

Post-War Transitions in Europe: Politics, States and Veterans (1918-1923)

Centre for War Studies, University College Dublin

28-30 March 2019

The Centre for War Studies of University College Dublin is pleased to host an international conference to commemorate the end of the centenary of the First World War. The conference aims to appraise how European WWI ex-service men and officers contributed to the creation of new states in Europe and participated through associative or political activism to the peace process.

The way veterans associations provided a supportive environment for the survivors of the conflict has resulted in numerous studies. Since then, historians have extensively studied how European societies dealt with the homecoming of soldiers and provided economic assistance to a social group plagued by unemployment. An entire field of research has brought to light the readiness of European states to care for their wounded and to take care of the psychological and psychopathological damage caused by the war.

The 2019 centennial provides an opportunity to reconsider the contribution of WWI ex-service men and officers to the European peace process. The conference intends to explore the kaleidoscopic trajectories of WWI veterans, highlighting their contribution to the construction/reconstruction of European societies between 1919 and 1923. At the local, national and European level, WWI ex-service men and officers shaped post-war societies, making a significant contribution to the creation of a new set of new political entities and frameworks, thus establishing themselves as major actors in the construction/reconstruction process of Europe.

In Europe, the upheaval of the war and the resultant peace treaties reshaped borders and implemented a new, complex mosaic of nation states. Never had the European continent experienced such drastic territorial changes in such a short time. The enforcement of the Versailles Treaty forced Germany to cede territories to Belgium, to Czechoslovakia and to Poland. Alsace-Lorraine was returned to France. The September 1919 Treaty of Saint-Germain-en-Laye dismantled the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The United Kingdom fractured with the partition of Ireland and the foundation of the Irish Free State. Nation states were born and reconfigured across central and eastern Europe. Where and to what did the allegiances of WWI ex-service men and officers lie? How did the survivors react to the enforcement of the treaties? What role did WWI ex-service men and officers play in the creation and enforcement of the new order of nation states? Hundreds of European survivors actively participated in paramilitary organizations at the European level. The aim of this conference is to consider the transfers of allegiance which took place in the aftermath of the conflict, from imperial armies to revolutionary armed movements, without however neglecting the incorporation of WWI ex-service men and officers into the newly-raised national armies. European governments did in

fact rely heavily on ex-service men and officers to secure the democratic institutions and to maintain peace.

In the aftermath of the First World War, transnational initiatives sprang up throughout Europe, with the aim of bringing together and reconciling WWI veterans from the vanquished and the victorious nations. The aim of this conference is therefore to assess the links between ex-service men of the vanquished and the victorious powers, while analysing their role in the foundation of transnational organizations. On what basis were the latter formed? What common ideals of peace (if any) did they share? Did the articles of the Treaties were imposed on the vanquished weaken the transnational brotherhood? Or is there evidence of the existence of a European solidarity and fellow-feeling between WWI ex-service men? At the local and the national level, did WWI ex-service men and officers contribute to the pacification of the political debate or, on the contrary, did they nourish an exacerbated nationalism? Particular attention will be given to the involvement of WWI veterans in local and national politics.

Main themes

Papers will broadly deal with the following themes:

- WWI ex-service men and transnational networks in Europe
- WWI ex-service men and the peace process
- WWI ex-service men and politics
- WWI ex-servicemen and paramilitary violence in Europe
- WWI ex-service men and the creation of nation states throughout Europe

As we approach the end of the centenary of the First World War, the organisers invite a widespread multi-disciplinary response. In particular, they welcome proposals offering a transnational approach to the study of the demobilization of European armies. The conference organizer intends to organise a round-table around the work of George Mosse *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (1990). Historians, contributors to the conference, and the audience will debate whether the concept of “brutalisation” still has relevance.

The conference language will be English

Please send your proposal (title and abstract in English, French or German of no more than 500 words) and short CV to the conference organiser Emmanuel DESTENAY: emmanuel.destenay@ucd.ie. The deadline for paper proposals is **October 1st 2018**.

Scientific committee

- Bruno CABANES (Ohio State University)
- Emmanuel DESTENAY (University College Dublin)
- Robert GERWARTH (University College Dublin)
- John HORNE (Trinity College Dublin)
- Antoine PROST (Université Panthéon-Sorbonne)

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