

From Momentous Times [*Aus großer Zeit*] (1913)

Abstract

During the German Empire [*Kaiserreich*], historical memory of the 1813 defeat of Napoleon served to cast the anti-Napoleonic wars as “wars of liberation” and, ultimately, as the point of origin of a German nation forged in struggle. The 1913 centennial, especially, brought a veritable marathon of remembrance. All available new media were used to showcase the fight of the “German man” for the “German fatherland.”

Source

Transcription

Audio: From Momentous Times [*Aus großer Zeit*] (1913)

[...] Groups of people commemorate the victory over Napoleon a hundred years ago in national celebrations in 1913.

[Music: Marseillaise]

Prussia had not forgotten the disgrace of Jena. // Napoleon proudly called himself master of the world. // The Corsican’s arrogance was immeasurable, // a cry for revenge rang through Europe. // In Breslau, the peak of German youthful strength gathered around Lützow. // This fierce band of black riflemen is giving the Frenchman a hard time.

[Song]

All hearts beat with enthusiasm when the king wrote to my people, // and men, old men, even boys were under Prussia’s banners, // and the poet Körner sang loudly, // so that it sounded through Germany’s lands: // “The people are rising, the storm is breaking; // Who still lays his hands cowardly in his lap? // Fie on you boys behind the stove, among the lackeys and among the maids! // You are a wretched creature without honor; a German girl won’t kiss you, a German song won’t delight you, and German wine won’t refresh you. // Join in the toast, man for man // who can swing the Flambert!” [Theodor Körner, “Männer und Buben,” in *Leyer und Schwerdt* (Berlin, 1814), p. 78.]

And history knows the honorable names of the brave leaders: Yorck, Scharnhorst, Gneisenau and Blücher, who are still spoken with reverence today.

Ernst Moritz Arndt sang his song full of verve // Old and young rejoice.

[Fatherland song by Ernst Moritz Arndt, set to music by Albert Methfessel, instrumental and sung:] The God who made iron grow, // he did not want servants, // therefore he gave saber, sword and spear // to the man in his right; // therefore he gave him the bold courage, // the wrath of free speech, // that he would endure to the blood, // to the death the feud.

The Landwehr was now founded, family fathers, serious and simple, // they left wife and child at home for the

fatherland; // it was called a man's duty. // Near Großbeeren they hit the enemy with the butt of their rifles like thunder // "Hey," shouted Blücher, "why don't you shoot?" // Their answer was, "it flows better that way!" // At Gadebusch Körner sang his own swan song in the bivouac six hours before his death.

[Song]

On October 18, a battle was fought // of which one will still say in later [*unintelligible*] times // near Leipzig at the Pleiße // there men heatedly fought with sweat and blood // in laborious quarrel. // What terrible whistling // like whistles through storming lakes // [*unintelligible*] makes one's heart swell with horror // as if the world should perish. // The troops come striding // the drums swirl ahead // the flags in their midst // wave over the green plane. // "Forward, forward!" cried Blücher // Prussia's best sword // and on slippery bloody paths // the old hero rode so surely. //

[Song] Fanfare

From Leipzig the horn of battle sounds // Napoleon looks so gloomy // many a general trembles // his troops so used to victory // do not cheer him // an almost icy peace of the grave blows through the whole camp // Napoleon rides to the hill // his white horse neighs anxiously // and a ghastly silence reigns for seconds. // Foreboding gray and deathly // the great morning dawns // and the sun, cold and bloody // shines on the green plane. // In the next hours' bosom // lies the fate of a world // and already the lots tremble // and the honorable die is cast. //

[Song]

It [*unintelligible*] a picture of horror // fallen are a hundred thousand // over hundred thousand [*unintelligible*] // death broke without sparing // with heavy wounding cannons // cattle and men [*unintelligible*] // and flew from place to place. // Bonaparte fled running, not walking // and with the sound of cannons royal the Rhine alliance and the Prussians were united by this victory. // Napoleon received his judgment, the enemy was destroyed. Let the songs of victory ring out on the fair path of freedom, // when the Germans now stand firmly together as German men. // If ever an enemy approaches the German fatherland, then he shall surely feel the strong hand of the Germans. // German our hearts, German our Rhine, // German our singing, therefore join in:

[Instrumental and sung:] Germany, Germany above all, above all in the world.

Source: Aus großer Zeit, 1913, Archivnummer 1731300, Stiftung Deutsches Rundfunkarchiv.

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