



## **COPING WITH IMMEASURABLE LOSSES. POPULATION OF THE EUROPEAN CITIES AND WORLD WAR I**

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**The Prague City Archives  
in cooperation with**

**Wiener Stadt- und Landesarchiv**

**Institut für Zeitgeschichte Universität Wien**

**Lehrstuhl für Neueste Geschichte Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main**

**33. INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON URBAN HISTORY, PRAGUE,**

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**On the 100th anniversary of the outbreak of World War I, the world historiography and world media are about to commemorate its monstrous radicalism and until then unimaginable human sacrifice that changed Europe at root at all levels and paradigms. It is not an end in itself. The anniversary conferences and piles of books will surely concentrate on both political and military aspects of the war. Nevertheless, we must not forget that the conflict changed significantly the life within European cities. Their population and economies were shaken, tasks of the local governments had to keep up and the role of cities in their states and / or national societies was often changed by the war.**

**This international conference is dedicated to the lives of Prague's more than 600 thousand population during World War I. The then provincial and national metropolis is to be compared with European cities of a similar functional category. From the numerous questions that are arising, we are preferably interested in the cities'**

**population, i. e. how and with what impact did the war change their structure. The second issues are the cities' investments that were inevitably drawn into war loans or confiscated by the military sphere. How did it involve everyday life in the cities (numerous constructions were consequently interrupted, there was lack of finances for maintenance and operation of a city's infrastructure)? And on the contrary, to what extent did the cities benefit from the war, did they profit from armament or accoutrement orders and military building contracts? There are other numerous questions to be posed, however, we finally concentrate on five following issues:**

**1) *Who decided?* How did unnatural war conditions change emerging tasks of local government and its functioning? How did a city's economy deal with impacts of the war's economy? Did these changes become a permanent part of communal administrative mechanisms? Was there either state or provincial political will that drew both human and financial capital from the cities?**

Was this considered in terms of the city functioning? Or were the local authorities forced to improvise and patch up financial, material and human loss ad hoc? Were the state governments aware of the complex importance of the cities and their stability for the war's success?

2) *Who left?* We are primarily interested, who was taken away (and often never returned) by the war from a city. A mass of young, often qualified inhabitants were recruited. What were the consequences of these permanent losses of large groups of qualified male population on operation and economy of the cities? What professional groups of population of the cities were damaged most?

3) *What was the price of the war paid by the academic and cultural spheres?* A high number of students and educated intelligentsia left for the battlefields voluntarily. These were members of both social and professional groups that would have had an extraordinary impact on the forming of the cities' professional, political and cultural life. Along with this, they would have been a group of economically significant "consumers" within the cities. We ask again: how did their departure influence the cities?

4) *Who remained?* What amount of qualified experts, employees and workers were left? How were the functional elites replaced during the wartime? Were these roles left only to the elderly and military unfit?

5) *As the war ended*, how was its impact felt within city life? What did the processes of demilitarisation and demobilisation bring to the life of the cities? How did

the end of the war impact the role for the female both privately and professionally?

These five subheadings share some common ideas. Can we identify the similar methods of a problem execution within certain cities? Could these methods be transferable if we take a look at both front line and cities untouched by the war? To what extent can we actually compare the wartime situation in European cities?

#### Relevant Information:

- Applications in Czech, German or English are to be submitted at the latest by April 15, 2014. Applications without abstracts will not be considered. The organizers reserve the right to choose. Length of proposed contribution: 15–20 min.
- Chosen and/or presented papers in an appropriate form (e. g. max. 40 pages) may be submitted for publication in the journal *Documenta Pragensia*. The articles are subject to approval of the journal's Advisory Board.
- There is no charge for participation.
- Active participants from outside the Czech Republic will be provided with accommodation at the hotels of the Czech Academy of Sciences or Charles University in Prague. All transportation fees are to be met by participants.
- Conference languages: Czech, German and English. Simultaneous translation from German language will be on hand.

#### Organizing Committee:

Doc. dr. Václav Ledvinka, CSc.  
Prof. dr. Jiří Pešek, CSc.  
Prof. dr. Milan Hlavačka, CSc.  
PhDr. Olga Fejtová, PhD.

#### Partner Institutions:

Univ.-Prof. Mag. DDr. Oliver Rathkolb  
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