



The Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars  
in European Experiences and Memories



GERMAN HISTORICAL INSTITUTE LONDON  
DEUTSCHES HISTORISCHES INSTITUT LONDON

## **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

**The Workshop is funded by the German Historical Institute London, the Arts and  
Humanities Research Council and the German Research Foundation.**

## **Program**

The importance of the armed struggles which took place across Europe and far beyond European borders between 1789 and 1815 for the framing of the political and military culture of the nineteenth century has been largely underestimated. The enduring legacy of this period of warfare related not only to the much-analyzed after-effects of the French Revolution, which permanently influenced European political culture far beyond France's borders, but also to the constant state of war which existed between 1792 and 1815. These wars touched nearly every European country and also parts of Asia and Africa as well as North America. They were for the first time conducted by mass armies mobilized by patriotic and national propaganda, leading to the circulation of millions of people throughout Europe and beyond (soldiers, prisoners of war and civilians). They affected, in different degrees, the everyday lives of women and men of different religions and social strata across European and many non-European regions. The new style of warfare had far reaching consequences

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for civil society. Those who lived through the period between 1792 and 1815 as children, youths, and adults, shared – albeit from the most varied perspectives and disparate perceptions – formative common experiences and memories.

Though these conflicts were in many respects part of what may be regarded as the first world war they were also the first wars fought by all combatant parties increasingly as "national wars" with mass armies recruited on the basis of universal mobilization and provided for by requisition and plundering. The number of soldiers deployed surpassed anything ever seen in Europe. In order to defeat Napoleon, the *ancien régime* states also appropriated French military strategy, with its general aim of annihilating enemy troops. The changing nature of war had several consequences. Because of mass mobilization and the spatial extension of these wars even ordinary men came as soldiers to regions they only had heard about before, encountered unknown people, languages and customs, across new borders. Both soldiers and civilians experienced a further brutalization of warfare, with war casualties rising to previously unheard-of levels. Yet, because of their character as 'national wars', these conflicts were closely intertwined with the process of political and cultural nation building in Europe. It was not only France and Britain but also monarchies such as Prussia, Russia and Spain who sought, through appeals to national sentiment the mobilization not only of men but also of civilian populations – men and women alike. Without the support of civil society the leading war powers would not have been able to go to war. They needed broad civilian support to provide equipment for armies, militias and volunteers, medical services for sick and wounded soldiers and war charities for invalids, widows and orphans. Women's scope of action steadily expanded, since they were not only solely responsible for supporting their families and carrying on the business of their soldier husbands, but were also entrusted in one way or another with wartime nursing and relief work. New gender images were crucial for the necessary patriotic-national mobilization of both the military and civilian population, and were created in the process of the construction of a new gender order, hierarchical and complementary, that reached its peak in the war period between 1792 and 1815. This was used to legitimize the gender-specific tasks of men and women in the state, the military, society and family.

The new political concepts that emerged at the turn of the nineteenth century were gendered from the beginning, and were of central military importance. In the mobilization of men for war gender images were extensively deployed, including the construction of men as protectors of family, home, and country, sometimes to demand for or promises of, more political rights. Citizenship and military service were therefore connected, in one way or another, and women excluded from the emerging national community of citizens of the state. These issues were not directly confronted at the Vienna Congress of 1814/15, which was influenced more by the determination to achieve a balance of power than by the principle of national self-determination. The conference will aim to develop the comparative study of the experiences of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars:

- It will ask how these wars were experienced by men and women of different ethnic backgrounds, religious affiliation, political *Weltanschauung*, age and familial status, as soldiers, sailors or civilians, abroad and at home.
- It will consider which factors most shaped experiences and perceptions of the wars and how far these became a part of individual and collective identities.
- It will examine the role of 'civilians at war', alongside the soldiers, sailors and non-combatants who volunteered or were conscripted.

The conference will pay specific attention to the autobiographical source-materials for such experiences, mainly letters, diaries and published eyewitness reports from contemporaries. Inevitably the central social group will be the educated and literate elite (aristocratic and middle class men and women), although others will not be excluded where the sources are available. Many more letters, diaries and memoirs appear to have been published between 1792 and 1815 than during previous eighteenth-century conflicts. Men and women of the upper and middle classes attempted to come to terms with the war experience by reaching for the pen, writing letters to their relatives at the front or in other affected regions, or by keeping diaries. Sometimes, after the war, such letters or diaries were published, to become a part of the mythologizing of the period as a "heroic era" and of the shaping of new national and regional identities. The conference will consider the methodological issues involved in the reading of such source-materials.

Until now the focus of research has mainly been upon the political, diplomatic and military dimensions of the wars, viewed in the main through national historiographies. Comparative studies, including metropolitan-regional differences, are rare, as are studies of the social and everyday histories of these wars. The dimension of gender difference has, as yet, hardly been considered systematically. This conference hopes to encourage work in all these areas, and, especially, to highlight, comparatively, the images and narratives that recur in the experience and perception of the revolutionary and Napoleonic wars across and beyond Europe. We are particularly interested in the construction of 'the self' and 'the other' through the drawing of boundaries defined in national, regional, social or cultural terms.

## **Program:**

### **Friday, February 24, 2006**

#### *Registration and Welcome Coffee*

9:30 – 10:30 a.m.

#### **Welcome**

10:30 – 10:45 a.m.

- Prof. Hagen Schulze (German Historical Institute, London)
- Prof. Karen Hagemann (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and Technical University of Berlin) and Prof. Alan Forrest (University of York)

#### **Introduction: 'Nations in Arms, Nations at War'**

10:45 – 11:30 a.m.

Chair: Prof. Karen Hagemann

- Prof. Alan Forrest (University of York)

## **Military Experiences of the Wars I: Ordinary Soldiers**

11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Chair: Prof. Richard Bessel (University of York)

- Dr. Laurence Montroussier (Université Montpellier 1):  
Wartime Experiences of British and French Soldiers' between 1799 and 1815 through their Memories: The Example of the Peninsular War
- Prof. Natalie Petiteau (Université d'Avignon):  
War Experiences From Below: The Soldiers of the Napoleonic Army

Commentator: Prof. Etienne François (Technical University of Berlin)

## **Military Experiences of the Wars II: Officers**

2:00 – 3:30 p.m.

Chair Prof. Alan Forrest

- Prof. John E. Cookson (University of Canterbury):  
War Experiences of British Soldiers and Officers: The British Armed Forces in the Wars Against Napoleon
- Dr. Jarosław Czubaty (University of Warsaw):  
"Tout pour la gloire": The Ways of the Military Career in the Duchy of Warsaw 1806-1815

Commentator: Prof. Peter Wilson (University of Sunderland)

## **Civilians at War I**

3:45 – 5:45 p.m.

Chair: Dr. Holger Hock (University of Liverpool)

- Dr. Patricia Lin (University of California, Berkeley):  
Caring for the Nation's Families: British Soldiers' and Sailors' Families and the State, 1793-1815)
- Prof. Katherine Aaslestad (University of West Virginia):  
The Civilian Experiences of the Continental Blockade in Northern Germany

Commentator: Prof. Clive Emsley (Open University)

## **Saturday, February 25, 2006**

### **Civilians at War II**

9:30 a.m. – 11:00 p.m.

Chair: Dr. Brendan Simms (University of Cambridge)

- HD Dr. Ute Planert (University of Tübingen):  
Civilian War Experiences: South-West Germany during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars

- Dr. Ruth Leiserowitz (Berlin School for Comparative European History):  
'With the blood of Abel': The Experiences of Polish and Russian Clergyman during wartime  
1806/1812

Commentator: Prof. Janet Hartley (London School of Economics)

### **Gender and the Experience of War**

11:15 a.m. – 12:45 p.m.

Chair: Dr. Jane Rendall (University of York)

- Prof. Karen Hagemann:  
Gendered Perception and Experience of the Anti-Napoleonic Wars: Hamburg in 1813/14 – A  
Case Study
- Dr. David Hopkin (Hertford College, Oxford):  
Female Soldiers and the Battle of the Sexes in France

Commentator: Dr. Emma Macleod (University of Stirling)

### **War, Citizenship and Patriotic Mobilization**

2:00 – 4:00 p.m.

Chair: Prof. Tim Blanning (University of Cambridge)

- Dr. Johan Joor (University of Amsterdam):  
Dutch Popular Protest in the Napoleonic Period
- Dr. Kevin Linch (University of Leeds):  
The British Volunteer Movement and the War Against Napoleon
- Prof. Claudia Kraft (University of Erfurt):  
The Polish struggle for independence, military mobilization and political rights

Commentator: Dr. Michael Rowe (Kings College London)

### **Round Table: War Experiences and Identities**

4:15 -5:15 p.m.

Chair: Prof. Karen Hagemann

- Prof. Richard Bessel (University of York)
- Prof. Dennis Showalter (University of Colorado)
- Dr. Jörg Echternkamp (Military History Research Institute, Potsdam)
- Dr. Jane Rendall (University of York)

### **Organizers:**

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- Dr. Ruth Leiserowitz (Berlin School for Comparative European History)

**In co-operation with:**

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**For further information please visit the Website of the**

AHRC and DFG Research Group a on 'Nations, Borders, Identities: The Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars in European Experiences and Memories'

Internet: <http://www.nbi.tu-berlin.de/>

**or contact**

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