

## **The first world war in moving images**

European project making film from 1914-1918 available online for the first time

**The year 2014 will be characterised by numerous commemorations for the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the outbreak of the First World War. These tributes will also take place in moving images thanks to a unique project co-ordinated by the German Film Institute in Frankfurt am Main. Since February 2012 the European project ‘The European Film Gateway 1914’ (EFG1914) has digitised over 650 hours of historical film material from the war and has made this footage available online for the first time. The films can be viewed via the European film heritage internet platform ‘The European Film Gateway’.**

The catastrophe that was the First World War coincided with the rise of film as a powerful, modern medium. The surviving films from 1914-1918 are eloquent representations of political, social and aesthetic positions. They reproduce and document every day life as well as the state of emergency, and provide information about the technological and narrative development of the cinema.

The EFG – [European Film Gateway](#) also offers a comprehensive insight into film production from the time. Approximately 1,500 weekly news programmes, documentaries, animations and feature films have been digitised for the EFG 1914 and can be seen online. A further 1,000 titles will be added between now and the conclusion of the project in February 2014. The German Film Institute in Frankfurt am Main co-ordinated the collaboration of 26 partner institutions from 15 different countries. A unique body of work; featuring not only all of the phases and locations from the First World War but also all genres and sub-genres (from propaganda films to anti-war films), has resulted from contributions from film archives across Europe. The contents have been thoroughly prepared for the user so it is possible to search particular [topics](#) such as ‘the western front’, ‘mountain warfare’ and ‘civilians’ next to the usual search engine.

During the First World War, film was used as a propaganda medium for the first time. Film production was subjected to strict censorship on military authority, therefore there are hardly any examples from the battles at the front, most of the pictures are shot behind the front or during exercises. Two films, that focus on the Alp Front, show how different the aesthetic access to the reality of war can still be. An example of which is the news reel [EIN HELDENKAMPF IN SCHNEE UND EIS](#) / A HEROIC STRUGGLE IN SNOW AND ICE (Austria-Hungary, 1917) from the Austrian Film Archive’s collection, which impresses with beautified, hand-coloured images of the Alpine mountains. In contrast, the documentary [GUERRA SULLE ALPI](#) / THE WAR IN THE ALPS (ITALY 1916) from the Italian film-pioneer and camera man Luca Comerio, shows the struggle of the Italian mountain troops as they transport heavy war machinery 3,000 meters high through snow and ice. GUERRA SULLE ALPI comes from the collection at the Cineteca Italiana in Milan.

Location Belgium: the suffering of the civilians due to the atrocities of the German troops is a recurring theme in films made shortly after the end of the war, which come from the Royal Belgian Film Archive in Brussels. The feature film [BELGIQUE MARTYRE](#) (Belgium 1919) conjures up the image of the ‘poor little Belgium’, which the allies also used for their propaganda against Germany. This can be seen in the British war bond advertisement [STAND BY THE MEN WHO HAVE STOOD BY YOU](#) (Great Britain 1917) from the Imperial War Museum’s collection, which, with over 1,000 titles, is the largest contribution to the EFG1914.

Whilst selecting films for EFG1914 the archivists were able to discover new things along the way. For example, [HUNGER BLOCKADE GERMANY](#) (Deutschland/USA ca. 1919) from the collections of the German Film Institute. The film is made William Held, an American doctor and documentary film-maker, and focuses on the health of the German population in the year following the war. The film shows an American audience with dramatic form, in the style of a German news reel, the effects of malnourished and deformed children.

Aside from the German Film Institute other German partners include the Deutsche Kinemathek and the Federal German Film Archive (Bundesarchiv-Filmarchiv) in Berlin. Parts of the material is copyright owned by the Friedrich-Wilhelm-Murnau Foundation and the DEFA Foundation. The

German entries, which currently consist of more than 200 titles, can also be found at [filmportal.de](http://filmportal.de), the central internet platform for German film and can soon be researched and viewed on the German Digital Library portal.

According to estimates, approx. only 20% of the films produced in Europe between 1914 and 1918 still survive. Thanks to the EFG1914, a considerable part of the existing films are now available online. Thousands of photos, posters and other historical documents will also be available via the European Film Gateway and Europeana websites until the start of 2014. "A peerless European project for film with an immense importance for academic and journalistic research" said Claudia Dillmann, the director of the German Film Institute, of the EFG1914.

**EFG1914 Project partners:** Arhiva Nationala de Filme, Bukarest | Association des Cinémathèques Européennes, Frankfurt/Brüssel | Athena Research and Innovation Center in Information, Communication and Knowledge Technologies, Athen | Centre National du Cinéma et de l'Image Animée-Archives françaises du film, Bois d'Arcy | Cinecittà Luce S.p.A, Rom | Cinémathèque royale de Belgique, Brüssel | Fondazione Cineteca di Bologna | CNR-ISTI, Pisa | Det Danske Filminstitut, Kopenhagen | Deutsche Kinemathek - Museum für Film und Fernsehen, Berlin | Deutsches Filminstitut - DIF e.V., Frankfurt | Estonian Film Archive, Tallinn | EYE Film Institut Netherlands, Amsterdam | Filmarchiv Austria, Wien | Filmoteca Española, Madrid | Fondazione Cineteca Italiana, Mailand | Fraunhofer IIS, Erlangen | Imperial War Museums, London | IVAC, Valencia | Jugoslovenska Kinoteka, Belgrad | La Cineteca del Friuli, Gemona | Magyar Nemzeti Digitalis Archivum És Filmintézet, Budapest | Národní filmový archiv, Prag | Nasjonalbiblioteket, Oslo | Österreichisches Filmmuseum, Wien | reelport GmbH, Köln

### **Facts about EFG1914 and the European Film Gateway**

EFG1914 is co-ordinated by the German Film Institute (DIF) with the support of the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and Media and the Hessen State Ministry of Higher Education, Research and the Arts. The project is co-financed with 2,1 Million Euros by the ICT PSP Programme of the European Commission.

The digitized films and accompanying materials are held locally on the websites and portals of the participating archive partners. The 'European Film Gateway' (EFG) offers a central research and access point to all of the digitalised materials.

The EFG collects the development and access information (metadata) and makes it available via the 'Europeana' platform, which was developed by the EU-Commission for European cultural heritage. Therefore, these collections will be connected to those of 2,000 other cultural institutions. Currently, the EFG offers access to more than 600,000 photos, posters, films and historical film documents and therefore provides important information to film archives, academics, students and interested members of the public.

### **Links mentioned in text (in order of their appearance):**

EFG1914: <http://www.europeanfilmgateway.eu/content/efg1914-project>

EFG1914 Topics: <http://www.europeanfilmgateway.eu/content/wwi-topics>

Ein Heldenkampf in Schnee und Eis / A heroic struggle in snow and ice: <http://tinyurl.com/ohpa6zw>

Guerra sulle Alpi / The War in the Alps <http://tinyurl.com/nh3vtuv>

Belgique martyre : <http://tinyurl.com/pyhuckr>

Stand by the men who have stood by you : <http://tinyurl.com/loxpmsg>

Hunger Blockade Germany: <http://tinyurl.com/ny9h4om>

<http://www.filmportal.de>

<https://www.deutsche-digitale-bibliothek.de/>

<http://www.europeana.eu>