



*Coping with Immeasurable Losses. Population of the European Cities and World War I.* Prague City Archives, The Institute of History of the Academy of Science of the Czech Republic; Faculty of Humanities of Charles University in Prague; Wiener Stadt- und Landesarchiv; Institut für Zeitgeschichte, Universität Wien; Lehrstuhl für Neueste , 07.10.2014—08.10.2014.

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## **Coping with Immeasurable Losses. Population of the European Cities and World War I**

On October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2014 the 33<sup>th</sup> anniversary conference of the Prague City Archives took place in Clam-Gallas palace in Prague. The main theme was the First World War and its impacts on the population of European metropolises. Not only various spheres influenced by the conflict – for example local administration, economy, structure of the inhabitants, culture – and problems that cities had to deal with (insufficient provision of food, outflow of capital and labour force, street violence) were discussed, but also issues such as how much the course and results of war affected everyday life in cities and contributed to the change of their role within the state and society.

The keynote speaker JIŘÍ PEŠEK (Prague) outlined roles of metropolises during the outbreak of the conflict and formulated fundamental thematic areas: changes in operation of municipal administrations, impact of recruitment on particular professional groups of inhabitants, replacement of missing qualified employees, effect of war events on the inner life and the function of cities. His thesis that a lot of metropolises were almost destroyed during the war not only by enemy armies but often also by contribution of local political elites, anticipated the results of many of the following presentations.

A series of papers dedicated to the reactions of municipal administration and its representatives to the changes caused by the war led to contemplation: how

much were the cities prepared for the conflict? And how and to which extent they contended with problems, having been limited by the lack of authorities, finances, materials and labour forces? Attention of the speakers was primarily turned to the key topics: change of powers and forms of municipal administration and coping with shortage. Most speakers stated that representatives of the cities were absolutely unprepared for the war situation and they could not effectively challenge most of the problems, such as general shortage, black market, usury, influx of refugees. A city management turned gradually into the administration of shortage as ANDREAS WEIGL (Vienna) pointed out in his talk and life of the inhabitants became increasingly unbearable according to ALFRED PFOSER (Vienna). According to JANA KONVIČANÁ (Prague), the main causes of these issues were to be found in both underestimation of the duration of the conflict and in an unconcerned attitude of the central authorities to answer requests of the municipal administrations. Lively discussion was primarily aroused by diametrically opposed approaches of Viennese and Prague city halls to the supply crisis and its possible causes.

The same topic was studied from regional metropolitan point of view, especially those with specific political and economic structure. SABINE MECKING (Duisburg) talk demonstrated everyday life in times of war in the garrison city of Münster, followed by other examples. MARTINA HALÁŇOVÁ (Pardubice) presented the

case of the East Bohemian Pardubice, where, on the outskirts the largest military hospital in Europe was constructed in 1915. Distinctively STANISLAV KNOB (Ostrava) then outlined specific conditions in which Ostrava â one of the most important centres of war industry in Austria-Hungary â experienced the war, in particular, he paid attention to the wave of riots caused by the lack of food which stood in contrast with intensification of work in factories. CHRISTOPH STRUPP (Hamburg) pointed out some positive war impacts: war events, though, accelerated long time postponed reform of local administration in Hamburg.

Different kinds of war experiences of urban population and its reaction to twists brought by the war conflict (mobilization, approaching battlefront, evacuation of a city and its capture by the enemy forces or changeover to peace conditions) were discussed too. The front events affected entire populations regardless to the distance from the battlefield; particularly in the cities the course of war and the supply crisis caused mood swings as CHRISTOPH CORNELISSEN (Frankfurt am Main) pointed out. As ISMEE TAMES (Amsterdam) demonstrated for the cases of Amsterdam and Antwerp, initial excited anticipation and enthusiasm for the mobilisation were common for almost all Europeans with no difference in citizenship and nationality. Yet, responses to further events were significantly disjoined, even within individual locations, mainly ethnically mixed. This fact was accented in the paper of WÅODZIMIERZ BORODZIEJ and MACIEJ GÅRNY (Warsaw) who analysed emotions of the inhabitants of important Eastern European cities, who were affected by the approaching battlefront. These emotions could range from panic, through curious expectation to hope that the occupation of the city would end chaos and violence in the streets. JIÅÅ VLASÅK (Prague) then completed this topic from the Central European perspective. He presented an example of a personal chronicle written by a Prague shoemaker. The discussion then focused on topics such as use of ethnic minorities and refugees in propaganda or impacts of war loans on post-war economy of metropolises.

The following sessionâs presentations were dedicated to the effects of the First World War on the socio-demographic structure of population and its post-war development. Apart from casualties as such in CHRISTOPH RASSâ (OsnabrÅ¼ck) presentation and their influence on sex ratio and growing social tension as presented by KAREL ÅEHÅÅEK (Pilsen), attention was paid chiefly to the demographic processes, which were started or accelerated by the war. JAN HORSKÅ (Prague) in this case

mentioned birth control in families in Czechoslovakia. JÅRG VÅGELE (DÅ¼sseldorf) studied an effect of supply crisis on the number increase of breastfed babies in German cities. BARTOSZ OGÅREK (KrakÅ³w) demonstrated factual impacts of war on the survivors. On an example of KrakÅ³w he pointed out that starvation, stress and heavy labour permanently influenced physical condition of the war generation.

The parallel section was dedicated to the city infrastructure in a broad sense, including water pipelines and sewerage system, trade and public space safety. JAROSLAV JÅSEK (Prague) accented the importance of good quality of both water and sewer systems, that protected Prague from epidemicsâ outbreak during the war. DAVID HUBENÅ (Prague) studied the operation of the Prague Police corps at the end of the war. In agreement with VÅCLAV Å MIDRKAL (Prague) he stated that the changeover to the peace condition took place without escalated nationalist conflicts and explicit violence in Prague. The section was topped by a paper by KONRAD MEUS (KrakÅ³w), who analysed the activity of Lvivâs Chamber of Commerce and Industry and appreciated its credit for restoration of production and business relations interrupted by invasion of the Russian army to Lviv. The discussion focused primarily on the specific role of violence in the process of taking control over the public space and causes of different intensity of this violence in European cities. In connection with these topics, HANA SVATOÅ OVÅ (Prague) put stress on the fact that a relatively peaceful end of the war in Prague was caused both by procedural continuity of state and local administration together with a positive influence of the Czech political parties that were ready to master the public space quickly.

The next dayâs morning section pictured the war conflict as a catalyst of nationalist passions in Eastern European cities of multiethnic and multiconfessional characters. The attention was primarily focused on the motivation of violence against minorities and on a new definition of loyalty in terms of war twists. VICTOR DÅNINGHAUS (LÅ¼neburg) presented a pogrom of Germans in Moscow as an example of calculated hateful campaign, in order to unite ethnically inhomogeneous population and to divert its attention from war losses. Subsequent speakers studied a development of interethnic relationships in multinational Lviv and ÅÅ³dÅ°. At this point FRANK M. SCHUSTER (ÅÅ³dÅ°) and ÅUKASZ T. SROKA (KrakÅ³w) reached the same conclusion, i. e. that the war experience and deteriorating relationships among minorities initially led the members of minorities

to enhanced expressions of loyalty to the ruling regime, and later to reassessment of previously held opinions; the Jews then became inclined towards Zionism under these circumstances. The discussion revolved firstly around responses of official authorities to the pogroms and secondly around approaches of municipal administrations to the refugees's issues. In this context Jiřek pointed out that numbers of refugees were very often overestimated in contemporary newspapers.

Finally, there were discussed impacts of the war on both intellectual and culture city elites. STANISLAV BALÁK (Brno) studied changes in life of Prague's lawyers and their war experience. PETR SVOBODNÁ (Prague) and MILADA SEKYRKOVÁ (Prague) focused on life stories of the staff of Prague universities and technical universities. They agreed that both common pauperisation and recruitment affected intelligentsia and its institutions even in terms of prestige decline. On the contrary, theatres experienced increased popularity during the war years. Nevertheless, even the role of the theatres was changed. MAREK PODLASIAK (Toruń) demonstrated upon an example of Berlin that however theatres represented places of collective war enthusiasm at the beginning of the conflict, with rising losses they gradually became rather a refuge for troubled and suffering inhabitants, which was reflected in the changes in theatres's repertoire. Impacts of leave of young intelligentsia on the functioning of the cities and period transformations of social mentality and the public space as structural changes were discussed consequently.

The conference presented the fundamental changes caused by the war in the life of European cities and their inhabitants. The papers focused on municipal administration proved that both state political leaders and military command were unaware of the importance of a city for the preservation of a state's stability and its wartime achievements at the beginning of the war. As a result, municipal administrations, despite various strategies of its representatives, gradually took the form of inner dictatorship. Further, continual drain on city resources for the army's benefit transformed the life in the cities into the fight for survival. The discussed issues also showed that research of everyday life in wartimes has a potential to contribute to the knowledge of history of metropolis and to the understanding of transformation of the whole post-war society too.

#### Conference Overview:

Presentation: Jřg Vgele

Opening: Vclav Ledvinka / Jan Něek (Prague)

Jřek (Prague), Einführungsreferat

Włodzimierz Borodziej / Maciej Głrny (Warsaw), Mobilisierung und Besetzung in den Großstädten Ostmitteleuropas

Presentation: Oliver Rathkolb

Andreas Weigl (Vienna), Versorgungsnot. Kriegsfolgen, Herausforderung für die kommunale und staatliche Verwaltung in der k. k. Haupt- und Residenzstadt Wien in der ersten Kriegsphase (1914-1916)

Ismee Tames (Amsterdam), The liminal moment: Amsterdam versus Antwerp from peace to war in 1914

Jana Konviř; (Prague), Der Erste Weltkrieg und die Prager Selbstverwaltung

Sektion A

Presentation: Jiřek

Christoph Corneliř (Frankfurt am Main), Die Großstädte im Grořen Krieg

Jan Horský (Prague), Populationsveränderungen als Indikator einer innenstädtischen Krise während des I. Weltkrieges

Karel řek (Pilsen), Krieg als Ursache der Populationsveränderungen in Pilsen 1914-1918

Sektion B

Presentation: Jana Konviř;

Stanislav Knob (Ostrava), Ostrau im Kriege: das Beispiel einer Industrieagglomeration

Martina Halřovř; (Pardubice), Pardubitz und der Groře Krieg (Diskussionsbeitrag)

Jř Vlasík (Prague), "Wir alle empfinden diese Kriegszeit" Der 1. Weltkrieg durch die Augen eines Prager Schusters (Diskussionsbeitrag)

Sektion A

Presentation: Victor Dřnninghaus

Christoph Rař (Osnabrück), Mapping military casualties of the Great War on civil society

Bartosz Ogłrek (Kraków), Scarred by war. Consequences of the Great War for the population of Krakow - an antropometric evidence

Jřg Vgele (Dřsseldorf), "Krieg ist gut für

Babies!â SÃuglingssterblichkeit und die Entwicklung der SÃuglingsfÃ¼rsorge in deutschen GroÃstÃdten im Ersten Weltkrieg (mit besonderem Blick auf Stadt und Regierungsbezirk DÃ¼sseldorf)

*Sektion B*

Presentation: Jan HorskÃ½

Jaroslav JÃ½sek (Prague), Wasserleitungen und Abwasser in Prag und in den VorstÃdten der Kriegsjahre: WasserqualitÃt und Alltag

VÃ½clav Å midrkal (Prague), Zerfall des Imperiums und die âSiegeskulturâ im Prager Ãffentlichen Raum 1918â1919 (Diskussionsbeitrag)

David HubenÃ½ (Prague), Ãffentliche Sicherheit im Prag der Nachkriegszeit (Diskussionsbeitrag)

Presentation: Maciej GÃ³rny

Victor DÃ¶nninghaus (LÃ¼neburg), Der Frust einer ganzen Metropole entlÃdt sich â die antideutschen Pogrome in Moskau im Mai 1915: TÃter â Opfer â Zuschauer

Frank M. Schuster (Ã³dÃ°), Die zentralpolnische Industriestadt Lodz zwischen Russen und Deutschen 1914â1918

Konrad Meus (KrakÃ³w), The Lviv Chamber of Commerce and Industry during World War I

Presentation: Sabine Mecking

Åukasz T. Sroka (KrakÃ³w), Elites in Lviv during the First World War

Stanislav BalÃk (Brno), Wie sich der 1. Weltkrieg in der Prager Juristengemeinde widerspiegelte

Presentation: JiÃ½ PeÃ½ek

Petr SvobodnÃ½ (Prague), Die Prager tschechische und deutsche UniversitÃt im 1. Weltkrieg

Milada SekyrkovÃ½ (Prague), Die Techniker fÃ¼r den Kaiser oder fÃ¼r sich selbst? Die Prager THs und der 1. Weltkrieg

Marek Podlasiak (ToruÅ), Theateralltag im Ersten Weltkrieg. Berliner Metropole und die westpreuÃische Provinz

Presentation: Andreas Weigl

Sabine Mecking (Duisburg), Verwaltung und Kriegsalltag einer Garnisonstadt: Die Provinzialhauptstadt MÃ¼nster

Christoph Strupp (Hamburg), Der Krieg als Katalysator politischen und administrativen Wandels in Hamburg

Alfred Pfoser (Vienna), Das Wiener Rathaus im Ersten Weltkrieg

Schlusswort: JiÃ½ PeÃ½ek (Prague)

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