

States that contributed to the collapse of the Soviet system runs the danger of becoming captive to the same dialectics of Enlightenment that had characterized the evolution of Soviet perspectives on America.

At the conference's conclusion, academic discussion gave way to political debate. In his paper "European Unity and Anti-Americanism: Are They Inseparable?" Robert McGeehan argued that, with the collapse of the USSR and the end of the Cold War, "Europe" can now experiment with ventures that would present the option of not only separating from but opposing the United States. The only political force strong enough to justify the economic sacrifices necessary to achieve a militarily operational Europe, he suggested, is anti-Americanism. Will European anti-Americanism, liberated from the closet of the Cold War, develop sufficiently to achieve the unity which has so far been frustrated by the necessity of Atlanticism? This threat to NATO is of great concern to the Bush Administration, even as George W. Bush's policies on defense, the environment, and human rights make easy targets for what is emerging as "the ugly European."

Both the style and viewpoint of McGeehan's paper were surprising and made the discussion of the subject difficult and unsatisfactory. The original goal of the workshop was to compare and discuss different cases of anti-Americanism, not to engage in political argument. For a historian, watching a scholarly argument about the past turn into a heated political debate about the present was an exceptional experience that reflected the differences between the academic cultures of history and political science. It became clear that we reached the border between academic analysis and political opinion and that this border is porous. Nevertheless, especially after September 11, it is necessary to distinguish between political interests and fundamental values. Academic analysis can, of course, address both, and the answers should not be limited. That is one of the strengths of open societies. The question about the importance of anti-Americanism in the twentieth century was not answered by this conference, but it was opened up. This made the event interesting.

*Patrice G. Poutrus*

## **A WORLD AT TOTAL WAR: GLOBAL CONFLICT AND THE POLITICS OF DESTRUCTION, 1937–1945**

Conference at the Hamburger Institut für Sozialforschung, Hamburg, August 29 to September 1, 2001. Co-sponsored by GHI Washington, GHI London, Hamburger Institut für Sozialforschung, and Max-Planck-

Institute for History, Göttingen. Conveners: Roger Chickering (Georgetown University), Stig Förster (University of Bern), Bernd Greiner (Hamburger Institut für Sozialforschung). Participants: John Barber (Cambridge), Birgit Beck (Bern), Stephen Broadberry (Warwick), Wilhelm Deist (Freiburg), Michael Fellman (Vancouver), Jürgen Förster (Freiburg), Christian Gerlach (Berlin), Myriam Gessler (Bern), John Gillingham (St. Louis), Mark Harrison (Warwick), Holger Herwig (Calgary), Gerhard Hirschfeld (Stuttgart), Rolf Hobson (Oslo), Sir Michael Howard (Oxford), Fritz Klein (Berlin), Robert Messer (Chicago), Hans Mommsen (Munich), Jörg Nagler (Jena), Hans-Heinrich Nolte (Hannover), Richard Overy (London), Jan Philipp Reemtsma (Hamburg), Daniel Marc Segesser (Bern), Dennis Showalter (Colorado Springs), Jill Stephenson (Edinburgh), Hew Strachan (Glasgow), Christoph Strupp (GHI), Robert Tombs (Cambridge), Martin Vogt (Darmstadt), Gerhard Weinberg (Chapel Hill), Louise Young (New York).

The fifth and final conference in the series on Total War was devoted to the Second World War. Several central problems dominated the discussions at this conference, as they have the previous four. The effort to reach a consensus about the definition of "total war" bore little more fruit this time, even though we confronted a conflict that many instinctively regard as a paradigmatic case. In his opening remarks, Roger Chickering again drew attention to the vexing problems of definition. He suggested that the term "total war" be used historically and limited to the era in which contemporaries themselves employed it, which began in the later phases of the First World War and culminated in 1945. Gerhard Weinberg emphasized the global dimensions of the second of the last century's great conflicts. Hew Strachan noted the radicalization of operations over the course of the war, which reflected, he argued, the salience of racism in the thinking of both sides. Myriam Gessler and Stig Förster then suggested that genocide represented an essential ingredient of total war, and that one might characterize the Second World War as the closest historical approximation of an ideal-type called total war, insofar as the Holocaust approximated "absolute genocide."

The second session explored further the question whether specific modes of combat and operations distinguished total war. Holger Herwig underscored the elements of central command control, limitless aims, and rhetorical extravagance in the German conduct of the Battle of the Atlantic. Jürgen Förster's paper on the German land war likewise found indices of "totality" in the unlimited and uncompromising objectives of the German forces, the lack of restraint with which they pursued these aims, the central control exercised by Hitler, and the degree to which German society mobilized for war. By contrast, in his broad analysis of the Ameri-

can war in two theaters, Dennis Showalter concluded that this country did not fight a total war, insofar as mobilization never reached the extremes that it did in other belligerent countries. Nonetheless, the American effort was not only geared from the outset to global dimensions, but was also conceived as a "mega-war," which, Showalter contended, "changed the world's paradigms" technologically and institutionally for the rest of the twentieth century.

The next session was in some respects the most intriguing, for it suggested specific parameters for measuring the "totality" of war. Mark Harrison and Stephen Broadberry argued that the economic dimension was in any case pivotal. Harrison examined the plight of the Soviet economy during the war and concluded that the mobilization of resources was the single most important factor in deciding the war in favor of the USSR. Broadberry's analysis of the British economy likewise argued that in total war "victory is dependent on the scale of resources that can be mobilized." During the ensuing discussion, the two economists argued further that a national commitment of more than forty percent of all resources to war might well be taken as the threshold of "totality"—a standard which all the belligerents save Italy met during the Second World War. John Gillingham's paper on the American mobilization noted the difficulties of cross-national comparison, but likewise emphasized the place of productive capacities in the war's outcome.

The mobilization of societies was the theme of the following session. Here Jill Stephenson offered a comparative analysis of the war's impact on women in Germany and Great Britain. Her conclusions suggested that even in the wholesale mobilization of women, basic sectorial divisions of class, confession, gender, and region survived in both countries. John Barber's survey of the involvement of Soviet women in the war made clear that in this, as well as other respects, the experience of the USSR represented an extreme case, if the measure of "totality" is the "intensity of destruction and suffering." This argument found support in Hans Mommsen's review of compulsory labor in German society, which emphasized the brutality under which laborers from the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe suffered particularly. Mommsen also stressed the paradox that modern total war should have witnessed a reversion to the atavistic institution of slave labor. Bernd Greiner's survey of American society at war highlighted the distinctions between the experience of war on the two sides of the Atlantic. The watchword in North America was "volunteerism," which mitigated sectorial tensions and turned mobilization into a "truly national effort."

To the extent that agreement has emerged on a conceptualization of total war, it has emphasized the blurring of boundaries between combatants and noncombatants. This theme accordingly occupied a prominent

place in our deliberations. Gerhard Hirschfeld's survey of German occupation policies in Europe made clear, however, that the burdens were more "total" in Eastern Europe than Western Europe. In the east, he argued, German policies seemed intent on the "total destruction of the occupied territories" and the remaking of social institutions. The paper by Heinz-Heinrich Nolte lent support to this conclusion, as well as to the proposition that the war reached a pinnacle of brutality in the Soviet Union. Nolte's analysis of partisan warfare in Byelorussia demonstrated how the German effort was directed indiscriminately not only against the indigenous populations of areas controlled by partisans, but also against the natural environment. The casualties of the German war included crops, trees, and the "scorched earth" itself. Two papers then took up the strategic air war. Richard Overy's survey of the war against German cities nodded to the economists, as it argued that strategic bombing was based on materialist premises—the proposition that material destruction was the key to undermining enemy morale. Robert Messer's analysis of the American decision to drop atomic bombs on Japanese targets raised the issue of proportionality, the "morality of killing some innocent people in order to save the lives of others." He also made it clear, though, that despite questions subsequently raised by historians, the American leaders who ordered the bombings were sufficiently committed to a doctrine of total war that they were not troubled by their decision.

Questions of morality, atrocity, and law were featured then in a session on "criminal war." Birgit Beck examined the problem of sexual violence and racism among German troops, noting that the proliferation of unreported cases makes conclusions difficult to document. She argued nonetheless that women became primary targets of sexual violence during this total war, particularly on the eastern front, where incidents were at once racially motivated, far more numerous, and more leniently prosecuted than in France. Christian Gerlach's examination of the German invasion of Hungary in March 1944 dwelt on the themes of underdevelopment and subversion. The German leadership persuaded itself that this was not only a backward land, but also a hothouse for Jewish left-wing agitation. These perceptions justified both the pitiless exploitation of the country's resources and the deportation of its Jewish population. In her paper, Louise Young explored the cultural contexts of Japanese atrocities against the Chinese in occupied Asia. She argued that atrocities began amid counterinsurgency in 1931, but that they rested on long-held Japanese cultural perceptions, which portrayed the Chinese as a primitive people who stood outside the purview of the law. Daniel Segesser's survey of the development of international law represented a fitting conclusion to this session. It underscored the impact of the Second World War in broadening the understanding of war crimes, as well as the Allies'

determination to establish legal and institutional foundations to punish them.

The final session of the conference was devoted to a roundtable discussion, which was led by Jean-Philipp Reemtsma, Michael Fellman, Sir Michael Howard, Wilhelm Deist, Robert Toombs, and Jörg Nagler. Their presentations and the ensuing discussion touched many of the issues that have guided our considerations of total war throughout the conference series. Several of these issues are worth special mention. Reemtsma emphasized the cultural dimension of the problem, the fact that total war rested on the systematic simplification of distinctions between “us” and “them”—to the point where these contrasts could be portrayed as absolute. Wilhelm Deist offered some cautionary advice about positing an “age of total war.” The elements of total war, he argued, have been multiple—their roots have been historically deep, and many of them remain with us (as a glance at events in Africa during the past decade confirms). Robert Tombs suggested that the conceptual disagreements about total war reflect two different approaches to the problem, which he characterized as “nominalist” and “realist” or, drawing on another historiographical debate, “intentionalist” and “functionalist.” If the one stressed the professed ambitions of historical actors to wage something akin to total war, the other emphasized the indices or ingredients that defined the phenomenon. Finally, Michael Howard raised some troubling thoughts about the conflict that most have agreed was the most total ever fought. The sheer complexity of the Second World War, Howard observed, undercuts the effort to characterize it as total. The war was a profoundly different phenomenon in Washington and Leningrad, Hamburg and rural Bavaria. “Total war,” Howard concluded, “is not all of a piece.”

*Roger Chickering*

## JUDGING THE PAST IN UNIFIED GERMANY

Symposium at the GHI, October 3, 2001. Conveners: Robert Gerald Livingston (GHI) and Bernd Schäfer (GHI). Participants: A. James McAdams (University of Notre Dame) and Ann Phillips (United States Agency for International Development).

In his presentation, James Mc Adams argued that, compared to the enormity of the crimes committed by the Third Reich, the wrongdoings of the East German communist government during its forty-year rule pale into