

ABSTRACTS

Sándor Oláh: *The French Battlefield. The WW I Memoir of János Pap*

János Pap, a WW I veteran from Homoródalmás, wrote his war memoir in 1966. His writing focuses on the last day of the Great War in France where he was fighting with his battery on the western front when he heard the long awaited news of the war ending.

The memoir is marked by his battalion's traumatic experience of losing their beloved artillery sergeant on the night of the very last battle of the war. The loss overshadowed the joyous event of the end of the four year long war. The memoir then describes the stops and events on his journey back to Transylvania.

Pap was a key figure in his community, even though his father denied him the opportunity of getting a formal education.

His memoir raises several questions concerning communities' shared cultural memories (Jan Assman), and the nature of memory itself: memories are preserved longer in a culturally homogeneous society. Communism destroyed the structure of traditional communities. So the events of the war, and the war itself, was no longer deeply rooted in communities. After the decline of the period of oral tradition, the written word is the only way of preserving cultural memory.

Keywords: WW I, memoir, cultural memory, forget, communism, oral tradition, history

Dénes Lőrinczi – Lehel Molnár: *A Kolozsvár-based Painter in the Great War. István Tóth's WW I Letters to Erzsébet Kelemen*

It is one task of historiography to understand the participation and responsibility of various social strata (primarily intellectuals, writers, poets, artists, etc.) in the Great War, and the motifs of enthusiasm about, and disappointment with, the war.

The intelligentsia was first of all mobilized by the fact that many wanted to fight, to prove their physical courage, and not do intellectual work in the hinterland. Secondly, they discovered a new direction of intellectual activity in the war: for the intellectuals – writers, social and natural scientists, artists – the war, the generalized hatred, was like a large laboratory, a field of new experiments. Consequently the war acted as a new source of inspiration for fine arts that had already been emptied of all content by the beginning of the 20th century. Misery and blood, love and hatred, became new “experiences”. During WWI, there was a need for a propaganda organization which sent the war correspondents, journalists, photographers, filmmakers and artists to the front under safe and controlled conditions, where they could present the war in an “aesthetic” way. There were, however, artists who were not part of this propaganda organization, and fought and were even wounded in the Great War.

One of these artists was painter István Tóth, who fought in early 1915 in Russian Poland, crossing into Bucovina, with infantry regiment 51 of Kolozsvár. In 1917 he was on the Italian front. He painted more than 150 paintings during the war. Unfortunately they were lost in Prague. From this period, we only know of the four richly illustrated letters and an Easter card now published. Tóth wrote these letters to Lajos Kelemen’s daughter, Erzsike, who was only 5 years old in 1916, when she received the first one. The letters emanate warmth and a sense of humour; the visual experience of the drawings is used to present the war, the chaos and horror, that the little girl saw around her but did not understand, in a way that a child could more easily digest and make sense of.

Keywords: Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, World War I, war representation, Kolozsvár, artist, participation, István Tóth, Infantry Regiment 51, illustrated letters, Erzsébet Kelemen

János Pál: *The First World War in the Unitarian Church Press*

The war discourse in the Unitarian church press shows clear signs of the two main reasons serving the justification of WW I. It tried to show that the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy entered the war for all the right and just reasons since the crown prince and his wife were murdered. Picturing the Monarchy as a victim served the purpose of war mobilization, of raising the parishioners’ acceptance and patriotism.

The justification discourse had two main constituents: the first interpreted the war as part of God's plan and as the necessary tool of humanity's ethical evolution. The second considered the war as a forced move and an answer to the provocation of, and danger to the nation (the nation in this context refers to all the Austro-Hungarian citizens). Both constituents supported the Monarchy starting the war as completely legal and legitimate.

There was a minority who interpreted the war differently: they criticised the war's capacity for diminishing human ethics and culture. But this third constituent agreed to seeing the war as an act of self-defence.

From the beginning, the Unitarian press presented the gruesomeness of the war, although mostly as a stylistic tool, as a trope. But as the war went on, the cruelty crossed the line and the Unitarian press started to express a real longing for peace. After 1916, when the Romanian army trespassed across the borders of the Monarchy, the citizens, including the Unitarian believers and clergy, experienced war first hand: war had an extremely negative effect on ethics and economic life.

Considering the imagery of the enemy it can be stated that the Unitarian press – except for a few historical stereotypes – steered clear of xenophobic, provocative discourse.

Keywords: WW I, Hungarian Unitarian Church, Press, propaganda, ethics

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