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Class and Collaboration: The (Luxem)Bourgeoisie in the European Civil War

Penser sur la Collaboration !

By viewing the Second World War as part of Enzo Traverso's 'European Civil War' (what de Gaulle called '*une deuxième guerre de trente ans*') we can view one of the most notorious subjects of the civil war's short end (1939-1945) – collaboration – not as national betrayal, but as solidarity within one class against another. *Why did the heavens not darken?* Because civil wars are not wars of national hatred, but ideology.

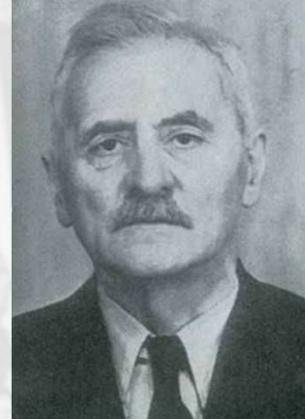
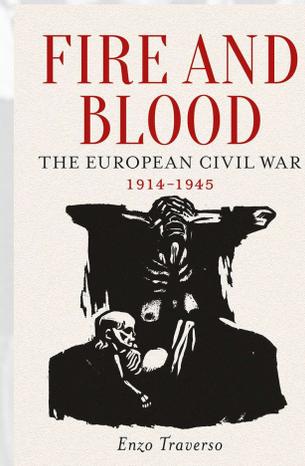
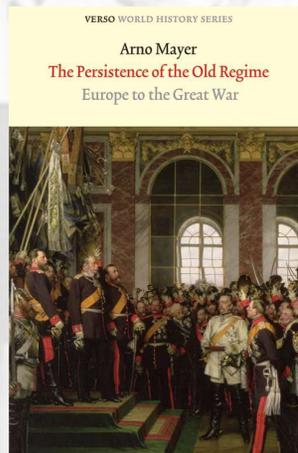
The (Luxem)Bourgeoisie at War

The (Luxem)bourgeois experience of the European Civil War can be summarized by asking: why collaborate in one war when you can collaborate in two? The continuity of collaboration(s) should be explored in its own right – beyond the tired dictum of activity versus passivity – but how people thought of their 'collaboration' is a vital part of whether or not their actions are, indeed, collaboration. The bourgeois separation of political action in the public sphere and ideas in the private, means that the historian must look for the beliefs of the bourgeois in that private sphere, in letters.

These letters from the European Civil War create a massive corpus, everything from 1914 to 1945.



Marie-Adélaïde, © Wikimedia Commons

Damian Kratzenberg, head of the *Volksdeutsche Bewegung*, © Wikimedia Commons

Mass Methodologies: *Transkribus*

The massive quantity of sources means that digital tools are vital. Even the relatively small (Luxem)bourgeoisie produced a massive number of letters between 1914 and 1945 (War letters of the European Civil War) that no human could ever know their whole existence. Instead, quantification and distant reading are required. *Transkribus* makes distant reading possible by turning private letters into machine readable text.

A machine to read that text, however, is this project's massive drawback, the nuances of how people speak about themselves goes beyond keywords but an algorithm that can find subtle examples through combinations of ideas, terms, and references. It is a large task for an important topic.

In Luxembourg, what did collaboration look like throughout the European Civil War and who were these 'collaborators?' *How did they understand their actions and how was it presented within their private spheres?*