

The foreign soldier's transnational experience in the Nazi military. A biographical study of conscripts and volunteers from Luxembourg in the Wehrmacht and their military and individual experiences in WWII

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Outline:

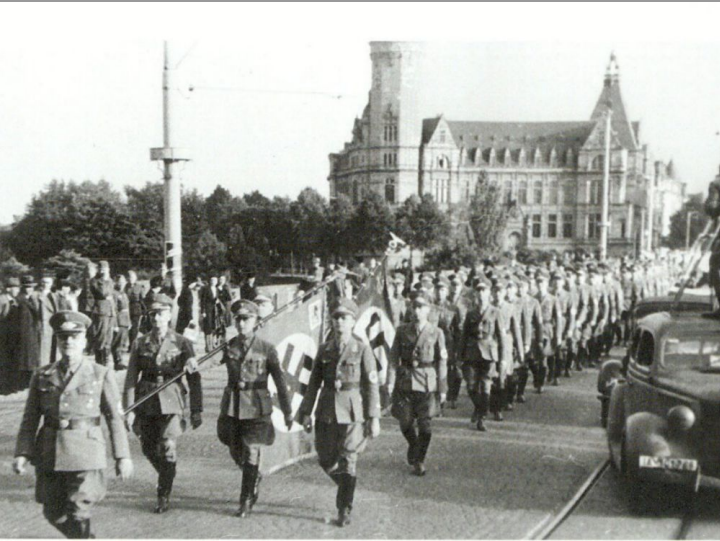
1. Intro - Biographical approach
2. Luxembourg under occupation
3. Transnational aspect - German or Luxembourgish?
4. Conscription of non-German citizens
5. The Luxembourgish experientiality
 - a. As German soldiers
 - b. “Luxembourgishness”
6. Conclusion: The Luxembourgish soldierly experience as transnational war experientiality

Biographical approach on individual transnational soldiers, here: Luxembourgish Case

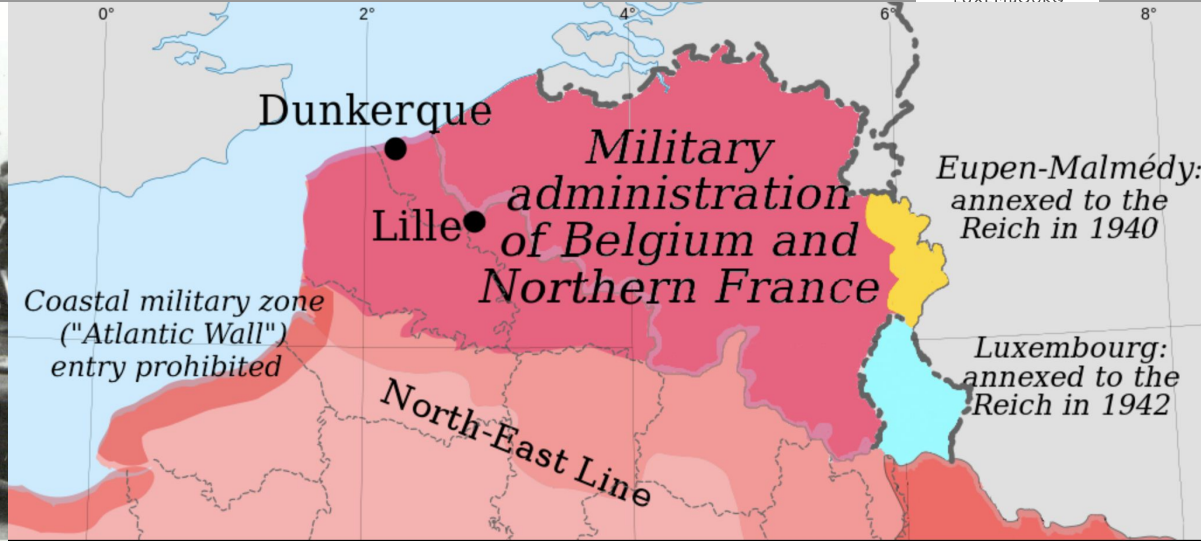
- Over two million foreigners served in the ranks of the Wehrmacht and the Waffen-SS
- Focus on individual transnational soldiers provides a new perspective on the European experience of war
- transnational because these research subjects were conscripted by another power in which they were not citizens



Invasion of the Benelux countries in May 1940



Nazi parade in Luxembourg City



- Civil administration and de-facto annexation
- Persecution of political opposition and violent enforcement of the National Socialist German order and legislation

Transnational? National? German? Luxembourgish?

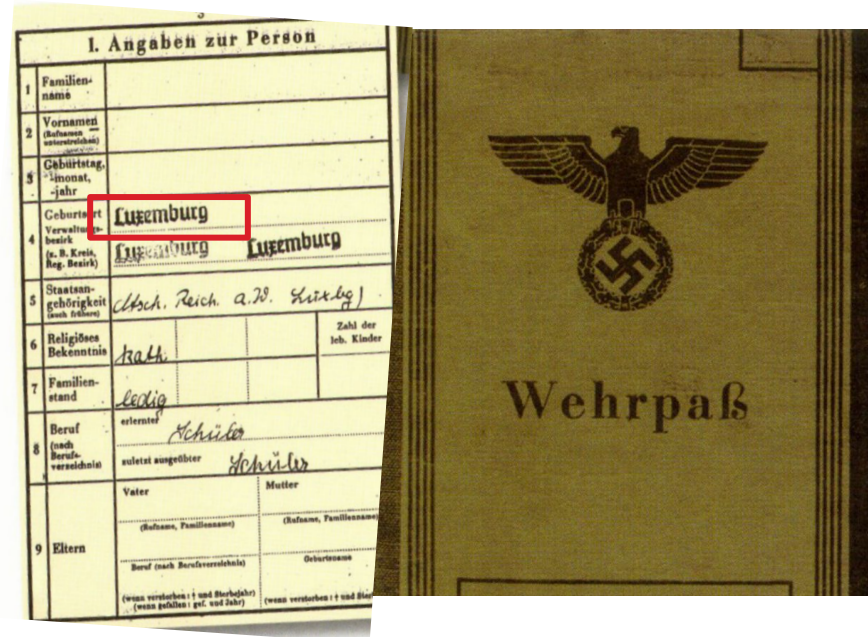
“Luxembourger you are German”

"Luxemburger du bist Deutsch"

Poster by the Volksdeutsche Bewegung, a pro-nazi movement in Luxembourg during World War II; it advocated the annexation of Luxembourg to the Reich.
Luxembourger



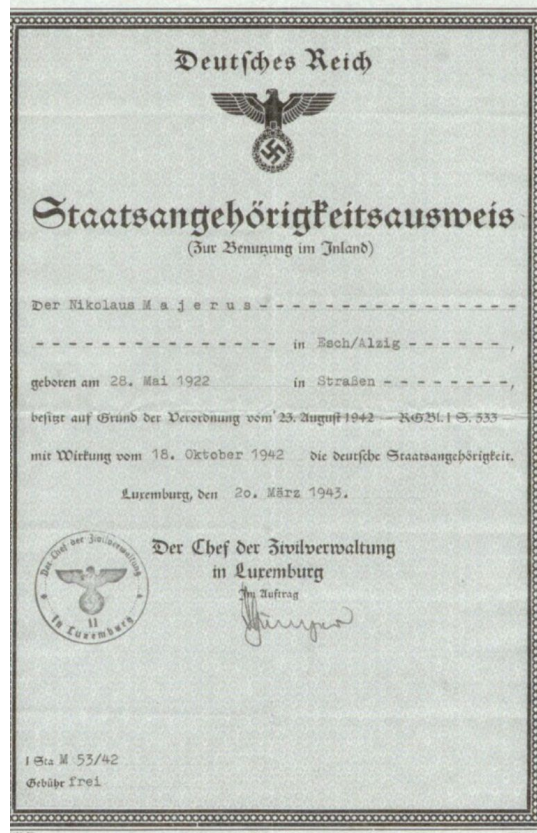
As the Luxembourgers were considered ethnically "Germanic" according to National Socialist ideology, they were drafted into the German army



Military ID of a Luxembourger

Conscription and
subsequent

Naturalisation



Certificate of German citizenship

The certificate shown here was issued on 20 March 1943, but with retroactive effect to 18 October 1942, the day on which this person was conscripted



Medical examination of recruits

Luxembourg, M. d'Histoire de la V. de (Ed.). (2002). ...et wor ailes net esou einfach Questions sur le Luxembourg et la Deuxième Guerre mondiale.



Transport to the military training camps

Luxembourg, M. d'Histoire de la V. de (Ed.). (2002). ...et wor ailes net esou einfach Questions sur le Luxembourg et la Deuxième Guerre mondiale.

As German soldiers

- **10.211** were conscripted (born 1920-1927)
- **1.765** KIA
- **3.510** deserted / went into hiding

Luxembourger Joseph Dondelinger with other German soldiers on the Eastern Front



Diederich, P., Etienne, E., Fritsch, M., Goniva, R., Gross, M., Guirsch, E., Jentgen, R., & Ki, M. (2015). "Verluere Joëren": 85 Luxemburger Zeitzeugen Des Zweiten Weltkriegs Berichten : Zwangsrekrutierte, Refraktäre, Deserteure, Resistenzler, Aber Auch Kollaborateure, Kriegsfreiwillige. Vol. 3.

Letters from Luxembourgish soldiers

Front letters (“Feldpost”) as communication with the families at home

“I am fine”

- Considering censorship and forced integration in the German military (following orders etc.)



Uffen. 25.5.43.
x

Liebt Mathil!

Ich huer Dein Brief nu Wälfen mat grousser Freie
empfang. Wie ech gesinn das de mes an der Schöul a
nuechs op der Bank. Nuji besser dat e ve am Rad oder
soß ans wünsch. Gott weiß woi. Mir get et och nach em-
mer gut, wat ich hei wellt gut nennen. Hoffen immer dat
et. Du an Dinge Leid besser get. Du weiß jo woi ich sen
an so aß et net ganz schon an dem Land. Ich mat On-
recht nennen s'et Peinlich. Ich huer d'Flamm hei. Bis
immer d'Quere an et get erischt un. Mir get et 2 Menit
dat mer hei sen. Ich mengen et wir schon eng Lang leit.
W. H. 19.8

“We” as part of the
German soldier
camaraderie/community

- question of survival -
following orders and
identity as “a” soldier
- even it means to kill
Allies



Guerre, G. des R. et d'études sur la. (2017). *Schicksalswege einer Kriegsgeneration*.

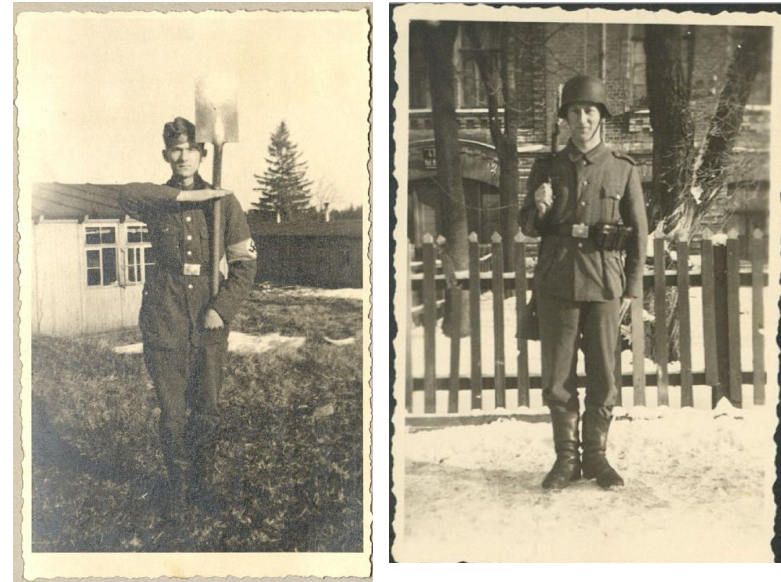
Expression of their identity in many ways

- writing in their language or sharing information about encounters with other compatriots
- or appreciation of conversing in Luxembourgish or French (with other conscripted soldiers from Alsace or Lorraine)



Luxembourgish national colours

- For the Nazis, Luxembourgers were "Volks"-Germans, while the Luxembourgers felt themselves to be strangers wearing an enemy uniform
- Luxembourgish experientiality has two sides of a medal: the average experience as a German soldiers and Luxembourgish aspect of its own identity and the demarcation from the German soldiers



Luxembourger in German uniform

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- Janz, N. (2021). *Between the front and home – War letters of Luxembourgers in Nazi forces and organisations during WWII as a source to*
- Kmec, S., Lehnert, J., Fuchshuber, T., Franz, N., & Wagener, R. (2016). *Identitätsbildung und Partizipation im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert. Luxemburg im europäischen Kontext*.
- Marsalek, Z., & Neminar, J. (2020). *Zwangsrekrutierte in die Wehrmacht*.
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- Wette, W. (1994). Deutsche Erfahrungen mit der Wehrpflicht 1918—1945. Abschaffung in der Republik und Wiedereinführung durch die Diktatur. In *Die Wehrpflicht. Entstehung, Erscheinungsformen und politisch-militärische Wirkung* (pp. 91–106).
- Wette, W. (1995). Der Krieg des kleinen Mannes. Eine Militärgeschichte von unten. In *Eine Militärgeschichte von unten*.

Project WARLUX - Soldiers and their communities in WWII: The impact and legacy of war experiences in Luxembourg

- Collecting their biographies and individual life paths throughout the war and the post-war period
- <https://www.c2dh.uni.lu/projects/warlux>



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Blog: “Digital War History” and WARLUX

<https://digiwarhist.hypotheses.org>

