From Collaboration to Resistance: Politics, Experience, and Memory of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars in Southern Germany

Ute Planert

Travelers strolling through Stuttgart’s Old Town who pause before Württemberg’s royal residence can hardly fail to notice the Victory Column. Thirty meters high, it towers over the square and proclaims Crown Prince Wilhelm’s victories against the armies of Napoleon in 1814.1 Erected in 1841, the Victory Column marked the Silver Jubilee of Wilhelm’s reign, by that time a much-loved regent. Eight years earlier, at the twentieth anniversary of the Battle of Leipzig, the Bavarian king Ludwig I dedicated a memorial to the dead of the Russian Campaign. Evidently cast from the metal of French cannons, the massive obelisk dominates a crossroads in Munich—roads named after victorious battles fought during the Wars of Liberation. With their military campaigns engraved in stone, the two monarchies, Württemberg and Bavaria, demonstrated their zealous opposition to the French Emperor.

In fact, the opposite was the case. No one better allied themselves with Napoleon in the Confederation of the Rhine than the southern rulers in the former Holy Roman Empire. Unlike Prussia—spared the full brunt of war by its Sonderfrieden of 1795—the German-speaking south was exposed to a long series of wars beginning at the end of the eighteenth century. Located between the warring parties, France and Austria, it became a staging ground and corridor alike for armies of all stripes—from 1792 to 1797, then 1799 to 1801, again in 1805 and 1809, and finally from 1813 to 1815. The combination of ongoing warfare and the ambitions of the larger territorial states in the south, later called the Third Germany, eager to emancipate themselves from Austro-Prussian tutelage and dualism, led them to establish themselves as powers in their own right. Aligning militarily with France as early as 1805, the princes expanded their core territories as a reward for their collaboration. Baden, Württemberg, and Bavaria were compensated to a far greater extent than their losses on the left bank of the Rhine justified. In the wake of secularization and mediatization—the expropriation of the ecclesiastical states, imperial cities,

1On the plinth are reliefs of the Battles of Brienne, Sens, and Fére Champenoise.
and imperial counts and knights—Württemberg quadrupled its territories, and Baden grew sevenfold. It was in the interest of the south German princes to seal their alignment with France in the Confederation of the Rhine in summer 1806. Yet, these same allies deserted the French Emperor in 1813 when his defeat by the Quadruple Alliance seemed imminent. The Emperor’s former satellite states, however, forfeited none of their considerable territorial gains in the process of reversing their allegiance.

Efforts to integrate disparate new lands and a confessionally heterogeneous population followed territorial expansion in the enlarged south German states. The geopolitical transformation created an important impulse for political and administrative reforms. Historians have therefore tended to focus on integration policies and reform politics in the Confederation of the Rhine, concluding that the bureaucratic modernization of the Third Germany was equivalent to the Prussian reform movement after 1806. In fact, as in Prussian historiography, scholarly emphasis on the reform movement in the Confederation often overlooked the wars that preceded and followed administrative changes.

Academic interest in modernization policies did not extend to an examination of the living conditions of the inhabitants in the new Confederation states. Whereas scholars have studied the spread of nationalist ideas in Prussia and among the urban Bildungsbürgertum, only a few studies have explored the impact of the wars on the general population. This is all the more surprising as archives contain numerous administrative reports as well as diaries, chronicles, and eyewitness accounts that provide the basis for this paper. Such sources reveal that an endless series of wars shaped everyday life in southern Germany more than reform politics or the spread of national sentiment.

This article will argue, warfare itself, not the nationality of the soldiers, determined the living conditions in southern Germany. In light of the
ongoing burdens of coalition warfare, the alliance with Napoleon promised at least political stability. In Bavaria, under constant pressure from Austrian expansionist ambitions, the French Emperor was especially welcome. Yet initial enthusiasm for Napoleon soon gave way to growing discontent with imperial domination, financial exploitation, economic dislocation, and the introduction of conscription. German nationalist sentiments, shared primarily by an educated urban minority, however, played a marginal role in expressions of popular discontent. Religion, traditional loyalties, Habsburg patriotism, or just the wish for peace fostered anti-French sentiments in south Germany. In the decades after 1815 the sovereign states of the south subsumed the variety of war experiences, hardships and losses, and multiple memories in the dominant myth of a national “War of Liberation” to deny their French past and harness national memory to legitimize state particularism.

Experience of the Revolutionary Wars in the South

When the French Estates General declared themselves the National Assembly, none of the delegates could guess the influence of this decision on Europe’s future. A few years later European thrones struggled with constant war, and the most successful of the revolutionary generals tore asunder the long-standing Holy Roman Empire to master the European continent. In the wake of French conquest, the abolition of the monasteries and the end of the ecclesiastical states totally transformed traditional society, nowhere more so than in southern and southwestern Germany. Hundreds of principalities and Reichsständte, the autonomous cities within the Holy Roman Empire, were dissolved and incorporated into the new territorial states. The harsh hand of the new sovereign rulers and their ministers stitched modern state entities out of the patchwork quilt of the Old Empire. Judicial and administrative reforms enhanced and enforced the power of the state and laid the groundwork for a bourgeois society. New state administrations cut back traditional estate prerogatives as well as the influence of the church and the guilds. In the long run, state centralization, bureaucratic reforms, and the standardization of measurements, weights, and taxes encouraged commerce, yet contemporaries found it hard to keep abreast of all these changes. In Rothenburg ob der Tauber Sebastian Dehner wrote in the foreword to his handwritten chronicle of 1793:

The time in which we live is rich in deeds. The history of many a century is scarcely as full of unsuspected great events, such rapid swings in fortune, the momentous fate of whole nations, as has transpired in a few months’ time. The memory of mankind, not accustomed to comprehending such

unprecedented events in such quick succession tires almost under pressure of remarkable episodes: yet even those of great magnitude are rapidly thrust aside by those of even greater . . .

Dehner was not alone in reaching for his quill to record for posterity the cascade of transformative events. Estate stewards and managers of stately residences, clerics and apothecaries, craftsmen and ordinary soldiers, all recounted the memorable years in their reports, chronicles, and journals. Central to all their experiences, they concurred, was war. In all their writings, the experiences, consequences, and legacy of war preoccupied people as it had not for generations.

If the Prussian peace treaty of 1795 kept the French military from large territories of northern and central Germany for the better part of ten years, the southern states in the Holy Roman Empire collapsed into a war zone for almost two decades. Commencing in 1792 and during the campaigns of 1796/97 especially, south Germans encountered soldiers of revolutionary France, émigré units under the leadership of Prince Conde, contingents of the imperial estates, the Austrian military and their Russian allies and auxiliary troops from Hungary or the eastern fringes of Austria. South German inhabitants housed, fed, and supplied not just revolutionary and Napoleonic troops, but the many armies of French opponents.

The French Republic did not have the resources to supply the levée en masse, the massive armies it put into the field, so its soldiers lived off the land in western and southern Germany. Soldiers and officers were quartered in the houses of townspeople and farmers, or else they bivouacked in the vicinity of villages and towns, whose inhabitants had no choice but to provide food for the men and fodder for the horses, as well as articles of clothing, boots, and other items of daily life. Confiscations of daily necessities during the first years of French occupation were accompanied by incessant demands for coin, which the authorities would usually fob off onto the towns and villages. This was bitterly resented by many, for along the Rhine and in southwestern Germany generally there had been much sympathy for the revolutionaries. The conduct of the revolutionary soldiers therefore caused great disappointment and resentment. “Equality reached us all right,” recorded Ferdinand Mueller, publican of “The Bear,” a local watering hole, and later foreman of the village Welschingen, “since all became equally poor. Of freedom we saw nothing.”


South German experiences with French military forces, however, could take many forms. Furthermore, French military and civilian encounters fluctuated wildly based on the local circumstances and logistical realities. For locals, the attitudes and professionalism of the officers played a crucial role in the process of provisioning the revolutionary troops. The pastor and publicist Johann Gottfried Pahl assembled a mass of information regarding the plunder and pillage by French soldiers; but he also reported instances of military discipline enforced by officers. Whereas pro-Prussian propagandists like Ernst Moritz Arndt and Friedrich Ludwig Jahn spoke of the French in general terms as a national adversary, the Swabian cleric strove to be fair to the enemy in his representations of French military forces:

Many [officers] deplored the extravagances of their comrades from the bottom of the heart, bemoaned the evil consequences that arose thereby for the service and for the honor of the French name, and extended, often at risk to their person and with sacrifice, protection to those who had cause to fear pillage or maltreatment from others. Yet there were others—and their numbers were in the predominance—who did not trouble themselves much about the conduct of their comrades; rather, they rested content when their own momentary needs were satisfied, and did evil to no person.8

Although inhabitants of the countryside were terrified by the massive French armies living off their land, émigré units led by Prince Condé were equally burdensome. In fact, Condé’s army flaunted such excessive aristocratic arrogance and behaved so cruelly to the peoples his armies were meant to liberate that mayors of several towns pressured the Margrave of Baden to throw them out of the country. When Condé’s men, known to Germans as the “Condéer,” marched with 2,000 infantry and some 10,000 cavalry in the summer of 1796, they made “many a Swabian desire that the patriots [i.e., the French], whose avant-garde the Condéer had always been, would hurry to the rescue as soon as possible,” in order to free them from this plague.9 Thus, the original revolutionary oppressors emerged as liberators in comparison with the émigré forces.

Other armed opponents to the revolutionary and Napoleonic armies did not behave much better than the French. Soldiers of all kinds demanded food and accommodation. The Austrian military quickly ran out of money and did not pay civilians adequately for the goods. Austro-Hungarian soldiers, said to plunder as much as the French, caused townspeople to lock their houses and

9Cf. Joseph Philipp Brunnemair, Geschichte der Königlichen Bairischen Stadt und Herrschaft Mindelheim im Zusammenhange mit anderen wichtigen Weltbegebenheiten (Mindelheim: Bröänner, 1821), 450f.
call their children home. At times Hungarian hussars maltreated their “hosts” to the point where they died of their injuries. Austria’s Russian allies were feared for their hunger and cruelty as well. It became abundantly clear to south German farmers and townspeople that the Russian auxiliary corps could “steal as well as the enemy himself.” Inadequate logistics and the complete collapse of military supply lines meant that, by the early fall of 1799, individual theft gave way to full-scale plunder. In the Allgäu, no house or street was safe from this “people of robbers,” raged the Kempten merchant and magistrate Peter Gebhart, who wished the Russian soldiers who “devour and plunder whole countries” far from his doors.

If most diaries report instances of French plunder and requisitioning, they also recognize honest and decent French soldiers and officers. Moreover, contemporaries also feared the soldiers sent to liberate them, be they German, Austrian, French, Russian, or Hungarian. During the revolutionary wars, the question of loyalty cannot be reduced to the simple opposition of German versus French. Beginning in the 1790s, the inhabitants of southern Germany were put upon by troops of all kinds. They had to give succor to allies and enemies alike and, as chronicles and diaries reveal, they judged the soldiers they were forced to supply by their behavior rather than by their nationality. Hounded by military requisitions and demands from all sides, the costs of war were high and weighed heavily on the inhabitants of the war zones. Besides damage to fields and crop losses, people living near military corridors also had to cope with plagues and livestock diseases. The campaigns of 1796/97 and 1799/1800 were accompanied by epidemic cattle diseases that ruined many a farmer. Moreover, typhus spread from make-shift field hospitals all over towns and villages. In the region around Lake Constance, an area packed with troops of all kinds during the Revolutionary Wars, typhus was the most frequent cause of death for civilians. In the context of such heavy burdens associated with war and occupation, the alliance with Napoleon in 1806 appeared to offer south Germans a chance for political stability, and above all, a return to peace.

Contemporary Perceptions of Napoleon and his Conquests

Expressed in a language evoking the mythological exploits of Greek gods at a time when the cult of genius and reverence for antiquity was at its zenith,
reports on the heroic deeds of Napoleon Bonaparte gripped and fascinated a European-wide readership. Goethe was one of thousands who regarded Napoleon as a “demigod striding from victory to victory.” Ludwig von Liebenstein, who would later make a name for himself as a liberal parliamentarian in Baden’s Landtag, ranked Napoleon in 1810 along with Caesar and Alexander among the “heroes of all peoples and all times.” Not even Frederick the Great, in his assessment, could hold a candle to the Emperor: “Army after army sank into the dust before the might of his arms.” Military glory alone did not endear the Corsican upstart to opponents of the French Revolution. His success beyond the battlefield in transforming European society appealed to a range of political viewpoints. For conservatives, Napoleon ended the “crass excrescences” of the Revolution and put back together a world come apart at the seams. “Every private man,” Heinrich A. Reicbard recorded, “is grateful for what he wrought as Consul: implementation of law and order, protection of property, respect for the right of worship, recognition for a rational ordering of the estates, restoration of respect for one’s betters.” If secular opponents of the Revolution celebrated restored law and order under Bonaparte, the clergy viewed the restoration of the church as divine intervention. Support for Napoleon swelled among the ranks of the Catholic priesthood, especially following the Concordat with the Pope. For Magnus Rief, parish priest in the hamlet of Dürrenwaldstetten, Napoleon was the man “destiny had so palpably elected to the end of extirpating the dreadful revolution and of restoring the altar of the throne and the order of society.”

If conservatives appreciated Bonaparte for crushing the French Revolution, early liberals understood his administrative and legal directives as the embodiment of enlightened and liberal principles. Heinrich Zschokke, editor of the Miscellen für die Neueste Weltkunde, highlighted the French Emperor as the bulwark of bourgeois progress and reformer of European political life. He admired the achievements of the French Revolution and looked forward to such rational reforms making their way, via Napoleonic rule, to the other countries of Europe. Johann Cotta, the editor of Augsburg’s famous Allgemeine Zeitung, remained convinced until late 1808 that Napoleon’s domination of

16Cf. Generallandesarchiv Karlsruhe, Nachlass Liebenstein, No. 3, entries of 1810 (undated) and September 1, 1814.
17Cf. Heinrich A. Ottokar Reichard, Seine Selbstbiographie (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1877), 293.
Europe would result in liberal reforms. If Napoleon impressed the educated public regardless of their Weltanschauung, his glory and reputation resonated deeply within the broader public. At times enthusiasm for Napoleon verged on reverence for the divine. Wherever Bonaparte went, people filled the streets and squares to catch a glimpse of the ‘Man of Destiny.’ When he journeyed to Munich in late 1805, he arrived in triumph. In all of Bavaria’s towns en route throngs of enthusiastic locals greeted him and illuminated private homes in his honor, rang bells, and fired guns in salute. Bavarians had particular reasons to welcome and acclaim Bonaparte. He stood against the annexationist greed of their traditional enemy and powerful neighbor Austria. Thus, the victorious general was “universally the adored idol of the mob.”

Napoleonic paraphernalia generated a lively commerce among his admirers. Confederation newspapers published verse eulogies to the Emperor’s glory, and a roaring trade in Napoleonic copperplates complemented written tributes. Haberdashers sold ribbons bearing the French colors. Lithographs recorded historic moments from Bonaparte’s life. In fact, snuffboxes, pipes, and porcelain plates were decorated with portraits, battle scenes, or merely bore a single word: “Napoleon.” French textbooks along with copies of the Code Napoléon were in high demand. Parents even named their offspring after the Corsican. Troupes of acrobats vied for the honor of performing before the French Emperor and his Empress. Balladeers and strolling players recounted the events of the day; broadsheets of songs, printed by the thousand and sold by hawkers and street singers, spread the word of Bonaparte’s fame. A Napoleonic “song of peace,” replacing the words of a well-known melody, became popular with
some rhetorical flights of its own: “Exult in this peace/Sing in jubilant
tone/Praise to the Emperor/Napoleon” (“Freut Euch des Friedens/singet im
Jubelton/preiset den Emperor/Napoleon”).

Many south Germans initially regarded Napoleon as the Prince of Peace. The years of warfare on the side of the coalition during the 1790s and the first years of the nineteenth century brought devastation to farms and towns alike. Thus, south Germans enthusiastically welcomed the peace treaty of Lunéville in 1801 and attributed the end of war to the genius of the French consul.

Following a short period of peace, Austria invaded Bavaria in 1805. Prussia and Austria both initiated hostilities against Napoleon in 1806 and 1809, respectively. If the policy of conquest pursued by the French Emperor left the two powers with little choice but to react, most contemporaries did not grasp the complexity of high politics. The German monarchs appeared the aggressors in both cases to a people who desired peace. The restoration of stability and prosperity mattered most to south Germans after years of severe deprivation during the coalition wars, and the Confederation appeared to promise both.

Yet, hopes for better times were soon disappointed. After 1806, taxes nearly doubled as states struggled to meet the fiscal demands from the Empire. Moreover, the combination of the Continental System and French attitude toward trade—France first!—burdened the economy of its German allies. Some industries flourished—especially gun factories, breweries, and the cotton industry—but in general, local officials reported increasing impoverishment not only among the traditional poor, but also within the middle classes. Police reports to the king of Württemberg revealed evidence of economic depression, stagnating trade, a rising number of insolvencies, and an overall lack of liquid

assets. By 1809 even the financial authorities recognized their citizens’ “absolute inability to pay” for French provisions, economic monopolies, and taxes.31

Promises by the new Confederation sovereigns to provide Napoleon with soldiers generated great public discontent. No other issue inflicted such grief on the peoples of Napoleonic Europe as conscription. From just one tiny Swabian village, Jungingen, some 50 of its 500 inhabitants were sent to war to fight for the Empire between 1805 and 1813.32 In nearby Wurmlingen, a whole generation of young men lost their lives in Russia.33

As elsewhere the uneven implementation of conscription exposed divisions in society. During the ancien régime, only men of the lowest estates joined the military. Soldiering remained the fate of those with no other choices. In the Napoleonic era, this asymmetry in the armed services continued. Following the French example, Baden and Bavaria granted the well-off the option to purchase exemption from service. Sons of civil and royal servants, academics, teachers, parish priests, businessmen, large landowners, and the nobility were exempted in any case. In Württemberg, exemptions that accompanied high social status duly led to a general “aversion to the military profession, so great as to be prejudicial to the common good, constituting a burden to be borne only by the lowest classes of the people.”34 To meet the obliged quota of soldiers, King Friedrich of Württemberg proclaimed a new conscription law in 1809. The new settlement, unique in its radicalism within the Confederation states, exempted only the sons of the aristocracy from conscription; all other male subjects between the ages of 18 and 40 were called upon to fight for their monarch and the Emperor.35 These hitherto unknown measures to enforce imperial conscription broadly in society met resistance. Desertion became an ever-increasing problem. Those who were too poor to evade conscription left the country, rushed into marriage, or turned to self-mutilation. Prospective conscripts and their parents besieged physicians and pastors to solicit certificates testifying unfitness to serve. If wealthy families tried to bribe officials, the poor turned to self-mutilation. Such was the case for Württemberg conscript Johann Michael Bauer who was sentenced to sixteen years of hard labor after he cut off his right forefinger, ensuring his inability to handle a weapon.36

33See the votive tablets in the chapelle of Wurmlingen near Tübingen, Germany.
34Cf. August Ludwig Reyscher, Vollständige, historisch und kritisch bearbeitete Sammlung der württembergischen Gesetze (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1851), vol. XIX, 2, 1004ff.
35Cf. ibid.
36Cf. the examples in Staatsarchiv Ludwigsburg, D 1–797 and Bauer’s case in Baden und Württemberg im Zeitalter Napoleons, vol. 1, part 1, 391.
In some cases, opposition to state conscription went beyond individual attempts to avoid military service. Especially in the newly integrated territories in Baden, Württemberg, and Bavaria, the new sovereign’s first attempts to levy troops were met by riots and upheaval. Usually, the riots were supported by the rural population, who had not been liable for military service under their former rulers. The urban middle classes often were instrumental in putting down the riots. They looked to the lower classes to provide the new authorities with recruits in order to save their own sons from conscription.\(^\text{37}\) Thus, conscription generated hostility toward France as well as stirred up internal social tensions.

**Religion, Regionalism, (Reich) Patriotism, and Nationalism**

During the Franco-Austrian war in 1809, popular unrest exceeded earlier recruiting riots. Anti-French sentiments, however, did not represent a nationalist inspired uprising against French domination, as the Austrian government claimed and some later historians alleged. Although Austria tried to foster popular insurrection in the Rhinebund states based on the insurgency in Spain, the population did not respond. Only in Tyrol and some other former Austrian regions that had been incorporated into Bavaria or Württemberg did men take up arms in rebellion. Yet, Tyrolean leader Andreas Hofer’s enemy was not France, but Bavaria. The people of the Tyrol fought for religious freedom, restoration of their traditional rights, and reunification with Austria. Notions of modern nationalism were alien to them. In 1813, popular upheavals started before and after Bavaria changed sides. This makes all the more clear that Tyroleans’ priority was not to fight against French domination, but the wish to be freed from Bavarian rule.\(^\text{38}\) Likewise, rebels in Württemberg in 1809 demanded to stay with their former sovereign. In all cases, popular unrest was motivated by traditional and often dynastic loyalties. Thus, the uprisings of 1809, pointed toward the past of the Old Reich, not toward a future era of nation-states.\(^\text{39}\)

By the end of 1812, south Germans had wearied of the persistent economic downturn and unending conscription. Less than ten percent of the Württemberg and Bavarian troops survived Napoleon’s defeat in Russia. Even in isolated areas such as the Black Forest and the Swabian Alps, pamphlets brought the news that Moscow had been alight in flames. By the beginning of 1813, rumors were


\(^\text{39}\) Cf. Planert, ’Rette sich, wer kann.’
circulating in every corner of the Confederation states that the failed Russian campaign shattered the might of the Empire. By February 1812, Württemberg’s king recorded a growing “distaste for all things French.”40 Survivors of the Russian Campaign passed on graphic tales of desperate retreat, hunger, disease, frozen landscapes, and ferocious Cossack warriors. The impression these descriptions made on the next dismal levée of conscripts struck Friedrich as more than alarming.41

As news of the French defeat increased, fear and apprehension of French military power declined in the southern satellite states. By the early summer of 1813, Confederation authorities found it increasingly difficult to protect French troops en passage from the “wrath of the people.”42 Tsar Alexander’s proclamations to resist the French circulated in the inns and taverns, as did mocking rhymes and pamphlets emanating from Russian headquarters. Yet, popular unrest rarely got out of hand and became violent. Only once did Württemberg officialdom get wind of an anonymous letter in which a “scion of Armin” (i.e., the Germanic chief of antiquity who once decimated a Roman army) called for an uprising against “France’s tyranny” and against the “other crowned Hans Wursts” of the Confederation. Apart from Prussian and Russian war propaganda, this four-page pamphlet appears to be the only uncovered manifesto by a private person supporting the national cause. Yet, even in this document, Prussia drew harsh criticism from the anonymous author. He accused the Prussian king of betraying the Reich and the “German cause” with the peace treaty of 1795, a view shared by many inhabitants of the German south.43 Even as Prussia presented itself as the inspiration and leader of the Wars of Liberation, longer memories of Prussian self-interest lingered among southern Germans.

Resurgent enthusiasm for Austria, far more common than any vaguely formed notion of national unity, resounded in much of southwestern Germany. In the Catholic parts of Swabia and in the former Anterior Austrian territories (Vorderösterreich, divided among Bavaria, Baden, and Württemberg), eyes and ears turned eagerly to Vienna. There, Metternich first tried to mediate between the belligerents before gravitating toward the Allies.44 In several former Free Imperial towns as in former Anterior Austria anonymous posters in town halls again displayed the double eagle as the Habsburg

41 Cf. ibid; see also a report to Württemberg’s Minister of Police, von Taube, February 28, 1813, Staatsarchiv Ludwigsburg (StAL), D 52–1074.
42 Cf. report of the Augsburg local authorities, June 8, 1813, Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv München, MImn 15255.
43 Cf. Mayor Wildermuth from Pleidelsheim to Oberamt Marbach, March 7, 1813, Staatsarchiv Ludwigsburg, D 52–1180.
The anticipated downfall of the French Empire stirred up hopes of rejoining Austria or even of restoring the Old Reich. When Austrian troops marched into the former Anterior Austrian capital Freiburg, the citizenry gave them a triumphal reception. There was no end to the cries of “Long live Emperor Franz.” Following the dissolution of the Confederation, locals in former Anterior Austrian villages on the shores of Lake Constance returned to celebrating the Austrian Emperor’s birthday. Maria Agatha Zimmermann from Villingen, a catholic widow and Austrian patriot who had found incorporation into Baden hard to accept, understood the downfall of the French Emperor as an immediate return to Habsburg rule. Thus, the end of the Confederation meant one thing only: “[We have] become Imperial again,” she noted with great enthusiasm in November 1813 in her diary. Defying the obvious political reality that Baden continued to exist, she expressed her ongoing traditional allegiance to the Reich and the Habsburg Emperor.

During these turbulent times, the clergy and their sermons exercised a great influence on ordinary people. As Maria Agatha Zimmermann’s diary indicated, the church served as her primary source of information. Long before French soldiers crossed the Rhine, she had learned about the “horrible upheavals” of the “godless French,” their war against religion, and their killing of all French Catholics. As she rarely left her hometown but regularly attended church, it is likely that the clergy shaped her opinions. If Catholic clergymen judged the French Revolution as the source of evil, the demise of Napoleon’s power encouraged religious opposition to lingering imperial rule. The hope for political restoration and the revival of the traditional power of the church motivated and directed Catholic anti-French hostility during the wars against Napoleon.

In a similar way, religious sentiments shaped the conduct of many south German pietists. If segments of popular pietism temporarily sympathized with French revolutionaries and later Bonaparte, the majority of pietist pastors equated “Napoleon” with “Apollyon,” the ever-destroying angel from hell.

---

45 Cf. ibid., 439, entry of November 23, 1813; parochial chronicle of Wollmatingen 1755–1818, Generallandesarchiv Karlsruhe 65/11288 (7), 107.
46 Cf. Maria Agatha Zimmermann, Diary, Stadtaarchiv Villingen, BBB 10, entry of November 17, 1813.
mentioned in the biblical book of Revelation. Württemberg’s pietist priests welcomed the shift in alliances away from France more for religious than national reasons. Impressed by Tsar Alexander’s piety, they hoped the coalition with Russia would be the start of a new age of religion that would erase the blasphemy and decline in faith that corresponded with French rule. Even for Jonathan Friedrich Bahnaier, the only Württembergian pastor to publish a nationalist-oriented songbook in 1815, national revival was second to religious awakening.50

Outside Württemberg, the Protestant clergy expressed more sympathy for national ideas. A considerable part of Bavaria’s new northeastern territory, the margravate of Ansbach-Bayreuth, had belonged to Prussia prior to 1806. Dynastic loyalty toward Prussia remained strong. Former Prussian civil servants showed such pro-Prussian attitudes that the commissioner of the Bavarian government in Bayreuth feared they would lead an anti-Bavarian uprising.51 Thus, Prussian war propaganda found an eager reception in this region and developed as a channel to disseminate national ideas throughout the Protestant parts of Bavaria. Popular opinion regarded France as “loathsome indeed!!!!,” as the Nuremberg post office director Axtheim told the Bavarian minister of state Montgelas in March 1813. All it would take, he warned, was “just a spark, then there’d be the devil to pay.”52 Following Bavaria’s alliance with the Allies, the broadsheets of the Protestant northeast were the first to express national sentiments, and young pastors used sermons to propagate the new national image of war.53

The experience of incorporation into Bavaria, a state with very different cultural standards, religious habits, customs, and traditions, caused Bavaria’s new territories to forge close links and led to the construction of a new regional identity. In opposition to Catholic Bavaria, the Protestants of the northeast started to identify themselves as “Franken,” a term coined after an ancient German tribe. Clergy and parts of urban academia in Franconia demonstrated their support for Prussia and the national movement by celebrating the first anniversary of the battle of Leipzig more enthusiastically than other regions did.54

50 Cf. Jonathan Friedrich Bahnaier, Gesänge in Deutschlands großer ernster Zeit (Tübingen: Laupp, 1815).
Bavaria was the first Confederation state to join the Allies. In contrast to Württemberg and Baden, where defection to the Allies occurred later, Bavaria witnessed an emerging patriotic-national movement that was encouraged by the state and the court in the last months of 1813. Like the Prussian king Friedrich Wilhelm IV, Bavarian king Max I Josef issued a manifesto to the Bavarian people to account for a change in alliances in order to support “the independence of the German nation and the states . . . of which it consists.”

District commissioners appealed to the inhabitants to help to free the country from the “alien yoke.” Yet, by Prussian standards, the nationalist rhetoric associated with the Wars of Liberation in southern Germany was minimal and moderate. Hate tirades against France were the exception, not the norm. While the northeast showed sympathy for Prussia and the south for the Habsburgs, popular allusions to the “German nation” in Bavaria’s core regions were heavily intertwined with loyalty to the Wittelsbach dynasty. Primarily an urban phenomenon, Bavarian patriotic nationalism found supporters especially in urban academia and among the educated classes, some clerics, and merchants in the major trading and financial metropoles. For example, merchants in the trading capital Augsburg were especially fed up with Napoleonic rule as it ruined both local industries and the stock exchange. Following the war, wealthy businessmen thus erected a monument for the Bavarian general Wrede, celebrating him, not Prussia’s Blücher, as the liberator of the south.

Dyanstic loyalty in Bavaria also played a crucial role in enlisting volunteers to fight against Napoleon’s forces. Approximately 6,000 men volunteered for service to combat the French. Church, state, and dynastic loyalty to a popular king succeeded in getting young men into uniform. District commissariat directives obliged priests to encourage volunteering for the militias in their sermons as well as contributing money to the Bavarian military expenses. In the countryside, in contrast, where every working hand was sorely needed, such appeals to dynastic allegiance flew in the face of economic realities. Among the few young men left working the fields there was scarcely anyone prepared “to enlist as a volunteer for war service.” In the countryside, young foreigners were commonly paid to enlist. Thus, not all war volunteers were patriotic warriors, and

55Cit. Döberl, Bayern, 403.
56Cf. ibid.
59Cf. Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv München, MInn 15246, and Junkelmann, Napoleon, 326.
60Cf. Kirchenbuch Bernbach, Seraphin Schompp, Notata pro R.D. Successoribus, Archive of the Bishopric Augsburg (ABA), Pf 27/1.
61Cf. statistics of the parish Winzer, August 24, 1830, ABA, parish archive Winzer, without shelf mark.
nobody counted the numbers of those who shed their uniforms and returned home as soon as the Allied armies crossed over the Rhine into France.63 If most south Germans welcomed the end of the Confederation era, it was principally because they hoped the endless wars and associated burdens would finally come to an end. The country priest Emmeran Thoni, for example, expressed this sentiment in his sober account of the events of 1813: “Thus began a new campaign against France ... and, God willing, [it will be] the last.”64 In the domestic ledger of the Kühlsheim farmer and vintner Michael Schreck, the author’s opinions on dissolution of the alliance with Napoleon remained unrecorded. Instead, Schreck chronicled the key events that shaped his livelihood: good and bad harvests, climatic alternations, village gossip, and family news. In his depictions of everyday life, political events remain absent, only the conclusion of a peace treaty stands out in his relentless narrative on rural life. In regional dialect, Schreck confided that in 1814 “ist der fride worden mit den franzhosen mit dem Kaisser Von Oesterig and mit dem Kaiffer Von rußland der Krig hat getauert 23 Jar.”65 The question of war or peace meant most to simple folk.

Longing for peace and a return to stability, south Germans expressed mixed feelings toward the anti-Napoleonic Wars of 1813 to 1815. Clearly, the move to the Allies meant continued economic and military burdens. Even advocates of the new alliance bemoaned that taxes were higher than ever and that growing numbers of troops marched through their country. In 1815, for every four Badenese, there was one soldier to maintain. “Nobody was master of his own home,” complained the foreman of a small Baden village.66

Conscription soared to new heights in order to build up Allied armies, yet more men than ever tried to dodge it. Applications for exemption stacked up in the chancelleries.67 In Baden, recruits levied for service laid low or attempted “to defer for months their call-up assignment by shuttling back and forth” between different towns, as the director of the Main and Tauber district tersely reported in April 1814.68 Numerous complaints regarding low conscription rates originated from the newly incorporated parts of the country. In the small former Austrian town of Waldshut, some fifty-five percent of the army

63 Cf. Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München (BSB), CgM 6791, diary of Freiherrn von Ausin, 1814 and 1815.
64 Cf. [Emmeran Thoni], Tagebuchauszeichnungen eines Landpfarrers 1804–34 (Regensburg: Mittelbayrische Druckerei- und Verlagsgesellschaft, 1984), 36.
65 In 1814 “peace has come between the French and the Emperor of Austria and the Emperor of Russia [sic] the war lasted 23 years,” cf. the diary of Michael Schreck from Kühlsheim, Generallandesarchiv Karlsruhe, 65/11282, unpaginated.
68 Cf. report of April 30, 1814, Generallandesarchiv Karlsruhe, 236/2808.
deserted in 1814. As late as June 1815, the governor of the Baden province of Freiburg complained of widespread desertions. In Biberach, a former Imperial town, 700 men of Württemberg’s home guard (Landwehr) answered the call for duty “in a sorely troubled state and mouthing loud curses,” complaining bitterly of their separation from “wife and child.” Similar desertions and complaints from other territories support these anecdotal findings. For example, in Westphalia, Napoleon’s newly created “model state,” the number of desertions reached a peak in 1813 and did not decline until the war ended in 1815.

Thus, in regions lacking state integration and strong sentiments of dynastic loyalty, inhabitants appeared reluctant to take up arms for their new regent, even in a war against French domination. In the years immediately following the territorial reorganization, traditional and local ties clearly assumed more importance than state, dynastic, and especially national identity.

The complex relationship between war experiences and the development of new political identities in southern Germany was far from deterministic in fostering state, much less national, allegiance. As examples from the Tyrol indicated, effective opposition toward territorial-political reorganization and incorporation manifested itself only where loyalty toward the former ruling dynasty, confessional disparities, and burdensome fiscal, economic, or wartime demands met with a comparatively homogenous society with a strong sense of regional identity. Moreover, new sub-identities developed through the process of incorporation based on religious affiliation. When small religiously homogeneous territorial units were annexed to a core state of a different confession, such as in Württemberg or Bavaria, a special, denominational-oriented regionalism evolved. The emergence of a regional identity in Protestant “Franconia” (Franken) within the new Bavarian state or a regional Catholic “Upper Swabia” (Oberschwaben) in Württemberg both represented cultural constructions unknown in the former Holy Roman Empire. They could only develop in the context of territorial reorganization and incorporation central to Napoleon’s conquest of German central Europe.

States with a dynastic-confessional core that had already started to develop an individual state identity during the eighteenth century succeeded best in convincing their populations to support their state by joining the Allies during the anti-Napoleonic Wars. By 1800, the perception of a “Bavarian nation” had already evolved in the Bavarian Kingdom. In 1813, yet another sense of allegiance—federative nationalism—joined these layers of local, regional, and

69 Director of the district Dreisam to the Baden Secretary of the Interior, June 19, 1815, ibid.
state identity evident in south Germany. As in Prussia, a mixture of dynastic, Bavarian, and German national loyalties directed Bavarian political popular religious allegiance. Throughout the nineteenth century, Bavarian politics of memory consequently continued to tie German nationalism to Bavarian dynastic and state allegiance. Not all south German states followed this dual trajectory. In Württemberg, by contrast, state politics of identity, in spite of certain references to German cultural nationalism as a whole, continued to reinforce allegiance to the dynasty and the individual state.

The binary opposition “German” versus “French” became widely disseminated during the Wars of Liberation. Yet, this rhetoric originated neither during the years of Napoleonic warfare and occupation, nor in tandem with a growing German national consciousness. The aversion to “everything French” diagnosed by the King of Württemberg developed in response to many different sources. Opposition to French cultural dominance articulated by segments within the German “republic of letters” developed in the eighteenth century and shaped a distinctive German national culture in the process. Long before French troops crossed the Rhine River, educated and cultured society articulated the dichotomy of “German” versus “French” as distinguishing cultural markers.72

The French Revolution charged anti-French rhetoric in southern Germany with a new ominous dynamic related to the persecution of the Catholic Church. Deprived of its power in France, the church succeeded in disseminating the image of the godless French revolting against both against divine and secular order. Catholic and Protestant ministers alike condemned revolutionary events in their sermons throughout southern Germany. The influence of church announcements and sermons upon the rural population in particular cannot be overestimated, especially since it played the crucial source of information for most country folk. Moreover, the brutal conduct of invading French troops often seemed to confirm the image propagated by the clergy. By demonizing Napoleon and condemning “everything French” in 1813, the church could thus build upon its earlier anti-French propaganda dating from the years of the French Revolution and the initial French invasion into German territory.

Moreover, among the Catholic population in southwestern Germany, opposition toward the Napoleonic system—or at least the joy of its rapid demise—did not derive from national ideas, but from pro-Habsburg sentiments associated with reverence for the Holy Roman Empire. While Protestants were more inclined to look northward toward Prussia as a protective Protestant power, the emperor (Kaiser) and empire (Reich) remained central for Catholics and their frame of reference for the post-war era. In southern German states,

loyalty toward the House of Habsburg survived the dramatic transformations of the Napoleonic era after 1815. Orientation toward Austria continued to play an important role in south German political culture throughout the “Vormärz” and even beyond the Revolution of 1848/49.

In the wars against Napoleon, German nationalism as a source of political allegiance could not compete with the varied and dominant alternatives: local, regional, and confessional identities; dynastic patriotism; and Imperial sympathies. At least in the former states of the Confederation of the Rhine, the Wars of Liberation stimulated national feeling only among segments of educated society. Moreover, the desire to expel the French derived from long years of military and economic exploitation and should not be confused with a broad-based German nationalism.73

(Post) War Memories in the South

Despite the population’s exhaustion with war, state military authorities ensured that thousands of young men obeyed the call to arms, both to fight for Napoleon and against him. The number of conscripted soldiers and volunteers was unprecedented. For these soldiers, their participation in a series of extraordinary battles, campaigns, and conquests, as well as their awareness that they, unlike many of their comrades, slipped the noose of death, fostered among soldiers a sense of community bonded by fate and memory. Following the wars, former soldiers formed their own veteran associations during the mid-1820s. Apart from fostering companionship, these “still living comrades” made a point of commemorating the dead within a Christian context. In Bavaria and Württemberg, these young brotherhoods organized informally at the parish level. The dates chosen for their meetings signaled that the national context, like memorializing the Battle of Leipzig, played as yet no role. Rather, meetings were scheduled to correspond to religious feast days or to mark the end of the wars as in the peace treaty of Paris. Even elements of single state patriotism only appeared sporadically in their meetings and commemorations.74

Toward the end of the 1820s, parents and relatives of fallen soldiers erected the first monuments in honor of the wartime dead. These were simple wooden tablets, some one by two meters in size, with the name of the


dead—“in pious memory”—painted in oil. This form of commemoration was especially popular in Catholic former Anterior Austria. Some tablets referred to the Russian catastrophe only, but the majority included the dead of all wars—either fought with or against Napoleon. Commemorating the dead throughout the 1820s remained limited to family and one’s religious community. This intimate and exclusive atmosphere underwent an abrupt transformation once the former Confederation states intervened in the construction of public memory.

Twenty years after the war, the question of its commemoration and memorialization acquired a dynamic of its own. With the resurgence of nationalist discourse and rhetoric in the 1830s and 1840s, the former Confederation states had to confront the fact that in 1806 they allied themselves with the wrong side. Thus, the southern German monarchies sought to erase their pro-Napoleonic past, at least on the plane of symbolic imagery. By doing so, they hoped to rejoin a growing heroic legend in German history and use nationalism to bind their subjects to their individual states. Moreover, horrified by the Vormärz political dissent, south German monarchs attempted to harness the symbolic strength of wartime memories to foster state cohesion. The manipulation of historical memory, however, required that the multiple strands of meaning associated with the Napoleonic era be reduced to a single heroic story. In order to be useful, this history had both to honor traditional values and to relate to the exigencies of the day. Such a complex task necessitated developing a “national narrative” from a plurality of possible interpretations that looked to the present and future as much as to the past.

Bavaria took the lead in this politics of memory. Ever since the Battle of Polozk in 1812, when the Bavarian army suffered exceptionally heavy losses, surviving soldiers and the officer corps circulated various plans to erect a memorial to the fallen; yet none came to fruition. Instead, King Ludwig I decided to dedicate a memorial to the 30,000 Bavarian soldiers who marched off to Russia and never returned. Previously, memorials were erected only to honor members of the reigning dynasties. In the aftermath of the Napoleonic wars, a political cult of the dead emerged that legitimized monuments for common soldiers, too. As the Bavarian memorial demonstrates, post-war commemorative culture did not necessarily refer to the German nation alone, rather it featured the territorial state’s sacrifice and its populations’ losses.

Cf. Georgi, 1812, 81–89.
On October 18, 1833, the twentieth anniversary of the Battle of the Nations at Leipzig, an obelisk in Munich was finally unveiled. By choosing this date, King Ludwig I carefully positioned Bavarian deeds alongside the national movement’s rhetoric of the shared German national sacrifice, anti-French by its very nature. That the 30,000 commemorated Bavarian soldiers had fought in 1812 on the side of Napoleon was studiously ignored. Rather, the legend placed at the foot of the memorial gave clear pointers to a specific interpretation of the past. Inscribed on the north side of the monument, facing out toward the other German states, were the words, “They also died to liberate the fatherland,” and the side facing east bore the legend, “Completed on the eighteenth of October 1813.” Thus, the monument placed the Russian Campaign in historical continuity with the Wars of Liberation against Napoleon. The start of the latter wars shifted from 1813 to 1812. This interpretation presented the death of the Bavarian soldiers as a necessary prelude to the downfall of Napoleonic rule and to the resurrection of the German nation.

By interpreting the Russian disaster as via dolorosa trodden out of devotion to the Bavarian monarchy and for the greater good of the German nation, the Munich monument established new commemorative practices that would shape the future. As with other war memorials erected by king Ludwig I—the Walhalla at Kelheim and Munich’s Field Marshals Hall (Feldherrenhalle), whose foundation stone was likewise laid on the eighteenth of October, national commemoration was used to legitimize state particularism.79

With the memorial obelisk in place after 1833, Ludwig I could finally put the war veterans behind him. Petitions by veterans associations for medals or other signs of public recognition were peremptorily rejected. The government even withdrew permission to establish further wartime associations.80 To the Bavarian veterans, this attitude seemed difficult to comprehend as former soldiers of the Empéreur in Mainz in 1834 had erected a monument to Napoleon’s memory.81 From Mainz the veterans’ movement spread through Rhine-Hessia, passed the Bavarian Palatinate and continued into Baden and Württemberg. Through a plethora of festivals, associations, and newly erected memorials, former soldiers strove to secure social recognition, not to mention a growing volume of war memoirs, for which a keen literary market existed.


79Cf. Georgi, 1812, 77.
80Cf. ibid., 53.
The Napoleonic Wars therefore laid the groundwork for a novel literary genre—the war memoir—one that in later decades would enjoy booming popularity. Although popular war chronicles dated at least to the Thirty Years’ War, by the increasingly literate early nineteenth century the experiences of a whole generation of young men were deemed worthy of remembrance for the first time. The wars of the little man had gained a foothold, if not in the formal annals of the historians, then at least in the popular press. This phenomenon benefited from the increasing numbers of those who could read and write. Moreover, popular titles like Als Soldat mit Napoleon in Russland contributed to popular interest in the common Franco–German history.

In comparison with Prussian memoirs, wartime recollections from the “Third Germany” failed with few exceptions to beat the national drum. In fact, books and other writings appearing in regions formerly incorporated into France, such as the Bavarian Palatinate, openly revered Napoleon. To be sure, when a book of songs for veterans from Frankental, a Rhineland-Palatinate town just across from France, appeared in 1842, the editors included an ode to the Bavarian Landesvater. The rest of the songs, however, were dedicated by the fifty self-styled “Napoleon veterans” to the memory of that “mighty warrior” and “great all-vanquishing hero” Bonaparte. The temporary cession of the Palatinate to France seemed to the singers as accession to a “land of liberty,” and the years spent in the “mighty Frankish army” were extolled as a time when they had fought “for the fatherland,” meaning of course la patrie. Thus, the Frankenthal veterans evoked in endless heroic variants the man “for whom the world was too narrow” and awaited the moment when the object of their devotion would be admitted to the halls of Walhalla with the familiar war cry “Vive l’Empéreur.” The image of Napoleon entering Walhalla as a beloved war hero seemed a twisted irony in that Bavaria’s King Ludwig I erected a hall of victory bearing the same name dedicated to the greater glory of German warriors.

Veterans’ movements arose in the very late 1830s in neighboring Baden and Württemberg. In 1838, veterans from Baden presented a petition to the Grand Duke, calling on him to honor all war participants, without regard to rank and with a medal of recognition for their time in the field. The Grand Duke soon gave his approval to the request, excluding, however, participants in the coalition wars prior to 1805. Encouraged by the veterans’ successes in Baden, Württemberg’s veterans organized in a similar manner. In spring 1839, various meetings and festivals took place. The sermons and speeches
associated with these festivals revealed a decidedly multilayered understanding of Württemberg’s erratic past; interpretations of the state’s wartime record varied with the speaker and related to his politics and Weltanschauung. All veteran spokesmen expressed loyalty to the king, paid their respects to religion, and were at pains to integrate all former soldiers—whether they had fought with France or against it—in the festivities. Yet their presentations and speeches interpreting the meanings of the wars and the Confederation era differed greatly in relation to political opinions.

If the speeches of Dean Pressel of Tübingen were devoted exclusively to the sphere of religion, his colleague from Besigheim designated the campaigns against Napoleon, in which he had taken part in 1815 as a military chaplain, as a “holy war [fought] for the liberation of the universal [understood as “national”] fatherland.” At the same time, however, he recognized Napoleon as the “great warrior hero of our century.” His ambivalent presentation was outdone by Pahl, the liberal-minded headmaster of a grammar school in Tübingen. Although he evoked the Confederation era as a “time of misery and humiliation,” he also left no doubt of his admiration for Napoleon’s political and “military genius.” Pahl rated the French Revolution as the first rung on a new and higher ladder of development for mankind, and reminded his audience of the many accomplishments of the recent past: a simplified legal code, a constitution, and the abolition of tariff barriers. Napoleon’s rule and administrative directives thus appeared as the midwife to a progressive and liberal present.

Veteran meetings and speeches took a quite different turn in the Swabian Allgäu. The Wangen veterans referred to songs by Ernst Moritz Arndt and staged plays by Körner and Kotzebue, recalling the heroic German resistance to the French menace. The accounts of the festival featured nationalist rhetoric dripping with pathos and anti-French ressentiment.85 Despite these different interpretations of the recent past, Württemberg’s speechmakers universally portrayed King Wilhelm I as first soldier of his state and an authentic hero of the Wars of Liberation. Yet, the fact that during the years of the Confederation of the Rhine he fought on the side of Napoleon remained unacknowledged in the celebratory speeches.86

Unquestioned praise for the monarch, therefore, animated the court’s official memory politics in Württemberg. Confronted by a veritable veteran’s movement, King Wilhelm I dexterously climbed on board and supported their


celebrations. On January 1, 1840, a commemorative medal was struck in his name, marking services rendered “for King and Fatherland.” Wilhelm I’s strategy sought to channel emotions and sentiments related to the war and direct them toward the monarchy he represented in order to support the cause of state integration in Württemberg. The medal was available to officers, military officials, and enlisted men who had taken part in any campaign under Württemberg’s flag, whether for or against Napoleon. Yet applicants must have had certifications of good character and no history of criminal offenses. By honoring the veterans, the state also imposed upon them social norms of conduct and loyalty to the monarchy. State recognition, however, excluded women who had accompanied their men during the war, even those women honored at previous veterans’ reunions. In the official politics of war and memory, women were completely ignored.

The award ceremony itself enhanced the prestige of the monarch and the state. The date scheduled to honor veterans with their medals coincided with Wilhelm I’s birthday (September 27, 1840) rather than the anniversary of the Battle of Leipzig (October 18). Serendipitously, twenty-five years had passed since the wars’ end, thus twenty-five years of peace could be directly attributed to the person of Württemberg’s monarch. Wilhelm, therefore, appeared as the bearer of salvation, peace, and prosperity—as the man who had ended the long years of wartime hardships. Stuttgart, like Munich, co-opted to war commemoration to legitimize particularistic state rule and dynastic loyalty.

As official recognition of veterans took place during veterans’ reunions and meetings, senior state officials decided to establish veterans’ associations in those areas where they did not yet exist. These official veterans associations, in contrast to their grass-roots predecessors, were led by local dignitaries and were very different in nature from the former reunions of old fighting comrades. No longer socially open, the new associations insisted on rank and distinction. Only medal recipients of “irreproachable reputation” were admitted. Membership was incompatible with “indecent behavior,” “habitual drunkenness,” or “leading a disorderly life.”

Commemorating the dead, once central to the mission of the veteran groups, receded into the background. Instead, annual military parades on the king’s birthday emerged as a central activity of veteran associations. Marching columns of former soldiers attired in Württemberg’s colors carried Württemberg’s flag and state motto “Fearless and True” at the head of the procession.

---

89 Cf. Statutes of the Veterans’ Associations of the districts Ailingen, Berg, und Friedrichshafen (1844), Staatsarchiv Ludwigsburg, E 179 II–737.
90 Cf. Statutes of the Veterans’ Associations of the districts Leutkirch and Zeil (1844), ibid.
91 Cf. Statutes of the Veterans’ Associations of Neukirch, Schomburg, and Flunau (1845), ibid.
associations actively supported the cause of state particularism and contributed to the domestic integration of the relatively young state. As in Bavaria, the complex and eventful political history of the state’s Napoleonic past was neglected in order to instill popular loyalty to the monarch.

In each state, the instrumentalization of public memory sought to forge a link to a common German national history and shared German experiences, without encouraging a political nationalist movement seeking a unitary central state. In both Bavaria and Württemberg, the person of the ruler seemed to offer an ideal foil for any potential political nationalism. Both kings could claim a heroic legacy in line with the nationalist narrative. Wilhelm I, as Crown Prince, fought during the Wars of Liberation on the side of the Allies against France. King Ludwig I of Bavaria had in his youth, much to the chagrin of his father, openly disagreed with Bavaria’s pro-French politics. Each monarch represented therefore in his own person a rejection of French influence, an endorsement of the anti-Napoleonic alliance, and a common representation of heroic leadership. By replacing complex and unwieldy war memories onto his own person, each ruler could co-opt the veterans’ movement to shore up and stabilize single-state rule, expunge the memory of wartime suffering, and return the former Rhinebund states to the heroic narrative of German history.

The 1841 festival unveiling the Victory Column celebrated with great pomp the twenty-fifth anniversary of Wilhelm’s accession to the throne and provided the perfect context to bury Württemberg’s French past and finally lay it to rest. In a festive procession several miles long, participants of all classes, vocations, and regions, along with the military and war veterans, vied in homage to their king. The parade and its loyal partakers and audience appeared to integrate symbolically the heterogeneous components of a state that had expanded its territory through wars fought side by side with Napoleon. Yet in 1841, the veterans marching to celebrate the king’s jubilee displayed only flags and uniforms from 1814/15 and carried placards that listed the battles in which Wilhelm had the better of Napoleon. Through this symbolic act, the Württemberg monarchy wrote itself into the founding myth of the German Nation—central participants of the “Wars of Liberation” against the French Emperor. To assist the construction of public memories, consumers could purchase ten round images, all nicely colored and mounted in a cardboard box, illustrating Wilhelm surrounded by his soldiers as he took part in the campaigns against France. The fact that Württemberg had only become a kingdom by Napoleon’s grace remained unmentioned, as did the onerous and painful burdens that soon followed for the


93Cf. the collection in Hauptstaatsarchiv Stuttgart.
common man. Wilhelm, the message insisted, was the first soldier of his land and victor in the struggle to liberate Germany from Napoleon.

The Chamber of Estates (Stände­kammer) of Württemberg’s parliament also supported this interpretive spin. Its members collected money to erect a victory column. As mentioned at the outset of this essay, it still marks the square opposite the monarch’s residence in downtown Stuttgart. As with many other public memorials erected during these years, Württemberg’s Victory Column did not attempt to tell the whole story of the French wars. Rather, the images appear through the filter of an idealized past, images clearly constructed with an eye on the present. 94 Thus, the monument’s reliefs simply ignore the Confederation era and portray only battle scenes from the wars that finally expelled Napoleon from Germany. Such reduction of polyvalent experiences and mnemonic discourses to monarchial loyalty and the dominant national mode of interpretation was underwritten and legitimized by the recent branches of veterans’ associations founded by the ruling classes. A flag presented in 1842 to Münsingen veterans bore the trenchant legend, “In commemoration of Germany’s struggle for liberation.” 95 Against a backdrop of social tensions that characterized the turbulent 1840s, homogenized war commemoration served the king’s need for integration on one side, and mediated the growing power of the liberal-national movement on the other.

In Baden and Württemberg the establishment of constitutions in the years following the Congress of Vienna fostered a strong liberal movement that was deeply rooted in state particularism. 96 In Bavaria, authors such as Lorenz von Westenrieder successfully continued the eighteenth-century practice of supporting Bavarian “nationalism” and allegiance through popular calendars, plays, and history books. 97 Especially during the Vormärz, but even after the revolution of 1848/49, liberal nationalism did not necessarily aim toward national unity, but toward a federal state. This federal nationalism allowed


people to share in a cultural German nation while staying Württembergian or Bavarian patriots. Contemporaries distinguished between this twofold identity by describing it as a “wider” (German) and “nearer” (local) fatherland.98 Such sentiments could both hinder and support political German nationalism and preceded what scholars described as a “nation of provincials” in the later nineteenth century.99

By the early 1840s, national flashpoints on the Rhine and in Schleswig-Holstein, along with the accession of a new Prussian king who sparked hopes for a united German state, generated a new national discourse among the educated middle classes. For example, Johann Gustav Droysen, a professor at the University of Kiel in the German-speaking Duchy of Holstein under Danish rule, observed that “in the German peoples the deep feeling of ancient commonality in one Reich and one law” was now rekindled. To underpin this emergence historically in national awareness, this doyen of the so-called “Borussian school” of German historians delivered in the winter of 1842 a series of lectures on what he dubbed the “Wars of Liberation.” Here Droysen evoked those “three unforgettable years” from 1813 to 1815, when “for the first time in centuries the German people had fought and prevailed together, uplifted by a sense of their unity.”100

If the Kiel professor still spoke of an uprising that was “European” (though led by Prussia) against French hegemony, during the last third of the nineteenth century German historical works generally awarded the laurels for victory over Napoleon to Prussia alone.101 For Heinrich von Treitschke, probably the most zealous propagator of a “Prussian empire of the German nation,” German and Prussian history was one history. He and other so-called kleindeutsch historians saw Prussia’s resurgence as marking the beginning of German national history, and so a range of professors, publicists, and politicians further embellished the mythical picture of the “Wars of Liberation” and tied it closely to the emergence of the second Empire in 1871.102

In his 1879 German History of the Nineteenth Century, Treitschke expressly legitimized Prussia’s claim to leadership of the new German Reich as it

represented the source of salvation for the German nation. He argued that following the Treaty of Westphalia Germany declined under the Imperial and misguided influence of the Catholic Habsburgs. In Treitschke's account, a historic task fell to Prussia as “Germany’s natural ruler,” namely expanding the influence of the German nation and freeing it from the foreign yoke. Therefore, the Berlin historian characterized the collapse of the Hohenzollern state in 1806 and the emergence of the Confederation of the Rhine as a tragedy, the nadir of German history. According to this master narrative, the German nation again arose under Prussian leadership following the catharsis of the Wars of Liberation. The Rhinebund princes under this construction could only seem “betrayers of the fatherland,” who at Austria’s instigation retained “disgraceful booty achieved through service to the enemy.” Treitschke accused Austria not only of treason to the “German nation” but also of leading the southern German states astray as part of his strategy to expel the second great German power from the national narratives. In fact, he sought to deny the former Confederation states any role in the nation’s resurrection so that Prussia’s star shone more brightly. Yet for all his tendentious motives, some of Treitschke’s observations contained kernels of truth long submerged in the post-war interpretations of the wars. Enthusiasm for the wars against Napoleon reflected a strong northern-southern divide, and social and confessional differences. “Never as deeply as in Prussia,” he wrote, “could hatred of foreign rule have put down roots” in the south. It was “only in much later days,” Treitschke asserted, when “historical scholarship and an awakened drive for unity stimulated a belated enthusiasm for the Wars of Liberation in southern Germans.”

In response to the reproachful official histories of the emerging nation-state, schoolbooks on individual state histories altered their presentation of the past. In Bavaria, school histories adopted a defensive tone. Eager to underline Bavaria’s efforts to free the German nation from French tyranny, they exaggerated the importance of the Bavarian military during the Wars of Liberation and portrayed crown prince Ludwig I as an early pioneer of Germany’s national movement. In the schoolbooks, Bavaria’s French liaison was downplayed and reinterpreted in order to fit the dominant narrative.

By the late 1870s, however, Imperial nationalism began to absorb the polyvalent notions of German nationalism, evident in the proliferating numbers of Kaiser Wilhelm I and Bismarck monuments throughout the new Empire. In contrast
to the fifty-year anniversary of the Wars of Liberation in 1863, when Germans struggled over the right way to celebrate, the centenary anniversary in 1913 was held throughout the young Empire with great pomp. In southern Germany as well as in Prussia, enthusiastic patriots undertook pilgrimages to the Bismarck memorials and Kaiser Wilhelm towers. Throughout the Empire military music intoned Körner’s patriotic lyrics. From the mountain crests of the Swabian Alps, fires lit the night sky as a symbol of German national triumph, that of 1813 and 1871. In the speeches and presentations, publicists and teachers recalled the oppressive times of life “under the French yoke,” and in the little Swabian village Auingen, the assembled company ended the celebrations of 1913 by singing “Deutschland, Deutschland über alles.” As the local newspaper reported, the emotive words sounded like an oath of allegiance.

On the eve of the Great War, political orientation, not regional differences, determined popular expressions toward the commemorations of the German victory over Napoleon. For example, the Social Democrats refused to participate in the centenary festivities sponsored by the local branches of conservative parties and right-wing organizations like the Alldeutsche Verband, gymnastic associations, student fraternities, and veterans’ associations. If left-wing liberals in the Reichstag and Socialists criticized the celebration’s atmosphere of militarism and national ecstasy, the crowds applauded the inevitability of Germany’s past military successes. Government calls for a new military bill corresponded to the centenary events in a way that struck its critics as cynically exploitative of popular emotions. Gerhard Hauptmann and Max Reinhardt produced an anti-war play in Breslau’s theater, and more than 2000 participants gathered at the first Freideutsche Jugendtag for an alternative to the official centenary celebrations at the newly erected war memorial in Leipzig, the Völkerschlachtdenkmal. Opposing Imperial Germany’s nationalist chauvinism, such speakers referred to the war of 1813 as a universal movement for liberalism and underlined the importance of its lessons for peace. Nevertheless, such critical voices remained a small minority. Far more typical of the popular atmosphere in 1913 was evident in a lecture given by Admiral von Breusing to the members of Tübingen’s right-wing organizations in April 1913. The question, he


maintained, was not whether a new war was on the rise, but when the best time would be to launch an attack against Germany’s eternal enemy—the French.\footnote{Tu¨binger Chronik, April 25, 1913.}

Conclusion

Located between the key belligerent powers of the European continent—France and Austria—the German-speaking territories of the south suffered perpetual war between 1792 and 1805. Inhabitants consistently experienced hardships from military occupation, exploitation, and plunder by friend and foe alike. In the context of the burdens of coalition warfare, the Confederation of the Rhine appeared an opportunity to establish peace and stability. Yet in light of increasing taxes, the introduction of conscription, and economic decline, the initial popular support for Napoleon ultimately led to rejection of French domination. The desire among most south Germans to be liberated from exploitative French rule, however, should not be confused with a broad-based German nationalism. National enthusiasm remained restricted to urban academia, a few nobles deprived of their former rights, parts of the urban merchant class, and specific regions such as Bavaria’s new northeastern territories formerly aligned to Prussia. Wartime experiences demonstrated that class, religion, and region diluted the development of national sentiments. Napoleonic territorial reorganization had generated a range of political identities based on regional and confessional differences. If populations in the core territories of the expanded states expressed regional patriotism or dynastic loyalty, inhabitants in other newly incorporated regions looked to Vienna, hoping for the return to Habsburg rule.

Following the Napoleonic wars, grassroots veteran associations commemorated the past, reflecting its original complexity. Veterans in the German southwest celebrated Bonapartism, liberalism, dynastic and territorial loyalty, as well as German nationalism. Such polyvalent interpretations of the meaning and memories of war, however, underwent a fundamental transformation as the former Confederation states intervened in the construction of public memory. Initiated by their desire to support state integration after 1815 and in light of a growing liberal-national movement, the new monarchies of the south re-interpreted polyvalent war experiences and multiple responses to French domination along the lines of the Prussian-disseminated myth of a national “War of Liberation.” Denying their French past, they employed national commemoration to legitimize state particularism.

\textit{University of Tübingen}