

COMMEMORATIVE RITES FOR THE CASUALTIES
AT THE BEGINNING OF THE REVOLUTIONS
IN CENTRAL EUROPE 1848/49

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During the revolution of 1848/49, a specific form of commemorating the dead evolved which is demonstrated in the present article by means of texts from Berlin, Vienna, and Prague. The casualties of the uprisings were ritualized, and the fate of nation and home country was symbolically linked to them. This manner of commemorating was due, in Berlin as well as in Vienna and Prague, to the bourgeois wing outweighing representatives of the old order. By “pocketing” the dead in this manner, the bourgeois strata sought to increase their power. Thus the casualties became a sort of capital, however symbolic, with which to work towards one’s goals. The obsequies in March were about real victims, it is true, but the main thrust of the commemorative assemblies and marches was the importance attached to the fact that rebels had died, and closely linked to this was the hope for an eventual democratisation and social liberation as well as – in the case of the Jews – for emancipation and civil rights equal to those enjoyed by other ethnic groups. Although the commemorative rites of those days were staged in a national way, they also had aspects which transcend the purely national. In consequence, the term “European revolutionary culture” does not appear unjustified.