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## NATIONAL NARRATIVES OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR – MEMORY AND COMMEMORATION

### Abstract

How is the First World War remembered in different regions and countries? Is there a “European memory”, a “*mémoire partagée*”, or do nations and other collective groups remember the war in very different ways? Have significant narratives persisted over the last decades? How have narratives changed with the course of time, or been adjusted to changing political systems, cultural policies and politics of memory? In the year 2014, when the centenary of the outbreak of the First World War was celebrated, certain differences and asymmetries could be observed when comparing the ceremonies and festivities across individual countries. The First World War has produced many memories ranging from the culture of mourning, manifested in numerous places of commemoration of the dead, like cemeteries and memorials, to presenting and representing the events and sources of the War within the borders of national institutions. Moreover, different emphasis on individual experiences was discernible. While political history has proved dominant in many countries, there is also a culture of remembering losses and heroes, of discussing continuity of values alongside questions of war guilt and warnings from history. Individual countries, regions and peoples connect their memory of the First World War to very different effects of the war. Not only single events like the battle of Gallipoli, but also the Bolshevik Revolution or the expulsion of Greeks and Turks after 1918 are decisive for various national memories. And sometimes traumatic experiences long after 1918 overshadowed the history of the war. Thus, there is a gap not only between the memories of nations and countries carried on over the century, but also between the public and the private modes of commemoration within a single country. At times, these two spheres merge and overlap and the political focus of commemoration corresponds to individual reflections on the sacrifices and losses. The list of national narratives presented here is not exhaustive – it can be enriched and further extended, integrating Baltic countries, Italy, Bulgaria, Romania, the U.S. and Canada, Ireland, and so on. Each country has its own (official) tradition of remembering the war and commemorating its events. However, this selection already indicates significant differences and commonalities of the commemorating processes. Especially the selection of digital information reveals the pivotal role of mourning in certain countries.

### Introduction

There are many efforts to define the fluid reality of memory and memories, of individual and collective attempts to define the past in the form of history. Collective memory forms cultural identity in well-defined boundaries, mostly national contexts that are passed on within societies and other groups, forming a framework of references between the collectively perceived past and the individual position within a socially delineated group.

Commemoration, however, manifests a clearly expressed cluster of shared public points of reference, comprising an official historiography that is widely accepted and represented by a political system or by cultural institutions. Like memory, it is not an eternal or stable entity, its components vary over time and space, the result of changing systems and processes of negotiation. Thus, commemoration practices give an account of the contemporary perception of past events rather than of the events themselves, expressing the mutual influence of past and present in socio-cultural contexts. They also reflect tendencies of collective remembrance rather than of private and family experience.

Here is not the place to reflect on the ambivalences of public and private memories in depth (but see also the [ARG on Private Memories](#)). It is rather the place to address the strongest current trends and their alteration over time, pointing at the still prevalent narratives in their national contexts, which show huge differences across (European) borders and manifest themselves in the policy of cultural agents and stakeholders. According to the official memories of the First World War, cultural heritage institutions have varying roles around the Centenary, exposing many different sources and resources on the war and thus also the perceptions of the war in individual countries.

Looking at these different narratives, a transnational approach initially seems impossible. But the opposite is true. In these narratives the First World War appears more than just one war, and the contrasts between these narratives prove fruitful to challenge them in a comparative and supranational way. Beyond that, a clear overlapping of commemorative practices, presumably not yet forming a European or a Global memory, but depicting some common trends in the perception of the First World War, can be observed. This refers above all to the culture of mourning and grief, manifested in memorials representing the people’s search for the meaning of the war and reflections on the sacrifices that the conflict had entailed. This refers at the same time to the approaches focusing more and more on the private memories of the war, the everyday life of soldiers and civilians rather than of politicians and decision makers.

The commemoration activities in different countries mirror these traditional perceptions manifested in the national historiographies as well as in the digital representations. It is now even clearer to see the discussion about the “right” war in Western Europe or the “forgotten” and “unknown” war in Eastern Europe. Because, looking at the presentation and representation of knowledge about this event, many gaps can be frequently observed. While some countries devote huge financial and research efforts to deal with the legacies of 1914–1918, others foster their national historical myths referring to periods after 1918 or before 1914. They are all equal in their functionality as relevant points of reference; yet they reveal imbalances and disparities of information about the First World War.

An especially burning question today is how the digital age alters the memory and the commemoration practices with regard to the First World War. Official narratives are perpetuated by the publication and dissemination of resources considered crucial; but at the same time, the fragmentation of available information deepens the gaps between countries and national memories, highlighting some resources and concealing others even more. This happens on the national as well as on the transnational scale and must be considered methodologically when examining the memory and memories of the First World War. Historical material is being opened up to researchers and to the public more and more, and the Centenary certainly promotes this development. This fragmentation, though, becomes imperceptible when accompanied by a huge amount of digital information across different portals and websites. Commemorative portals are also used to aggregate primary and secondary information on resources, thus facilitating access to the historical material for the public. At the same time, cultural heritage institutions are taking part in commemorating the First World War, presenting parts and fragments of their holdings and collections in online galleries and digital portals, also providing contents to national or pan-European portals.



## NATIONAL NARRATIVES AND THEIR SOURCES

### THE “GREAT WAR” IN THE UK

The First World War has made a great impact on the collective memory in Great Britain. The years between 1914 and 1918 are perceived as the door that closed behind everything Britain had been before. Therefore, it is not the Second World War, like in many other European countries, that casts long shadows over the cultural and political memory; in Great Britain, major importance is assigned to the shadow of the battle of the Somme, where in 1916 several thousands of British soldiers were dying daily.

Before 1914, Great Britain was a country of wealth and prosperity, a politically and culturally leading great power in Europe and the world. The last battle fought by the United Kingdom before the First World War which took place geographically close was 1815 at Waterloo. The First World War was more damaging to Great Britain than the Second World War in four different aspects: everyday life, the economy, the global position, and domestic policy. In addition, the human losses were more significant in 1918, almost twice as high as 1945. Almost every family mourned their losses, and this was a new and unknown experience for British society that has not been repeated since.

Thus, even though Great Britain won the war, the results of it were strongly felt as a national catastrophe. The picture of a “lost generation” dominated literary as well as cinematic output and was also recorded in private and published memoirs. Moreover, the participation of “lower classes” in the war, often in high and honored military positions, changed the structure of British society after the war. Almost 50% of British officers 1918 were of a lower class origin. Social power and position thus became an issue of merit and expertise rather than of class origin. The social order was additionally challenged by the growing presence and professionalization of women in public business sectors.

The losses were strongly felt in terms of economic and financial policy. The “total war” led by the British government channeled all provisions to the military effort, provoking a virtual bankruptcy of the country. Thus, British influence in the world diminished substantially. Matters were complicated further by the fact that British Dominions — Canada, Australia, New Zealand — that contributed significantly to the history of the First World War alongside the British Empire had been fighting under their own flag and command and, by 1918, expected full independence. This independence was then granted.

Great Britain’s commemoration of the First World War is thus ambivalent, if the relation towards losses is taken into respect. Seen from a more general point of view, it is not only a look back to the lost soldiers 1914—1918, but at the same time a look back to the imperial era with all its prosperity and progress; and this perspective stems from a triumphalist point of view.

### Primary sources

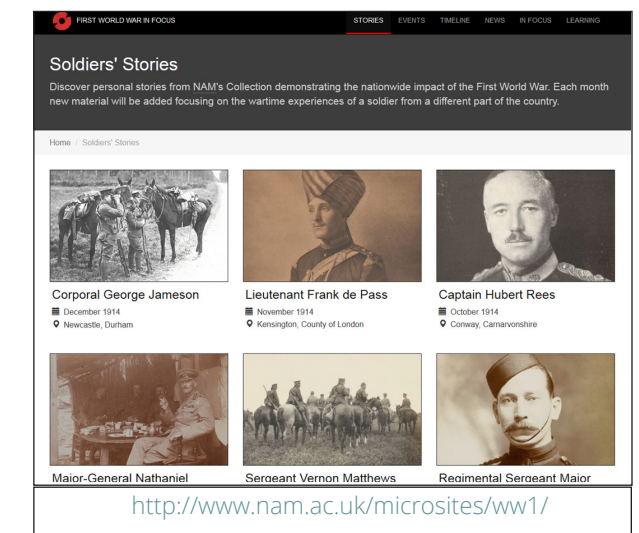
- The [Royal Air Force Museum](#) and its website [RAF Museum Story Vault](#) which enables members of the public to interrogate the Casualty Cards of members of the Royal Flying Corps who suffered injury during the First World War. In addition to these records online visitors are now also able to search the Muster Roll for the RAF as drafted on 1 April 1918 and the Air Force List as of 1 February of the same year.  
[Series Casualty Record Series](#)  
[Series Casualty cards - Person](#)  
[Series Roll of Honour - Roll of Honour 1914-1918](#)
- The [National Archives](#)  
[War Office: First World War and Army of Occupation War Diaries](#)  
[Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps service records](#)
- [ICRC](#)  
[Archives of the International Prisoners-of-War Agency](#)

### Digital Sources

*The Imperial War Museums, commissioned, funded and supported by JISC and the Wellcome Trust, have produced the attached guide to First World War collections held across the UK. The guide provides information on which archive, museum or library across the UK has material relevant to the First World War: [JISCWW1](#)*

The website of the [National Army Museum NAM](#) [Explore a World at War](#) demonstrates the nationwide impact of the First World War, publishing and continuously adding digitized historical material to the portal. The presentation focuses on the wartime experiences of soldiers from different parts of Britain. Each year of the commemorative period, the First World War activities of the National Army Museum focus on a different theme. Starting with *Outbreak* in 2014, it examines *Empire & Commonwealth* (2015), *Conscription & Volunteering* (2016), *Women* (2017), and *Fallout* (2018).

The *National Archives in Kew* hold the official UK government records of the First World War, including a vast collection of letters, diaries, maps and photographs. More and more records become available for online research. This will continue between 2014 and 2019. Among those, a growing number of unit war diaries 1914—1922 are being published on the archive’s portal, accompanied by the project *Operation War Diary*, a crowdsourcing project unlocking the data in the war diaries by users’ tags. Furthermore, in numerous online collections, the National Archives present their records concerning: the British Army (e.g. Prisoner of war interview reports 1914—1918, British Army medal index cards 1914—1920, Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps service records 1917—1920, British Army





nurses' service records 1914—1918, Soldiers' service records, Victoria Cross registers 1856—1944, Soldiers' pension records, Household Cavalry soldiers' service records 1799—1920); the British Air Force (e.g. Royal Air Force officers' service records 1918—1919, Women's Royal Air Force service records 1918—1920); the British Navy (e.g. Royal Navy ratings' service records 1853—1923, Royal Navy officers' service records 1756—1931, Royal Naval Air Service officers' service records 1906—1918, Women's Royal Naval service records 1917—1919, Volunteer

Reserve service records 1903—1922, Royal Naval Division service records 1914—1919, Royal Navy officers' service record cards and files c.1840—c.1920, Royal Naval Reserve service records 1860—1955); Marines (e.g. Royal Marines' service records 1842—1925); Merchant Navy (e.g. Merchant seamen's campaign medal records 1914—1918); as well as Cabinet Papers, 1911 census, Gazettes, and Security Service: Personal Files.



*Centenary 2014-2018* [www.1914.org](http://www.1914.org), led by IWM, focuses on a “global commemoration” of WWI. On the website of the Centenary Partnership, a network of local, regional, national and international cultural and educational organisations, a First World War Centenary Programme is being displayed, a global programme of cultural events and activities, and online resources. The website, sponsored by the British government, is a central place to look for ways to take part in the global commemoration to mark the First World War Centenary. However, it mostly concentrates on events and news from the anglo-phone world, Great Britain as well as its former Dominions Canada, New Zealand, Australia, South Africa or India.

*Thiepval Memorial* [Thiepval Memorial to the Missing of the Somme](#), [Franco-British Memorial](#) — The Somme Memorial, erected in 1932 by the British government, is dedicated to the 75,085 British and South African soldiers missing in action between July 1915 and March 1918 and who have no known graves. Their names are engraved on the 16 pillars that form the base of the 45-metre high arch. Designed by the architect Sir Edwin Luytens, this memorial to the missing soldiers is the most important British monument in France and remains a veritable pilgrimage site for visitors from across the Channel.

The *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* was founded initially in 1915, and by 1917, their work was given official recognition by the War Office. It is incorporated into the British Army as the Graves Registration. On their websites, you can find lists of memorials and cemeteries relevant for the history of the British Empire in the First World War,

commemorating “the 1,700,000 men and women of the Commonwealth forces who died in the two World Wars”. The CWGC also cooperates closely with the IWM in order to present information about the major campaigns, battles and events of the two World Wars, e.g. the Battle of the Somme, the Ypres Salient or the Western Front. [Commonwealth War Graves Commission](#), especially First World War [discover14-18](#).

## Secondary Sources

- See the Collaborative Bibliography of the International Society for First World War Studies, using Zotero, open-source bibliography program to gather references relevant to the First World War. [ISFWWS Collaborative Bibliography](#)
- [encyclopedia.1914-1918-online](#) Great Britain and Ireland





## “LA GRANDE GUERRE” IN FRANCE

The memory of the “Grande Guerre” in France is passed within families from one generation to the next. In almost every family, there are memorabilia and documents of the war to be found, and they still call forth many emotions. The First World War touched almost every French family: 1.4 m soldiers died, several millions were wounded.

Apart from this social and family tradition, there is also a memory institutionalized by state politics. Its most vibrant expression is the National Holiday on Armistice Day every 11 November, established in 1922.

However, French memory of the First World War builds to a great extent upon mourning the dead, rather than commemorating the victory of 1918. And although the years 1939—45 proved disastrous for France, the memory of 1914—18 remains vivid, even if it has transformed, as it did in the 1980s when many veterans were about to pass away. Again in 2014 in France, the Centenary proves the persistent importance of the First World War for French national memory rather than its rediscovery in a collective context, as in Germany. Moreover, the memory of the First World War acts as a collective bond for the French; it does not divide the nation’s self-perception.

This does not imply that there is only one traditional point of view and no different or even opposite perceptions of the events of 1914—1918. In the 1990s, some left-wing activists lobbied for the acknowledgement and rehabilitation of army deserters and renegades who were executed as rebels. So far no such rehabilitation has been achieved.

What makes French memory of the First World War unique are the numerous memorial sites, monuments and places of remembrance in the country, particularly where the Western front divided French territory. This is different from Germany, the U.K. or other countries, even though many German, British or Australian and Indian soldiers fought on the same front. Besides, in France, there is an extensive culture of commemoration, manifested in numerous films, novels or even comics for adults, a genre that is more appreciated in France than elsewhere in Europe. Comics on the First World War are particularly popular.

## Primary Sources

- [Service historique de la Défense](#)  
[Journaux des marches et opérations des grands unités](#)  
[Journaux des marches et opérations des régiments et bataillons](#)  
[Journaux de l’armée de l’Air](#)  
[Journaux de la Marine, Bâtiments de la Flotte principale](#)
- [ICRC](#)  
[Archives of the International Prisoners-of-War Agency](#)

## Digital Sources

The publicly funded website [Mission Centenaire](#) gathers all sorts of information about commemoration, research and activities around the First World War Centenary. The “First World War Centenary Partnership Program” is a public interest group established in 2012 by the Government for the preparation and implementation of the commemorative program for the First World War Centenary. It is made up of sixteen founding members and works under the authority of the deputy minister responsible for War Veterans. One of its aims is to inform the general public about the preparations for the Centenary and to put in place a communications strategy in conjunction with the major events organized as part of the Centenary and to provide information about the First World War, notably by means of a reference digital resources website. It displays materials from libraries (e.g. collection of newspapers of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France) as well as other public fonds in French Archives Départementales and municipales, museums, film archives, etc. A strong focus is also put to local commemoration activities, stating explicitly: “Every French département took part in the war front, whether they were at or behind the front. A number of them were the scene of fighting. All of them lived through the violence of war and mobilization of their inhabitants, men, women and children alike. All of them retain a vivid memory of this global event which left its mark on every village and every family. Today the départemental committee is way of sustaining this local memory of the war and using it as a stimulus for projects for the future.”

### La Marne — un siècle de mémoire

Marne stands for the name of the two decisive battles of the Great War where emblematic monuments and numerous cemeteries delineate the historic front. A multitude of nationalities are represented here and the soil of Marne respectfully hosts the largest number of military graves of all French departments with 164,145 soldiers’ tombs. The website offers an illustrated list of remembrance sites, war cemeteries and necropolises, containing descriptions of soldiers buried on each of them.



## Mémorial de Verdun



The Mémorial de Verdun commemorates one of the biggest battles of the First World War on the Western front. Its name is attached to the battle of 1916, although in fact fighting went on in and around Verdun throughout the whole of the First World War. Provoking reflection on the First World War, and thus on the more general history/memory question, the Verdun Memorial is above all, as the former soldiers who founded it wished, an educational tool that serves historical research. The documentation centre of the Verdun Memorial was created in 1974. Since its creation, it has been enlarged by further donations and research. There are currently several thousand pieces of documentation of various natures in the reserves. The centre contributes to commemoration by conserv-

ing the memories of those who fought in the Battle of Verdun, and thus sustaining the memory of the First World War. The documents also provide a study base for French and German historians who wish to research particular aspects of the battle. It is also open to those wishing to research their relatives' involvement in the 1914—1918 war and all those who are interested in the history of the First World War. Finally, the centre provides the source material necessary for the creation of educational tools by the Education Service of the Memorial. The majority of the documentation concerns the First World War and the Battle of Verdun in particular, seen from many different perspectives: military history, witness accounts, stories, novels, military studies, university studies, military manuals. There are over 4,000 monographs, including rare ones such as “The French Armies in the First World War”, periodicals, newspapers from that period, over 600 regimental accounts that include almost daily records of the battles the regiments participated in, private archives such as letters, travel books and iconographic resources such as photographs, postcards, posters and engravings. All these objects are classified by theme. There is also a large number of material objects such as helmets, uniforms and weapons.

## Memoire des Hommes

The website “Mémoire des Hommes” is being maintained by the French Ministry of Defense. It displays several databases of French and allied soldiers who fought and/or died in France. A database “Sépultures de guerre” is integrated into the portal of the French Ministry of Defense and contains 660,000 names of fallen French soldiers, alongside another database of 1.3 million soldiers who died for France in the First World War. This information was recorded by French war veterans administration just after the war. This database is the result of the digitization and indexation of these records nowadays preserved by the Ministry of Defense (direction of memory, heritage and archives). Another database pro-

vides information about soldiers and civilians sentenced to death and shot in accordance with military judiciary decision or summarily executed during the First World War. Yet another database includes more than 70,000 digitized items about soldiers who belonged to the air force. A database of war diaries from military units contains scanned images of marches and newspaper operations, notebooks accounting campaign, logs, etc. of all military units involved in the First World War.

## Historial de la Grande Guerre Péronne

The Historial de la Grande Guerre (Museum of the Great War), located near the Somme battlefields, was opened on 1 August 1992. Its Documentation Centre contains archives, photographs, postcards, brochures and other documents on the Great War. The focus of the museums lies on presenting different perspectives of the war — the British, French and German perspective — of those who participated in the Battle of the Somme, one of the most costly battles of the First World War.



## Secondary Sources

*Printed Collection Descriptions, available online:*

- Guide des sources de la guerre 1914—1918 dans le Nord, préface Annette Becker, Presses Universitaires Septentrion, Villeneuve d'Ascq, 2009 [GoogleBooks Version in pdf available here](#).
- Guide des Sources conservées par le Service Historique de la Défense à la Première Guerre Mondiale, sous la direction de Agnès Chablat-Beylot conservateur en chef du patrimoine et Amable Sablon du Corail conservateur du patrimoine, Vincennes 2008. [Guide des Sources in PDF version](#)
- République française. Documents relatifs à la guerre 1914—1918. Rapports et procès-verbaux d'enquête de la commission instituée en vue de constater les actes commis par l'ennemi en violation du droit des gens (Décret du 23 septembre 1914) . Paris, Imprimerie nationale, tomes I et II, 1915, tomes III—IV et V, 1916, tomes VI—IX, 1917, tomes X—XII, 1919.
- [encyclopedia.1914-1918-online France](#)
- See the Collaborative Bibliography of the International Society for First World War Studies, using Zotero, open-source bibliography program to gather references relevant to the First World War. [ISFWWS Collaborative Bibliography](#)



## GERMANY AND WAR GUILT

In Germany, the memory of the First World War since 1945 has been dominated by accounting for the events of the Second World War. Before 1939, however, and even up to the 1960s, “war guilt” — clearly assigned to the German Reich in the Treaty of Versailles (article 231) — was perceived by all political parties as well as the public as an injustice and a historical falsehood. The idea of all nations “slithering” into the war 1914 with no actual guilt of only one power led to heroizing of the fallen soldiers as well as the leading army officers, but also to politically rightist anti-republican ideas or the stab-in-the-back legend.

Shortly after the war, a new sensitivity to the historical relevance of the files and records of World War I emerged. The war was to be documented as an epochal event in the archives. However, this approach was also due to historical and political motivation, demonstrating the “national defense fight” and refutation of the “war guilt”. This motive proved dominant for decades to come, including activities to secure not only records of state administrative and military actions but also to actively create contemporary historical war collections.

After the Second World War, certain motives of commemoration — like the heroizing of “dying for his country” and the raising of monuments of the First World and the Second World Wars — were no longer appropriate. The maintenance of war graves and war cemeteries became a task for public charity.

The war guilt question could be and was also used as a sort of an exculpation of the results of the Second World War: in this interpretation, the Treaty of Versailles seemed a true misfortune and was responsible for the Third Reich with all its manifestations. This changed after the Fritz Fischer controversy, declaring Germany’s “bid for world power” as one of the main German “Aims in the First World War”. Until then, Germans had accepted that Germany caused the Second World War, but not the First World War. Fischer declared that Nazi Germany was no “chance accident” but rather that there was continuity in German foreign policy and military plans from 1900 to the Second World War, implying that Germany was responsible for both world wars. Thus, in German memory, both World Wars were and still are strongly intertwined. However, some recent publications have put the question of war guilt and responsibility on the historical agenda again.

Regarding the German national narrative of the First World War, it is important to differentiate between two German narratives in the time between 1945/49 and 1989/90. The GDR largely adopted the Soviet perception of the First World War as an imperialist war, which was considered unimportant to the history and self-understanding of the East German state. The remembrance was even more focused on the events of 1933—1945 than in West Germany.

## Primary sources

In numerous villages and towns, also in many buildings of institutions, plaques commemorate the fallen and dead of the given village or town or institution. They appeared mostly after 1918. However, many German soldiers were buried on foreign territory, in Western and East European cemeteries. Most of them, though not all, still exist. Until 1925, though, Germans were not allowed to visit the graves of their dead in France or Belgium. Already in 1919, the War Graves Commission was founded in order to care for all war graves and to aggregate information about war cemeteries in Europe. Parts of this information can be found online in the archival holdings of the [War Graves Commission](#):

[Archivbestände des Volksbundes Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge e.V.](#)

The Leipzig War Crimes Trials were a series of trials held in 1921 to try alleged German war criminals of the First World War before the German Reichsgericht (Supreme Court) in Leipzig, as part of the penalties imposed on the German government under the Treaty of Versailles. Only Germans were being tried, though virtually all belligerents had committed war crimes, albeit not in such a striking way on foreign territory.

- [Bundesarchiv](#)  
The [German Federal Archives \(Bundesarchiv\)](#) launched a website in July 2014 integrating information about its archival holdings and collections relating to WWI, including a selection of audio material, photographs, digitized objects and genealogies. This digital information is quite considerable and it leads the way to all relevant holdings that can be found in this biggest national archive of Germany, concerning, in the first place, the German Empire before 1918.  
[Reichsgericht](#)  
[Oberreichsanwalt beim Reichsgericht](#)  
[Reichskanzlei, Neue Reichskanzlei](#)  
[Reichstag des Deutschen Reiches](#)  
[Preußisches Kriegsministerium](#)  
[Auswärtiges Amt, Zentralstelle für Auslandsdienst 1912-1923](#)
- [Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv - Kriegsarchiv](#)  
[Kriegsstammrollen](#)  
[Kriegsranglisten und -stammrollen des Königreichs Bayern, 1. Weltkrieg 1914—1918, at: Bayerische Kriegsstammrollen at Ancestry.com](#)
- [International Institute of Social History IISH](#)  
[Karl Kautsky Papers](#) and the holdings of the [International Institute for Social History](#) in general
- [ICRC](#)  
[Archives of the International Prisoners-of-War Agency](#)





## Secondary Sources

- See the Collaborative Bibliography of the International Society for First World War Studies, using Zotero, open-source bibliography program to gather references relevant to the First World War. [ISFWWS Collaborative Bibliography](#)
- [encyclopedia.1914-1918-online Germany](#)
- *Vollständige Sammlung der von Karl Kautsky zusammengestellten amtlichen Aktenstücke mit einigen Ergänzungen.* Im Auftrag des Auswärtigen Amtes nach gemeinsamer Durchsicht mit Karl Kautsky hrsg. von Graf Max Montgelas und Walter Schücking. 4 Bände, Charlottenburg 1919; neue, vermehrte Auflage Berlin 1927.
- *Sammlung der Diplomatischen Akten des Auswärtigen Amtes.* Im Auftrag des Auswärtigen Amtes hrsg. von Johannes Lepsius, Albrecht Mendelssohn Bartholdy, Friedrich Thimme. Band 1—40 [nebst Kommentar], Reihe 1—5, Berlin 1922—1927, 2. Aufl. 1924—1927.
- *Documents extraits des archives de l'Office allemandes Affaires étrangères.* Publiés et annotés par André Scherer et Jacques Grunewald. Vol. 1—4, Paris 1962—1978.
- Kramer, Alan. “Deutsche Kriegsverbrechen 1914/1941. Kontinuität oder Bruch?” In: *Das Deutsche Kaiserreich in der Kontroverse*, edited by Sven Müller and Cornelius Torp, 341-358. Göttingen, 2009.
- Hankel, Gerd. *Die Leipziger Prozesse. Deutsche Kriegsverbrechen und ihre strafrechtliche Verfolgung nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg.* Hamburg, 2003.
- Mullins, Claude. *The Leipzig trials: An account of the war criminals' trials and a study of German mentality.* London: H.F. & G. Witherby, 1921. [Online at the InternetArchive.](#)

## AUSTRIA AND THE END OF THE EMPIRE

Contemporary Austria's commemoration of the First World War is rather scarce. Not only the research community keeps distance to the events of 1914—1918,<sup>1</sup> but also the self-image of the Republic of Austria precludes any identification with the former Austro-Hungarian Empire. The First World War appears in a very ambivalent way in Austrian memory, politically as well as publicly. The utter defeat and the end of the Empire is strongly intertwined with the birth of the new Austrian Republic. What happened after 1918 obscured what had existed before: the end of the Habsburg Monarchy, the Peace Treaties of Saint-Germain and Trianon and the explicit interdiction of a unification with post-war Germany formed the reception and the formation of memory of the wartime events. As a result, the Austrian society that emerged after the war was deeply and long-lastingly divided in its political perceptions which almost led to a civil war in 1934. Thus, it is the year 1934 that is perceived as a “political momentum” in Austria's contemporary history, not the year 1914.

However, the distance to World War One in Vienna seems bigger than in many other regions of Austria. The trend is towards commemoration of fallen soldiers and local museums' exhibitions of private documents like letters (from) home and private diaries of soldiers as well as their families. This rather private approach to the memory of the war is supported by the omnipresence of historical and illustrative material devoted to the centenary.

## Primary and Digital Sources

- Austrian newspapers and special editions from the WW1 period
- Landesbibliothek Oberösterreich
- Die digitale Landesbibliothek Oberösterreich Österreich-Ungarns letzter Krieg
- Die digitale Landesbibliothek Oberösterreich Der Weltkrieg 1914—1918
- ANNO — Newspapers Online ANNO is a virtual reading room of the Austrian National Library, displaying digital copies of historical Austrian newspapers. They can be searched alphabetically or chronologically, also applying full-text search. For the time period of WWI, between 80 and 90 newspapers can be searched on a daily basis. Here an example of the appeal of the Austro-Hungarian Emperor in the daily press: “An meine Völker!” (“To my Peoples!” here: Reichspost, 29 July 1914). [ÖNB/ANNO AustriaN Newspapers Online](#)
- Tiroler Ehrenbuch Digital — Tyrolean Digital Books of Honour Landesmuseum Tirol — Contains names of fallen, wounded and missing soldiers of WWI in Tirol. 120 volumes alone relate to the time of the First World War. In addition to biographical information, such as birth and death date, hometown, occupation, place of death, the Tyrolean honor books contain many images of death and remembrance, and in some cases even letters or short life sketches.
- Austria Forum: A rich collection of secondary material on the history of WWI from the Austrian perspective is being displayed on the platform Austria Forum, maintained by a group of independent researchers and journalists, assembling in-depth knowledge on individual topics that allows for regional and chronological emphasis of Austrian history. WWI is one of these topics. Here, a large number of

<sup>1</sup> Grundlagenpapier österreichischer Wissenschaftlerinnen und Wissenschaftler aus Anlass des Gedenkens des Ausbruchs des Ersten Weltkriegs vor 100 Jahren, August 2013, at: <http://www.bmi.gv.at/cms/cs03documentsbmi/1399.pdf>.



pictures, photographs and films concerning many different features of the conflict. Most part of the material belongs to the public domain, or the rights of use remain with the Austria Forum and are thus clearly specified.

## Secondary Sources

- Collaborative Bibliography of the International Society for First World War Studies, using Zotero, open-source bibliography program to gather references relevant to the First World War. ISFWWS Collaborative Bibliography
- [encyclopedia.1914-1918-online Austria-Hungary](#)

## ANZAC DAY IN NEW ZEALAND AND AUSTRALIA

Every 25th of April since 1916, Australia and New Zealand remember how their troops disembarked on the top of the Gallipoli Peninsula, where they were thoroughly defeated by the Turks after protracted combat. The ANZAC (Australian and New Zealand Army Corps) Day is not only a day of remembrance for this one battle, but it also defines New Zealand's and Australia's identity as an independent member of the British Commonwealth.

In the First World War, New Zealand mourned for more than 18,000 fallen and 60,000 wounded soldiers — more than in World War Two.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, they were all buried far away from home, making it almost impossible for the bereaved to visit their graves. In total, some 10% of the entire population of New Zealand (ca 100,000 soldiers) were shipped to Europe 1914—1918, almost 42% of the male adult population. Evidence of the national importance of the First World War can be found in many places: More than 500 plaques and Memorial Monuments commemorate the fallen of the First World War. Memorials compensate for missing places of mourning, for far away graves.

In Australia, the First World War is more present than any other war. The country then sent an army corps to Europe and its first defeat at Gallipoli is now regarded as the birth of the nation. Like in New Zealand, the ANZAC Day on April 25 is used to commemorate the 9,000 fallen Australian soldiers of Gallipoli, even though three times as many fell in the French trenches. Gallipoli, however, was the biggest campaign of the First World War with Australian participation, and this military disaster now forms the pivotal memory of Australia, focusing on courage, sacrifice and perseverance. The cohesion of the soldiers in Gallipoli has since been regarded as a symbol of the supposed Australian character. Politicians and the Veterans Association made a moral triumph from a crushing defeat. Gallipoli has long been the symbol for Australia's military past and the founding myth of the Australian nation, according to the official version. Here Australia, for the first time, acted as a cohesive and unified country and a sovereign factor — from the beginning on, alongside New Zealand. The experience of an all-Australian experience of suffering in the war contributed to the national integration, constituting an “Anzac spirit”, the entirety of “national values” of Australia which arose in the war and are considered an “ideal to strive for”.

Like in New Zealand, memorials and graves of the “Unknown Warrior” act as substitutes for war cemeteries in Europe. Australia suffered the highest number of casualties in the war, in relative proportion to its population.

## Primary sources

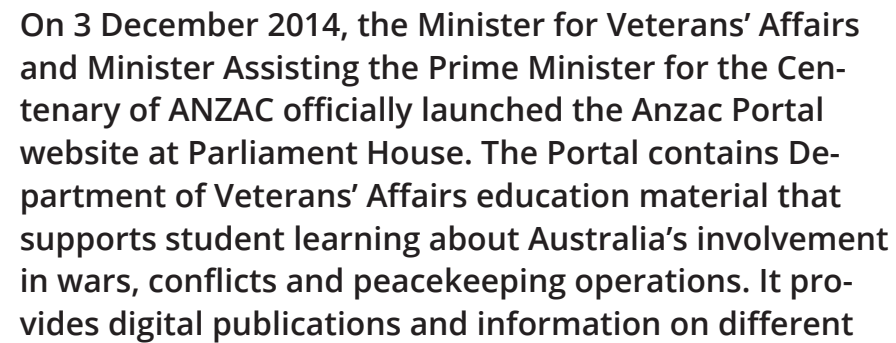
- Australian War Memorial ([described in detail over here](#))  
[Australian Imperial Force unit war diaries, 1914—18 War](#) (digitized records)  
[Official History, 1914-18 War: Records of C.E.W. Bean](#), Official historian  
[Australian Government: How the Germans Treated Australian Prisoners of War](#)
- Archives New Zealand  
[Casualty Forms New Zealand Army](#)  
[Soldiers' Register](#)  
[New Zealand Army Nursing Service Papers](#)

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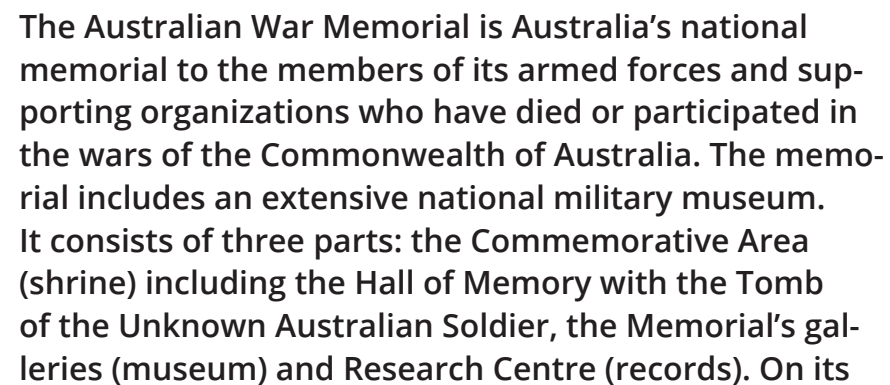
See <http://www.wellington.diplo.de/Vertretung/wellington/de/00/WK1-seite.html>.



## ANZAC Centenary



## Australian War Memorial Centenary Projects



## Australians on the Western Front 1914—1918

the achievements and sacrifices of Australians in the main theatre of conflict” during the First World War.<sup>1</sup> The Trail will link the sites of the most significant Australian battles of the war. It is being developed by the Australian Department of Veterans’ Affairs in partnership with local French and Belgian communities, councils and regional governments. The Trail highlights twelve sites, and other significant locations, from Passchendaele in Belgium down to the area of some of the AIF’s last actions in France around Péronne in 1918.



HOME NZ AT WAR WHAT'S HAPPENING ABOUT

**NZ'S FIRST WORLD WAR CENTENARY 2014-2019**

**NZ AT WAR**

**WHAT'S HAPPENING**

**REMEMBRANCE**

**THE GREAT WAR**

**UPCOMING EVENTS**

<http://www100.govt.nz/>

Veterans' Affairs is responsible for the coordination of veterans' attendance at commemorations of significant military anniversaries. It is also responsible for the provision of ex-service memorials and the maintenance of service cemeteries throughout New Zealand. Unlike many other countries, New Zealand has specifically designated areas within public cemeteries and stand-alone individual cemeteries for the internment of veterans, irrespective of whether death was due to service or to natural causes. These are called service cemeteries and there are now 183 of these throughout New Zealand. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission is responsible for true 'war graves' – that is, the graves of service personnel who died during, or shortly after, World Wars I and II, both overseas and in New Zealand. The Ministry for Culture and Heritage are the New Zealand agents for the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. The website of the Veteran's Affairs offer links to different commemorative services (including visits to Gallipoli and Passchendaele, as well as to personnel papers in New Zealand's Archives). [Veterans Affairs New Zealand](#)

1 See <http://www.ww1westernfront.gov.au/>.

Zealand war graves in 79 countries including New Zealanders serving with other Allied forces. It also aims at producing a photographic record of the relevant major cemeteries and surrounding areas, creating a digital archive and database, accessed via a website, enabling free public access to their biographical information and images, instigating community and education programmes based around the project, instigating the making of a TV documentary telling the story of the project, the cemeteries, but most of all the servicemen, and co-operating and collaborating with others working in similar areas, to ensure accuracy and compatibility of data. Building on the information of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, funded by all Commonwealth governments, the project develops a photo-archive of all cemeteries, headstones and memorials of New Zealand servicemen, who died in conflict.



The website “New Zealand History” features information and resources from within the History Group of the Ministry for Culture and Heritage, Wellington, New Zealand. Three broad categories showcase themes in New Zealand history: Culture and society, Politics and government and War and society. New Zealand in the First World War. Concerning the war, a rich collection of articles, maps, statistics and photographs is being displayed in a specific section of the site dedicated entirely to this conflict. It also contains links to archival material in cultural heritage institutions, e.g. in order to research New Zealand soldiers or an annotated index of wartime laws and regulations 1914–21. All text is licensed under the

Creative Commons Attribution — Non Commercial 3.0 New Zealand License. Commercial re-use may be allowed on request. All non-text content is subject to specific conditions. It also displays a memorial register map — Memorials Register Map New Zealand — including civic First World War memorials and memorials from the New Zealand Wars and South African War. There are plans to add memorials from non-military commemorations (e.g. centennial memorials) in the future.

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- WWI Document Archive: [In Memoriam — The Last Anzacs](#)
- [encyclopedia.1914-1918-online New Zealand](#)
- [encyclopedia.1914-1918-online Australia](#)

## POLAND AND THE WARS AFTER THE WAR

see also: [ARG Parallel Records and Supplementary Material — Poland](#)

For Poland’s national memory, the First World War appears less meaningful than the wars that followed after 1918. Between 1914 and 1918, Poles mostly fought in foreign uniforms, in the Prussian, the Austro-Hungarian or the Russian Armies. They also fought for foreign objectives and aims. The First World War, for decades, has been considered a non-Polish war. In contrast, after the reconstruction of a Polish state became one of the issues of the Paris Peace Conference, the “national fight” for the borders of the future Polish state began. And this fight became the most important part of Polish national self-assurance and its memory of the First World War and after.

Thus, the [Polish Legions](#) or the [Blue Army](#) (Polish military contingent in France) became symbols of a supposedly dominant striving for national independence, carrying on the idea of Polish statehood and also already carrying the name of a Polish state. Thus, the veterans of these military units were valorized after the war, particularly for also having fought in several wars, uprisings and border conflicts after 1918. Their number, however, was not very significant, when compared to the numbers of Poles fighting in German, Austrian or Russian armies. To recognize the veterans of these armies was much more difficult, as they were not fighting for a Polish cause — but for a German, an Austrian or a Russian — and also, because they were fighting against each other between 1914 and 1918.

The overrepresentation of the Polish fighting units in the collective memory of the Second Polish Republic ignored the fact that most individuals considered Polish before 1918 were not taking part in this pursuit of the Polish national idea. Neither was it very opportune to question the continuation of the Polish fight for national independence that began immediately before the final partition of the Polish Republic 1793. The continuity of the struggles for independence were and are part of the Polish self-image and self-understanding, an image that could not be weakened by any political power since 1918.

Only recently, the Poles start to deal with the history of the First World War not only as background of their national struggles but also as the prehistory of their country and region that proved important if not pivotal for the reemergence of a Polish State and for its history in the entire 20th century.

## Primary Sources

Several Polish State Archives exhibit parts of their holdings related to the First World War in online galleries. The descriptive information is rather scarce, the focus is on digital objects, i.e. digital copies of documents, photographs, plans, etc. A list of digitally published galleries 2014–2018 can be found on the website of the Head Office of Polish State Archives. [WWI online galleries of Polish state archives](#).





Besides, some most valuable fonds and holdings have been already — or are being continuously — digitized, pointing to collections most valuable for historical research as well as for the momentum of memory of the Polish nation.

- [Muzeum Śląskie w Katowicach](#)  
Table of Silesian insurgents, verified by the Association of Silesian Insurgents in the years 1936-1939
- [Centralne Archiwum Wojskowe](#)  
Polish Legion and Polish Legion Auxiliary corps  
Upper Silesian uprising
- [The Pilsudski Institute of America](#)  
Silesian Uprising 1919-1922
- [The British Library](#)  
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## REVOLUTIONS AND CIVIL WAR IN RUSSIA

While in Western Europe the outbreak of the First World War as a “seminal catastrophe of the 20th century” is well commemorated, the European East has a divided memory of this event. In Russia, the memory of the horrors of war and the capitulation is almost completely superseded by the memory of the horrors of civil war.

The First World War began in Russia like in all the other belligerent countries — with an eruption of patriotic exaltation on a broad social basis. As in Berlin and Vienna, Paris and London, the enthusiasts who assembled in the streets of St. Petersburg celebrated their love of their country and the hatred of the enemy. As elsewhere, such rallies in Petersburg were accompanied by attacks on members of the “enemy nations”, in this case on the Germans, almost 2 million inhabitants of the Empire 1914. Of course, the anti-German riots in East London with most of the German shops, the demolition of the German shops in Paris or the attacks on Serbs and Russians in Germany and Austria were not trivial, but there were some Russians who presented themselves in “the most patriotic” manner — even in the German Embassy in Petersburg they threw the furniture out of the windows while the police looked on benevolently.

With the first defeats at the front and the worsening food provisioning, in particular the Russian petty bourgeoisie became just as frustrated and angry as its German counterpart. The German patriot, however, really began in 1918 after the defeat in war and the “shameful” Peace of Versailles to believe in the “betrayal”. For the Russian patriot, any military setback and any shortage pointed to a machination of “German spies” who were everywhere — in the army staff as well as in the court of the Russian Empress, the former Darmstadt princess.

The war led in Russia to two revolutions, to a civil war and to the dictatorship of the Bolsheviks. In view of the defeat of the Central Powers Russia actually belonged to the war victors, but after the October Revolution Lenin’s calculation preferred rather to lose the war than to endanger the revolution.

With the 1918 Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, Soviet Russia lost a quarter of its former European territory, a total of 1.42 million square kilometers, where about 60 million people lived — more than a third of the total population of the former Russian Empire. It waived its sovereign rights in Poland, Lithuania and Courland and let Estonia and Livonia and almost the entire territory of Belarus to the German troops. Ukraine and Finland gained political independence. Besides, it accepted reparations amounting to six billion gold marks and the assignment of the Black Sea Fleet to Germany.

Then the Russian civil war began that would last until 1922 and devastate large parts of Russia. The Bolsheviks had anticipated and even ideologically promoted it after the October Revolution: they had planned from the beginning to turn the “imperialist war” into a “class war”. So the First World War was overshadowed by the civil war between the Reds and the Whites in Russia. Because there was no period of peace between the two wars, the memory of the catastrophe of the First World War in Russia is not anchored to nearly the same extent as it is in Western Europe.

The Russian battles of the First World War took place on “enemy territory” — first in Galicia, Bukovina, and in East Prussia. Later, the fighting continued in Poland and the Baltic states, parts of the Russian Empire with no significant Russian population. The Russian Civil War, however, with all its cruelty, was fought on Russian territories. It is estimated that 8 to 14 million people fell victim to the fighting, 2 million (mostly members of the nobility and middle class and the educated class) fled the country. Just about all of industry and agriculture collapsed. 4 to 8 million children were orphaned.

Thus, it is hardly surprising that the Russian collective memory focused on the Civil War and almost faded out the memory of the First World War. This is already apparent in the number of literary masterpieces dealing with the Civil War from the 1920s and 1930s.

It was relatively easy in the Soviet Union to write or speak about the First World War, a war generally considered to be “the war against the Germans” or “the German war”. Books by historians for an academic audience could appear, but at the same time, popular representations of the Tsarist crimes circulated. Even the documents of the Russian “secret diplomacy” were published in the early twenties as an act of backing away from the imperial past. However, the First World War was connected strongly to some less appropriate memories of the new Bolshevik régime, such as the history of exiled communist revolutionaries in Switzerland or of the German money transfers to the Bolsheviks.

In today’s Russia, a gradually growing interest in the First World War can be observed. Russian research works appear, others are being translated. International conferences are being organized. Obviously, the realization of a deep inner connection between the two world wars is starting to gain interest.

## Primary sources

- [The British Library](#)  
[European Collections from WW1 kept by the British Library](#)

## Secondary Sources

- [encyclopedia.1914-1918-online](#) [Russian Empire](#)

## SERBIA’S “RED HARVEST”

During the First World War, Serbia recorded the highest number of deaths among all belligerent countries: 1.2 million, i.e. 53% of the male population between 18 and 55 years of age. After the war, Serbia encountered a deep economic crisis. In post-war discourse the memory of this Pyrrhic victory became the founding myth of the first joint Yugoslav state. Serbia considered himself as a self-sacrificing nation who in costly battles freed the other South Slavic peoples from tyranny.

The sacrificial leitmotif has had a great impact on the Serbian view of history: from the legendary field of Kosovo battle to the NATO intervention in 1999. This trope appears in various guises: as victims, martyrs or heroes who shed their blood for a just cause. It has an important place within family memory and in school education. Nationwide, one finds “krajputaši” on the paths and roadsides — small grave stones of the soldiers who died a hero’s death during the liberation wars. On 1 December 1918, the first Yugoslavia — the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes — was established under the Serbian dynasty Karađorđević. This year marks a highlight in the Serbian history, the euphoric nation-building in a free state. The dream of a strong Yugoslav state under the Serbian government was paid for with thousands of lives.

The First World War plays a particularly important role in Serbian historiography because it is closely associated with the idea of nation-building and the founding of the state. However, Serbia’s First World War began already in 1912 in the First Balkan War and continued in 1913 with the Second Balkan War, experiences shared with Bulgaria and Greece. Thus, the Serbs entered war from a substantially different basis than most other countries. The Balkan Wars had already exhausted the population and took a toll on its resources. They proved, on the other hand, responsible for the Austro-Hungarians’ fear of diminishing influence on the Balkans and potentially for the harsh reaction of Vienna and Berlin to the assassination of the Archduke of Austria Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo. This, at least, forms the argumentation of a currently popular publication on the European ‘Sleepwalkers’, European powers provoking a war they were not able to categorize when they took the risk, amongst them most notably France and Russia, Austria and Germany. The question of the Serbian war guilt arises again<sup>1</sup> and finds incomprehension and indignation in Serbia. Simultaneously, the unveiling of a monument of Gavrilo Princip, the assassin of 1914, in Sarajevo, reveals a conception of the war that differs substantially from the West European perception — and meets as much incomprehension outside of Serbia.

However, the collective memory of World War I has been amended several times in Serbia: sacralized by one power, then, for a certain time, removed by another power from the national memory. Only the myth that has arisen from this war has remained unshakable — the victimhood of the people. In 1938, a mausoleum in memory of the fallen of the First World War was built by order of King Alexander I in the vicinity of Belgrade. The symbolically important mound of Avala had been selected as the place for the monument. The monument was named “Tomb of the Unknown Hero” and recalls to this day the achievement of all eight nations that lived in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes.

<sup>1</sup> Christopher Clark, *The Sleepwalkers. How Europe went to War in 1914*, London 2013.



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[Books from the WW1 period preserved by the National Library of Serbia](#)  
[Cartographic material of the WW1 from the National Library of Serbia](#)  
[Letters, postcards, unpublished memoirs and documents for the history of Serbia in World War I](#)
- [The British Library](#)  
[European Collections from WW1 period kept by the British Library](#)
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## THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

The same battle which became the founding myth of the nations of Australia and New Zealand is in Turkey named after the town Çanakkale, and proves much less important for the national narrative of the First World War, despite that fact that it was a rare Ottoman victory. Nonetheless, each year on 18 March Turkey commemorates the same battle with the “Remembrance Day of the Fallen”: the failed Anglo-French naval attack on the Dardanelles 1915. The Çanakkale Şehitleri Anıtı, the memorial of the martyrs of Çanakkale is situated on the northern shore of the Dardanelles. Close by, on a war cemetery, some 600 soldiers are buried. The memorial incorporates an inscription with verses from the “Independence March” — since 1921 the Turkish national anthem. The verses refer to the horrors of the First World War. Mustafa Kemal “Atatürk” (Father of the Turks), the founder of the Turkish Republic, expressed in 1933 the universality of the memory site of Çanakkale/Gallipoli alluding to the Turkish, British and Australian casualties: “For us, there is no difference between the Johnnies and the Mehments. They are now lying side by side in our country and rest in peace.” To the dead of both sides the entire area is dedicated with the martyrs’ monument and other memorial architecture.

But 1915 also stands for another event in modern Turkish history: the genocide of the Armenians. On 24 April of that year, the organized expulsion of Armenians began. Armenians all over the world commemorate that day of the genocide and the genocide has been recognized by many countries. However, Turkey rejects the term genocide and speaks of a tragedy during a wartime relocation of Armenians. It is estimated that between 300,000 and more than 1.5 million people were killed on death marches and in massacres. Modern historical research agrees that the former Ottoman government systematically and brutally acted against the Armenians in the Empire, resulting in their deaths.

The First World War was fought and lost by the Ottoman Empire which signed the Sièvres Peace Treaty 1920, which accommodated the numerous strategic interests of the Western powers. However, the struggle for power in the now emerging state of the Turks was not finished. On the contrary, the movement around Mustafa Kemal became more powerful after the end of war and led to the disintegration of the Empire, strongly weakened in the course of the war. In Turkey, the First World War is mainly seen as an overture to the establishment of the Turkish Republic five years after it ended. It was in Lausanne 1923 that the final peace treaty could be signed, sealing and recognizing the existence of the Turkish Republic. Thus, the state founding myth of modern Turkey is based on the liberation war from 1919 to 1922 against the Greeks —where the Greek Asia Minor Campaign was repulsed —, the Treaty of Lausanne and the proclamation of the Republic in the same year. Greek and Turkish population were at that point of time expelled from Greece and Turkey, respectively.

After the end of the First World War, the Turkish nation-state was able to rely on a loyal, educated elite that seamlessly fit with the new conditions. The sons of Ottoman Kadis now became Republican judges. Officers who before the war had fought in Yemen or in Albania against insurgents, now served as generals of the armies of Atatürk. The separation from the Ottoman heritage was not at all radical: the state control of Islamic institutions was retained. The sharpest break with the Ottoman past were the abolition of the Arabic script and the introduction of a European legal order.

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## UKRAINE’S FIRST ATTEMPT OF INDEPENDENCE

The First World War was important for the history of the Ukraine: millions of Ukrainians fought in different armies and at the same time, crucial parts of Ukrainian territories (or those that became Ukrainian in the course of time) formed the main war zone in Eastern Europe’s war theatre. The war also accelerated the process of unification of the Ukrainian nation, even though in 1914—1918, Ukrainians, like Belarusians or Poles, could not refer to their own state and fought against each other in the Russian and the Austro-Hungarian armies.

Nevertheless, the process of political awareness and consciousness had its origins in the intensified attempts of national liberation that began during the First World War. Important in this context was the creation of the first Ukrainian military unit: the Legion of Ukrainian Sich Riflemen as part of the Austro-Hungarian army (and similar to the Polish Legion). After the First World War, with Austria’s disintegration, the unit became the regular military unit of the West Ukrainian People’s Republic and was eventually disbanded in 1920, after the Polish-Ukrainian war.

Similar to other territories in East Central and Eastern Europe, it was the disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian and the Russian Empire that made Ukrainian statehood likely. However, different from the Polish or the Czech and Slovak example, for Ukraine it proved unsuccessful. The Ukrainian People’s Republic and the West Ukrainian People’s Republic in East Galicia were proclaimed 1918/1919 and merged soon after. Throughout 1919, Ukraine experienced chaos as the armies of the Ukrainian Republic, the Bolsheviks, the Whites, the foreign powers of the Entente, and Poland tried to prevail in the territories. In 1920/21, Ukraine was eventually conquered by the Bolsheviks. The Peace Treaty of Riga sealed a shared control of the territory by Poland, the Soviet Russia, and the Ukrainian Soviet Republic.

The short period of independence played an important role in forming a Ukrainian national and political thought. It is, however, hardly remembered in Ukrainian society. Neither historians nor artists dedicate much attention to the First World War. In this sense, this war appears as a “stolen war”, overshadowed by the remembrance of the Bolshevik Revolution in the Soviet Union of which Ukraine, for many decades, formed an integral part. The remembrance, at the same time, differs in individual regions of Ukraine. While in former Galicia, the First World War still excites some patriotic memories, the Eastern part of the country, then part of Russia, shows less identification with its history.

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- [encyclopedia.1914-1918-online Ukraine](#)



## OCCUPATION OF BELARUS

For decades, the First World War has been suppressed in the collective memory of Belarus since the Belarusian soldiers were “fighting for the wrong cause”. At the same time, the war left deep marks in contemporary Belarus. Current research estimates that of a total of 7 million Belarusians, 700,000 to 920,000 men were conscripted, 1.5 million were made refugees, and 3.5 million came under German occupation. A review of the numbers is difficult as the territories of present-day Belarus were part of the Russian Empire before 1917 and no isolated data can be extracted from the Russian material. Thus, the numbers can be even higher given the fact that Belarus was one of the main theatres of operations on the Eastern front.

A differentiation between topographic description “Belarussija” during the war years and the today’s “Republic of Belarus” seems necessary. Within its borders, the headquarters of the Supreme Commander of the army of Nicholas II in Mogilev were situated, the subsequent Treaty of Brest-Litovsk was signed between Russia and the German Empire, and the abdication of the Tsar was signed. Also, the first monument to the soldiers of the First World War was built in 1915 in Baranovichi, a city in the Brest Region of Western Belarus, the place of deployment of the high command of the armed forces in the Russian Empire before the German occupation. After the Polish-Soviet War 1919—1921, it became Polish.

Although the First World War does not nearly reach the relevance of the experience of the Second World War, it plays an increasingly important role in the national self-definition of Belarusians. During the Second World War, the region experienced a wave of massive terror and crimes against humanity, becoming part of what has recently been called the “Bloodlands”,<sup>1</sup> the process of self-conception and national identity, strongly encouraged after the disintegration of the former Soviet Union.

## Secondary Sources

- [encyclopedia.1914-1918-online Belarus](#)

<sup>1</sup> Timothy D. Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin*, Basic Books New York 2010.

## THE RAPE OF BELGIUM

The neutrality of Belgium had been guaranteed by the Treaty of London (1839), which had been signed by Prussia. However, the German Schlieffen Plan required that German armed forces violate Belgium’s neutrality in order to outflank the French Army, concentrated in Eastern France. Thus, the Treaty of London was dismissed. Several atrocities against the civilian population of Belgium were carried out by the German army in the opening months of the War. They became the basis for exaggerated war propaganda, though not completely unfounded. Belgian losses in civilians were significant, the destruction of cities and villages was real, public executions as well as the deliberate burning of the university’s library in Leuven were not mere propaganda, even though the allied countries used modified versions of these events in order to — successfully — achieve global condemnation of their enemy. Much of the wartime publishing in Britain for instance was in fact aimed at attracting American support.

The narrative of German atrocities in Belgium in its overwhelming intensity partly cast doubts about its reliability, as some of them proved fictional and wrong. An official report of the Committee on Alleged German Outrages (Bryce report) was published in May 1915 and served as the basis for further accusations.

However, more than 5,500 Belgian civilians were executed or killed in the first few months of the war, their homes destroyed. The arbitrary massacres of civilians were justified at that time with attacks of guerrilla fighters that have been already refuted by the current research. It is currently clear that there was no guerrilla warfare in Belgium, except for infrequent and isolated actions. Nevertheless, the German soldiers are being attested of having believed in universal franc-tireur activities of the Belgian population, effecting a war paranoia that led to the massacres.

For decades, the atrocities of the German side were officially largely ignored. Only in 2001 a representative of the German government asked for forgiveness in Dinant, the place of a massacre 1914. However, in Belgium the memory of the atrocious crimes such as the massacre of Dinant is kept alive to this day.

Simultaneously, as Belgium was one of the main war theatres in the First World War (the First and Second Battles of Ypres), not only the remembrance of Belgian civilian victims, but also of fallen soldiers of all nationalities is playing an important role in the national narrative of the war.

## Primary sources

- [Royal Library of Belgium](#)  
[Brochures and Pamphlets for the history of Belgium in World War I](#)  
[Musical Life in Belgium during the First World War at the Royal Library of Belgium](#)

## Digital Sources



### 100 jaar Groote Oorlog

The project 'The Great War Centenary' was put up to commemorate the events of the First World War in a fitting way. Westtoer and the province of West-Flanders want to make both adults and youngsters aware of the theme 'no more war', co-ordinating this event in the region West-Flanders and outlining all planned events and initiatives in the built-up to the remembrance of the First World War in the Westhoek district of the Flanders Fields Country in Belgium. It gives an overview of Commonwealth, Belgian, German, French and American war cemeteries in this region.



**In Flanders Fields Museum** — The Name List (A list including both civilians and soldiers, irrespective of nationality).

Between the start of the war and the signing of the peace, millions of deaths were mourned worldwide, out of which 600,000 in Belgium, or 550,000 in West Flanders. Various official organizations keep victim lists, for which great efforts were and are done. All of them, however, are based on nationality. The In Flanders Fields Museum

seeks to publish a Name List that aims to unite all victims linked to the First World War in Belgium in one shared history without the intention to replace the existing databases of official war grave committees. This project aims to assemble all fatalities of the Great War who died or were mortally wounded in Belgium, both civilian and military, and whatever their nationality. In a sub-project, civilian victims are being listed. Besides, the City of Ypres holds an original copy of Ireland's Memorial Records. The Committee of the Irish National War Memorial recorded some 49,000 names to be published in 1923. Alphabetically listed in eight leather bound volumes, the register was beautifully illustrated by the Irish artist Harry Clarke. The Ypres copy and its original made to measure cabinet is on permanent display in the In Flanders Fields Museum.

**Gone West, reflections on the Great War** — The list of Names: The focus of Gone West will be the compilation of a complete list of the names of 600,000 people who died in Flanders during the Great War, both citizens and soldiers.

### Memorial Museum Passchendaele 1917

The Battle of Passchendaele 1917 was one of the biggest and bloodiest encounters of the Great War. In 100 days of heavy fighting 245,000 British, Australians, Canadians, New Zealanders and South Africans were put out of action to gain just five miles. In Passchendaele, the back walls of Tyne Cot Cemetery contain the names of 35,000 men missing in action from 16.08.1917 until the end of the war. The Menin Gate, Ypres, commemorates another

55,000 soldiers whose bodies were missing before that date. Approximately half of those men lie unidentified but in graves with the inscription 'A Soldier of the Great War'. The others remain unrecovered, still buried somewhere in Flanders Fields ...

No matter how impressive a visit to Tyne Cot or other cemeteries and memorials is, one can only find a name there, with the scantiest of details. 'The Passchendaele Archives' intends to put a face and a story to those names by building up personal archives with photographs, family and military information. In order to avoid a duplicate of the CWGC database, a file will only be started if a photograph is available and if the man fell during the Battle of Passchendaele, from 12 July till 15 November 1917. It aims thus at building up personal archives with thousands of files to be consulted in the Memorial Museum and developing a database with extracts of all files and research facilities.



## Secondary Sources

*Printed Collections Descriptions, available online:*

- Guide des sources de la Première Guerre mondiale en Belgique / Archievenoverzicht betreffende de Eerste Wereldoorlog in België  
[Guide des Sources\\_Vol 1](#)  
[Guide des Sources\\_Vol 2](#)
- [War Propaganda Bureau, London](#)
- [encyclopedia.1914-1918-online Belgium](#)
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- Horne, John, and Kramer, Alan. *German Atrocities, 1914: A History of Denial*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001.



## HUNGARY'S LOST TERRITORIES

In Hungary, the memory of the First World War is dominated by the remembrance of its results for the then Kingdom of Hungary — the Peace Treaty of Trianon. The dismemberment and fragmentation of former Hungarian territories led to the fact that more than 3.5 million ethnic Hungarians found themselves living in foreign countries and as what they felt to be second-class citizens. Thus, the First World War does not claim such relevance in the Hungarian collective memory as it does in the U.K. or in France. Moreover, Hungarian memory differs profoundly from Serbian memory, which accepts the outcomes of the war as ultimately positive, notwithstanding the sacrifices between 1912 and 1918.

Historiography in Hungary has from the start estimated the First World War as a national catastrophe and it did not really matter whether the war was a war of aggression or of defense. These categories have repeatedly been put aside. The origins of the war and the question of war guilt have not played any decisive role in the Hungarian remembrance. In 1914, the Hungarian Prime Minister István Tisza initially rejected the idea of joining the war alongside with its union partner Austria. In the end, however, Hungary followed Austria after the Austrian ultimatum and the declaration of war to Serbia. Hungarians fought on many fronts of the First World War: in Galicia and the Ukraine, at Isonzo, in Tirol. The family memory in Hungary refers to all these battlefields of Eastern and Central Europe. Almost 4 million Hungarian soldiers took part in the war, more than 600,000 fell.

What happened after the First World War, however, was an involuntary democratization, and, after a short intermezzo under Béla Kun and the Hungarian Soviet Republic, a return to an authoritarian, conservative country that had lost two thirds of its pre-war territories. Territories that were not entirely inhabited by Hungarians, though. As in Austria, in Hungary significant Slovak, Romanian and Croatian minorities were part of the Magyar country before 1914, minorities now striving for independence and not ready to continue under Hungarian rule. Thus, the fact that Hungary now actually became a national country could not substitute for its former position as a privileged, almost equal partner in the Austro-Hungarian dual monarchy. The disintegration of this monarchy did not bring advantages to the Hungarian independent state as it did to many other states in the area.

The official memory found its expression in “Monuments of the Hungarian Grief” (Magyar Fajdalom szobra) and the “Irredenta Monuments”. These monuments were not built spontaneously and did not reflect the feelings of the greatest part of the Hungarian population after the First World War — they reflected rather the ideology of the post-war state and were from the beginning instrumentalized to represent its irredentist tendency

## Secondary Sources

- [encyclopedia.1914-1918-online Hungary](#)

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