



The Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars
in European Experiences and Memories

Project Outline

Berlin, Chapel Hill, York, June 2005

No epoch between the Thirty Years' War and the First World War affected Europe so directly and permanently as the period 1792–1815. In these years Europe existed in a constant state of war that soon touched every European country and profoundly shook them all. Because of their new character as 'national wars' fought by mass armies and the resultant changes in the conduct of warfare, these wars affected not only armies and their soldiers and officers but also civilian societies – men and women alike. Well into the twentieth century, this era, which was also a period of far-reaching economic, social and political upheaval, played a central role in the academic historiography, the popular histories, and the historical politics of all the European countries involved. Succeeding generations appear on the whole to have conceived of this period as the "founding era" not only of "their" nation or region and its collective identity, but also of the European system of nation-states.

The project is intended to examine these experiences and memories of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars in the European nations and regions involved in a long-term perspective. 1945 will be the end point of the analysis because the end of World War II and the Holocaust mark a sharp break in the history of political culture and memory all over Europe. The main focus of analysis will be on the images and narratives that formed war experiences and memories and therefore collective identities all over Europe. Of central interest is the construction of 'the self' and 'the other' through the drawing of boundaries defined in national, regional, social or cultural terms. The assumption is that the network of (trans)national and regional images and narratives that derived from the early period of modern world-wide war had long lasting effects on the political culture of Europe in general and the relations of nations and regions in particular. The most important sources for the analysis of war experiences will be letters, diaries and war memories produced during and shortly after the war. For the analysis of memories the most widespread media and therefore source-materials appear to be (next to poetry, plays and visual representations) printed autobiographies and war memories, commemorative books, historical novels and, in the twentieth century, films.

By addressing the following five main questions the project intends to contribute to a genuinely European history. First, the project will examine how the Wars between 1792 and 1815 were experienced, perceived and remembered in the participating nations and regions by men and women from different social strata. Secondly, it will ask which economic, social, political and cultural factors were most influential in the conditioning of experiences, perceptions and memories and which commercial media of memory were

most popular and widespread in the diffusion of memory. Thirdly, it will examine how far these different experiences and remembrances formed collective identities, and in particular national and regional identities. Fourthly, it will consider which images and narratives were most diffused throughout Europe, where, when, and why there were overlaps or differences between dominant images and narratives, and reciprocal influences. Finally, it will ask to what extent was the collective memory of these wars influential in, or constitutive of, the development and character of Europe. With these questions the project is not only investigating a desideratum of European historiography, but is doing so in a methodologically innovative way. In the first place, it combines the history of experience with the history of memory and differentiates systematically between the communicative and the cultural memory and contributes to a history of memory and media. Secondly, it analyses memory as a long-term phenomenon in the context of historical change. Thirdly, it studies the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars as one period, and intends to examine both the military experience and the civilian societies at war. Finally, the project will be conducive to a comparative European history of the long nineteenth and early twentieth century.

Two project groups (one based in Britain and one in Germany) will conduct research on the main war powers: Austria and Germany, Britain and Ireland, France, as well as Russia and Poland. The two project groups will collaborate in a comparative working group, which will meet for a series of three workshops and two international and interdisciplinary conferences. The working group will be part of a wider network of experts working in different disciplines and countries on the wars between 1792 and 1815 in European experience and memories. Through this network, connected by a website and an electronic discussion forum, will research by other scholars be included, who work on the major war powers and other involved European states and regions. Till now 190 scholars from 17 countries have joined the network. The published results of the three-year project, in addition to monographs and articles, will include at least one co-authored comparative volume that presents the research of the working group and a two-volume anthology with selected workshop and conferences papers.

The Comparative British-German Working Group

British Project Group: Nations, Borders, Identities: The Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars in European Experiences (1792–1820)

Directed by Prof. Alan Forrest (project director), Prof. Richard Bessel, Prof. Karen Hagemann and Dr. Jane Rendall

Funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC)

Sub-project 1 on France: by Dr. Karine Rance (postdoc project)
University of York, Centre for Eighteenth Century Studies

Sub-project 2 on Great Britain and Ireland: by Dr. Catriona Kennedy (postdoc project)
University of York, Centre for Eighteenth Century Studies

Sub-project 3 on Austria and Germany: by Dr. Leighton S. James (postdoc project)
University of York, Centre for Eighteenth Century Studies

The three sub-projects analyse autobiographical sources produced between 1792 and 1820 (mainly diaries, letters and unpublished war memories)

Website: www.york.ac.uk/inst/cecs/NBIproject.htm

German Project Group: Nations, Borders, Identities: The Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars in European Memories (1815–1945)

Directed by Prof. Karen Hagemann (project director), PD Dr. Arnd Bauerkämper, Prof. Etienne François and Prof. Hartmut Kaelble

Funded by a grant of the German Research Foundation (DFG)

Sub-project 1 on France: by Dr. Kirstin Schäfer (post-doctoral project)
TU Berlin, Centre for French Studies

Sub-project 2 on Great Britain: by Lars Peters M.A. (doctoral thesis)
TU Berlin, Centre for French Studies

Sub-project 3 on Austria and Germany: by Maria Schultz M.A. (doctoral thesis)
FU Berlin, Berlin School for Comparative European History

Sub-project 4 on Russia and Poland: by Dr. Ruth Leiserowitz (research project) (project coordinator)
FU Berlin, Berlin School for Comparative European History

The four sub-projects analyse war memories published between 1815 and 1945 in commemorative texts (mainly war memories and historical novels as well as biographies, commemorative books, plays and lyrics)

Sub-project 5 on feature films produced till 1945 in Austria and Germany, Britain and France: by Wolfgang Koller M.A. (doctoral thesis)
TU Berlin, Centre for French Studies

Workshops and Conferences of the Comparative British-German Working Group and the Network

Workshops:

The Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars: New Approaches and Future Questions of Research
MGFA, Potsdam, **November 1, 2004** (funded by the MGFA)

The Experiences and Memories of War in European Comparison: (Trans)national and Interdisciplinary Approaches
European Academy Berlin, **November 11–12, 2005**

War Experiences and Identities: The Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars in Contemporary Perception
German Historical Institute, London, **February 24–25, 2006**

International and interdisciplinary conferences:

Gender, Politics, and War: The Wars of Revolution and Liberation - Transatlantic Comparisons
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, **May 17–19, 2007**

Nations, Borders, Identities: The Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars in European Experiences and Memories
University of Mannheim, **October 11–13, 2007**

Contact:**DFG Project Group
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