

IN THIS ISSUE

The Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, now in its second year, has many historical connections and implications – including some which may not immediately spring to mind. The German War Graves Commission estimates that the human remains of more than 800 Wehrmacht soldiers have been uncovered so far over the course of this war, some of them surfacing as new trenches were being dug. Helmets and boots have also been found.¹ Historian Reinhart Koselleck's (1923–2006) metaphor of *Zeitschichten*, or temporal layers, acquires here a different meaning and a very concrete materiality. (Koselleck had himself served as a soldier in Ukraine.²) In her acceptance speech for the Leipzig Book Award for European Understanding in April 2023, the Russian author Maria Stepanova, who currently lives in Berlin, said: ›Are we condemned to keep reliving the twentieth century with its prisons, concentration camps and propaganda machines, its trench warfare and area bombardments? What can we do when the fabric of language, its texture, suddenly becomes transparent, revealing all the hidden layers of latent and overt violence percolating to the surface?‹³

›The future of Eastern European history‹ has been a major concern of academic debate since 24 February 2022.⁴ ›Have Eastern European Studies failed again?‹ ›Do historians of Eastern Europe need to fundamentally rethink everything?‹ These are some of the salient and hotly debated questions.⁵ Frithjof Benjamin Schenk, for one, anticipates ›a renaissance of military history, of foreign policy history, and of the history of geopolitical thinking‹ – and adds: ›hopefully in a new guise grounded in theoretical reflection‹.⁶ Stefan Plaggenborg, on the other hand, is keen to point out that ›[t]he scale of the war is not a scientific criterion for a revision [of the foundations

1 Robert Ide, Ukraine-Krieg. Überreste deutscher Soldaten entdeckt, in: *Tagesspiegel*, 21 April 2023, p. 23; press release by the War Graves Commission, 19 April 2023, URL: <<https://www.volksbund.de/nachrichten/ukraine>>.

2 Cf. Bodo Mrozek, Die sogenannte Sattelzeit. Reinhart Kosellecks Geschichts-Metapher im Erfahrungsraum des Krieges, in: *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte* 75 (2023), pp. 133-153, here p. 146.

3 <<https://www.leipzig.de/news/news/reden-verleihung-des-leipziger-buchpreises-zur-europaischen-verstaendigung>>.

4 Résumé of the colloquium of the Association of Eastern European Historians (*Verband der Osteuropahistorikerinnen und -historiker*, VOH), 10 March 2023, URL: <https://lisa.gerda-henkel-stiftung.de/voh_kolloquium223>.

5 Frithjof Benjamin Schenk, Russlands Überfall auf die Ukraine 2022. Hat die Osteuropaforschung erneut versagt?, in: *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 69 (2021), pp. 543-548; Stefan Plaggenborg, Russlands Krieg in der Ukraine. Müssen die Osteuropahistoriker umdenken?, in: *ibid.*, pp. 549-556. The special issue with the discussion forum on the war in Ukraine was published in spring 2023. See also for example Andreas Hilger, Ein Fach diskutiert über sich selbst. Der russische Krieg gegen die Ukraine und die Osteuropäische Geschichte in Deutschland, in: *Merkur* 77 (2023) issue 3, pp. 78-85, with recommendations for further reading.

6 Schenk, Russlands Überfall (fn 5), p. 548.

of Eastern European Studies]. [...] The important questions – those with the potential to breathe new life into our discipline – are independent of the current war.⁷ A consensus is emerging that ›Eastern European history‹ must give much greater consideration than it has in the past not only to Russian but also to Ukrainian, Belarusian and Baltic history, as well as the history of other post-Soviet states⁸ – both in their respective autonomy and their close interrelationship. For the foreseeable future this kind of research and debate will only be possible outside of Russia, as today's Russia lacks the necessary conditions for academic freedom.

This latter point is very bitter, conceptually and in terms of the practicalities of research, especially insofar as it concerns personal contacts to historians in Russia. But the new global political landscape also opens up new contemporary history perspectives of interest and relevance for an understanding of international relations. Until very recently it was virtually unthinkable that after decades of neutrality, Finland would join NATO, something which has now happened, after relatively brief preparations, with effect from 4 April 2023 – more than doubling the length of NATO's borders with Russia. This raises the historical question as to precisely what characterised Finnish neutrality, and the more political question of whether ›Finlandisation‹ could be a suitable model for the future status of Ukraine following a ceasefire. *Antero Holmila* and *Pertti Ahonen* discuss both questions in their essay for the present issue. While acknowledging that the Finnish concept was a pragmatic solution for foreign policy stability, particularly in the initial stages of the Cold War, they also highlight its questionable domestic consequences and corrosive effects on democracy. They argue that the long-serving Finnish president Urho Kekkonen, in particular, was not only willing to accept these but indeed expressly encouraged them in order to consolidate his own grip on political power. The authors therefore view the Finnish history of neutrality as a warning, not a model, for Ukraine.

The pressing question cannot yet be answered of how the Ukraine war, which cannot be seen solely as ›Putin's war‹,⁹ can be brought to an end; like all wars it has also produced a specific ›social situation‹.¹⁰ Generally speaking, an end to military combat

7 Plaggenborg, *Russlands Krieg* (fn 5), pp. 551-552.

8 See for example Susanne Schattenberg, »Zeitenwende« in der Osteuropageschichte. Das Ende des Zentrums – die Stunde der Republiken, in: *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 69 (2021), pp. 565-573.

9 This is emphasised by, among others, Gwendolyn Sasse, Von erwartbaren und überraschenden Entwicklungen, in: *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* 73 (2023) issue 10-11: Krieg in der Ukraine, pp. 4-6, here p. 5. Politically and sociohistorically nuanced: Juliane Fürst, Gibt es gute Russen?, in: *ZEIT*, 27 April 2023, p. 54.

10 Speaking both of World War II as well as in a more general sense, Jan Philipp Reemtsma put it like this: ›War forms and deforms societies. And when a war as radically nullifies traditional boundaries between what is and is not permitted as this war has done, an external force is required to redraw and safeguard these boundaries, and it takes time for the internal social regulatory systems that monitor these boundaries to start to function soundly again.« Jan Philipp Reemtsma, in: Hamburger Institut für Sozialforschung (ed.), *Krieg ist ein Gesellschaftszustand. Reden zur Eröffnung der Ausstellung »Vernichtungskrieg. Verbrechen der Wehrmacht 1941 bis 1944«*, Hamburg 1998, pp. 8-13, here p. 13.

is only likely when ›the costs of warfare systematically exceed those of negotiations‹¹¹ – that is to say, when ›a more attractive reality‹ ›outmatches‹ the war.¹² Historians and social scientists have recently (once again) become much more interested in researching peace negotiations and peace accords, not only in the context of Eastern Europe and contemporary history. And it can't hurt to take another look at the existing literature in the light of the current situation.¹³

There is now also a greater focus on the significance of the military element in various societies, on the use of military force and its political legitimization, on the interrelationship between military and civilian actors and actions. This is new and unfamiliar in the German context.¹⁴ Outside of the narrower military history circles, the Bundeswehr was long largely neglected in contemporary history research. In addition to the current political situation, an anniversary now also presents an opportunity to recalibrate the perspectives: 50 years ago, the universities of the West German armed forces in Hamburg and Munich began their academic activities. *Niklas Lenhard-Schramm* and *Jan Stöckmann* describe in this issue how the career of army officer came to be academised, why independent Bundeswehr universities were founded for this purpose, and how the relationship between the military, academia and society was discussed in this context – with tensions that can still be felt to this day. The history of West German security elites is also the subject of the article by *Fabian Bennewitz* and *Markus-Michael Müller*, though their focus is not on the Bundeswehr but on the police, or rather the ›police development aid‹ for Latin American states. In the effort to counter international left-wing terrorism during the 1970s and 1980s, numerous bilateral contacts and aid programmes providing training and equipment were established, often benefiting military dictatorships and their vested interests, with the stated goal of ›ensuring internal order and stability‹.

In view of the many threats to liberal democracies today, the question of the practices and operating conditions of democratic governance has also become a focus of contemporary history research in recent years.¹⁵ In this issue, *Zoé Kergomard* looks at

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- 11 Nicole Deitelhoff, *Wie lässt sich der Krieg in der Ukraine beenden?*, in: *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* 73 (2023) issue 10-11, pp. 14-19, here p. 16. See also Hans-Henning Schröder, *Krieg und Verhandlungen. Voraussetzungen für Frieden in der Ukraine*, in: *Osteuropa* 72 (2022) issue 11, pp. 23-34 (published in March 2023); Gesine Schwan, *Putins politische Kosten mehren*, in: *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 27 February 2023, p. 9; Bastian Berbner et al., *Verhandeln?*, in: *ZEIT*, 27 April 2023, pp. 13-15.
 - 12 ›Vorstellungen von Glück sind ansteckend«, in: *ZEIT*, 16 February 2023, p. 46 (interview with Alexander Kluge).
 - 13 See, to name just one example, Bernd Wegner (ed., together with Ernst Willi Hansen, Kerstin Rehwinkel and Matthias Reiß), *Wie Kriege enden. Wege zum Frieden von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart*, Paderborn 2002.
 - 14 Written in the context of the Bundeswehr's mission in Afghanistan, but still worth reading: Klaus Naumann, *Einsatz ohne Ziel? Die Politikbedürftigkeit des Militärischen*, Hamburg 2008.
 - 15 From the broad range of literature on the subject, see for example *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 58 (2018): *Demokratie praktizieren. Arenen, Prozesse und Umbrüche politischer Partizipation in Westeuropa im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*. All of the articles in this volume are freely available at <<https://www.fes.de/afs/baende>>.

Switzerland as a case that is ›paradigmatic of democratic tensions around participation and inclusion‹. Drawing on the debates about non-voting and abstention from the 1960s onwards, she illuminates the contemporary concerns and preconceptions. Woman only gained the right to vote at the federal level in Switzerland in 1971, so the discussions about voting and non-voting also had strong gendered dimensions. Sarah Knoll analyses Austria's refugee and asylum policy around 1990 in her article. The mid-1980s saw the beginning of a mass movement of people fleeing Romania for Hungary that created unease within the ›Eastern Bloc‹ and also affected Austria, until the situation changed with the opening of the western borders in 1989. One proposition of this article is that Austria's efforts to ward off the ›migratory pressure‹ began earlier, at the beginning of the 1980s – thus revealing patterns of continuity over a longer period of time. As Knoll writes: ›The foundations of a European asylum policy based on deterrence go back to the Cold War.‹

Jürgen Dinkel's essay on the history of academic acknowledgements considers a practice that is rarely questioned, yet grounded in a host of assumptions. In constellations ever-shifting since the early modern age, the genre has had much to do with what is said and unsaid, with hierarchies and institutions, with other people and more recently sometimes with animals as well. While acknowledgements in the 19th and 20th century tended to be terse, from the 1990s onwards they (again) became much more elaborate; a ›subjectivisation, deconventionalisation and individualisation‹ began to take place. The text implicitly ties in with earlier essays on ›brainwork‹ or ›mental labour‹¹⁶ and its science policy context that we have published in *Zeithistorische Forschungen/Studies in Contemporary History*.¹⁷ Ideas and manuscript submissions on broader topics like these, combining historical research approaches with interdisciplinary perspectives, are also very welcome for future issues.

A topic to which not only historians can relate is the history of the IKEA catalogue, the print edition of which was discontinued in 2020/21. The company estimates that ›in the year with the highest circulation‹ (2016), a total of ›200 million copies of the catalogue were distributed in 69 different versions and 32 languages, throughout more than 50 countries‹.¹⁸ An abundant collection of source material has accumulated over the decades on the history of prototypes for living spaces. Monique Miggelbrink examines in this issue the furniture store's promise of order and creativity, with particular reference to the Swedish and German catalogues. She interprets the IKEA catalogue as a ›mediating authority‹ for ›living spaces as cultural technology‹. Though it always presented itself as ›alternative‹, IKEA was and is a part of mass consumption.

16 Steffen Martus/Carlos Spoerhase, *Geistesarbeit. Eine Praxeologie der Geisteswissenschaften*, Berlin 2022.

17 See for example Cornelia Brink, Anachronismen und neue Aufmerksamkeiten. Überlegungen zur geschlechtersensiblen Sprache in der deutschsprachigen historischen Forschung, in: *Zeithistorische Forschungen/Studies in Contemporary History* 18 (2021), pp. 584-602; Constantin Goschler, Die Vermessung der Zeitgeschichte. Quantifizierte Forschung und ihre ambivalenten Effekte, in: *Zeithistorische Forschungen/Studies in Contemporary History* 17 (2020), pp. 116-129.

18 <<https://www.ikea.com/de/de/newsroom/corporate-news/nach-70-erfolgreichen-jahren-schlaegt-ikea-ein-neues-kapitel-auf-und-verabschiedet-sich-vom-katalog-pub95e78337>>.

As the Swedish company expanded globally, particularly from the 1970s onwards, a critique of consumption and growth that sought real social and economic alternatives was also intensifying. One example of this was the widely read book *Small is Beautiful*, a collection of writings by the economist and policy advisor Ernst Friedrich Schumacher (1911–1977). The first English-language edition was published 50 years ago, and to mark this anniversary *Benjamin Möckel* takes a closer look at the bestseller and its author in his contribution for the ›Literature Revisited‹ section. Schumacher can be read today as a pioneer of ecology and sustainability; but it is more interesting still to see the very provisional and fragmentary nature of his account as a document of the times. Schumacher's optimism that he could help to shape a better, more humane future is also striking – a hope that now, for many reasons, seems shattered, and yet remains indispensable.

In response to her questions cited at the beginning of this editorial, the writer Maria Stepanova gave an answer as poetic as it is political and which is also applicable to the sciences: ›The work of understanding, like the work of poetry, is never undertaken alone. [...] The weightless threads of comprehension that stretch somehow, softly, very slowly between texts, between languages, between gaping voids – they still hold our world together, drawing closer, forging relationships, creating connections and mending the fabric that is tattered and torn.‹¹⁹

Jan-Holger Kirsch for the editorial team
(Translated from the German by Joy Titheridge)

19 See fn 3.