

Propaganda Postcard: “Germany Gives Thanks to Her Heroes” (1916)

Abstract

The postcard pictured is an example of propaganda material that promoted war service as a heroic sacrifice for the Fatherland. The figure of Germania as the embodiment of Germany stands at the grave of a fallen soldier holding a victor's crown symbolizing the glorious and victorious battle. The German Eagle descends to deliver the Iron Cross. This military honor, of which there were three classes, had been awarded in Prussia since 1813 as the highest military decoration. On orders by Kaiser Wilhelm II, however, the Iron Cross was awarded so frequently during the First World War (more than 5 million times) that it lost its significance. Propaganda imagery in which female figures represented the nation, victory, or specific virtues were very common during the First World War. The poem, which glorifies the numerous war dead who had to be buried in makeshift graves in the war zone, was written by Josef Benno Sailer.

Source



Germany gives thanks to her heroes.

Lonely in a foreign soil,
many a brave man rests.
Who joyfully gave
his blood for the Fatherland.

Alas, none of the distant loved ones
put flowers on his grave.
And no familiar voice

calls down greetings to him.

And yet it remains unforgettable
so precious is the blood of heroes;
the people's loyal memory
It keeps in sacred trust.

From millions of hearts
Gratitude arises, deeply moved,
Which at night as a cool dew
Blankets all the graves.

Source: Postcard, artist: Ludwig Rösch, poem: Josef Benno Sailer, 1916. Historische Bildpostkarten - Universität Osnabrück, <http://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:gbv:700-2-0011069-0>

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