

Good morning everyone. Confronted with the unprecedented violence of the war, many soldiers sent to the front line developed mental disorders. Abandoned during the conflict, then fallen into oblivion, they nevertheless contributed to laying the foundations of war psychiatry. Today on the history podcast, we will talk about the psychological wounds of the Great War and their impact on psychiatry. It's November 23 and you are listening to the history podcast animated by Leo Rousseau.

On July 14, 1919, on the Champs-Élysées, generals Joffre and Foch opened the way for their troops. France was celebrating with pomp its victory over Germany but was also mourning its dead. At the head of the procession, 1,000 mutilated soldiers were applauded by the crowd. Les mutilés de la face reminded the French of the sacrifice of these soldiers.

However, some of them did not receive the same honors. Victims of hallucinations, nightmares, terrors, the psychologically injured of the Great War fell into oblivion. After 1918, some were interned in asylums, others were unable to resume their former lives. Today, we would put a word on these ailments: post-traumatic stress syndrome. But when these signs appeared during World War I, they were unprecedented.

If violence was always present among previous conflicts, its intensity changed considerably in 1914. The soldiers were confronted with an "industrial war", where shells continuously rained from the sky. Paul Voivenel, a French doctor, mentioned it in his diary: All day long, a hellfire flies over our heads. We wonder how we do not go crazy. Always the same anguish that grips the passage of these incredible machines whose explosions shock you and make you fall onto the ground, your legs weakened, energy less.

According to Olivier Faret, chief doctor of army hospitals of France and president of the museum of the health of Val-de-Grâce: Confrontation with the reality of death is the dominant factor in psychic trauma, either confrontation with one's own death, or that of the comrade in the trenches, or that given on order. This possible imminent death causes a great feeling of fear among the soldiers. In the event that the fighter is overwhelmed by fear, he can develop psychic troubles.

From 1914, French psychiatrists are confronted with a ton of new psychological traumas resulting from the deadly August battles. We can cite «battle hypnosis», shellshock, the neurasthenia of war, and some strange forms of camptocormia for example. At that time, the states were not ready to handle all those new cases. The intensity of the war of attrition forced the states to use all the manpower available and directly impacted how psychological injuries were treated. Considered less important than physical traumas because of the absence of physical lesions, soldiers suffering from psychic trauma were almost immediately sent back to the front line. Soldiers whose symptoms persisted were presented with an impossible choice: to be treated with electrical shocks, an inefficient and barbaric method, or be accused of simulation and face martial

court and potentially be executed. It is estimated that more than 600 French soldiers have been executed because of that

After the armistice of 1918, a whole generation of men was abandoned. Today, it is known as the sacrifice of the forgotten: the soldiers of shame. But this sacrifice was not in vain. The First World War proved to be decisive for psychiatry: for the first time, clinical portraits of these mental illnesses were established. Subsequently, the psychiatric approach was no longer doubt for these psychically injured. "It is the progressive humanization of the therapeutic relationship.

Fifty years later, the Vietnam War marked an important stage in the global knowledge of mental disorders. "It was only at the end of the Vietnam War with more than 700,000 psychically injured without real care, that this influx of post-Vietnam syndromes led American psychiatrists in 1980 to propose a new medical entity, the " Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. In France, the decree of January 10, 1992, finally recognizes the "mentally injured", paving the way for compensation. The terms "traumatic neurosis" or "traumatic psychosyndrome" are now medically defined. Thank you for listening