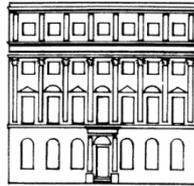


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Mischa Honeck, Susanne Quitmann, and Stina Barrenscheen:
*War and Childhood in the Age of the World Wars: Local and
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War and Childhood in the Age of the World Wars: Local and Global Perspectives. Conference organized jointly by the German Historical Institutes in Washington, London, and Paris and held at the German Historical Institute Washington, 5–7 June 2014. Conveners: Mischa Honeck (GHI Washington), James Marten (Marquette University), Andreas Gestrich (GHI London), and Arndt Weinrich (GHI Paris).

This conference explored the intersecting histories of modern war and childhood in the early twentieth century. Its goal was to come to grips with a fundamental paradox: how was it possible for modern societies to reimagine childhood as a space of sheltered existence and yet mobilize children for war? Rather than merely investigating adult *representations* of youth and childhood in war, it uncovered the processes by which young people acquired *agency* as historical subjects. The participants paid attention to the voices and actions of children in the different locales of modern war—from the home to the homefront; the bomb shelter to the battlefield; the press to the pulpit; the school to the street. In addition, they examined how adult institutions (governments, civic organizations, social movements) utilized images of children for wartime propaganda. These images could be deployed for various purposes: to mobilize patriotism and popular support for the war effort; to discredit and dehumanize the enemy; but also to subvert the logic of escalating military and political violence.

The first panel looked at different discursive and material modes of infantilizing war in first half of the twentieth century. Using examples from Japanese propaganda, Sabine Frühstück (California, Santa Barbara) showed how the Japanese were emotionally sensitized and mobilized by iconography that co-configured soldiers and children. Portraying soldiers as caring fathers and linking war with infancy made war appear natural and inevitable. Valentina Boretti (London) illustrated the importance of toys for militarizing Chinese children under the republican and communist regimes. War toys were disseminated to foster a martial spirit among youths perceived as frail and unmasculine. Julie K. deGraffenried (Baylor) compared American and Soviet alphabet books published in the Second World War.

The full conference programme can be found under Events and Conferences on the GHIL's website <www.ghil.ac.uk>.

While the war and military life were more prominent in the Soviet case, the American example tended to highlight traditional gender roles and a normative whiteness.

The second panel explored different forms of youth mobilization. Antje Harms (Freiburg) argued that ideological constructions of 'youth' in the German youth movement during the First World War stressed attitude over age. The concept, according to Harms, was broad and fluid enough to encompass both militarists who volunteered for a 'new Germany' and pacifists who refused to fight. Esbjörn Larsson (Uppsala) analysed the Swedish government's implementation of defence training in national schools. He underscored the importance of traditional gender roles, financial feasibility, medical education, and ethics in Swedish debates over children's roles in civil defence. Mischa Honeck (GHI Washington) challenged the idealized image of the Boy Scouts of America during the Second World War, which papered over generational and racial conflicts. While adults envisioned the organization as a tool of social control and wartime conformity, young Scouts conceived it as an opportunity for self-mobilization and self-actualization.

The third panel focused on issues of agency and victimization. Kate James (Oxford) examined boy soldiers in the Royal Navy and British Army in the early twentieth century from an intergenerational perspective. Working-class boys enlisted in search of adventure and social advancement. British military leaders, on the other hand, sought to increase young people's physical fitness while restricting their involvement in combat. L. Halliday Piel (Manchester) talked about the Manchu-Mongol Pioneer Youth Loyal and Brave Army, which was composed of Japanese boy soldier-settlers in the 1930s and 1940s. Lured into Manchuria with the promise of education and land, the boys from rural Japan who joined the Army wanted to rise socially but ultimately faced poverty and death. Suzanne Swartz's (Stony Brook, NY) paper about Jewish child smugglers in the Warsaw Ghetto demonstrated how generational roles could be inverted in times of crises. While adults faced increasing restrictions, children formed their own networks and became breadwinners for their families.

The fourth panel centred on juvenile delinquency on the home front. Kara Ritzenheiner (Oregon State) talked about *Kriegsschundliteratur* in First World War Germany, a popular genre in youth liter-

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ature that featured sensationalized wartime heroics. Discredited as inferior literature that would lead young people astray, the genre was suppressed by governmental authorities as part of Germany's wartime censorship regime. Emma Lautmann (Nottingham) analysed widespread claims of juvenile delinquency in Britain during the Second World War. She linked these claims to children's public visibility after many schools had been closed but also highlighted the fact that the young contested adult definitions of good citizenship. Martin Kalb (Northern Arizona) dissected constructions of the 'delinquent boy' and the 'sexually deviant girl' in Munich during the 1940s. These stereotypes emerged in war-ravaged spaces and as a result of a mismatch of the sexes, with women outnumbering men in post-war Munich. Young German women who socialized with US soldiers were accused of tarnishing the nation's future, even more so if those soldiers were black.

The fifth panel shed light on the role of children as witnesses of war. Manon Pignot (Jules-Verne, Picardie) analysed First World War drawings by French, Russian, and German children. Enemies were illustrated with animal features, and depictions of battles often merged modern and medieval symbols of war. Reflecting traditional gender divisions, boys overwhelmingly depicted battle scenes, while the drawings by girls contained references to the home front. Susan Miller's (Rutgers) presentation revolved around the art German children made in response to the American Quaker feeding programme after the First World War. Arguing that children's art should be regarded as a genuine reflection of their feelings, Miller identified two conflicting emotional reactions: gratitude for the relief, but also ambivalence about needing it. Thomas Christopher Stevens (Oxford) drew on autobiographical writings to investigate the perception and (re)interpretation of childhood in revolutionary Russia. He regarded the writings as a deliberate effort to construct childhoods that were consistent with the ruling ideology, and as a personal expression of individual interactions with a violently changing social environment.

The sixth panel dealt with wartime relocation and child relief. Nazan Maksudyan (Kemerburgaz, Istanbul) focused on Ottoman orphan boys taken to Germany as apprentices in the final years of the First World War. The few sources available show the diverging expectations of the parties involved: German authorities sought to bolster their dwindling domestic workforce, while Turkish authori-

ties wanted to get rid of delinquent boys. Karl Qualls (Dickson College) talked about Spanish refugee children, mostly boys, who migrated to Russia to escape the violence of the Spanish Civil War. Struggling to overcome homesickness and adjust to a foreign culture, these children were idealized by Soviet propaganda and held up as examples of a heroic childhood that young Russians should imitate. Sharon Parks (Minnesota) gauged the scope and impact that US post-war aid programmes had on European refugee children. The figure of the destitute child was used to attract funding and symbolize the boundless generosity of a victor nation, although personal accounts reveal discrepancies between official representations and the programmes' actual impact.

The seventh panel explored how children remembered war, and how wartime children were remembered in post-war societies. Arndt Weinrich (GHI Paris) argued that generational conflict structured the collective memory of the First World War in Weimar and Nazi Germany. Although youth groups across party lines seized on the cult of the fallen warrior, National Socialists exploited this myth best by eventually turning it against the older generation. Drawing on 200 oral interviews, Birgitte Søland (Ohio State) told the story of American orphans who had become subjects of medical experimentation conducted to boost US combat efficiency in the Second World War. She suggested that most of the survivors of these experiments took pride in having contributed to the war effort, even if that contribution had left physical and psychological scars. Robert Jacobs (Hiroshima Peace Institute) talked about the nuclear attack on Hiroshima in August 1945 and its impact on children. Examining the absence and re-emergence of children in Western stories about Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Jacobs highlighted changing representations that ranged from military personnel secretly assessing the destructive impact of atomic bombs on school populations to sentimentalized depictions of child victims used to promote global peace.

The conference concluded with a roundtable that pulled together major methodological and historiographical strands. A focus on children, the participants agreed, productively disrupts and calls into question common boundaries of modern war. On an emotional level, it shows the importance of children for the morale of the soldiers and their symbolic value as embodiments of suffering and national survival. On the level of agency, it shows that while childhoods were

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ideological constructions and children semi-autonomous actors at best, their modes of self-determination also proved empowering. For the young, war was both a devastating trial and a locus of socialization where issues of age, gender, sexuality, and citizenship were negotiated, adapted, and redefined. As adults were grappling to regain control over their children in times of war, children constantly reinvented the meaning of childhood for themselves.

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