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Introduction

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**Introduction:
Europe and the World from the Congress of Vienna to 1945
German-French history textbook**

The second volume of the Franco-German History Textbook for the period 1815-1945 is now available, two years after the publication of the first volume on the post-1945 era. In the meantime, 80,000 copies of the latter have been sold on both sides of the Rhine; equally, the project's originality and high quality are reflected by its widespread reception in the public sphere. The history textbook is currently even being translated in Japan and Korea![1] Transfer opportunities are accumulating. One might ask to what extent the Franco-German project can be used to the benefit of the processes of understanding and peacemaking in the aftermath of conflicts.[2] In the last few years, other projects have evolved in the Balkans, the Middle East and East Asia.[3] It is not so much a matter of 'joint educational works', which would imply an adaptation of curricula on the part of both or several states; rather, these are 'joint materials for teaching and learning', intended to contribute towards overcoming national or nationalistic approaches to history tuition. These materials mostly derive from social or university-based initiatives which act alongside – or sometimes against – governments, which is how they differ from the Franco-German History Textbook.

Teamwork between historians from countries or regions in post-conflict situations adds a certain dynamic to the process of mutual understanding. The Balkan project, begun in 1997 before the Franco-German History Textbook, intends to contribute to reconciliation in South-Eastern Europe. Such projects correspond to different phases of dialogue between various peoples. In the case of Israel and Palestine, it is still a matter of juxtaposing two national narratives on opposite sides of a double page. However, the mere presentation of the 'other' perspective is in itself a first step along the road to recognising and accepting difference.

In the last few months, a new project between Germany and Poland has set itself the goal of developing a history textbook in accordance with both countries' curricula. Following the publication of joint educational materials in 2007 on the topic of German-Polish relations from 1933 to 1949 for pupils in Saxony and Lower Silesia,[4] the bilateral cooperation will thus reach into new dimensions. In order to overcome the recent tension between the two countries, the German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier launched the project of a joint history book, based on the concept of the Franco-German History Textbook, in January 2008. The suggestion met with the immediate support of the new Polish government led by Donald Tusk. The Polish Deputy Education Minister and historian Stanowski insisted that the cooperation between Polish and (West-)German historians, developed under the leadership of the Georg Eckert Institute since the early 1970s, had provided a starting capital that could render the realisation of this joint educational work easier

than that of the Franco-German History Textbook![5] But did he not know that German and French historians had worked together on textbooks after the 1950s, also mostly supervised by the Georg Eckert Institute, inspired by the impression – sometimes widespread in third countries – that the Franco-German reconciliation had been even less simple? Or was it his intention to cast doubt upon the assumed 'model character' of the Franco-German project?

Whatever the case may be, this project was officially set in motion by the Polish Minister of Education Krzysztof Stanowski and his Brandenburg colleague Holger Rupprecht (coordinator of the project since January 2008) on the 17th May of this year in Berlin, with the aim of completing and implementing this teaching work within three to four years.[6] This obviously political initiative should demonstrate, according to Rupprecht, 'how fruitful cooperation between Germany and Poland has become' and serve to reinforce mutual understanding between the young generations. Although the framework conditions have not yet been clearly defined (e.g. issues of equal funding, the necessary adaptation of curricula and the increased convergence between the didactic cultures), this project is already revealing significant differences between itself and the Franco-German History Textbook. The textbook is for pupils of the first years of secondary school and not for sixth form, and the first volume will deal with the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Era up until the French Revolution; in other words, the period before the concept of the nation was developed. The academic authorities involved in the project believe that this more distant past is more suitable for a transnational European history, as it allocates a more appropriate and fair space to Eastern Europe.[7] It will be particularly instructive to follow the realisation of this project, which has already provoked numerous discussions in both countries and, to a certain extent, even concerns in the Polish public sphere.[8]

While the Franco-German History Textbook has set itself the ambitious goal of paving the way for a hypothetical European history book that combines 27 'viewpoints' – a project that rather tends to invite scepticism in the light of the current divergence of perspectives and the so-called competition between memory cultures in Europe[9] – the German-Polish History Textbook could build a bridge between Eastern and Western Europe, helping to assess the feasibility of a future European Textbook.

In any case, the Franco-German History Textbook is certainly a success story that should warm the hearts of all who particularly value the maintenance and further development of Franco-German relations. Such is also the attitude shared by the German and French editors of this Dossier. Furthermore, this collection of essays also has a predecessor: in 2006, a Dossier was published in the Franco-German journal *Dokumente*, which analysed from an academic perspective the first volume of the Franco-German History Textbook, and which has enjoyed a wide readership up until today.[10] The fact that even the producers of the textbook appreciate the more critical passages is particularly gratifying for all those who participated in the project, wishing to offer constructive suggestions for improvement alongside praise.[11]

Both the Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research in

Braunschweig (GEI) and the German Historical Institute in Paris (DHIP) expressed their interest in this new Dossier on the occasion of the publication of the second volume of the Franco-German History Textbook at an early stage. They subsequently decided to co-operate in order to render the analyses available to the widest possible public. The editors are delighted by this opportunity to publish electronically at such a prominent and relevantly qualified location. We expressly thank Simone Lässig, Director of the GEI, and Gudrun Gersmann, Director of the DHIP, for their support as well as for the complete freedom they gave to the editors and authors of the Dossier. The editors also thank, of course, all those who have worked on the project; here, once again, competent German and French colleagues from the disciplines of history, German studies and specialist didactics have shown the will to carefully proof-read selections of the textbook and to monitor their educational as well as academic value. We considered it useful this time too to dedicate special contributions to illustrations and didactic implementation. Further, the Dossier questions the learning processes that can be observed through a comparison of the first two volumes of the Franco-German History Textbook.

As was the case with the first Dossier, the focus is laid on recognising the organisational and editorial achievements of the team of authors led by Peter Geiss, Daniel Henri and Guillaume Le Quintrec as well as for the book's content. The particular relevance of precisely this period of European and Franco-German history requires no further explanation. The events from 1815 to 1945 may be a chain of revolutionary ruptures and violent confrontations, yet they also show the first signs of organised European cooperation and convergence. During this period, ideological and power-political opposites reached their culmination for Franco-German relations; predominantly negative stereotypes were reinforced, which were not to be overcome until the second half of the 20th century after enormous efforts, and which *longue durée* and thus relevance should not be underestimated even today. Furthermore, the second volume of the Franco-German history book is also very up-to-date, both in terms of content and of didactics. It offers pupils a wealth of impulses and information for group discussions as well as for independent learning[12].

Nevertheless, some criticism must also be noted, with regards to details (as are explained in the individual essays of this dossier) as well as in a general vein. As was already the case in the first volume, the structure is not always convincing. Historical contexts are torn apart without an explicit indication. In Part One, for instance, events are touched upon that are mentioned again 300 pages later in the last chapter, together with supplementary information that teachers and pupils might well have needed at the earlier stage. Certain aspects thus rather depend on luck and chance, which, while almost certainly more entertaining, does, however, disregard the reality of daily life in school, which is subject to ever-increasing time pressure.

In view of the fact that the first volume of the Franco-German History Textbook had been criticised by many German reviewers as being 'too easy', a controversial discussion surrounding the publication of the second volume also evolved, regarding the layout and presentation of text and image documents.

Critics may now object once again that the reader is subjected to an absolute *embarras de richesse* on some pages of the book. Colourful collages of term definitions, pictures, timelines and quotations greet the reader boisterously with the result that only little space remains for the explanatory text. There is no doubt that, here, the Franco-German History Textbook is threatened by the danger that German teachers in particular might only use it as a goldmine for materials needed in class in addition to more comprehensive portrayals to be found in more traditionally designed German textbooks. This would be a pity, as the whole significance of the series lies in its particular common Franco-German perspective on European history, which in turn is mostly inherent in the text. Teachers in France will find it less challenging to adapt to, as French teaching materials have granted more space to images for a long time, as is documented by the composition of the French textbook, *Histoire. Le Monde, l'Europe, la France (1850–1945) 1er L-ES-S (Histoire)*, which allows for an in-depth analysis of visual media in almost every chapter beneath the rubric 'Arrêt sur images'[13].

A closer look and a comparison with other teaching materials will demonstrate, however, that the Franco-German History Textbook is not the 'light reading' it may first appear to be, even from a German perspective. It deals with the period from the Congress of Vienna up until the end of the Second World War over 385 pages, while the equivalent volume on the Early Modern Age, for instance, *Geschichte und Geschehen (GuG)*[14], begins with the French Revolution and follows history chronologically up to the 'Berlin Republic', further dealing with European integration, Islam and the Modern Age as well as the development of China from 1800 up to the present in the subsequent chapters (covering a total of 590 pages). *GuG* dedicates, however, only 255 pages to the timeframe from 1815 to 1945 as dealt with in the Franco-German History Textbook, with the result that we can claim that – from a quantitative viewpoint alone, the latter renders more materials available to teachers and pupils for the same period of history.

Despite compromises and middle ways, which are not to be overlooked, the Franco-German comparison tends to reinforce the impression – one that has been expressed by various parties – that the Franco-German History Textbook rather more conforms to the French textbook tradition. Nevertheless, everyday school life in French lycées and the – comparatively 'elite' – German Gymnasien must be placed into context here. While in France over 60% of each school year complete a university-entrance qualification, the Abitur numbers in Germany are considerably lower (2005/2006: General university entrance examination: 29,9%; technical college entrance examination 13,6%; total: 43,4%)[15]. The varying societal structures and learning situations of the examinees in Germany and France must be taken into account by the design and didactic implementation. The fact that *GuG* gives preference to longer, descriptive texts and more consideration to text-based sources should therefore not be overlooked; further, it is already tailored to the needs of future history students, whereas *Histoire* does not venture beyond the horizon of the Baccalauréat. All three volumes include chapters on methodology and various approaches towards history, yet the different teaching and learning traditions become apparent in this respect too. While *GuG* offers the pupils –

amongst other aspects – a methodological introduction to the conception and procedure of writing an academic piece of work, thus preparing them for the future task of composing an extended essay, the French pupil is informed most expressly of the definitive criteria for a historical essay ('Dissertation'). The Franco-German History Textbook offers a compromise between both traditions: a methodological chapter on the analysis of academic traditions, in accordance with German traditions, a type of text that has thus far not been included in history teaching in France; yet at the same time, it includes a methodological chapter on using historical maps, which derives from the broader space allocated to this medium in French schools.

We may conclude, therefore, that any teacher who is willing to demonstrate an open attitude to teaching practices in a different country will only benefit from the Franco-German History Textbook. At this point, therefore, it is only fitting that the makers of the new Franco-German textbook be congratulated, notwithstanding critique of particular details from contributors to this dossier. We look forward to the remaining third and final volume, which aims to cover the period from Antiquity to the Napoleonic Era, and which is planned for early in 2010.

[translated by Wendy Anne Kopisch]

[1] On the interest expressed by Koreans and the Japanese in the Franco-German history textbook, see Pierre Monnet, 'Faites un manuel, pas la guerre', in: *L'Histoire*, No. 312 (2006), p. 22f.

[2] Akiyoshi Nishiyama, 'Das deutsch-französische Geschichtsbuch in Japan: Ein Vorbild für Ostasien?' in: *Eckert. Das Bulletin*, No. 2 (2007), p. 59f.

[3] Historians from 11 countries in the Balkans participated in the textbook on the history of the Balkans initiated by the Centre for Democracy and Reconciliation in South-Eastern Europe. Four volumes (covering the period from Ottoman Empire to the Second World War) have appeared in the Balkan languages as well as in English since 2003 (available from the website <http://www.cdsee.org>). The Israeli-Palestinian textbook, published in 2004 in both Hebrew and Arabic, *The History of the 'Other'*, was initiated by the NGO 'PRIME' (Peace Research Institute in the Middle East), founded by Palestinian and Israeli academics. The South-Korean/Chinese/Japanese textbook, *Modern and Contemporary History of Three East-Asian Countries*, was published in 2005 by academics from these three countries.

[4] Declaration of 11th February, 2008, quoted in: Célia Chauffour, 'Bientôt un manuel d'histoire commun germano-polonais?', in: *Le Monde*, 20th February, 2008.

[5] 'No more delays for the German-Polish History Textbook' ('Kein Aufschub mehr für deutsch-polnisches Geschichtsbuch'), in: *der Standard.at*, 28th January, 2008.

[6] Press release from the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport of the State of Brandenburg and the Polish Ministry of Education, No. 194, 2008, 17th May, 2008.

[7] Thomas Strobel, 'Green Light for the Joint German-Polish History Textbook' in: *Eckert. Das Bulletin*, No. 03 (2008), pp. 26–28.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Emmanuel Droit, 'Le Goulag contre la Shoah : mémoires officielles et cultures mémorielles dans l'Europe élargie', in: *Vingtième Siècle* 94/2007, pp. 101–120.

[10] Reiner Marowitz, Ulrich Pfeil, 'Dossier: Gemeinsames Geschichtsbuch', in: *Dokumente. Zeitschrift für den deutsch-französischen Dialog* 5/2006, pp. 53–104. As this issue is no longer available, the Editors have made it accessible online: http://www.zeitschrift-dokumente.de/downloads/artikel/art_08052006.pdf

[11] Étienne François, 'Le manuel franco-allemand d'histoire. Une entreprise inédite', in: *Vingtième siècle* 94/2007, pp. 73–86; Ralph Erbar, 'Ein Geschichtsbuch für zwei Länder? Kritische Anmerkungen zum neuen deutsch-französischen Geschichtsbuch', in: *Geschichte in*

Wissenschaft und Unterricht 57 (2006) 10, p. 623f.; cf. on the history of the project: Florent Claret, *Die Geschichtsschulbücher in den deutsch-französischen Beziehungen. Auf dem Weg zu einem gemeinsamen Geschichtsbuch für beide Länder*, Saarbrücken 2006; Ders., 'Le manuel franco-allemand d'histoire, de l'utopie à la réalité', in: *Lendemains* 122/123 (2006), pp. 235–240.

[12] Cf. Ursula Lange, Transnationales Wissen. Das nationalstaatliche Prinzip im gemeinsamen Geschichtsbuch, in: *Dokumente* 64 (2008) 4, pp. 21–24.

[13] Jacques Marseille (ed.), *Histoire. Le Monde, l'Europe, la France (1850–1945) 1er L-ES-S*, Nathan, Paris 2007.

[14] *Geschichte und Geschehen. Neuzeit*, Upper secondary school, Ernst Klett, Leipzig 2006.

[15] Statistics published by the Standing Conference of Education Ministers (*Statistische Veröffentlichungen der Kultusministerkonferenz*), No. 173 (January 2005).