2014 the German Federal Agency of Civic Education (bpb) invited me to hold a workshop for students at the History Campus 14/14, commemorating the outbreak of the First World War. My team and I decided to combine the creation of contemporary digital formats with the use of historical caricatures as a source of information. We started out decoding political cartoons from the years 1913 and 1914. With the professional support of historian and journalist Martin Bayer, we created an overview of the European crisis at the beginning of the First World War. We looked at historical facts and the symbolic language used in cartoons, art and propaganda. In a second step, we tried to translate these elements into today's visual formats. Together with a group of designers, our students created a website to collect propaganda posters, which they turned into image macro memes. Two media artists staged an online art performance with our students, recruiting soldiers for an imaginary third world war and asking for reasons why young people would go to war today. Together with a TV journalist and aspiring comedian Janina Rook, we also filmed YouTube beauty tutorials for Kaiser Wilhelm II, now called "Wilhelm 2.0"<sup>81</sup>.

During the workshop, the students handled digital formats naturally and at the same time were very conscious about the historical facts and the process of translation they had to go through. For example, when writing scenarios for their YouTube tutorials, they reflected on every detail, every stage prop they wanted to use, every joke they made, in an attempt to package historical facts in a way that would excite a young audience. While the results might look simply entertaining and funny, and sometimes even a bit trivial, the journey to achieving them triggered deep discussions and was highly informative for all involved. For example, the family ties between European royals and their effect during the war were discussed, which resulted in a virtual WhatsApp chat between Wilhelm II and his cousin Nicholas II of Russia. While turning propaganda posters from the First World War into memes, students started to ask themselves how war was depicted in the media today.

Another idea for the use of memes in commemoration projects came from Pavel Franzusov, a Berlin based philosopher and participant in our workshop "History reloaded: A practical view of modern and interdisciplinary methods of commemoration", which was held at the "Europäische Erinnerungskulturen - European Commemoration 2014" conference. Together with film director Peter Jeschke, he started the 70/70 project. Seventy years after the end of the Second World War they wanted to collect seventy videos of seventy persons from different backgrounds, talking about their thoughts on the Holocaust.

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<sup>81</sup> You can find some of the workshop results on our blog: <http://bit.ly/WW1Web2-0> [24.02.2016]

While preparing for their project, the two film-makers realised that they were collecting very similar statements. “We observed a corporate consensus of how people think they are supposed to talk about the Holocaust. Even a drunk soccer fan would instantly say “never again”. Which then sounds like a superficial set phrase”, says Franzusov. In an attempt to help their participants tell stories that were more individual, they developed an interesting recipe: each interlocutor had to bring an object to the interview, and tell how he or she connected this object to the Holocaust. The resulting stories were less generic and more personal. Although the project is limited to seventy interviews, the communication template could easily serve as an internet meme, as soon as it gets taken up and copied by other internet users, who are not selected by Franzusov and Jeschke. “It would be great if our project would encourage people to tell their own story, film their own videos and share them with us over the internet”, Franzusov told me.<sup>82</sup>

While many memes are funny, smart, and to the point, it is important to see the phenomenon of internet memes in its context: memes remain the work of amateurs. They do not aim for the satirical brilliance of a caricaturist, for the depth of a writer or for the vision of a scholar. The use of modern tools such as memes, as shown in the examples above, are not to be thought of as a replacement for commemoration education. Instead, this tool can be used as an extension, a way of triggering the interest of young people who might not respond to traditional educational methods. And most importantly, they reflect the contemporary culture of creating social interaction instead of static content. “The ticket to take part in public debate is much cheaper than before”, Limor Shifman told me. I think we should not miss out on this potential in commemoration work.

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<sup>82</sup> You can find their videos on their website: <http://siebzigsiebzig.de> [10.04.2015]

**Thilo Kasper**

is a Berlin-based designer on the brink of journalism. Thilo Kasper is founder of “Putsch Berlin”, a platform for digital image culture in the political sphere which explores the potentials of new digital graphic phenomena such as memes and GIFs as a modern form of political caricature. Thilo Kasper and his team held a three-day workshop at the History-Campus Berlin called “World War I meets Web 2.0” where teenagers and young adults from all over the world created GIF pages, videos and a performance around the commemoration of the First World War. He studied Communication Design at the University of Arts and Design Karlsruhe, from which he graduated with a thesis (*Diplom*) on internet memes in editorial surroundings.

**Frank Drauschke and Breda Karun:**

**Europeana 1914-1918 – Creating a pan-European personal archive of WWI with a special focus on the Western Balkan states**



*Picture 1: Logo Europeana*

Europeana 1914-1918 is a project which represents a new approach to solving the challenge of European commemoration. Bringing together European personal narratives of the First World War from more than 20 different countries and making them accessible to everybody in a single online database is a very democratic way of creating a virtual archive for comparative studies on the history of World War One. Commemorating the First World War involves a multitude of individual and collective experiences as well as political perspectives, particularly in light of the number of countries and people involved.

Nowadays, young people rarely have access to personal memories of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century within their families, and this will certainly not be possible for future generations. But when at one of our collection days we meet people talking about the fate of their parents or grandparents during WWI with tears in their eyes, we can really see and feel that 100 years is not such a long time and that the First World War still has a direct connection to and impact on our life today.

To take my personal example: as a young boy, my interest in history was sparked by historical documents and objects belonging to my family. When we were asked by “Europeana” in 2011 to take part in the project, I immediately thought of this old cigar box, which once belonged to my grandfather Joseph Drauschke. His documents and memorabilia became the first contributions to “Europeana 1914-1918”.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> [http://www.europeana1914-1918.eu/en/collection/search?q=drauschke+joseph&qf\[index\]\[\]=a&utf8=%E2%9C%93](http://www.europeana1914-1918.eu/en/collection/search?q=drauschke+joseph&qf[index][]=a&utf8=%E2%9C%93) [14.04.2015].



Picture 2: WWI memorabilia of Joseph Drauschke

Like many other participants, I realised how much it had to do with my own life. A hundred years ago my great-grandfather was exactly my age today and had to go to war. In 1918, my grandfather, his son, was turning 19 and sent to the front as well. That was exactly my age when I experienced the peaceful revolution in Berlin in 1989 and then unfortunately missed one of the most important events of my life, the fall of the Berlin Wall, because I was drafted into the East German army as a building soldier (*Bausoldat*) only seven days before that historic day.

Then in 1989 “We made history” – we, the people of Central and Eastern Europe. Under this slogan “We made history” the sister project “Europeana 1989” also set out to collect personal stories and memorabilia from this crucial period in European history.<sup>84</sup> Together with “Europeana 1914-1918” we let the people of Europe write their common history based on personal memories and perspectives of the events that shaped our continent.

This article aims to give an overview of the “Europeana 1914-1918” project, provide some stories as examples, and talk about our experiences during the campaigns across Europe: about what makes people participate in this kind of a project and how the outcome supports the joint dialogue on remembrance in Europe. Breda Karun shares her observations from the project in the Western Balkan states.

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<sup>84</sup> [www.europeana1989.eu](http://www.europeana1989.eu) [14.04.2015]

### **The “Europeana 1914-1918” project as part of Europeana**

What is Europeana? “Europeana” ([www.europeana.eu](http://www.europeana.eu)) is Europe’s digital library, archive and museum. It provides access to digitised material from libraries, archives, audiovisual archives and museums. There are more than 2,400 collaborating institutions. These range from major heritage institutions like the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, the British Library and the Louvre to regional archives and local museums from every Member State of the European Union. The website is available in 29 European languages. Europeana allows the public to discover and explore the cultural and intellectual heritage of Europe through a simple search engine and virtual exhibitions. Since its launch by the European Commission in November 2008, Europeana has grown to include nearly 40 million documents and heritage works, available on [europeana.eu](http://europeana.eu).<sup>85</sup> The Europeana Foundation is based in The Hague, the Netherlands. It is conducting a large number of international heritage projects, such as Europeana Newspapers, “Europeana 1989” and “Europeana 1914-1918”.

The “Europeana 1914-1918” project<sup>86</sup> is a joint initiative of the Europeana Foundation, Oxford University and many local partners. It is one of several projects that contribute content to Europeana by collecting memorabilia in digital form from across Europe. Via crowdsourcing, the European public is invited to share their private memorabilia from the First World War on the web. These could be photographs, letters, diaries, short films, audio recordings, material objects and associated stories, which are digitised and added to the online archive, along with corresponding descriptions. More than 13,000 personal contributions with over 170,000 digital objects are already searchable at [www.europeana1914-1918.eu](http://www.europeana1914-1918.eu) and more content will be uploaded in the future. Since January 2014 this portal combines the personal contributions with over 660 hours of film from European film archives,<sup>87</sup> 400,000 items from the collections of several national libraries and other institutions in Europe<sup>88</sup> and over 640,000 items from digital libraries in Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the USA.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> For up-to-date statistical data on Europeana: <http://pro.europeana.eu/about-us/factsfigures> [14.04.2015]

<sup>86</sup> [www.europeana1914-1918.eu](http://www.europeana1914-1918.eu) [24.02.2016]

<sup>87</sup> These films were digitised by the European Film Gateway 1914 project: <http://www.european-filmgateway.eu/1914> [13.04.2015]

<sup>88</sup> These items were digitised by the Europeana Collections 1914-1918 project: <http://www.europeana-collections-1914-1918.eu> [13.04.2015]

<sup>89</sup> For up-to-date statistical data on the Europeana 1914-1918 portal: <http://www.europeana1914-1918.eu/en/statistics> [13.04.2015]

In 2011 everything started as a pilot project in Germany. The first eight road shows held in Frankfurt am Main, Berlin, Dresden, Munich, Stuttgart, Regensburg and other cities attracted more than 700 visitors. This positive response exceeded expectations, so the project was rolled out across Europe. Since then, over 180 road shows have been held in 20 European countries with in excess of 18,000 participants.<sup>90</sup> In 2014, road shows were held in Croatia, Germany (Berlin, Aachen, Münster, Görlitz, Greifswald), Poland (Opole, Szczecin), Austria (Vienna), Portugal (Lisbon), Serbia (Belgrade) and other places. The project will be continued and collection days will be organised in other countries in the years to come.

Contributions to “Europeana 1914-1918” can be made in two ways: by contributing directly to the “Europeana 1914-1918” website, where advice is given on how to scan, photograph and upload material at home; or by bringing the items to a road show where project staff photograph them and record the stories.

### What is a road show or collection day?



Picture 3: Setup in Bonn, Germany

In the context of the “Europeana 1914-1918” project, the terms “road show” or “collection day” are used to describe events where members of the public are invited to bring their memorabilia and stories from the time of the war. The format of a road show can vary, but it usually takes the form of a one or two-day event. These events are organ-

ised in memory institutions like museums, libraries or archives. Ideally it is set-up in one big hall or two bigger rooms. The space is divided into three parts: the welcoming and waiting area, the interview area with computers to enter the information into the online database and a digitisation area, where professional scanners, digital photo reproduction stands and a photo studio are installed. In most cases additional attractions like a film screening, a small exhibition or even music performances are organised. In some places people in original uniforms also attended the events.

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<sup>90</sup> For example in the UK (Preston, Banbury), Luxembourg, Ireland (Dublin, Limerick), Slovenia (Nova Gorica, Maribor, Celje), Denmark (Sønderborg), Belgium (Ypres) and Cyprus (Nicosia, Paphos), Italy (e. g. Trento, Rome), Romania (Bucharest, Cluj), Germany (Bonn, Aachen, Bochum, Bremen), Slovakia (e. g. Bratislava) and France (more than 100 places)

The aim of the event is to assist participants to share their stories and objects and to encourage online contributions. A road show is also meant to encourage the reuse of the collected material and to raise awareness of “Europeana” and the “Europeana 1914-1918” project in particular. It also promotes local organisations and helps to preserve an important heritage from disappearing. The people who attend these road shows belong to all age groups. They range from teenagers and young mothers with their babies to even a few centenarians who were children at the time of WWI. The events are truly cross-generational, since quite often younger family members accompany or help their elder relatives to take part in this online project. In most cases the contributors are family members of people who served in the First World War or were affected by it.

The usual workflow of a road show is that when contributors arrive, they are welcomed and introduced to the process. After a possible waiting time, during which they can watch films or visit an exhibition, they are then interviewed by a member of staff. The interviewers record the stories and information about the objects into the online database and possibly add expert knowledge and further information. Afterwards objects are digitised (photographed or scanned) and on the same day returned to the contributor. In the weeks after the road show, stories and object metadata are edited and digital images are uploaded on the “Europeana 1914-1918” website, where they are available to anyone who wants to explore and use them.



Picture 4: Participants in Dresden, Germany

The number of people participating in a road show may vary widely depending on a number of factors. They may be small or medium-sized regional events or reach a big – even national – audience because of strong media attention. For instance, the road show with the highest number of participants took place in Dublin, Ireland, in 2012. Before this, the participation of Irishmen in WWI fighting for the British Empire was given little public attention and was rather politically sensitive, so many stories had never been told outside the family. Now people were happy to share their family stories, which is one of the reasons why the Dublin road show has been the best attended in Europe so far. More than 600 people came to the library, some queuing for hours, to share their memorabilia and stories.<sup>91</sup>

<sup>91</sup> Contributions from the Dublin collection day: [http://www.europeana1914-1918.eu/en/collection/search?count=12&qf\[index\]=c&qf\[metadata\\_collection\\_day\\_ids\]\[\]=210&utf8=%E2%9C%93](http://www.europeana1914-1918.eu/en/collection/search?count=12&qf[index]=c&qf[metadata_collection_day_ids][]=210&utf8=%E2%9C%93) [13.04.2015]

In Cyprus, the forgotten story of thousands of Cypriot young men participating as mule drivers at the Salonika front in WWI was unearthed during the project and publicised before the event. This made the road show in Nicosia a great success. More than 150 people, some from remote villages, contributed WWI memorabilia of their ancestors, such as photographs, letters and war medals.<sup>92</sup>

Road shows have proven to be a very effective way to preserve private cultural heritage that has never been seen or studied outside of family circles. They are also an effective way to raise awareness of the interest in private historical sources and make the project known to a wider public.



Picture 5: Collection day in Nicosia, Cyprus

2014, the year of the centenary of the outbreak of WWI, marked the peak of public and media interest in the topic and the project so far. The events saw even more visitors and drew the attention of the mainstream media, major channels and a number of distinguished politicians.

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<sup>92</sup> Contributions from the Nicosia collection day: [http://www.europeana1914-1918.eu/en/collection/search?count=12&qf\[index\]=c&qf\[metadata\\_collection\\_day\\_ids\]\[\]=224&utf8=%E2%9C%93](http://www.europeana1914-1918.eu/en/collection/search?count=12&qf[index]=c&qf[metadata_collection_day_ids][]=224&utf8=%E2%9C%93) [13.04.2015]

### Conference “Unlocking Sources” in Berlin

The centenary year started with the relaunch and extension of the thematic portal [www.europeana1914-1918.eu](http://www.europeana1914-1918.eu) on 29 January 2014 during the opening of a two-day international conference titled “Unlocking Sources – The First World War online & Europeana”<sup>93</sup> at the Berlin State Library. The relaunch and the following road show were attracted a great deal of media interest. Many articles appeared in German and international newspapers and journals and the event was also featured on television, for instance in the main German evening news programmes *Tagesschau*<sup>94</sup> and *Tagesthemen*<sup>95</sup>. Because of this media attention there was a tenfold increase in visits to the website from one week to the next (from 19,000 to 199,000). The collection days on 30 and 31 January attracted over 350 visitors and contributors. In order to be able to handle the amount of necessary work, the road show was extended for an additional day. In total, more than 12,500 digital images were made and over 400 stories recorded.<sup>96</sup>



Picture 6: Collection day in Berlin, Germany

On 24 May 2014 German Chancellor Angela Merkel spoke in her weekly video podcast about the remembrance of the First World War and the “Europeana 1914-1918” project. In the interview, she discussed the importance of projects that invite people to participate

<sup>93</sup> See <http://www.europeana-collections-1914-1918.eu/unlocking-sources/> [13.04.2015]

<sup>94</sup> See “*Erster Weltkrieg: Hunderttausende Dokumente im Webportal ‘Europeana’ digitalisiert*”. In: ARD, *Tagesschau*, 29/01/2014, 20:00 h. <http://www.tagesschau.de/multimedia/video/video1369268.html> [13.04.2015]

<sup>95</sup> See “*Erinnerungsportal ‘Europeana’. Die Gesichter des Ersten Weltkriegs*” by Kerstin Breinig. In: ARD, *Tagesschau*, 29/01/2014. <http://www.ardmediathek.de/tv/Tagesthemen/tagesthemen/Das-Erste/Video?documentId=19396228&bcastId=3914> [13.04.2015]

<sup>96</sup> See all contribution from the Berlin collection days at [http://www.europeana1914-1918.eu/en/collection/search?qf\[index\]=c&qf\[metadata\\_collection\\_day\\_ids\]\[\]=407&utf8=%E2%9C%93](http://www.europeana1914-1918.eu/en/collection/search?qf[index]=c&qf[metadata_collection_day_ids][]=407&utf8=%E2%9C%93) [13.04.2015]

in writing Europe's history. She said that they serve as a reminder that it would be "better to negotiate 20 hours longer and talk" than ever return to such a situation of war in Europe.<sup>97</sup>

### German-Polish road shows



Picture 7: Bi-lingual German-Polish project poster

In November 2014, a series of four cross-border German-Polish road shows were organised in the cities of Görlitz, Opole, Greifswald and Szczecin. These road shows were supported by the German Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media. They successfully met their objective of bringing about a connection between these border regions, and the contributions mirrored the eventful history of these territories. For instance a lot of new material from Poles serving in the Polish Legion and the Russian, German and Austrian armies was collected. At the Polish road shows, material was contributed by

former German inhabitants and by families from the former Eastern parts of Poland. It is planned to have more collection days in other parts of Poland.

### “Europeana 1914-1918” campaigns in the West Balkan States

The West Balkan States represent a particularly interesting example within the Europeana 1914-1918 project due to the special history of the region. After all, it was Otto von Bismarck who in 1888 made his famous prediction about a future European war – that it would “start with some damned foolish thing in the Balkans” - and he was right.

<sup>97</sup> Merkel in a video podcast “20 Stunden länger verhandeln”, video podcast by Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel. Interview by Frank Drauschke on the 24 May 2014. [http://www.bundeskanzlerin.de/Webs/BKin/DE/Mediathek/mediathek\\_node.html;jsessionid=71FEEA8B23D582E53B5162FA8B8102A4.s4t1?cat=videos&id=872382](http://www.bundeskanzlerin.de/Webs/BKin/DE/Mediathek/mediathek_node.html;jsessionid=71FEEA8B23D582E53B5162FA8B8102A4.s4t1?cat=videos&id=872382) [13.04.2015]

There are some significant historical differences between Croatia, Slovenia and Bosnia, which were part of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, on the one hand and Serbia, which was an independent monarchy, on the other. Therefore soldiers from these countries served on both sides of the front on different battlefields.

Due to the political and social environment in the decades after WWI, participation in the ranks of the Austro-Hungarian army did not bring social recognition and benefits. Therefore the war memories of Slovenian, Croatian and Bosnian soldiers remained mainly within the family or just personal reflections. In Slovenian, Croatian and Bosnian historiography WWI is often called the “forgotten war”, as there is still a huge research deficit about this area of national history. With the advent of World War II, which was afforded a “glorious” place in Yugoslavian history, WWI sank into oblivion.

The “Europeana 1914-1918” campaign started in Slovenia in 2012 in two libraries and in the Military Museum. Soon after, public libraries across the country joined the campaign and organised small local events on their own. The slogan in Slovenia was: “A Farewell to arms. Welcome the memories”. Between September and December 2014 road shows were organised in three archives and two public libraries in Croatia and three public libraries in Serbia. In Croatia the slogan was: “Give a voice to those who were left silent” and in Serbia: “Mobilisation of Memories”.

It was planned to also include Bosnia and Herzegovina, despite the fact that it was not a partner in the EU project. But lack of time for preparation and the rather complicated situation in the country meant that it was postponed until 2015. This was mainly due to the division of the country into three entities, Croatian, Bosnian and Serbian, which demands a very sensitive approach and requires a great deal of time and effort.

Many senior contributors in all these countries said that we had just caught the period when people who have direct memories of their grandparents’ stories are still living. With the next generation this link will be broken. The younger generation does not have a personal connection to this part of history, especially because it was never exposed and popularised in former Yugoslavia.

Public interest and media coverage at national and local level was very good. The average number of contributors during the road shows was between 30 and 40.

## Objects collected

During the span of the project, a plethora of interesting unknown stories and different objects was revealed. They are not just a collection of curiosities, but a source which can be used for serious academic research. This is the first time that such a vast collection of private sources from all over Europe and other parts of the world has been made easily accessible to anyone who is interested in studying and analysing them on their



Picture 8: Memorabilia from Walter Naumann

own computers. The items collected can be categorised as a) written materials, such as diaries, war letters, postcards and documents, b) photographs, c) pieces of art, such as drawings and paintings, d) souvenirs from the front, such as trench art (often made from pieces of ammunition and shrapnel) and e) other material objects, such as parts of soldiers' gear and equipment. Formerly unknown complete correspondence, diaries and private photographs form a particularly invaluable resource for further research. It is now easily possible to read and compare diaries written by people from France, Denmark, Poland and Germany.

## Knapsack reveals WWI treasures from Slovenia

When renovating a house in the area close to the Isonzo front, the contributor found a knapsack in the attic, hidden beneath a beam. The knapsack belonged to Victor Mitkiewicz, a cadet in the Austro-Hungarian Army, and was undiscovered until 20 years ago. The bag contained an unsent letter to his mother, along with correspondence and postcards from her, his brother and his girlfriend. The contributor said he approached many collectors in the hope of finding relatives of cadet Mitkiewicz, but without success. He hoped that by sharing the story on the Europeana 1914-1918 website he might be able to find Mitkiewicz's descendants and return his legacy to them.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Kadet Viktor Mitkiewicz, contributed by Silvester Kovačič. <http://www.europeana1914-1918.eu/en/contributions/3664> [13.04.2015]

## A wooden cross in a bottle from Slovenia



Picture 9: Mr Zupan with the mayor of Nova Gorica and his contribution

The Slovenian centenarian Slavko Zupan took part in the 2012 roadshow in Nova Gorica, Slovenia and shared his direct memories of the war. His enthusiasm for the project was so great that he visited the roadshow twice. It was most probably the first time in his long life that he had participated in an online project.

To illustrate his childhood recollections Mr. Zupan brought along a richly decorated wooden cross, which was inserted into a glass bottle. It was made for sale by a Russian prisoner of war (POW) in Slovenia. The bottle was bought by Mr Zupan's mother and has been in his family since 1916.<sup>99</sup>

## “Gold for Iron” ring from Croatia

A contributor who came to the collection day at the Osijek State Archive brought an iron ring, an example of the official

wartime fundraising programme “Gold for Iron”. In 1914 the government of Croatia launched a campaign to collect donations under the slogan “Gold for Iron”.<sup>100</sup> People were called on to donate gold jewellery and other valuables and in return got an iron ring indicating the value of their donation. The revenue from the campaign went to support the families of soldiers, who had died in the war “and who left their families without sufficient means”.<sup>101</sup> In order to promote the collection days in Croatia, adaptations of such a ring were reproduced, engraved with the slogan “Digital for Iron” and presented to media editors and journalists.

<sup>99</sup> Ruska steklenica, contributed by Slavko Zupan. <http://www.europeana1914-1918.eu/en/contributions/3661> [13.04.2015]

<sup>100</sup> Contributions connected to the WWI ‘Gold for Iron’ campaign. [http://www.europeana1914-1918.eu/en/collection/search?count=12&q=gold+eisen&qf\[index\]\[\]=a&utf8=%E2%9C%93](http://www.europeana1914-1918.eu/en/collection/search?count=12&q=gold+eisen&qf[index][]=a&utf8=%E2%9C%93) [13.04.2015].

<sup>101</sup> For more about this campaign: <http://www.hismus.hr/en/exhibitions/virtual-exhibitions/patriotic-rings-gold-iron/> [13.04.2015]

## Students and Wikimedia in Serbia

There was a very good response from the citizens of Belgrade. A two-day road show attracted about 100 visitors, including a number of people from rural areas. A group of secondary school students, together with their teacher, visited the road show in Belgrade and brought their memorabilia and their families' stories to digitise them. Collecting family memorabilia and discussing their stories had been incorporated into the school curriculum. In addition, Wikimedia participants also joined the road show in Belgrade. It is planned to publish a selection of the collected items on Wikimedia in 2015.

## S.M.S. Kaiserin Elisabeth

The contributions connected to the story of the Austro-Hungarian war cruiser S.M.S. Kaiserin Elisabeth illustrate the opportunities offered by this kind of crowd sourced online archive. Three contributions from different parts of the world fit together like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle.

During the collection day at the public library of Cluj, Romania, three beautifully illustrated diaries of the Transylvanian seaman Dumitru Nistor, a prisoner of war in Japan, came to light.<sup>102</sup> He served on the S.M.S. Kaiserin Elisabeth. When the war broke out the ship was in East Asia and took refuge in the harbour of

Tsingtao in the German colony in China. After a siege the Japanese occupied the colony. All German and Austro-Hungarian soldiers became POWs and stayed in Japan until 1920/21. The same happened to Dumitru Nistor, who gave a vivid account of these events and his time as a POW in Japan and illustrated the story with drawings and watercolours.



Picture 10: Illustrated pages of a diary by Dumitru Nistor

<sup>102</sup> "Dumitru Nistor prizonier de război în Japonia", three diaries contributed by Biblioteca Județeană Cluj. [http://www.europeana1914-1918.eu/en/collection/search?count=12&q=Dumitru+Nistor+japon-ia&qf\[index\]\[\]=a&utf8=%E2%9C%93](http://www.europeana1914-1918.eu/en/collection/search?count=12&q=Dumitru+Nistor+japon-ia&qf[index][]=a&utf8=%E2%9C%93) [13.04.2015]

At the collection day in Nova Gorica, Slovenia, the story and photographs of the Slovenian seaman Melhior Katnik were contributed. He also served on the S.M.S. Kaiserin Elisabeth. His photos show the ship and seamen in their home port on the Adriatic Sea before the war.<sup>103</sup>

A third contribution was made online from the USA. Gerald H. Davis shared a story and photographs of his father-in-law, Pasko Rogulj, a former Croatian sailor and cook. Rogulj also served on the S.M.S. Kaiserin Elisabeth and was taken as a POW to Japan. His collection of photographs gives a vivid picture of life in the POW camps. Most probably Dumitru Nistor is also depicted on one of the group pictures.<sup>104</sup>

### **Cypriots serving in the Macedonian Mule Corps**

Before the start of the project not many people in and outside of Cyprus knew anything about the history of the island in WWI. It was generally thought that Cyprus was not really affected by it. A lone material trace, which was found by searching the portal europeana.eu, was a prosthetic leg at the Science Museum in London. The description stated that it supposedly had belonged to an anonymous Cypriot WWI truck driver.<sup>105</sup> Nobody expected that this trace would finally lead to names and accounts of the actual former owner of the leg and the bigger picture of Cypriots in WWI.

During the project, it was revealed that he was not a truck driver, but one of many Cypriot mule drivers at the Salonika front. They were drafted into the “Macedonian Mule Corps” (MMC), an auxiliary unit of the British Army, and carried supplies with their mules up the steep Greek mountain paths to the front line. About 12,000 Cypriots from all communities served in the MMC, constituting 20-25 per cent of the male working population of Cyprus at that time (Varnava 2014).

Research at the National Archives in the UK even revealed the names of all of these men. After the war, members of the MMC were eligible to the British War medal in bronze.

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<sup>103</sup> Melhior Katnik, contributed by Erih Katnik. <http://www.europeana1914-1918.eu/en/contributions/3747> [13.04.2015]

<sup>104</sup> Pasko Rogulj: Austro-Hungarian Prisoner of Japanese, contributed by Gerald H. Davis. <http://www.europeana1914-1918.eu/en/contributions/13354> [13.04.2015]

<sup>105</sup> Left prosthetic leg, Cyprus, 1914-1918, Science Museum, London. [http://www.europeana.eu/portal/record/2022343/3F7C6DE429E988A22EB895215E70575B006ABDBD.html#\\_VQpjukRly7A](http://www.europeana.eu/portal/record/2022343/3F7C6DE429E988A22EB895215E70575B006ABDBD.html#_VQpjukRly7A) [13.04.2015]

Each medal had the roll number, name and unit attached to their rim. The original source for the award is eight handwritten volumes of MMC roll lists, stating the number, name, rank, relatives and home town of each of the 12,000 Cypriots who served in the MMC from 1916-1919. This list is a unique historical source for Cypriot history.<sup>106</sup> The names are also included in the British War Medal card index, which had already been digitised. An extract of the database was made and published online on the websites of the Cyprus Library and the Ministry of Education and Culture before the road show in Nicosia took place.<sup>107</sup> This publication and the tireless efforts of the Cypriot partners spread the word to every village on the Greek part of the island. As many Cypriot families did not know much about it, they were eager to discover if their grandfathers or great-grandfathers were on the list and took part in WWI.

As a result of the project a civil initiative was launched to build a war memorial. For the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first muleteers departing Cyprus it is planned to erect a sculpture of two muleteers and a mule in the centre of Nicosia.

During the collection days, the identity and extraordinary life story of the former owner of the artificial leg at the Science Museum in London was also discovered. The man, Agathoklis Hajichristodoulou, was born in 1901 in Polystipos (he later used the name Polistipiotis). He and his two brothers served as mule drivers in Greece. Due to frostbite he lost both his legs at the Salonika front. It is said, that he was the only injured Cypriot to be awarded compensation by the British authorities. After several complaints and at least two sets of prosthetic legs, he got a last new pair and final compensation of 40 pounds. A man from his village who attended the collection day remembered him vividly. He said all the children were always afraid of him, because of the noise his legs made while walking.<sup>108</sup>

### **Reuse in virtual exhibitions and publications**

All private material contributed on “Europeana 1914-1918” is freely available for research and reuse. It is available under the terms of the Creative Commons license CC-BY-SA.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Register MMC, vol.1-8, The National Archives UK, Kew, WO 405-1.

<sup>107</sup> Extract MMC, British WWI Medal Card Index, The National Archives UK, Kew, WO 372. [http://www.moec.gov.cy/politistikis\\_ypiresies/archeia/katalogos\\_kyprion\\_ethelonton\\_pagkosmiou\\_polemou.pdf](http://www.moec.gov.cy/politistikis_ypiresies/archeia/katalogos_kyprion_ethelonton_pagkosmiou_polemou.pdf) [13.04.2015]

<sup>108</sup> “The muleteer who lost his legs”. Agathoklis Hajichristodoulou (Polistipiotis), contributed by Omiros Hadjistillis. <http://www.europeana1914-1918.eu/en/contributions/4491> [13.04.2015].

<sup>109</sup> <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/> [13.04.2015]

“Europeana” encourages everyone to make use of this possibility. In order to demonstrate the potential, “Europeana” provides virtual exhibitions which serve to showcase the content that is available. These include the virtual exhibition “Untold stories of the First World War: photos, letters and other memorabilia”, which presents a selection of exceptional personal stories from “Europeana 1914-1918”.<sup>110</sup>

A publication which also draws entirely on the exceptional personal accounts of individuals who experienced the First World War collected by “Europeana 1914-1918” is Jackie Storer’s “Hidden Stories of the First World War”, published by the British Library in 2014 (Storer 2014). Storer attended a number of road shows and heard the stories first-hand from relatives and descendants. Her well-written and richly illustrated book gives a good insight into the range of stories and material from different parts of Europe.

A number of on and offline publications have already re-used textual and pictorial content from “Europeana 1914-1918”. To name just two: the special themed edition of the German magazine ZEIT Geschichte made use of four diaries from “Europeana” to present the war from the perspective of ordinary people and used illustrations from the website.<sup>111</sup> The online edition of the Wall Street Journal published a special photo series with images from “Europeana 1914-1918” (Wall Street Journal 2014).

### Summary and future plans

Although the main phase of the project ended in December 2014, “Europeana” and its partners will keep the project running. The “Europeana 1914-1918” thematic portal will stay open for online contributions and research. It is planned to enhance and expand it with new features, such as a transcription tool. A number of institutions within the greater “Europeana” network have expressed their interest in organising WWI crowdsourcing campaigns. It is planned to especially involve new partners in countries which have not yet participated. In 2015, for example, it is planned to have roadshows in Turkey.

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<sup>110</sup> Virtual exhibition: “Untold stories of the First World War: photos, letters and other memorabilia”. <http://exhibitions.europeana.eu/exhibits/show/europeana-1914-1918-en> [24.02.2016].

<sup>111</sup> “Wenn die Granaten sausen, hört das Denken einfach auf”. ZEIT Geschichte Extra: “Der Krieg in Tagebüchern und Briefen. Eine Collage” by Christian Staas. In: “Der Erste Weltkrieg. 1914-1918. Der Große Krieg: Wie er begann und wie die Menschen ihn erlebten”, ZEIT Geschichte No. 01/2014. <http://www.zeit.de/zeit-geschichte/2014/01/Inhaltsverzeichnis> [24.02.2016]

The “Europeana 1914-1918” project as a pan-European initiative to collect memorabilia from a time period that changed the face and shape of Europe represents an important perspective on joint European commemoration and is an example of how a dialogue on remembrance in Europe is possible.

The project’s success highlights the great interest that Europeans have in their shared history. People pass their stories on within their families, and in “Europeana” have found the means to preserve them for future generations. Presented without restrictions in an online archive in many different languages, they have become universally accessible to everybody. As part of the greater “Europeana” project, the archive represents a new approach to cultural history, linking people’s own stories to the official histories of WWI that are kept in the national libraries and archives of Europe. By combining these personal stories with institutional collections, “Europeana” is creating unique and engaging online user experiences. By giving a voice to people from all parts of Europe who are willing to share their private memories and documents we are building a common European identity and letting the people of Europe write their own history.

As historians, we find these archives a real treasure trove for research. Never before has it been so easy to find, compare and analyse personal sources from all parts of Europe. Now it is possible to sit at your computer at home and read diaries from Serbia, France, Germany and Denmark or find a range of private photos from a certain area or ship. This online archive is a raw diamond. Scholars and all kinds of interested users are called on to cut, polish and reuse it.

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### **Picture credits**

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### **Frank Drauschke**

studied Modern History, South Asian Studies and International Relations at Humboldt University in Berlin and at Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi. In 1999 he became one of the founding partners of Facts & Files – Historical Research Institute Berlin. He has long-standing experience in the management of international research, PR and exhibition projects. He specialises in archival research. From 2000-2004 he coordinated archival research projects for the International Commission of Holocaust Era Insurance Claims (ICHEIC) in 55 archives in 11 countries. Similar projects were conducted for other institutions. Since 2011 he has been actively involved in international projects in the framework of "Europeana". He has coordinated "Europeana 1914-1918" and "Europeana 1989" collection day campaigns in 15 countries.

### **Breda Karun**

is the founder and director of the Jara Institute for library development (Slovenia), which she set up in 2010. Previously she worked as a librarian and deputy director of a public library and was a national coordinator of the regional library system for seven years. She was the executive director of the Consortium Kamra (local cultural heritage portal) and since 2011 she has been responsible for developing the portal and cooperation with "Europeana". She was the programme manager of the EIFL Public Library Development Programme funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation between 2009 and 2012. She has been a coordinator or partner in a number of EU-funded projects in the areas of culture, lifelong learning and ICT. Her expertise includes topics such as access to local cultural heritage, advocacy, impact assessment, project management, and library trends.

**Frank Morawietz:**

**“How to deal with history?” – The importance of history and commemoration in Franco-German-South Eastern European projects <sup>112</sup>**

In recent years, projects devoted to the topic of “dealing with difficult history” have become a major focus within the South Eastern Europe (SEE) Initiative of the Franco-German Youth Office (FGYO) (Franco-German Youth Office 2010: 17-19). As a basic principle, educational work on historical topics plays a leading and sustained role in the programmes of the FGYO and its partner organisations. This has not always been the case: for a long time, the paradigm of Franco-German reconciliation was dominant, and this is why the programmes of the FGYO were initially of a conflict-avoiding, apolitical nature and revolved exclusively around youth-based themes. It was only the longevity of prejudices and stereotypes, phenomena that could not be addressed through moral conviction alone, which led to an intensified focus by the FGYO on historical memory and educational work in promoting intercultural understanding.<sup>113</sup>

The topic of “dealing with difficult history” is highly relevant in the societies of the Western Balkans, particularly as a result of the wars of the 1990s and their still-perceptible aftermath (Petritsch/Dzihic 2010). In Germany and France, questions of political history – concerning the Third Reich, the Second World War, the Vichy regime, the Holocaust, the war in Algeria and the past of the GDR – remain matters of considerable sensitivity as well. Both across and within the various European societies, memories often collide with one another, and at the same time there is frequently great ignorance about history and about controversies of commemoration in other countries (Pakier/Strath 2010). For all the differences between the various historical situations, the basic question presents itself for European societies: how do we intend to deal with this difficult history? These issues arise in meetings organised by the FGYO between Germany and France on the one hand and the countries of the former Yugoslavia on the other.

Because the question of how history is dealt with is also fundamentally important for any lasting reconciliation process, FGYO has decided to take up and address these issues

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<sup>112</sup> I would like to thank my colleague Dr Nicolas Moll, coordinator of “Memory Lab”, for the discussions and support while preparing this text.

<sup>113</sup> Concerning memory work within the French-German relations see Moll 2013. On the history of the FGYO see Bock 2003.

directly in its SEE Initiative, through a series of seminars and projects. This text draws on two concrete projects to describe how these sensitive issues are approached in these encounters, and the challenges and difficulties that present themselves:

- the “War Crimes and Trials” project involving students from Croatia, Serbia, France and Germany which addresses the recent history of war crimes and trials in Europe since 1945;
- the “Memory Lab” project and platform, which connects institutions, organisations and persons who work in the field of remembrance and commemoration in Western Europe and SEE.

These two examples will illustrate that one of the key challenges being addressed by the SEE Initiative of the FGYO is how we can develop and strengthen “a European space of memory” and a multi-perspectival view of history and to substitute this for the national perspectives and narratives still taught in the classroom (Liebert/Müller 2012: 47).

For the sake of clarity, discussion of the sample projects is preceded by a presentation of the FGYO’s SEE Initiative. This is needed to understand and interpret the context of this multilateral project work in SEE.

### **The South Eastern Europe Initiative (SEE) of the Franco-German Youth Office**

The SEE Initiative of the FGYO marks its 15<sup>th</sup> year of existence in 2015. At the French-German summit on 9 June 2000 in Mainz, Germany, the German and French governments

“asked the Franco-German Youth Office to develop its activity in South Eastern Europe and to reinforce in future its trilateral exchange programmes in this region. They have successfully carried this out in the past with the countries of Central and Eastern Europe” (Franco-German Youth Office 2010: 67).

The FGYO was able to establish a long-term co-operation with its partners in SEE in order to support their associations, educational facilities and local youth organisations.<sup>114</sup> This co-operation has helped young people in those countries develop a better knowledge of one another and a respectful dialogue between the different cultures, entirely in the European spirit of tolerance and fraternity. The programmes of the SEE Initiative of the FGYO are aimed at young citizens from Germany, France, Macedonia, Kosovo, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia and appeal particularly to those young citizens who

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<sup>114</sup> For a list of the partner organisations see *ib.*, p. 62-63

would like to assume future responsibility themselves, whether in civil society, in international youth work or at a political level. In the context of the SEE Initiative, since the year 2000, some 10,000 young people have taken part in trilateral exchange programmes in Germany, France and SEE. First and foremost, this accomplishment testifies to the success of FGYO partner organisations in civil society in SEE, France and Germany. Without this network, the projects presented here would not have been possible to begin with.

An important aspect of the work of the FGYO on behalf of SEE is the basic recognition that the experiences of Franco-German relations do not represent a model that can be simply transferred over to other regions in Europe (Moll 2009). And yet the experiences gained from Franco-German relations constitute a powerful source of inspiration and encouragement and are an integral part of modern European history. Franco-German relations and the triumph over enmity between the two countries were and are an important pillar of the European framework of peace and an engine of the process of European integration. Beyond the specific example of peaceful and close cooperation, these experiences also provide very specific instruments and a host of best-practice examples that can be taken up, evolved and applied to different contexts, for instance: basic political experience under the Élysée Treaty, the role and impact of a Youth Office, content and methods of intercultural learning, experiences from twinning of towns and cultural cooperation.

Furthermore, the youth exchange programmes of the FGYO offer a very pragmatic platform for dialogue that incorporates not only young citizens of the Western Balkans in the European dialogue – young people who often lack the means and opportunities for European mobility – but they also present an opportunity for young people in France and Germany to discover a European region, people and culture that is relatively unknown to them. Interestingly through this exchange – and particularly in the context of the question of how to deal with history – young people from France and Germany gain new insights into their own countries of origin, of the history and role of the EU and of the historical and political significance of Franco-German relations.

### **Sample project 1: “War crimes trials and their legal, political and social implications in Germany, Croatia, Serbia and France”**

In 2013/2014, together with partner organisations from Germany, France, Serbia and Croatia, FGYO carried out a project for students (of history, law and political science) devoted to the topic of “war crimes and war crimes trials in Europe”.<sup>115</sup> With trials for war crimes in the former Yugoslavia still ongoing, the subject of the project remains highly topical and continues to move and polarise the people of SEE a great deal. The project was developed at the recommendation of our partner organisations in Croatia and Serbia, as the issue of war crimes is implicitly or explicitly raised by participants in many of our meetings in the Balkans. The aim of the project was to investigate and analyse the role of war crimes trials and to discuss their legal, political and social implications, consequences and effects particularly in Germany, Croatia, Serbia and France. The project was divided up into three individual seminars.

#### **Part 1: First part of the seminar in Dachau and The Hague**

In Dachau, seminar participants explored the history of the war crimes trials in Germany from 1945 to the present. The seminar addressed the Nazi crimes and their prosecution in the Nuremberg and Dachau trials. During a visit in Nuremberg, the participants collected information about the historical significance of the Nuremberg trials for modern-day jurisprudence and the impact on developments in international law. This exploration served as a basis for the subsequent visit to the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in The Hague. Over the course of two days, high-ranking representatives of the ICTY took the time to present their respective departments and their work and hold discussions with the group. This provided the group with many different perspectives and insights in the work of investigators, judges, prosecutors and lawyers, the management of the remand centre, dealings with witnesses, and also the outreach activities of the ICTY.

The high substantive quality of the seminar, the participants’ motivation and, not least, the very open reception given to them at the ICTY, contributed to a very objective debate on the issues involved and a good, constructive atmosphere within the group. It was also not an everyday occurrence for the staff of the ICTY to receive a multilateral group of Serbian, Croatian, French and German participants. The seminar provided a solid basis, both at a substantive and group-dynamic level, for the second portion of the seminar in Croatia and Serbia.

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<sup>115</sup> The partner organisations were the Max Mannheimer Study Center in Dachau, the Centre de Mémoire in Oradour-sur-Glane, the Agency for Local Democracy in Osijek, and the Youth Initiative for Human Rights in Belgrade.

## **Part 2: Seminar segment in Serbia and Croatia five months later**

The second seminar dealt with the specific situation involved in prosecuting war crimes in Croatia and Serbia. Conversations with representatives of courts in Croatia and Serbia dealing with war crimes stemming from the wars in the 1990s created an opportunity for a (cautious) exploration of war crimes that are not yet part of the distant past. This also included a visit to and discussions with witnesses in Vukovar, a Croatian town that was subject to heavy destruction between 25 August and 18 November 1991 during the Croatian War of Independence. Here, participants spoke with the former director of the hospital and visited the memorial to the 200 murdered victims found in mass graves in Ovcara, near Vukovar. The participants also held discussions with representatives of Documenta in Zagreb and the Humanitarian Law Centre in Belgrade. These are two of the most important human rights organisations in the region, which are involved in working through the legal and socio-political implications of war crimes and trials.

In her seminar evaluation, one participant from Serbia described this experience as follows:

“First, I would like to emphasise that not many young people from Serbia and Croatia had a chance to visit together both Jasenovac and Vukovar and still to have peaceful and meaningful dialogue about war crimes committed not so long ago. I admit it was easier to discuss in Germany about Nazi crimes, like we did, than to deal with crimes committed in our countries or with crimes orchestrated by our state officials. Still, we have shown respect towards victims and condemnation towards perpetrators regardless of their nationality. We made an effort to understand the other side without judging. By doing this we have created a foundation for future cooperation and dialogue. In addition to that, it was very useful to see what kind of perception people have who do not come from this area. Participants from Germany and France helped us to create a broader perspective and not to be ‘Balkanocentrics’. I think that we, from Serbia and Croatia, tend to perceive our conflict and post-conflict problems as unique instead of looking for comparative experiences that could be functional. For this reason, the presence of Germans and French participants enriched our observation and we were able to see a bigger picture. To sum up, Hannah Arendt wrote that we would never be able to overcome our past. It always stays as an integral part of our personal or historical stories. Therefore, the only thing we could do is to talk about the past no matter how difficult or painful it may be. This is what we were doing so far in this program. We were there to talk and now it is up to us what we are going to do with these stories.”

### **Part 3: Seminar segment in France**

In this seminar, participants devoted particular attention to the fate of French Jews during the World War Two occupation of France by German troops, through visits to the Shoah Memorial in Paris and in Drancy. In a discussion with a researcher from the Sorbonne, participants also examined the state of historical research into war crimes during the Algerian war, and discussed the problem of amnesty which was granted after the end of the Algerian war in 1962.

In Oradour-sur-Glane, participants visited the memorial and learned of war crimes committed in Oradour-sur-Glane, and of the trial related to this crime which was held in Bordeaux in 1953. The massacre of Oradour-sur-Glane was committed on 10 June 1944 by the SS Das Reich Division. In the course of a few hours, 642 civilians were murdered, and the village was looted and burned.

### **Sample project 2: “Memory Lab – Trans-European Exchange Platform of History and Remembrance”**

The starting point of the “Memory Lab” initiative was the observation that exchange and cooperation between dealing with the past - initiatives from SEE on the one hand and countries of the EU on the other are still very rare. This absence of contacts and knowledge reflects the gap that persists between the former Yugoslavia and the rest of Europe. From the point of view of European integration of the countries of the former Yugoslavia, it seems increasingly important and urgent to create spaces and opportunities for bringing together initiatives committed to constructive consideration of difficult pasts. This will give these initiatives an opportunity to share experience and knowledge, and to work together on specific, common challenges to contribute to building a shared European memory space and a European civil society. In order to explore possibilities to promote exchange and cooperation between Western Europe and the Western Balkans in the field of practical work on and with memorial sites, in June 2010 the Centre André Malraux Sarajevo, the FGYO and the Youth Initiative for Human Rights BiH organised a three-day workshop in Sarajevo. It involved 25 representatives of memorials and featured representatives of their educational units in particular, along with history NGOs from Germany, France, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia. This meeting helped to build contacts, share experiences and improve understanding of one another’s situations in the field of memory work. This workshop, which included an exploration of Sarajevo with an eye to the traces of war and war memorials, revealed the difficulties that exist in the Balkans regarding a constructive dealing with the past. At the same time it showed that there are also diverse and courageous initiatives to be found there, with creative and productive approaches in order to address

the complex task of the remembrance of war. Overall, the workshop was very rich and productive; in their evaluations, participants emphasised not only how much they had learned but also how motivated they now were to continue to work together in this area. After its great success, the workshop became an annual project with an extended length and even more in-depth study possibilities through organised tours. After two years in SEE, in 2012 and 2013 the next two workshops and study tours were held in France and Germany: in France in October 2013 in the Somme, in Paris, and in Oradour, emphasising the history and memory of the First and Second World War; and in Germany in October 2013, in Berlin, Frankfurt/Oder and Ravensbrück, with emphasis on the memory of the Third Reich and the history of the GDR. The various workshops also led to several direct cooperation arrangements among the organisations involved, such as the aforementioned seminar series titled “War Crimes and Trials in Europe”.<sup>116</sup>

### **Aims of workshop and study trip**

After organising the first two workshops and study trips in SEE, and the two following trips in Western/Central Europe, in the 5<sup>th</sup> year of its existence, Memory Lab brought together experts, activists, historians and representatives of human rights organisations, museums and direct survivors of war events for a workshop and study trip in Macedonia and Kosovo.<sup>117</sup> The aims of the workshop and study trip were, as in previous cases, adapted to the context of the specific countries visited. It had the following aims:

- To explore and discuss current memorialisation challenges in Kosovo and Macedonia related to three topics: dealing with the communist past; dealing with the recent armed conflicts (Kosovo 1998/1999, Macedonia 2001); building of new collective identities (independent Kosovo, Skopje 2014).
- To connect the experiences from Kosovo and Macedonia with the situations and remembrance work in other European countries.
- To deepen established contacts and cooperation, initiate new contacts and provide space for future activities between the participants.

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<sup>116</sup> For other examples of cooperation and more general information about Memory Lab: [www.memorylab-europe.eu](http://www.memorylab-europe.eu) [12.04.2015]

<sup>117</sup> The workshop and study trip 2014 were organised by the Youth Initiative for Human Rights BiH (Sarajevo), French-German Youth Office (Paris/Berlin), Forum ZFD Kosovo (Pristina), Alter Habitus (Pristina) and LOJA – Centar for Balkan Cooperation (Tetovo), in cooperation with and with the support of the Robert Bosch Foundation, CCFD-Terre Solidaire, the French-German Youth Office, Forum ZFD Kosovo, and the Südosteuropa-Gesellschaft. 43 persons from nine European countries participated (Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, France, Germany, Kosovo, Macedonia, Netherlands and Serbia).

### **The programme in Kosovo and Macedonia**

The programme for the Kosovo part of the workshop and study trip included visits to different sites: the Gazimestan-Monument commemorating the 1389 Kosovo battle, the Adem Jashari Memorial Complex in Prekaz, relating to the 1998/1999 war, and a Memory Walk through Pristina with visits to the Brotherhood and Unity, and Boro and Ramiz monuments and the Sami Frasheri Private School House, which had been part of the parallel education system in Kosovo in the 1990s. The programme also included a workshop with Saranda Bogujecvi, who survived the massacre of her family in 1998. She talked about the challenge of remembering the suffering of her family, but without spreading hatred while doing so. As a tradition from previous “Memory Lab” workshops, a “Memory Market” was also organised, where all participants were given the opportunity to present informational material, brochures, CDs and booklets about their work and the organisations they are affiliated with. A public discussion was also organised on the topic of “Memory challenges in Kosovo and the region”, where representatives of mainly civil society organisations presented their work and vision, discussed processes for dealing with the past and memorialisation, and outlined the main challenges they are facing.<sup>118</sup>

The different issues raised in Kosovo were reiterated or further elaborated and evoked during the following visit to Macedonia. The first day of the programme in Macedonia was dedicated to the exploration and discussion of Skopje 2014, the project officially launched in 2010 by the Macedonian government, which has radically changed the urban landscape of downtown Skopje. This was done through the construction of monuments and buildings designed to illustrate the history of the Macedonian nation. It represents one of the most striking nation-building projects through architecture and urbanism in contemporary Europe. The programme started with a self-exploration of the center of Skopje. In groups, participants discovered and explored different sites and reflected on Skopje 2014. For the joint discussion in the afternoon, each group was invited to come back from the exploration with two photos and explain why they had chosen these photos, share their impressions about what they had seen and formulate questions provoked by the exploration. After the presentations, two local experts reacted to the participants’ questions and remarks and gave additional information in order to provide

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<sup>118</sup> The panelists were Bekim Blakaj (Executive Director, Humanitarian Law Centre Kosovo), Ljiljana Milić (President Božur), Marie Ursula Kind (Senior Adviser on Transitional Justice, United Nations Kosovo Team), Orli Fridman (Academic Director, Peace and Conflict Studies in the Balkans, Belgrade), Kushtrim Koliqi (Executive Director, Integra) and Abdullah B. Ferizi (Project Manager, Forum ZFD Kosovo). The public discussion was held in the EU Information and Cultural Centre Pristina.

a better understanding of the Skopje 2014 project and place it in a historical and political context.<sup>119</sup>

On the next day, the group first visited the Museum of the Communist Party of Macedonia in Tetovo, and then, as part of an exploration of the way in which the recent conflict of 2001 was commemorated in Macedonia, the memorial to Macedonians killed in Neprosteni, Tetovo. This memorial was built in July 2014 to commemorate the lives of twelve Macedonians who were kidnapped by Albanian rebels in 2001. The last element of the study tour was a visit to the Albanian Mother memorial in Zajas, a very new memorial which opened in November 2013. The next day began with a feedback round about these visits, which provided additional information about the monuments visited.

After all these visits the last day of the programme was largely dedicated to placing what had been seen and heard in these two countries into a broader European context. The session was called “Mapping Similarities and Differences in Memorialisation in Europe”. In parallel country groups, the participants first discussed the question of how their societies are dealing with the three main memorialisation topics which had been the focus during the week: dealing with the communist past, dealing with recent armed conflicts, and national identity building. The groups were invited to choose keywords for the situation of their country related to the three topics, which were then put on a European map on the wall. They then summarised and discussed their findings in a plenary session, which allowed a comparative overview of the different situations in Europe.

The programme ended with a written evaluation by the participants. Some extracts of the evaluation sheets may illustrate how such a project can contribute to overcoming knowledge and contact gaps within Europe. Participants emphasised how much they had learned in these five days (“I learned much more than in a whole semester of history at university”) and underlined the specific trans-European importance of this project. One participant from Western Europe for example wrote:

“As the history of Kosovo and Macedonia is largely ignored in Western Europe, what we have seen this week is a good start to try to change this situation and create projects on this history.”

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<sup>119</sup> The two invited local experts were Dr Goran Janev, Social Anthropologist teaching at the St. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje, who has published several articles about the project Skopje 2014, and Sanja Radjenovic-Jovanovic, architect and President of the Association of Architects in Macedonia.

The programme not only allowed participants to learn more about Kosovo and Macedonia, but also placed the situations there in the context of situations in other European countries:

“The approach used to address the topics of memorialisation practices in Kosovo and Macedonia (...) provided me with the possibility to understand these processes and at the same time to perceive the differences and similarities between these and other countries in that respect.”

The project provided an opportunity to learn about the specific situations of different countries, while also illustrating that we are facing similar challenges in Europe and that discussing these challenges is highly stimulating for the participating organisations:

“It is important to provide the people who deal with the topics of facing the past, reconciliation and memory processes with an opportunity to meet colleagues who are dealing with similar topics. This not only makes us aware that we all have something in common even though we come from various contexts, but at the same time provides us with a platform to discuss, exchange, and draw new conclusions which can help us in our work.”

The trans-European importance of “Memory Lab” is also illustrated in the fact the project facilitates networking and the development of new projects between the different organisations, as emphasised by one participant:

“I established new contacts which will result in one new project; and with other colleagues we agreed about the continuation of a project we initiated last year. In general, the knowledge that there is a network of competent and interested people whom I can contact any time for different needs and ideas related to my work is extremely useful!”

### **Creating a European space of memory**

In 2014, the year in which we remember the beginning of the First World War in 1914 and its devastating consequences, 75 years after the outbreak of the Second World War and 25 years after the fall of the Iron Curtain, we must recognise that war in the heart of Europe is possible once more. This shows that our societies, in their effort to make peaceful, democratic coexistence possible in Europe, are more dependent today than ever before not only upon an understanding of European history in all its complexity but also upon a dialogue about this history, a dialogue carried out together and reaching across national boundaries.

The intercultural quality of this dialogue will also ultimately determine how sustainably our European societies can learn from this history and apply its lessons to the future.

As said in the introduction, the history projects of the FGYO in and with SEE aim to develop and strengthen a European space of memory and a multi-perspectival view of history within Europe. There are a host of encouraging approaches in this respect: Germany and Poland are currently working on a common history book. After many years of dialogue and research, Germany and France have succeeded in providing schools in both countries with a common history book spanning several volumes. This project is rooted in a call by the Franco-German Youth Parliament in 2003, convening on the occasion of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Élysée Treaty. The participants called for the “introduction of a history course book having the same content in both countries so that negative preconceptions caused by mutual ignorance might be avoided” (Klett Verlag 2008: 3). The preface to the history book states:

“No doubt teachers, pupils and interested readers outside of the school system will find new material here that will permit them to change the views they have of others as well as of themselves. Ultimately, this added value lies in the novelty and in the specific character of the point of view proposed: its essential material is the shift in perspective. This shift emphasises the interwovenness of the strands of historical development; elements of remembrance, whether shared or disputed; and the various and different approaches to one and the same reality – as well as differences between words, meanings, concepts and their reception.” (Klett Verlag 2008: 3)

The challenge is thus an intercultural one: how – particularly in schools – can we offer a change of perspective in the encounter with history, altering not only the way we view others but also the way we see ourselves and what are often our own entrenched “certainties”? Strengthening European identity calls for knowledge of different perspectives, awareness of our European neighbours and respect for different points of view. So we need space and opportunities for shared, intercultural learning about history.

In terms of formal and non-formal education, this means redoubling the search for ways of discovering memorials and “difficult places” together with our European neighbours and heightening awareness of different perceptions (e. g. in the context of school partnerships or cross-border educational or extracurricular projects). It is also important, particularly in SEE and Eastern Europe, and also in the Maghreb, to integrate those memorials and institutions that are active in the work of commemoration even further into existing European networks.

A “European space of memory” also offers the opportunity to open up new doors in a difficult dialogue. This need is particularly evident in SEE, where the memory of the last wars is still painfully present, and where, depending upon the pupils’ ethnicities, different versions of history are taught under the same school roof – as is the case, for instance, in some parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

As both sample projects demonstrate, a shared European dialogue on history offers the opportunity for a multi-perspectival approach, a change of perspective and hence a more in-depth examination of history. In addition, the Memory Lab platform underscores how trans-European (and quite practical) dialogue on the topic of European cultures of remembrance also inspires new forms of and projects in European cooperation.

The example of the Franco-German-Serbian-Croatian seminar on war crimes trials in Europe shows how discussing this topic in a European context (the issue was no longer seen as a problem “typical” of or “internal” to the Balkans) greatly contributed to more objective reflection, promoting common European learning in the process.

The diversity of cultures of remembrance and concepts of remembrance in Europe, our different perceptions and approaches to dealing with history, provide the opportunity to grasp history from different perspectives. Seizing this opportunity remains a challenge and a common European mission, even 100 years after the outbreak of the First World War.

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**Andrea Mork:**

### **Constructing the House of European History**

What we understand by “Europe” is, and one might say always has been, a matter of contention. Europe is not an easily definable entity, neither geographically nor politically. What Europe is has always been a question that has been answered in different ways at different points in time. And the decisive characteristic in shaping European history has not been political unity, but the experience of diversity in a variety of different forms. “The European identity is complex... in permanent movement and many-headed. A kaleidoscope.” (Kristeva 2013: 40)

### **Genesis and building of the museum**

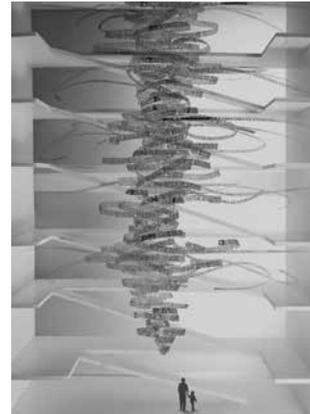


*Picture 1: House of European History under construction*

The House of European History, a museum under construction in Brussels, is based on the idea that main events and key developments in European history which have been formative for the continent were transnational, even though they were experienced in very different ways. The House of European History aims to become a “reservoir of European memory”, a reservoir of a shared memory in the dual sense of the word: European history has bound us together and it has divided us.

The House of European History is a project initiated by the European Parliament. At the suggestion of the former President of the European Parliament, Hans-Gert Pöttering, who launched this idea in his inaugural speech on 13 February 2007, an initial concept was drawn up by an international committee of experts and accepted by the Bureau of the European Parliament in December 2008. From January 2011 onwards the academic project team – now composed of 29 historians, museum professionals and assistants from 14 different nations – started work on this project, developing the concept, narrative and historical content of its permanent exhibition. From the outset the project has been met with critical debate in the academic world, giving rise at the same time to concrete proposals and recommendations about the subject matter and key issues for the museum, which have inspired our thinking on the content in many ways (see Kaiser 2012, Knigge 2011, Breier 2011, Leggewie 2011). These discussions have increased our awareness of the sensitivities of our subject matter and confirmed our commitment to arguing for a pluralism of interpretations that will counter the limitations of taking a single, ostensibly objective, approach. The academic project team has had the freedom and independence to generate its own ideas without any political interference. An academic committee chaired by Prof Włodzimierz Borodziej advises the academic project team and has prevented us from making the most egregious mistakes.

The museum will be hosted in a historical building, the Eastman Building, a former dental clinic from the 1930s, which the American George Eastman had built for the medical treatment of socially disadvantaged children. The building reminds us every day not to become too Eurocentric in our historiographical reflections, recalling the decisive role the United States has played in European history. This building is currently being restored and enlarged by the architectural firms Chaix & Morel et associés (France), JSWD Architekten (Germany) und TPF (Belgium). The exhibition design has been developed by the Spanish design agency GPD/Acciona, based in Seville. The opening of the permanent exhibition is planned for spring 2016.



Picture 2: Central staircase with quotes

Multilingualism and multiperspectivity will be key constituents of the new museum, which will provide educational services in 24 languages.<sup>120</sup> When visitors enter the central

<sup>120</sup> Bulgarian, Croatian, Czech, Danish, Dutch, English, Estonian, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Irish, Italian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Maltese, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Slovak, Slovene, Spanish and Swedish.

staircase of the museum, they will be confronted with a 27-meter high installation, consisting of a tree-like structure composed of historical quotes. These quotes serve as leit-motifs within the narrative, reaching out like branches into the exhibition, directing the visitor towards particular topics. Each of the quotes expresses the individual spirit of its time and together they build up to a multi-vocal diversity of interpretations. They situate the events within a meaningful context and at the same time invite contradiction. The oldest quote comes from Herodotus, explaining the source of Europe's name, and the most recent from the Ukrainian author Juri Andruchowytch: "The human formula is memory plus hope" (Andruchowytch 2004: 71).

### **Theoretical basis and methodological framework**

Anyone who builds a house needs a foundation, a theoretical basis and a methodological framework. Anyone who builds a historical museum needs to orient themselves within three categories: history, memory and identity.

Since the 1990s the question of collective identity has had overwhelming success in cultural science. This can also be regarded as the sign of a deep-rooted crisis. In a crisis situation, the call for a stronger sense of community and an awareness of belonging together, the desire to bind people together in a community of shared values – beyond political imperatives and economic interests – is altogether understandable. After long discussions, the academic project team has come to the conclusion that the concept of identity is not suited to defining our theoretical basis, as there is no commonly accepted definition of European identity. Its description achieves such a degree of generality that it loses any concrete meaning. The concept is too simple, reductionist, and static. There is no identity without historical consciousness and shared memory. Making the House of European History a stage for the presentation of a pre-defined European identity would be an authoritarian step that would block rather than foster the necessary social debate on this highly meaningful question. Instead of defining an identity "from the top down", the House of European History should become a platform for the dialogue on European identity and the emergence of a European consciousness.

An alternative approach leads in the direction formulated by Swiss author Adolph Musch: "What binds Europe together and what divides it, is quintessentially the shared memory." (Muschg 2003) Instead of defining an identity, we think it is more appropriate to refer to the concept of "collective memory" which was developed by Maurice Halbwachs in the 1920s and has been reintroduced into the international debate by Pierre Nora and

Jan and Aleida Assmann. The advantage of this concept lies in its multiperspectivity and critical potential.

The purpose is neither to present European history in general nor to add national histories. Instead, our focus is on those events and developments that have been formative for the continent and we ask: what binds Europe together? What are the most relevant historical events and developments in European history and which experiences, interpretations and memories do the various nations and social groups associate with them, as each of the nations and groups have been involved in different ways? The exhibition will focus on phenomena: a) which are originally European, b) which have spread all over Europe and c) which have been relevant up to now and considered distinctive marks of a European civilisation and culture. We will identify these events and developments with the aim of providing a framework which allows different experiences and interpretations to be revealed. We do not see historiography and cultural memories as contradictory approaches, but believe they complement each other.

In other words, the permanent exhibition does not intend to provide a – however condensed – complete overview of European history. Such an attempt would extend the scope of the exhibition, which instead has to be content with accentuating the most relevant reference points for a European consciousness. We are aware that gaps will emerge and historians may criticise this with good reason. No one would deny that all history is a construct, but its presentation should certainly not be arbitrary and subjective. Plausibility is the goal, and the critical use of sources and intersubjective comprehensibility are our tools.

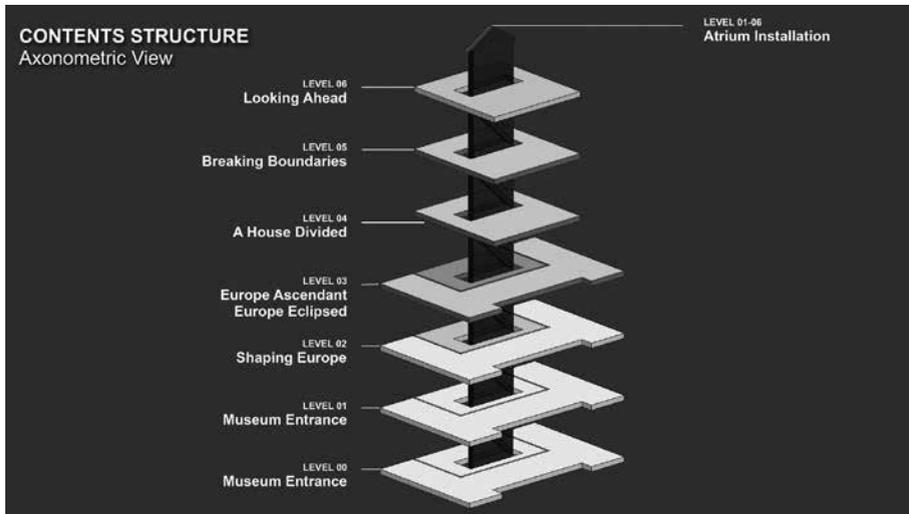
To sum up, The House of European History will not be just a representation of the multiplicity of national histories. It will be a “reservoir of European memory”, containing experiences and interpretations in all their diversity, contrasts and contradictions. Its presentation of history will be ambivalent rather than homogeneous, critical rather than affirmative. It is our goal to raise awareness of European commonalities by bringing together the memories and traditions of different national and social groups. We want to inspire the visitors to learn more about different perspectives and thus transcend their national bias and expand their understanding of European history. Although we are avoiding the word “identity”, we would of course be delighted if our future visitors would recognise some common sense of history, crystallised as points of identification with their shared European legacy.



Picture 3: Objects in the House of European History

The team has already started to build up our own collection, which will contain all kind of objects – from fine art to items used in everyday life. As witnesses of the past, objects are sources of historical knowledge and cognition. Contextualised by texts and other objects they reflect the variety and complexity of the past and the complexity of understanding the past. As we do not have our own collection yet, we depend on loans from museums and collections from all over Europe. Over recent years, the curators have been contacting and visiting around 300 institutions in order to find objects which have a “European dimension”, bearing witness to cross-border processes and pan-European phenomena.

## Narrative and structure of the permanent exhibition



Picture 4: Structure of the permanent exhibition

What is the central theme of the narrative and how are we going to visualise European history? The 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century will be the core element of the permanent exhibition, with particular attention paid to the process of European integration after World War II. The scope of the narrative will not be restricted to the outer borders of the European Union. Such a limitation would not live up to the notion of “European history”. The permanent exhibition will extend over five floors of the Eastman Building. Six examples from different periods and subject areas should give you an insight into how we are going to present history and memory.

## Introduction: “Shaping Europe”



Picture 5: Permanent exhibition – “Shaping Europe”

The starting point of the permanent exhibition – “Shaping Europe” – provides an introduction into the subject matter of the House of European History. Its aim is to engage visitors with the fundamentals of Europe and to familiarise them with core issues of its history.

“There has always been a Europe, since the ancient Greeks gave it a name” (Hobsbawm 1997: 219). In the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC Herodotus already mentions the myth that the princess Europa gave the continent its name. The story is that the Phoenician princess was robbed by Zeus, who carried her off to Crete. Europa has become the emblematic figure of the continent and been the subject of a wide range of different readings and imaginative recontextualisations through history. The exhibition shows examples of how the myth has been interpreted in a multiplicity of ways in fine art and literature, for decorative and cartographical purposes, as a way of displaying romance and sensuality, and also for political purposes. Viewed from a modern standpoint, the myth hints at the fact that European culture has ancient roots beyond the European continent. It is of course surprising that the name giver of our continent came from abroad. According to the myth, Europa’s brother Cadmus brought the Phoenician alphabet to the Greeks. Thus, the myth recalls an extraordinary example of cultural transfer, as the Greeks adopted the Phoenician script and developed the first full alphabet from it, which in turn became the origin of numerous other European and Middle Eastern scripts.

The exhibition accentuates the fact that Europe is not a self-evident entity and that perceptions of Europe, its images and concepts, have changed radically from antiquity until today. Maps determine and reflect the image of Europe and the political self-image of the continent. They are not defined by sharp-edged geographical boundaries, but rather by cultural characteristics and distinctions. Up until today, “mapping Europe” has been the result of social and political concepts as well as (un)consciously active religious, cultural and national borders.

Our central message is that Europa is a cultural term. It is a construct. “It has its place in the self-identification and self-definition of those who call themselves Europeans.” (Schröder 2014: 169) The visitor is asked to reflect on particular features, traditions and achievements that could be defined as “typically European”, which distinguish its history, civilisation and culture from those of other continents. In the introduction we attempt to stimulate discussion about the components of a European heritage by highlighting the most powerful factors that have shaped Europe’s history, including Greek philosophy, Roman law, human rights, the dominance of Christianity and individualism, Enlightenment and colonialism. The differentiation between those parts of our heritage that we accept and those that we refuse should stimulate reflection on the impact of history, its opportunities and its obligations. Which part would we like to shelve, which do we want to continue?

### The long 19<sup>th</sup> century



Picture 6: Permanent exhibition – 19<sup>th</sup> century

The narrative of the exhibition – in the proper sense of the term – starts with the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when Europe developed its modernity – politically, economically, socially and culturally. The concepts of human and civil rights, self-determination, industrialisation, liberal market economy, national movements, and socialism were leading factors in this conflictual transformation process and remain relevant up till now. The exhibition tries to visualise the transnational interrelationship of these developments, accentuating their parallels and their connections.

The visitor should become aware that with the French Revolution a radically new concept of democracy was conceived, destroying the ancient idea that power was religiously legitimised and could be inherited. In 1789 the *Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen* demanded freedom and equal rights for all. Politics should depend on the decisions of the majority. The ideas of the French Revolution, *liberté, égalité, fraternité*, circulated all over Europe. All subsequent revolutions referred to them. The exhibition lends special attention to the revolutions of 1848/49 due to the multiplicity of upheavals and their geographical scale, which made them a truly European event.

The idea of the nation state became the leading concept for European politics on its way to modernity. The exhibition gives an overview of how peoples and nations all over Europe endeavoured to reinvent their traditions, standardise their languages, make up national myths and create historical reference points. All of them were striving for the particularity of their own national identity.

Only a few intellectuals had already envisioned the utopia of a politically united Europe. One of these was Victor Hugo, who in 1849 expressed his vision in a passionate speech:

“The day will come, when you Russia, you Italy, you England, and you Germany, when all the nations of the continent, without forgetting your distinctive characters or your individual splendours, will bind yourselves tightly together into a single, superior entity, and come to constitute a European brotherhood.” (Hugo 1882: 479)

Describing major lines of European history in their transnational interdependencies and interrelations, the exhibition depicts simultaneously the local particularities and different manifestations of these developments. It is this relationship between difference and commonality that makes “the complexity and the richness of European culture and history” (Schlögel 2013: 164) and provides the basic pattern for our exhibition.

As the new century dawned, Europe was the dominant global power and culture. Confident and self-assured, its mastery in science, technology and culture was displayed to the world in grand events such as the Universal Exhibition held in Paris in 1900, which expressed its consciousness of superiority. It was the progress of industrialisation, which caused radical change in all spheres of life and which provided Europe with the means to achieve unprecedented levels of economic growth and gain increased control over the rest of the world.

Our narrative points out that the belief in progress and superiority reflected and motivated Europe's role as the technological innovator and the dominating power in the world, creating vast imperial networks. Technological advancement and imperial expansion were two sides of the coin, both representing the innate belief in human progress, the linearity of history and the position of Europe and Europeans at the apex of that development. Scientific advances became a source of pride and competition between European nations. In the eyes of the European elite, no other benchmark could better demonstrate their progress and superiority – the signature of the era – than the multiplication and improvement of knowledge.

Yet inner contradictions were growing at the heart of Europe's progress, such as the discrepancies between European principles and colonial practices. The exhibition shows that in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Africa in particular became the "greenhouse of imperialism" (Hannah Arendt), where Europeans suspended the political and ethnic standards of Western civilisation while exploitation of and disregard for the "Others" were rationalised by new theories of social Darwinism and the faith in European racial superiority. As one can already recognise here, the permanent exhibition does not present European history as an unbroken success story. In the contrary, it points out that social and political tensions and international rivalries led to the build-up of an enormous and multi-faceted potential for conflict, which then exploded at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

## The Age of Catastrophe



Picture 7: Permanent exhibition – World War I

In the choice of topics for the narrative of the permanent exhibition we have focused on issues with a distinct and visible relevance. The integration of Europe after World War II cannot be understood without knowing about its disintegration in the period beforehand. The first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is presented as an “Age of Catastrophe” (Hobsbawm 1994) – shaken by two traumatic world wars, an economic crisis of unprecedented depth and the decline of liberal democracy, while totalitarianism advanced. The dialectics of modernity became manifest in the transformation from extreme rationality, as it had been developed in modern times, into the extreme irrationality which became apparent in the different scenarios of mass war and totalitarian terror.

1914 was a turning point for Europe. World War I, the Great War, *la Grande Guerre* was the “great seminal catastrophe” of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (George F. Kennan), from which all future calamities sprang. Focusing on a European scenario, we try to expose the traumatising experience of the first industrialised mass war that inflicted unfathomable destruction both on the battlefield and on society at large. “The lamps are going out all over Europe. We shall not see them lit again in our lifetime.” This clairvoyant statement from Edward Grey, Foreign Secretary of Great Britain, made on 3 August 1914, when Germany declared war on France, was a kind of anticipated memory. The exhibition recalls the traumatic effects of the irresponsible mass killing in the trench war, which had a profound impact on the European memory, thus setting the pace for the most murderous century in European history. There was no way of stopping the “battle in the heads” (Raphael 2011: 66).

In "The Last Days of Mankind", published in 1922, the Viennese satirist Karl Kraus prophesied the continuation of warfare: "All that was yesterday will be forgotten... that one was defeated... that one started the war... that one fought the war. Therefore the war will not end." (Kraus 1986: 659)

The First World War radically changed the political map of Europe. Old empires collapsed; new nation states were established. The exhibition points out the rapid and extensive rise of parliamentary democracy and, a short time later, its decline, as authoritarianism and totalitarianism were on the advance all over Europe. In 1922 it was only the Soviet Republics and Hungary that deviated from the model of parliamentary democracy. 1939, not even two decades later, dictators ruled the majority of Europeans. Pacifism and the European idea, which had gained prominence and support in the 1920s, could not prevail in the nationalistically heated atmosphere and faltered in the face of rising chauvinism and totalitarian aggression.

In this context the comparison between National Socialism and Stalinism is a constituent part of the exhibition. Comparison does not mean equalisation. The exhibition accentuates that these two extreme manifestations of totalitarian systems evolved from their own ideological roots and different historical and political circumstances. National Socialism and Stalinism will be placed face to face in order to explain both their differences and their similarities. "The basic comparability", Hans Mommsen recapitulated, "lies in the terrible consequence of unlimited exercise of power and in the unscrupulousness with which real and imagined enemies were persecuted ruthlessly as well as the all-encompassing of the terror apparatus, which was no longer tied to any traditional legal norm." (Mommsen 2006: 13) Our goal is to demonstrate the structural elements of these two systems, which were mortal enemies but which at the same time constituted both a radical break with liberal democracy and the denial of any ethical and humanitarian concerns. While the Communist regime justified its expansionism as being a battle for the victory of the proletariat and the National Socialist regime declared its striving for hegemony as being a battle for new Lebensraum and a racial reorganisation of the continent, both regimes undertook the total destruction of the political order of the interwar period.

## Memory of the Shoah



Picture 8: Permanent exhibition – memory of the Shoah

The exhibition pays special attention to the memory of the Shoah. As the “break of civilisation”, the Shoah is the beginning and the nucleus of the European discourse of memory. We document different strategies of justification and suppression, showing how the memory of the Shoah was put aside for a very long time. The exhibition focuses on six countries (West Germany, East Germany, France, Poland, Austria and Ukraine), which have dealt in very different ways with the Shoah. In the meantime, the recognition of the Shoah has become the negative reference point of European self-consciousness – constitutive for the European self-image that can no longer trust its own humanistic traditions. As Tony Judt has put it, “the re-discovered memory of Europe’s dead Jews is the definition and guarantee for the re-discovered humanism of the continent.” (Judt 2005: 804) From this standpoint it should be evident – even for a hurried visitor – that the permanent exhibition of the museum is far away from any idealisation of European history. Critical self-reflection of our past and of our deepest convictions is what sharpens European memory.

### European integration after 1945

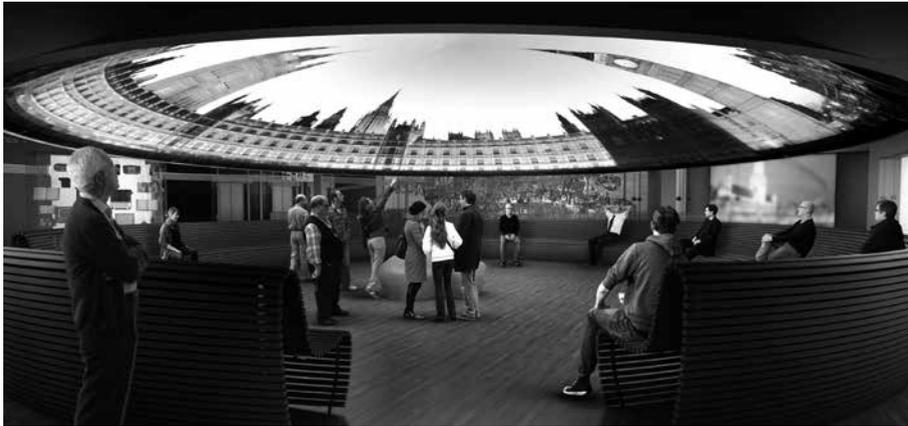
Another fundamental subject of the permanent exhibition is European integration after 1945, which marks a further turning point in the history of the continent, preventing Western Europe from falling back into previous chauvinistic and aggressive mechanisms. The exhibition presents Europe in ruins, disempowered and divided between two opposing superpowers, the United States of America and the Soviet Union. Even though

the nation states have been reinstalled after 1945 and are ethnically more homogenous than ever, the time of national sovereignty is over.

The exhibition points out that European integration was the result of a long and painful learning process after the murderous experiences in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and that it was also a “child” of the Cold War. United by their fear of Communism, some Western European countries set themselves on a path of co-operation in order to tame nationalism and dismantle the risk of war, thereby pursuing two complementary goals: the project aimed at reconciliation and freedom, at the domestication of international conflicts on the one hand and at the promotion of cooperation between the nation states and the building up of new supranational competences on the other. The Western European Community was founded primarily to promote peace and prosperity. It was regarded as a means of suppressing the aggressive tensions of nationalism, mainly on the part of Germany, by integrating it into supranational structures. In the course of European integration a unique community has crystallised that has largely contributed to the “pacification of a blood-soaked continent” (Habermas 2011: 61). Paradoxically, the Western European nation states could gain their relative independence and increasing political power to act through supranational integration.

The question arose of how to make this very complicated and changing history of European integration comprehensible for a mass audience. How was it possible to document a process, which had been accompanied by crisis and flashbacks, without reducing too much of its complexity? The exhibition design follows the advice of Jean Monnet, who proposed moving slowly and step by step, leaving each generation its own tasks and goals to realise the European idea. We will concentrate on 15 milestones, which have set the course for building a supranational network and been paradigmatic of the problem-solving within the integration process from The Hague Congress in 1948 to the Treaty of Lisbon in 2009.

The presentation of these 15 milestones is embedded in a wider historical context, describing basic events and developments from 1945 to our time, such as the introduction of the welfare state, the economic crisis, the emergence of new social movements, the decline and crash of communism in Central and Eastern Europe, the end of Cold War and the reunification of the continent. The development of Western Europe was largely influenced by the predominance of the United States of America. In Eastern Europe the dominant Soviet Union integrated all nation states into one economic and political bloc. For decades East and West stood in radical confrontation to each other.



*Picture 9: Last part of the permanent exhibition – fifth floor*

These are a few examples of the way we are going to portray European history. The presentation of key events and ground-breaking developments in Europe provides a framework in which different national experiences and memories can be exposed. In this way, the presentation of history will be complex rather than uniform, more differentiated than homogeneous, critical rather than affirmative, but with a synthetic perspective towards a European self-awareness. The advantage of this concept lies in its multiple perspectives and critical potential. The “reservoir of European memory” should contain the European experiences and interpretations in all their diversity, contrasts and contradictions. Our goal is to encourage visitors to become acquainted with new perspectives and to transcend their national prejudices and biases towards an enlarged understanding of historical commonalities and interrelations.

### **Summary**

There are three convictions that are fundamental to our project: First, the huge revolutionary and traumatic events in European history were cross-border developments. To broaden the perspective of historical investigation is helpful for the understanding of historical complexity. Second, sharing our stories means learning to deal with diversity. Shared memories can be the starting point for a learning process in which different experiences and diverse interpretations are mirrored and related to each other in a new way. The construction of European history and memory is inseparably intertwined with the awareness of differences. Third, the HEH should become a platform for the dialogue on European identity. The construction of a transnational, pan-European memory should take place within a process of communication and in the light of public discussion.

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- a) Gas mask from World War II, France. Photo credits: © European Union
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- Picture 7 World War I - Postcard Ensemble. Photo credits: ACCIONA Producciones y Diseño S.A. © European Union
- Picture 8 Memory of the Shoah. Photo credits: ACCIONA Producciones y Diseño S.A. © European Union
- Picture 9 Last Part of the Permanent Exhibition. Photo credits: ACCIONA Producciones y Diseño S.A. © European Union

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**Geert Buelens:**

**War poetry, nationalism and internationalism: a pan-European perspective**

In countries like France, England or Belgium the First World War is still mainly being referred to with the name it received in the early months of the conflict, in 1914: The Great War. The War was “great” because the world had never before seen so many soldiers being mobilised, or, for that matter, being killed. But it was also “great” because the greatest nations of Europe were involved: Germany, France, Britain, Austria-Hungary and Russia. The horrible events of 1915, 1916, 1917 and 1918 would make that Great War ever so great. A conflict beyond compare, a tragedy beyond belief. A hundred years after the start of the war its greatness is not a matter of dispute. Its meaning, however, is. In order to understand the Great War better, it might be an idea for us, Europeans, to look not only at the fate, ambitions and sacrifices of those Great European nations, but also at the significance the war had for all those smaller nations or cultures. Nations that also suffered immensely, but whose remembrance of the war is also influenced by the specific cultural and geopolitical promises, triumphs and disappointments the First World War brought to them.

Military, economic or diplomatic historians do not tend to focus on these smaller nations. By and large, these countries’ efforts were not really crucial to the outcome of the war. And culturally speaking they tend to be overlooked as well. The small canon of First World War films, for instance, contains American, German, British, and French pictures with the accidental Italian production added to it (Véray 2008, Sorlin 2010). Intriguing, illuminating and often deeply moving films like Vulo Radev’s “The Peach Thief” (Bulgaria) or Liviu Ciulei’s “Forest of the Hanged” (Romania) are all but forgotten today, despite the fact that the former was nominated for the Golden Lion in Venice in 1964 and the latter won the award for best director at the Cannes Festival in 1965.

**Reframing the canon of First World War poetry**

When it comes to poetry, the selection that made the cut is even more questionable. British war poets like Rupert Brooke, Siegfried Sassoon or Wilfred Owen are world famous; John McCrae’s “In Flanders Fields” is quoted time and again. But who knows the poem-as-letter the Hungarian Margit Kaffka wrote to her husband who served at the front? Who knows the darker than dark poems Daan Boens wrote in the trenches of his native

Flanders? Who quotes the Yiddish verses of Apocalypse in which Uri Tsvi Greenberg wrote about the sorrow and terror of Europe, as he called it?<sup>121</sup>

One might argue that this is how collective memory and canonisation work. Only a small percentage of works tend to survive, only a few are immortalised. But then again, the way the canon of English literature has been successfully questioned until texts by women or postcolonial authors were included shows that canonisation is not a natural process. It is not the survival of the fittest. If it were, this would imply that the fittest First World War poets by definition had English as their mother tongue. Efforts by critics, curators, publishers and teachers can make a difference when it comes to cultural memory. To a large extent, it is also a question of framing: who thinks of Rainer Maria Rilke, Fernando Pessoa and Vladimir Mayakovsky as First World War poets? Yet, they were. And their contribution might help us to understand the conflict better. In this respect, I believe it is a good idea to rethink and reframe the canon of First World War poetry.<sup>122</sup> There are at least three good reasons to do so.

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<sup>121</sup> All poems mentioned in this article can be read in the original language and a Dutch translation in Buelens (2008b). Kafka is anthologised in English in Higonnet (1999); Greenberg in Howe/Shmeruk (1987).

<sup>122</sup> Symptomatically, Penguin stopped printing the widely used and taught Silkin edited "Penguin Book of First World War Poetry" (revised edition 1996) which, next to the English language canon, also included translations from a few German, French, Italian, Russian and Yiddish poems. It was replaced with an anthology edited by George Walter also called "The Penguin Book of World War Poetry" featuring only poems originally written in English (Walter 2006). In a field dominated by university presses like Cambridge, two noted examples of a similar approach to textbooks and introductory guides and companions are Sherry (2005) and Das (2013). The first volume contains 12 essays, 8 of which are on English language literatures, one on French, and one on German literature. A single contribution – Marjorie Perloff's essay on the European avant-garde – looks at the war from a comparative point of view. The book contains not a single reference to Georg Trakl or August Stramm (quintessential German speaking modernist poets who both died in the war), to Giuseppe Ungaretti (whose 1916 war-volume "Porto Sepolto" is a landmark of Italian modernist poetry) or to Nikolas Gumilyov and Alexander Blok (whose contributions to Russian War Literature are vital). These poets are also absent from Das (2013), which does a superb job at integrating the colonial perspective into the main English paradigm but deliberately limits itself to poetry "written in English, whether in Britain, the former parts of the empire or the United States; poems in other European, Asian and African languages belong to different contexts and traditions. These are vast and complex areas, and single chapters on each, it was felt, would not do them justice." (Das 2013b: xxi). This is a legitimate choice, for sure, but one which should not keep us from trying out other configurations. Early attempts at developing a more encompassing transnational view like Bowra (1961) and Hamburger (1970) are absent from the extensive bibliographies of these books. Marsland (1991) seems to be the only transnational study which has been canonised in international First World War poetry studies. The invaluable "1914-1918-online. International Encyclopedia of the First World War" website contains references to neither one of these.

The first one has to do with quality. There are so many unknown voices and treasures to be discovered, anthologised and taught. The main national poets of Slovenia, Serbia and Latvia wrote about the war. But there's also a trove of First World War writing by very famous poets who were directly involved but who are not normally seen as War Poets the way Sassoon, Blunden or Robert Graves are. Apart from those already mentioned, one could think of the Russian Futurist Velimir Chlebnikov, the Italian Futurist leader Marinetti or the French avant-garde gurus Guillaume Apollinaire, Blaise Cendrars, Louis Aragon or Jean Cocteau. Adding their work to the canon of First World War poetry will not only change the way we see the war, it will also have implications for our understanding of the avant-garde's relationship to society, to war, to ideas of regeneration and revolution.

The second one is about historical or maybe even moral justice. Why would the expressions of those smaller literatures and cultures matter less than those of the main European nations who made the war "great" but who also bear the biggest responsibility for it? Or to put it differently: we should expand the canon beyond the national scope which still seems to dominate our cultures of remembrance. If the First World War was to a large extent caused by nationalism, shouldn't we try to move beyond the idea of a "national" commemoration and make it into a true European, that is to say, international and multilingual affair? Poetry is a great way to do so, because it allows for the inclusion of relatively short texts, often by authors who still have a central place in their nation's cultures, without reducing them to the position of their nation's mouthpiece.

The third reason might be the most important one, at least from the perspective of European commemorations. If we really want to form some sort of European Union we should take an interest in the history, experiences and traumas of all those minor states that make up most of the continent but which, culturally, tend to be reduced to their often whimsical appearances at the Eurovision Song Contest. But while the musical acts at the song contest usually are displays of a globalised pop culture with a tinge of *couleur locale* added that does not really speak of nor for the way the citizens of their countries lead their lives, European First World War poetries testify to the actual, often local, sometimes universal experiences of their people. And knowing more about those local circumstances and the way they shaped the history and soul of their respective nations might help us to assess "what the war was really about".

### Poetry as a quick guide to specific and local cultural practices

Apart from well-worn phrases about the importance of peace and international understanding it has proven to be difficult to find real common ground when it comes to the commemoration of conflicts like the First World War. Even within the European Union – itself the product of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century's world wars – there is no real consensus about the significance of this episode in our history. *Urkatastrophe* for one country, birth of the nation for another one – the *enjeux* and outcomes differed and so do contemporary interpretations. There is no easy solution to this conundrum and it would be misleading to suggest otherwise. But on a very basic level much can be done to further mutual knowledge and understanding. Artists, academics, diplomats and other intellectuals who attempt to develop transnational practices can learn more about the specific local histories of the war by studying artistic practices from all over the world.

My own work on the First World War tries to inform readers using poetry as its main source. I build on two wonderful anthologies made many years ago: Tim Cross's "The Lost Voices of World War I" (1989), a collection of works by writers, poets and playwrights who perished in the war and Margaret Higgonet's "Line of Fire. Women Writers of WWI" (1999). My interest was not so much gender-related or an attempt to honour the dead. Both in "*Het lijf in slijk geplamt*", an annotated anthology of 200 poems from thirty languages and forty countries (Buelens 2008b) and in my book "Europa Europa" (Buelens 2008a) translated into German (Buelens 2014a) and English (Buelens 2015) I tried to overcome the nationalist bias of many cultural approaches to the war and its remembrance by including work from all sides and embracing a comparative, transnational scope of the material. These poems testify to the jingoism and pacifism of its time, to the folly of a belief in war as a cleansing experience, but also to the humanism, courage and despair of those who lived, died, survived. Apart from these more or less universal poems and emotions, I learned much about very local circumstances and sensitivities. In what follows I single out four elements.

The first of these is about how the aftermath of the war is still very much a factor in politics today. My case in point is the national trauma Hungary suffered after its defeat. The Trianon treaty which forced Hungary to give up 71 per cent of its pre-war territory and 60 per cent of its population is still a major factor in Hungary's current nationalist politics. In late 1918 Hungary's major poet, Endre Ady, issued a poetic warning to the victors of the war, asking them to be gentle with his country:

“Don’t you step too hard on it  
Don’t trample too hard on it  
On the beauty that’s our torn heart  
Which someday may yet wish to soar.” (Ady 1987: 136)

Ady had never been a jingoist, he was heavily criticised for his cosmopolitan tendencies, but he had a sense of local pride and a special love for the multiethnic Transylvania which, according to the Treaty, went to Romania, placing almost three and half million Magyars outside their country’s borders. Ady’s respectful plea was not heard. Ninety years later the trauma still lingers on.

The second thing I learned by adopting a transnational approach is, perhaps ironically, about nationalism. Before I started this First World War project I had been studying Flemish nationalism for years. I knew, of course, that the Flemish movement was only one of many nationalist factions in Europe at the time, relics of 19<sup>th</sup>-century Romanticism but also important cultural and political forces one hundred years ago. What I learned from comparing them was that nationalism’s role in the Great War’s *culture de guerre* (war culture, cf. Becker 2005) might be instrumental to our understanding of the war’s multifaceted meaning. Jingoism and nationalism in the main warring nations are generally believed to have been crucial factors in the outbreak of the conflict. But the Easter Rising in Ireland in 1916 and Woodrow Wilson’s plea for the self-determination of nations and the Bolshevik revolutionaries’ support of the right of all nations, including colonies, to self-determination gave momentum to Flemish, Irish, Latvian, Polish, Czech and Slovak nationalism alike. Millions of soldiers who had very much doubted what they had been fighting for now found a new purpose. For these men, their sacrifices would not be in vain if they were to lead to their nation’s independence. Today’s map of Europe testifies to that struggle.

In that respect it seems strange to talk about the First World War as an absurd or futile conflict, as so often happens, especially in British culture. Even when the war did not lead to independence, as in the case of Flanders, it remains a crucial factor in the history of the nation at large and the Flemish independence movement in particular. The Flemish-nationalist party N-VA, which is now the leading political force in Belgium, is the direct descendant of the FRONT party, formed in 1919 by Flemish nationalist veterans of the war.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> As of 2014 N-VA is the strongest political party in Belgium, leading the Flemish government, chairing the Flemish Parliament, and – with 33 seats out 150 – forming the biggest parliamentary group in the federal Chamber of Representatives, which it also chairs. The Prime Minister is not from N-VA, but it is also the strongest party in the federal government.

The third element is about the way the few neutral states in Europe dealt with the war. Neutrality is finally gaining traction as a topic for First World War research, but the cultural aspects of these neutral nations as discursive battlefields need to be explored more. They were havens for pacifists, double agents and spies, but also for revolutionaries. The story of how Dada was born in neutral Zurich is told in every history of modern art. Lesser known is how Swedish and Dutch revolutionary poets met with Lenin in September 1915 in Zimmerwald, Switzerland. Here the socialist movement, which had succumbed to nationalist pressures in the summer of 1914, tried to redeem itself. Despite the hundreds of new books being published on the occasion of the First World War Centenary we are still in need of a substantial monograph detailing the many peace initiatives that were developed during the war and the role played by neutral states and their citizens.<sup>124</sup> Again: poems could be a point of entry.

The fourth and final example has to do with Jewish culture. The lingering tendency to focus on national cultures and practices of remembrance implies the neglect of those groups in European society who do not have or form a nation on our continent. Sinti and Roma are a case in point, but also the many descendants of Moroccan or Indian soldiers who fought in the Great War. A very special case is that of the Jewish people. Not unlike the Poles, Jews often found themselves on both sides of the divide, as part of either the German, Habsburg or Russian armies. Polish as well as Jewish poems talk about the cruel fate of having to fight your own brother as if he is your enemy. But while the Polish poet Edward Śliński emphasises how the sacrifice of the Poles (“You’re my enemy, I’m yours”) would be sanctified by the Polish nation that would be established after the bloodshed, the Galician poet Ber Horowitz could only weep for the Jewish brothers and the Jewish mothers – from the Caucasus to Italy – who were to suffer without purpose, without having a clear stake in the matter.<sup>125</sup> These Galician voices are a testimony to a world that would disappear in the next World War, but which is also painfully absent from our collective memory of the First World War.

But things might be changing – as the “European Commemoration – *Europäische Erinnerungskulturen* 2014” conference also suggested and tried to support. Partly based on the anthology mentioned earlier on (Buelens 2008b), two projects launched in 2014 are

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<sup>124</sup> A very welcome contribution is Kennedy (2014). Zimmerwald is not treated here, though the conference is mentioned in a few articles in the “International Encyclopedia of the First World War 1914-1918-online” [07.04.2015].

<sup>125</sup> See Buelens (2008a) for the Jewish poets and Schuster (2004) for the fate of the East European Jews during the First World War.

much more inclusive and transnational. The German Federal Agency of Civic Education (bpb) published an anthology of international First World War writing (Langner 2014). And in Belgium the “Hellemondens” project will bring 20 tombs, 20 war poets, 20 First World War poems to festivals, galleries and public spaces, allowing the audience to listen to these poems – one for every tomb – and reading or rereading the contextualised poems in a newspaper.<sup>126</sup> Some of this material testifies to universal feelings of suffering and pain. Others bring in more local, more specific voices. In the stupendous amount of First World War remembrance projects, these are just two of the initiatives which can reshape our memory of the Great War by restructuring it, by making it more inclusive and transnational.

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<sup>126</sup> See <http://www.vonkenzonen.be/hellemondens/> [07.04.2015]

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# European Commemoration: Locating World War I

*"Memory cultures are still rooted in the region and the nation, even if pioneering work is being done that transcends borders." (Kramer, Chapter I)*

Commemoration depends on current views of the past. The conference "Europäische Erinnerungskulturen – European Commemoration 2014" gave an overview of the initiatives, narratives and commemorations taking place across Europe. This expert conference provided an opportunity to analyse common perceptions and to discuss different opinions about what the First World War still stood for a hundred years later.

What are the correlations between national, transnational and European perspectives? Is there a difference between a European perspective and multiperspectivity? What can and what should be the goal of historical education concerning the First World War?

The contributions in this anthology reflect on these questions, reveal blind spots and present new approaches and projects to European Commemoration of the First World War. It comprises contributions from Alan Kramer "Too early to say?", Aleida Assmann "European Commemoration of the Great War", Joke van der Leeuw-Roord "Memory and Remembrance in history education" and Maciej Gorny "Our war? Eastern Europe's experience and memory of the Great war".