Forgetting the Great War? The Langemarck Myth between Cultural Oblivion and Critical Memory in (West) Germany, 1945–2014

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“Next stop: Langemarckstraße” informs the automatic announcement system on bus 33 that orbits Münster’s ring road. Monitors inside the vehicle indicate that it will subsequently call at Flandernstraße. “Langemarck” and “Flandern”—it seems unlikely that these two names, once pregnant with meaning, will stir memories, trigger associations, or spark curiosity among the passengers. Few people will know that these two streets were named during the 1930s after the great battles of 1914 (Langemarck) and 1917 (Flandern). The intention at the time was to create organic forms of commemoration that would subtly infiltrate the everyday. In towns throughout Germany, Langemarck in particular began to leave its mark on the paraphernalia of quotidian life, including visiting cards, directories, and maps. People waited at bus stops called “Langemarckstraße” (fig. 1) and heard the name shouted out on public transport. Today, the great battles fought around the Flemish city of Ypres (Ieper) during the First World War occupy a liminal space between memory and oblivion. They are both “forgotten” and ever present, no longer a mythical presence but still a small part of the fabric and rhythms of urban life.

This article explores the memory of the First World War in the wake of the Second World War—or, rather, it examines the intersecting memories of the two world wars since 1945.1 It takes issue with a commonly held view, frequently articulated in the run-up to the centenary of the outbreak of the First World War, that der große Krieg is a “long forgotten war” eclipsed by an even greater conflict.2 For Aleida Assmann, the flurry of commemorative activities in

* We are grateful to Philip Boobbyer, Dominiek Dendooven, Charlotte Sleigh, and the journal’s three anonymous readers for their perceptive comments on earlier versions of this article.


Fig. 1.—Bus stop, Langemarckstraße, Münster. Authors’ photograph, August 2013. Color version available as an online enhancement.

2014 revealed that Germany had finally left its post-1945 “Sonderweg [special path] of forgetting,” since “the forgotten war was on everyone’s lips again.”

This bold claim by the doyen of memory studies is based on the prevalent, but unexamined, assumption that the cultural memory of the Great War became a nonentity in the Federal Republic, surviving at best in societal niches. The literature on the sociocultural reverberations of the Great War, though mountainous, offers no insights here. Scholars across the board have chosen the years 1939/1940 or 1945 as cutoff points for their research, thereby implying that commemoration of the 1914–18 conflict came to an abrupt end as a consequence of the Second World War. Nor have studies of the long-term transformations of commemorative cultures in the nineteenth and twentieth century been particularly attentive to memory traces of the Great War beyond the watershed of 1939/45. A notable exception is Jay Winter’s War Beyond Words: Languages of Remembrance from the Great War to the Present (2017), which examines how Great War culture continued to reverberate in art and literature beyond 1945.

The small amount of scholarship that addresses the memory of the First World War post-1945 focuses almost exclusively on the British and, to a lesser
extent, on the French cases. Essentially, these are studies in commemorative resurgence rather than in cultural liminality. While this article is not an exercise in transnational or comparative history, the example of Britain offers an intriguing foil of (implicit) comparison and (reflective) contrast that can help throw German peculiarities into sharper relief. In Britain the First World War has retained and even gained in cultural significance since 1945. The symbol of the poppy, the language of “shell shock,” keywords like “The Somme” and “Passchendaele,” or a television phenomenon like the BBC’s *Great War* series have no equivalent in Germany. The term *nullachtzehn* (zero eight fifteen) is one of the very few surviving memory traces of the First World War in colloquial language. The expression, borrowed from the type designation of the new machine gun introduced in the German army in 1915, connotes an unsophisticated product or a meaningless, repetitive task. However, few people today will be aware of its origin in the soldiers’ slang of the First World War; they are much more likely to associate it with the film trilogy *08/15* (1954–55) set during the Second World War. Even the most public of historiographical debates, sparked by the publication of Fritz Fischer’s *Der Griff nach der Weltmacht* in 1961 (translated as *Germany’s War Aims in the First World War*, 1967), was only superficially about the First World War. At the heart of the controversy was not the Great War as such but the continuities between the expansionist goals of Imperial Germany and the Third Reich. Without doubt, the legacies of Nazism and the Second World War came to dominate political discourse and commemorative culture in postwar (West) Germany, pushing the First World War to one

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side. It should be recognized, however, that important memory traces remained. Moreover, it is incomplete to write a history of Second World War commemorations with the Great War left out.

Memory and forgetting are not polar opposites but two sides of the same coin, scholars have asserted time and again. Even so, the culture of forgetting has long remained the poor relation of memory studies. The seminal publications on the theory of collective/cultural/social memory by the sociologist Maurice Halbwachs, the Egyptologist Jan Assmann, the literary critic Aleida Assmann, and the media-studies scholar Wolfgang Ernst barely touch on forgetting. A notable exception to the rule is a long essay, *Oblivion* (2004), by the ethnologist Marc Augé, which suggests that forgetting facilitates memory: “Memories are crafted by oblivion as the outlines of the shore are created by the sea.”

More recently, monographs by Aleida Assmann and the social anthropologist Paul Connerton have appeared, designed to fill the yawning gap in this field, with both scholars developing a typology consisting of seven forms of forgetting. Their approach has been challenged, however, by two cognitive psychologists who argue that we should “forget forgetting.” Jefferson A. Singer and Martin A. Conway propose to substitute the concept of “relative accessibility” for the much too stark notion of forgetting: “The past in the individual and in culture is available, the question is: Can we access it?”

The emerging plethora of theoretical treatises on memory and oblivion contrasts sharply with a dearth in empirical studies. This is perhaps unsurprising, for studying cultural absences, political silences, and representational voids in practice poses particular methodological challenges. Collective memory requires

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guidance and direction; agents of remembrance such as war memorial committees have left behind dense paper trails. In addition, material culture provides ample evidence. Yet, with the exception of political acts of *damnatio memoriae*, forgetting can be an elusive thing, only sparsely documented, often requiring the historian to read between the lines.\(^{15}\) Nevertheless, this article is based on extensive research in German national, local, and institutional archives (with supplementary research in some British and Belgian archives). In addition, we have undertaken site visits to inspect street signs and memorials, and we have also benefited from the study of maps and plans held at land-registry offices and building authorities.

The cultural memory of the Great War after 1945 is potentially a vast topic. This article will focus on one real-and-imagined battlefield in particular: Langemarck in the Ypres salient.\(^{16}\) Without doubt, postwar representations of Verdun or Tannenberg would be equally viable and fruitful research topics, but for reasons both pragmatic and programmatic we shall concentrate on the theater of operations in West Flanders.\(^{17}\) The Ypres salient was a microcosm of the Western Front, intensely fought over in five major battles between 1914 and 1918 and also the site of commemorative campaigns after 1918. For many a contemporary, West Flanders was the Western Front. There the German advance had ended in a stalemate in autumn 1914, giving birth to what was, arguably, the most enduring myth of the First World War: the Langemarck myth about the collective self-sacrifice of Germany’s youth. At Langemarck, a village nine kilometers northwest of Ypres, so the story goes, young volunteers, all students, had charged toward death singing “Deutschland über alles.” It was the final assault, the end of the war of movement, before the military stalemate of trench warfare set in. The myth-making about Germany’s lost generation began immediately after the battle. It had its origin in an army communiqué that the press, starved of exciting war news, eagerly reprinted: “West of Langemarck, young regiments broke forward singing ‘Deutschland über alles’ against the first line of the enemy’s positions and took them.”\(^{18}\) Military leaders knew full well that this story had no substance; not even the location was correctly given. Yet even the official historians’ attempt at debunking the myth (calling it an “overhasty attack”)

\(^{15}\) On commemorative purges, see Winfried Speitkamp, ed., *Denkmalsturz: Zur Konfliktgeschichte politischer Symbolik* (Göttingen, 1997).


\(^{18}\) This episode is discussed in detail in Mark Connelly and Stefan Goebel, *Ypres* (Oxford, 2018), 30–34.
did not nothing to undermine it during the interwar years. Langemarck enshrined a story of heroic failure, one that transcended conventional notions of victory and defeat. The soldiers’ baptism of fire in November 1914 would become the nucleus of a new national community overcoming older divisions of social class. The subsequent battles of Ypres in 1915, 1917, and 1918 were thus fought in a landscape saturated with memory. With the exception of the relatively “quiet” year 1916, the salient was the scene of heavy fighting throughout the war, notably during the Third Battle of Ypres in 1917, simply known as “Flanders” or “Passchendaele” in Germany and Britain, respectively. “The final act” was the fighting at Mount Kemmel—known as the “inviolable sanctuary” of German arms—in the southern sector of the Ypres salient in 1918.

Like Tannenberg and Verdun, Langemarck became a powerful symbol in the last years of Imperial Germany, one that was revived and reconfigured during the Weimar Republic and further cultivated after 1933. November 11—Langemarck Day—became a fixture in the national calendar and an antipode to both Armistice Day (November 11, observed in Britain and France) and the founding day of the republic (November 9). During the Third Reich, Langemarck was elevated to a state-sponsored myth, effectively becoming a prism through which the First World War in its entirety was seen; “Langemarck” stood for “the sacrifices [made] on all the fronts.” Hitler presented himself as a veteran of Langemarck (paying a visit to the war cemetery en route to Paris in June 1940; fig. 2), while both the German Students’ Association and the Hitler Youth were vying for custodianship of the legacy of the battle. Unlike Tannenberg, Langemarck stood both for a historical event and a political idea, transcending time and space. Unlike Verdun, Langemarck also gave stimulus to the creation of a commemorative infrastructure made up of dedicated sites, rituals, and organizations, one that the Nazis appropriated for their own purposes from 1933 right until the dying days of the Third Reich. Thus Langemarck—and the memory of the Great War more generally—became inseparable from Nazism and its legacy.

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21 See, for example, the title of Günter Kaufmann, ed., Langemarck: Das Opfer der Jugend an allen Fronten (Stuttgart, 1938), our italics.

The argument we want to develop is this. After 1945 the First World War ceased to be regarded as der große Krieg. But even though that war’s legacy of death and violence was overshadowed by the horrors of an even greater war, the 1914–18 conflict was never completely “forgotten.” The past remained “accessible” and continued to speak to (West) German culture, although not everywhere and not all the time. Hence this article distinguishes between five, occasionally overlapping, phases of Great War memory/oblivion during the post-war era. What became consigned to oblivion, however, was first of all the topography of remembrance that had emerged between 1914 and 1940. Memory traces of the Great War lost their connection with the landscape of the battlefields that had formed them. Once resonant place names like Dixmude or Kemmel faded from the imagination; and the Langemark of the postwar was an altogether different place. So, first, the spatiality of remembrance that had been so important to the commemorative culture in the aftermath of 1914–18 changed fundamentally after 1945. Our second line of argument is that one can observe how the memory of the First World War moved progressively out

Fig. 2.—Hitler visiting the Langemarck war cemetery, June 1940. Photograph by Heinrich Hoffmann. Bayerische Staatsbibliothek Munich, Bildarchiv.

of the realm of grief and bereavement. There was a strong tendency among Germans to approach the First World War in a different register, one that was reflective and judicious rather than emotional and mournful. Thus this article extends and expands on Alf Lüdtke’s tentative observation, made in a review article in the Journal of Modern History, that West German efforts of “coming to terms with the past” entailed an “increased ‘rationality’” and an avoidance of “public emotions.”

I. Purging the Past: Spatial Traces, 1945–49

In April 1945, in the chaos of the final days of the Nazi regime, Max Bock, an accountant and so-called “half Jew” from Berlin, emerged from hiding. For the previous two years he had been sheltered by friends or lived rough in the city. Bock used his newly gained freedom to perambulate his hometown. The scene of devastation he witnessed at the once so beautiful Tiergarten shocked him deeply. “Most of the trees have lost their crowns and are sprouting from the sides and from a few remaining branches. It reminds me of the Houthis Forest,” he confided in his diary. A war veteran who had seen action in Flanders in 1918, Bock tried to understand the Second World War in terms of the First. In doing so, he effectively followed a pattern of representation established by wartime propaganda. From the outset, the prism of the Great War had provided an important lens for contextualizing the new conflict. The Wehrmacht’s Blitzkrieg campaign, overrunning positions where the advance of the Kaiser’s troops had come to a halt in autumn 1914, had been celebrated as a “Second Langemarck” in 1940. As late as early 1943, Nazi propagandists had invoked the spirit of collective self-sacrifice of the war volunteers of 1914 in a rallying call to the Sixth Army encircled at Stalingrad. The British, too, had remobilized the memory of the Great War. Justifying the carpet bombing of German cities, the British press had suggested in December 1943 that air power “means no more Passchendaeles.”


24 Imperial War Museum, Department of Documents, 10800, Diary of Max Bock, trans. Lilli Segel, fols. 34/49, May 17, 1945. We are grateful to Paul Cornish for drawing this source to our attention.


Around the same time as Max Bock was invoking the landscape of the First World War in his private diary, the memory of that conflict was being gradually expunged from the public domain. On April 24, 1945, two weeks before the Reich’s unconditional surrender, workers from the civil engineering inspectorate in Freiburg removed Werwolf (Nazi partisan) graffiti and, at the same time, took down the street signs in Langemarckstraße. Both were considered a matter of urgency, although the surviving correspondence is silent about the rationale behind the latter measure. Were they afraid that the story of war volunteers marching willingly to their deaths with the Deutschlandlied on their lips would reek of Prussian militarism? Were they thinking of how right-wing associations had used the Langemarck war cemetery to rally against both the Versailles settlement and the Weimar Republic? Did the Nazis’ concerted efforts to turn the story of Langemarck into a state-sponsored national myth in the 1930s loom in their minds? Or were they aware of how the legacy of Langemarck had become implicated in the racist war on the Eastern Front through the actions of SS-Sturmbrigade “Langemarck” and SS-Grenadier-Division “Langemarck”? Whatever the concrete reasons, one thing seemed clear: Langemarck, tainted by Nazism, would have no place in a future postwar order.

Similarly, in spring 1945 Stuttgart’s administration was busy working toward the new regime, compiling lists of streets to be renamed following the demise of the Third Reich. In one document, a clerk noted, somewhat vaguely, that Flan dernstraße, Kemmelbergstraße, and Ypernstraße, located in the outer district of Cannstatt, “commemorate some sort of battle or place from the world war 1914/18.” In the event, all three streets retained their names, for they were considered insignificant residential roads (fig. 3). Yet, elsewhere in the Swabian capital, two Langemarckstraßen and one Langemarckallee disappeared by the end of 1946. Although “Ypern” and “Langemarck” had often been used synonymously between 1914 and 1940, the former now seemed innocuous, whereas the latter appeared unsavory. On the form used for the renaming of streets, the official

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29 StdA Stuttgart, 850/1, Nr. 14, Vorschlag zur Änderung von Straßenamen in Bad Cannstatt, 1945; see also Peter Poguntke, Braune Feldzeichen: Stuttgarter Straßenamen in der NS-Zeit und der Umgang nach 1945 (Stuttgart, 2011), 94–96.
ticked “militaristic” and “National Socialist.” There is nothing to suggest that the residents either objected to or welcomed these changes. Challenging the authorities was not yet part of the political DNA of ordinary Germans, and, in any case, people had more pressing concerns in the immediate aftermath of the war.

In Freiburg the overzealous officials were eventually reprimanded and the street signs reinstalled. Contradictions and inconsistencies abounded when it came to dealing with the legacy of Langemarck. Across Germany, there were significant local variations depending on the zone of occupation, the zeal (or ignorance) of bureaucrats, the prominence of the location, and, to some extent, the emerging new political culture. In the Soviet Zone of Occupation all visible reminders of Langemarck were removed from street signs and the official address books. By contrast, in the Western occupation zones (where the vast majority of Langemarck streets were concentrated), confusion was rife, compounded by the fact that the Western Allies themselves were not entirely clear about how to interpret Control Council Directive No. 30 concerning the liquidation of German

Fig. 3.—Street sign, Ypernstraße, Stuttgart. Authors’ photograph, August 2014. Color version available as an online enhancement.

30 StdA Stuttgart, 125/1, Nr. 45-3, Statistisches Amt, Bennennung der Strasse/Platz/Weg [Isolde-Kurz-Straße], December 15, 1946.
military and Nazi memorials. Did it, or did it not, include commemorations of the First World War? Dortmund’s administration adopted a stringent interpretation of the directive, implementing it without delay in July 1946, when both Flandernstraße and Langemarckstraße were renamed. However, in nearby Gelsenkirchen, once a communist stronghold, Langemarckstraße was inexplicably overlooked. In neighboring Essen (where a Langemarckstraße exists to this day), city hall employees were aware of the directive (though not in possession of a copy) but were dragging their heels, citing the sheer cost involved—an unconvincing argument given that many of the street signs had been literally bombed away during air raids. Virtually every major city and most of the smaller towns, too, had boasted a street named after the battles of Langemarck and Flanders by 1939. The percentage of streets renamed in the aftermath of the Second World War is difficult to establish with precision. Statistical evidence is available only for Westphalia, where 88 percent of streets (that is, 14 out of 16) dedicated to Flanders, Langemarck, or Kemmel were given new names between 1945 and 1949.

In Dortmund the city authorities simply reverted to the original street names, while elsewhere politically resonant new ones were chosen. These were instances of what Aleida Assmann calls “constructive forgetting” driven by an urge to leave the past behind and start afresh. Thus Langemarckstraße was re-baptized Karl-Marx-Straße in Mannheim (1946) and Stresemannstraße in


32 “Neue Straßenbezeichnungen,” Bekanntmachungen für Groß-Dortmund, July 19, 1946.


36 Assmann, Formen des Vergessens, 61.
Wuppertal (1947); in Mönchengladbach Langemarckplatz was called (again) Platz der Republik (1947), two years before the founding of the Federal Republic; and Langemarckwall in Bonn-Gronau became Charles-de-Gaulle-Straße (1978). The peculiar case of Bonn, the town that became the political capital of the Federal Republic in 1949, illustrates that Langemarck was not universally considered a dangerous legacy to be eradicated. While Langemarckstraße in the Bad Godesberg district of Bonn was renamed in January 1947, a street by the same name in the Oberkassel ward of the town was not, despite the fact that from 1924 to 1937 it had been called Friedensstraße (Peace Street) in memory of the adoption of the Dawes Plan at the London Conference of 1924. Even if this had been an administrative oversight, another opportunity was missed to correct it in 1953 when the name Langemarckstraße was even extended into an adjoining street. More incredible still might seem the decision by the neighboring municipality of Sankt Augustin to create an entirely new Langemarckstraße in 1956—a decision indicative of the changing political climate of the mid-1950s.

II. Neutralizing Langemarck: Linguistic Fragments and Monumental Legacies, 1950–59

The impetus to break with the past—including the First World War—was strongest in the weeks immediately before the collapse of the Third Reich and in the first two years afterward. These commemorative purges extended to "militaristic" traditions dating back to the First World War. By the mid-1950s, however, the erstwhile iconoclasm had waned, giving way to more subtle forms of re-fashioning the legacy of the Great War. This trend coincided with what Norbert Frei terms the advent of Vergangenheitspolitik (politics of the past), a political pincer movement that enabled democratic politicians to rescue some elements of the recent past, all the while affirming the anti-Nazi consensus. To be sure, there was no systematic "politics of the past," no concerted effort to revive memory traces from 1914–18. Yet Vergangenheitspolitik created a political climate in which it was easier to "access" (to cite Singer and Conway) aspects of the past considered poisonous only a few years earlier. Take the case of the Langemarck

38 StdA Bonn, Ok 12, fol. 18, Niederschrift über die nichtöffentliche Sitzung des Gemeinderates Oberkassel, October 30, 1953.
39 StdA Sankt Augustin, ME 1416, fol. 50, Auszug aus der Niederschrift über die Sitzung der Gemeindevertretung der Gemeinde Menden, December 17, 1956.
Barracks in Göttingen. In the second half of the 1950s, the newly formed Bundeswehr sought to take possession of the land and buildings, now known as “the former Langemarck Barracks.” The legal situation was complicated, and an extensive correspondence unfolded between various ministries over several years. Seemingly, the name of the barracks was never an issue, yet uncertainty prevailed over the exact spelling. In several typewritten memoranda, civil servants have crossed out by hand the letter “c.”\textsuperscript{41} What at first glance might seem a trivial question of orthography carried strong political connotations—connotations of which the civil servant may or may not have been fully aware. In deconstructionist theory a word is used \textit{sous rature} (under erasure) if it appears suspicious, a strategy akin to placing it in inverted commas. “Langemarck”—as we will see in the next section—had become a dirty word in certain circles. Spelled with “ck,” “Langemarck” was a political myth, originating in First World War propaganda, further cultivated by the political right during the Weimar Republic, and finally elevated to official status in the Third Reich. “Langemark” without the “c,” by contrast, was a mere place name. This small intervention illustrates geographer David Lowenthal’s observation that “neutralizing its relics tames the past.”\textsuperscript{42}

Gradually, Langemarck was being replaced by Langemark during the 1950s—a process that was never straightforward and often fraught with contradictions.\textsuperscript{43} Inexplicably, in the first postwar edition of Erich Maria Remarque’s bestselling war novel, \textit{All Quiet on the Western Front}, a “c” crept in; the “Langemark” of the original 1928 edition became “Langemarck” in 1950. In all likelihood, this was the typesetter’s fault, which the new publisher duly corrected in 1968 (when, for the first time, the title page also made clear that this was a \textit{Roman} or “novel”).\textsuperscript{44} In the intervening years “Langemarck” had officially been consigned to history. The Langemarck war cemetery—the principal site of memory on the former Western Front during the interwar period—was renamed “Langemark soldiers’ cemetery.” A minute variation in the name’s ending signified a massive change in meaning. Ostensibly, this alteration reflected merely the new, official spelling of the town’s name. More crucially, it signaled the cultural demobilization of the Langemarck myth. On the one hand, the myth was tainted by association


\textsuperscript{42} David Lowenthal, \textit{The Past Is a Foreign Country—Revisited} (Cambridge, 2015), 140.


with Nazism and genocidal war; on the other, the whole notion of heroic “self-sacrifice”—applied to an entire generation—had become anathema in the second postwar era.45 “From monuments to traces”—this is how Rudy Koshar sums up the transformation of German commemorative culture.46 Traces remained visible at Langemark. Consider the cemetery’s motto, “Germany must live, even if we must die,” which survived the postwar redesigning of the cemetery. A line borrowed from a 1914 poem by Heinrich Lersch, it had been used by Nazi propaganda as a rallying cry during the battle of Stalingrad. At the new Langemark cemetery, the inscription was subtly amended rather than erased, adding “Heinrich Lersch, 1914.” This was a cunningly pragmatic solution—a taming of the wartime rhetoric hinging on what the poet Robert Graves called “big words”—that alluded to the historical context and suggested an implicit distancing from the sentiment.47

The specter of erasure and oblivion had hung over the Langemarck war cemetery (consecrated in 1932) from the outset. During the Weimar Republic, student organizations and the conservative press had claimed that the dead of Langemarck had been callously abandoned by the German authorities. “The ‘officially’ forgotten [‘von Amts wegen’ vergessenenen] students’ cemeteries” had become an indictment of Weimar’s political system.48 A 1929 flyer distributed by the Langemarck-Spende (a subsidiary of the German Students’ Association tasked with collecting funds for the construction of a war cemetery in Flanders) juxtaposed British and German war cemeteries. Two photos show the splendor of the Menin Gate and orderly rows of white headstones; four others capture the dilapidated appearance of German war graves. The images are captioned “Thus the enemy pays honor” and “Thus do we forget.”49 After the Second World War, however, the language of forgetting was put to a completely new use, now to justify a massive program of liquidation of war cemeteries in Flanders. Between 1955 and 1957 over 134,000 soldiers were exhumed from 270 different sites to be reinterred in four concentration cemeteries at Langemark, Hooglede-Ost, Menen-Wald, and Vladslo-Praetbosch. The mortal remains of all unidentified soldiers, some 25,000 men, were transferred to a mass grave at Langemarck. All other cemeteries

46 Koshar, *Monuments to Traces*.
were dissolved.\(^\text{50}\) This drastic, cost-saving measure—disturbing the Totenruhe and breaking the interwar promise of eternal commemoration—represented, in the bureaucrats’ language of the 1950s, the “final solution” of the war-graves question.\(^\text{51}\) The “ghosts of war,” which Monica Black suggests shamed and plagued the living after 1945, clearly did not bother the functionaries of the Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge (German war graves association)—at least not the “ghosts” of the First World War.\(^\text{52}\) Finances were tight, and the construction of cemeteries for the dead soldiers of the Second World War had absolute priority. Lommel, the largest German war cemetery in Western Europe, opened in 1959. Thus a distinct topography of memory emerged in eastern Belgium simultaneously with the dissolution of war cemeteries in West Flanders.\(^\text{53}\)

The disinterment and reburial of the war dead in concentration cemeteries was a highly rational decision. The Volksbund, acting on behalf of the Auswärtiges Amt (Foreign Ministry) in Bonn, surmised that it would not cause much emotional pain, given the supposedly “waning interest” of families.\(^\text{54}\) Who would make a fuss about the forgotten dead of a forgotten war? Dan Todman argues that the perceived need to respect the feelings of the bereaved continued to have a restraining influence on British commemorative practices well into the 1960s.\(^\text{55}\) This was plainly not the case in West Germany. The Volksbund proceeded with the destruction of personal grave markers without consultation of the bereaved. The number of formal complaints received was, in fact, small—insignificant, from the Volksbund’s point of view. It is difficult to say whether this lack of reaction was because the relatives did not care or because they did not feel empowered to protest or because they simply did not know until after the work had been completed and reported in the press.\(^\text{56}\) One man who did take up his pen expressed his shock at learning that his brother had been exhumed.


\(^\text{53}\) On the microgeographies of remembrance, see Connelly and Goebel, *Ypres*.

\(^\text{54}\) PA AA, B 92/52, Generalsekretär Markgraf to Auswärtiges Amt, June 22, 1955.

\(^\text{55}\) Todman, *Great War*, 58–59, 141–44.

and reburied in a new location, without his knowledge or consent. Why had he not been informed? What had happened to the gravestone and the zinc coffin that were, after all, his property? And why was it necessary to concentrate the German war cemeteries, while the British continued to maintain all of theirs?57 Engaging in an extensive correspondence with both the Volksbund and the Auswärtiges Amt, this man asserted familial sovereignty over the process of commemoration.58

The tone of those who oversaw the dissolution of the cemeteries was often chillingly rational. Yet filed away in the archives are a number of touching letters full of anguish. Consider the case of Hans Kollwitz. He was “deeply distressed” by the organization’s plans to dissolve the cemetery at Esen-Roggeveld near Dixmude, he told the Volksbund.59 Kollwitz was writing as a son, of the sculptor Käthe Kollwitz, and a brother, of Peter Kollwitz. Peter, a war volunteer, had been killed aged eighteen in autumn 1914 and was buried at Esen-Roggeveld. For the cemetery in Esen-Roggeveld, Käthe Kollwitz had created her most personal and profound work of art, a sculpture of two mourning parents on their knees, placed overlooking her son’s grave in July 1932. The process of designing the monument to Peter had been an emotionally painful one, often revised and put on hold.60 The Volksbund gave reassurances to Hans Kollwitz that the Grieving Parents and the dead son would be reunited in their new location at Vladslo, about five kilometers to the north of Esen-Roggeveld.61 In truth, though, the new ensemble departs in a subtle but significant way from the original one. The gap between the sculptures of the father and the mother is much reduced, and the two figures are positioned at the rear rather than the entrance of the cemetery. All this mattered a great deal. War cemeteries are more than simply memorials to the dead, one architectural historian stresses; “they are the architectural embodiment of a personal relationship between soldier and

57 PA AA, B 92/52, Otto Kösler to Auswärtiges Amt, August 8, 1955.
architect.” With the relocation of the war graves, this relationship was irreversibly severed.

Reluctantly, Hans Kollwitz accepted the new arrangements. What sugared the pill for him was the promise that replicas of the two figures were to be placed prominently in a (Second World War) ruin in Cologne. The proposal amounted to a major endorsement for a female, socialist artist, whose legacy was called into question by the East German communists. Importantly, the Cologne scheme was supported by the president of the Federal Republic, a largely ceremonial office that its first incumbent, Theodor Heuss, turned into an important repository of national memory. Ten years after the end of the Second World War, West Germany still had no official “national” war memorial; the Grieving Parents were meant to fill this commemorative void. In the early years of the Federal Republic, as Michael Geyer remarks, “there was no public sphere of death as there had been in the Weimar Republic.” The replica sculptures were intended to reestablish such a public sphere by breathing new life into symbols of the First World War. Yet the Cologne figures—the father was carved by Joseph Beuys, then still an art student under Ewald Mataré—were not exact copies but enlarged versions. They were also made of a different material. What is more, the triad that had linked mother, father, and son symbolically and spatially—central to the cemetery memorial—was completely lost. The emotional power of the original ensemble had been deeply rooted in its geographic specificity. Yet, placed in the ruins of St. Alban’s, a church burnt out during the bombing of Cologne, the sculptures derive a new meaning from their new context. While images of Flanders lingered on, they were overwritten by memories of the Second World War and a new narrative of national suffering and universal sadness. At the unveiling of the memorial in May 1959, Heuss referred to the “murderous battles” of autumn 1914, but also to the sad loss of the artist’s model for the Grieving Parents in the “firestorm of Berlin.” He praised the figures as the embodiment of sorrow and grief—grief not only for the dead (that is, those of the last war) but also for the divided nation. The transmutation of Käthe Kollwitz’s design from a

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personal tribute to a collective symbol was acknowledged by the city’s mayor. The new memorial, he stressed in his speech, remembered “all dead. . . . The dead of Cologne, the dead of the nations of the world.”

Here was a monument relocated from war-torn Flanders to bombed-out Cologne, a monument from the Great War refashioned and reinterpreted in an effort to represent the Second World War. At first sight, the Grieving Parents sculpture seems to run counter to Jay Winter’s argument that the horrors of the Second World War “made it impossible for many survivors to return to the language of mourning which grew out of the 1914–18 war when they tried to express their sense of loss after 1945.” On closer inspection, though, one can discern that the postwar Grieving Parents did not hark back to the commemorative discourses of the interwar period. There was no attempt to revive older languages of classical, nationalist, or religious reference, no effort to search for “meaning” beyond death in the early years of the Federal Republic. The romanticism, patriotism, and medievalism that had once underpinned war commemorations had evaporated.

III. Debunking the Myth: Intellectual Discourses, 1950s–60s

President Heuss alluded to but did not expressly mention Langemarck in his speech at the unveiling of the Cologne memorial. This most learned of German politicians must have been aware that, in intellectual circles, “Langemarck” had deteriorated into a dirty word. “From Langemarck to Stalingrad” became a slogan of critical discourse post-1945. It was the theme of a much-reprinted 1957 issue of the cultural magazine Mosaik. In the introduction, the editor drew a line

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69 This point seems to have escaped scholars, with only the title of Ernst Keller, Nationalismus und Literatur: Langemarck, Weimar, Stalingrad (Bern, 1970), alluding to it. See Michael Kumpfmüller, Die Schlacht von Stalingrad: Metamorphosen eines deutschen Mythos (Munich, 1995); Christina Morina, Legacies of Stalingrad: Remembering the Eastern Front in Germany since 1945 (Cambridge, 2011); Jörg Echternkamp, “Die Schlacht als Metapher: Zum Stellenwert von ‘Stalingrad’ in Deutschland 1943–2013,” in Erinnerung an Diktatur und Krieg: Brennpunkte des kulturellen Gedächtnisses zwischen Russland und Deutschland seit 1945, ed. Andreas Wirsching, Jürgen Zarusky, Alexander Tschubarjan, and Viktor Ischtschenko (Berlin, 2015), 91–105.
of continuity between these two iconic events, extending it even to include Dresden and Auschwitz.\textsuperscript{70} The first use of the formula “From Langemarck to Stalingrad,” however, can be traced back to agitprop material issued by the Communist Party around 1946. For the East German communists, the names of the two battles symbolized the evils of Prussianism and nationalism—a notion later echoed in Hermann Kant’s novel \textit{Die Aula} (1965).\textsuperscript{71} “From Langemarck to Stalingrad” also implied a shift in the imagined geography of war: the Eastern Front was the new Western Front. In the Federal Republic it was above all the playwright (and Eastern Front veteran) Wolfgang Borchert who popularized the notion of Germany’s downfall from Langemarck to Stalingrad. He gave the idea of calamitous continuity a distinct generational slant by pointing the finger at the teachers. In “Das ist unser Manifest” (That is our manifesto, 1947), Borchert writes, “Between Langemarck and Stalingrad was just one maths lesson.”\textsuperscript{72} His feeling of a betrayal of trust by the older generation is even more pronounced in what became the signature play of the postwar period, \textit{The Man Outside (Draußen vor der Tür, 1947)}, about a soldier coming home from the Eastern Front:

They have betrayed us. Betrayed us terribly. When we were quite small they had a war. And as we got bigger they told us stories of the war. Enthusiastically. They were always enthusiastic. And nobody told us where we were going. Nobody told us you’re going to hell. Oh no, no one. They invented marching songs and [Langemarck] celebrations [\textit{Langemarckfeiern}]. And courtsmartial [\textit{sic}] and campaigns. And heroes’ songs and initiation ceremonies. They were so enthusiastic. And at last came the war. They packed us off to it. And they said to us—Make a job of it, boys!\textsuperscript{73}


\textsuperscript{72} Wolfgang Borchert, “Das ist unser Manifest,” in \textit{Das Gesamtwerk} (Reinbek, 1998), 313.

Langemarck as a symbol of trumped up “war enthusiasm,” and of betrayal and disillusionment, featured also in Carl Zuckmayer’s novella, “Engele von Loewen” (Little angel from Louvain, 1952), one of the few attempts at a literary representation of the First World War produced after 1945. A love story between a poor Belgian war orphan and a dashing young German officer set against the backdrop of the campaigns in Flanders, it lent itself to cinematic adaptation. Helmut Käutner’s film version, under the title Ein Mädchen aus Flandern (A girl from Flanders, 1955), starring Maximilian Schell and Nicole Berger with Gert Fröbe in a supporting role, found moderate success with critics and audiences. In terms of narrative structure and plot development, both the novella and the movie were extremely conventional Cinderella stories. What was novel, though, was a shift in representation away from the military front to the zone of occupation. More in the film than in the original story, the soldiers’ experience at Langemarck is a recurring theme poignantly juxtaposed with the gruesome atrocities, everyday injustices, and gross frivolities of the military occupation. Paradoxically, in debunking Langemarck—showing that it had been an unmitigated military disaster—Zuckmayer and Käutner unwittingly ended up reaffirming a core element of the myth, that is, the idea of a battle in which a whole generation received its baptism of fire.76

A veteran of the Great War, Zuckmayer knew about Langemarck only through hearsay; he himself had served during the Third Battle of Ypres in 1917. “I have also almost never spoken about the war, and especially not with people who were not in it. With the others, a phrase sufficed: ‘Somme, 1916.’ ‘Flanders, July 17.’ After that we preferred to fall silent,” he noted in his 1966 memoirs. Apparently, Zuckmayer did not consider his novella a proper war story. “I have not written a war book and have told no war stories. It seems to me impossible to communicate the experience, futile to attempt to reproduce the reality either in a transfigured, a heroic, or a critical way, or in the form of objective reportage.”77 What Zuckmayer did not seem to realize is that the very idea that the experience of war was “beyond words”—defying expression or description in language—was in fact the code in...
which many soldiers expressed themselves; and this is particularly true of accounts of the fighting in Flanders in 1917.

Somebody who was never at a loss for words in the face of mass-industrialized warfare was the writer and Flanders veteran Ernst Jünger. His so-called war diary, *In Stahlgewittern*, had popularized the notion of the war as a “storm of steel,” a metaphor that was suggestive of both the forces of nature and industrial modernity. Jünger had reworked his original “diary” several times during the interwar years, publishing five distinct versions between 1920 and 1935. In the course of the revisions, the “steeling” of the battle-hardened front-line fighter was accentuated, while references to “nerves” were rewritten or erased. In the aftermath of the Second World War Jünger subjected the text to another round of revisions; the sixth and penultimate version of *In Stahlgewittern* came out in 1961. If “revision and elision complement oblivion,” as Lowenthal stresses, then the postwar version of *In Stahlgewittern* is the perfect example.78 The words that had given the 1924 and 1934 editions their characteristic “steely” flavor gave way to a more humane, debrutalized description of battle.79 Even so, the central metaphor still had purchase after 1945. Ernst Jünger’s younger brother, Friedrich Georg, published his own memoirs, *Grüne Zweige* (Green branches, 1951), in which he depicted the battlefield near Passchendaele as “a gigantic steelworks and rolling mill.”80 True, the Jüngers’ star was on the wane in the postwar period, yet some veterans of the Great War continued to embrace the Jüngerian idiom as their own. For instance, one former soldier writing in a regimental magazine recalled “the storms of steel of the battles of Flanders.”81

### IV. FORGETTING LANGEMARCK, REVISITING IEPER: GENERATIONAL NARRATIVES, 1960s–70s

Ernst Jünger’s Flanders is a landscape thick with memory. Digging into the earth for shelter during the Third Battle of Ypres in 1917, he recalls finding

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guns, cartridges, and belts dating from the first battle of 1914, “proof that this wasn’t the first time this ground had drunk blood.” Interestingly, Jünger revised this passage in the 1961 edition, adding the sentence, “Our predecessors here had been the volunteers of Langemarck.”82 Jünger felt the need to expand, perhaps to be more explicit for the sake of a new generation of readers for whom the Great War was merely history. Apparently, however, it was not only younger readers who drew a blank; the new crop of writers, too, was unfamiliar with the events of 1914. “Langemarck is no longer a familiar term for the poet of today; the name has escaped him,” concluded a 1966 report in the files of the Volksbund about the place of Langemarck in the German collective memory.83

The report included a poll conducted among 118 Bundeswehr conscripts born between 1945 and 1946. Only eight respondents had even heard of the once-so-famous battle, while a further six could at least name the Langemarckplatz in their garrison. For the overwhelming majority of young men, the name “Langemarck” triggered no recollection. The memory of the First World War was “fading,” the report stated, and soon the battle of Stalingrad would suffer the same fate, that is, “to be forgotten.”84 Arguably, the very existence of the report testifies to the opposite: there were still many people in 1966 for whom Langemarck mattered. It is impossible to say how sound the methodology or how representative the sample was. If not representative, the survey was certainly indicative—indicative of a growing cultural anxiety about collective amnesia and a perceived gap in generational memory.85 Lamenting the “forgotten war” is best understood as a communicative trope rather than an accurate description. It was a cultural representation in its own right, and one to be conjured with. “Forgetting” had been part of the lexicon of the political right during the interwar period. After the Second World War the Volksbund had used the waning of memory to justify the dissolution of war cemeteries—an act of erasure—on a grand scale; ten years later, though, it invoked the specter of oblivion to strengthen its own mandate as a guardian of memory.


83 VDK, A. 100–899, Friedrich Gerischer, Langemarck in zeitgenössischer und heutiger Sicht, n.d. [1966], 24. The exact provenance of the report is unclear, but in all likelihood it was commissioned by the Volksbund.


The report identified war veterans as important custodians of the memory of the Great War—in particular, the Grünes Korps, a veterans’ association originally formed during the Weimar Republic with the explicit aim of fostering the cult of Langemarck. While the major national veterans’ organizations that had dominated commemorative affairs during the interwar years had disappeared for good, the Grünes Korps resumed its activities, offering organized trips to the former battlefields of the First World War from the late 1950s. The veterans’ journey to Flanders in June 1964, on the eve of the fiftieth anniversary of the outbreak of the First World War, marked a special occasion. Naturally, the group visited the redesigned German war cemeteries at Langemark, Menen, and Vladslo, but they also paid their respects at Tyne Cot (the largest cemetery maintained by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission) and laid wreaths at the Menin Gate as well as at French and Belgian war memorials. Moreover, at both Langemarck and Ieper, they attended official receptions hosted by the mayors. The souvenir brochure issued by the Grünes Korps interpreted the trip as a “symbol of the unity of Europe” and an affirmation of “the pursuit of peace.” There was even a cautious debunking of the Langemarck myth, arguing that soldiers had been “forced into heroism” and that their deaths had been “futile.” “Out of the national feeling at the time, a glorious manhood demanded an honorable death. Today’s man feels differently.”

German veterans of the Great War represented themselves as reconstructed pacifists and committed Europeans. However, remnants of the nationalist war myth survived in some pockets of the veterans’ milieu. The comrades of the Langemarck-Kameradschaft of Reserve Infantry Regiment 234 from Göttingen attended the same function in the town hall of Ieper in 1964. They subsequently composed a travelogue in which they, too, emphasized their desire for peace and international understanding. Yet these veterans were less prepared to ditch the myth, pronouncing the battle of Langemarck a tactical defeat turned into a strategic victory. To be sure, they dispensed with unrealistic embellishments such as soldiers marching into death singing “Deutschland über alles.” While their battlefield tours were duly reported in the local press, veterans never regained

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their former standing in society. Unlike British ex-servicemen, whose testimony finally found a public forum (just at the moment when they began to fade away in large numbers), their German counterparts remained fringe figures with little influence on the commemorative mainstream.

At Ieper, however, German veterans were invited into the inner circle. In the city’s Guldenboek one finds, practically next to the signatures of royalty, generals, politicians, and diplomats, the names of humble veterans (and their wives). The timing is significant. In the 1960s there emerged new audiences for alternative narratives that challenged the formerly dominant “patriotic memory” of war and occupation in Belgium. The shift toward greater openness about the legacy of the Second World War coincided with the historical milestone that was the fiftieth anniversary of the Great War. At Ieper, the city authorities sought to retrieve a “usable past” from the anniversary celebrations. Anxious to shed the city’s reputation as a cultural outpost of the British Empire—“the Holy Ground of British Arms”—the mayor and tourist office used the fiftieth anniversary to launch a new, international image for their city—and the presence of former enemies was vital to achieving this aim. What they envisaged was the Europeanization of the legacy of the Great War—a vision of a European people united in the commemoration of a common catastrophe. For all its idealism, this approach had political potential, because here the geography of memory did for once (in contrast to the Second World War) overlap with the fault lines of the postwar international order. Once a byword for death and

89 For newspaper coverage, see, for instance, “Fünf Tage Kriegsgräberfahrt durch Belgien und Frankreich 1965,” Benrather Tageblatt, July 13, 1965.
90 See Todman, Great War, chap. 6, on the British case. On German veterans (of the Second World War), see Echternkamp, Soldaten im Nachkrieg, chap. 3. On the interwar period, see Benjamin Ziemann, Contested Commemorations: Republican War Veterans and Weimar Political Culture (Cambridge, 2013).
91 In Flanders Fields Museum, Documentatiecentrum, Ieper (hereafter IFFM), Guldenboek Stad Ieper, 1939–67.
destruction, Ieper (as the city was now spelled) was to become a symbol of world peace and, more specifically, European integration. However, the question of Langemarck’s place in this embryonic European memory is a moot point. It is not clear whether the local leaders even grasped just how loaded a term “Langemarck” had become in Germany. Their eyes were firmly fixed on Britain, that is, the example of Coventry, the British city that had successfully reinvented itself as an international hub of commemoration-cum-peacebuilding in the aftermath of the German air raid of November 1940.96 Significantly, in November 1967, Benjamin Britten’s “War Requiem” was performed in the finally restored St. Martin’s Cathedral in Ieper.97 Originally composed for the consecration of the new Coventry Cathedral in 1962, the requiem was now employed to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the battle of Passchendaele. The 1967 performance of the “War Requiem” (which juxtaposes the liturgical text of the Latin requiem mass with the war poetry of Wilfred Owen) was deemed so poignant that it was decided to repeat it the following year, this time in Dortmund’s Westfalenhalle under the auspices of the heads of state of Belgium and West Germany. Reviewing the performance, German journalists were impressed by Owen’s purportedly “timeless” words, the emotional depth of Britten’s music, and the overall message of reconciliation of former enemies.98 Implicit was the notion that the First World War was understandable only through the experience of the Second, and, moreover, that political lessons had to be learned from the two conflicts.99

According to Tony Judt, the postwar was built on “forgetting as a way of life,” for “Silence over Europe’s recent past was the necessary condition for the construction of a European future.”100 Yet break the silence they did at Ieper, albeit in a roundabout way by commemorating together the First World War. While official receptions for veterans between 1964 and 1968 had involved a degree of mnemonic “amnesty,” that is, a polite silence over historical details in the interest of international reconciliation, in the 1970s there was a greater effort to

96 Stefan Goebel, “Commemorative Cosmopolis: Transnational Networks of Remembrance in Post-War Coventry,” in Cities into Battlefields: Metropolitan Scenarios, Experiences and Commemorations of Total War, ed. Stefan Goebel and Derek Keene (Farnham, 2011), 163–83.
Alfred Caenepeel, local historian, founder of the Herinneringsmuseum in Ieper (established 1972), and vice-chairman of the Last Post committee (in charge of the daily ceremony at the Menin Gate), was in the forefront of this development. In 1972 he brokered a spectacular reunion of former enemies. On Christmas Eve 1914 Paulus Renovanz and Auguste Gouiller had fired shots at each other near Gheluvelt, yet in August 1972 they came face-to-face “as friends.” Over the course of three days, the German and the Frenchman revisited the battlefields, laid wreaths, joined the Last Post ceremony, and attended a reception in their honor in the town hall, their every step accompanied by radio and television journalists. Renovanz had previously visited Ieper in 1964 and 1967, on the latter occasion bringing as a gift a copy of the 1927 history of Infantry Regiment 171, which he had co-authored. Fortunately, no one seemed to have read it in any detail. On the whole, the regimental history expressed a sentiment common among veterans before and after 1945: “Whoever did not fight at Ypres [in 1914 and 1915], has no clue as to what it was like back then.” Controversially, though, it applauded the use of chlorine gas during the Second Battle of Ypres in 1915 as a demonstration of German “attacking spirit.” So it was probably a good thing that the volume was gathering dust in the library by 1972.

The meeting during which foes became friends was a special occasion that was entered in the annals of the city. Outside the political limelight, there were clandestine reunions of less savory types of veterans. During the Second World War, Flemish volunteers had been assigned to the SS-Sturmbteilung “Langemarck,” which was later expanded into the SS-Grenadier-Division “Langemarck.” For nearly twenty years they laid low, but between the 1960s and 1980s they reemerged as a group coming into sporadic contact with the right-wing Hilfsgemeinschaft auf Gegenseitigkeit (HIAG), the lobbying group for former Waffen-SS personnel in the Federal Republic. Both the Flemish volunteers and their German comrades wanted to rehabilitate the Waffen-SS as a “normal” military unit distinct from other

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102 BArch-MA, MSg 2/2860, Paulus Renovanz to Herr Neikes, February 21, 1973; see also Dominiek Dendooven, Menin Gate and Last Post: Ypres as Holy Ground, 2nd ed. (Koksijde, 2003), 146. On international contacts between veterans during the interwar period, see Julia Eichenberg and John Paul Newman, eds., The Great War and Veterans’ Internationalism (Basingstoke, 2013).


104 Kaiser, Bucholz, and Renovanz, Das Infanterie-Regiment Nr. 171 im Weltkriege, 102.
SS formations, suggesting that it had been essentially a proto–Cold War bulwark against Bolshevism. Proud of their military record, one of their number even self-published a chronicle in 1977 about battles in which the Flemings had participated—in the name of “Langemarck” (with “ck”)—at the Eastern Front. Of course, strictly speaking, these veterans had nothing to do with the First World War, and yet their case shows how the legacy of that war had become inextricably intertwined with the reverberations of the Second World War. While in Britain the 1960s saw the shaping of a distinct cultural memory of the Great War, in Germany it proved impossible to divorce the two conflicts, as controversies of the 1980s would show.

V. Confronting the Nazi Past, Reframing the Great War: Local Initiatives, 1980s–2000s

Until the early 1970s, veterans of the Great War were vigorous enough to participate in commemorative activities. Their declining health and ultimately death meant that the living (or “communicative”) memory of the Great War became extinct within a decade. The 1980s, therefore, marked a crucial junction in the reshaping of the “cultural memory” of the Great War. During this decade, Britons, as Todman points out, began to rediscover familial links to the war, a process that was often triggered by the discovery of photographs, medals, and trench art in people’s attics. “For many families, it was indeed where ‘history’ had begun.” Similarly, Santanu Das observes that for Indians material culture could offer a gateway to the First World War experience of their grandfathers: “War memories in India are like the artefacts in the wardrobe—powerful but subterranean.” Yet in Germany the dislocations caused by the Second World War had obliterated many of the memory aids available to Britons and former colonial subjects. There is nothing to suggest that the First World War was popularly constructed in Germany as an event in family history; that Germans were able


\[\text{106 On communicative and cultural memory, see Assmann, Cultural Memory and Early Civilization, 34–41.}

\[\text{Todman, Great War, 214.}

\[\text{108 Santanu Das, India, Empire, and First World War Culture: Writings, Images, and Songs (Cambridge, 2018), 21.} \]
to reformulate emotional connections to the soldiers of 1914–18; that the former battlefields were perceived as sacred ground. Nevertheless, the demise of the generation of the witnesses heralded not an era of forgetting, but instead the most intense period of engagement with the First World War in post-1945 Germany. In particular, it was the toxic legacy of Langemarck that sparked much controversy during the 1980s. The “memory boom” is often seen as a phenomenon that emerged in the wake of the fall of the Berlin Wall, revealing an increasing preoccupation with the Second World War and the Holocaust in a “global age.” Yet, the 1980s witnessed its own memory boom that showed a greater concern with the First World War and unfolded primarily in a local (rather than an international) context. For politically and historically aware Germans, the First World War became a source of controversy, not of identity.

The new debates about Langemarck often centered on local places that for one reason or another had survived the commemorative purges of the late 1940s. Thus the controversies that erupted in the 1980s were in some ways delayed reactions to the unfinished business of denazification and demilitarization, and they often blended into the post–Cold War “memory boom.” Bremen offers a particularly illuminating example of a long-drawn-out dispute accompanied by intermittent periods of forgetting or silence. The name “Langemarckstraße” dated from 1937 and had been indirectly confirmed in 1950 when the lanes of the street were widened. An argument about the street name broke out in 1983, subsided for several years, was reignited in 1988, and seemed settled in 1992, only to remerge in 2004 and rumble on until its eventual resolution in 2012. Unlike other Langemarck streets in Germany, Bremen’s is not a quiet residential road but one of the main arteries into the city. Moreover, it is where the polytechnic is based—in fact, it had been the intention of the Nazis to impress the name of the great battle on student generations to come. In 1983 it was members of the AStA (the students’ union executive committee) who took matters into their own hands, removing the street signs and rebaptizing the street “Willy-Brandt-Straße.” Attention soon shifted from the street name to the First World War memorial located at the entrance to the polytechnic, which bore the inscription “To Our Heroes.” In the following year architectural students converted the war memorial into a temporary “peace columbarium.” Then in 1988, in a dramatic turn of events, unknown persons toppled the monument, making the provocative dedication invisible. The polytechnic’s initial response was to call in the police to investigate, but soon they realized that tolerating the memorial in its


vandalized state—exorcizing a corrupt memory—represented the ideal solution. The monument was left lying next to its plinth, thus blotting out the controversial inscription. This was remembering by means of (partial) forgetting (fig. 4).\footnote{Renate Meyer-Braun, “Denkmalsturz und Namensstreit—Von ‘Helden’ und ‘Lange-
marck,’” in Geschichte im öffentlichen Raum: Denkmäler in Bremen zwischen 1435 und 2001, ed. Wiltrud Ulrike Drechsel (Bremen, 2011), 64–83.}

Moreover, the toppled monument disrupted the traditional “geometry of remembrance, or the spatial logic of war memorials” by turning a vertical structure (suggestive of upright bravery) into a horizontal one.\footnote{On the idea of a “geometry of memory,” see Winter, War Beyond Words, 143–71, 144.}

Since 1992 the monument in its vandalized state has become a permanent fixture, complete with a bronze plaque outlining the (un)making of the monument. Yet the issue of the street name remained unresolved. In 2004, after a hiatus of over ten years, representatives of the Green Party in the local assembly put it back on the agenda, causing a fresh uproar. Local businesses were alarmed at the potential cost involved. In particular, the association of hotel and restaurant...
owners made representations to Bremen’s senate.113 Another eight years passed until a Geschichtspfad (historical pathway) was installed in 2011–12, with boards providing background information about the battle and the myth as well as the recent conflict over the street name and the war memorial.114 The Geschichtspfad along this major road is restricted to the area around the polytechnic, however, and the project website is now defunct. Moreover, tensions appear to persist, for the street signs near the polytechnic seem to be left in a permanent state of disrepair.

University students had been instrumental in shaping the nationalist myth of Langemarck in the 1920s and 1930s. In the 1980s it was again student activists who emerged as influential agents of remembrance. Their political outlook had changed radically, however, and their views on Langemarck were strongly influenced by the resurgent peace movement in the wake of the NATO Double-Track Decision. It was not only university students, but Zivildienstleistende (young men carrying out the alternative national service) too, who voiced their concern about traces of the Langemarck myth in 1980s West Germany. At Rheine in Westphalia, for instance, a group of Zivis embarked on a campaign that prompted a wider discussion in the town, notably among high school students, about the battle of Langemarck and its use in Nazi propaganda.115 Originally the intellectual property of the political right, the Langemarck myth became principally the concern of critical citizens. The founders of the Federal Republic had been wary of plebiscitary democracy, yet on the local level provisions for citizen participation were introduced in the 1970s. Making use of his democratic rights, one history teacher spearheaded a petition in 1986 to the district council of Münster-Mitte requesting that Langemarckstraße (fig. 1) and Tannenbergstraße be renamed after a democratic politician (Joseph Wirth) and a peace activist (Klara-Maria Faßbinder), respectively. The petition warned of the “glorification of militaristic traditions” at a time of heightened threat of nuclear war due to the stationing of Pershing missiles in Germany.116 While eighty-seven people signed the petition, only nine of them were local residents, the


land-registry office pointed out. Facing stiff opposition from the municipal administration, the district council sought a compromise: retaining the street names while adding a brief historical explanation. In the event, a supplementary sign was mounted only in Tannenbergstraße. One can only guess as to why Langemarckstraße was omitted. The surviving paperwork shows that it proved difficult to reconcile the need for extreme brevity on a street sign with the enormous complexity of the subject matter. The city archivist certainly struggled to sum up the quintessence of Langemarck—the battle and the myth—in under thirty words. It is worth noting that no one objected to the name “Flandernstraße.” Both Langemarckstraße and Flandernstraße had been created at the same time in November 1938, but nearly fifty years on, Flanders no longer functioned as a memory trigger.

Covering the story in its newsletter, the Münster branch of the German Communist Party (DKP) drew attention to another case, one that was making national newspaper headlines in 1986: the Dormagen affair. In December 1985 the town council of Dormagen (near Cologne), led by a coalition of Social Democrats, Christian Democrats, and the Center Party, carried a motion to baptize a local school “Langemarckschule.” Der Spiegel suggested this decision was made out of ignorance. The news magazine poked fun at allegedly dumb local politicians who got lost in the minutiae of spelling (“ck” or “k”) while completely unaware of the political ramifications of their decision. No doubt, the town councilors were taken by surprise by the political storm that broke loose and during which, reportedly, the federal president Richard von Weizsäcker, veteran socialist Herbert Wehner, Nazi hunter Simon Wiesenthal, and the Israeli embassy in Bonn all voiced their consternation. The intensity of the reaction reflected contemporary concerns over a politically mandated “normalization” of German history during Helmut Kohl’s chancellorship that had culminated in the Bitburg affair a few months earlier. However, a closer look at the Dormagen case and its history reveals a different set

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122 For a good summary, see Axel Schildt and Detlef Siegfried, Deutsche Kulturgeschichte: Die Bundesrepublik—1945 bis zur Gegenwart (Munich, 2009), 425–35.
of motivations that had nothing to do with Kohl’s controversial identity politics. Already between 1935 and 1968 the school had been called “Langemarckschule.” When lessons resumed after the war the school became a Catholic elementary school, yet kept its name. The school chronicle notes that the occupation authorities struck military history off the syllabus, which, ironically, made it impossible to discuss Langemarck in class.123 By 1965 teachers and parents agreed that the name was untenable, but the board of education refused to acquiesce, arguing that the very name represented a Mahnung (admonition)—the keyword of war commemoration in the Federal Republic.124 Following a reform of the school system, Langemarckschule lost its name in 1968, effectively becoming nameless. Its new official appellation, “Secondary School Dormagen-Center,” did not roll easily off the tongue, and colloquially the school continued to be called “Langemarckschule.”125 In 1985, the year that marked the school’s fiftieth anniversary, the school applied to the town council to grant it the name that everybody was using anyway. Embracing the language of Mahnung, the headmaster suggested that a negative identification with Langemarck should be at the very heart of the school community. The renaming, he argued, would be backed up by a program of “peace education” both theoretical and practical. Pupils would be confronted with the history of Langemarck and also be encouraged to tend the war graves situated in close proximity to the school.126 There was a question mark over the sustainability of such a scheme in the long term: would it be possible to instill a critical awareness of the name “Langemarck” in every single cohort, year after year? In any case, the kind of self-reflective memory work and critically engaged learning proposed here bore little resemblance to Kohl’s vision of a national past resurrected.

Bizarrely, nobody (except for one Green councilor) seemed to mind that the school was located in a street called “Langemarckstraße” (today written with a simple “k”).127 It was thus an irony that elsewhere the Dormagen affair triggered so much soul searching about street names. One such case was the town of Nordhorn in Lower Saxony, which saw a highly charged debate over its Langemarckplatz fueled by the frequent interventions of DKP councilors. The communists,

normally a marginal party in the political system of the Federal Republic, gained an unusually high profile through debates over Langemarck. The local Green Party, too, was in favor of renaming Langemarckplatz, and external support came from the left-of-center German-Dutch reconciliation initiative “Nooit Meer/Nie Wieder.” Both proponents and opponents of renaming the square employed the language of “oblivion,” though they drew diametrically opposed conclusions. Langemarck was considered a “forgotten” episode in German history, which meant that it could potentially be exploited again (thus the argument of the Greens) or that there was no need for further action (thus the argument of the town administration). The town’s institutional memory was prone to amnesia, too. In 1986, two years into the controversy, the administration raised the question whether the square known as “Langemarckplatz” did indeed bear that name. Certainly, Langemarckplatz was not signposted anywhere. A detailed report into the matter, based on files held in the town archive, concluded that, in all likelihood, the square had probably been omitted during the wave of renamings in April 1945.

The debate was shelved in 1988 but reopened in 1991 when it shifted from the naming of the square to the redevelopment of the war memorial. Impressed by her contribution to the recent international Skulptur-Projekte exhibition in Münster, Nordhorn’s deputy mayor approached the American conceptual artist Jenny Holzer. It was an unlikely match between a sleepy provincial town and an internationally renowned artist, yet the outcome was one of the most astounding commemorative spaces of the postwar. Nordhorn’s memorial to the fallen soldiers of the Great War had been unveiled originally in 1929, almost ten years before the surrounding space was named “Langemarckplatz.” The design showing a German youth divided opinion during the Third Reich, enthusing the Propaganda Ministry and scandalizing the SA. The sculpture was first removed and then destroyed in 1938, leaving an empty plinth. When the invitation to Holzer to redesign the space was made public in 1991, debates about Langemarck merged with polemics about contemporary art. The local newspaper suspected

131 StdA Nordhorn, C IV e 84a, Langemarckplatz, March 9, 1988.
that here a “cultural mafia” was at work wasting taxpayers’ money on art of allegedly dubious quality.¹³²

Holzer’s design is uncompromisingly postmodern. Combining horticultural, sculptural, and textual elements, Holzer converted Langemarckplatz into a Black Garden (fig. 5). This garden is decidedly not a green space; it features black and very dark red plants surrounded by benches inscribed with puzzling poems (in English and German) such as “The ocean washes the dead. / They are face up face down in foam. / Bodies roll from swells to open in the marsh.” Conceptually, Holzer’s installation is akin to the counter-monuments that were increasingly erected during the 1990s to commemorate the Holocaust. “The most important ‘space of memory’ for these artists,” as James E. Young aptly puts it, “has not been the space in the ground or above it but the space between the memorial and the viewer, between the viewer and his or her own memory.”¹³³ Memorials in this sense act as facilitators of reflection rather than as carriers of

¹³² Forke, Straukamp, and Grudin, Vom Langemarckplatz zum Schwarzen Garten, 31–47.
¹³³ James E. Young, At Memory’s Edge: After-Images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture (New Haven, CT, 2000), 118.
messages. But is the Black Garden—opened on May 8, 1995, the fiftieth anniversary of the Second World War—still a space for reflection about the First World War? Back in 1991 the Christian Democratic youth organization had warned that Holzer’s installation would consign the First World War to oblivion.\textsuperscript{134} Certainly, the Black Garden renders the space less concrete. The attentive visitor can find some information about Langemarck, but, fundamentally, the Black Garden invites people to reflect about conflict and violence in the twentieth century generally. Here the memory of the First World War has not been deleted, expunged, or obliterated, but reframed, overwritten, and recontextualized. If forgetting facilitates memory, as Marc Augé suggests, then the making of the Black Garden (and the unmaking of the old war memorial) illustrates how memory can also facilitate forgetting.

The outcome of the post-1990 “memory boom” was the creation of what is, perhaps, “the most historically self-aware democracy in the world.”\textsuperscript{135} In order to understand how German society got where it is today, one must revisit the earlier debates of the 1980s. It was during this period that the First World War, in particular, was openly and controversially discussed.\textsuperscript{136} It seems that a reworking of the history of the First World War was a precondition for the subsequent memory boom. Coming to terms with the past entailed confronting the multifaceted legacy of the Great War, including its use by the Nazis. Typically, these were grassroots debates triggered by local activists (such as university students, left-wing politicians, or schoolteachers), influenced by, yet removed from, the Geschichtspolitik (politics of history) at the national level.\textsuperscript{137} They reflected a renewed interest in locality and Heimat, history and heritage during the 1980s. The consequence was that a new, highly localized memory of the First World War, preoccupied with sites of memory at home, became divorced from the traditional topography of remembrance that had centered on the Western Front as both a physical and an imagined space.\textsuperscript{138} With the demise of the veterans’ generation, the Western Front ceased to be a lieu de mémoire inhabited by powerful recollections. German battlefield tourism petered out to a trickle—just as a new

\textsuperscript{137} On the connection between the two levels, see Ulrich Herbert, \textit{Geschichte Deutschlands im 20. Jahrhundert} (Munich, 2014), 1010–22.
\textsuperscript{138} On the interwar years, see Brandt, \textit{Vom Kriegsschauplatz um Gedächtnisraum}. 
generation of anglophone visitors were renewing their emotional connection to the former battlefields, returning in ever-increasing numbers in search of the graves of both blood relatives and “fictive kin.”139 With Germans severing their cultural ties to the landscape of the great battles of 1914–18, the embryonic internationalist impetus of veterans’ meetings of the 1960s and 1970s was largely lost, too. Now the First World War was encountered primarily through local memorials and street signs. This often led to searching questions about who erected them at what time for which purpose. Thus, while for Britons (and Australians and Canadians, too) “Ypres” signified a place in Flanders, a battlefield of the Great War, and one of the densest and most contested sites of memory on the Western Front, for many Germans “Langemarck” connoted more often than not a local street—and, for the historically aware, a political path into an abyss.

VI. Conclusion

The cultural history of commemorative codes, gestures, and representations, Jay Winter asserts, is “the study of fragments and images which never add up to a coherent whole.” Rather than striving for an illusory exhaustiveness and representativeness, the practitioner of memory studies ought to “grant the uncertainties and messiness of everyday life the pride of place they deserve.”140 The exploration of collective memory—its institutions, rituals, and material culture—is challenging enough, but pinning down oblivion is infinitely more difficult. This article has ventured into the largely uncharted terrain of applied “oblivion studies,” using the emerging theoretical literature as a suggestive guide. The ideal types developed by theoreticians—such as the seven variants of forgetting that both Assmann and Connerton have identified—are heuristically stimulating, yet ultimately too neat and limiting to grapple with the messiness of forgetting and its often ephemeral empirical evidence. The processes of forgetting Langemarck and, by extension, the Great War in (West) Germany after 1945 took many, often overlapping and sometimes conflicting forms, including erasing and ignoring (street names), neutralizing and overwriting (linguistic fragments), critiquing and debunking (historical narratives), dissolving and redesigning (military cemeteries), toppling and recontextualizing (war memorials). Forgetting, like remembering, is a fluid phenomenon, fading in and out, subject to shifts and changes over time. Oblivion was never set in stone; sometimes debates over Langemarck erupted unexpectedly after long periods of

silence. Forgetting is relative; it is not the same as total erasure. Hence some scholars prefer to put the term “forgetting” in quotation marks.141

Theoretical discussions are necessarily just that—discussions of theories and abstractions. The study of cultural oblivion in practice is complicated further by the fact that “forgetting” is not only a process or state of affairs, but also a cultural representation in its own right, one that needs to be historicized—a critical insight missing from the prevalent typologies of forgetting. In the postwar era “forgetting” was a mnemonic figure full of ambivalences. It was used to justify a massive act of obliteration (that is, the liquidation of the cemeteries of an allegedly “forgotten” war), on the one hand, and to legitimize the construction of and maintenance work on new sites of memory (such as the redeveloped and relandscaped war cemeteries), on the other. Similarly, both proponents and opponents of redesigned war memorials employed the language of oblivion in arguing their causes. Forgetting as a mnemonic figure clearly served an instrumental purpose, but there was a psychological side to it as well. Those who invoked the specter of oblivion appeared to harbor cultural anxieties about collective amnesia generally and about a gap in generational memory in particular. The past, they feared, would become—to cite David Lowenthal—“a foreign country.”142

Langemarck was, of course, situated in a foreign country. After 1918 streets in Germany had been named “Flandern” or “Langemarck” with the explicit intention of bringing the Flemish salient home. Yet after 1945 Flemish place names disappeared again from the maps of most, though not all, German towns. The spatiality of remembering—this is our first main conclusion—became fundamentally disrupted in the aftermath of the Second World War. The microgeographies of the Ypres salient such as Dixmude, Houthulst, Kemmel, Langemarck, and Ieper itself—discrete locations invested with special significance during the Great War and renewed in the interwar period—faded in the postwar era. To some degree, Nazi propaganda had paved the way toward deconcretizing the memory of the Great War by suggesting that “Langemarck” stood for “the sacrifices at all the fronts,” effectively turning Langemarck into a symbol that transcended both time and space. After the Second World War Langemarck became Langemark, and the famous “students’ cemetery” became a general war cemetery, the site of one of four new concentration cemeteries in West Flanders. The legendary “dead of Langemarck” were now joined by others with no prior association with the place. The Volksbund’s interventions in the commemorative landscape of West Flanders, though seemingly subtle, were in fact so drastic that the term “First World War cemeteries” is a misnomer. Langemark, Hoogelee, Menen, and Vladslo are essentially post–Second World War cemeteries containing graves and unidentified mortal remains of soldiers of the First World War.

141 Singer and Conway, “Should We Forget Forgetting?,” 280.
142 Lowenthal, The Past Is a Foreign Country.
In the course of abandoning entire cemeteries and reinterring bodies in new locations, the Grieving Parents—designed for a very specific location—were relocated, too. What is more, in placing replicas in an inner-city ruin (from the Second World War) the link to the Flemish landscape and the soil in which the son was buried was weakened even further. This all happened against the background of an intellectual debate about a German special path “from Langemarck to Stalingrad.” A slogan of critical discourse during the 1950s and 1960s, it stressed temporal continuities between Imperial Germany and the Third Reich. But, significantly, it also created spatial discontinuity by shifting the imagined geography of war eastward. Naturally, veterans of the First World War retained an emotional attachment to the topography of West Flanders. When they “returned” in the 1960s and 1970s, however, they followed a completely new itinerary, visiting places such as Tyne Cot cemetery, the Menin Gate memorial, or the Ieper town hall, places they previously had no deep connection to. This had much to do with the Flemish authorities’ aim to shed “the Holy Ground of British Arms” image and to reinvent Ieper as a site of international understanding. Yet, by the 1980s, battlefield tourism was a thing of the past. West Germans by and large had severed their cultural ties to the historic landscape of the Great War and the microgeographies of the Ypres battlefield. By the same token, a new, highly localized memory of Langemarck emerged that was focused on sites at home. For many Germans living in the 1980s and 1990s, “Langemarck” connoted not so much a distant place in Flanders as a nearby street. In sum, in the postwar period, Langemarck was not so much “forgotten” as it was overwritten, re-fashioned, and, above all, relocated. Historians use spatial terms like lieux de mémoire or “sites of memory” often in a metaphorical sense, without paying close attention to the geography of remembrance. It is here, however, that we see a fundamental shift in the memory of the First World War after 1945.

“Lively, picturesque Flanders”—this is how one German travel agent advertised, in the centenary year 2014, a four-day coach tour of a region that, in many British minds, is a byword of death and destruction.143 Today, those who pronounce the First World War a “forgotten” conflict in Germany often make an implicitly comparative statement. In Britain the war is still known as “the Great War,” and in France la Grande Guerre has a lingering and vivid presence, too. Contemporary British culture, in particular, seems marked by a near obsession with the blood, the mud, and the poetry of the trenches, and with the landscapes of the Great War. Battlefield tourism has been on the rise again since the 1970s (initially slowly, but exponentially since the 1990s), with many a Briton following a family-history trail.144 A large dose of hyperbole notwithstanding, Prime

Minister David Cameron expressed an important point when, in his 2012 speech outlining the government’s plans for the centenary of the First World War, he stated that the war “matters not just in our heads, but in our hearts; it has a very strong emotional connection.” The comparison with British commemorative culture shows that a weakening of emotional bonds was not the inevitable outcome of generational change; there is no necessary correlation between the presence of “witnesses” and the cultural memory of war.

It is doubtful whether many Germans still feel a deep emotional bond with the dead soldiers of the First World War. So, comparatively speaking, the Great War and its dead may have been “forgotten” in Germany. Of course, such a statement rests on the assumption that memory is an emotion and that the memory of war is “traumatic.” Yet—and this our second main finding—since the end of the Second World War Germans have tended to approach the Great War in a different register, one that is cerebral rather than emotional. The commemorative purges of streetscapes in the immediate postwar years followed a clear political rationality. The dissolution of the war cemeteries in Flanders in the 1950s also represented a clear-headed decision reflecting new administrative priorities, although it could still trigger impassioned reactions from some relatives of the dead. True, veterans who revisited the former battlefields during the 1960s and 1970s must have carried with them a kind of sentimental baggage. Many of them, however, were open to reason, becoming converts to the idea of international understanding in a new Europe. During the 1980s the mode and mood of war commemoration changed for good. Now the emphasis was placed on critically confronting the past, on the lessons to be learned from it. Emotions gave way to self-reflection, and mourning to scrutiny. The subsequent “memory boom” of the 1990s only strengthened this pattern. In short, Langemarck may matter in some people’s heads, but it touches few hearts; its legacy is perceived as problematic, not poignant.

To be sure, there are numerous instances where the First World War seems to have fallen by the wayside altogether. In total, there remain today thirty-three Langemarckstrassen/plätze/wege, four Flandernstraßen, one Ypernstraße,

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40 Connelly and Goebel


146 The concept of trauma has provided an important stimulus to memory studies in the 1990s and 2000s. See, for example, Nancy Wood, Vectors of Memory: Legacies of Trauma in Postwar Europe (Oxford, 1999).
and one Kemmelbergstraße, mostly concentrated in the far western regions of
Germany. There are also two streets named “Ypern” and one “Flandern” that were
created after 1945 with no commemorative purpose.147 Generally, they are not ac-
comppanied by any supplementary sign, so roads named after the battles in Flanders
simply blend into the fabric of the built infrastructure. Koblenz has a Langemarck-
platz (a stone throw from the Bundeswehr’s museum of military technology) that,
curiously, it is not even signposted. In Stuttgart the street signs in Ypernstraße are
rusty or overgrown with leaves (fig. 3). In Augsburg tourists can check into Hotel
“Langemarck” unperurbed by the name. And in Münster an allotment named
“Langemarck” recently celebrated its seventy-fifth anniversary—seemingly obliv-
ious to the resonance the name once had.148 Hotly disputed in some places, ignored
or overlooked in others, the legacy of the Great War today occupies a liminal state
between critical memory and cultural oblivion.

147 The remaining streets named after the battles of Ypres can be found in Schleswig-
Holstein (Langemarckstraße, Eckernförde); Bremen (Langemarckstraße, Bremen); North
Rhine-Westphalia (Flandernstraße and Langemarckstraße, Münster; Langemarckstraße,
Duisburg; Langemarckstraße, Essen; Langemarckstraße, Gelsenkirchen; Langemarckstraße
and Flandernstraße, Oberhausen; Langemarckstraße, Neuss; Langemarkstraße, Dormagen;
Langemarckweg, Bergisch Gladbach; Langemarckstraße, Bedburg; Langemarkpark, Düren;
Langemarckstraße, Troisdorf; Langemarckstraße, Sankt Augustin; Langemarkstraße, Bonn);
Rhineland-Palatinate (Langemarkstraße, Niederfischbach; Langemarckplatz, Koblenz; Lange-
marckplatz, Ludwigshafen; Langemarckstraße, Prüm); Hessen (Langemarckstraße, Bad
Wildungen; Langemarckstraße, Eschwege; Langemarckweg, Korbach); Baden-Württemberg
(Langemarckstraße, Eisingen; Flandemstraße, Kemmelbergstraße and Ypernstraße, Stuttgart;
Langemarckstraße, Freiburg; Langemarckstraße, Lahr; Langemarckstraße, Rastatt); and Ba-
varia (Langemarckstraße, Augsburg; Langemarckstraße, Gersthofen; Langemarckstraße,
Donauwörth; Langemarckplatz, Erlangen; Langemarckplatz, Rothenburg; Langemarckstraße,
Gräfelfing). Unrelated to the memory of the Great War are Flandernstraße, Essen; Ypern
straße, Bremen; and Ypernstraße, Siegen.