

ESF Exploratory Workshop on
**Occupations in World War One. Sources and
Analyses**

Munich (Germany), 1-3 July 2009

Convened by:

Gustavo Corni and Martin Baumeister

SCIENTIFIC REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND SCIENTIFIC CONTENT

At the workshop, a group of international senior and younger scholars discussed the current research on military occupations in Europe during World War One and considered the perspectives for a project of a multi-volume edition of documents concerning different territories and states under the control of the Central Powers. During the preparation of the workshop, it had been particularly difficult to find colleagues studying Eastern and South Eastern Europe. Unfortunately, two of these experts from Great Britain and Austria who had figured in the preliminary programme, had to be replaced at short notice by young German scholars working in the field in the absence of alternatives. That is why the national balance of the participants shifted in the last moment. The distribution of the participants according to their country of origin, finally resulted in seven colleagues from Germany, three each from France and Italy, and one each from Austria, Belgium, Ireland, Great Britain, Poland, Serbia, and the U.S. Among the 19 participants from the final programme, there were seven women and twelve men. According to academic status, there were eight younger scholars, i.e. two Ph.D. students and six postdoctoral researchers and research assistants, as well as twelve senior scholars, i.e. five associate professors and researchers and seven full professors. In the last moment, one young colleague from Italy had to cancel his participation, but the results of his paper were read during the conference.

The structuring of the programme into a geographical and a systematic section proved successful in organizing the discussions in a helpful way. The first section encompassed case studies of France, Belgium, Serbia, Montenegro, Rumania, Poland and Italy, countries that were partially or totally occupied in World War One by Germany or Austria-Hungary. The presentations illustrated on the one hand that the existing research on the West is far more developed than the research on the East, South-East and South. This reflects the general state of research on World War One. It became clear, however, that by studying occupation we particularly can advance our understanding of the "wild war" in the East and South-East. On the other hand the discussions of the first section showed that while studies on Northern France and Belgium constitute the reference point of research, our understanding of the occupation in these countries is still far from perfect. Central issues like the establishment, staff and practices of the occupation administration as well as important aspects of the occupation economy have barely been studied. Of special interest is the everyday life in the occupation zones, as it allows insights into the complex relationship between occupiers and occupied, and especially the question of collaboration which so far has been an understudied aspect of the history of World War One. The lectures on Eastern European countries elaborated on the problem of the occupation authorities to establish clear

borders between friends and enemies caused by the large number of ethnic groups and variety of ethnic labelling. While in this respect, there existed stark differences between occupations in the West and the East, the comparison, however, also showed important similarities. At both fronts, loyalties were not necessarily formed only along national lines, but could also be shaped by social affinities. For example, the military elite of the occupying forces often felt closer to the local representatives of their social class than to the common soldiers of their own troops who probably developed similar sympathies along class lines. The participants in the discussions of the first section called especially for a more actor-centred analysis, particularly with regard to the role of women as part of the occupying forces. Other issues that were deemed worth of scholarly interest were the relationship between broader war aims and the everyday-politics of occupation as well as a better contextualisation of the occupation regimes. The discussants pointed to forms, meaning and consequences of economic exploitation as well as to practices and perception of violence as vital issues of comparative studies.

The second part focused on different thematical and methodological approaches to occupation and occupation politics. It took up the debates of the first section and placed them into a wider context. The participants argued for a broader economical approach that would include monetary policy, the black market and the economical consequences of occupation, but would also look at strategies the occupiers used to legitimize their exploitation. The “history of experience” and the concept of “culture de guerre” as developed in the French historiography seem especially helpful methodological tools to widen our understanding of the interactions between the occupiers and the occupied. Of central importance in this line of research is moreover the category of space, and how it was put to use by the historical actors to map and subdivide the war territory, for example in war zone, front, rear etc. with their constant shifts and interferences. The chronology of occupation, the transition from invasion to permanent occupation and its end, poses a question of its own. A look at Eastern Europe illustrates this point. The population of occupied Eastern European territory had often lived under occupation immediately before the war. This was the reason that often many people initially welcomed the military occupiers as liberators from despised foreign rule. Moreover in the East military conflict continued often into the 1920s. Beyond that, the workshop discussed the conspicuous difference between the Eastern and Western front regarding questions of international law. While the occupation politics in the West regularly provoked significant international protests, there were for the most part no comparable reactions to events in the East and Southeast. This is especially noteworthy because here occupation was particularly brutal and the exploitation of the occupied territory was more than elsewhere ruthless and with devastating consequences.

The debates over international law stand symptomatic for a contradiction that already can be detected in the wars of the 19th century: the contradiction between the increasing totalization of war on the one hand and attempts to reign in armed conflict on the other hand. The importance of occupation studies within the wider context of research on World War One lies exactly in its contribution to this debate because a defining feature of totalization of war is the use of military violence against civilians. Occupation research can in this respect also contribute to the debate about continuities between the First and Second World War which the participants of the workshop discussed in depth. They criticized the concept of a “new Thirty Years’ War” which suggests a close link between the two World Wars. The discussants pointed instead to different dynamics of destruction, which opened into “total war”, but not without counter movements and deviations.

ASSESSMENT OF THE RESULTS AND PERSPECTIVES FOR THE FUTURE

The workshop confirmed impressively and in various ways the main hypothesis of the organizers. Occupation research constitutes a crucial field of current studies on World War One which integrates fundamental debates and approaches. An exhaustive collection of documents would undoubtedly be a valuable contribution to future research. However, the participants abstained in the end from the project of a classical multi-volume edition in printed form, not the least because of problems of practical problems of time and money. As a future agenda the participants agreed on two goals: On the one hand, the convenors of the conference with the help of some participants will develop and edit a “handbook of occupations in World War One” in which international experts will present and contextualize the state of current research in a thorough and extensive manner. On the other hand, an online-platform will be set up which will meet the urgent need of international exchange, stimulate new research, and, not the least, will make possible the establishment of a virtual library and source collection which can be continually enlarged. Such an enterprise is only possible through the establishment of a coordinating position. The participants of the workshop are preparing an application in this respect on the European level.

PRELIMINARY PROGRAMME

Wednesday 1 July 2009

Afternoon *Arrival*
19.30 *Dinner (Place to be announced)*

Thursday 2 July 2009

09.00-09.15 **Welcome by Convenors**
Gustavo Corni / Martin Baumeister

09.15-09.30 **Presentation of the European Science Foundation (ESF)**
Ilie Parvu (ESF Standing Committee for the Humanities)

09.30-10.00 *Keynote lecture and discussion:*
Military Occupation in World War One: programmes, politics, and experiences in a comparative European perspective
Alan Kramer (Trinity College, Dublin, Ireland)

Part One: The state of the art: current research on military occupation in Europe during World War One (I) - National and regional case studies

10.00-11.00 **Session 1: France**
Annette Becker (Université Paris Ouest La Défense, Paris, France)
Anne Duménil (Munich, Germany)
Larissa Wegner (Albert-Ludwigs-Universität, Freiburg i.B., Germany)

11.00-11.15 *Coffee / Tea Break*

11.15-12.15 **Session 2: Belgium**
Benoît Majérus (Université libre de Bruxelles, Belgium)
Sophie de Schaepdrijver (Pennsylvania State University, Pennsylvania, USA)

12.30-14.00 *Lunch*

14.00-16.00 **South Eastern Europe (Serbia, Montenegro, Romania)**

Session 3: Serbia
Milan Ristovic (Filozofski fakultet, Belgrad, Serbia)
Tamara Scheer (University Vienna, Vienna, Austria)

Session 4: Montenegro
Heiko Brendel (Johannes Gutenberg Universität Mainz, Mainz, Germany)

Session 5: Romania
Lisa Mayerhofer (LMU München, Munich, Germany)

16.00-16.15 *Coffee / tea break*

16.15-17.30 **Session 6: Eastern Europe**
Christoph Mick (University of Warwick, Coventry, United Kingdom)
Danuta Plygawko (Kornik, Poland)

17.30-18.30 **Session 7: Italy**
Bruna Bianchi (Università Ca'Foscari Venezia, Venice, Italy)
Daniele Ceschin (Università Ca'Foscari Venezia, Venice, Italy)

19.00 *Dinner*

Friday 3 July 2009

Part Two: The state of the art: current research on military occupation Europe during World War One (II): general aspects and comparative perspectives

09.00-09.45 **Session 1: Economic aspects of occupation**
Reinhold Zilch (Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Berlin, Germany)

09.45-10.30 **Session 2: Experiences of occupation and "culture de guerre"**
Martin Baumeister (LMU München, Munich, Germany)
Nicolas Beaupré (Université Blaise Pascal Clermont, Clermont-Ferrand, France)

10.30-10.45 *Coffee / Tea Break*

10.45-11.45 **Session 3: Atrocities, war crimes and international law**
Martin Geyer (LMU München, Munich, Germany)
Alan Kramer (Trinity College, Dublin, Ireland)

11.45-12.45 **Session 4: Humanitarian aid**
Annette Becker (Université Paris Ouest La Défense, Paris, France)
Danuta Plygawko (Kornik, Poland)

13.00-14.30 *Lunch*

10.45-11.45 **Session 5: Atrocities, war crimes and international law**
Martin Geyer (LMU München, Munich, Germany)
Alan Kramer (Trinity College, Dublin, Ireland)

14.30-15.30 **Session 6: The comparison between the two world wars**
Christoph Mick (University of Warwick, Coventry, United Kingdom)
Benoît Majérus (Université libre de Bruxelles, Belgium)
Gerhard Hirschfeld (Universität Stuttgart, Stuttgart, Germany)

15.30-16.00 **A critical assessment of collection of documents on occupation during World War Two: achievements and desiderata**
Gustavo Corni (Università degli Studi di Trento, Trento, Italy)

16.00-16.15 *Coffee break*

16.15-17.30 **Final discussion: plans for follow-up research activities**
End of Workshop and departure

Final List of Participants

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STATISTICAL INFORMATION ON THE PARTICIPANTS

19 participants (including 2 convenors)

One participant from Italy had to cancel for personal reasons only a few days prior to the workshop. The main theses of his paper were read by a colleague.

Status:

2 Ph.D. students

6 postdoctoral researchers and research assistants

5 associate professors and researcher

7 full professors

Gender:

7 female - 12 male

Countries of origin:

Country	Number of participants	Country	Number of participants
Germany	7 *	Belgium	1
France	3	Ireland	1
Italy	2	Great Britain	1
Austria	1	Poland	1
Serbia	1	USA	1

* for an explanation see the scientific report