

## The last remains of the FWW

Today, nothing remains of the First World War but its **material memory traces**. War monuments, commemorative plaques and street names can be found everywhere in Belgium, in every village and city.

These traces tell us how people chose to **remember the war**. They transform public space, and unconsciously influence how people imagine the past.

My research is **different** from other research on the material memory traces of the FWW in Belgium, because:

- it focuses on the dynamics of **cities** (Antwerp & Liège)
- it targets cities **occupied** during the FWW
- it analyses not only war monuments, but other traces as well (street names, plaques, trees, ..)

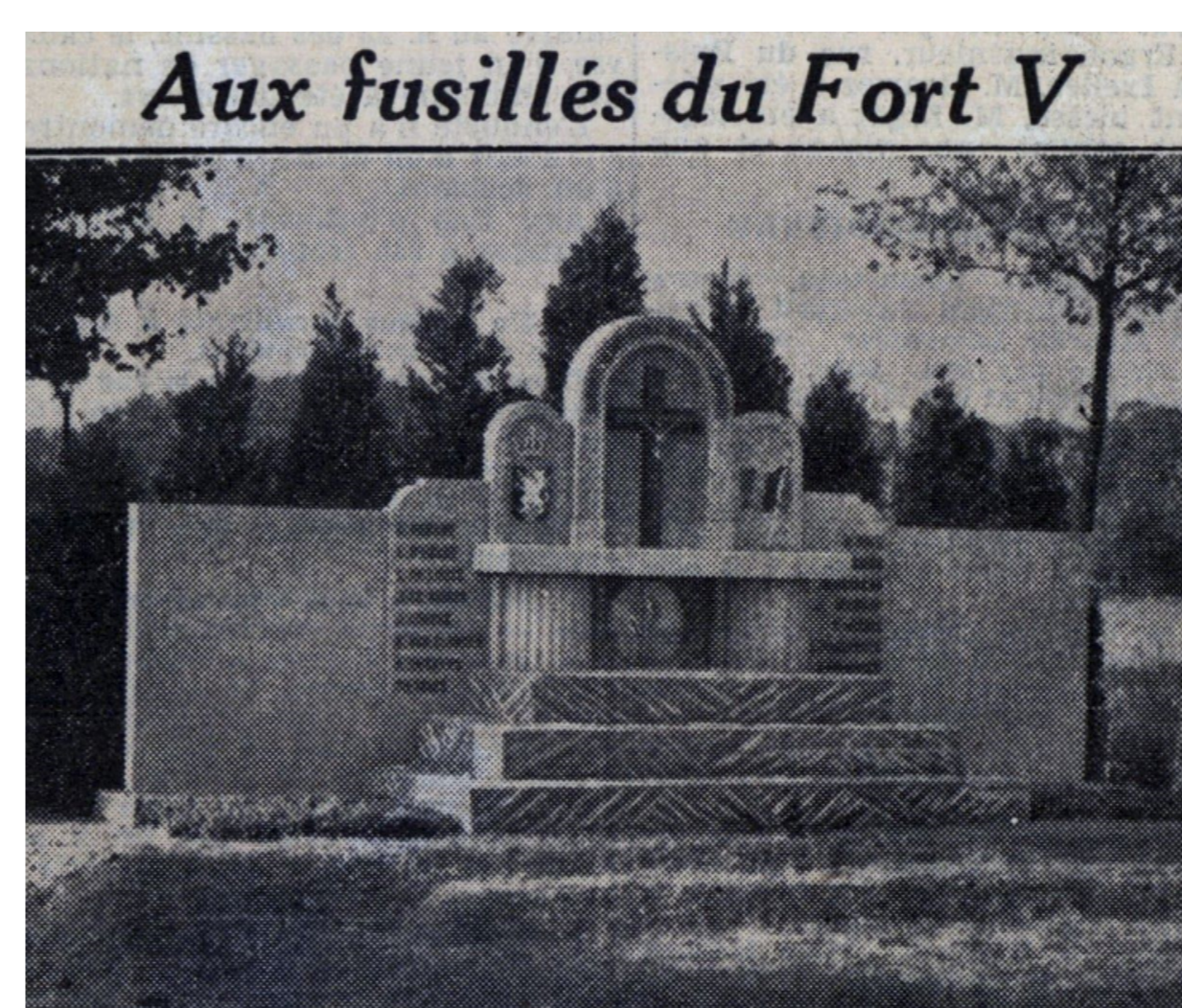
## SPACE

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Occupied cities – similar war experiences, similar memories?



Liège  
Bastion de la Chartreuse  
48 executed



Antwerp  
Fort V Edegem  
16 executed

### CASE STUDY The memory of the executed

During the FWW, more than 227 civilians were executed for espionage by the German authorities in occupied Belgium and France

### Similarities

A strong need to embed the cult of the executed in the public space of these cities:

- Transfer of their bodies to the city cemetery
- Execution sites transformed in sites of pilgrimage and public memory
- The places where they had lived, been judged and imprisoned in the city centre were memorialised

### Differences

In both cases, civil society took the initiative to commemorate and memorialise the executed, but in Liège, the city council also partook actively in this process

## TIME

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How did FWW memory evolve through time?

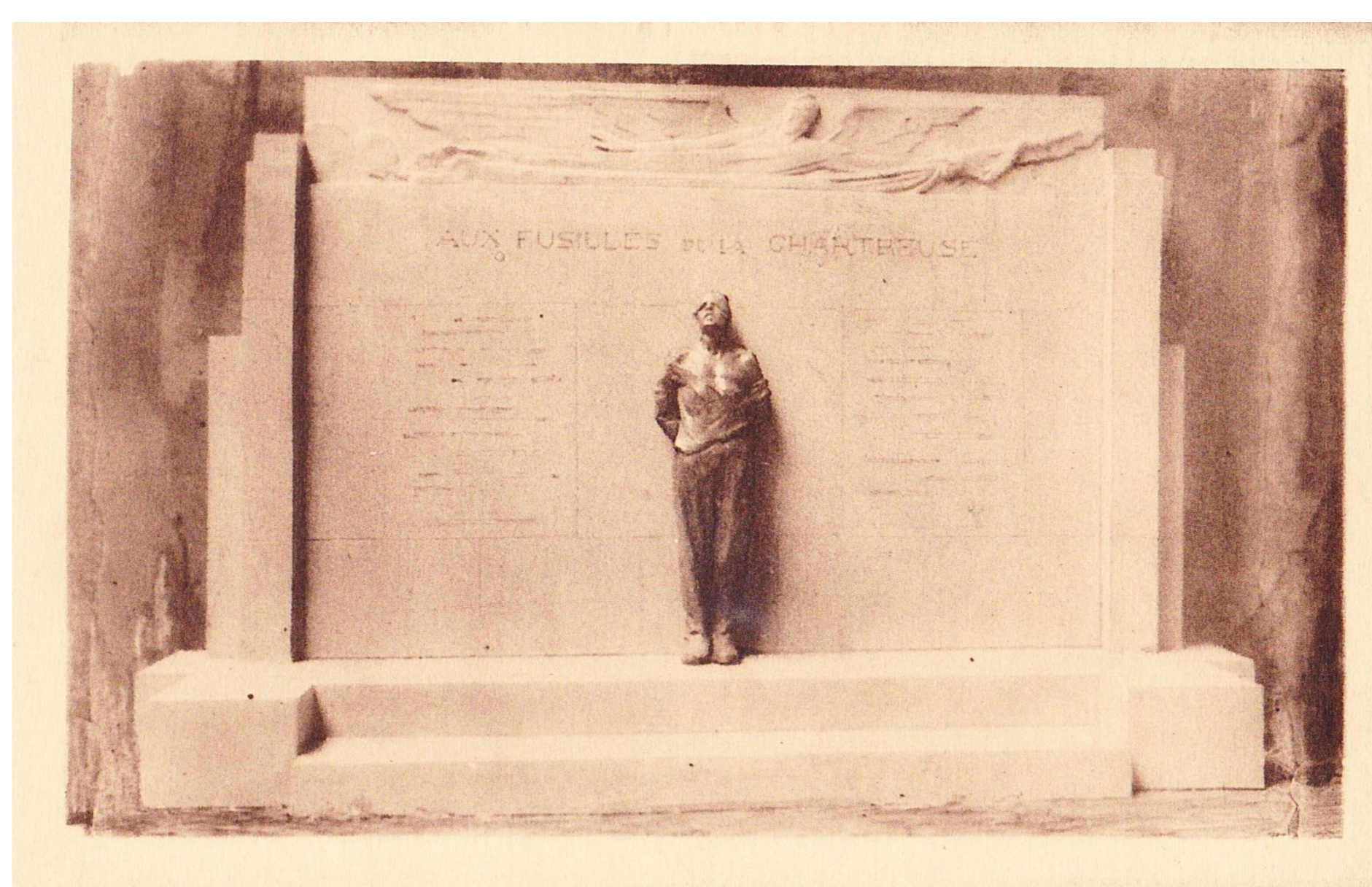
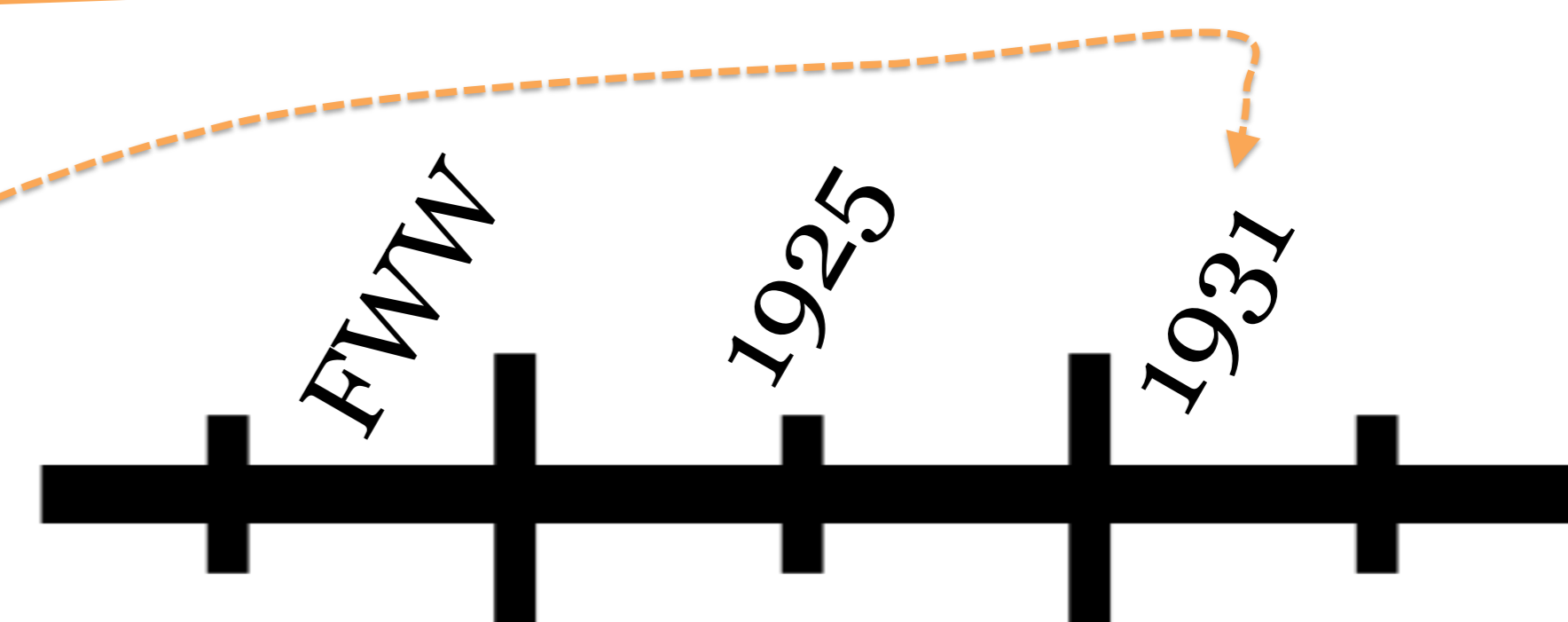
### CASE STUDY The memory of the executed

Historian Laurence van Ypersele has argued that, at the end of the FWW, a unified set of memories of 'Our Dead Heroes' prevailed

From 1925 onwards, after the signing of the Locarno Pact, collective memory gradually became fragmented

- the Flemish: pacifist
- The French-speaking: patriotic

Is this the case for the cult of the executed?



Liège  
Bastion de la Chartreuse

Both in Antwerp and Liège, the executed continued to be commemorated and memorialised after 1925

The commemorative discourse seems to have changed little in the twenties and the thirties

## RELEVANCE

Studying the history of FWW memory in Belgium is relevant for two reasons:

1. The Great War centenary is the single most important commemorative event that ever took place in Belgium  
→ **understanding the history of FWW memory helps to understand the centenary anniversary.**
2. FWW memory provides a template for memory conflicts in Belgium  
→ **understanding FWW memory helps to understand the dynamics of a divided nation.**