Press Information
24 May 2022

Citizenships. France, Poland, Germany since 1789

From 1 July 2022 in the Deutsches Historisches Museum

To belong – or not to belong? This question unleashes strong, conflicting feelings. It can be of existential significance. As the object of struggles for political participation and public welfare, citizenship draws together many of these emotions. The passport guarantees citizens of a state fundamental rights and points out who "belongs to it". As a legal status, citizenship engenders national and political commonality, but it also marks a priority vis-à-vis those who stand outside of the community. Its inclusive and at the same time exclusive character reveals itself particularly in times of war and crisis. That citizenship in the European Union has not replaced national citizenships was clearly shown in recent reactions to the Corona pandemic, or in the Brexit referendum. The current tendencies towards re-nationalisation within the EU discernibly influence the national-political dynamics of isolationist, citizenship and emigration policy.

With the exhibition **"Citizenships. France, Poland, Germany since 1789" (1 July 2022 – 15 January 2023)** the Deutsches Historisches Museum focuses on the topic of the changing meaning and the mobilising power of citizenship from the "long" 19th century until the present day. It created the *citoyen* – the citizen – and determined what rights and duties went along with this new role. In the following years, citizenship advanced to the dominant form of political belonging in the era of the nation-state, was used by dictatorships as a means for ethnic and political selection, and has taken on a new appearance in the Union citizenship of the supranational EU. Thus, citizenship became the central instrument for the distribution of living and survival chances in the European states in the 19th and 20th centuries.

The exhibition, curated by Dieter Gosewinkel, focuses on three European countries: France, Poland and Germany, which, as neighbouring states, were closely entangled through violent conflicts in the form of occupation and expulsion, and now still are interlinked through political cooperation. A glance at two centuries of shared history shows how strongly the concepts and practices of citizenship not only reflect the political relations between the three neighbours, but also help to determine them, depending upon the political-social constellations and interests.

In six theme rooms the exhibition takes a closer look at central aspects and mechanisms of citizenship during the last three centuries. Paintings, drawings, graphic prints, statistics, surveys, documents, publications, posters, technical

equipment, souvenirs, film clips, audio stations, and interviews illustrate the elementary socio-political significance of citizenship in all levels of everyday life.

The theme room **"Actors"** throws light on the social gradient between the "decision-makers" of the state and the people who want to acquire citizenship. Explanatory films on the often years-long naturalisation procedures in the three countries are contrasted with shots of different national naturalisation ceremonies, which exemplify the emotional and symbolic dimensions of the process.

Civic knowledge was communicated in the 19th and 20th centuries primarily through two institutions: the schools and the army. Military duty was closely connected with the definition of the (male) citizen. The guiding principle of the "soldier-citizen" was conveyed in the army through the "school of the nation" or through toy soldiers. With the suspension of compulsory military service in Germany and Poland and its elimination in France, citizenship today is largely defined in civilian terms.

The chapter "**Discriminations**" elucidates how unequally civic law was handled for women, Jews and colonies, and how it is still subverted through racism. Excluded from public life, **women** formed civil rights movements to demand elementary political and social participatory rights such as the right to vote. It was not until the mid-20th century that women achieved full citizenship rights in France, Poland and Germany.

Jews experienced the most extreme form of exclusion. Moritz Daniel Oppenheim's painting "The Return of the Volunteer from the Wars of Liberation to his Family still living according to Old Customs" (1833/34) shows that many Jewish men nevertheless professed their allegiance to the state through serving in the army. The Nazi state defined citizenship in ethnic terms: accordingly, German Jews were not "Reich citizens", but only "members" of the state with constantly diminishing rights. How the regulations set down in the Nuremberg Laws of 1935 were implemented in the occupied territories is demonstrated in a *Juif* ("Jew") hole punch, which was used in France from 1940 to irreversible mark the French passports of Jews. In the Holocaust the right to citizenship was used as an instrument of exclusion and persecution.

The division of the world into citizens and **colonial subjects** without full civil rights in the course of **European colonialisation** and it post-colonial ramifications are shown among other things in the "identity disc" introduced by the colonial police in Swakopmund as well as in French documentations on the situation in Algeria and Indochina.

New identification methods – such as border control systems, ID papers and statistics – accompanied the development of citizenship and were methods employed for ethnic and economic selection. Already during the First World War, citizens of adversary nations were considered "enemy aliens" and detained in camps. The "German National List" introduced in 1941 served the purpose of racist selection of the population in the annexed Polish territories; it categorised people through their ID documents and thus determined their chances of survival. The restrictive handling of citizenship is also evident in the treatment of political opponents: authoritarian regimes often used denaturalisation in the 20th century to exclude unwanted persons from their respective society. A prominent example is songwriter Wolf Biermann, who talks about the deprivation of his GDR citizenship in 1976 in an interview.

With Poland's admission to the EU in 2004, **France, Poland and Germany today** are closer than ever. Their citizens are supranationally united through their Union citizenship. However, questions of dual nationality and political participation for foreigners remain highly topical in times of growing internationality and concurrent re-nationalisation tendencies. At the end of the exhibition, visitors have the opportunity to explore current political developments by means of statistics, videos and statements by contemporary witnesses. At the end an interactive station addresses the topic of wished-for forms of citizenship and the rights and duties that are connected with them.

The exhibition is inclusive and barrier-free. It is accompanied by an illustrated essay volume published by Piper-Verlag (255 pages, 22 euro).