**FEEDBACK OF THE PROJECT ERASMUS + (Eduquer à la paix)**

**Has the project offered you an occasion to reflect on the horror of the war and the necessity of peace? If yes, explain how and give a feedback on the project activity that has just finished.**

The project Erasmus + (Eduquer à la paix) we have been carried out during the last three months is the result of a large documentation about the events connected to WW1 and the Unknown soldier cult’s following development and spread in all over the world. The project will officially be finished in Münster, in Germany, where students and teachers groups from all Europe will have a debate about WW1 and reflect about how the idea of peace overcame the one of war in all European countries.

The project we took part could be subdivided in different steps, where both individual and group works were carried out and different topics were analysed.

The first step involved the studying of some extracts by the book “The Unknown Soldier” published by Neil Hanson in 2005 and by other sources. Personally, my group work had to synthesize and map some pages of the book about the events that led to the erection of the Cenotaph, which was one of the first memorials of its kind as it commemorated dead soldiers from all over the world. This analysis made me reflect a lot about such public opinion could push the main authorities of that time to build these kinds of memorials, as they needed a place where to mourn and to express their feelings. But on the other side, the Cenotaph was presented in the text as a possibility to reinforce the national’s sense of identity feeling.

Moving from the particular to the general, we started our analysis about some letters written by people from all over the world invited to imagine what the statue of the unknown soldier at Paddington Station in London might have been reading. The letter we took into consideration underlined the brutality of the war, how war was seen by common people, their personal reflections and feelings,… Thanks to these letters, we could move to the analysis of the memorials (and war memorials) in general and take stock of what happened in Europeans after the war. People were no longer convinced of war’s necessity and otherwise they began to denounce it as it led to massive destruction and loss of life.

As a result of that, the cult of the Unknown soldier began to spread in all Europe. There was a shared conviction – expressed by common poor people who lost their dear in the War– to get someone on where to mourn, cry: this person had to be unidentified, so that everyone could identify in this person as he was their father, son, relative,…

As our teacher had organized a trip to London –including of visits to the main places connected to the Unknown soldier– we mainly took in consideration the English Unknown soldier and the key personalities, the four people that contributed to the utmost in the steps that brought the English Unknown to become one of the main memorial in Westminster Abbey. These are: the birth of the idea (David Railton), the soldier’s exhume and choice (L.J.Wyatt), its organization and collocation in the Abbey (Reverent Ryle) and its ‘promotion’ (King George V). As I have just told about, the Unknown soldier’s perspective was different in each character because the first were moved by moral reasons to act this way while the political authorities (such as the King, Prime Minister Llyod George and maybe also the Reverend) saw the Unknown soldier as an occasion to exalt the sacrifice of so many human beings, instead of mourning on them and remembering what they have done.

This step of the project – as the following ones (we went on with the French and American Unknown soldier, making then an analysis about ‘the People’s Pilgrimage’ and a general reflection) – for me was very meaningful as it permitted me to understand events’ complexity and the different points of view about the Unknown soldier that emerged from the different sources’ analysis. Certainly, as WW1 casualties amounted to 17 million, it goes without saying that people became aware of the necessity of peace, whose thought was on the other side difficult to develop for the highest level of society, as we underlined in the general reflection (that brought an end to the preparatory part of the project).

Surely, on my point of view, this project gave me the possibility to deeply think about war, its horror, how was seen by common people, kings, ministers, (all the society in general) and how that common feeling of peace spread in the population. War is a terrible negative thing – that, as we can determinate – did not lead to any conclusion , but on the contrary, it set the basis for another conflict (worse than the previous). In conclusion, I would say that this project pushed me to reflect a lot about today’s situation: Europe has lived a long period of peace while other many countries are still involved in wars. We do not have to undermine the importance of the Unknown soldier as a bridge of peace between different countries, which, united together, managed to create the EU. That is on what we are going to focus in Germany.

It is important to say that this project is the result of many different sources, such as books, letters, internet sites, so the book it resulted from is an heterogeneous piece of work. What I mean is that each source we took in consideration expressed its point of view about the Unknown soldier’s events: some were objective, while some others (such as the letters) expressed the horror of war and the necessity of peace. This is what I could infer from this hard and, at the same time, rewarding project.