



## Joint Workshop:

# War Experiences and Identities:

## The Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars in Contemporary Perception

Friday and Saturday, February 24-25, 2006

German Historical Institute London, 17 Bloomsbury Square

### Abstracts of the Papers

**Katherine Aaslestad**

***The Everyday War: Civilian Experiences of the Continental Blockade in Northern Germany***

Most traditional studies on Napoleon's Continental Blockade have focused on long term economic consequences, namely exploring the extent to which the Blockade fostered economic disruption or new opportunities within the Empire, its satellites, and allies. Yet, this approach has generated a limited understanding of the true nature of the Blockade. The focus on a general economic framework misses the broader experience of French occupation not reflected in statistics on economic growth or decline. My paper presents a different perspective by featuring the experiences of civilians in northern German cities and towns. I argue any examination of the impact of Continental Blockade must be regional and comparative in nature and must look beyond economic statistics to explore the combined experience of economic growth or decline and relate economic shifts to the day to day experience of military occupation, billeting, conscription, administrative reforms, taxation, and smuggling as well as increased poverty absent traditional poor relief structures. These combined experiences must be considered central to the experience of the Blockade initiated with the Berlin Decrees.

**John E. Cookson**

***War Experiences of British Soldiers and Officers during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars***

Ample material exists to interpret the experiences of those who fought in the British army during the Napoleonic wars; its harvest by historians, however, has hardly begun. The very numerous published reminiscences, letters and early biographies of generals, regimental officers and rank and file soldiers have mainly been used by conventional military historians merely to add detail to their accounts of military operations. In addition, very few scholars have made use of the immense cache of records generated by the army itself as it developed a bureaucracy to collect information from regiments relating to many aspects of their existence. One important purpose of this paper is to show how personal, regimental and army sources in combination open up rich opportunities for further work. It can even be argued that 'army and society' history can make a valuable contribution to the history of the wider society; for it is likely that more can be found out about officers and soldiers than about other social groups of the period belonging to the 'middling sort' and the classes of the poor. The paper will focus on the war experiences of British soldiers and officers during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars and interpret them in a broader historical context that expands military history.

**Jarosław Czubaty**

***"Tout Pour la Gloire": The Ways of the Military Career in the Duchy of Warsaw***

The paper concerns the problem of the military career of the officers of the army of the Duchy of Warsaw in the years of 1806-1815. The author analyses the social structure of the officer's corps. Taking into account the ways of the military career the author indicates the most important groups forming the officer's cadre. The first one consisted of the officers who gained their ranks in the army of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and Kościuszko's Insurrection and after the third partition emigrated to serve in the Polish Legions in Italy and Germany. The second group was formed by their colleagues, who decided to stay in the country and returned to the service in 1806. The next group consisted of the officers, who joined the army of the Duchy after some years of service in the Austrian, Prussian, and – rarely – Russian forces. The officer's cadre was completed by the young volunteers without military practice, who enlisted in the years of 1806-1812. The author attempts to indicate the motives, which animated the officers to undertake the service in the reborn Polish army and to describe some of the mechanisms ruling their military careers.

**Karen Hagemann**

***Gendered Experience and Perception of the Anti-Napoleonic Wars: Hamburg in 1813/14 – A Case Study***

In the paper I would like to analyze the experiences and perception of the Anti-Napoleonic Wars using the ego documents of a middle class family from Hamburg, which was intensively involved in the wars, as a characteristic example. In 1813-1814, they along with many others were considerably affected by the French occupation of the town. At the centre of the article is the question about the

relationship of the men who had volunteered for the war and were on the front, and their kinswomen at home. What interest me above all are their different experiences and memories of the war. With this paper I want to indicate an important research desiderata: We lack a history of daily life and experiences during the Anti-Napoleonic Wars between 1806 and 1815 that asks about the wars' impact on the historical subjects. This analysis should include not only regional and confessional differences but also differentiation by class, social stratum, ethnicity, generation, and gender.

**David Hopkin**

***Female Soldiers and the Battle of the Sexes in France***

Revolutionary promises of political liberty may be interpreted as opportunities to increase personal autonomy, and the breakdown of political structures of authority readily calls into question other, less formal claims to power. The French Revolution raised the possibility that activities deemed to have been the preserve of men might, perhaps should, now be opened to women. Famous revolutionary feminists such as Pauline Léon argued that women too had the right to bear arms. Less well-known women took more direct action by joining the army, usually disguised as men. However, the new language of liberty and equality was insufficient to dislodge the existing repertoire of ideas associated with female soldiers, which had been diffused through vaudeville plays, cheap prints, songs and folktales. In these stories women dressed as soldiers to thwart unwanted sexual advances, or to pursue errant lovers; either to uphold their father's honour, or to escape parental tyranny. Her inversion of gender roles was permissible only as long as it was, finally, reversed. New stories, claiming to be based on real female soldiers of the revolutionary wars, were cast into the mould of some existing narrative. The political claim to gender equality was constantly reduced to personal relationships with men. Thus, the impact of the Revolution on gender relations was dissipated. This transfer of the female soldier from the public to the private sphere may seem regrettable, but we should remember that the household was the arena in which women's conflicts were mostly played out, and that a cultural figurehead who could negotiate male power might have proved a useful ally.

**Johan Joor**

***Dutch Popular Protest in the Napoleonic Period***

In Dutch history the years 1806-1813 can be typified as the 'Napoleontische tijd'. In the first four years of this period, from June 1806 until July 1810, Holland was a kingdom enforced by Napoleon, with the younger brother of the Emperor, Louis, as King. In the following three and a half years, from July 1810 until November 1813, Holland had lost her national independence completely and was a part of the French Empire, although it remained a separate administrative entity, known as the 'Dutch Departments'. In Dutch historiography this Napoleonic period was always considered as a time of general calm and of total passivity amongst the people. However, the results of an intense investigation into a wide range of administrative, judicial and police archives showed a complete different picture. A multitude of varied protest were found and in many ways the Napoleonic period demonstrated to be a time of turmoil instead of internal peace. Who were protesting, why did the people protest and can we compare the Dutch protest with the protest in other parts of Napoleonic Europe?

February 6, 2006

**Claudia Kraft**

***The Polish Struggle for Independence, Military Mobilization and Political Rights***

The paper deals with the Polish reform debates about the reshaping of citizenship before the background of the partitions of Poland in the late 18th century and the transformation of these debates in the era of Napoleonic Wars (especially in the Polish Legions) up to the foundation of the Duchy of Warsaw in 1806/07. I will focus on the gender order, which was reformulated in these debates and on the gender roles, which underwent a remarkable transformation since the breakdown of the Polish-Lithuanian Republic at the end of the 18th century. I am especially interested in describing to what extent military mobilization led to a new understanding of the relationship between men and women. I will investigate if the exclusion of women from the public sphere, which developed in the West at the same time corresponds with the experiences Polish women made in the era of revolutionary warfare. The paper will focus on the connection between political rights and military service, while investigating old and new concepts of citizenship.

**Ruth Leiserowitz**

***'With the blood of Abel': The Experiences of Polish and Russian Clergyman during Wartime 1806/1812***

The political and military events at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century also influenced the course of the lives of Polish and Russian clergyman to a great extent. In 1814 40000 Russian clergymen alone received the "Chaplain's cross for Clergy who participated in the Napoleonic War of 1812". The direct and indirect experiences of the war which Polish and Russian priests gathered during the Napoleonic Wars in various situations (in primarily political positions, as civilian victims of war or as preachers in the field), found immediate expression above all in their sermons. These forms of public speaking were a product of the interrelations of rhetoric, power and opinion. They attracted widespread interest. Important pulpit sermons were also frequently published. Despite their religious structure and the rich biblical images, the content of these texts was very politically coloured. In my article I investigate the connections between the spheres of the state and the church, based on sermon texts, and highlight regional and confessional differences.

**Patricia Lin**

***Caring for the Nation's Families: British Soldiers' and Sailors' Families and the State, 1793-1815***

During the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, the experiences of the families of British common soldiers and sailors were radically transformed. The British central government established a welfare system to provide for these families, who in earlier wars had been left destitute and dependent on poor relief and charities. Among the welfare system's provisions were life-transforming schools for soldiers' daughters and sons and a program by which seamen could regularly send their wages back to their families. In benefiting from this system, family members

systematically interacted with the central government in unprecedented ways, both as recipients of relief and as objects of knowledge. This paper explores the experiences of the soldiers' and sailors' families who benefited from the new welfare system and uses the information collected by the government in implementing the system to highlight the national and international character of the experiences of these families.

**Kevin Linch**

***The British Volunteer Movement and the War against Napoleon***

The volunteer movement in Britain is perhaps typical of the complexities of mass mobilisation in the Napoleonic wars. Seen as a source of strength and an expression of patriotism in newspapers and speeches, equally arming such a large proportion of the population as volunteers could privately cause alarm for the government and local authorities in times of economic and social distress. Consequently, the government and local elites consciously sought to influence the attitudes of volunteers through civic parades and celebrations of victories, cultivating a national identity. However, the volunteers brought their own attitudes into this force, and a whole range of experiences can be highlighted in a discussion of the British volunteer movement: from a volunteer who was so taken by his experience as a part-time soldier, and so frustrated and even shameful about it, that he enlisted in the British Army, to the local militiamen of the north of England who were also believed to be members of secret organisations and may have even taken part in the Luddite troubles.

**Laurence Montroussier**

***Wartime Experiences of British and French Soldiers' between 1799 and 1815 through their Memories: The Example of the Peninsular War***

The Wartime experiences of British and French soldiers' during the Napoleonic Wars is so important that it was necessary to make choice. After making the list of French and English memories of Napoleonic Wars, it was obvious to limit the subject to the Peninsula War because of the important engagement of the British which appeared very clearly through the number of the memoirs dealt with it. Focus on this particular war and after a reflection on the published diaries used and brief research on their authors, the question of the perception of war was asked. Indeed, how English and French soldiers live during the war, or more exactly, what do they tell of it in their Memories? Is there some difference in the experience of this war?

**Natalie Petiteau**

***The Impact of an Experience of War: The Soldiers of the Napoleonic Armies***

We cannot strive to understand the significance of the period 1800-1815 without taking into account the fate of the anonymous soldiers of the Great Army. For in order to comprehend what the Empire signified for the Europeans of those days, we must first examine what the war, the major event of that period, signified for all of its combatants. But we should also ask ourselves what consequences these years of

war had on the period subsequent to 1815: what became of these men upon their return to civilian life? And those who had a link specific to the national idea whilst in the army, what political role did they then play? Finally, to what correspond the numerous legendary images formed about them?