



Dieter Höbner, Kristina Höbner, Julius H. Schoeps, eds.
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The modern state of Brandenburg can lay claim to some 3,500 individual war memorials. A telling reflection of its turbulent past, they extend from national memorials for the Wars of Liberation and Unification, militaristic World War I memorials, through to the heroic sites of remembrance constructed across the state for the Soviet war dead of World War II. This mixed volume, which is the result of a project group based at the University of Potsdam, is the first historical work to examine Brandenburg's wide range of war memorials. There may be little existing literature on memorialization in Brandenburg, but research on the broad subject of war commemoration has boomed over the past decade. An oft-noted divide runs through this historiography. The first approach typified most prominently by Jay Winter, focuses on the trauma of war. The second follows the work of George Mosse and Reinhart Koselleck in emphasizing the politics of remembrance. As Brandenburg has a long history of political upheaval, it is not surprising that most of the contributors to this volume adhere to the second, functionalist approach. Indeed, the volume's editors' bold aim is to "uncover and to expose the self-image of our governing culture that is concealed beneath 'high politics'" (p. 9).

The lofty ambitions of this project are evident in the volume's scope. Essays span a wide time period from the

1813/15 Wars of Liberation through to the memorialization of World War II in the GDR. This diversity, which is one of the volume's great strengths, is also evident in the collection's structure. Two groups of essays, one focusing on theory and one on case studies, form the basis of the book, while an accompanying CD-ROM contains an inventory of sources to memorialization in Brandenburg and an excellent database of the state's war memorials. Sadly, the sum of the project's multiple sections, spanning print and electronic media, fails to add up to a cohesive whole. A volume containing so many disparate elements needs a strong framework to hold it together. Yet even the standard academic apparatus, such as notes on the contributors and a concluding essay, to draw the volume to a close, are all missing. The book's short four-page introduction, moreover, offers the reader little guidance. It fails either to place the state of Brandenburg in historical context or to introduce the book's twelve essays.

The first section of the book, examining theoretical approaches to war memorials, begins with Stefanie Endlich's historical overview of twentieth-century remembrance cultures. With such a cursory introduction to the volume as a whole, it falls on this essay to provide a much-needed outline of the subject. Endlich's useful synthesis almost fills this void. It traces the develop-

ment of memorials from the time of World War I through to plans for a September 11 memorial at Ground Zero. This broad approach reveals a complex history of continual change. Walter Gropius's Memorial for the revolutionary dead, for example, was constructed in Weimar in 1922, destroyed by the Nazis in 1933, and finally reconstructed in the SBZ in 1946 (p. 18). In the context of this volume, though, Endlich's wide-ranging essay appears rather misplaced. Geographically its focus is too general, only briefly touching on Brandenburg, while its twentieth-century time frame is too narrow, for a book that begins with the Wars of Liberation.

Highlighting the richness of this field, the remaining essays in this opening section apply different methodological approaches to the study of war memorials. Jens Fehlauer addresses questions of individual and collective memory to examine the mnemonic function of war memorials across generations. However, an overreliance on the work of Siegfried J. Schmidt—a quarter of all references relate to Schmidt's work alone—leaves Fehlauer's interesting essay feeling theoretically narrow. Turning to the design of war memorials, Karin Gummels ably describes the use of pieta iconography in the process of remembrance. Due to their cost, figurative memorials, although common in the nineteenth century, were rarely constructed for the dead of World War I. Nevertheless, Gummels's brief survey of four of these memorials proves fruitful. She identifies changes in the form of pieta memorials, to argue that they, in line with other forms of German remembrance, became more aggressive during the late 1920s. While early designs often used the figure of a grieving woman to depict a community's loss, later memorials of this form glorified sacrifice for the nation through the depiction of a dying heroic soldier.

Andreas Keller's excellent essay takes issues of war memorial design in a different direction. He uses memorial inscriptions as a tool for considering the reception of these objects. As Keller shows, the choice of language and grammatical structure of an inscription all reveal different aspects of a memorial's design. Finally, Udo Gentzen and Kristina Hänel demonstrate the importance of looking beyond the materiality of war memorials. In detailing the workings of Brandenburg's war commemoration advisory centers, they consider confrontations that preceded the construction of World War I remembrance sites. Formed in 1916 in most German states, these organizations were charged with the task of stemming the spread of an industrialized remembrance culture. The state authorities feared that in the rush to honor the fallen, people were erecting ill-conceived and inap-

propriate memorials. The advisory committees' powers, however, were limited to obstruction. If the committee's advice was disregarded, they could do little more than to impose added taxes on the memorial design.

The tone changes in the second half of the book. Replacing the rigid theoretical discussion of the opening section, seven essays examine specific war memorial sites in Brandenburg. Unfortunately, the editors' selection feels somewhat unbalanced. While four of the contributors focus on the Wars of Liberation, essays on the memorialization of the Wars of Unification and on Nazi remembrance practices are conspicuous by their absence. Of the essays focusing on the Wars of Liberation, Michael Bienert's lively article on the death of a Prussian officer in 1814 is the most engaging. Bienert skilfully excavates the officer's biography to reveal a dichotomy between private grief and public mourning. A memorial plaque erected in the familial burial ground was for personal reflection, while a public remembrance service placed his sacrifice, for "king and fatherland", within an emerging political cult of the war dead (p. 137). In his interesting discussion of a Borussia memorial for the Wars of Liberation, René Schreier develops the political dimension of memorialization. In 1813, Prussia recorded a minor victory over the Napoleonic forces near the village of Hagelberg. Yet a memorial commemorating the victory was not raised until 1849. Schreier suggests convincingly that the impetus for its construction, thirty-six years after the battle, came from the previous year's revolutions. The memorial, strongly monarchist in its symbolism, represented a show of support for the Prussian King.

Work on war memorials is at its most creative when, as with Schreier's essay, the remembrance process is used as a prism through which to analyze broader social and political issues. Judith Prokasky's perceptive examination of a Jewish World War I memorial in Guben also adroitly achieves this delicate task. Prokasky places her discussion firmly within a widely held reading of the German-Jewish war experience. According to this narrative, German Jews greeted the war's outbreak enthusiastically and served with distinction at the front. Indeed, some 96,000 Jews fought and almost 12,000 Jews died for their German fatherland in the war. Despite this sacrifice, German Jews suffered the indignity of the German army's notorious *Judenzerählung* in 1916, which provided ammunition for antisemites at the war's end (p. 205). Prokasky argues, therefore, that Jewish war memorials served a dual function. They commemorated the Jewish fallen as well as helping to protect the commu-

nity from allegations of war shirking. Where Prokasky's contribution runs out of steam is in her attempt to trace the history of Guben's memorial into the Third Reich. In particular, her suggestion that the war memorial survived World War II unscathed because Germans had been conditioned "to respect memorials" seems insufficient (p. 212).

This, though, is an inherent weakness in most of the contributions to this anthology. Insufficient space is given to the histories of the different war memorials discussed after their dedication. It would have been fascinating to discover why certain memorials survived the Third Reich and the GDR, while others were either neglected or willfully destroyed. Essays by G nter Wagenknecht and Petra Winarsky, for example, examine recently restored memorials for the Wars of Liberation in Dahme and Wolfshagen respectively. Both contributions sketch out the erection of the memorials during the 1820s, focusing on issues of design and financing, but pay little attention to their later destruction and more recent reconstruction. Proving that a society's relationship with its war memorials is ongoing and continually evolving, Dieter H bener examines the remembrance of the Soviet World War II fallen. More than three hundred Soviet memorials and war cemeteries can be found across Brandenburg (p. 217). Many of these, as H bener shows, were repeatedly reconfigured, either to reflect ideological changes or because of the poor quality of the materials originally used in their construction. Since reunification, however, many of these sites have fallen into disrepair.

"The style of the Soviet war grave sites," as H bener suggests, often "no longer fit the future image of these town[s]" (p. 229).

Researchers will undoubtedly find the volume's accompanying CD-ROM of considerable use. The disc includes an impressive database, which details more than eight hundred extant war memorials in Brandenburg. For each entry a description, photographs, bibliographical references, and the inscription are all included, where available. The database runs with Microsoft Access, which allows the user to search or to browse the entries. Although the software is relatively simple to master, to get the most from the package, a reasonable knowledge of databases is required. The CD-ROM also contains a well-researched inventory of the Brandenburg State Archive in Potsdam. This lists all pre-1945 collections containing information, whether plans, photographs or documents, on all forms of war memorial erected within the modern state of Brandenburg.

The scope of this volume makes it particularly well suited to researchers of the modern history of Brandenburg as well as to those interested in the remembrance of war more broadly. For the more general reader, though, there are a number of editorial weaknesses. The lack of an adequate introduction, in particular, can make the book difficult to access. Nevertheless, those willing to negotiate their way through the work will be rewarded with several excellent essays on the previously neglected topic of war and remembrance in Brandenburg.

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