Guest Editorial

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In 1993, the Berlin-born sculptor, Günter Demnig, began work on an ambitious public art project which would soon capture international attention.[1] Entitled, *Stolpersteine* [stumbling stones] Demnig's goal was to create an art memorial which would serve as a daily reminder of the people who died under National Socialism. His idea? The placement of brass cobblestones in front of the last known residences of each of the victims of the Holocaust. According to Demnig's plan, each brass stone would be engraved with not only the dates of deportation and death, but also the personal name of each individual victim. Almost immediately, the project idea won praise from the artistic community. However, among activists, the reactions were considerably more sceptical. In particular, there was much concern that the placement of the brass plaques upon the city streets would allow (if not directly encourage) passers-by to trample upon the names and by extension the memories of the dead. Instead, precisely the opposite has occurred. For interested passers-by, the sudden discovery of the cobblestones instantly transforms the world around them into a multilayered temporal landscape in which the names of the dead serve as compelling visual portals. To date, Demnig has laid over 20,000 stones in over 500 cities throughout Europe. The most recent stone-laying ceremony took place on the twenty-eighth of January 2010 in Rome, Italy.

Importantly, in Germany, the connection between naming and war has great historical significance for remembering not only the victims, but also the perpetrators of the Holocaust. An excellent case in point is that of German pilot and loyal member of the National Socialists, Commandant F. Christiansen (†1972). The story begins in 1879, when Friedrich Christiansen[2] was born on the remote North Sea island of Wyk auf Föhr. For his distinguished service during World War I, Christiansen was awarded the *Pour le Mérite*. In World War II, Christiansen was given the duty of flying the Do X, by far one of the largest seaplanes ever to be produced in the twentieth century. In recognition of this service, in 1932, the decision was made to name one of the main streets of Wyk auf Föhr, *Friedrich-Christiansen-Straße*. The story does not end there, however. A little over a decade later, in the Fall of 1944, Commandant Christiansen summarily ordered that all of the male residents of Putten im Gelderland, a small town on the border between Germany and the Netherlands, be arrested and sent to internment camp, Landelund. The men who survived this torture were eventually transported to other, larger concentration camps such as Neuengamme. In the end, some 545 of the men from Putten died in the Nazi death camps. These crimes did not go without punishment, however.

Immediately after the end of the World War II, Christiansen was prosecuted by the Allied Forces and given a 12 year jail sentence. It was also at this time that the British occupational government officially ordered that Christiansen-Straße be renamed to *Große Straße* [i.e. main street]. In a clear act of defiance, this decision was later overturned in the 1950s, shortly after Christiansen's release from prison. Although initial reactions to this name change were rather reserved, as the decades passed, public protests from Germany, Denmark, and the Netherlands continued to mount. Finally, on the eighth of May 1980, at the express behest of the surviving members of the Christiansen family, the town officials finally acquiesced and the street name was officially changed back, for once and for all, to *Große Straße*.[3]

The above incident is by no means unique. As a US American sociolinguist who has worked and researched in Germany for over the past twenty years, I have continued to be fascinated by the historical importance of names for inscribing both public and private war experiences. Indeed, long after the witnesses have died, names remain as powerful keys which linguists can use to unlock the door to our collective and individual pasts. Over time, as I travelled, I became intensely curious about the relationship between war and naming in other nations with differing military and onomastic histories. It was this curiosity which eventually gave rise to my idea for this special issue of *Names*.

In the Fall of 2009, the American Name Society issued its first call for papers for this special journal issue on Naming and War. The purpose of this issue was to explore the unique ways in which the language of names can affect individuals, communities, societies, and/or the international community before, during, and after war. Shortly after the call was issued, I began to receive enquiries from interested scholars from around the globe representing a variety of different perspectives. As the *Names* editor-in-Chief, Frank Nuessel, and myself agreed it was essential that the submissions accepted for publication promise to make a responsible and scientifically significant contribution. The selection process was not an easy one. However, thanks in no small measure to the coordinated efforts of the reviewers and editors, the final selections were made. The result is, I believe, an intriguing collection of articles which powerfully reflects the international diversity of scholars working in onomastics today.

Taken separately, each article in this issue provides an in-depth look at the relationship between armed conflict and naming within a specific sociocultural, historical, and geopolitical context. Taken together, the papers also offer a fascinating look into the naming and war from four very different yet entirely complementary perspectives. The article by LAVERSUCH, for example, provides a corpus linguistic exploration into the impact which World War II had upon the personal names of female civilians during the rise and fall of National Socialism in Germany. By contrast, MAKONI, MAKONI, and PFUKWA use eye-witness reports to investigate the names given to African soldiers during Zimbabwe's War of Liberation. The article by DARWISH alternatively compares the names which have been used by and for enemy nations in the Jordanian press before and after the signing of the 1994 Peace Treaty between Israel and Jordan. Finally, ODEBODE shifts the temporal focus forward to the eighteenth century Yoruban Empire and examines the names which have were given to major intra-tribal wars claiming the lives and marking the memories of untold numbers of people.

Ultimately, it is hoped that this special issue will stimulate further scientific research into the ways militarized armed conflict and naming processes can affect individuals, communities, societies, and/or the international community. At the same time, it is also my hope that this issue may spark even more scholarly attention to exploring the relationship between naming and war. In particular, it is hoped that the articles here will inspire more cross-disciplinary cooperation between onomastics and other academic fields.

One obvious, potentially fruitful academic cooperation might involve onomastics, geography, and the law, for example. Experts together from these fields might be in a position to answer questions like the following: What have been some of the post-war legal precedents which have been established in post-colonial disputes over toponyms? By contrast, other research cooperatives involving onomasticians and psychologists could explore the role which naming might play in the recovery processes of persons suffering the long-term effects of post-war trauma. How important is it, for example, for the survivors of wartime rape to be able to name their victimizers in a court of law? On another level, joint research ventures between specialists in onomastics and political science might help to shed further light on the ways in which the progressive denial of personal names in despotic political systems might help to accelerate the societal processes of victim dehumanization and perpetrator de-personalization which can culminate in acts of genocide during times of war. In my opinion, we are only at the very beginning of understanding the complex relationship which exists between names, naming, and war. With this special issue, we have made a valuable contribution to what I trust will be much more work to come.

Notes

[1] For more on the Demnig *Stolpersteine Project*, see: www.stolpersteine.de

[2] Interestingly, the Commandant's first name is derived from the Old German words *fridu* which roughly means protection from war-induced harm, or peace' and *rihhi*, meaning powerful(,) ruler. *Das große Vornamenlexikon*. 2003. Mannheim: DUDEN Verlag. p. 132.

[3] For more on the Christiansen case, see: Lorenzen, Heinz. 2004. "Versöhnung nach 60 Jahren: Repräsentaten der Gemeinde Putten besuchten erstmals offiziell Wyk auf Föhr." *Nordfriesland*, 148: 9–10.