

Nerves and War. Psychological Experiences of Mobilization and Suffering in Germany, 1900-1933

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organized by Gundula Gahlen, Björn Hofmeister, Christoph Nübel and Deniza Petrova

'Nerves' enjoyed a central place in German debates about war at the beginning of the 20th Century. Politicians, scientists, the public, and the military discussed the extent to which a future war would strain the nerves of German society. Concepts of 'strength of nerves' as well as of 'weakness of nerves' were increasingly used as combat terms during the First World War. The massive scale of experiences of psychological injuries and suffering only added to this phenomenon. The social and political administration of the medical treatment of psychological war disabilities presided over post-war discourses of managing the consequences of war. Simultaneously, a new spiritual mobilization for war followed in the Weimar Republic, which, after 1933, 'synchronized' almost all aspects of social life in the Third Reich.

Current scholarship has devoted substantial historical research to the treatment and accommodation of psychological war-disabled veterans. This conference focuses on contemporary discourses on nerves in politics, society, science, and the military and aspires to elaborate the interaction as well as their practical consequences of these discourses for the period of 1900 and 1933. At this conference nerves are understood as a code and a construct that are central in negotiating identity. Both, contemporary discourses on nerves as well as individual and collective experiences of psychological mobilization and suffering will be presented and analyzed. The focus of the conference papers is on Germany, but in a wider European context.

Venue: Freie Universität Berlin, Fabeckstraße 23-25, 14195 Berlin, Room: 2.2059

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For further information please visit the conference website: www.nervenundkrieg.de