

Histories of 1914. Debates and Use of Origins of World War One in Southeastern Europe

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The annual conference of the Centre for Southeast European Studies was devoted to the remembrance of World War One in Southeastern Europe and brought more than forty scholars to the University of Graz. Scholarly contributions covered papers on public memory and commemoration, illustrating the varieties in national historiographies of WWI in the region.

The program was opened by JAMES LYON (Sarajevo/Graz), who depicted Sarajevo on the eve of the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand and his wife Sophie. Focusing on the city's transformation from an Ottoman to a Habsburg city, the presentation stressed that everyday life was still deeply segregated with confessional quarters and few mixed marriages, while common spaces only emerged in the „čaršija“, the centre. PAUL MILLER (Westminster, MD) continued by mapping out the diverging Yugoslav commemorative traditions of 1914. Whilst the first Yugoslavia gave little space to 1914 and Gavrilo Princip, with much of the initiative during the interwar period being private and unofficial, it was socialist Yugoslavia that took up their cause and named the first street after Princip in Belgrade. However, even then WWII and the Partisan struggle overshadowed most memories of 1914. BOJAN ALEKSOV (London) placed the centennial commemorations in 2014 in a more global context and highlighted key Western, in particular British, debates and controversies. Much of the debate in Britain and internationally focused on the influential book „Sleepwalkers“ by Christopher Clark¹, whose view of the Balkans and Serbia reaffirm an orientalist view of the region, noted Aleksov. The debate saw conservative politicians and historians in Britain defending the established understanding of the

war as being primarily caused by Germany, whereas liberal intellectuals and labour politicians rather defending Clark's arguments of shared responsibility. Yet, the debates have been unable to capture the complexity of the causes of the war.

The second panel focused very concisely on the remembrance of WWI, the transformation of Austria's memory landscape and the mnemonic practices in Austrian post-WWI narratives. Starting with an elaboration of Austrian WWI narratives, WERNER SUPPANZ (Graz) portrayed a multitude of ideological approaches and caesuras in Austrian memorialization from 1918 onwards. He argued that due to the strong ideological polarization during the Interwar period, there had not been an 'Austrian' narrative about WWI. After 40 years of being overshadowed by the academic and public preoccupation with WWII, it was only after 1990 that a narrative of WWI emerged as modern experience of violence. Following up, HANNES LEIDINGER (Vienna) took a more thorough look at exactly this intensive re-introduction of WWI into public memory after years of forgetting and silencing. For him, 2014 has itself proved to be a competitive exhibition for academics, public intellectuals and journalists to portray their interpretations. He concluded that the reintroduction of the topic represents an opportunity to widen and deepen historical research. BETTINA HABSBURG-LOTHRINGEN (Graz) explored a myriad of representations of the „Great War“ in the Austrian museum context. Echoing the two previous speakers, she illustrated the shift of representations from a technological war related topic towards social issues, everyday life and particularly the suffering of the ordinary people. The last speaker, WOLFRAM DORNIK (Graz), focused on the role the controversial Austrian military general, Conrad von Hötzendorf, played during WWI. Today he is remembered positively within certain circles of the military and the political right, whilst in the general public his persona is an increasingly marginalized, forgotten or even criticized one.

The third panel opened the second day with

¹ Christopher Clark, *The Sleepwalkers. How Europe went to War in 1914*, London 2012.

AMER OSMIĆ and ENITA ČUSTOVIĆ (both Sarajevo) presenting a study on the perception of the Young Bosnians and Gavrilo Princip in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Claiming that the perception depends on ethnic affiliation, they showed that for Bosniaks Princip is widely seen as a terrorist, whilst the Bosnian Serbs see him as a hero. Interestingly, Bosniaks do not see the Young Bosnians, the network the assassins belonged to, as a terrorist organization. IRENA ŠENTEVSKA and MUHAREM BAZDULJ (both Belgrade) presented an analysis of two contemporary plays by two Belgrade authors, Biljana Srbljanović and Milena Marković, which gave a very different interpretation of the role and personality of Princip. For Srbljanović he was first of all a victim of Serbia's „deep state“ of the time, which abused young and idealistic men as part of its project to destabilize neighbouring Bosnia-Herzegovina. Marković, on the other hand, portrayed Princip not as an object, but a consenting political subject who knew exactly what he was doing. This perspective is gaining more and more ground among leftists in the region, as GREGOR MAYER (Vienna/Budapest) showed in his contribution. He elaborated on the ‘Yugoslav’ interpretation of Princip, which sees him not as a Serbian nationalist, but as a fighter for the union of the South Slavic people and anti-colonialists.

The fourth panel focused on different patterns of remembering WWI from official commemoration to oral traditions. MARTIN BAYER (Berlin) placed the commemoration of WWI in the Balkans in a global context. The global view reveals that despite the war's global reach, commemoration remains national. From holidays to the key battles, memory is different and separate, as is the centrality of the war for national narrative. Thus, WWI remains framed in a larger national context. PETER DRAGIŠIĆ (Belgrade) illustrated this global pattern with new nationalist WWI narratives in Serbia. The newly emerged narratives seek to prominently accentuate the role of the Entente and Russia, while others, such as France, are downplayed. ADNAN KAMENJAŠEVIĆ (Osijek) gathered and analysed hundreds of orally transmitted stories of WWI in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The sto-

ries are much more ambivalent about who is „ours“ and „theirs“; heroes are ordinary people and the main focus is on everyday themes and concerns. MIRZA REDŽIĆ (Vienna), on the other hand, explored the commemoration festivities in Sarajevo in 2014. He argued that due to the dominance of commemorations by outsiders, Bosnian actors were deprived of their agency, with the commemorations becoming re-shaped as events focused on peace, reconciliation and linking the wars of the 1990s to 1914.

Panel five of the second day dealt with modes of remembering, forgetting and with diverging national histories of WWI. NICOLE IMMIG (Jena) compared the current German „Marathon of Remembrance“ pertaining to WWI with its absence from the public debate in Greece. The Great War, she argued, is not part of the collective memory in Greece. Both the preceding Balkan Wars and the succeeding Asia Minor campaign are considered much more important formative moments in the collective memory and constructions of national consciousness. Both the Greek case, further discussed by PANAGIOTIS PASCHALIDIS (Thessaloniki), and the Slovenian case, explored by MARTA VERGINELLA and PETRA TESTEN (both Ljubljana), illustrate the importance of diverging national histories for our understanding of remembering and forgetting the Great War.

The last panel of the second day focused on commemorations and memorials, remembering and forgetting the Great War. ALEKSANDAR-IVAN TATIĆ (Rijeka) and NIKOLA BAKOVIĆ (Čačak) gave two accounts of local mnemonic practices and their transformation during the 20th century by focusing on commemorations and monuments in the Croatian port-city of Rijeka/Fiume and Čačak, Serbia respectively. OLGA MANOJLOVIĆ-PINTAR (Belgrade) echoed some of these processes by looking at the period of socialist Yugoslavia and the complex memory politics of communist elites in relation to WWI. Illustrating the transformations within these memory politics, she pointed out the internal struggle and ultimately failure of Communist political elites to streamline memory and memorialisation of WWI with Yugoslav political ideology. Closing

the second day of the conference, VJERAN PAVLAKOVIĆ (Rijeka) focused on the memorialisation of WWI in post-socialist Croatia. Explaining the „Croatian silence“, he pointed out that being on the „losing side“ is generally more difficult to commemorate, but also that the war was not fought on Croatian territory. Concluding, Pavlaković said that the remembrance of WWI was overshadowed by WWII and the War of Independence (1991-1995) and that the state has little interest or initiative to create memorials to WWI, thus incorporating the WWI narrative into the broader state-building narrative.

The first panel on the third day displayed variations in historiographies about the Great War in the region. While OLIVER SCHMITT (Vienna) and TVRTKO JAKOVINA (Zagreb) highlighted the silence regarding WWI in Albanian and Croatian historiographies, DANILO ŠARENAC (Belgrade) examined Serbian responses to the centennial revision of 1914. Šarenac underlined the role of Christopher Clark's „The Sleepwalkers“ as it marked public life and became a „coffee-table book“ in Serbia. For him, Clark's account, despite being accurately researched, contains Balkan stereotypes and is seen as a hit on Serbian identity. AMIR DURANOVIĆ (Sarajevo) emphasized that the Sarajevo assassination has never been an exclusively scholarly debate, but is still shaped by political elites and public discourse. He concluded that nationalist rhetoric and divided memories emanating from public discourse on the 100 year anniversary of the Sarajevo assassination further contribute to the division of Bosnian society along ethnic lines. TINA MAVRIKOS-ADAMOŪ (New York) presented findings on her research about the use of still images in teaching WWI in Greek history textbooks.

EROL KÖROĞLU (Istanbul) opened the next panel with an overview of the commemoration of the Gallipoli battle, which became crucial for Turkish historical imagination and statist history. ELEONORA NAXIDOU (Xanthi) uncovered the reasons behind the lack of scholarly attention towards WWI in Bulgarian historiography. The Great War, apart from being remembered as a failure of Bulgarian irredentism, was not part of official his-

tory as it was considered an imperialistic conflict. WWI is still mostly forgotten by Bulgarian historiography or is in „semi-oblivion“, Naxidou concluded. Similarly, LJUBINKA TRGOVČEVIĆ-MITROVIĆ (Belgrade), in her comparison of old and new historiographies about WWI in Serbia, mentioned that the Yugoslav Communists regarded WWI as a bourgeois war led by imperialists. Yet, WWI was not completely ignored in socialist Yugoslavia; instead, its remembrance was postponed and the war made a historical reappearance during the 1970s. In the 1990s, a period described by Trgovčević-Mitrović as a new turn-about in war studies when ethnocentrism and pseudo-historiography became dominant, historians turned from class to national identity and to the Serbian victims of WWI. IAKOVOS MICHAILIDIS (Thessaloniki) stated that in Greek historiography the Asia Minor catastrophe of 1922 has always been a bigger issue than WWI. His paper illustrated how historiography and the memory of WWI in Greece were overshadowed by the „National Schism“ between Royalists and Venizelists due to the usage of history as a propaganda tool and the continuation of the dispute between the two rivaling parties.

The last panel of the conference focused on the depiction of WWI in history textbooks. VASSILIKI SAKKA (Tripoli) observed that the Great War was approached separately – in European and national dimensions – in history textbooks, but is still rather absent from Greek collective memory. Her conclusion revealed that national history in Greece is still read from the „Nationalist Divide“-lens, including both the dichotomous memory of the dispute between Venizelists and Royalists and the collective trauma of the Asia Minor catastrophe. SNEJŽANA KOREN (Zagreb) conducted a comparative analysis on the presentations of WWI in Croatian and Serbian history textbooks. Her analysis showed that despite the common framework of Yugoslav identity, history textbooks in socialist Yugoslavia were characterized by Croatian, Serbian or Slovenian perspectives, while in the 1990s historical presentations of WWI were used for political manipulation. BOŽO REPE (Ljubljana), in his study on WWI in Slovene consciousness and history textbooks,

noted that with Slovenia's independence the teaching of history changed with a greater focus on the Slovene nation and everyday life aspects of history. HALIL BERKTAY (Istanbul) explored the Turkish paradox of progressive politics and retrogressive textbooks when (dis)remembering the Armenian genocide. He emphasized the importance of context for historical practice, but also pointed out that contextualization of historical events might lead to denialist apologetics. This tension between context and historical event has permeated genocidal recognition and denial politics in Turkey.

Overall, the conference on histories of 1914 showed that there is no common European commemoration of WWI and that internal contestation(s) and narratives on the Great War have to be taken into account. In addition, many of the present scholars highlighted to what extent historical debates are taken over by amateur historians and entrepreneurs of memory.

Conference overview:

Conference Opening; Introduction
Florian Bieber (University of Graz, Austria)

Panel 1: Gavrilo Princip and Young Bosnians

James Lyon (Sarajevo / University of Graz, Austria), *Life in Habsburg Sarajevo 1914*

Paul Miller (McDaniel College, Westminster, Maryland, USA), *Yugoslav Eulogies: The Footprints of Gavrilo Princip*

Bojan Aleksov (University College London, UK), *The centennial commemorations in Britain*

Panel 2: Delayed Remembrance: The First World War in Austrian Memory

Werner Suppanz (University of Graz, Austria), *World War One in Austrian Remembrance and Styria*

Hannes Leidinger (University of Vienna, Austria), *Old wine in new tubes? World War One in „Austrian“ historiography around the commemorative year 2014*

Bettina Habsburg-Lothringen (Universalmuseum Joanneum, Austria), *The „Great War“ in the Museum. On the representations of World*

War One

Wolfram Dornik (Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for Research on War Consequences, Austria), *No hero anymore? The memory of Conrad von Hötzendorf in Austria*

Panel 3: Remembering Gavrilo Princip and the Young Bosnians

Irena Šentevska (University of Arts in Belgrade, Serbia) / Muharem Bazdulj (Vreme news magazine, Serbia), *Gavrilo Princip on the Stage: 100 years after*

Amer Osmić / Enita Čustović (University of Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina), *Perception of Citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina about the Role and Significance of Gavrilo Princip*

Gregor Mayer (Independent author and journalist), *Hero, Victim or Terrorist? - Gavrilo Princip in Contemporary Serbia's Political-Intellectual Discourse*

Panel 4: Remembering and Forgetting the Great War. Public Memory (part I)

Martin Bayer (Berlin), *Beyond the End of National Noses: The First World War and National Cultures of Commemoration*

Petar Dragišić (Institute for Recent History of Serbia in Belgrade, Serbia), *The 100th Anniversary of the Outbreak of the World War One in Serbia. Reinterpretations and Political Abuse*

Adnan Kamenjasević (University of Osijek, Croatia), *Remembering World War One in Bosnian Oral Traditions*

Mirza Redžić (University of Vienna, Austria), *Et après la guerre, la paix: Europeanization of the Sarajevo Assassination Centenary*

Panel 5: Remembering and Forgetting the Great War. Public Memory

Nicole Immig (Friedrich-Schiller University of Jena, Germany), *„Asynchronies“ of the Great War: Remembrance of the First World War in Greece*

Panagiotis Paschalidis (University of Macedonia, Thessaloniki, Greece), *Representations of the First World War in Greek and International Newspapers in the Context of the Cov-*

erage of former Yugoslavia during the post-Cold War era

Marta Verginella / Petra Testen (University of Ljubljana, Slovenia), Remembrance and Historisation of the Great War: The Slovenian Case

Panel 6: Remembering and Forgetting the Great War. Commemoration and Memorials

Aleksandar-Ivan Tatić (University of Rijeka, Croatia), Disputed Identities and Contested Space in the City-State (Rijeka)

Nikola Baković (Regional Historical Archives of Čačak, Serbia), „A Memory to End all Memories“ Political Memory of the First World War Case Study of Commemorations in Čačak (Serbia) 1918-2008

Olga Manojlović Pintar (Institute for Recent History of Serbia), Erasing or Harmonizing the Competing Memories, First World War Memorials and Monuments in Serbia

Vjeran Pavlaković (University of Rijeka, Croatia), Remembering a Forgotten War: First World War Sites of Memory in Croatia since 1990

Panel 7: Historiography about the War (part I)

Oliver Schmitt (University of Vienna, Austria), World War One in Albania

Tvrtko Jakovina (University of Zagreb, Croatia), 100-year-long Croatian Silence on the Great War

Danilo Šarenac (Institute of Contemporary History, Belgrade, Serbia), The Serbian Response to the Centennial „Revision“ of History

Amir Duranović (University of Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina), Perceptions of WWI in Bosnia - From Historiography to Public Discourse

Tina Mavrikos-Adamou (Hofstra University, New York, USA), Greece and World War One: Greek History Textbooks and the Use of Images

Panel 8: Historiography about the War (part II)

Erol Köroğlu (Boğazici University, Turkey), Remembrance and Commemoration of Gallipoli War in Turkey

Eleonora Naxidou (Democritus University of Thrace, Greece), ‘Black Holes’ in Bulgarian Historiography: The Forgotten World War I

Ljubinka Trgovčević-Mitrović (University of Belgrade, Serbia), The Old and the New Serbian historiography about WWI

Iakovos Michailidis (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece), A Ten Year’s war: Re-assessing the Greek historiography on the First World War

Panel 9: Teaching World War I

Halil Berktaş (Sabancı University, Istanbul, Turkey), Progressive Politics, Retrogressive Textbooks: A Turkish Paradox

Vassiliki Sakka (University of Peloponnese, Greece), WWI through Greek Perspective: Echoes from the trauma of „National Division“

Snježana Koren (University of Zagreb, Croatia), The First World War in Croatian and Serbian Textbooks since 1918.

Božo Repe (University of Ljubljana, Slovenia), First World War in the Slovene Consciousness and in the Teaching of History

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