

Disseminating the “Truth” about Imprisonment: Veterans’ Associations of Former POWs in Interwar Austria

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Historiography

The growing interest in the history of veterans of World War I in international historical research has led to an obvious increase in the publication of specialist literature on this subject in recent years.¹ Considering the many diverse influences that former combatants had on post-war society, as well as the question of what influence politics and society had on the integration of these men, it certainly makes sense to engage in a detailed study of the history of veterans. Still, in 2014, a long-lasting and extensive resistance, at least in the case of (Western) German research on this topic, was stated on the occasion of the publication of Benjamin Ziemann’s study on the veterans in Germany between

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1 See, among the numerous publications, Mark Cornwall and John Paul Newman, eds., *Sacrifice and Rebirth: The Legacy of the Last Habsburg War* (New York/Oxford: Berghahn, 2016); Julia Eichenberg, *Kämpfen für Frieden und Fürsorge: Polnische Veteranen des Ersten Weltkriegs und ihre internationalen Kontakte, 1918-1939* (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2011); Deborah Cohen, *The War Come Home: Disabled Veterans in Britain and Germany, 1914-1939* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Julia Eichenberg and Paul Newman, eds., *The Great War and Veterans’ Internationalism* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Nils Löffelbein, *Ehrenbürger der Nation: Die Kriegsbeschädigten des Ersten Weltkriegs in Politik und Propaganda des Nationalsozialismus* (Essen: Klartext, 2013); Sabine Kienitz, *Beschädigte Helden: Kriegsinvalidität und Körperbilder 1914-1923* (Paderborn/Munich/Vienna/Zürich: Schöningh, 2008); Pierluigi Pironti, *Kriegsopfer und Staat: Sozialpolitik für Invaliden, Witwen und Waisen des Ersten Weltkrieges in Deutschland und Italien 1914-1924* (Cologne/Weimar/Vienna: Böhlau, 2015); Natali Stegmann, *Kriegsdeutungen – Staatsgründungen – Sozialpolitik: Der Helden- und Opferdiskurs in der Tschechoslowakei 1918-1948* (Munich, Oldenbourg; 2010). In summary, see also Julia Eichenberg, “Veterans’ Associations,” in *1914-1918-online: International Encyclopaedia of the First World War*, ed. Ute Daniel, Peter Gatrell, Oliver Janz, Heather Jones, Jennifer Keene, Alan Kramer, and Bill Nasson (Berlin: Freie Universität Berlin). Accessed March 27, 2017. <http://dx.doi.org/10.15463/1e1418.10270>.

1918 and 1933.² Ziemann's "cultural-historical" examination of the veterans of the Weimar Republic was explicitly pointed out by Benjamin Schulte in his review of the book, which, unlike earlier primarily organizational historical studies, focussed on "political, ideological and paramilitary aspects".³

Various aspects of the history of veterans and their associations in Austria in the interwar period have been addressed in the publications on war victims in Austria after 1918 by Verena Pawlowsky and Harald Wendelin, as well as by Ke-Chin Hsia. The same can be said of Thomas Rohringer and his approach to the topic, focussing on "emotional styles" and their importance for the formation of war victims' organizations, or the work of Oswald Überegger on the "remembered war" in Tyrol between 1918 and 1938.⁴ Numerous authors have also dealt not only with the memory of the war as well as the implementation of various commemorative rituals between 1918 and 1938, but also with the function of military cultures in the era of the Austrofascist Ständestaat. In connection with this, the history of veterans as well as the importance of veterans' groups or associations have been taken into consideration to varying degrees and in varying contexts.⁵ In contrast, historiography (not only with respect to

2 Benjamin Ziemann, *Veteranen der Republik: Kriegserinnerung und demokratische Politik 1918-1933* (Bonn: Dietz, 2014). This is the German translation of his book, which was originally published in English in 2013.

3 Benjamin Schulte, "Review of Ziemann, Benjamin: *Veteranen der Republik. Kriegserinnerung und demokratische Politik 1918-1933* (Bonn 2014)," *H-Soz-Kult*, September 12, 2014. Accessed March 27, 2017. <http://www.hsozkult.de/publicationreview/id/rezbuecher-22004>.

4 Verena Pawlowsky and Harald Wendelin, *Die Wunden des Staates: Kriegsopfer und Sozialstaat in Österreich 1914-1938* (Vienna/Cologne/Weimar: Böhlau, 2015); Ke-Chin Hsia, "A Partnership of the Weak: War Victims and the State in the Early First Austrian Republic," in *From Empire to Republic: Post-War I Austria*, ed. Günter Bischof, Fritz Plasser, and Peter Berger (New Orleans: University of New Orleans Press, 2010), 192-221; Ke-Chin Hsia, "War, Welfare, and Social Citizenship: The Politics of War Victim Welfare in Austria, 1914-1925" (PhD Thesis, University of Chicago, 2013); Thomas Rohringer, "Spaces and Emotional Styles. War Victims in Czechoslovakia and Austria 1918-1938," in *Mind and Memory in Discourse*, ed. Marija Wakounig and Markus Peter Beham (Zürich/Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2014), 65-82; Oswald Überegger, *Erinnerungskriege: Der Erste Weltkrieg, Österreich und die Tiroler Kriegserinnerung in der Zwischenkriegszeit* (Innsbruck: Universitätsverlag Wagner, 2011).

5 For example: Ernst Hanisch, "Die Rückkehr des Kriegers: Männlichkeitsbilder und Remilitarisierung im Österreich der Zwischenkriegszeit," *Transit: Europäische Revue* 16 (1998/1999): 108-124; Maureen Healy, "Civilizing the Soldier in Postwar Austria," in *Gender and War in Twentieth-Century Eastern Europe*, ed. Nancy M. Wingfield and Maria Bucur (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 47-69; Peter Melichar, "Die Kämpfe merkwürdig Untoter: K.u.k. Offiziere in der Ersten Republik," *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaften* 9, no. 1 (1998): 51-84; Werner Suppanz, "Der lange Weg in die Moderne: Narrative der Habsburgermonarchie in der österreichischen Geschichtswissenschaft seit 1918," in *Vergangene Größe und Ohnmacht in Ostmitteleuropa*, ed. Frank Hadler and Mathias Mesenhöller