

Between National Tradition and Bilateral Dialogue: Teaching the First World War in France and Germany to Build Lasting Peace.

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At the close of the Second World War, the time was propitious for a greater awareness of the issues at stake in History teaching. School textbook narratives were accused of stirring up hatred by glorifying a vindictive form of patriotism. Borne along by the new international order, numerous undertakings were initiated to revise school textbooks, sponsored by governments, the Council of Europe or UNESCO¹.

A joint commission of French and (FRG) German History teachers was set up in 1951 with the purpose of improving textbooks in the two countries². Designed to be an autonomous peacemaking tool for the use of “civic society” as a complement to political initiatives, its aim was to foster reconciliation between the two peoples through education by means of a new teaching of war without producing hate and vengeance and a teaching approach conducive to peace³. At a time when the Franco-German textbook is offering a common discourse on history⁴, the time seems ripe for a new look at the

¹ Faure Romain, *Netzwerke der Kulturdiplomatie. Die internationale Schulbuchrevision in Europa 1949-1989*, Berlin, de Gruyter, Oldenburg, 2015; Lutinen, Pertti, “School history textbook revision by and under the auspices of UNESCO”, in *Internationale Schulbuchforschung*, 10, 1988, pp. 337-348; 11 (1989), pp. 39-48. Stobart Maitland, “Fifty years of European cooperation on history textbooks: The role and contribution of the Council of Europe”, in *Internationale Schulbuchforschung*, 21, 1999, pp. 147-161.

² Riemenschneider Rainer, “Ein halbes Jahrhundert deutsch-französischer Schulbuchgespräche”, in Pandel Hans-Jürgen (ed.), *Verstehen und Verständigen*, Pfaffenweiler: Centaurus Verlagsgesellschaft, 1991, pp. 137-148; Bendick, Bendick Rainer, “Irrwege und Wege aus der Feindschaft. Deutsch-französische Schulbuchgespräche im 20. Jahrhundert”, in Hochstuhl Kurt (ed.), *Deutsche und Franzosen im zusammenwachsenden Europa 1945-2000*, Stuttgart, W. Kohlhammer, 2003, pp. 73-103.

³ Nouvel-Kirschleger Maguelone, Sammler Steffen, “De la révision des récits de guerre à l’enseignement de la paix dans les manuels scolaires : l’exemple franco-allemand au sortir de la Seconde Guerre Mondiale”, in Coppolani Antoine (ed.), *La Fabrique de la Paix*, Quebec: Presses de l’Univ. de Laval, 2015, pp. 213-223.

⁴ François Etienne, “Le manuel franco-allemand d’histoire. Une entreprise inédite”, in *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d’histoire*, 94 Apr-June 2007, pp. 73-86; Defrance Corinne, Pfeil Ulrich,

recommendations of that original commission in order to match them against the content of the textbooks published during that same period, in a context of Franco-German reconciliation. How do the French and German books combine “teaching about war” and “education in peace”? How do they integrate political, historiographical and didactic developments to create a new narrative of the wars? How far do the contents of the textbooks converge, in line with the Commission’s recommendations?

To answer these questions, the example of how the First World War was taught reveals the development of the narrative relating to the “sensitive” issues, the most controversial of which for a long time were those of “German responsibility”, “resistance to war” and the portrayal of violence⁵.

1. *On the Origins of the War: the Problem of “German Responsibility”*⁶

The controversy of German responsibility was broached by the members of the Franco-German Commission at the Mainz Conference in 1951. Applying the “consensus method”, they recommended avoiding “sensitive” issues so as not to compromise the nascent dialogue⁷. As for the Great War, they advised against tackling the origins of the conflict from the perspective of responsibilities: no nation was at greater fault than another – a means of “externalising” the responsibility of the states and individuals. On this point, the members of the Commission gave credit to the interpretation of the British Prime Minister, David Lloyd George, according to whom the European states slid – more or less unawares – into war, as victims of fate and the “alliance system”⁸.

The Commission’s recommendations were aimed at influencing the production of textbooks on either side of the border, but they were by no means compulsory. This being the case, then, how did French and German textbooks treat the role of Germany in relation to the origins of the Great War?

“Symbol or reality? The background, implementation and development of the Franco-German history textbook”, in Korostelina Karina, Lässig Simone (eds), *History Education and Post-Conflict Reconciliation*, New York: Routledge, 2013, pp. 52-68.

⁵ Bendick Rainer, “La première Guerre mondiale à travers l’opposition des deux États allemands (1949-1989)”, *Tréma*, 29, 2008, pp. 21-31.

⁶ The following argumentation on the origins of the war is developed in detail in: Nouvel-Kirschleger Maguelone, Sammler Steffen, “Construire une paix durable après 1945: L’enseignement des origines de la Première Guerre Mondiale en France et en Allemagne”, in *Didactica Historica. Revue Suisse pour l’Enseignement de l’Histoire*, 1, 2015, pp. 71-76.

⁷ “Les entretiens franco-allemand, mai-octobre 1951”, in Eckert Georg, Schüddekopf Otto-Ernst (et.), *Deutschland – Frankreich – Europa. Die deutsch-französische Verständigung und der Geschichtsunterricht*, Baden-Baden: Verlag für Kunst und Wissenschaft, 1951, pp.15-34.

⁸ *Ibidem*, pp. 24-28.

1.1 *The Effects of the “Consensus Method”: an “Externalisation” of Responsibilities?*

In the French and German textbooks of the 1960s, the question of German responsibility is avoided virtually altogether. Compared with the textbooks of the inter-war period, the narrative is purged of any notion of judgement. In the Hachette textbook, for example, the conflict begins with the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria in Sarajevo, and the nations enter the war one by one, “dragged in” mechanically by the “alliance system”; Germany and France are mentioned in the same paragraph: they are drawn into the war, as victims in their turn of the spiralling conflict⁹.

While the author of the Gigord textbook points the finger at Austria and Russia, he nevertheless states that Austria never intended to trigger a war of this scale. Moreover, he clears France of all blame, as he does Germany, which is absent from the introduction. He insists on the simultaneity of both mobilisations as if to place the countries on a par and to avoid designating either one or the other as the aggressor: “On August 1st, the two states decree general mobilisation almost simultaneously”¹⁰. Compared with the inter-war textbook, which is extremely vindictive towards Germany, this new text seems much more pacific. Bellicose Germany disappears, giving way to a nation which aspires to peace and in 1914 intercedes with Austria to allay the crisis! Coming at the time of the Elysée Treaty, this discourse indeed weighed in favour of appeasing tension between the former enemies.

In Germany too, the textbooks avoided the issue of German responsibility and emphasised the alliance system. However, there is a greater contrast between discourses: a divergence emerged between “socialistic” works, which put the blame on imperialism in general but no nation in particular¹¹, and “conservative” textbooks, the inheritors of the historiography of the inter-war period. While much less virulent than before, these place the blame on Russia – the first to give the order for general mobilisation – and on France’s passivity in doing nothing to stop its ally¹².

Although encouraged by the Franco-German Commission, this “externalisation” of responsibilities was nonetheless a matter of debate in French university and teaching circles: historians like Pierre Vilar and teachers, among them members of the French Society of History Teachers, criticised the “externalisation” of responsibilities and took their example from the socialist textbooks of the GDR, which did not hesitate to designate the guilty parties¹³.

⁹ Bonifacio Antoine, Meile Pierre, *Terminales*, Paris, Hachette, 1962, p. 15.

¹⁰ Roulier Fernand, *Terminales*, Paris: Gigord, 1963, p. 7.

¹¹ Ebeling Hans, *Deutsche Geschichte*, Braunschweig: Westermann, 1955, pp. 5-9.

¹² Dittrich J., Dittrich-Gallmeister E., *Die moderne Welt*, Stuttgart: Klett, 1964, pp. 159-162.

¹³ Vilar Pierre, *Die Revision der Schulbücher, die internationalen Begegnungen von Historikern und die Völkerverständigung*, in *Pädagogik*, 10, 1955, p. 10-26 ; *Bulletin de la Société des Professeurs d’Histoire et de Géographie de l’Enseignement public*, 147, 1956, p. 446.

In the GDR, in line with Marxist historiography, authors imputed the conflict to imperialism, the military and the weapons industry. They made great use of shocking images, such as that of German cannons with the caption: “Krupp sells arms to its friends and to its enemies”¹⁴. Responsibility was “class” responsibility, and transnational: the elite of the different warring parties were guilty of triggering a war at the expense of the people. The symbol of this was the torpedoing of a British cruiser by a German submarine on 7 May 1915, sacrificing the 1,200 civilians on board. The East German authors transcended the national level to justify the socialist revolution, which according to them was the only means of guaranteeing lasting peace, and called for people to unite against the ruling classes. Their textbooks were imbued with this discourse until the fall of the regime.

1.2 A New Historiographical Approach: Germany Facing up to its Responsibilities?

In contrast to this immutable socialist discourse, discourse in France and the Federal Republic of Germany evolved from the 1970s onwards.

At that time, the construction of Europe and Franco-German reconciliation were in full swing and a new historiographical debate shook public opinion¹⁵. Within the Franco-German Commission, the methodology evolved, notably under pressure from associations such as the Human Rights League, which called for a naming of the guilty parties out of respect for the victims¹⁶. The *Kriegsschuldfrage* was discussed in Dijon in 1965¹⁷: the “consensus method” was abandoned in favour of a discussion of divergent points of view between historians and encouraging new practices of teaching in the classroom.

Echoing this, French and German textbooks now permitted themselves to broach the question of the origins of the conflict. Influenced by the “Nouvelle Histoire” approach, numerous authors threw off the bonds of a purely political discourse and looked into the history of the people, which they considered distinct from that of the elite, in the style of their socialist colleagues.

For example, the Hatier textbook restores Germany to its place in history: “Berlin and Vienna” were now jointly responsible for the flare-up of war in the Balkans. The authors emphasise the responsibility of the “military” and the “French, German and British governments”, clearing the people of blame. From the didactic perspective, the question was broached by means of a historiographical news file containing an extract from Fritz Fischer’s controversial

¹⁴ Bartel Horst (eds), *Geschichte. Lehrbuch für Klasse 8*, Berlin: Volkseigener Verlag Volk und Wissen, 1969, p. 193.

¹⁵ This is the controversy triggered by Fischer Fritz, *Griff nach der Weltmacht. Die Kriegszielpolitik des kaiserlichen Deutschland 1914/18*, Düsseldorf, 1961 (Fr. transl. 1970). The author’s conclusion is that the German ruling class was responsible for starting the war.

¹⁶ Cf. *Internationales Jahrbuch für Geschichtsunterricht*, vol. IX, 1963/64, pp. 255-272.

¹⁷ Moret M., “La douzième rencontre franco-allemande”, *Historiens & Géographes*, 194, 1965, pp. 206-207.

work. This method allowed the contentions subject to be broached without the textbook authors' having to express themselves either way: the debate took place in the classroom to allow the pupils to gain awareness of the constructed nature of historical knowledge. The ex-enemy's document was turned into a didactic tool: it introduced the conflictual issue without the risk of the author's being suspected of vindictive anti-Germanism¹⁸.

Similarly, at Hachette the authors put forward contradictory documents illustrating the differences in interpretation between French and German historians¹⁹. In the spirit of the "reciprocal method"²⁰ recommended by the Franco-German Commission, the French authors used the document of the "other side" to teach the divergences in points of view without stirring up resentment.

In the Federal Republic of Germany, where new teaching methods were being introduced, textbooks first of all broached the question of responsibilities head on²¹. Authors Hirschfelder and Nutzinger, for example, presented the controversy between historians through documents, referring explicitly to the work of the Franco-German Commission²². Without openly advocating the class struggle, the authors joined their East German counterparts in making a distinction between the opinion of the people and the will of politicians. This separation of the history of the elite from the history of the people, which also appears in the French textbooks, was in line with the Commission's recommendations. This interpretation helped appease conflict by accusing solely the "ruling classes". As victims of decisions taken in high places, the peoples were able to achieve reconciliation across and beyond borders and foster disputes between governments. Although allowing the sensitive issue to be broached without fanning up hatred, this bi-partite "peacemaker" discourse was to be challenged under a new kind of teaching less focused on events-driven history.

Today in France the question of the origins of the war has virtually disappeared from textbooks. The traditional "steps to war" and the political and economic interests have given way to themed history focused on the "fighting experience". For reasons of insufficient time, the French authors no longer offer any discussion of the processes that triggered such conflicts. Questions of responsibility are avoided in favour of an anti-war discourse of principle. In contrast, how the question of responsibility is treated is still very important

¹⁸ Berstein Serge (ed.), *Première*, Paris: Hatier, 1982, p. 78. Special feature: "Qui est responsable de la guerre?"

¹⁹ Grehg, *Première*, Paris: Hachette, 1982, p. 22.

²⁰ The "reciprocal method" led to an exchange of sources: the French authors examined the German documents and vice-versa.

²¹ Immisch Joachim, *Europa und die Welt. Zeiten und Menschen*, Hannover: Schöningh, 1966, pp. 21-22; Schmid Heinz Dieter (eds), *Fragen an die Geschichte*, Frankfurt: Hirschgraben, 1976, pp. 272-276.

²² Hirschfelder Heinrich, Nutzinger Wilhelm, *Das Kaiserreich 1871-1918*, Bamberg: Buchner, 1987, p. 198.

in Germany, first and foremost because from a didactic point of view this issue demonstrates the advantages of class teaching methods founded on the principles of “multiple perspectives” and juxtaposed points of view. These are considered vital to develop a critical way of thinking in pupils²³.

2. *The Populace in the Face of War: “Consent” or “Resistance”?*

Avoided during the first Franco-German meetings because considered too “delicate”, the question of “resistance” to war appears in discussions for the first time during the Dijon conference in 1965. French and German contributions were now focused on political resistance, especially in socialist milieus, while the more “sensitive” questions – such as the refusal of individuals to go and fight, or mutinies – are again set aside.

During the same period and in the same spirit, the French and West German textbooks present “consent” to the war as virtually unanimous²⁴, as illustrated by numerous photographs of soldiers setting off with cheerful insouciance²⁵. “Resistance” is absent, or minimised²⁶: on both sides, all the socialists accept the rallying cry of unity.

2.1 *The Image of “Consent”: Soldiers Marching Cheerfully off to War*

On this point, the GDR stands apart from France and the Federal Republic of Germany: the textbook authors refuse to show soldiers happy to go to war, voluntarily avoiding a reality that they do not sanction – that of the consent to war by nationalist workers and socialist militants rallying to a militarist discourse. The authors preferred to show civilian to go and fight by the imperialist leaders and their accomplices²⁷.

By contrast, in the textbooks in both France and the Federal Republic of Germany, the image of soldiers cheerfully departing for the front acclaimed by enthusiastic crowds is recurrent. Certain other French authors also offered an original page layout introducing a comparative perspective which is typical of the French books: two photographs, one French, the other German, facing

²³ Bendick Rainer, François Etienne, “Allemagne : fédéralisme et compétences”, in *Le Débat*, 175, 2013, pp. 141-150.

²⁴ Roulhier Fernand, *Terminales*, Paris: Gigord, 1963, p. 7: “Dans tous les Etats belligérants, la mobilisation s’exécuta dans l’ordre, la confiance et l’enthousiasme”; Genet Lucien (ed.), *Terminales*, Paris: Hatier, 1962, p. 2: “Dans les deux camps, nul ne songe à s’opposer à la guerre”.

²⁵ Galtier-Boissière Jean, *La Fleur au fusil*, 1934 (republ. 2014).

²⁶ Bouillon Jacques (ed.), *Terminales*, Paris: Bordas, 1962, p. 14: “Quelques isolés voulaient cependant défendre la cause de la paix”.

²⁷ Cf. Büttner Wolfgang (dir.), *Geschichte. Lehrbuch für Klasse 8*, Berlin, Volkseigener Verlag Volk und Wissen, 1988, p. 237. A caricature illustrates how “capital”, politics and the Orthodox Church force the people to go to war.

one another on a double spread, echo one another to illustrate the common rejoicing in Paris and Berlin²⁸; the French and the Germans are portrayed on equal terms, as if as a reminder that the war was not wished for by one side and endured by the other, but consented to on both sides. This didactic choice was propitious in pacifying sentiment. It emphasised the points in common that united the two peoples at that time: the ex-enemy was no longer a disembodied entity but a kind of reflection of oneself, someone with whom one could identify.

Starting in the 1970s, this theory of a cheerful departure for war was challenged by authors on the basis of new historiographical findings²⁹. Moreover, these joyful images posed the problem of an idealised portrayal of war, viewed as harmful to peace. For example, in a paragraph entitled “A general illusion: joyful, refreshing war”, the Hachette author challenges this “historic tradition”, describing a “war that was feared”; however, instances of “resistance to war” were still rare, while “resignation” was the dominating mood³⁰.

In present-day French textbooks, the “cheerful” clichés have all but disappeared, the authors emphasising the dramatic aspects of war. By contrast, these photographs are still present in German textbooks, but they are juxtaposed with images showing the horrors of war: this didactic means juxtaposes the idealised image of war with the sad reality of the fighting and the trenches³¹.

2.2 *The “Resistance” Narrative: a Competition between War and Peace?*

In the GDR, the textbooks of all periods place the theme of “resistance” at the centre of teaching about the First World War; they focus particularly on the pacifist movements, and not just the activities of the “Workers’ International”. The authors’ account is one of competition between forces for war and forces for peace. However, this perspective is teleological: the manuals report solely the events that explain the failure of the pacifist movements in order to deduce that there was a need for a socialist revolution, the sole means of putting an end to international conflicts. They use history to illustrate the Marxist theory of *Gesellschaftsformationen* developed by Lenin in his 1917 book entitled “Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism”³² prior to the advent of

²⁸ Roulhier Fernand, *Terminales*, Paris: Gigord, 1963, pp. 26-27; Grehg, *Première*, Paris: Hachette, 1982, pp. 24-25.

²⁹ Rousseau Frédéric, *La guerre censurée, une histoire des combattants européens de 14-18*, Paris: Points, 2014.

³⁰ Grehg, *Première*, Paris: Hachette, 1982, p. 35: “Les sentiments les plus communément répandus sont la stupeur, la résignation, mais aussi la résolution au moment du départ : le nombre des insoumis est resté infime”. Cf. Berstein Serge (ed.), *Première*, Paris: Hatier, 1982, p. 77.

³¹ Dambor Andreas et al., *Zeitreise, Klasse 9/10*, Leipzig, Klett, 2001. pp. 542-543: “L’Europe, champ de bataille”. Here, an iconographic representation evidences the contrast between how war is portrayed – through propaganda – and the reality of it.

³² Bartel, Horst (dir.), *Geschichte, Lehrbuch Klasse 8*, Berlin, Volkseigener Verlag Volk und

the socialist revolution. The East German curricula end with the Russian and German revolutions (1917-1919), which were major turning points in Marxist historiography: born of resistance to war, the aim of the socialist revolution was to build a world of peace... The authors describe a “march towards revolution” turning into a “march towards peace”: paradoxically, this “education in peace” presupposes revolutionary violence, which it is careful to legitimise.

From the 1970s, textbooks of the Federal Republic of Germany moved closer to those of the GDR in adopting the theme of competition between war and peace. The predominating perspective as far as the choice of photographs is concerned is a comparative one, and international³³. This is where a difference becomes apparent between France and Germany: giving priority to the theme of competition between militarism and pacifism, the German textbooks lend greater scope to “resistance to war” than their French textbooks, most of which do no more than recall the impotence and the divisions of those militating for peace³⁴.

This divergence is continuing and is even accentuated today. In France, the new curricula make a distinction between teaching about the wars and the history of the construction of peace in the twentieth century. This pedagogical choice certainly puts the spotlight on peace by giving it its own specific narrative, but it tends to leave out interactions, presenting war and peace as two parallel movements. In contrast, in reunified Germany the textbooks have retained this narrative of tension between war and peace, giving pride of place to the militants for peace. For example, the textbook in the *Zeitreise* collection, published by Klett, explores the subject under the title *Lay Down your Arms!* by Bertha von Suttner³⁵ on a themed double-page spread which also shows a photograph of the French socialist Jean Jaurès to illustrate the international and pluralistic dimension of the anti-war and peace movement³⁶.

The German textbooks, therefore, portray two major trends in the peace movements: a liberal middle-class movement and a socialist workers' movement. By contrast, the French textbooks describe the pacifist movement as emanating exclusively from the socialist milieus, won over to the idea of a “white peace” in which there is neither a conquering nor a conquered party, as proposed at the Zimmerwald Conference in 1915³⁷.

Wissen, 1969, one chapter is devoted to “The struggle of the German and international workers' movements against the risk of war (1900-1914)”.

³³ Cf. the work of Heinz Dieter Schmid, founder and director of the collection “Fragen an die Geschichte”, which in the 1970s and 80s juxtaposes the ideologies of peace and war.

³⁴ Bouillon Jacques (ed.), *Terminales*, Paris: Bordas, 1962, p. 14; Berstein Serge (ed.), *Première*, Paris: Hatier, 1982, p. 82.

³⁵ A member of the Austrian nobility, Bertha von Suttner (1843-1914) became one of the principal representatives of the pacifist movement thanks to this novel: she was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1905.

³⁶ Dambor Andreas et al., *Zeitreise, Klasse 9/10*, Leipzig: Klett, 2001, p. 548.

³⁷ Bouillon Jacques (ed.), *Terminales*, Paris: Bordas, 1962, p. 22; Berstein Serge (ed.), *Première*, Paris: Hatier, 1982, p. 88.

3. *Teaching about the “Violence” of War in the Interests of Education in Peace?*

Is it possible to teach about peace without showing the violence of war? Is it possible to teach about war without designating the other side as the enemy? Is it necessary to shock in order to educate? At the close of the Second World war, numerous questions faced those designing school curricula as well as the authors of school textbooks.

The theme of teaching about peace – linked to that of teaching about violence – was broached as early as 1952 in Tübingen at the third Franco-German conference³⁸. The participants reached an agreement on the need to place greater importance on the theme of peace in the teaching delivered in both countries: textbook authors and history teachers were therefore advised to put the emphasis on the periods of peace between the European states and to detail the acts of joint consultation and the peace treaties from the perspective of a “longue durée”. This should permit the critical study of the narratives of victorious and defeated nations in different historical periods and draw specific attention to the dangerous feeling of humiliation and revenge developed by people considered victims of an unjust peace.

3.1 *A “Clinical” Narrative of War: History in the Form of a Battle with no Victims?*

In the 1960s, French and West German textbooks put forward a factual, “clinical” and “dehumanised” history of the war. The “victims” are figures, the “battles” maps and the “heroes” military or government leaders. From a didactic point of view, the texts and images reflect a “clean war”: no bloody combat, no bodies; war is a matter of statistics and political and military strategies.

At Hachette for example, the authors reproduce photos of “trenches” with captions describing how they were organised prior to the fighting. Although one small paragraph refers to “the hell of the trenches”, the violence of war itself is absent, while living conditions, the mud and the interminable waiting come over as the sole real enemies³⁹. Neither at Gigord does the author deal directly with the violence of war, presenting the trenches “at rest”. He reiterates the didactic procedure of reproducing two photos, one French, the other German, facing one another on a double-page spread to emphasise the similar conditions in which all the soldiers on the front lived⁴⁰. This kind of narrative is “pacifying”: it opens minds to the suffering of the other side.

³⁸ Cf. “Die dritte Arbeitstagung deutscher und französischer Geschichtslehrer, Tübingen, vom 31. Juli bis zum 9. August 1952”, in *Internationales Jahrbuch für Geschichtsunterricht*, II, 1953, pp. 359-363.

³⁹ Bonifacio Antoine, Meile Pierre, *Terminales*, Paris: Hachette, 1962, p. 19.

⁴⁰ Roulier Fernand, *Terminales*, Paris: Gigord, 1963, pp. 27-28.

Similarly, in Germany the violence was still only suggested, while new textbooks, from the democratic or socialist milieus, tended to encourage reconciliation with the former adversary. Thus, starting in the 1950s, the authors of the *Wege der Völker* series reproduced the symbolic photo of the destruction of the town of Reims which suggests, without showing the horror endured by civilians, the responsibility of German soldiers in acts of violence perpetrated in France. By implicitly designating Germany as the aggressor, this image became an element of reconciliation for the French and the Germans⁴¹. This same pacificating method, consisting of presenting one's own country as the aggressor in the face of an ex-enemy who is transformed into a victim, was adopted by the French authors a short time later⁴².

Although they did not place violence at the forefront, from the 1950s onwards certain German authors nevertheless offered a general reflection on the origins of "barbarity": in their view, the history of the two wars provided proof of the fascination that barbarity exerts on people. Hans Ebeling, for example, in his textbook *Reise in die Vergangenheit* puts the spotlight on the "horror" and the inhuman nature of war – a philosophy to which his publishers, Westermann, remained faithful during the following decades⁴³.

Similarly, in the GDR the description of violence is largely absent. The narrative gives the star role to the resistance fighters and rebels, the heroes of an idealised socialist epic which seems to forget the other victims of the war. As for the revolutionary violence, on the whole little is mentioned of it and the emphasis is placed instead on the values and courage of the revolutionary players.

3.2 Use of Documentary Evidence: War as a Human Tragedy

Marked by social history, the 1970s and 80s represent a real turning point in the way war is taught: from then on it is treated as a human tragedy.

In France as well as in the Federal Republic of Germany, the authors are no longer content just to recount the war; they show it, first and foremost by means of images in ever greater numbers. At Hachette, for example, the way the trenches were represented evolved: now they are shown during bloody combat, with body-to-body fighting, mutilated men, and bodies, accompanied by cemeteries and war memorials. The captions are explicit: "The horror of war"; "A huge human price"; "a mutilated generation". Moreover, the texts evoke

⁴¹ Schulze, Gertrud, Puhlmann, Wilhelm, et al. *Demokratie im Werden. Geschichte der neuesten Zeit von 1849 bis zur Gegenwart*, Berlin, 1950, p. 202.

⁴² Berstein Serge (ed.), *Première*, Paris: Hatier, 1982, p. 91. The author reproduces the image of an attack by French heavy tanks on the German trenches in July 1918.

⁴³ Ebeling Hans, *Die Reise in die Vergangenheit. Ein geschichtliches Arbeitsbuch*. Vol. IV: *Unser Zeitalter der Revolutionen und Weltkriege*, Braunschweig: Westermann, 1981, pp. 141-142; Ebeling Hans, Birkenfeld Wolfgang, *Die Reise in die Vergangenheit. Ein geschichtliches Arbeitsbuch*, Vol. V: *Das Zeitalter der Weltkriege*, Braunschweig: Westermann, 1991, pp. 43-44.

the feelings of the soldiers, “the obsessive fear of the *poilus*”⁴⁴: the documents relate a tragedy experienced first-hand by the soldiers of all nationalities. The perspective now is one of pacification: war is no longer solely a national misfortune, but a worldwide and primarily human tragedy.

This evolution in the way violence is represented in textbooks in France was the result of advances made in historiography but also of the influence of First and Second World War veteran associations, which advocate “experience-based pacifism”, and, as witnesses to the horror of the fighting, they advocated peace education based on a realistic teaching of war and homage to the victims⁴⁵.

The risk of this kind of presentation, however, is that of reviving hate towards the former enemy. This is why the authors of the French textbooks chose to “humanise” the other side by showing them suffering, at the front and behind the lines, by means of images or through eye-witness accounts that make history come alive. At Hatier for example, the author speaks of the “agitation in the German fleet” in 1917 caused by the distress of the sailors who were victims of “poor supplies and of mockery”. The aim was to arouse empathy in young people by underlining the analogy between the fates of French and German soldiers. “The deprivation of the population [...] in Germany, shortages, rationing”⁴⁶ are also reported to remind pupils of the suffering endured by the civilian population (women, children, old people) on both sides of the border. Pupils could therefore easily draw parallels between the experience of the French and that of the Germans during the Great War. The message is a general one: war creates victims on all sides, innocent victims, broken lives, whether the country is victorious or conquered; war is a terrible misfortune for all soldiers, whichever side they are on.

3.3 Teaching Peace by “Dramatising” War

Today in French and German textbooks, violence is present from the first page. War is “dramatised” by means of numerous contemporary images and documents, as in Hachette, for example, which opens its chapter with a large-format photo of the bodies of German soldiers piled up in a trench in Champagne⁴⁷.

“The fighting experience” and the horror of war are at the core of the new French curricula: history is seen from the soldier’s perspective, through his eyes. Similarly in Germany, the focus is on the different kinds of suffering, mourning and the need for remembrance. The photos appeal to the emotions to encourage the pupils not to relive the drama of the war operations without any critical judgement but to gain awareness of the day-to-day situation of the soldiers out in the field⁴⁸.

⁴⁴ Prost Antoine, *Les anciens combattants*, Archives, extraits du *Journal des mutilés*, 1977.

⁴⁵ Prost Antoine, *Les anciens combattants*, Archives, extraits du *Journal des mutilés*, 1977.

⁴⁶ Berstein Serge (ed.), *Première*, Paris: Hatier, 1982, p. 88.

⁴⁷ Lambin Jean-Michel (ed.), *Première*, Paris: Hachette, 2011, p. 72.

⁴⁸ Bahr Frank (ed.), *Horizonte I. Geschichte für die Oberstufe in Baden-Württemberg. Von der Amerikanischen Revolution bis zum Nationalsozialismus*, Braunschweig: Westermann, 2003,

As part of a new, themed, take on history, French authors have joined their German colleagues in offering a more general, almost anthropological debate on the development of “violence” in wartime and the manifestations of “barbarity”: “Also part of the fighting experience is the discovery by the soldiers of a violence of which they would not have thought themselves capable in peacetime”⁴⁹. This development is reminiscent of the work of the historian Georges Mossé on “brutalisation”: “Confronted with intense violence and in a context in which the prohibition of killing has been lifted, there were times when some soldiers took pleasure in fighting.”⁵⁰ Thus, during wartime people can lose their humanity and indulge in cruelty. Echoing this, in Germany the collection “Horizonte” by Westermann describes a “battlefield” which is no longer a field of honour and glory, but a theatre of inhumanity. The authors then put the more general question of “Why are people always willing to go to war?”⁵¹

The narratives focus on the traumatic consequences of war in order to educate pupils in universal values in the interests of peace: in France as in Germany, this consists of showing the horror of war – assimilated to “barbarity” – to create rejection on the part of a young generation which has not known war and which could trivialise the issues at stake. While giving greater scope to the theme of peace, the authors teach peace by “dramatising” war with the aid of shocking images.

In doing so, the authors set the history narrative in the context of a theoretical debate based on the social sciences, which considers concepts such as “war and peace”, or “war and imperialism” over the “long term”, abandoning the traditional chronological approach. History is placed at the service of moral education for peace which conditions the way knowledge is passed on.

Conclusion

During this study, it became clear that school narratives of the Great War, which were openly bellicose in the inter-war period, were gradually rendered more “pacific” after 1945, notably under the influence of the work of the Franco-German Commission on the revision of textbooks which was aimed at eliminating stereotypes and using the advances of scientific research and didactics for the purposes of an education for peace. History was transformed into an instrument of peace, called upon to transmit common values and reconcile peoples.

This being the case, today, as historians of both sides of the Rhine have pointed out, history partially runs the risk of becoming a simple “auxiliary

pp. 318-319.

⁴⁹ Lambin Jean-Michel (ed.), *Première*, Paris: Hachette, 2011, p. 78.

⁵⁰ Lambin Jean-Michel (ed.), *Première*, Paris: Hachette, 2011, p. 84.

⁵¹ Bahr Frank (ed.), *Horizonte I. Geschichte für die Oberstufe in Baden-Württemberg. Von der Amerikanischen Revolution bis zum Nationalsozialismus*, Braunschweig: Westermann, 2003, pp. 318-319.

science” at the service of civic and moral education: is there any future for History as a teaching discipline in itself⁵²?

In France, the textbooks no longer offer any reflection on the origins of war, which raises new questions. Can we deliver peace education without teaching about the events that led to war? Can we prevent a new conflict without remembering the origins of past conflicts? Do pupils not run the risk of interpreting war as barbarity without cause or purpose, like an outbreak of gratuitous violence? The German textbooks succeed in combining the teaching of responsibilities and education in values by means of themed chapters.

Given the differences that exist between the two education systems and the “national” textbooks, despite the convergence between the narratives and the publication of a Franco-German textbook, it seems important to widen and deepen the international scientific and pedagogical dialogue between communities of historians and political scientists. This can be achieved at least within new international organisations like IRAHSSE or new studies offering promising prospects for a comparative investigation of the “sensitive” questions of war and of peace⁵³.

⁵² Bendick Rainer, “Mehr als nur Kompetenzen. Der Erste Weltkrieg als Chance für einen transnationalen Geschichtsunterricht”, in Manfred Quentmeier, Martin Stupperich, Rolf Wernstedt (eds), *Krieg und Frieden 1914 – 2014. Beiträge für den Geschichts- und Politikunterricht*, Schwalbach/Ts., Wochenschau Verlag, 2014, pp. 119-145.

⁵³ Barbara Christophe, Kerstin Schwedes (eds), *Schulbuch und Erster Weltkrieg*, Göttingen, V & R Unipress, 2016.